CAPACITY ISSUES IN PAKISTAN'S CIVIL SERVICE: A CASE STUDY OF THE PAKISTAN ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE

By

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ABSTRACT

The governance capacity of the Pakistan Administrative Service is an important determinant of the bureaucracy's capacity to deliver public services at both the field and the secretariat levels. The capacity of the PAS is determined by a number of factors at the induction level as well as during the service career of the officers.

We judge this capacity at the initial level from the academic grounding of candidates to their performance at the university level and the quality of education they received, to their performance in the entry exam, and their subsequent performance in the initial training programmes. The quota system and the emphasis on the English language as a medium of testing candidates are specifically explored at this initial phase. Thereafter, we assess capacity development, retention and erosion on the basis of development of expertise and meritocratic promotions and positioning on key posts.

We use this information to categorize the 240 PAS officers who were inducted from 1982 to 1990 into three tiers i.e. high performers, mid-level performers and underperformers. While we find that the high performers, irrespective of their gender, were rewarded the most in terms of the highest grade and coveted positions which helped retain capacity, many officers were promoted despite violating policies which militated against the build-up of capacity. We also find that there was no prevalence of a glass ceiling that prevented women officers from attaining the highest management positions.

The research reveals fluctuating instances of both development and erosion of capacity during the period under study and highlights governance factors responsible for these variations.

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