

Chapter 3: The Civil Service

3.1 DEFINITION

The civil service is the machinery of government, established to implement government policies and programmes. It is defined as an organized body of men and women who are employed on civil capacity and on permanent basis in government ministries and departments, charged with the responsibility of implementation of government policies and programmes. The civil service operates under the framework of law. Its operations are regulated strictly by civil service rules and procedures. The survival of any government depends on the civil service, as without it, government policies would not be implemented. Thus, the civil service is the lifeblood of government.

The term 'civil service' is different from the term 'public service'. The civil service is a body of permanent employees who work in government ministries and departments, charged with the duty of exercising the executive authority of government. Civil servants are normally recruited by a quasi-autonomous body to guarantee its political neutrality and impartiality, and therefore, to recruit on basis of merit. In Nigeria, this quasi-autonomous body is called the Civil Service Commission. Examples of civil servants are Permanent Secretaries (Director-Generals), tax collectors, messengers, surveyors, etc. who work in government ministries. On the other hand, the term public service refers to the entire body of personnel who are employed by public establishments and paid from the public fund. Thus, public service covers the civil service, services of the public corporations and government-owned companies, the armed forces and the police, the local governments and educational institutions established by government.

3.2 CHARACTERISTICS/PRINCIPLES

The civil service generally operates under certain fundamental principles. These principles are the characteristics of the modern civil service. They are discussed under the following headings:

- (i) **Framework of Law:** The most important feature of the civil service is that its operations are governed by law. The civil service administers public affairs through laws made by the legislature. The civil service is the administrative body of the executive branch of government.
- (ii) **Regulation and Procedures:** The civil service operates under the principle of bureaucracy. Bureaucracy is a system of hierarchical office and officials with definite roles operating under strict rules and definite procedures designed to carry out policies in large-scale organizations. The civil service is therefore governed by a body of rules and regulations. It is also guided by laid down procedures which are strictly followed. These civil service rules and procedures are embodied in documents known as General Orders (GO.) and Financial Instructions (EL). Others are found in establishment circulars issued by the Establishment Ministry or Division of the Cabinet Office. It is important to note that these civil service rules and procedures ensure standardization, uniformity and impartiality in the civil service. They however produce the disadvantages of delays, red-tapism and inertia in civil service operation. Inertia means the absence of growth and progress.
- (iii) **Hierarchy:** Hierarchy, which is an essential feature of bureaucracy, is also a characteristic of the civil service. Hierarchy is an organisation or arrangement of offices and personnel of various ranks and grades in systematic, 'superior-subordinate' relationship. In a hierarchy, commands and communication follow the line created by ordered levels within the organization. An important advantage of hierarchy within the organisation is that it gives effect to unity of command. It also facilitates coordination and control. Its most important disadvantage is that it causes delays in the operations of the civil service. The diagram below illustrates a hierarchy.

