

C H A P T E R - V I I I

PROBLEM OF JOB CLASSIFICATION IN THE UN SECRETARIAT

The need for job-grading structure was felt in 1976 by the Secretary General and the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) with a view to reforming the personnel policy of the UN Secretariat. The main purposes of establishing the Job-classification system were to cover all professional category, posts in the Secretariat, with the aim of providing equitable grading to ensure consistent relationship between the duties of a post and the grade to which it was allocated. The other purpose was to restructure the General Service category by replacing the existing five grades with a seven-grade structures. This proposal, drawn up for the United Nations Headquarters, referred to the ICSC. However, at the United Nations Office at Geneva, General service staff led a strike for the salaries. This strike compelled the Secretary General to make proposals for permitting the immediate implementation of a Job-grading structure study of the General Service Category at Geneva, which later on would cover all other duty stations.¹

During the period of discussion concerning the implementation of personnel policy reforms in the Fifth (Administrative and Budgetary) Committee of the General Assembly, representatives of France, the Federal Republic

1. YUN, 1976, p. 870.

of Germany, the USA, Belgium and Canada, among others, were in favour of proceeding immediately with the job-classification programme to make a sound grading of job structure which was required for good staff/ management relations. The representative of Japan opined that the job-grading programme after completing its task might avert the strike of staff at Geneva in February -March 1976.²

The International Civil Service Commission at its 5th session held at the UN Headquarter from 22 Feb. to 11 March 1977, considered a plan for the assumption of its functions concerning job-grading structure. The Commission main objectives in taking this responsibility were to create fully unified international civil service and to remunerate the staff on the basis of equal pay for equal work which would ultimately be helpful in Commissions work in relation to recruitment standards and to career development.³ The Commission pointed out that its first task under article 13 was to establish standards in fields of work, common to several of the organizations and to

2. Ibid. p.871.

3. UN Doc A/32/30 (Report of the ICSC 1977) General Assembly 32nd session Supp. No.30 , p. 69.

to monitor to the application of those standards under article 17 of its statute . However, the responsibility rested with each organization to apply the standards in classifying its own posts. The Commission considered its second function to be to advise organizations on the development of consistent job-classification plans in other fields of work.

The Commission approved the division of tasks between itself and the CCAQ. The CCAQ was given the responsibility to coordinate the information concerning the organization 's needs, views and proposals to the Commission , which would act as guidelines for common classification standards . The other responsibility was to develop a common classification of occupational groups in both categories i.e . professional and General Service Category. (which was needed for statistical as well as job classification purposes). The Commission also gave an assurance to staff representatives that they would be given every opportunity to present their views before any common standard were established by the Commission.⁴

The ICSC at its eighth session held in 1978 analysed the uses, to which a common classification of occupational groups was to be put. The Commission pointed out that this classification would provide a meaningful

4. Ibid pp. 69-70.

exchange of information and compilation of personnel statistics to the organizations of common system. This was also necessary for the commission and other international bodies in carrying out their functions. The classification was necessary for the establishment of career development and helped in the function of recruitment by identifying those occupations for which recruitment could be conducted jointly and by facilitating the preparation where possible, standardized notices of vacancy.⁵ The classification would also be helpful in carrying out General Service salary surveys. However, the most deservable area which required this exercise was that of job-classification, by means of which a classification would identify the fields of work, common to several of the organizations and job-classification standards be established.

The commission approved preliminary a global scheme for the common classification of occupational groups to be brought within the common system. The global scheme was a listing of the occupations, grouped by categories of work on the basis of similarity of functions. This scheme provided four levels of categorization:

- a) The "Occupational Group" (e.g. Professional, Managerial, Technical and Related works");

5. UN Doc. A/33/30 (Report of the ICSC) 1978 General Assembly 33rd Session, p.100.

- b) The "Family" (e.g. Architects, Engineers, and Related Technicians)".
- c) The "Field of Work" (e.g. Civil Engineers);
- d) The "Occupation" or "Speciality" (e.g. Sanitary Engineers).⁶

The Commission recommended a point factor of job-classification for the comparative study which measured the relative value of jobs in wide variety of occupational groups by awarding points according to factors of work which were supported to make up the jobs. The factors were professional knowledge required, difficulty of work, work relationships required both inside and outside the organization, supervisory responsibility and the impact of work.⁷

At its 10th session held in New York from 13 to 31 August 1979, the Commission approved a plan for the preparation of a common system job-classification standards, which was to be used in determining the grade of each job within the various occupational groups. The plan helped in developing a three-tiered system.

