

JOB CLASSIFICATION METHODS

It is important to note the vital importance of internal equity which should be guaranteed by a classification matrix. Failing this, a wide array of parallel compensation systems would arise, in order to restore internal justice acceptable to everyone.

Job evaluation should be based on consensus and recognition of the new classification for each individual, rather than on any supposed objectiveness of the method.

A large number of methods or processes are used to describe and evaluate jobs and skills. This has given rise to a typology to find a way in all this diversity: it simultaneously sheds light on the work situation evaluation method (general approach, criteria-based, single criteria-based methods, etc.) and the subject of the evaluation (the position or job, skills and activities, individual capabilities).

EVALUATION MODE	SUBJECT OF EVALUATION		
	POSITION JOB	SKILLS TASKS	INDIVIDUAL CAPABILITIES
GENERAL METHOD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Paired comparisons ✓ Sector-based organisation 	Overall job	Public service type methods
CRITERIA-BASED METHODS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Classifying criteria ✓ Single criteria ✓ Information theory 	Job segmentation	-

Classification is intended to grade jobs. When it is based on skills, it is intended to classify customised work situations.

I. GENERAL METHODS

These methods enable ordinal organisation of jobs, i.e. not accounting for the degree of difference or the nature thereof.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Simple to implement Suitable for simple jobs, with repetitive tasks	Less precise than analytical methods: the classification does not enable a distinction between the respective difference between jobs, but merely a ranking based on importance. Referencing difficulty: what basis is used to determine whether one job ranks higher than another? General methods infer that the values of the sector are sufficient to classify jobs equitably; these values are not generally formalised. These matrixes age rapidly with respect to technological developments, and no longer reflect actual work situations and have difficulty accounting for new roles.



1.1. Paired Comparison

This consists in comparing each position with another on the basis of an overall subjective assessment of its "weight", its "value" or its "contribution for the company". All positions are thus considered successively, with respect to each other. This gives rise to an intuitive classification as it is based on an implicit job hierarchy. This method is particularly used in small businesses, where it is not always necessary to apply a high level of precision or complexity.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Simple, flexible administration and maintenance, inexpensive, easy to explain	Imprecise, more subjective, vague in its definitions, difficult to transfer between sectors, and, for this reason, not very suitable for use in a large organisation

1.2. Sector-Based (or Job by Job) Organisation

This method has been used for decades to construct and update collective agreement classification matrixes.

The term sector refers to all the jobs in a single profession or a single specialty, regardless of the value scale determined. "Crossovers" enable mobility between sectors.

This method consists in identifying the sector of each job (production, maintenance, accounts, sales, administration, I.T., etc.), and placing each position in a predetermined classification matrix by comparing its profile to the characteristics of some reference jobs¹ selected in the occupational sector and calibrated on all the sectors. Consistency between sectors is achieved by means of a mere horizontal comparison of these reference positions (for example by comparing the job of a programmer in the I.T. sector with that of a workshop technician in the maintenance sector).

The method consists in constructing an estimation scale: from the jobs to be classified, that perceived to be the highest and that perceived to be the lowest are selected. Jobs half-way between the two extreme jobs are situated on this scale. The jobs are positioned at the centre of the scale segments. The scale obtained contains the number of levels required by the evaluator. On the basis of this scale, the evaluator positions all the other jobs to be classified.

The aim of negotiation firstly consists in selecting the list of reference positions and determining horizontal equivalences between sectors. In a second easier, but more tedious, phase, it is necessary to inventory all the jobs and insert them at the correct factor level in each of their sectors.

No job in the sector or company should be omitted from this inventory (to meet exhaustiveness requirements specific to Parodi matrixes).

¹ Reference jobs are used relatively frequently in classification methods (Hay, Cort, Hewitt 1, Watson Wyatt) as they make it possible to only identify, describe and classify one reference job instead of several jobs corresponding to similar but differentiated work situations.