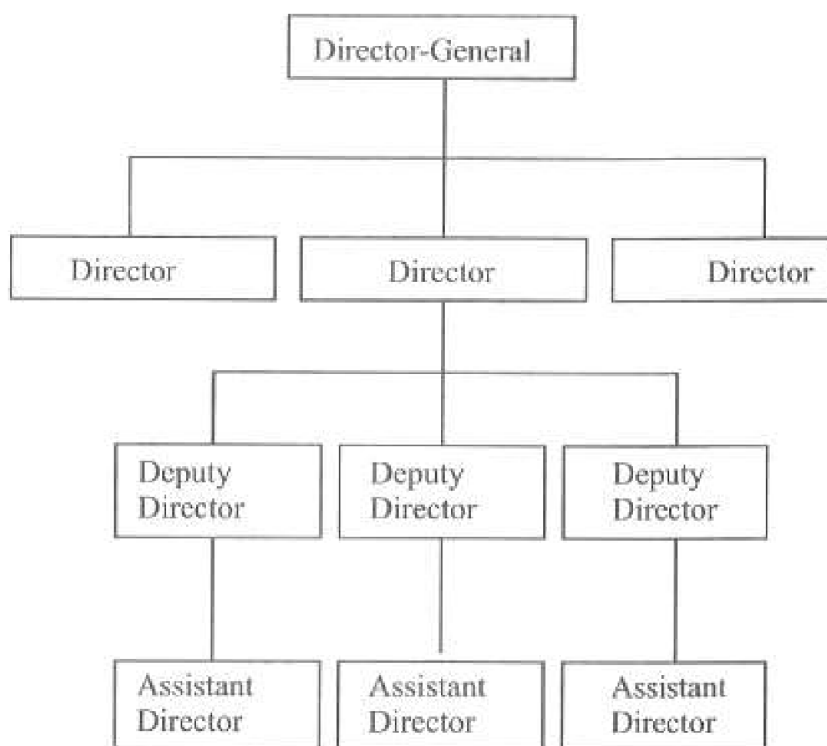


Fig. 3.1: Hierarchy in civil service

(iv) Permanency in Office: The civil service generally operates with the principle of security of tenure. This means that civil servants cannot be removed from office as long as they are of good behaviour, and perform their duties devotedly. When there is change of government, politicians are thrown away while civil servants remain. Thus, civil servants serve many different regimes. There are regulations which govern the appointment and removal of civil servants. These rules and procedures seek to guarantee the security of tenure of the office.

However, it is important to note that since 1975, this principle of permanency in office has been continuously eroded in Nigeria. In 1976, the government under General

Muritala Muhammed launched a purge operation on public service under which many civil servants were retired or dismissed while the appointment of others were terminated contrary to civil service procedure. This exercise continued on a larger scale in 1984 - 87 by both Buhari and Babangida's regimes under their policy of rationalization of the personnel in various public service organizations. Nevertheless, permanency in office remains a feature of the civil service as civil servants are not removed with changes in government like politicians.

(v) Merit System: Merit systems, as a principle in the civil service, means a system in which the selection, promotion, rewards and benefits to individuals within the service are strictly based on comparative achievement. Thus, selection, pay and other rewards in the civil service are expected to be based on merit. Generally, entry into the civil service is through competitive written examinations and oral interviews which ensure that the most qualified and competent personnel are appointed. The merit system checks political patronage, favouritism, sectionalism and tribalism.

(vi) Political Neutrality: Political neutrality means that the civil service should not identify itself with any political party. Civil service should be non-partisan in the discharge of their responsibilities. They should serve any regime that comes to power with equal zeal and devotion. As servants, they should implement policies and programmes of their political masters even where such policies and programmes are in conflict with their personal values and interests. Political neutrality demands that civil servants should obey their political masters and serve any regime that they find themselves under with loyalty and dedication. They should identify themselves with the programmes and policies of the government of the day.

(vii) **Impartiality:** Impartiality is an indispensable element of the civil service. It means that the duties and responsibilities of the civil service should be discharged to all people with fairness and justice. The civil service controls the resources and services of the entire people of the state. Without the principle of impartiality, some people would be unjustifiably favoured while others would suffer. The civil service therefore applies the principle of justice and equity in the discharge of its duties. Actions of civil servants are expected to be objective. They should not be influenced in the discharge of their official duties by familiarity, monetary, sexual, religious or sectional considerations. The principle of impartiality demands that civil servants in the conduct of their official duties should be guided by the general interest of the people.

(viii) **Anonymity:** A corollary of the principle of political neutrality is anonymity. Anonymity is a principle which demands that civil servants perform their duties without publicity. Civil servants advise their political masters (ministers). Once the decision is taken, it is the decision of their political masters. Civil servants do not take the blame for bad public policies which they formulate nor receive praise for laudable public policies which they originate. The chief executive and his ministers take the credit or blame for all public policies and actions. The chief executive and his ministers, not the civil servants, take full responsibility for bad or good policies, even when civil servants are the real authors of such policies.

This principle also implies that civil servants are not expected to make open statements. They should be seen performing their duties and not be heard about what they have done. Nowadays, the principle of anonymity is greatly eroded as top civil servants often make open political statements.

3.3 THE STRUCTURE OF THE CIVIL SERVICE

The civil service is organised horizontally into classes, and vertically into ministries and departments.

(a) Ministerial Organization . .

The ministries and departments into which the civil service is organized differ considerably in number from nation to nation.

In Nigeria, the number, nature and organization of the ministries and departments differ from state to state and from federal government to state governments. In the states, the number ranges from ten to twelve, and there are Ministries of Education, Agriculture, Health, Justice, Industries, Finance, Works, Trade and Transport, Information, Culture and Sports, Lands and Survey. At the federal level, the number ranges from twenty to thirty.