Tier I would be a "MASTER STANDARD" applicable to all professional jobs in the organizations belong to

6. Ibid. pp. 100-101

7. YUN, 1978, p.991, Report of the ICSC.

to the common system. It was also to be grade jobs according to an analysis of skills, responsibility, experience and other requirements, with differing numbers of points assigned to each factor. This tier was to be applied to jobs in all fields of work and so named as "HORIZONTAL" standard.

Tier II was to consist of "GRADE-LEVEL STANDARDS FOR SPECIFIC FIELDS OF WORK", such as economist or editor, providing specific examples of the types of duties typically carried out at a given grade level. This standard was called "VERTICAL" standards as separate standards would be established for field of work and as such they would be more specific than the master standard in their applicability to individual cases.

Tier III consisted of "BENCHMARK JOBS", which was to be established by each organization separately, identifying actual jobs in terms of the standards set out in the first and second tiers. The bench mark standards was the most specific, the most directly applicable of the three tiers. However, it was applicable to smaller numbers of jobs.⁸

The ICSC at its eleventh session held at New

8. YUN, 1979, pp. 1167- 1168.

York (19 Feb-14 March 1980) approved the programme carried out by a testing team on the development and testing of Tier-I, the MASTER Standard of job grading. This testing team was a technical body with the responsibility of determining whether or not the points factor evaluation system was suitable for adoption as the Master standard of job-classification standards. The team was a composition of six members which included job-classification specialists from agencies of the common system, representative of FICSA and members of the Commission's Secretariat. The team performed its duty in carrying out a detailed testing programme of seven weeks' duration in three duty stations, Geneva, New York, and Bangkok and 179 jobs examined. In the end of completing the work, the members of the team concluded that the points factor evaluation system would be adopted by the Commission. They gave following reasons for this⁹.

- a) The points factor method of job evaluation is analytical quantitative, and objective.
- b) It had worked well on scientific, technical, administrative, relations and language jobs, on supervisory and jobs, on operational and support jobs, on headquarters and field jobs.

9. UN Doc. A/35/30 (Report of the ICSC, 1980) pp.57-58.

c) The system had been applied by classifiers having diverse experience and background.

The Commission decided to approve the point factor evaluation system as revised during the recent test programme and instructed the Secretariat to prepare, after consultation with organizations and staff, and to submit to the Commission at its 12th session, a plan for progressive implementation from 1 January 1981 of the Master standard.

At the 12th session of the ICSC, the Secretariat put before the commission a document having a plan for the progressive implementation of the Master standard from 1 January 1981. The representatives of CCAQ in giving their consent to the plan pointed out that there was a large measure of agreement among the organizations concerning the way in which the Master standard would be implemented. However, each organization prepared to implement the standard in accordance with its own requirements and a pace consistent with its resources.

The representative of FICSA opined that the staff agreed with the principle that job-classification plans be implemented in the process. However, they pointed out that the timing planned for implementing the standard.

