

Second Report on the Career Concept

Prepared by

Maurice Bertrand

Moustapha Ould Khalifa

Joint Inspection Unit



Joint Inspection Unit

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Page 10, para. 28, last line:

the words "annex IV" should be replaced by "annex II";

Page 18, footnote 8:

"annex III" should be replaced by "annex II".

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and

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Introductory Note

The present report concludes the report on "Personnel policy options" issued by the Joint Inspection Unit in August 1981. 1/ Hence, for a clearer understanding, the two documents have to be considered together. These reports deal with policy issues regarding the over-all approach to the international civil service and, as a result, they are intended for all the organizations of the United Nations system. Each recommendation is followed by an indication of how it is to be applied. Procedural matters regarding consideration of these recommendations by the General Assembly of the United Nations and by the legislative bodies of the organizations of the United Nations system are discussed in annex I.

1/ Document JIU/REP/81/11, circulated by the United Nations under the symbol A/36/432 and Add.1, of 14 September and 29 October 1981. It will be referred to here as "Report No. 1". Comments on it by the Secretary-General of the United Nations are to be found in document A/36/432/Add.2.

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CHAPTER I

THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEMS AND POSSIBLE APPROACHES TO SOLUTIONS

A. The staff situation in the international civil service and the main problems

1. An attempt has already been made in Report No. 1 to describe the basic features of the existing situation (cf. paragraphs 16-34 of that report), particularly with regard to the Professional category. That situation undoubtedly differs from organization to organization and even, within a given organization, from one service or occupational group to another; nevertheless, in the light of numerous earlier reports, it can be stated that:

The recruitment methods in use are, with some exceptions, neither objective nor technically suited to the requirements of the organization;

The performance appraisal and promotion systems afford few guarantees of objectivity;

Allowing for exceptions, the cardinal importance of the concept of "professionalism" is not recognized. The concept of a generalist capable of doing everything and holding any post whatsoever provided he knows the customs of the organization exists alongside the method of job classification, which implies the opposite idea of intensive specialization; so far, the inconsistencies or contradictions between these differing approaches have not been resolved;

2. Moreover, although a very substantial proportion of the staff become career officials in all the organizations.

The fact that recruitments are made at all grade levels and only for specific posts (without, at the time of recruitment, consideration of the qualifications necessary for holding successive posts within a given occupational group) does not make for rational career development.

There is no career development system either, nor has the utilization of methods comparable to those followed in national civil services in this connection (definition of standard career paths for each broad occupational group, average rate of advancement, prospect of reaching a minimum grade level by the end of one's career, etc.) ever been properly considered in the organizations of the United Nations system.

3. In the main, these remarks hold true not only for the Professional category but also, mutatis mutandis, for General Service staff. They do not relate to technical co-operation experts. 2/

2/ However, paragraphs 126-127 of the Report on the Role of Experts in Development Co-operation (JIU/REP/78/3) contained proposals to enable certain experts (agency Chief Technical Advisers) to obtain the status of career staff of the United Nations agency appointing them.

4. Obviously, such a situation is bad for the morale and, consequently, the efficiency of the staff. It is not in the interest of the organizations nor is it in keeping with the criteria, set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and in most of the constituent instruments of the specialized agencies, regarding the highest standards of efficiency and competence.

5. Similarly, the Member States are not satisfied with this situation. The discussion of staff issues is accompanied by uneasiness because of the continuing ideological debate referred to in Report No. 1, the absence of clarity, the complexity and often the seemingly insoluble nature of matters pertaining to salaries, benefits and pensions, the difficulties that still remain in implementing the resolutions on equitable geographical distribution or the employment of women, and so forth. The recent debates in the General Assembly of the United Nations on these matters confirm this deep dissatisfaction, while discussions in the governing bodies of the other organizations reveal that concern on such issues exists throughout the United Nations system. For these various reasons it has become a matter of great urgency to formulate common principles and introduce a process of reform that will help to solve today's two major problems of the international civil service, namely:

How to ensure the very highest standards of efficiency, in other words a high degree of professionalism, in all fields; and

How to create a satisfying climate of work with both job security and reasonable and fair opportunities for advancement.

B. Possible approaches to solutions

6. Solutions to these two problems must take account of their complexity and of the diversity of situations that exist among the organizations. Questions of size and the need for different kinds of staff are important factors in identifying possible approaches to solutions.

7. Career development is obviously a very difficult task for organizations below a certain size. This is the case with all the small organizations employing between 60 and 130 Professional staff (WMO, UPU, WIPO, IMCO, IFAD, GATT), and even those like ICAO and ITU which have between 200 and 300; it is particularly so in the many instances where specialists are needed and where a substantial number of staff are therefore recruited on fixed-term contracts. The General Service staffs of the above organizations vary between 80 and 600, which makes it easier to provide career development for them, at least in the larger of these organizations. What is more, since the small organizations account for only a tiny percentage of the total staff involved, there is no great disadvantage in leaving them to work out individual solutions to their problems, instead of expecting them to follow the same principles as the big organizations. Table 1, giving the organizations' staffs at 31 December 1980, ^{3/}

^{3/} This table has been prepared from CCAQ statistics (document ACC/1981/PER/14 of 2 June 1981).

shows that all the small organizations together (including a few small units such as the International Court of Justice) account for as little as 7.3 per cent of the total number of Professional staff and 4.2 per cent of the total General Service staff.

8. Out of a total Professional staff of more than 11,500 and a total of nearly 30,000 General Service staff, the United Nations and the three major programmes attached to it (UNDP, UNICEF and the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees) account for 46.3 per cent of the Professionals and 55.2 per cent of the General Service staff. Moreover, the five big agencies (ILO, FAO, UNESCO, WHO and IAEA) account for 41.7 per cent of all Professionals and 37.7 per cent of all General Service staff, each of them having between 500 and 1,500 of the former and between 900 and 3,300 of the latter. Altogether, the United Nations, its three major programmes and the five big agencies account for approximately 90 per cent of the total staff in the Professional and General Service categories. It is therefore clear that in seeking ways and means of improving the staff career structure, particular attention must be paid to those nine bodies (six organizations and three major programmes).

9. The need for different kinds of staff is the second important factor to be considered, particularly as far as the Professional category is concerned. In every organization a substantial proportion of the personnel must obviously be professional staff dealing with finance, administration, personnel management, accounting, data processing and audit and providing library, information and language (translation and interpretation) services. For substantive activities, however, the requirements vary according to the kind of programme which the organization has to execute. For this purpose the United Nations, for instance, requires political officers, economists, jurists, social development specialists, statisticians, and so on.