The ministries correspond basically to distinct functionally-defined management tasks of the civil service. This functional organization of ministries makes it possible for civil servants of similar skills, professional and occupational specializations to be grouped in functional units. The vertical structure of the civil service is illustrated with the following diagram:

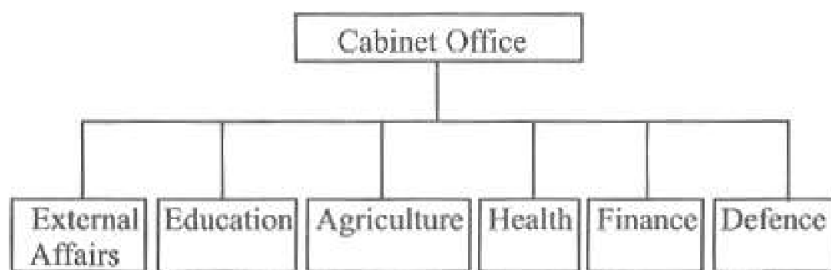


Fig. 3.2: Vertical structure of the civil service

MINISTRIES

(b) Classification of Civil Servants

Civil servants are structured into classes, namely: administrative, professional, executive, technical, secretarial and typist, clerical and sub-clerical, and miscellaneous classes. We shall discuss these in detail.

(i) *Administrative Class:* The administrative class occupies the centre of the governmental powers. It has the closest contact with the political class. Thus, its influence on the political class in policy-making is very tremendous. The members of the administrative class serve as advisers to ministers above them. They formulate policies which they present to their political masters for approval. They provide leadership, plan government programmes and coordinate the activities of civil servants under them.

Administrative officers are men and women of great intellectual ability, which their role in government demands. Thus, they are usually recruited from among university graduates with First and Second Class Honours degree. Movement from inside the service to the administrative class is permitted. As a result of the Nigerian Udoji Public Service Commission Report of 1974, members of the executive class can now be promoted into the administrative class.

(ii) *Executive Class:* The executive class was introduced in Nigeria in 1957, following the recommendations contained in the Gorsuch Report. The executive class is very strategic in the civil service organization. It is situated at the intermediate managerial level. The duties of the executive officers demand initiative, judgment and special skills. They deal with general administration. Their duties range from routine to managerial functions, depending on the rank of the officer. The executive officers are responsible for the implementation of government policies. Executive officers investigate and make decisions on matters assigned to them and report findings to their superiors. They control and supervise the junior officers under them.

The executive class has five grades, namely: Assistant Executive Officer (A.E.O), Executive Officer (E.G.), Higher Executive Officer (H.E.O.), Senior Executive Officer (S.E.O.), and Principal Executive Officer (P.E.O.).

Entry into the executive class is by either direct appointment or promotion. Direct appointment is by competitive written examinations and oral interviews. Promotion into the executive class is made from the clerical class. The entry qualification for direct entry into the junior grade of the executive class is the Advanced Level General Certificate of Education, Higher School Certificate or a university degree with ordinary pass.

(iii) *Professional Class:* The professional class is the highest class in the specialist branch of the civil service. Members of this class render specialist services in the field of their profession to the civil service. For instance, the engineers in the civil service are responsible for the engineering duties in the service while medical doctors render medical and health services and accountants perform government accounting and financial duties. Generally, they give professional and technical advice in the area of their professions to the administrative and political classes. They also supervise and direct the technical class.

The professional class has grades parallel with grades in the administrative class. Officers in the professional class include architects, engineers, surveyors, accountants, medical doctors, educationalists, geologists, and so on. Entry into the professional class requires that the officers must possess recognized professional qualifications, degrees in the relevant areas, or scientific qualifications of university equivalent.

(iv) *Technical Class:* The technical class performs the technical and technological work of government ministries and departments. For instance, staff in the technical class supply electricity, build houses, construct roads and bridges, construct pipe-borne water and work in laboratories, etc. They execute the plans made by the professional class. The technical and technological officers work under the direction and supervision of the professional class. The technical class includes technologists, technical officers (building, electrical, etc), health officers and so on. The minor technical grades can be included in this class. These minor technical officers serve as supporting staff for the technical and professional officers.