This type of matrix generally includes 12 to 20 positions for the unskilled worker, skilled worker, technician and supervisor categories alone. A further 6 to 10 positions should be provided to classify jobs in the engineer and executive category.

Advantages	Disadvantage
Simple, apparently inexpensive, flexible use	<p>The partially subjective nature of the classification may give rise to difficult arbitration and prohibitive times.</p> <p>Involves determining the hierarchy of jobs at a given time, with the subsequent rigidity that this implies: difficulty accounting for new actual work situations (comparison required), and lack of need to inventory jobs no longer held by anyone.</p> <p>Requires that evaluators have a good knowledge of each job (this requirement is increasingly difficult to meet due to the multiplication and diversity of positions in companies).</p> <p>Impossibility to uphold the assumption of an exhaustive list of jobs, particularly in wide-ranging and inhomogeneous sectors.</p>

Examples of methods:

- Parodi classification matrixes (Parodi decrees from 1945)
- Hewitt method, contribution-based approach

Examples of occupational sectors

Crafts sectors, rubber industry, clothing industry, shoe industry, journalism, etc. 154 sectors out of 286 referenced by the Circé study continue to refer to Parodi classifications.

II. CRITERIA-BASED OR ANALYTICAL METHODS

These analytical methods imply a detailed work analysis via one or more criteria. The methods define upstream job comparison criteria for classification purposes. Evaluating a number of criteria of each position makes it possible to assign a total score corresponding to a coefficient for each position.

The practice consisting in using a few criteria, which are now clearly identified, currently appears to be the most justifiable. Over the last 20 years, Parodi type classifications have increasingly been replaced by referencing systems based on underlying criteria.

2.1. Classifying Criteria

The standard classification criteria were introduced in France via trials on Telematics launched in the late 1940s.

Negotiation consists in coming to an agreement on job evaluation procedures and not directly on the classification of these jobs based on mere titles.

The various values - corresponding to the various criteria - are aggregated with a view to mathematical job weighting. Since the final job score is provided when the points are calculated, some methods provide for criterion weighting and do not apply a standard aggregation table which merely aggregates the values obtained in each criterion. It is thus possible to enhance some or take better account of a particular culture.

The number of criteria is generally relatively restricted: the precision and relevance of a method would not necessarily increase with the number of criteria.

As negotiations progress, two key criteria have progressively emerged (alone or with others) in most agreements referring to this method: technicality (already implicit in Parodi classification matrixes), roughly based on the qualification levels applied in French national education, and autonomy (degree of precision of instructions or orders setting the target, resources, procedure, sequence of operations, and degree of supervision applied)

Of the 10 largest sectors having signed a classifying criteria matrix since 1990, only 3 implemented the relational (or communication) criterion.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Rational approach Complementary nature of criteria and their checklist role are a source of reassurance for the parties involved. A skills rating system provides system transparency, and enables social partners to discuss the main issues openly.	Give rise to a large number of questions: which criteria should be selected? Which weighting should be selected? It may be deemed to be inappropriate to cumulate values referring to criteria of different types

Examples of methods:

- Hay method (introduced in France in 1966): based on 3 main criteria and 8 sub-criteria deemed to be objective, rational and universal: expertise, creative initiative, end purpose. The method does not enable weighting of criteria: it consists in examining each job evaluated by comparing the values assigned for each of the criteria. It is possible to conduct a comparison, criterion by criterion, of the jobs evaluated (smoothing).

The Hay method valuation chart is not based on the classification and wage structures in place; Hay "intervals", i.e. the distance between the high value and the low value in the evaluation chart, convey a difference in the region of 15% between two situations.

The use of the Hay method implies, *ipso facto*, acceptance of the relevance of the criteria and evaluations in all work situations. However, since its criteria assign considerable importance to the end purpose (latitude of action, scope of action, and impact on this scope), this evaluation method is probably not particularly suitable for unskilled and skilled workers and the method is rarely applied to this population. Job description in this method highlights the role (what is expected from the job) and not the tasks or the manner in which the holder acts.