UNICEF: programme officers, external relations officers,
procurement officers, etc.

WHO: physicians, public health engineers, etc.

ILO: economists and jurists, social affairs officers, etc.

FAO: agricultural engineers, economists, jurists, etc.

UNESCO: educationists, environment specialists, etc.

The fact that in each of the big agencies the various occupational groups mentioned above ^{4/} account for large numbers of staff makes it possible for career paths to be established within each group in most cases.

^{4/} These lists are far from being exhaustive.

Professional staffs (employed at headquarters and permanent offices) and General Service staffs

By organization

Organization	Professional staff	Percentage of total	General Service staff	Percentage of total
UN	3 814		9 342	
UNDP	760		4 559	
UNHCR	325		552	
UNICEF	435		1 691	
Subtotal	5 334	46.3	16 144	55.2
ILO	714		1 266	
FAO	1 526		3 377	
UNESCO	1 086		1 982	
WHO	953		3 316	
IAEA	523		907	
Subtotal	4 802	41.7	10 848	37
ICAO	314		629	
ITU	213		441	
Subtotal	527	4.6	1 070	3.7
UPU	66		79	
WMO	120		194	
IMCO	92		157	
WIPO	83		170	
IFAD	61		76	
GATT	126		174	
Subtotal	548	4.8	850	2.8
Other small bodies (UNITAR, ICJ, UNU, UNRWA, etc.)	287	2.5	372	1.3
Grand total	11 498	100	29 284	100

10. In addition to the above, all the organizations need to recruit officials for fixed terms. It is no secret that the policies in this respect vary considerably from one organization to another (see the figures given in annex IV to Report No. 1). These policies are the result of successive decisions taken by the director-general or secretary-general and governing body concerned; generally speaking they have aimed at catering for the needs of the organization as efficiently as possible, and have created traditions which are certainly worthy of respect. The United Nations, UNDP, UNICEF, ILO and FAO all have a majority of career staff (in most cases 60-70 per cent of Professional staff have permanent appointments). WHO, UNESCO and IAEA, on the other hand, have rather different policies (as few as 10-20 per cent have permanent appointments, although the actual proportion of career staff is far higher; in WHO, for example, 56.7 per cent of staff on fixed-term appointments do in fact serve for more than 5 years, and over 30 per cent of them for more than 10 years). The big agencies whose activities are particularly technical in nature (IAEA and WHO) follow a deliberate policy of employing fixed-term staff.

11. It would be an exaggeration to say that these approaches, methods, traditions or policies are the only possible ones and that they are the best in all cases. On the contrary, the situation described above shows that improvements are desirable. The concept of "requirements peculiar to the organization" is not sufficient to explain everything and calls for some scrutiny. The "occupational group" concept, on the other hand, enables these requirements to be translated into terms which are far easier to understand and verify.

12. In the long run, in defining principles which are common to all the big organizations and help to solve the two basic problems mentioned above, the first step should be to clarify the concepts of profession and career, which are closely linked; after that, it will be necessary to lay down recruitment, training and career development methods that ensure maximum professionalism and at the same time maximum job satisfaction for staff.

CHAPTER II

PROFESSION AND CAREER

A. The concepts of profession and occupational group

13. The concepts of profession and career are so closely linked that it is surprising to find that their relationship has not yet received greater attention in connection with the fundamental principles of the international civil service. There have been many reasons for this in the past, but they are no longer any justification for maintaining the same approach today.

14. Generally speaking, a career in a national civil service obeys precise and universally accepted criteria, one of the most important being recognition that pursuing a career for a reasonable number of years within a particular occupational group is essential if genuine professionalism is to be acquired. Thus career paths are generally organized into distinct groups such as professionals of ministries of finance, industry, agriculture or public works, specialized corps of engineers in telecommunications or military ministries, corps of physicians for public health administration, diplomats, etc.

15. The example that can be most easily checked by the members of the delegations of Member States is that of the diplomatic service, in which the usual features are:

Career development in a profession: diplomacy;

Entrance requirements that call for qualifications in the fields of history of diplomacy, economics, international law and drafting and speaking abilities, ascertained by tests or competitive examinations;

A very high probability of advancement to a particular grade (highest rank of counsellor, minister or ambassador, as appropriate);

Normally quite strict conditions as regards the length of stay in successive postings (generally three to five years for each posting) and a periodic return to the central administration in the ministry;

External recruitments for the first secretary or counsellor grades normally confined to officials from other administrations (with verification of their skills, mostly by examination); wider external recruitment at the ambassador level, but frequently with a percentage ceiling.

Naturally, this more or less standard pattern varies, depending on the countries concerned.

16. Consequently, the concept of a career system does not need to be reinvented. The national civil service systems which have stood the test of time have very similar characteristics for all professions. Generally speaking, the systems involve:

- (a) Standard career paths in a particular occupation or occupational group;
- (b) Recruitment by objective methods: written and oral tests or competitive examinations;
- (c) Recruitments largely at the junior starting grade (apart from a few exceptional cases);
- (d) Prospects of normal career development, in other words, of advancement at least to a particular level by the end of one's career, with equitable opportunities for promotion and an average rate of advancement that is fairly well known in advance;
- (e) A strict limit on the number of possible external recruitments at levels higher than the starting grade, precisely so as to facilitate normal career advancement for staff members recruited in that grade;
- (f) Methods for punishing and dismissing from office staff whose work is persistently unsatisfactory;
- (g) In addition to these basic features, the more progressive systems allow the persons concerned to take a part in determining the shape of their professional lives.

17. Such are the features of the arrangements in the civil services of most nations, both in the socialist countries and in the western-type countries or developing countries. The transfer to the international civil service of the concept of occupation or occupational group did not seem essential at the outset, largely owing to the small size of organizations. But with the increase in the numbers of their staff, the link between profession and career is tending to become as basic in international organizations as it is in national ones.