The qualifications required for entry into the technical class vary very widely. This is because of the varieties of technical skills which are needed for various technical positions. Generally speaking, a secondary school education plus special technical training in specific technical areas are required.

- (v) *Secretarial and Typist Class:* This class is very vital to the operation of government. The job of this class makes for effective communication and record-keeping in the service. The secretarial staff and typists are responsible for the typing of government documents. They are also responsible for stenographic and secretarial duties of government ministries and departments. The secretarial staff also assist top administrative officers in the administration of their offices. In the secretary cadre, there are six grades, namely: Personal Secretary I and II, and Confidential Secretary I, II, III, and IV. In the typist cadre, there are five grades: Chief Typist, Typist I, II, and III.

The educational qualification required for typists is professional qualification of at least 35 words per minute in typing gained in the West African School Certificate, R.S.A. or their approved equivalents. But the educational requirement for entry into the lowest position of the secretarial cadre is 80/30 words per minute in shorthand and typing plus West African School Certificate.

- (vi) *Clerical and Sub-clerical Class:* This class is at the base of the administrative hierarchy. Officers in this class perform routine work in the government ministries and departments. They collect required data and keep official records in the prescribed form. They also scrutinize returns and claims. The clerical assistants file letters and keep records in accordance with well-defined general instructions and procedure.

These records are subject to check by higher officers. The clerical officers in some places supervise junior workers under them. The educational qualification for entry into the clerical class is West African School Certificate or its equivalent with a credit in English Language. However, the sub-clerical grade of clerical assistants requires only secondary class four or its equivalent.

- (vii) *Miscellaneous Class:* This class includes messengers, cleaners, labourers, drivers, security staff and many others.

They constitute the most junior workers in the civil service. Nevertheless, they render very essential services in the civil service like cleaning offices by cleaners, delivering mails and messages by messengers, ensuring the security of government property by security staff, driving government officials with government vehicles and carrying government equipment and materials by drivers, and so on. The qualification for entry into this class is generally the First School Leaving Certificate. But in some specialist jobs requiring special skills, additional qualifications peculiar to that job may be required. For instance, a government driver additionally requires a driving license. This class of civil servants are generally recruited and selected by their respective ministries and departments.

The Civil Service Reform of 1988 abolished the classification in the Nigerian Civil Service.

3.4 THE GENERAL FUNCTIONS OF THE CIVIL SERVICE

The civil service is indispensable machinery for ensuring that the policies and programmes of government are implemented. It is the bedrock of modern government. The importance of the civil service in the operation of government can best be appreciated from the fact that while no government can operate without the civil service, it is possible to operate a government without the political class (politicians). The functions which the civil service performs are discussed in detail below.

(i) Implementation of Public Policies

The primary purpose for the creation of the civil service is implementation of government policies and programmes. The political class (the legislature, president or prime minister, ministers, commissioners) make policies on economic, social, political, cultural and technological matters. The policies remain mere paper work unless they are implemented by the civil service. It is, therefore, the responsibility of the civil servants to implement these policies loyally and faithfully. Implementation of government policies and programmes results in provision of services for the people, such as supply of good drinking water, good roads and bridges, electricity supply, establishment of hospitals and post offices, building of schools, establishment of industries, and so on. The civil service exercises tremendous power through implementation of policies. In implementing policies, civil servants interpret the policies in a way that suits their interests. They often exhibit • partiality, favouritism and sectionalism in the implementation of public policies.

(ii) Formulation of Policies

In the civil service, there are men and women who possess high technical and professional qualifications and wealth of experience in all fields of government business. Consequently, the civil servant is better placed to possess a sound knowledge of the problems of the society and the best ways to solve them. Thus, the top administrative and professional officers formulate policies which are presented to their political masters and the legislature for final determination. Government programmes are initiated by civil servants. Many public policies and bills that are presented to the legislature for consideration have their origins in the civil service. Apart from knowledge and wealth of experience, the civil service is the store of government information which is much needed in the formulation of highly technical and complex policies.

(iii) Adviser to the Political Class

Politicians are amateurs in government while civil servants are professionals in government. Consequently, political leaders rely on civil servants for advice. Top administrative and professional officers like Director-Generals in particular, serve as advisers to their respective ministers/commissioners. The civil service utilises its store of government information and professionalism to give dependable advice to the political masters.

