

Unit- I: Chapter 3: Classification of Civil Services in India

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Objectives: The objective of this chapter is to make the students understand:

1. Classification: Introduction, Significance & Essentials of Classification;
2. Rank and Position Classification;
3. History of Classification in India;
4. Classification of Civil Services in India;
5. Shortcomings in the Classification of Civil Services in India; and
6. Measures to make the Classification System Effective.

Introduction: Classification

Classification is grouping persons or things based on some common characteristics. It means to arrange, distribute or place persons, things or ideas into groups based upon similar or like qualities. Just like the books in the library are classified so that a reader can locate them smoothly, the civil services are also classified for the effective utilisation of people at work. The civil services require to be administered scientifically to provide career service to the people to provide a career service to people wherein the civil servants are promoted to higher positions within the organisations. The classification system of personnel is the foundation for building up a career system.

Significance of Classification

The civil services are career services wherein the civil servants join at the lower levels and reach higher positions through promotion. Nowadays, modern governments perform many tasks ranging from the maintenance of law and order, the collection of taxes, development activities, and providing welfare. So the number of public personnel is also huge. Handling such a large number of civil servants and managing their personnel aspects like placement, transfers, and promotion is significant in the modern age. Following is the significance of classification:

1. Uniformity: Classification of civil services helps in bringing uniformity in the services.
2. Job Description and Job Analysis: Classification helps in analysing and describing different positions in the civil services.
3. Authority and Responsibility: Classification helps in identifying the duties and responsibilities of different positions in the services.
4. Remuneration: Proper classification of civil services helps in determining the wages/pay policies/scales of different positions in the civil services.
5. Recruitment and Placement: As the duties and responsibilities of different positions are identified with job analysis and job description, it helps in the proper recruitment and placement of the personnel based on their qualifications or duties.
6. Promotes Merit: It promotes the criterion of merit for the recruitment and promotion of civil servants.
7. Controls Favouritism: Classification endeavours to control favouritism and political interference.

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Essentials of the Classification System: According to Fred Talford following are the essentials of a classification system.

1. Collection of detailed information about the 'position' where it occurs in the organisational unit and its functions and procedures thereof;
2. Grouping of individual positions into a class;
3. A written definition or description for each class of positions. And the duties attached to the positions to be included in the class;
4. A written statement of minimum qualifications required in an individual to be able to perform the duties of the position successfully;
5. A title for each class of positions, with duties attached to the positions in the organisational unit in which they occur;
6. Allocation to the proper class of every position that is classified;
7. The lines of promotion;
8. The compensation schedule for each class giving minimum to the maximum range to be paid to the employees; and
9. Finally, the grouping of classes into services.

Classification Systems

Classification of personnel is done by two systems, i.e. Rank Classification and Position Classification. Following is a description of Rank Classification and Position Classification.

Rank Classification

The Rank Classification system is based on the official's rank and personal status rather than his position. This system is in vogue in India, Pakistan, Britain, France, Germany, Malaysia and Laos. In Rank Classification, the basis of classification is the rank and personal status of the official rather than the specific duties of the post he occupies. This system of classification is also known as the rank-in-man system. The personnel are classified in hierarchical order according to their rank. The employees are classified and not the job. Each employee is then placed in the precise class. In the Rank Classification system, the services are planned around the incumbent. So, the civil servants are members of a broadly defined group or service. The employees get their salary and status as per their rank in service.

Position Classification

Position Classification is prevalent in Canada, Japan, the Philippines, Taiwan and the USA. It is also known as 'Duties Classification' and 'Rank-in-Job Classification'. Position Classification categorises positions into groups or classes based on their duties, responsibilities, and qualification requirements.

A 'Position' is classified according to the nature of the job rather than the person in the position and is the basic unit under the position classification system. A position indicates the duties and responsibilities assigned to an employee, his status, and salary. Several similar positions are put together to form a class.

According to Stahl, a 'Class' is a group of sufficiently similar positions in their duties, responsibilities, and levels of difficulty. All positions covered in a class have similar qualifications and pay scales.

A class specification identifies each class of positions. For example, it specifies the title of the class, description of the duties and responsibilities, description of minimum qualifications, lines of promotion and scales of pay.

