Domain knowledge - Civil Services

What is the issue?

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- The generalist character of the administrative personnel in India is losing its relevance, given the many emerging challenges.
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- The need for domain knowledge in Indian Administrative Service personnel is being increasingly felt.
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How has the system progressed?

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- India inherited the civil service system from the erstwhile British.
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- It was however felt that the colonial civil service system would be unsuitable for politically free and economically poor India.
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- Renaming of ICS (Indian Civil Service) as IAS, etc had happened, but there had been only little change in practice.
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- The IAS continue to be deeply hierarchical and rule-bound, and seniority continues to be the basic criterion.
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- The goal of the training is still that of creating the all knowing “intelligent generalist”.
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- The service thus holds its generalist character despite the increasing need for domain knowledge in administration.
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What is the way forward?

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- Many incremental changes to policy and government role have happened over the years since the time of independence.
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- The civil service should thus assess the shift from seniority and experience based system to a domain knowledge based system.
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- **Organisational Change** - Change in the organisation of government ministries and departments is essential alongside the change in the character of the personnel system.
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- This could be carried on by clustering the departments based on their needs , demands and characters.
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- The clusters may be categorised as security, economy, engineering, energy, social, rural, transport, science and technology, etc.
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- **System** - It is suggested that the Indian civil service could adopt the system practised in the defence personnel.
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- A person joining the Indian Army as an infantry man remains so throughout the career and cannot become an artilleryman, etc.
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- Similarly, once “streamed”, the civil servants can spend the rest of their careers within the clusters or sectors as specified above.
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- **Training** - Training and examination could be made mandatory to reach higher levels in the service.
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- The academy at Mussoorie could engage in training officers in leadership qualities and more in imparting training in the domain knowledge.
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Source: The Hindu

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