Moreover, the representatives of the Organizations and of the staff welcomed the introduction of the Master Standard, and taking account of their constitutional

arrangements, resources and staff consultation procedures, Organizations began implementing the Master Standard from 1 January 1981.¹⁰

The representative of Japan commenting on the report of the ICSC pointed out that the Master Standard of job-classification would contributed to realization of the objective of equal pay for equal value. The Federal Republic of Germany opined that job-classification should not be too rigid in lower professional grades. Austria pointed out that the system was complex and far removed from reality. Whereas Afghanistan and the USSR did not accepted the plan on job-classification of the Commission.¹¹

The Commission announced at its 12th session its intention to consider and promulgate at its session the Tier-II standards for Translators and personnel Management Specialists. The Commission also prepared a programme of work for 1981 which included the development and promulgation of Tier-II standards for the Economists and Electronic Data Processing Specialists fields of work.¹²

The Commission at its 13th session held at New York (23 Feb. 13 March 1981) accepted the request of the United

10. Ibid. pp. 59-62.

11. YUN, 1980, p.1169.

12. UN Doc A/35/30 (Report of the ICSC, 1980) pp. 66-67.

Nations for a delay in promulgation the Tier-II standards for personnel management specialists and requested its Secretariat to hold further consultations with the organizations to review job-descriptions, organization charts and other relevant information to be provided by the United Nations. The Commission also consulted CCAQ to provide for the 14th session its final written proposals for changes in these standards before their adoption and promulgation by the Commission.

At its 14th session held at New York from 6 to 31 July 1981, the Commission considered a report on the further consultation that had taken place following the 13th session. The report indicated that the United Nations had produced to the ICSC secretariat job-descriptions for the work of personnel management specialists in the areas of recruitment (professional) recruitment (expert I and personnel administration. This was confirmed by the Chairman of CCAQ. The president of FICSA appreciated the Commission's decision for delaying the promulgation, however, he regretted that the consultations had not included FICSA'S full participation. The Commission decided to establish and promulgate the Tier-II grade level standards for personnel management specialists within the organizations of the common system as set forth in annex IV to

the ICSC'S report of the fourteenth session. These standards were to have immediate effect and to be used in conjunction with each organization's use of the Master Standard.¹³

At the 13th session the representative of the United Nations approached the Commission to delay the approval of Tier-II standards for translators and revisors for further consultations. The representative pointed out that steps had been taken to modify the work of translators and revisors and the General Assembly, by its resolution 35/225 of 17 Dec.1980, had approved the proposals of the Secretary General for reclassifying some 576 translators' and revisors' posts in the United Nations Secretariat, which was to be implemented over the three year period from 1981 to 1983, on the basis of the restructuring of the translations functions.¹⁴

The Commission at its 14th session also approved a method which was less costly for making consultations with organizations and staff, required for the development of Tier II standards.

The Commission was satisfied at its 13th session with the plans formulated by the majority of the organizations

13. Report of the ICSC, 1981, pp.56-57.

14. Ibid.

for implementation of the Master Standard as at 1 January 1981 and considered the further progress at its 14th Session made by those organizations which had not submitted definitive plans for the implementation of the Master Standard. However, GATT informed that it had not yet developed a plan for the implementation of the Master standard. The reason it gave was that the executive head of that organization and the head of personnel was security appointed and had not yet had an opportunity to study the matter.¹⁵

The Commission was requested by the Chairman of CCAQ that a number of organizations had limited staff resources available, which caused difficulties in the implementation of the Mastard Standard and less number of personnel trained for performing job classification duties.

The representatives of ILO and IAEA clarified to the commission that their organizations had implemented the Master standard. The Commission also noted the status of implementation of the Master Standard in UNESCO, UPU, GATT, UNICEF, UNHCR, the UN University, the International Court of Justice and ITC. The Commission also approved a format at its 14th session on which organizations would report statistics to the commission at its 15th session on

15. YUN p.1327 (1981).

their application of the ICSC Master standard during 1981. It also recommended to its Secretariat to issue a manual on job-classification and to conduct additional training workshops at headquarters duty stations on the subject of ICSC job-classification standards.¹⁶

Statistics provided by organizations at the 15th session held at Geneva from 1 to 19 March 1982 of the Commission indicated that 80 per cent of professional posts in the United Nations system had been covered and the Master standard of Job-classification had been applied to about 15 per cent of the total posts. The Commission felt the progress was satisfactory taking into account difficulties encountered by some organizations. The Commission also instructed the Secretariat to carry out a comprehensive study on the implementation of the Master Standard after the first three years (1981-1983).¹⁷