Classification of Civil Services in India

Introduction

Systematic classification of personnel helps in the proper management of human resources in organisations. *Dr H. Finer* says that the efficiency of the services depends upon the proper classification of the personnel. In a classification plan, the basic unit is a 'Position' defined as the work consisting of duties and responsibilities of an employee. Similar positions are grouped into 'Class'. The classes are further grouped into broad occupational groups called 'Services'. This part of the chapter provides an insight into the history and classification of civil services in India

History

The classification of civil services in India has undergone significant changes since the country became independent. A brief history of the classification of civil services in India is as follows:

I. Pre-Independent India

1. The Macaulay Committee gave India its first modern civil service in 1854. It recommended a permanent civil service based on a merit-based system through competitive entry examination. The Report of the Committee made it clear that only the best and the brightest would do for the Indian Civil Service (ICS). After 1855, recruitment to the ICS came to be based totally on merit. It was an elite service that was opened to Indians from 1922 onwards, and the Indian Civil Service Examination began to be held in India.
2. The *Aitchinson* Commission (1886) attempted to systematise civil services in India. It recommended that the two-tier civil service classification of the "covenanted and uncovenanted" system must be replaced by a three-tier classification system, namely – Imperial, Provincial and Subordinate. After the passing of the Government of India Act 1919, the Imperial Services were split into two classes – All India Services and Central Services. There were Provincial Services as well. From 1930 onwards, the classification of services was governed by the Civil Service Classification, Control and Appeal Rules, 1930 and the services were divided into four categories: Class I, Class II and Subordinate.

3. Post-Independent India

Post independence, classification of the services is governed by the Civil Services (Classification, Control and Appeal) Rules, 1930, as amended from time to time. After Independence, the different services are now designated as All India Services, Central Services and State Services.

1. **First Administrative Reforms Commission:** The First ARC Report on Personnel Administration (1969) emphasised the importance of proper personnel planning and cadre management. It recommended that recruitment to the IAS/IFS and other non-technical Class I services should be made only through a single competitive examination. It also recommended that the upper age limit for taking the civil services competitive examinations should be raised to 26 years. It recommended maintaining a three-tier structure, All India Services (AIS), Central Services and State Services with clear functional roles.

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2. **Third Pay Commission (1970-73):** Recommended conversion of Class I to IV to Group A to D. It was adopted in 1974, marking a semantic and symbolic shift from the colonial terminology.
3. **Sixth Pay Commission (2006-08):** Recommended the Pay Band and Grade Pay system. Pursued to de-layer the bureaucracy and simplify pay scales. Recommended removal of Group D posts — merged into Group C Multi-Tasking Staff (MTS).
4. **Second Administrative Reforms Commission:** In its 10th report, Refurbishing of Personnel Administration – Scaling New Heights, the Commission observed that the civil services can be categorised into three broad groups, namely – All India Services, Central Civil Services and State Civil Services. It recommended reclassification of civil services based on function and moving away from Group A, B, C & D classification and adoption of a function-based framework like General Management Services, Specialist, Technical Services and Support Services. Advocated merging services with overlapping functions and creating unified service cadres in sectors like health and education. It also recommended the creation of the Unified State Civil Services and enabling lateral entry and inter-cadre mobility.
5. **Seventh Pay Commission (2014-2016):** The Seventh Pay Commission recommended replacing ‘Grade Pay’ with ‘Pay Matrix’. Encouraged cadre review across all services, integration of General and Specialists Services and more inter-service parity. It also supported Lateral Entry at higher administrative levels.

Classification of Civil Services in India

The Civil Services at the Union and State levels can be classified in several different ways. Firstly, the civil services can be categorised into three broad groups – All India Services, Central Civil Services and State Civil Services. Secondly, the Union and State Services can be classified into Groups A, B and C based on their role and responsibilities. Thirdly, these services can also be classified into technical and non-technical services. All India Services have Group A services only, Central Civil Services and State Civil Services both have Group ‘A’, ‘B’, ‘C’ and ‘D’. Group D services have been merged with Group C services, now known as Multi-Tasking Services. Detailed information on the classification of the civil services in India is as follows:

Classification of Civil Services (Illustrative)			
Category	General Management Services	Specialised Services	Technical Services
All India Services: Group A	Indian Administrative Service	Indian Police Services	Indian Forest Service
Central Services: Group A		Indian Foreign Service, Indian Revenue Service, Indian Audit & Accounts Service	Railway Engineering Services, Indian Engineering Services (IES)

