

Reforms in Eligibility to Civil Service Entry: Education & Age



This document describes a component of early reform package i.e. age and education. The changes in age and educational requirements to entry in civil service are rationalized.

Civil Service Reforms

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Governance in recent times is marked with increasingly complicated and cross-cutting issues, such as economic and financial unpredictability, internal and external conflicts, demographic drifts, climate change, and regulatory challenges. Liberalization, privatization, deregulation and rapid technological advancement require a different set of competencies among public officials than the ones they currently possess (FPSC Annual Report, 2013). These competencies are the skills, knowledge and attitudes that lead to successful performance in civil service (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2006). The availability of these competencies does not just happen by chance but through an articulated recruitment exercise and subsequent capacity development endeavors. The recruitment process should attract the best available talent to the civil service. The key to effective recruitment lies in the fact that jobs in the civil service are carefully analyzed on the basis of duties, responsibilities and the skills required to perform them.

Keeping in view the challenges in governance and the requirements of a modern civil service, a workforce that is more knowledgeable and skillful is needed. Reforms¹ regarding the introduction of pre-exam screening test, specialized group intakes and revising the qualifying criteria of education and age is intended to facilitate the process of getting even better intake in civil service exams.

Reforming² the age and qualification requirements help in the identification of most suitable candidates and ensures the initial filtering of unqualified applicants in a way that will reduce overall selection costs as well. Though age and qualification are general correlates but there are no standard criteria on which requisite age and qualification are determined except the mental and physical requirements of the job. These requirements can be tested in the written examination once an effective recruitment pool is generated on the basis of adequate age and education criteria.

Ministry of Planning Development & Reform (MoPDR) held a series of consultations with various stakeholders, including civil servants from all provinces. The consultations culminated in a two-day, final national consultative workshop, held from 13th to 15th September.

Based on proposals and feedback received from this series of consultations and the final national consultative workshop, the following reforms may be considered for implementation as a part of recruitment calibration

¹ Findings of the National Consultative Workshop during 13th to 15th September, 2015 in Bhurban.

² These reforms only regard to augmentation in age and qualification criteria and may be considered further to the eligibility criteria, framed in "Rules for competitive examination (CSS) 2016" Federal Public Service Commission, Islamabad.

1. Sixteen years of education be a prerequisite to entry in civil service.
2. Age ceiling for entry in civil service be increased from 28 to 30 years.

Rationale

1. Sixteen years of education be a prerequisite to entry in civil service.

- a. Requisite of bachelor level qualification was designed in times where Bachelor was considered a high level of qualification. 14 years bachelor's degree today is no longer considered a superior qualification and an upgrade in educational requirement for entry in civil service is inevitable.
- b. According to Higher Education Commission regulations, completing a 4 year Bachelor's degree requires 124-136 credit hour studies³ which correspond to 16 years of education. Realizing that the most of the public and private sector Universities in Pakistan have moved to a 16 years bachelor degree program and appreciating the fact that candidates with 16 years education are more knowledgeable and skillful, it is recommended to change the educational qualification from 14 years bachelor degree to 16 years education (i.e. Bachelor or Master degree) to be eligible to take the Competitive Examination. This shall also align the recruitment practice of FPSC with prevailing education system in Pakistan.
- c. The annual report of PFSC (2013) shows that very low candidates qualified to appeared ratio⁴ (e.g. FPSC reports⁵)also indicates a provision of further filtering of candidates for entry exams and increasing the educational qualification to 16 years could facilitate the process of filtering less attractive candidates. This shall also reduce the management costs of examinations.
- d. Considering that 80 to 86 percent of the candidates qualifying the Competitive Examination between 2008 to 2012 (c.f. FPSC Annual Report 2014,p 11) had 16 years or above educational qualification. The fact is sufficient to justify the upgrade in the qualification requirements to 16 years of education.
- e. To upgrade the civil service and move forward from generalist to specialist orientation of civil servants in their early career, sixteen years qualification could be a step in right direction. This shall also facilitate the recruitment of candidates in the fields of their specialization.

³<http://www.hec.gov.pk/InsideHEC/Divisions/LearningInnovation/Documents/HEC%20Approved%20Policy%20Guidelines%20for%20Semester%20%20Examination%20%20System.pdf>

⁴ It refers to a ratio of number of applicants appeared in the CSS exam to no. of qualified candidates. According to FPSC annual report (2013), this ratio was 7.8% in 2012 and further reduced to 1.92% in 2013.

⁵ http://www.fpsc.gov.pk/icms/admin/documents/publications/Annual%20Report%202013_12-09-2014.pdf

2. Age ceiling for entry in civil service be increased from 28 to 30 years.

- a. Naturally, when the education limit is increased from 14 to 16 years of education, entry age ceiling should also be increased by the same proportion i.e. two years from 28 to 30 years
- b. There are thousands of highly talented individuals who may join civil service at ages 28+ and Government could benefit from the service of the best brains.
- c. Increasing the age might allow people with some previous work experience in the private sector, or people who have studied and worked abroad (and therefore likely to be over 28), to join the civil service, and bring those skills to their work in government. Therefore, in anticipation of the fact that some talented people willing to serve the nation might want to leave current jobs and switch to the government, we need to increase the age ceiling.
- d. Due to lack of educational opportunity and family limitations, there is a marginal class even in major cities of Pakistan that complete education in longer duration than other candidates, increasing age could be a measure to enhance inclusivity and equality of opportunity to such candidates.

References

- 1. Denhardt R.B., Denhardt J.V. (2006). Public Administration: An Action Orientation, 5th Edition, USA: Thomson Wadsworth. Etuk E (1992). The Nigerian Public Service: In Search of Creative Excellence, Ibadan; Spectrum Books Limited