(iv) Collection and Keeping of Government Revenue

The legislature in a democracy possesses the power of imposing taxation. It decides the amount of tax to be paid by the people, companies and corporations. When the tax is determined, the civil service uses appropriate machinery to collect the taxes. It also collects other approved government revenue, and keeps the government funds in safe custody. It keeps accurate records of all incomes and expenditures of government, and also has the responsibility of auditing government accounts regularly, thus ensuring public accountability.

(v) Store of Government Information

One of the principles of modern administration is that all government businesses are recorded in writing. These records are kept in files, documents, and government publications. The civil service gathers, collates, arranges and stores informational materials for further use in public decision-making. These informational materials which are stored in ministries and departments are vital for the purpose of policy formulation and implementation.

(vi) Maintenance of Continuity of Government

The civil service is a permanent institution. The whole body of the civil service is never removed with a change in government. Thus, the civil service outlives regimes. Even when some civil servants retire or are removed from the office for misconduct, the main body of the civil service remains. However, the entire political leaders of a state are often swept away through election defeat or military coup d'etat. These changes in government are more frequent in African States.

Whenever there is a change in government, the civil service helps the incoming government to consolidate and stabilize. When an old government is removed and a new one is not yet formed, the civil service holds the government until a new one is formed. This happened in Nigeria in 1959 and 1964 after the federal elections. It also happened in January 1966 after the military coup under Major Nzeogwu.

The civil service is therefore an instrument of unity, peace and political stability.

3.5 CONTROL OF THE CIVIL SERVICE

The civil service is a public instrument for achieving public goals. Because of its strategic position and role in government, it wields a lot of power. Furthermore, its activities affect the lives of every citizen of the state. It is, therefore, necessary that the civil service should be controlled in order that it can perform its duties effectively and impartially, and to keep its powers on check. There are various ways in which the civil service is controlled. The seven principal ways are discussed below.

(i) Internal Control

As we mentioned earlier, the civil service operates within the framework of law. Its activities are governed by rules and regulations. Civil servants cannot act contrary to these rules and regulations unless they wish to risk their job. These rules and regulations are clearly embodied in the General Order (GO.) and the Financial Instructions. (F.I.) The General Orders and Financial Instructions are powerful checks on the civil service. They ensure uniformity in standards, conformity and fairness and check arbitrary actions. The Ministry of Establishments or the Establishments Division controls the civil service.

It regularly issues directives, instructions and regulations to the civil servants in all ministries and departments. The formal organization of the civil service in a hierarchical structure also serves as a powerful form of control to the civil service.

(ii) Parliamentary Control

Modern democratic governments operate representative governments. The underlying principle in a representative government is that the elected representatives of the people exercise governmental powers on their behalf. The legislature constitutes the representatives of the people.

One of the primary functions of legislators or representatives of the people is to control and supervise the executive which operates with the civil service. The legislature ensures that the civil service meets public will and aspirations. It is the responsibility of the legislature to monitor the performance of the civil service in the implementation of approved policies and programmes. It also looks into the manner it applies public funds. The legislature can appoint Parliament committees to investigate the activities of a particular ministry or department in order to expose corrupt practices and maladministration. It can also cut the budgetary allocation of any ministry or department that performs below standard. The legislature criticizes civil servants that are inefficient, ineffective or corrupt on the floor of the House. Such adverse criticisms can force the executive arm of government to discipline civil servants.

(iii) Executive Control

Civil servants are servants of the executive. The executive has the responsibility of ensuring that civil servants implement government policies and programmes. The executive i.e. the President and Prime Minister, and Ministers/Commissioners direct, control and supervise the civil servants in the performance of their duties. The civil service is structured into ministries and departments. Each ministry is under the control of a minister/commissioner. It is the responsibility of the minister to control and supervise civil servants under his ministry in order to ensure that government programmes and policies are effectively accomplished. The civil servants have the responsibility to obey and carry out legitimate directives of their political masters.

(iv) Civil Service Commission's Control

The Civil Service Commission is created to recruit and appoint, promote and discipline civil servants. Consequently, through its function of discipline and promotion, it controls the civil service. Annual performance evaluation of civil servants are made for the purpose of promoting productive and efficient civil servants and, on the other hand, reprimanding unproductive or corrupt civil servants. Cases of serious misbehavior or flagrant violation of the civil service rules are sent to the civil service commission which normally looks into the matter and disciplines the officers based on civil service regulations.