In 1982 the Commission covered two more fields of work-technical cooperation administration and electronic data processing under the Tier II of job classification and approved their promulgation. The ICSC also considered the work of the sub-committee on job-classification, a sub-committee of the CCAQ. The sub-committee at its Geneva

16. UN Doc A/36/30 (Report of the ICSC, 1981).pp 54-55.

17. YUN 1982, pp. 1460-61.

session (from 24 to 28 May 1982) proposed for a study of classification of General Service Posts in non-headquarters duty-stations. At its 8th session held at Viena, Austria from 8 to 12 Nov. 1982, the sub-committee reviewed a draft Tier-II standard for civil Engineers and decided to separate the standards, which was to be developed for the fields of accounting and finance officers, auditors and budget analysts.¹⁸

The Secretary General reported to the General Assembly in September 1982 that at 30 June, 1054 professional posts had been classified, of which 896 (85%) had been confirmed at their previous levels, 79 (7.5 per cent) up graded and 79 down graded. The Secretary General informed that the classification of new and vacant posts according to the Master Standard (Tier I) and occupational standards (Tier II) continued at the rate of approximately 65 posts each month.

The ICSC approved standards for classification of General Service posts at Headquarters in seven levels, which was to be applied beginning in 1983; Job-descriptions and post evaluations for a classification scheme for the General service at United Nations Offices at Geneva were nearly completed.¹⁹

18. Ibid. p. 1461

19. Ibid.

The Commission considered draft Tier-II job-classification standards at its 17th session held at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) at Vienna, 7-24 March 1983 for Civil Engineering, which was developed in accordance with the consultative process. During consultation for drafting Tier-II for Civil Engineering, the views of the organizations and staff representatives had been fully taken into account, which was confirmed by the chairman of CCAQ and the President of FICSA. After consideration of draft, the Commission decided to establish and promulgate for use within the organizations of the Common System, with immediate effect, the Tier-II standards for Civil Engineers in conjunction with Master Standard (Tier-I)²⁰

The Commission at its 18th session held at New York (18 July -5 August 1983) had taken the decision to establish and promulgate the Tier II standard for purchasing and contracting specialists for immediate application by organization of the Common System. The Commission had also taken into account the current status of the draft Tier II standards for auditors, accountants and financial analysts and requested its secretariat to submit draft standards for these fields of work to it at its 19th

20. UN Doc. A/38/30 (Report of the ICSC, 1983) p.31.

session. The Commission also considered joint job-classification standards developed by the coordination committee for workers in the trades and crafts in New York.²¹

The Secretariat of the ICSC prepared a plan and put before the Commission at its 19th session held in Paris from 5 to 23 March 1984. The Plan was considered by the Commission as it described further work undertaken by a CCAQ /ICSC testing team on the application of the Master Standard to classify project posts. The Commission pointed out that in spite of progress had been made, the work had taken longer duration than expected and requested its Secretariat to prepare the supplement to the Master Standard and be presented to its twenty first session.²²

A draft Tier II standards was considered by the Commission for accountants, financial analysts and finance officers at its 20th session held at New York from 5 to 27 July ,1984. The Commission also had taken into account the problems which became hindrance with the concept of categorization on the basis of quantitative indicators, and the Commission came to know that this

21. Ibid. pp. 31-32.

22. UN Doc. A/39/30 (Report of the ICSC, 1984)p. 50

concept had also caused delays in the development of Tier II standards for translators , for personnel management specialists and for auditors. At the same time ICSC came at a point and took the position that categorization , if properly applied, would facilitate the interpretation of the Master standard by clarifying differences in scope and complexity that might not be directly evident from job -description alone.