18. The arguments for the need to define occupational groups and to view them as standard career paths are set forth in paragraphs 56-71 of Report No. 1. It cannot be emphasized too much that:

- (a) Genuine "professionalism" can be achieved only through a combination of basic qualifications and experience in the profession or occupation over a number of years. The basic qualifications must be the theoretical knowledge required for the occupation and they must be verified on recruitment by objective methods; professional expertise normally comes with experience;
- (b) The secretariats of the international organizations increasingly need personnel who have great skill in their profession, so that the organizations' programmes are implemented with the requisite efficiency;
- (c) The fact that this professional competence often implies multiple skills cannot, for all that, vindicate the idea that generalists with a sound knowledge of the international organizations are suited to any kind of task and any kind of post.

19. The concept of occupational groups, as defined in Report No. 1, enables these needs to be met. The definition is as follows: "An occupational group is a series of occupations which are sufficiently similar, in particular with regard to basic academic and professional qualifications, for possibilities of transfer or promotion between the posts making up the group to exist for holders of the posts concerned". Hence:

Each of the groups must be defined in terms of the requisite entrance qualifications for the group;

The occupational groups must be viewed as standard career paths;

The conditions for transfer from one group to another must be subject to precise rules, so as to verify that the staff members transferred have all the requisite basic skills, on the understanding that a system of in-service training should, in certain cases and particularly for the General Service category, make such transfers easier for the persons who want them.

20. The national administrations in most countries do in fact use a system of occupational groups of this kind. Moreover, the study in Report No. 1 on the practice followed in international organizations outside the United Nations system (cf. paras. 34-37 and annex V) also confirms that occupational groups are used in the larger organizations.

21. Again, among the organizations of the United Nations system, the United Nations itself has shown the way in this respect by embarking on a definition of occupational groups. In his comments on Report No. 1, the Secretary-General states in this connection (cf. document A/36/432/Add.2, para. 15):

"The Secretary-General in 1978 issued a Bulletin which affirmed the principle that an occupational group structure should serve as the basis for managing the staff of the Secretariat (ST/SGB/166 of 18 May 1978). Furthermore, as noted by the JIU in its report, the Secretary-General has established a system of competitive examination by occupation both for the promotion of staff from the General Service to the Professional category and for the recruitment of candidates who are expected to have a career in the Organization. The Secretary-General is convinced that a sound personnel policy requires that candidates entering the Professional category must be selected according to objective criteria in a way which will ensure that they will be able to perform a variety of functions within a broad occupational group and will be able to advance in that occupation. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 35/210, descriptions of the qualifications required for entry in each occupational group have been published to meet the specific requirements of the United Nations in the areas of recruitment and career development."

It is highly desirable for the other organizations of the United Nations system to embark on the same course.

22. To facilitate the introduction of such procedures, a distinction should be drawn between the career paths for the part of the career in the junior and middle grades (generally speaking, P-2, P-3 and P-4) and the part of the career at the senior and director grades (generally speaking, P-5 and above). The concept of an occupational group has more precise significance at the junior and middle grades than at the grades which involve levels of responsibility and management.

23. For example, in a study being prepared for UNICEF, one of the authors of this report deemed it advisable to recommend career paths for eight occupational groups ranging from P-2 to P-4 for (a) programme officers; (b) management and administration; (c) external relations (these first three groups are by far the largest in terms of the number of posts); (d) supplies; (e) technical services; (f) auditors; (g) accountants; (h) data processing specialists; and then only two occupational group-career paths for grades P-5 and above, namely, (a) UNICEF representatives, heads of field offices; and (b) heads of services in the central administration.

24. In the case of the United Nations, where precise identification of occupational groups is under way, as indicated in paragraph 21 above, the list of occupational descriptions published in document A/C.5/36/CRP.2 is as follows:

Administration	Library and related work
Economics	Political affairs and related work
Electronic data processing	Public information
Engineering, architecture and related work	Publishing and printing
Finance	Science and technology
Language and related work	Social development
Legal and related work	Statistics.

25. The task of identifying the posts in each of these groups has been undertaken and an effort is being made to harmonize the job titles with their position in the occupational groups. When this work has been supplemented by a study of the relevant career paths (number of posts, average rate of advancement in each group, grade pyramid, etc.), it will probably be found that most of the groups are made up essentially of posts at the P-2, P-3 and P-4 levels. The work on job classification under the tier II master standards prepared by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) should be of considerable help in determining these career paths. Generally speaking, the level of responsibility reached over and above the P-4 grade is such that, in most instances, it changes the nature of the problems and the type of "professionalism" required.

26. Arrangements of the same kind should be studied by the other organizations, but in the light of their own particular characteristics of course. Especially, it has to be recognized that for certain functions it may prove essential to confine recruitment to established specialists who already have several years' professional experience behind them. For instance, recruitment for certain occupational groups might be direct and begin at over 35 years of age and at the P-4 level. These would be exceptions. At all events, clarification should focus

on defining occupational descriptions, in order to identify the conditions for entry to the various groups, and on preparing a list of the groups; it should then proceed by following the method described above in the case of the United Nations.

27. Definition of the conditions for entry to the groups is inseparable from definition of the conditions for transfer from one group to another, but the latter conditions can be clearly and comprehensively determined only if the career paths within the groups, and particularly the average rates of advancement in each group, are properly established.

B. Determining an average rate of advancement for each occupational group

28. A genuine career system means determining an average rate of advancement for each occupational group, firstly because such average rates already exist and because they vary a great deal. The Joint Inspection Unit had already drawn attention to this matter in its 1971 report on personnel problems in the United Nations (JIU/REP/71/7). In paragraphs 56-59 of that report, the career prospects in various occupational groups in that organization were illustrated by grade pyramids showing the number of posts in each grade in the various groups, and these graphs clearly showed the differences in the career prospects for each group. These grade pyramids are reproduced in annex IV.

29. The situation has remained roughly the same (the only major change being in the language services, in which staff members now have broader career prospects). Unfortunately, there are no statistics on this matter for the United Nations system as a whole or even for the United Nations (research is under way in this connection). However, a look at the figures which are available and, in particular, the information supplied each year for the Appointment and Promotion Committee on the periods of seniority in grade for all Professionals clearly reveal that the average period for advancement is much longer in some occupational groups (for example, librarians, language services, etc.) than in others.

30. A situation of this kind is not unusual, but it should be made more orderly by using precise criteria. Indeed, such criteria do exist. The rule whereby Professional salaries in the United Nations system are determined by comparison with those in the best paid national civil service (the United States civil service at the present time) cannot be properly applied unless the occupational groups have average rates of advancement comparable to those in the national civil service adopted as the yardstick. Otherwise, the result would be very different salaries (either higher or lower) from those in the country chosen as the basis for comparison. For most of the occupational groups, the average rates of advancement will probably be the same. On the other hand, from what is known about careers in certain occupations it will doubtless be necessary to establish special rates of advancement for some groups, such as electronic data processing, language work, librarians, publications, and so on.

