

WEEK 8

MEANING OF THE CIVIL SERVICE

The civil service is an essential department in the executive arm of government through which the government implements its policies and programmes. It transmits government policies and programmes into services to the people. It is divided into departments called ministries. The political head of a ministry is called a Minister or Commissioner, while the administrative head is called Director-General or Permanent Secretary.

CHARACTERISTICS

1. **Permanence in Office:** Civil servants are career government employees who are employed under a merit system in which federal characters is applied. They enjoy a permanent tenure of office. The government comes and goes but the civil service remains. This enables them to carry out their functions.
2. **Political Neutrality:** This means that they are to remain loyal and dedicated to the ruling party or government of a country. They are not allowed to engage in partisan politics, although they may belong to a political party and vote in elections, their views are private and should not affect their loyalty to the government of the country.
3. **Impartiality:** This means that the civil servants should discharge their duties with maximum considerations.
4. **Anonymity:** This means that credit or failure of any administration on any issues does not go to the civil servants. They are also not allowed to speak to the press on issues except that their minister or directors authorize them.
5. **Merit:** This means that recruitment into government offices is based on merit and not favouritism. This enhances efficiency.
6. **Expertise:** They are expected to be experts in their fields and offices, which they occupy.
7. **A framework of law:** This checks the use of arbitrary powers.
8. **Hierarchy:** This refers to the organization of the system in different levels of importance, from the highest to the lowest

STRUCTURE OF THE CIVIL SERVICE

The civil service is classified into the following:

1. **Administrative Class:** This is the highest class of the civil service. They consist mainly of the Director-General, Deputy Director-General, and Principal Officers etc. They are mostly graduates and they co-ordinate the activities of their ministry by policymaking and advising ministers and commissioners.
2. **Executive Class:** They deal with the day-to-day conduct of administration following lay down policies. They also implement government policies. They consist of Assistant Executive -Officers, Semi-Executive Officers and Executive Officers.
3. **Professional Class:** They are trained specially for their jobs. Examples include the lawyers, doctors, engineers etc.
4. **Clerical Class:** They are involved in the routine jobs of the service. Their jobs include the keeping of records, movement of files, preparation of vouchers, statistics etc. They are mostly young school leavers with SSCE, GCE, and NECO etc.
5. **Auxiliary Class:** Recruitment into this class of workers may not require any formal education or highly technical skills. However, such skills might be required to do their jobs. Such jobs include drivers, cleaners, gardeners, messengers etc

FUNCTIONS OF THE CIVIL SERVICE

1. **Formation of Policy:** The administrative and professional class of the civil service formulates policies owing to their wealth of experience. They present these policies to the ministers for final decision and implementation.
2. **Implementation of Public Policies:** The implementation of public oriented policies results in the execution of services to the public like good roads, electricity schools, hospitals etc.
3. **Preparation of Budget:** It prepares the government yearly budget of statement of expected revenue and expenditure.
4. **They Make Byelaws:** They perform sub-legislative functions. A senior civil servant has the power to draw up rules and regulations.
5. **Archival Function:** Civil servant document government policies and information and keep them safe for future references in public decisions.

PROBLEMS OF THE CIVIL SERVICE

1. **Low Incentives:** Poor conditions of service reduce the morale of the workers. This is further worsened by the slow promotion process.
2. An issue that needs urgent attention may not be met at the needed time.
3. **Negative attitude to work:** Most civil servants feel that government work does not deserve the best. They do their work half-heartedly.
4. **Political Interference:** Most government always interferes by not giving the civil service a free hand to run its affairs. Most politicians equally interfere with the planning and implementation of government policies.
5. **Tribalism/nepotism and favouritism:** Most unqualified persons are employed based on ethnic affiliations.
6. **Political Instability:** Frequent military interventions affect policymaking and implementation as director generals, permanent secretaries, ministers and commissioners are changed.
7. **Bribery and Corruption:** Most civil servants receive bribes and undue gratification for most works done.
8. **Lack of qualified personnel:** The civil service is always hit by the exodus of workers who seek greener pasture in private companies which offer attractive working conditions.
9. **The unfriendliness of the staff:** Most civil servants are arrogant and arrogate power to themselves. They are unfriendly to the public and most times are impatient to listen to complains from the public.

CONTROL OF THE CIVIL SERVICE

The civil service and civil servants can be controlled through the following ways:

1. **Legislative Control:** Ministers or commissioners can be asked to appear before the legislature and explain their activities.
2. **Public Service Commission Control:** This body has the power to appoint, promote, transfer, discipline or dismiss civil servants.
3. **Control of Ministries:** Ministries of finance and establishments have control over the ministries under the civil service. They control the expenditure, conditions of service, salaries and persons.
4. **Press control:** The press also helps to control the activities of the civil service. They criticize erring officers and this keeps them on check.
5. **Judicial control:** The court can try anybody for criminal charges. The public officers also have this in mind.
6. **Hierarchical Control:** The civil service is structured in a way that one cannot carry out the actions without letting his superior know.
7. **Pressure Groups:** They help to mount pressure on public officials to the line of other ministries.
8. **Public Complaint Commission (Ombudsman):** The function of this body is to receive and investigate a complaint from the public about a public officer who has not performed according to laid down rules.

9. **The General Order:** This is the regulation which outlines the condition of service and responsibilities of the civil servants.

REFORMS IN THE CIVIL SERVICE (1988)

The government of Ibrahim Babangida embarked on the reform of the civil service commission in 1988 in line with the Dotun Philip's review panel established in 1985. The major elements of the reform were:-

1. The ministers and not the permanent secretary is responsible for the policy and programmes of the ministry. He is accountable for his ministry's actions.
2. The permanent secretary becomes Director-General and his appointment is political. His tenure ends with the government that appointed him.
3. The civil service is professionally oriented with each civil servant spending his career in the ministry.
4. Each ministry is responsible for the appointment, discipline and promotion of civil servants under it, under the federal services guidelines.
5. The civil service is now empowered with various responsibilities.
6. The central bank and the ministry of budget and national planning will be under the office of the presidency.
7. The officer of the head of service ceases to exist.
8. Each ministry has the power to set up its personnel management board.