The Commission at its 20th session decided to promulgate the Tier-II standard for financial management specialists at its 21st session after a further examination of the proposed categorization.²³ The Commission also took a decision for request to the organizations for developing a quantitative indicators jointly which they considered truly meaningful and be helpful in distinguishing between the relative scope of the organizations financial programmes and the corresponding scope and complexity, their respective jobs in the field of financial management. The Commission also requested the organizations to submit these quantitative indicators at its 21st session along with on analysis of how the application of those indicators would lead to greater consistency with the Master Standards than the use of

23. Ibid.

the indicators developed by the Secretariat in the Consultation process.²⁴

The Secretary General reported in December 1985 on classifications of posts in the General Service began in 1982. He pointed out that the Classification Review Group- a Joint staff/management body submitted recommendations on the classification levels of 3065 posts, of which 300 were accepted by the Assistant Secretary General for personnel services. The Secretary General also gave facts in the report about the provisions made for all classifications within the General service category in his initial budget proposals for 1986-87 . He specifically gave some assumption about the budget needed for classification of jobs quantitatively as the proposed reclassification of 11 posts from General Service to the P-1/P-2 level would require an additional \$ 118000.²⁵

The ICSC at its 21st session held at the head quarter of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in London from 11 to 29 March 1985 critically examined a report on the implementation of the Master standard during the period 1981-1983. The report consisted of over all analysis as well as the results and status

24. Ibid.

25. YUN, 1985 p.1241.

for each organization. In the absence of statistics reflecting the distribution of different types of work in the common system, the ICSC pointed out that the common classification of occupational groups, set up to enable the development of such statistics, had not been fully implemented, however, it concluded that the Master standard was being generally applied throughout the system.²⁶ In the view of reports from the organizations and in the light of the analysis presented by its Secretariat, the Commission noted that the rate of implementation achieved by organizations overall (32.4 per cent) exceeded the rate that would have been achieved if all organizations had chosen the job-by-job approach, which would have led to an estimated implementation rate 27 percent, requested organization with implementation rates lower than their accumulated rate of turn over for 1981-1983 to put before the Commission at its 23rd session held in 1986.²⁷

In 1985 the Commission considered the final report of the testing team on the application of the

26. UN Doc A/40/30 (Report of the ICSC, 1985) p.49.

27. Ibid. p.50.

Master standard to project posts. The Commission decided to promulgate a supplement to the Master Standard proposed by the testing team, which was to be used when grading the content of project jobs. The Commission also recommended the use of a job-description format intended to provide guidance in gathering information required to grade project posts correctly.²⁸

The commission at its 21st session pointed out that the organizations had not submitted any proposals at the P-1 grade level for inclusion in the standard. The Commission also came to know that the Tier-II standards for auditors, translators, economists and civil engineers had not included a grade level description for the P-1 level. Therefore, P-1 was stressed by the Commission as an entry level for all occupations.²⁹ The ICSC decided to promulgate the Tier-II standards for public information specialists and for the field of work of financial management specialists.³⁰

The Commission considered a document at its 23rd session (March 1986) prepared by its secretariat and votes prepared by the United Nations and by the United Nations Staff Union on the implementation of

28. Ibid. pp. 50-51.

29. Ibid. p.52.

30. YUN, 1985, p.1242.

job-classification of the General Service and related categories in New York UNICEF informed the Commission that it had implemented the results of the job-classification of the General service and related categories in NOV. 1985. The Governing Council of UNDP had decided at its session held in February 1986, to implement the results of the exercise with effect from 1 January 1986. At its 23rd session, the Commission expected for the Secretary General that he would subsequently implement the reclassifications recommended for the security service and trades and crafts categories and for those General Service posts that had been classified identically by the United Nations Classification section, CRG and the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) and approved by the Secretary General .³¹

The Commission at its 23rd session while considering a progress report on the development of classification standards for General Services, pointed out that the progress was slow in Baghdad and in Santiago, the Joint Inter-Agency Committee was adhering to the relevant guide lines and criteria established by the Commission. The ICSC also repeated its request to the

31. UN Doc. A/41/30 (Report of the ICSC, 1986)pp.45-46.

United Nations to arrange for the timely submission of draft standards for Santiago and Baghdad, together with interim reports on their development.