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Classification of Civil Services (Illustrative)			
Category	General Management Services	Specialised Services	Technical Services
Central Services: Group B	Central Secretariat Service, Railway Board Secretariat Service, Delhi, Andaman and Nicobar Islands Civil Service	Central Public Works Department, Central Secretariat Clerical Service	Central Public Works Department, Geological Survey of India (GSI)
State Civil Service: Group A	Punjab Civil Service, Uttar Pradesh Provincial Civil Service	State Commercial Tax Service State Education Services	State Medical Service State Forest Service Punjab Engineering Services
State Civil Service: Group B	Block Development Officer Revenue Officer	State Education Service State Commercial Tax Service	Punjab Engineering Services (Group B) Punjab Scientific Services / Subordinate Labs
Central and State Civil Services: Multi-Tasking Services (MTS) (Group C and erstwhile Group D)	<i>Exist in all Functional and General Management Areas</i>		

Source: Adapted from: 10th report, Refurbishing of Personnel Administration – Scaling New Heights (2008) of the 2nd Administrative Reforms Commission

1. All India Services

All India Services serve both the Central/Union Government and the State Governments and are controlled by the Centre. In 1947, there were two All India Services – the Indian Administrative Service and the Indian Police Service. According to Article 312 of the Indian Constitution, the Council of States can create a new All India Service if not less than two-thirds of the members present and voting feel that it is essential in the national interest. Accordingly, the government of India set up three more services in 1963 – the Indian Forest Service, Indian Medical and Health Services and the Indian Service of Engineers. Only the Indian Forest Service came into being as the states refused to participate in the Indian Medical and Health Services and the Indian Service

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of Engineers. Presently, there are three All India Services - Indian Administrative Service, Indian Police Service and Indian Forest Service.

All India Services officers are at the disposal of both the Centre and the States. The Union Public Service Commission recruits these services on an all-India basis and then allocates them to state cadres. At present, there are 24 state cadres, including three joint cadres. The joint cadres are:

- i. Assam and Meghalaya;
- ii. Manipur and Tripura; and
- iii. Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Mizoram and Union Territories.

The states govern their service conditions, but disciplinary action against them can be taken only by the President of India in consultation with the UPSC. They have standard qualifications and uniform scales of pay and possess an all-India character. They serve the Central Government on deputation and man the top positions at the state level.

Examples: All India Services – Indian Administrative Service, Indian Police Service and Indian Forest Service.

2. Central Civil Services

Central Civil Services are recruited by the Central Government and are under the exclusive control of the Central Government. These services are functional in nature and generally serve one department. The civil services of the Central Government comprise established services known as the Central Civil Services and Civil Posts created outside the established services, which constitute the General Central Service. The services are classified into Group A, Group B, Group C and Group D services. There were 23 Central Civil Services Group A and 27 Central Civil Services Group B at the time of independence. As per the Central Civil Services (Classification, Control and Appeal) Rules, 1965, updated in 2018, there are 45 Central Civil Services Group A and 33 Central Services Group B (Except for civilians in Defence Forces). There are 5 Central Civil Services Group C (Except for civilians in Defence Forces).

Group A and Group B services constitute the higher administrative and executive services. In comparison, Group C services include subordinate services like the Stenographers, Typist and Assistants. Finally, Group D services lowest in the hierarchy include peons, chowkidars, malis and cooks.

The Fifth Central Pay Commission recommended a new classification wherein all the Central Civil posts were divided into six categories - Top Executives, Senior Executives, Executives, Supervisory Staff, Supporting Staff and Auxiliary Staff. However, the recommendations of the Pay Commission were not accepted, and the existing classification into Groups “A”, “B”, “C” and “D” was retained.

Sixth Pay Commission (2006-08): Recommended the Pay Band and Grade Pay system. Pursued to de-layer the bureaucracy and simplify pay scales. Recommended removal of Group D posts — merged into Group C Multi-Tasking Staff (MTS).

Examples: Indian Revenue Service, Indian Foreign Service, Indian Railway Service, Indian Audit and Accounts Service.