(v) Public Complaints Commission's Control

One of the functions of the Public Complaints Commission is to check the excesses of civil servants. Very often, civil servants, in the course of their duties, deliberately or inadvertently violate human rights of citizens.

The Public Complaints Commission exists to check such abuses of human rights.

Any aggrieved citizen can seek redress against any civil servant that violates his fundamental rights through the Public Complaints Commission. Regrettably, in most developing nations like Nigeria where the Public Complaints Commission exists, many citizens are not aware of its role and thus, do not make use of it. It is, therefore, necessary to educate the masses on the use of the Public Complaints Commission so that they can make valuable use of it.

(vi) Judiciary Control

The civil service operates under the law. Civil servants are supposed to work in strict conformity with the constitution and the laws made by the legislature. Moreover, civil servants are servants of the people. Whenever they violate the constitution or any law made by the government, they are prosecuted.

The court has the power to try any civil servant that violates the law or the constitution and punish him according to the provisions of the law.

(vii) Press Control

The civil servants are public servants operating public businesses. Members of the public possess the right to know how the civil service operates their business. They also possess the right to criticize and give suggestions on how the civil service runs their affairs. The press provides a means for achieving this purpose. The press is a powerful instrument which informs and educates the people on the activities of the civil servants. It exposes their abuse of power, corrupt practices, violations of human right, and maladministration. It serves as a means through which the people criticize the activities of civil servants. The press has a powerful control on the civil service where the press is free and allowed to discharge its duties without fear or favour.

3.6 CRITICISMS AND PROBLEMS OF THE CIVIL SERVICE

The civil service has been criticized on a number of weaknesses, most of which arise from its structure. The first and perhaps the most serious criticism is that of delays in its operations. The civil service is hierarchically organized. Moreover, its operations strictly follow laid-down procedures. Strict compliance with civil service rules and procedures in the conduct of government business coupled with the hierarchical organization, results in delays and red-tapism. It also results in inertia in the public service.

The second criticism of the civil service is its hunger for power. The civil service is composed of technically and professionally qualified personnel in all fields of government business. These personnel possess wealth of experience in government business as career officials. Above all, they occupy very strategic and critical positions in government. All these factors increase the power of the civil servants. Thus, they wield great powers and often struggle for power with their political masters. This often results in conflicts between top civil servants who are administrative heads of ministries and their political heads (ministers). In practice civil servants often assert themselves as masters instead of servants. Sometimes, this excessive wielding of power results in abuse of power and corruption.

The third criticism of the civil service is internal conflicts. The civil service is structured in classes. There are often conflicts and tension among these classes. More particularly, there are line and staff agencies in the civil service. The line agency represents the generalists in the civil service while the staff represents the professionals. There are always latent or manifest conflicts between the generalists and the professionals in the service.

The fourth criticism is lack of initiative and innovation. As civil servants must follow laid-down procedures in the performance of their duties, they tend to operate like machines. Any attempt to evolve their own initiative would amount to deviation from the civil service procedure. Thus, civil service rules and procedures are seen as ends in themselves instead of means. This denies competent and innovative civil servants the use of their initiatives.

The fifth criticism is that civil servants of the modern time are highly politicized. The principle of political neutrality is seriously eroded. Civil servants sometimes show openly their political interests. This affects their loyalty to the government of the day. It also affects the manner in which they implement public policies.

The sixth criticism is inflexibility. The civil service does not change its operations to suit changing circumstances. Civil servants apply civil service rules and procedures rigidly in all cases. Sometimes, these rules and procedures become outmoded in current situations.

Finally, the civil service is criticized for impersonality in dealing with people. Since the civil service is governed by rules and procedures, civil servants deal with the public without any consideration of their feelings and interests. They do not consider the differences in human beings and their peculiar problems. Human beings are treated as if they are machines.

3.7 THE CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

Status

The Civil Service Commission is a quasi-autonomous body. Generally, it is established by the constitution. The constitution guarantees its dependence. It sets out its structure, power and functions. The Commission is expected to be a non-partisan and impartial body. The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1979 established the Federal Civil Service Commission for the federal civil service and a State Civil Service Commission for each state civil service.