- Towers Perrin criteria-based method: criteria weighting makes it possible to vary the relative importance of each.

- Hewitt criteria-based method

Examples of occupational sectors

These consist of classifying criteria matrixes not involving scores.

1. Metallurgy

Unlike quantitative analytical classification methods which evaluate jobs using criteria by assigning a score for each, giving rise to an overall "weight" of the job, the UIMM method analyses jobs on the basis of criteria without involving scoring procedures.

Analysis matrixes, differing according to the categories, are used to determine the level and grade of a job: if the job characteristics match all the requirements for the same level and the same grade, that grade is assigned.

The four criteria used in metallurgy: know-how; autonomy; responsibility; type of activity (including three sub-criteria: brief description or purpose of the profession, list of tasks or work organisation and conduct, technical limit or scope of expertise). The grade is determined in relation to a further criterion: the complexity or difficulty of the tasks, subdivided into sub-criteria varying according to the staff category and the level in question.

Furthermore, UIMM recommends the parallel use of a general job organisation method to confirm the validity of the results obtained using the criteria-based analysis...

2. Chemicals

Two classifying criteria: technical know-how (referring to the content of national education vocational qualifications); autonomy (defined on the basis of the type of instructions received, the remaining scope for initiative and the closeness of supervision).

3. Construction

Four criteria: content of activity; autonomy and initiative; technicality; qualifications, adaptation and experience.

4. Insurance

Five criteria divided into 6 levels: qualifications-experience; problem perception/solving; personal skills aspect; autonomy; contribution (influence and scope of role).

5. Pharmaceuticals

Four criteria: complexity; responsibility; autonomy; knowledge and experience required.

2.2. Single Criterion

Methods based on a single criterion assumed to be a valid representation of jobs. They are no longer used at the present time.

Advantages	Disadvantages
	Does not solve the question of selecting the criterion to use. Not favourable for greater social acceptability.

Examples of methods:

In the 1940s, Elliott Jacques accounted for a single criterion referred to as the "autonomy period", and introduced a distinction between specified tasks - or specified responsibility - consisting of formal instructions, and non-specified tasks - or discretionary responsibility - which are performed autonomously and checked retrospectively: it is specifically the period elapsing between completion and checking which is liable to determine the difficulty of the job. Elliott Jacques's statistical studies demonstrated a clear correlation between this "autonomy period" and the payment scale deemed to be equitable by the parties involved. While this method does not appear to be relevant at the present time, the development of these ideas, from the late 1950s, most likely contributed to the inclusion of the autonomy criterion in the majority of methods currently applied.

2.3. Information Theory

A very important line of thought in job classification.

Work is considered to be a communication process between the worker and his/her environment. The worker receives information, analyses this information, provides responses, checks and adjusts these responses quantitatively and qualitatively on the basis of the end objective.

The analytical framework of the method is based on a systemic model providing a simplified logical representation of human activity regardless of the type of work and hierarchical level; this method makes it possible to compare a wide variety of work situations, in which the only common factor is this exchange of information between the job holder and his/her environment. The application of this method to job evaluation is based on the acceptance that the rank of a job increases in accordance with the level of requirements for the perception, processing and transmission of information.

In practice, a single criterion (information processing) is divided into multiple sub-criteria which are the subject of an evaluation.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Makes it possible to compare a wide variety of work situations and hierarchical levels.	



Examples of methods:

- Milox-Bocquillion method (1956): 11 general criteria based on the signal-integration-response framework, with a further 3 communication criteria and 4 "complaint" sub-criteria.

- Cort method (1965): 6 criteria: monitored scope of responsibility, level of know-how required, degree of autonomous initiative, importance of economic contribution, complexity of implementation, difficulty of required communications. The score matrix is not disclosed to prevent the evaluation from turning into "haggling" (no transparency, as in the Hay method).

