

## **DESIRE FOR KNOWLEDGE**

**Paper on 'Mission Karmayogi: Paradigm Shift in Civil Services Capacity Building'  
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## **DESIRE FOR KNOWLEDGE**

*'All men by nature desire to know. An indication of this is the delight we take in our senses; for even apart from their usefulness they are loved for themselves; and above all others the sense of sight. For not only with a view to action, but even when we are not going to do anything, we prefer sight to almost anything else. The reason is that this, most of all the senses, makes us know and brings to light many differences between things.'*

*Aristotle*

### **Introduction**

It would not be wrong to take away from the above excerpt that we may interpret desire for knowledge as a deeply imbedded force in all humans which may vary in degree but can certainly be acknowledged purely by the satisfaction we gain on exercising what we learn. From the Classical period in Ancient Greece to the current times in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we can observe the development of our thoughts, our surroundings and our lifestyles. Due to this progressive nature of humans, it is essential for us to embrace the diverse knowledge that comes with it. The thirst for comprehension is a strength that one should inculcate regardless of their path in life but as one of the frontliners in the contribution towards the development of the nation and mankind, it must be a requisite to develop this desire to learn in all stages of duty. As leaders, decision making is a necessary task of the job which makes it important to avoid ignorance as the consequences of these decisions hold a deep impact. These decisions must not only maintain the values and beliefs of the establishment but also keep in touch with the present and prepare for the future. Therefore, it is not enough to learn for the sake of it, what we need is to foster a constant motivation towards learning as it creates an atmosphere to store knowledge in the long run. This must not only be limited to gaining but should also extend towards sharing and application of the acquired knowledge.

The Indian Constitution states that it is a democratic country with power structure of federation having three tier of governance. It has all the basic structures of a federal state the only difference being that the power is devolve from the national government to the states and further to local governments. There are civil service officers who ensure smooth transition of the revenue from the Centre to the States. The Hon'ble Prime Minister has also emphasized that there is a need to strengthen this federal structure by good relations between the Central and State Governments. Also as per the New Public Governance the role of the governments is restricted as facilitator and arbitrator. Therefore, the officials will have to continuously be updated with the latest for which there is a need to have desire to learn.

Functioning of Civil servants is at the heart of government effectiveness as they are the ones who **lead** and improve major government function. Their job is to translate political direction into the policies and programmes to ensure "welfare for all". The basic premise of this submission is that "Desire for Knowledge" is quite inherent to the existence of civil servants. Experience has shown that civil servants intuitively scramble for upgrading their **knowledge** and skills, as the nature of their job is so. This is also vouched from the very description of three terms viz. Desire, Knowledge and Leaders, as reflected herewith.

### **Desire**

The word 'desire' originates from the Latin word "desiderare" which translates to 'long for, desire, feel the want of'. There are several theories on desire but, collectively, it can be considered as a state of mind that alters our actions in a way that motivates us to attain a certain object. The realization of the goal is generally followed by the feeling of satisfaction or content. These 'objects' need not always be materialistic.

### **Knowledge**

In order to comprehend this impulse to obtain the truth, it is vital for us to first thoroughly realise as to what classifies as knowledge. Several philosophies, be it Roman, Greek or Indian, define knowledge as a concept that is true, universally acceptable and can be used as a basis or for the betterment of other existing truths. It is something that demands

the utilization of our cognitive functions. The cognitive skills involved include perception, attention, memory and logical reasoning. Knowledge can be both subjective and objective. Subjective knowledge is highly dependent on our personal perceptions and is influenced by our individual experiences whereas objective knowledge is free from individual opinions or control. Daniel Bell, Harvard University Professor states that, 'Knowledge is an organized set of statement of fact or ideas, presenting a reasoned judgment or an experimental result, which is transmitted to others through some communication medium, in some systematic form. Knowledge consists of new judgments (Research and Scholarship) or presentation of older judgments as exemplified in text books, teaching and learning and collected as library and archival material'.

### **Leaders**

Bureaucrats are the leaders in the field of administration to ensure implementation of government policies, delivery of public services to the people and see that functioning of the country or state is smooth. As this involves directly impacting millions of people, there is always a chance to make a difference and that can be done only when we have knowledge and we are keeping abreast with what is latest in the field that we are dealing.

### **Relationship**

While it is impossible to determine when exactly humans came to appreciate the innate presence of desire for knowledge, several examples throughout history can be drawn out to visualize an array of display on how this curiosity for the unknown led to the most significant discoveries in our entire existence. It is not limited to a single field and a plethora of journeys towards the attainment of scientific knowledge, self-knowledge, social knowledge etc., can be considered a contribution of this intrigue. But one need not go that far into the past, introspection of our own lives can help us encounter incidents where we desire for insight in different areas/subjects.

