

Content analysis of UPSC optional papers on public administration

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Key points

- Indian civil service exam plays important role in shaping curricular priorities
 - Universities, textbooks, coaching programs
- We examine the optional papers on public administration for 2009 to 2018
- Three findings:
 - Heavy emphasis on American public administration
 - Neglect of international experience other than US
 - Content is out of date
 - Mismatch between theory and practical concerns identified in papers

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Number writing preliminary examination in 2016: 459,659

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF CANDIDATES WRITING MAIN EXAMINATION AND
OPTIONAL PAPERS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Year	Number appearing for CS(M) Exam	Number appearing for PA papers	Number recommended	Success rate (%)
2011	11237	6276	497	7.9
2012	12190	7077	359	5.1
2013	14178	2840	176	6.2
2014	16286	2852	151	5.3
2015	14642	1795	151	8.4
2016	13294	1506	160	10.6

Source: Annual Reports of the Union Public Service Commission.

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Structure of PA optional papers

- One of the most popular of the 26 optional subjects
- Syllabus published before examination
- Paper I: Administrative Theory
- Paper II: Indian Administration
- Typically about eight questions in each paper
- In 2009-2018, 492 questions or sub-questions

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Theory questions

- Of 58 individuals referenced, 41 are American
- Most of the non-Americans are politicians or bureaucrats
- 48 of the 58 people referenced are dead, half have been dead for at least a quarter-century
- Questions reflect American PA curriculum of late 1960s and 1970s
- Omitted: Public Policy literature post-1970s, Public Management literature post-1980s, literature on P3s, networks, non-profits
- Included: macro- and micro-level topics

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TABLE 3: PEOPLE REFERENCED IN PAPER I

Name	References	Nationality	Died
RIGGS Fred	8	US	2008
BARNARD Chester	7	US	1961
SIMON Herbert	6	US	2001
TAYLOR Frederick	6	US	1915
WEBER Max	5	Germany	1920
WILDAVSKY Aaron	5	US	1993
DROR Yhezkel	4	US	
FOLLETT Mary Parker	4	US	1933
McGREGOR Douglas	4	US	1964
DICEY A.V.	3	UK	1922
WALDO Dwight	3	US	2000
WILSON Woodrow	3	US	1924
ARGYRIS Chris	2	US	2013
GOULDNER Alvin	2	US	1980
HEADY Ferrel	2	US	2006
LIKERT Rensis	2	US	1981

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Mismatch Between Theory and Practice (1)

	Paper I	Paper II
C : Local government	4	33
E : Civil services	6	21
J : Internal security	0	19
H : Accountability and corruption control	5	15
U : District administration	0	13
V : Federalism and fiscal federalism	0	13
Y : President, Prime Minister, Ministers, Cabinet	0	13
AB : British and pre-colonial legacies	1	10
X : Planning & coordination	3	10
W : Judiciary and its role	1	9
AA : Politics and administration	3	9
AE : Disaster management	0	8
AH : State government	0	6

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Mismatch Between Theory and Practice (2)

	Paper I	Paper II
K : Decision-making	15	0
S : Public administration theory	14	0
D : Leadership and management	28	3
P : ICT, e-government & e-governance	13	3
A : Organization theory	41	4
I : Comparative and development administration	15	5
N : Role of the state and government	12	5
L : Administrative and Constitutional Law	10	6

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What might be examined

- Literature from other Westminster systems on problems at the apex of government
- Literature from statebuilding and development studies
- Literature on federalism and multi-level governance
- Literature on corruption control, transparency, IT
- Overlooked topics: climate change, supranational and transnational administration