3. State Civil Services

State Civil Service serves states in India besides the All India Services. The State Services function only under the State Governments. The State Civil Services administer those subjects which have been allocated to the States as per the Constitution. They implement State laws and also some Central laws. Their members are under the exclusive administrative control of the respective State Governments, and their duties are confined to the territories of the State, unless working on deputation.

These services are divided into Group 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' services. Group 'A' and 'B' are gazetted Civil Services, and Group 'C' and 'D' services are non-gazetted services. The State Services are divided into technical and non-technical services. The State Civil Services are broadly classified into the following three categories:

1. Administrative Services, Judicial Services and other Services like Sales Tax Officers, Treasury Officers.
2. Technical Services of the Engineers, Doctors and other Technical Services.
3. Subordinate Services.

Examples: Punjab Civil Service, Haryana Civil Service, Punjab Civil Medical Service, Punjab Education Service.

Shortcomings in the Classification of Civil Services in India

The classification of civil services in India, originally based on colonial-era hierarchical structures, has been criticised for being outdated, rigid, and functionally misaligned. Committees such as the First and Second Administrative Reforms Commissions (ARC), as well as various Pay Commissions, have pointed out several systemic shortcomings. Following are some such shortcomings:

1. **Over-Fragmentation of Services:** The Second Administrative Reforms Commission (2nd ARC) and the 5th & 6th Pay Commissions highlighted the excessive fragmentation of civil services into numerous cadres with overlapping functions. For example, several revenue-related services like the IRS (Income Tax), the IRS (Customs & GST), and the Central Excise Service perform closely related roles but exist as separate cadres. This creates inefficiencies, duplication of work, and coordination challenges, leading to delays in decision-making and inter-service rivalry.
2. **Rigid Hierarchical Classification:** The existing classification system, based on the four-group hierarchy (A, B, C, D), was criticised by both the First and Second ARC as outdated and status-driven. This salary-based classification did not reflect the complexity, responsibility, or nature of the roles. This hinders flexibility, discourages innovation, and makes it difficult to adapt job roles to evolving governance needs.
3. **Lack of Functional Specialisation:** The 2nd ARC stated that the civil servants, particularly generalists like those from the IAS, are often rotated through departments without considering their domain knowledge or prior experience. For instance, an officer may move from urban development to health, then to education, without gaining deep sectoral expertise. This lack of functional specialisation undermines policy continuity, institutional memory, and effective delivery.
4. **Poor Integration of Generalist and Specialist Services:** Committees such as the Hota Committee and the Surinder Nath Committee identified a clear divide between generalist (e.g., IAS) and specialist services (e.g., engineers, scientists, economists). Specialists often do not receive equal recognition or opportunities for leadership roles in ministries or autonomous bodies, even when

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they possess more relevant qualifications. This results in demotivation and underutilization of expertise.

5. **Inadequate Lateral Entry and Inter-Cadre Mobility:** The civil services system, as currently structured, provides minimal scope for lateral entry from academia, the private sector, or NGOs, nor does it facilitate easy movement across services.
6. **Promotion Based on Seniority:** This classification is typically based on seniority and length of service, rather than the complexity or strategic importance of the role. The 5th Pay Commission, among others, noted that promotions and pay upgrades happen mechanically, without regard for actual contribution, performance, or skill relevance. This undermines motivation, rewards mediocrity, and fails to incentivise high performance or continuous skill development.
7. **Service Inequity and Elitism:** The classification system reinforces a hierarchical structure where All India Services (AIS) officers—especially those from the IAS and IPS—dominate top administrative roles in both central and state governments. Meanwhile, officers from State Services and Group B cadres, despite years of experience and service at the grassroots, face limited promotion opportunities and professional growth. The First ARC and the Sarkaria Commission highlighted that this creates a sense of injustice and stagnation within lower services, ultimately affecting morale and service delivery.

Shortcomings include excessive fragmentation of services with overlapping roles, a rigid Group A/B/C structure that fails to reflect actual job functions, a lack of specialisation, limited integration between generalist and specialist cadres, discouraging lateral entry, and heavy reliance on seniority for promotions.