Structure

The structure of the civil service commission differs from nation to nation. In Nigeria, the structure reflects the federal nature of the Nigerian state. There is a civil service commission for the federal civil service known as the Federal Civil Service Commission. This is composed of the chairman and not more than nine other members who are appointed by the President. The appointment by the president is subject to consultation with the council of state and confirmation of the Senate. The State Civil Service Commission comprises a chairman and not less than two and not more than four other persons who are appointed by the Governor of the State. In the case of the appointment by the Governor, it is subject to the confirmation by a resolution of the State Assembly. The civil service commissions at the federal and state levels operate with a body of permanent officials headed by an official of the Director-General grade. For effective performance of its functions, the commission is organized into a number of divisions. Each division is further divided into sections and each division or section charged with specific functions.

Powers and Functions

The Civil Service Commission has four principal functions. These are explained below.

(a) **Recruitment, Selection and Appointment:** The Civil Service Commission is charged with the duty of recruiting, selecting and appointing civil servants. The Commission advertises for vacant positions in the service. Sometimes, it undertakes recruitment tours and drives. When the applicants are recruited, the Commission selects the best by conducting competitive written examinations and interviews.

Successful candidates are given appointments by the Commission. The Commission can delegate a measure of this function in relation to junior staff like labourers, messengers, cleaners, etc. to ministries and departments.

(b) **Regular Appraisals of Performance:** The Commission undertakes regular appraisals of the performance of civil servants. From the annual performance appraisals, promotions are made to deserving civil servants i.e. civil servants that show in their performance high productivity and effectiveness.

(c) **Discipline of Civil Servants:** Discipline here refers to administrative process of moulding and correcting the behaviours of employees through application of rewards and penalties. Allegations of misbehaviours by civil servants are sent to the Civil Service Commission. The Commission investigates all reports brought to it. In doing this, the Commission is guided by the civil service rules and regulations. The Commission disciplines any civil servant found guilty of any official misbehaviour by warning, demotion, suspension, termination or dismissal, depending on the gravity of the offence. The Commission can also discipline an officer by withholding or deferring the officer's salary increments.

(d) **Retirement .of Civil Servants:** It is the duty of the Civil Service Commission to retire an officer when he is due for retirement. The retirement may be voluntary or compulsory. A voluntary retirement, is one which an officer who qualifies for retirement as a result of his many years of service, out of his own wish, decides to discontinue his service. A compulsory retirement, on the other hand, is one in which an officer who has put in many years of service but has not reached retirement age is forced out of service. This can be done when the officer has committed an offence or when the government wants to rationalize staff in the service during a period of economic recession.

In conclusion, it is important to stress that these functions are performed only in relation to civil servants. The Civil Service Commission has no power over other arms of the public service like the armed forces, the police, teachers in the public schools and colleges, public corporations, local governments and others. These arms of the public service have their own management bodies.

Guaranteeing the Independence of the Commission

The Civil Service Commission is created to ensure that recruitment, selection, promotion and discipline of civil servants are done on the basis of merit. This can only be achieved if the independence of the commission is guaranteed. There are various constitutional means through which the independence of the commission can be guaranteed.

The first and perhaps the most important is that the Civil Service Commission is established by the constitution. The constitution generally provides for its structure, power and functions which cannot be arbitrarily changed by the executive. Any change in these provisions must follow the rigorous procedure for amending the constitution.

Secondly, the constitution usually provides that the chairman and members of the Civil Service Commission should be "persons of unquestionable integrity and sound political judgment."

Thirdly, there are checks and balances in the appointment of members of the Civil Service Commission. Generally, the executive makes the appointment after confirmation by the legislature.

Fourthly, the chairman and members of the Commission have a fixed, secured tenure. The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1979 provided that the members of the Civil Service Commission should serve for a fixed tenure of 5 years during which they cannot be arbitrarily removed by the executive. However, a member can be removed by the executive for misconduct or inability to perform his functions if the action of the executive is supported by two-thirds of members of the legislature.

The commission is expected to be impartial and non-partisan in the performance of its duties. It should exhibit objectivity and fairness. It is expected that it should not receive dictation from any quarters or be influenced by the executive, legislature or the party in power.