- Centor method developed by Pierre Jardillier (1968): 14 criteria grouped into 6 basic criteria: knowledge and know-how; improvement and autonomy; organisation and supervision; cooperation and joint action; quality/safety/health/environment. Each criterion is measurable on a scale of 8 to 15 degrees. The description gives 7 (or 9) points: the position in the structure, vertical and horizontal work relations, list of activities, summary of responsibilities, difficulties encountered and suggestions for improvement, the specific expertise of know-how required and the key figures (or the work conditions and details on hierarchical responsibility).

Examples of occupational sectors

The IUMM method, aimed at members of the organisation to facilitate the implementation of the classification based on the agreement, has been the subject of a number of technical additions, including the Milox-Bocquillion method.

III. SKILLS-BASED APPROACH

This consists in focusing on the individual, his/her actual work situation or the work situation liable to be within his/her scope.

At the present time, it is observed that classification systems are moving away from the job per se, focusing more specifically on the individual. Moving away from concepts such as qualification and tasks, the job evaluation is tending more towards the concept of skills.

If the job is no longer applied as the evaluation unit, it is necessary to address the choice of the observation variable to be taken into account; should some of the components of the job - profiles, roles, assignments, activities, skills - be adopted or should an inventory of the individual's capabilities be drawn up?

3.1. Overall Job

This consists in selecting some of the components of the job: profiles, roles, assignments, activities, skills, etc. and conducting job profile comparisons.

3.2. Job Segmentation

Many companies, consulting firms and some occupational sectors have adopted this approach.

It consists in accounting for, not the job, but the assignments, the "potential", necessarily "personalised" attributes, and move closer to the actual situation by means of a more detailed identification of the content of the job.

The employee is no longer paid on the basis of the job he/she holds at a given time, but for what he/she actually does within the scope of his/her work situation, after validation. This is due to the fact the organisation implies that personnel find themselves, in some circumstances in paradoxical work situations in relation to Taylor's conventional logic. Strictly in organisational terms, it is no longer suitable to define what the employee lacks to move up to a higher position, but to focus on what the employee can do in concrete terms if required in the company.

This logic implies that it is possible and useful to break down jobs into activities or skills that can be isolated, although they are still closely interdependent. While actual jobs are perceived as a plurality of differentiated aspects with their own logic, segmentation for the evaluation would appear to be natural and welcome.

Advantages	Disadvantages
These segmentations, intended to facilitate recognition, are found to be useful in recruitment, training, mobility or performance review policies	Not a socially neutral operation

Examples of occupational sectors

Cement production industry (1978 agreement): based on a schedule of assignments. The job classification is thus restricted to identifying the roles, enabling flexible job composition and identification of potential career developments by acknowledging them in classifications.

IV INDIVIDUAL CAPABILITY-BASED APPROACH

Capabilities consist of the individual qualities and aptitudes demonstrated previously or in absolute terms. They are actually presumed and are compared to the potential until they are confirmed when it has been demonstrated that a job requiring the application of these capabilities has been mastered, which occurs retrospectively. At that stage, they adopt the status of proven capabilities in situations and are similar to ... skills.

The approach consists in rationalising the rank system (professional army) by attempting to evaluate capabilities.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Facilitates position entry selection procedures	The organisation is burdened with the weight of theoretical or general knowledge, remunerated on the same basis as concrete qualities or skills required for a job Method declining in popularity

Examples of methods:

Tests claim to be the faithful indicators of aptitudes. It was thought to be possible to describe an individual's skills through a series of tests on the basic factors or criteria of the work activity.

Examples of occupational sectors

Classification matrix for the public service and semi-state sectors, recognising qualifications – French National education or internal examination – regardless of the job held. Statutory guarantee: examination requirements represent recruitment requirements, but they do not prejudge the use of the corresponding knowledge in the work situation. In fact, said knowledge and the job level are presumed to correspond.

The insurance sector only moved away from this approach recently.

The predominant approach currently applied does not account for qualifications, skills or knowledge per se (public service type methods), but those which have been proven to be useful in the concrete work context and accounting for the selected organisation method.