31. What is more, the information on career prospects which is given to staff members on recruitment is non-existent. The staff rules specify the minimum periods of service for promotion in the P-2, P-3 and P-4 grades. But particulars

of this kind are misleading, for they can cause people to believe that these minimum periods (namely, three years for promotion from P-2 to P-3, three years for promotion from P-3 to P-4 and five years for promotion from P-4 to P-5) are closely indicative of the average periods, which is not the case. Hence, simply as a matter of fair play, this matter has to be cleared up urgently and the candidates recruited for a given occupational group must be informed of the actual average period for promotion from one grade to another - and reminded at the same time that each staff member's rate of advancement is, of course, determined by the quality of his work.

32. Accordingly, it is essential to investigate this problem properly, to determine the actual rates of advancement for each broad occupational group in the various organizations, to review them in the light of precise criteria and to make the situation known to all the candidates for a post in the organization. Indeed, this information on the average rates of advancement between junior and middle-level posts in each occupational group should be supplemented by particulars on the conditions to be met for possible promotion to senior posts and on the percentages of P-4 posts in each group which have opportunities for moving ahead to P-5 or higher grades.

33. When this work has been done, it will be possible to establish rules on the conditions for recruitment at levels higher than the junior grade and the conditions for possible transfer from one group to another. In the case of recruitment at levels higher than the junior grade, it would be necessary more particularly to determine, in the light of the average rate of advancement, the minimum number of years of professional experience that is to be required for each grade in an occupational group. For instance, in the United Nations these periods are currently the same for all the occupational groups. Such a practice seems both illogical and unjust. It would be more rational and more equitable for recruitment at a given grade to require a minimum number of years of professional experience that is at least equal to, and preferably slightly higher than, the cumulative average periods of advancement from the junior grade in the occupational group in question.

34. Transfer from one group to another should be made subject to the acquisition of basic qualifications equivalent to those required for entry at the junior grade in the group to which transfer is requested.

C. The adjustments required

35. Thus it should be possible for a career system in the United Nations to be broadly based on the principles and the methods which have proved to be of value in national civil services. Yet it must take account of the specific conditions in the international organizations as well, namely:

Observance of the rules on equitable geographical distribution;

The fact that a career system easily applicable to most General Service staff could apply to only a proportion of the Professional category because of the requirements peculiar to each organization, and in particular the cause of the diversity of their occupational groups and the ideological divergencies between the Member States: this implies, for the Professional category, a substantial proportion of fixed-term contracts and the possibility of external recruitments at almost all grade levels;

The contradiction between the need to recruit at all grade levels and rational career development for staff members recruited at the starting level;

The need to follow different recruitment methods, depending on the levels, the age and the experience of the staff recruited, yet maintain the objectivity of those methods;

The need to pinpoint career paths by occupational groups, even though the numbers in such groups are often quite small;

The fact that a certain proportion of the Professional category is made up of officials seconded from their national administration.

36. If these particular conditions are to be reconciled with a proper career system, various procedures have to be worked out. First, in the case of the Professional category at least, the proportion of the staff to which a career concept is applicable has to be determined. Next, for all categories of staff, it is necessary to determine the broad occupational groups for the main occupations in the secretariats and, in each case, determine the level of the entrance qualifications, a scale of grades for the minimum career, and an average rate of advancement (in other words, they have to be considered as standard career paths). Lastly, for all categories of staff it is necessary to:

Set up an objective recruitment system;

Introduce for the occupational groups the requisite procedures to ensure both coherence in the objective methods of recruitment at all grade levels and maximum objectivity and equity in performance appraisal and promotions;

Establish precise rules for awarding permanent contracts;

Then, in the case of the Professional category:

Regulate and limit the conditions for recruitment at grade levels other than the junior grade;

Establish precise rules on the conditions of secondment.

37. These measures, which will be explained in detail in recommendations Nos. 2 to 4, make it possible to adopt the following definition of the concepts of career and occupation groups for the international civil service:

Recommendation No. 1

A. Career and career development

Career development in the international civil service should be based on the practice followed in national civil services. A career should therefore be defined as a system of personnel management involving:

- (i) Standard career paths in clearly defined occupational groups;
- (ii) Objective methods of recruitment;
- (iii) Prospects of career development, in other words, advancement up to a particular grade level by the end of one's career, with equitable promotion opportunities and an average rate of advancement that is known beforehand for each occupational group (provided the services rendered by the staff member are satisfactory);
- (iv) Methods of punishing staff members who do not give satisfaction;
- (v) Procedures enabling the staff to take part in determining how their career will be shaped;
- (vi) Recruitment chiefly at the junior level, except for some occupational groups to which only recruitment of experienced candidates is possible, and rules and limits on external recruitment at levels other than the junior level.

B. Occupational group

- (i) The organizations should establish a list of occupational groups, defined, as proposed in this report, on the basis of the qualifications required for entry to the groups, and should view them as standard career paths;
- (ii) In particular, an average rate of advancement for each occupational group should be determined. Information (purely indicative and involving no commitment on the part of the organizations) should be supplied on these matters to all candidates for posts;
- (iii) In the case of the Professional category, there should be rules regarding the average rate of advancement among the P-2, P-3 and P-4 grades and the conditions for possible promotion to grade P-5 and above. Similar measures should be taken for the General Service category.

Coverage

- (i) This recommendation covers all the organizations. However, the United Nations has already started to shape a policy in this regard, one that simply needs to be confirmed and developed. Furthermore, special or simplified methods must be established for agencies whose staffs are too small to allow for rational career development;
- (ii) This recommendation is applicable to all career staff, in other words, to part of the Professional category and to the vast majority of the General Service category. 4 bis/

4 bis/ See also paragraph 48 below concerning promotion prospects for non-career staff.