KEY POINTS

1. *Meaning of Civil Service*

It is an organized body of personnel who are employed on civil capacity and on permanent basis in government ministries and departments, charged with the responsibility of implementing public policies.

2. *Characteristics/Principles*

(i) The civil service operates within the framework of law. (ii) The operations of the civil service is governed by a body

of rules and regulations, and rigid procedures, (iii) The civil service is organised in hierarchy, (iv) The service has security of tenure, (v) The civil service is politically neutral, (vi) Recruitment, selection, appointments, rewards and

punishments are made on the basis of merit, (vii) The civil service displays impartiality in its operation, (viii) It operates under the principle of anonymity.

3. *Structure of the Civil Service*

(i) The *administrative class* is the elite of the service which advises the political class and controls the entire service,

(ii) The *executive class* is situated at the intermediate managerial level and they deal with the general administration.

(iii) The *professional class* is the highest class in the specialist branch and the members of this class render specialist services relating to the field of their professions to the government. .

(iv) The *technical class* performs the technical and technological work of government ministries under the supervision and direction of the professional class,

(v) The *secretarial and typist class* is responsible for typing, stenographic and secretarial duties of government ministries,

(vi) The *clerical class* is at the base of the administrative hierarchy, and it performs routine duties.

(vii) The *miscellaneous class* includes messengers, cleaners, labourers, drivers, etc, and the class performs miscellaneous duties.

The classification of the civil service in Nigeria was abolished by the Civil Service Reform of 1988.

4. *The General Functions of the Civil Service*

(i) It implements policies and programmes,

(ii) It formulates policies and programmes.

(iii) It advises the political class,

(iv) It collects and keeps government revenue,

(v) It stores government information,

(vi) It maintains continuity in government.

5. *Control of the Civil Service*

The civil service is controlled by the following means:

- (i) *Internal control*: The service is governed by rules and procedures,
- (ii) *Parliamentary control*: The legislature controls the activities of the civil servants,
- (iii) *Executive control*: The executive ensures that civil servants execute policies effectively,
- (iv) *Judiciary control*: The courts can punish civil servants for official misconduct,
- (v) *Press control*: The press exposes the abuse of power, corrupt practices, maladministration and violation of human rights by civil servants and gives them fierce criticism.

6. Criticisms of the Civil Servants

- (i) The civil service breeds delay and red-tapism.
- (ii) It wields excessive powers.
- (iii) There is lack of initiative and innovation.
- (iv) The service is highly politicized.
- (v) There is much inflexibility.
- (vi) There is impersonality in the operations of the service.

7. The Civil Service Commission

- (i) *Status*: The commission is a quasi-autonomous body generally established by the constitution.
- (ii) *Powers and Functions*: It performs four main functions.
 - (a) It recruits, selects and appoints civil servants.
 - (b) It makes regular appraisals of performance.
 - (c) It disciplines civil servants.
 - (d) It deals with matters relating to retirements of civil servants.
- (iii) *Means of Guaranteeing the Independence of the Commission*
 - (a) The commission is created by the constitution.
 - (b) Members of the commission are usually people of unquestionable character.
 - (c) There are checks and balances in the appointment of members.
 - (d) The members enjoy fixed and secured tenure of office. ,

SAMPLE EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

Essay Questions

1. What are the features of the civil service?
2. Outline the various classes in the civil service and discuss their respective functions.
3. Discuss the general functions of the civil service.
4. Examine the various means by which the civil service is controlled.

5. Discuss the status, power and functions of the Civil Service Commission.

Objective Questions

1. Which one of the following is not a civil servant?

A. An administrative officer in a public corporation

B. A clerical officer in the local government

C. A doctor in a private clinic

D. An executive officer in a parastatal

2. Which one of the following is not a feature of the civil service? A. Hierarchy B. Bureaucracy

C. Political neutrality D. Insecurity of tenure

3. One of the functions of the civil service is A. making laws B. announcement of policies. C. determination and imposition of taxes. D. maintenance of continuity of government.

4. Which of the following is not a means of controlling the civil service? A. Courts B. Parliament

C. Elections D. Public Complaints Commission

5. One of the main functions of the Civil Service Commission is A. training of civil servants. B. payment of salaries to civil servants. C. payment of retirement benefits to retired civil servants. D. appointment of civil servants.

Answers

1. C

2. D

3. D

4. C

5. D