The Commission after consideration at its 23rd session bench mark job descriptions proposed for General Service in small and medium sized field duty stations, decided to promulgate it with immediate effect. The Commission also pointed out that the organizations were working on the development of a support (master) standard to that would be used to complement the benchmarks in those cases where they did not provide adequate coverage.³²

The Commission considered the final report at its 24th session held in July 1986 on the development of Job-classification standards for the General Service and related categories at Vienna, which also included 22 benchmark job descriptions and decided to promulgate it. The Commission also requested the Vienna based organizations to develop some additional bench mark job descriptions for posts at the G-8 level.³³

The ICSC at its 25th session (March 1987) held at New York had gone through reports on the implementation

32. Ibid. p. 48.

33. Ibid. pp. 49-50.

of the Master Standard by organizations prepared by its secretariat on the basis of detailed statistics provided by FAO, UNDP, UNICEF, WHO and UNHCR. The Commission after finishing the review, had noted the rate of implementation of the Master Standard and Confirmation of the levels in UNDP, UNICEF, and UNHCR and that no further detailed statistics were required from those organizations, the Commission also noted the high confirmation rate of classified levels of posts in FAO and rate of implementation of the Master Standard of 30 per cent and the high overall confirmation rate in WHO of Professional level posts, including project posts.³⁴

The ICSC at its 26th session (July 1987) at New York, critically examined the definition of General Service work laid down by its secretariat with the help of the CCAQ sub-committee on Job-classification (SCJC). This definition was as follows :³⁵

"General Service Work is procedural, operational or technical in nature and supports the execution of the programmes of the organization. It ranges from simple, routine or repetitive duties based on following detailed instruction to varied and complex assignments requiring identification and consideration of alternative courses of action based on extensive and indepth practical knowledge

34. UN Doc A/42/30 (Report of the ICSC, 1987) p.74

35. Ibid, pp. 74-75.

of a specific subject area. The assignments are generally performed on a counting basis. The knowledge of the subject field and higher level skills are generally developed through long experience and familiarity with applicable procedures, regulations and precedents or projects of the organization in a narrow technical field or in an administrative support activity".

The Commission after some clarifications given by its Secretariat, promulgated the definition of General Service work and adopted the two step procedure for the determination of this level of work.

The Commission at its 25th session (March 1987) after finishing the review of a draft job-classification standard for staff in the General Service Category at Baghdad, delegated the authority to its chairman to promulgate it and to approve the development of bench mark job descriptions to supplement the standard. The Commission also considered at its 25th session a report on progress in the development of classification standards for General Service at Santiago and had shown the lack of progress at its duty station. The ICSC also considered a note prepared by its Secretariat providing the latest information received from the United Nations on the implementation of job-classification of the General Service and related categories in New York and after consideration, the Commission reaffirmed the need for benchmark job-description and repeated its request to the three organizations based in New York to develop common benchmark

job -descriptions. The Commission also considered and decided to implement the Job-classification standards, including a proposal for three additional benchmark job-descriptions at the G-8 level for the General Service and related categories at Vienna at its 25th Session (March 1987) held at New York. The Commission also undertook the task of reviewing progress reports provided by several organizations on the implementation of the job-classification standards of the General Service at Addis Ababa. After reviewing the reports, the Commission requested those organizations that had not yet done so, to implement the common grading standards promulgated in 1985.³⁶

In this way, the Commission started its work relating to the grading standards of job structure in 1976. Though the area was wide and difficult, the Commission, with the help of CCAQ testing team on job-classification, FICSA and classification Review Group, addressed itself solving a number of fundamental administrative, financial and other problems with energy, speed and Scientific method.

Though international organizations generally have the authority to establish administrative tribunals or submit employment disputes to tribunals established by other organizations, the question remains whether it is essential to establish them. This issue is studied in the next chapter (ix):
"The nature and role of the UN Administrative Tribunal"

36. Ibid. pp. 75-79.