CHAPTER III

OBJECTIVE METHODS OF RECRUITMENT

38. A genuine career development system is not compatible with the existing recruitment methods, which, allowing for exceptions, are based simply on a very rough check of university degrees and on non-systematic oral interviews. The situation described in this connection in a note by the Joint Inspection Unit prepared in June 1977 does not seem to have changed in the last five years, except in the case of the United Nations. ^{5/}

39. Particularly if a secretariat is to be skilled and to display a high degree of professionalism, it is no longer possible to continue to recruit, in terms of specifications established for particular posts, staff members who will in fact be making a career (and will therefore hold a number of posts in succession). The adoption of objective methods of recruitment with a view to ascertaining the aptitude of candidates to make a career is now indispensable.

40. The only objective methods generally recognized and practised in the national civil services are based on written and oral tests which are marked or checked by panels which usually specialize according to the occupational groups and are made up of eminent and highly qualified persons. The degree of sophistication in the methods ranges from genuine competitive examinations (involving advance publicity, a single date for all candidates to take the written tests, marking of nameless written papers, etc.) to tests which are held on different dates for the candidates for a particular post and for which the methods of marking are not so strict.

41. The application of methods of this kind to recruitment of Professional staff members must be adapted according to the grade levels and, consequently, to the age and the experience of the candidates. It would seem reasonable in this regard:

For the more formal, more objective and more equitable method of competitive examination, one which guarantees a very large number of qualified candidates when it is accompanied by adequate publicity, to be applied to the junior grade, i.e. essentially the P-2 grade;

For methods of selection which are less sophisticated but based on written and oral tests to be applied in the case of grades higher than P-2, particularly the P-3 and P-4 grades;

Lastly, for simplified methods based mainly on an examination of the work of the candidates and on systematic interviews to be applied to the P-5 and D-1 grades and even D-2.

^{5/} Note on the recruitment of staff in the Professional category in the United Nations system (JIU/NOTE/77/1). See in particular paragraph 9 of that document (obtainable from the JIU secretariat on request).

42. If these methods are to guarantee over-all consistency and equitable treatment for each of the candidates, it is essential that the written and oral tests for grade P-3 and above should be marked by the occupational group panels or boards of examiners which correct the papers for the junior competitive examinations, or at least (to reflect the requirements of staff seniority among the members) panels which would include some of the members of those boards of examiners. The measures to be taken in the United Nations and in the other organizations differ.

43. In the United Nations, it would be enough to continue and complete the current experiments in competitive examinations to recruit external candidates at the P-2 grade. The transitional period provided for in General Assembly resolution 35/210 (annex, section III) will end on 31 December 1982. The method will then have to be brought into general use. The experiments conducted so far appear to have proved positive: the care taken in calling on highly competent and qualified persons for the boards of examiners, the number of candidates who have come forward in the various countries, 6/ the calibre of Professionals recruited by this method recognized by the departments to which they have been assigned, are the main plus factors. Hence, lessons can rapidly be drawn from these experiments, notably as regards the nature of the tests, by ascertaining more particularly the views of the members of the boards of examiners for the competitive examinations. The change-over to the final system should therefore encounter no major difficulties.

44. On the other hand, it would be important to consider how objective methods can be established for recruitment at the P-3 and P-4 levels in particular: written and oral tests should be studied and tried out as quickly as possible and the experience gained in this connection by the members of the boards of examiners should be used for this purpose. Lastly, the requirements for access to the P-5 grade, especially the methods required to place the interviews and the examination of the work of the candidates on a systematic footing should be scrutinized and then regulated.

45. The other organizations should give serious consideration to how, for their part, they can institute objective methods of recruitment at all grade levels and, by a methodology to be worked out, join in the experiments in junior competitive examinations initiated by the United Nations. On this second point in particular, experimental phases could be envisaged to determine more especially the occupational groups for which experiments would be easiest, 7/ the arrangements whereby the organizations could participate in the boards of examiners or the responsibilities for holding future competitive examinations. Over the medium term, it would be advisable in the case of the largest occupational groups for many organizations to join together in holding common competitive examinations. In this way, the best results would be achieved at the lowest cost.

6/ In Italy in 1974, 580 candidates for 10 posts; in the Federal Republic of Germany in 1974, 404 candidates for 15 posts; in Japan in 1975, 388 candidates for 10 posts; in the United Kingdom in 1975, 47 candidates for 2 posts, in France in 1979, 140 candidates for 3 posts; in Brazil in 1982, 550 candidates for 6 posts, etc.

7/ Especially the largest groups and those which are common to all the organizations (occupational groups in administration and management) or to a number of them (for example, economists, jurists, social development officers and so on).

46. An over-all move towards arranging objective methods of recruitment for entry to the various occupational groups has now become indispensable. Consequently, recommendation No. 2 is as follows:

Recommendation No. 2

Introduction of objective methods of recruitment.

(i) All the organizations should examine ways to work out objective methods of recruitment, preferably by a methodology common to the whole of the system;

(ii) For the Professional category, such methods should comprise:

At the P-2 level, the use of competitive examinations for recruitment, following the model already developed by the United Nations, with the possibility of experimental phases involving participation by the organizations in the competitive examinations arranged by the United Nations;

At the P-3 and P-4 levels, the use of written and oral tests;

At P-5 and above, systematic use of personal interviews carried out in accordance with agreed methods and examination of the work of the candidates.

To ensure over-all consistency and equitable treatment for all the candidates, the panels or boards of examiners marking the papers in the junior competitive examinations, grading the written and oral tests at the P-3 and P-4 levels and the interviews at P-5 level and above should to the greatest extent possible be made up, at least in part, of the same persons for each occupational group.

(iii) For the General Service Category, it is recommended that objective methods of recruitment should be also brought into general use by ways and means to be determined later.

Coverage

This recommendation covers all the organizations. However, the United Nations has already started to shape a policy which simply needs to be confirmed and developed. Again, special or simplified methods could be established for the smaller agencies or for certain highly technical occupational groups.

CHAPTER IV

CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION

47. Systematic application of the concept of the occupational group and the introduction of objective methods of recruitment provide a basis for a career development system. If such a system is to operate properly, however, the following steps are necessary as well:

- (a) Objective methods must be devised for making equitable promotion opportunities available to both career staff and fixed-term staff;
- (b) Measures must be established to ensure maximum fairness in promotion decisions;
- (c) The staff must be associated with the preparation of career plans;
- (d) Staff training methods must be incorporated into career development.