So while we have defined the desire, knowledge and the leaders we can see direct linkages between the three. A good leader will always have desire for knowledge as they are constantly making decisions to do better or serve better and to do so, they must be eager to learn without egoistic presumptions.

Even the Simon's model of decision-making has three phases. His model of decision-making has three stages viz. "Intelligence" for problem identification and the data collection on the problem followed by "Design phase" to generate a set of alternative solutions to address the problem and finally the "Choice" for selecting the 'best' solution from amongst the alternative solutions using some criterion.

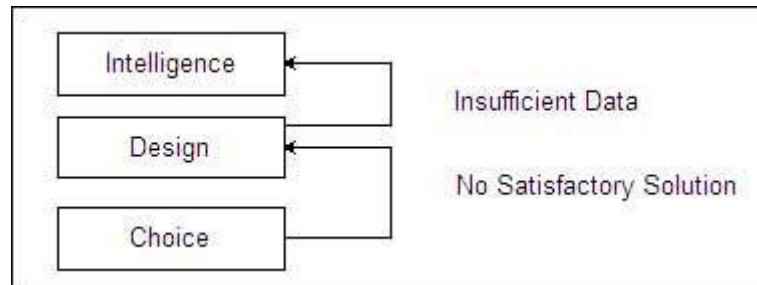


Fig 1: Simon's Decision Making Model

( Source : <https://ecomputernotes.com/mis/decision-making/explain-the-simons-model-of-decision-making>)

Applying this model of decision making to the realistic view of a civil servant's life, we could summarise the steps of knowledge as given in succeeding paragraphs.

### **Steps involved in gaining knowledge and building desire for it.**

The first step in attaining knowledge is the need to understand what is to be learnt. Arrogance often hinders this process as it blinds a person of their shortcomings. It takes a great amount of effort to realise and acknowledge where we are lacking. This is where the cognitive functions of perception and attention come into play. Observing our surroundings and sorting out topics that require further investigation, figuring out gaps in what we think we already know and challenging what we know are all steps in recognizing what we need to know.

The next step is to identify and collect credible sources of information. Even during the times of the existence of the widely known Greek Philosophers, when the number of references for gaining information was considerably lower, they insisted on the importance of verifying the sources which one reads from. One such example can be taken from the letters sent by Seneca to one of his acquaintances where he encourages the use of legit books and authors for proper acquisition of knowledge. With the advancement in technology and the introduction of the World Wide Web, these sources of information have grown exponentially, further enhancing the need for this practice.

Once there is enough accumulation of information, we can begin the process of going through it. It is essential that we not only take what is given but also question it and determine if it can be effectively answered by the provided information. This helps in making the function of memory more efficient and we are able to retain what we learn for longer. It also encourages us to approach a single problem in different ways. Another way to do this is to share what we know with others and indulge in intellectual conversations. Sharing knowledge is a highly valuable activity as it motivates others to seek further into the topic while at the same time it helps us understand the subject more deeply as we get to hear the perspective of others and may come upon something that we might have previously missed.

Curiosity towards learning can also be built by expanding our fields of interests and trying to connect them. One can begin with taking a topic that they are familiar with and trying to connect it with a previously unknown area. This pushes us to learn more about the new subject and also helps us in seeing what we know through a different light.

### **Why is it necessary to go through these steps?**

As decision-makers in an organization that is highly influential in its impact on the country, it is imperative to produce results of the greatest merit. The foundation for such an excellence lies in the knowledge that we attain throughout our life, be it in or out of duty. Information and time are proportional entities, as time grows, so does information. Hence it is vital for us to be up to date with practices and policies that directly influence us.

Most people who are successful have shown tendency for keeping themselves abreast with latest happenings as they want to learn more and know more as to what further they can do to make the difference. There is a need for all, especially people impacting decisions, to take learning to their comfort zone and continue to learn apart from the formal education that is gained through books, files, person they meet and so on.

### **Conclusion**

It is seen that in the organizations where there is a desire for seeking knowledge for betterment and learning from the past mistakes tends to be have advantage over the others. A fair competition for seeking knowledge is always good for the individuals as they tend to become better and in turn they improve the organization as well. There are a large number of

examples where the administrators and doctors by their innovative methods were able to quickly contain COVID - 19 in their area of jurisdiction. The same was possible as they studied the pattern and the best practices to contain the same. They had tendency to seek knowledge, interpret it to the advantage of people and implemented the same. Similarly, in all the fields that we work there are opportunities for us to do better but that will happen only if we have gained in depth knowledge about it and interpreted it well to ensure that best results are obtained. As stated above the knowledge once gained must be shared as it in turn increases the momentum and direction of the knowledge for the overall betterment of the nation. Fueling and then satiating 'desire for knowledge' in our civil servants through appropriate technologies and tools would certainly propel nation's competitiveness and enhance its ability to grow and to compete with other countries for human capital, investments, and other resources.

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