Measures to make the Classification System Effective

To address the shortcomings given above, the commissions and committees have recommended a shift toward function-based classification, domain specialisation, greater mobility across services, performance-based promotions, and structural parity between cadres. Following are some such measures to improve the classification system:

1. Merging services performing similar or overlapping functions. For example, combine various revenue, audit, or engineering services into unified cadres. Adopt a domain-based classification — e.g., economic services, development services, regulatory services — to enable coordinated policy and staffing.
2. Replacing the traditional Group A/B/C system with a function and competency-based classification. For instance, classify civil servants as managerial, technical, or field-operational. This would ensure more flexibility, reduce status fixation, and align personnel with actual job content rather than legacy pay bands.
3. Introducing specialised tracks within civil services. Officers should be allowed to develop sectoral expertise (e.g., health, education, energy) through long-term assignments and tailored training. Incorporating career path planning balances generalist exposure with depth in one domain.
4. Creating parallel career paths for specialists with equal access to top administrative positions. For example, allowing senior doctors, engineers, scientists, or economists to lead ministries or regulatory bodies in their respective fields. The system can be made effective by enabling joint training, postings, and committees for collaborative policy-making.

5. Institutionalising lateral entry from academia, the private sector, and NGOs at middle and senior levels, especially in policy, IT, health, and infrastructure. Also, enabling horizontal movement across services, e.g., from state to central roles, or between generalist and technical cadres.
6. Introducing a performance-linked career progression system. Using 360° feedback, objective Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and outcome-based assessments (already piloted in Smart Performance Appraisal Report Recording Online Window (SPARROW) and Framework of Roles, Activities and Competencies (FRAC) frameworks) to determine eligibility for promotion, training, or critical assignments.
7. Providing fast-track promotion channels for Group B and State Civil Services officers with exemplary performance records. Ensuring representation of state officers in policy roles and enabling merit-based empanelment for central deputation. Promotion of equal respect and visibility across services through common training modules and inter-service collaboration.
8. The 2nd ARC, drawing from international best practices (like the UK's Nolan Committee), emphasised that such inward and inter-sectoral mobility is essential for bringing in new ideas, skills, and perspectives. The lack of such mobility results in insular bureaucracies that are resistant to innovation and disconnected from changing societal needs.

Implementing the recommendations of expert committees—such as adopting function- and competency-based classification, promoting specialisation, enabling lateral entry, and ensuring equitable career progression—can transform the civil service into a more agile, accountable, and performance-driven system.

Conclusion

This chapter discusses the classification of civil services in India. Towards the end, the chapter gives the shortcomings and restructurings recommended by the Reforms Commissions and Pay Commissions.

Important Terms/Concepts/Information

1. **Rank Classification/Rank-in-Man:** The Rank Classification system is based on the official's rank and personal status, rather than the specific duties associated with their position.
This system is prevalent in countries like India, Pakistan, Britain, France, Germany, Malaysia, and Laos. Also known as the "Rank-in-Man" system, it focuses on classifying personnel based on their rank in the administrative hierarchy rather than classifying the job itself.
2. **Position Classification/Rank-in-Job:** Position classification categorises positions into groups or classes based on their duties, responsibilities, and qualifications. Position Classification is prevalent in Canada, Japan, the Philippines, Taiwan and the USA. It is also known as 'Duties classification' and Rank-in-Job classification.
3. **Classification of Civil Services in India:** The civil services in India have been classified in Services, Classes and Grades. There are three types of civil services – All India Services, Central Civil Services and State Civil Services. All India Services have Group A services only, Central Civil Services and State Civil Services both have Group 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D'.
4. **First Administrative Reforms Commission:** The First ARC Report on Personnel Administration (1969) emphasised the importance of proper personnel planning and cadre management. It recommended that recruitment to the IAS/IFS and other non-technical Class

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Short and Long Questions

Short Answer Type Questions

1. Write a note on Classification.
2. Write a note on the Significance of Classification.
3. Write a note on the Essentials of the Classification System.
4. What do you understand by Rank Classification?
5. What do you understand by Position Classification?
6. Write a note on the Classification of Civil Services in India.
7. Write a note on All India Services.

Long Question

1. Discuss the Classification of Civil Services in India.

Suggested Readings

1. Sharma, Vibha. Public Personnel Administration – with Special Reference to India, Jalandhar: New Academic Publishing Co, 2025
2. R.K. Sapru (1985). Civil Service Administration in India, Deep and Deep, New Delhi.
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6. Relevant reading material from Egyankosh - <http://egyankosh.ac.in/>
7. Relevant reading material from e PG Pathshala - <https://epgp.inflibnet.ac.in/>