A. Objective methods of making equitable promotion opportunities available to all categories of staff

48. Rational career development implies that it is possible to offer all staff members, particularly those recruited at the junior grade, reasonable prospects of advancement at the average rate of advancement for each occupational group now recommended. Such advancement prospects must exist primarily for career staff but also be available to fixed-term staff in so far as they serve long enough with the organization concerned. But no such possibility exists if:

Recruitment takes place haphazardly at all grade levels and no proportion of the posts in each grade is set aside for officials in the next lowest grade;

The principles of equitable geographical distribution are not properly applied at the time of recruitment;

The relationship between promotion possibilities and post availability is too rigid.

49. Report No. 1 explained the advantages and the drawbacks of the current United Nations practice whereby candidates for any new vacancy must first be sought from within the Organization. In all the organizations more precise methods must be adopted if rational career development is to be possible. It is essential to lay down actual regulations about the conditions for external recruitments for each grade level. In the case of the Professional category, these regulations should consist in setting percentage ceilings on external recruitment at each grade above P-2, either for the organization as a whole or for each of the broad occupational groups.

50. Such percentages cannot be set arbitrarily and precise studies are required for each organization and even for each broad occupational group; a mathematical ratio does exist between the average period of advancement desired and the number of posts in each grade. ^{8/} Lastly, it is obvious that some external recruitments

^{8/} The grade pyramids in annex III illustrate this phenomenon.

have to be reserved for non-career officials on fixed-term contracts. Rules on the percentage of recruitments for each grade are none the less desirable, so as to overcome the current vague and arbitrary state of affairs. In particular, the possibility should be considered of cutting down the number of external recruitments at the P-3 grade to the strictest minimum, for recruitments of this kind tend to increase at the expense of the promotion opportunities for officials recruited at the P-2 level and at the expense of the number of recruitments in this grade.

51. In addition, precautions must be taken to ensure that legitimate considerations of equitable geographical distribution do not hamper normal career development. This would be the case if promotion opportunities were blocked because one particular nationality or another was overrepresented at a given grade level. Recruitments at all grade levels, and especially at the junior grade, must therefore be distributed in such a way as to embrace the largest possible number of countries in proportions that conform to the existing quotas.

52. Lastly, if a genuine career system is to be established, it is essential to look very closely into the possibility of linking certain grades. Report No. 1 explained the advantage of a system of this kind and showed that it was perfectly compatible with the job classification methods, provided they are not applied too rigidly and inflexibly (cf. Report No. 1, para. 78 and annex VI). We shall not reiterate these arguments here, but we do hope that they will be given very serious consideration.

53. In the case of the United Nations, the Secretary-General in his comments (A/35/418/Add.1, of 21 October 1980) on the JIU report JIU/REP/80/9 declared his readiness to undertake a study, requested in recommendation No. 3 of that report, on the possibility of linking P-2 and P-3 posts by converting most P-3 posts into P-2/P-3 posts (cf. JIU/REP/80/9, paras. 26-28). ^{9/} This study does not seem to have been conducted. It would be desirable if it were, and it should be extended to cover all the organizations and also the possibility of converting P-4 posts into P-3/P-4 posts.

^{9/} The system proposed in that report was as follows:

"(a) The majority of P-3 posts would, for recruitment purposes, be graded P-2/P-3. This is based on the assumption that a person recruited from outside, no matter how highly qualified, would require some time to acquire the necessary competence to carry out effectively the functions corresponding to the P-3 level. A list of P-3 posts which, for reasons of specificity and specialization, will have to be excluded from the recruitment through competitive examination will be established. These posts will be graded P-3 only.

(b) Appointments to vacant P-2/P-3 posts would be made in priority through lateral transfers of staff serving at P-1/P-2 or P-3. Such appointments would vacate another post. Persons having the required seniority would be appointed at P-3.

(c) Only when there is no qualified or interested candidate from within the Secretariat would a P-2/P-3 post be filled by a candidate from the 'reserve list' which resulted from the competitive examinations. Such appointments would as a rule be at the P-2 level, with promotion possible in the same post after a minimum period of service.

(d) There would be thus two ways of filling a vacant P-2/P-3 post, either by internal promotion or transfer, or from the 'reserve list'."

B. Measures to ensure maximum fairness in promotion decisions

54. Paragraphs 21, 22 and 76 of Report No. 1 pointed to the difficulties in the performance appraisal and promotion methods and described the efforts made to improve the present situation. If the requisite "professionalism" is to grow in the context of the occupational groups, promotions must take place in that same context. One of the most serious causes of disquiet among staff members, regardless of their category, is the feeling that not enough guarantees are afforded for a just appraisal of the quality of their work and their efforts and that the decisions on promotions are not, generally speaking, sufficiently equitable.

55. Again, we have seen that, in the case of recruitment methods, it is highly desirable for the same panels of qualified persons for each occupational group to check oral and written tests (including the papers in junior competitive examinations) for at least all the grade levels between P-2 and P-5. It would be perfectly reasonable to envisage the possibility of assigning them the additional task of checking decisions on promotions and even performance appraisal.

56. If authority to supervise recruitments at all grade levels and monitor promotion procedures were vested in this way in panels of competent persons designated by occupational groups (as at the United Nations, where the boards of examiners have equal proportions of representatives of the administration and representatives of the staff), far more guarantees would certainly be provided for equitable treatment of the staff and consistency in over-all career management than is the case with the systems now in operation. Their composition should of course, reflect the diverse cultural perceptions to be found in the secretariats.

C. Consultation of the staff on types of posts, duty stations and the course of their careers; career plans method

57. As can be seen from paragraphs 73 to 75 of Report No. 1 and annex II thereto (para. 16), in 1971 the Joint Inspection Unit recommended for the United Nations the institution of an assignment planning system with individual standard career plans offered by the Organization to each Professional staff member and comprising mutual (i.e. contractual) commitments for a period of six years and non-contractual indications for a longer period, together with the establishment of a career planning unit (cf. JIU report JIU/REP/71/7 (A/8454) rec. No. 9).

58. In its report to the General Assembly in 1979 (A/34/30, para. 217), ICSC for its part worked out the "components of a career development programme" in seven steps:

Identification/reassessment of career needs and abilities;

Information exchange, career counselling;

Development of tentative career plans;

Integration of career plans;

Implementation of career plans;

Review and evaluation of implemented action;

Information exchange--assessment of career action taken.

In addition, annex X of the ICSC report to the General Assembly at its thirty-sixth session (A/36/30) contains suggestions for model printed forms which can be used both for performance appraisal and for establishing career plans.

59. Practical difficulties - lack of staff and specialists - probably explain why these recommendations have not been followed up. The particulars might be discussed and further refined, but arrangements for systematic consultation of international Professionals and national Professionals and also General Service staff are now essential with regard to the standard career paths for each occupational group. Such consultation should cover the types of post, types of training and duty stations in particular. 10/

D. Incorporation of staff training methods into career development

60. Staff training programmes are much more extensive in some organizations than in others. A comparative study would bring out considerable differences not only in the amount of funds and time given to such activities but also in their aims. The introduction of career development systems cannot conceivably take place without some attempt to bring proper staff training programmes into general operation (for General Service staff as well as Professionals). The Joint Inspection Unit has made recommendations to that effect in regard to the United Nations in the past (report JIU/REP/71/7 on United Nations Professional staff) but they have never aroused much interest. The essential requirements are now:

That occupational training and updating programmes should be developed for the occupational groups;

That additional programmes should be organized to allow staff members wishing to do so, particularly those in the General Service category, to transfer from one occupational group to another;

That a relationship should be established between training programmes and career development.

Studies to this effect should be undertaken, at least in all the big organizations.

10/ It should be understood that such consultation would not limit the authority of heads of secretariats as far as decisions on duty stations are concerned. Also, the JIU has already recommended that considerations relating to rotation should be taken into account when deciding on promotions.

Recommendation No. 3

Career development and promotion

The organizations should take steps:

(a) To determine (at least approximately) the desirable percentages for external recruitment for each grade (and possibly for each occupational group);

(b) As far as the Professional category and the majority of occupational groups are concerned, to increase the number of recruitments at the P-2 level and considerably reduce the number of recruitments at the P-3 level;

(c) To link the largest number of P-3 posts with P-2 posts and P-4 posts with P-3 posts;

(d) To give considerations of geographical distribution greater weight in recruitment policies, so that deserving promotions are not hampered by the fact that staff members possess this or that nationality;

(e) To introduce as speedily as possible systems for consulting the staff on career development and planning and to establish medium-term and long-term career plans;

(f) To modify current promotion methods by replacing the present machinery of appointment and promotion committees or panels by a system of special committees for each occupational group (for the main groups) and of sub-committees or ad hoc representation (for groups with a limited number of staff) that would act as boards of examiners to grade the written and oral tests used for recruitments and as a special appointment and promotion committee (at least for posts from P-2 to P-4 inclusive) for each occupational group.

(g) To develop in-service training activities to a reasonable level and incorporate them into a career development policy.

Coverage

All the organizations, all categories of staff.

CHAPTER V

TYPES OF APPOINTMENT

61. Paragraphs 26 to 27 and 51 to 55 of Report No. 1 discussed the question of the types of appointment and the ideas set forth therein help to clarify a situation which has now become confused, more particularly because very high proportions of fixed-term contracts are renewed for lengthy periods that are often equivalent to a complete career (cf. Report No. 1, annex III) and the criteria for granting permanent appointments or awarding fixed-term contracts are inadequate.

62. Paragraph 55 of Report No. 1 proposed some criteria for granting permanent appointments. Our proposal was that:

On the one hand, no permanent appointment can be granted once the maximum number resulting from the proportion set for career staff to non-career staff has been reached;

On the other hand, criteria relating to personal characteristics should cover, in so far as permanent appointments are concerned:

- (i) Either a compulsory competitive examination or compulsory written and oral tests, and a probationary period ranging from two to five years;
- (ii) Age requirements: the rule whereby no permanent appointment can be granted when a person is over 50 years of age would be maintained; 11/
- (iii) The requirement that the person concerned should not belong to another career system: no permanent appointment should be granted to staff seconded from a national civil service or university, etc.

63. The recommendations now made for career development for part of the staff should make it possible to study more precisely the use of permanent appointments and fixed-term contracts. Again it can immediately be seen that a genuine career system for part of the staff in the Professional category does not necessarily signify that all of the career staff should be granted permanent appointments.

64. It should be possible in particular:

To take the view that a permanent appointment cannot be granted at the start of a career. This would mean a decision that, for a particular period, e.g. the first five years, only fixed-term contracts can be awarded (for example, two successive contracts, one for two years and then one for three years). This method could usefully replace the current system of probationary contracts (which are shorter and virtually equivalent to permanent contracts);

11/ Generally speaking, this criterion is already being followed, although unevenly.

To limit the awarding of successive fixed-term contracts beyond a period of 10 years, except for two categories of officials, namely, those recruited over the age limit suggested above and officials on secondment.

65. Finally, serious consideration should be given to the suggestion in paragraph 54 of Report No. 1 regarding the possibility of organizing a system of "alternating secondments". The Secretary-General of the United Nations indicated in his comments on Report No. 1 (A/36/432/Add.2) that "while it may be appropriate to formalize the arrangements for the service of staff members who serve alternately with their Governments and with the Secretariat, it should not be done by the introduction of a new type of appointment". The authors of the present report do not in fact believe it necessary to introduce a new type of appointment, but matters do need to be formalized in this respect and this could be done on a basis common to all of the organizations of the United Nations system.

Recommendation No. 4: Types of appointment

- (i) The organizations should study and establish precise criteria for granting permanent appointments by means of the suggestions made in paragraphs 62 to 65 of this report;
- (ii) Rules should be worked out on the arrangements for secondment of national officials who serve alternately with their Governments and with the secretariats of the various organizations.

Coverage

All the organizations, only officials in the Professional category.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

66. The authors of this report are aware that the recommendations made here will, if adopted, involve a fundamental reform of the present practices. They realize that such a reform will call for a great deal of perseverance, effort and time both as regards its consideration by all the parties concerned and as regards its application throughout the United Nations system. But they are also convinced that reform has now become absolutely essential.

67. A reform of this kind will of course have to take account of the differences in the various organizations. Methods which are conceivable for secretariats which, in terms of the number of officials, are as large as those of the United Nations and the major large agencies will have to be adapted and simplified in the case of organizations with a much smaller number of staff members. However, to the greatest extent possible, and more particularly through general application of the same principles and the system of occupational groups, many of which are common to a number of the organizations, the unity of the common system must be preserved.

68. The efficiency of the services and the proper use of funds, which are the essential aims of the Joint Inspection Unit under the terms of its Statute, cannot be secured unless the staff required to carry out the complex and wide-ranging tasks assigned to the international organizations possess the requisite "professionalism" and work under satisfactory conditions, something which continuation of the present practices does not allow. For this reason, it has now become essential for the Member States to issue instructions for the speediest overhaul possible.

Annex No. I : Procedural matters regarding consideration
of the recommendations in this report

Article 11, paragraph 4 (e), of the Statute of the Joint Inspection Unit provides that:

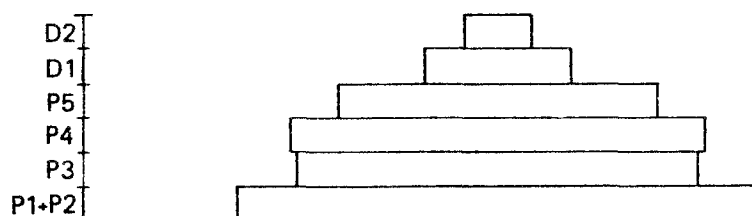
"When a report concerns more than one organization, the respective executive heads shall, normally within the framework of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination, consult with one another and, to the extent possible, co-ordinate their comments. The report, together with the joint comments and any comments of the respective executive heads on matters that concern their particular organizations, shall be ready for submission to the competent organs of the organizations not later than six months after receipt of the Unit's report for consideration at the next meeting of the competent organs concerned."

The date of the formal issue of this report by the Joint Inspection Unit being March 1982, the official comment of the executive heads within the framework of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination should be made by the end of September 1982. Consequently, it should be possible for the report to be considered by those competent organs of organizations that will meet after 1 October 1982 and, in particular, by the United Nations General Assembly at its Autumn 1982 session.

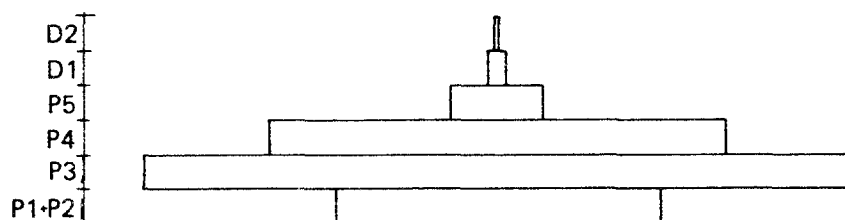
The International Civil Service Commission, for its part, is required to submit a report on the same subject (General Assembly resolution 35/210) and it has been requested, by General Assembly resolution 36/233, to take into account, in its study, the relevant reports of the Joint Inspection Unit. The relevant reports on the matter are report JIU/REP/81/11 on "Personnel policy options" and the present report.

Annex No. II: Career profiles; grade pyramids by occupational group as they appeared in 1970 (report JIU/REP/71/7 of July 1971) */

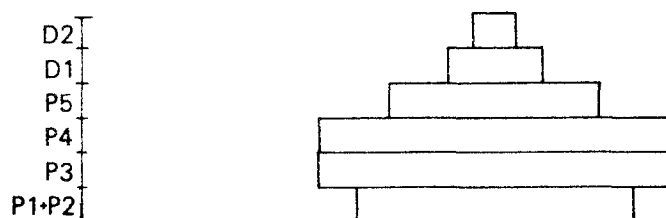
Administrative generalists



Language staff



Economists and social scientists



58. A comparison of the shapes of the pyramids for the three numerically largest groups clearly shows that the careers of language staff are in practice limited to P-4, since there are only one-fifth as many posts at P-5 as at P-4.

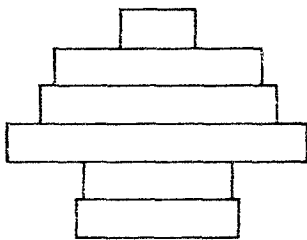
On the other hand, the careers of administrative generalists progress smoothly up to and including P-5, with further prospects of reaching the D-1 and D-2 levels.

The pyramid for economists narrows more rapidly from the P-5 level upwards.

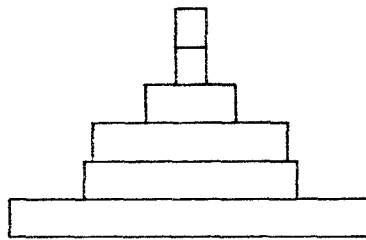
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In the case of language staff, the present situation is somewhat different (more P.5 posts); for the groups taken as a whole, there are probably fewer P.1 and P.2 posts.

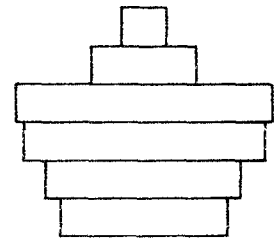
Political affairs officers



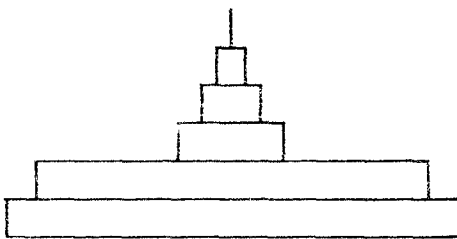
Auditors and accountants



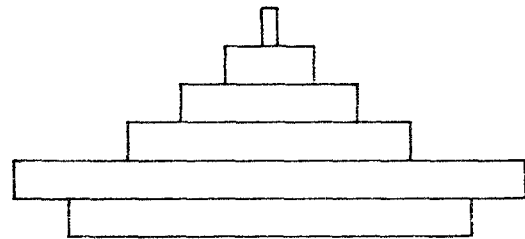
Legal affairs officers



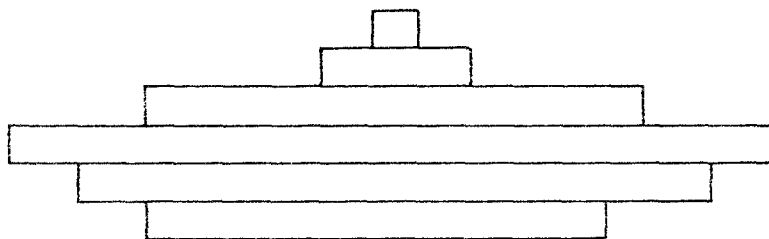
Librarians



Statisticians



Information officers



The shapes of the pyramids for the other groups also vary widely, those for auditors and accountants and, especially, librarians being broadly based at the P-1, P-2 and P-3 levels and then narrowing sharply at the P-4 and P-5 levels.

The pyramids for statisticians and information officers are more conventional.

Those for legal affairs officers and political affairs officers are very wide at the top.

