Comparism between Developed and Underdeveloped Countries Civil Service: The Lesson Therein

By

Christopher Oyemwinmina
Institue of Public Administration and Health Services Management.
University of Benin, Benin City.
Email: Christopher.oyemwinmina@uniben.edu
Phone No.: 07056022224
&
Uwamusi Cordelia Beauty
Institute of Public Administration and Health Services Managementuniversity of Benin, Benin City.
Email: cordeliauwamusi@uniben.edu
Phone No.: 08023713363

Introduction

The civil service is the cornerstone of governance playing a crucial role in policy implementation and public administration. The civil service is the body of government employees who are employed in civilian capacities to implement public policy, deliver public services and manage administration functions. Civil servants work across various government departments and agencies at national, regional and local levels, importantly, they are expected to be non-partisan professional and accountable in the public through their service to elected officials and institutions.

Different countries uses various terms for theirs civil service, such as public administration government bureaucracy or public service. All are referring broadly to the machinery of the state responsible for the day to day operation of the government. Their roles vary across countries and governance systems (Niedobitek, 2025).

Roles of Civil Service

According to Nyadera & Dugba (2020); Peter, (2010) & Enahoro, (2020). The civil service core functions are as follows:

i. **Policy implementations**

Policy implementation is one to the fundamental functions of the civil service that is to implement laws and policies enated by legislature or executives. This includes converting political decisions into practical programmes and service.

ii. **Administration management**

This role, ensure that government operations run efficiently and that the public resources are used effectively. The civil servants manage the administrative operation of the state. Including budgeting, procurement, human resources, and coordination between agencies.

iii. **Service delivery**

Civil servants deliver essential public services, such as education, healthcare, public safety, transportation, and social welfare. These work directly affects the quality of life of citizens and the legitimacy of the state.

iv. **Ensure continuity and stability**

They ensure that the state functions consistently and predictably, regardless of the political transactions or leadership changes. Unlike the elected officials who may change with election, civil servants provide institutional continuity

v. **Regulation and compliance**

Civil servants are responsible for regulating industries and ensuring compliance with laws and standards. This includes task like environmental inspections, business licensing and consumer protection enforcement.

vi. **Advising political leadership**

Experienced civil servants provide technical expertise and policy advice to ministers, legislators and other political leaders. This support is critical for evidence based policy making and long term planning, especially in complex areas like economic develop or national security.

vii. **Upholding the rule of law and public interest**

Civil servants are expected to uphold the rule of law, promote transparency and act in the public interest.

Characteristics of Civil Service in Developed Countries

Developed countries also known as industrialized or advanced or high-income nations emerged primarily in the aftermath of industrial revolution and evolved through various stages of economic, social and political transformation (Fukuyama, 2014).

Civil service systems in developed countries are often held as model of professionalism, accountability and effectiveness. Their systems typically function within well – established political and legal frameworks the emphasize good governance, rule of law, and institutional integrity. (Kelly, A. 2024). Below are some of the core characteristics of developed nation.

1. **Merit – Based Recruitment and Promotion**

Civil servant in developed countries are generally selected through competitive examinations and transparent recruitment processes. This help to minimize nepotism, favouritism and political interference. Promotion is merit – based.

2. **Professionalism and expertise**

Civil servants is developed nations are highly trained and often possess specialized academic and professional qualifications. They are subject to continuous professional development.

3. **Political Neutrality**

This is one of hallmarks of a mature civil service system political impartiality civil servants are expected to implement the policies of the government in power without letting personal political view interfere.

4. Transparency and accountability

Developed countries enforce strong mechanism for accountability, including independent audit intuitions, anti-corruption bodies and public access to information.

5. Clear organization structure and role definition

Civil service organizations in developed countries typically have well-defined structures, roles and responsibilities. This clarity enhances efficiency and reduces duplication of effect.

6. Use of technology and innovation
Civil servants are often trained in the use of E-governance and digital platforms to streamline service delivery, enhance efficiency and reduce bureaucratic delays.

7. Strong legal and institutional framework
Developed civil services operate under strong legal frameworks that define their duties, rights, and limitations. Institutions such as civil service commissions or Ombudiman provide oversight and ensure lawful conduct.

8. **Stability and continuity**
Unlike political appointees, career civil servants in developed countries enjoy job security and insulated from political cycles. Public services are not disrupted by political tractions

9. **Performance evaluation and result orientation**
Public service adopt performance measurement systems to assess outcome, encourage innovation and reward efficiency

10. Citizen – centered service delivery
Public service in developed countries are often designed to be citizen friendly, focusing on efficiency, accessibility and responsiveness (Rainey, 2019).

Institutional framework of civil service in developed countries
The institutional framework of civil service in developed countries is charactised by well – established law, autonomous institutions and a clear separation of powers that collectively ensure transparency professionalism and accountability. This framework enables public administration to function efficiently and to adopt to changing social, economic and political conditions.

The institutional framework of civil service in developed countries is marked by legal robustness, professional oversight, ethical regulation and administrative efficiency. These systems ensure that civil servants operate in a predictable, transparent and fair environment. This institutional maturity is a key factor behind the effective governance and high public trust levels seen in many developed nations.

Recruitment and Training in Developed Countries Civil Service

Recruitment into the civil services is largely governed by principles of merit, transparency and fairness. The selection process is typically competitive and open to all qualified applicants, ensuring that individuals are choosen based on their skills, educational background, and performance in standardized examinations or structured interviews. Recruitment procedures are designed to be free from political interference or nepotism and they are often overseen by independent civil service commissions or human resources agencies for example, the United States relies on the office of personnel management (OPM), while the United Kingdom utilized the Civil Service Commission to maintain fair and open recruitment standards. (Darlet Bayeva, Utepkpaliyera & Dussipov, 2014).

There is a strong emphasis on diversity and equal opportunity. Development countries actively promote the inclusion of underrepresented groups, including women, ethnic minorities and persons with disabilities. Recruitment advertisements are widely publicized through official websites and public channels to ensure broad accessibility.

Training and development are also essential components of civil service systems in developed nations once recruited, civil servants typically undergo structured induction or orientation programs which introduce them to the cores values, ethics, responsibilities and organizational culture of the civil service. Training programs may cover a wide range of topics including leadership, policy analysis, communication, digital literacy and public management and the hall mark of civil service training in development countries is the integration of technology and e-learning platforms.

Recruitment and training systems in developed countries contribute to the creation of professional, competent and ethical civil service. As a result the civil service in developed countries is generally more capable of delivering high-quality public services.

Efficiency and Transparency

Efficiency and transparency are core principles guiding the operation of the civil service in the developed countries. Efficiency in the regard refers to the ability of

government department and agencies to deliver public services effectively, on time and with optimal use of resources. This is largely made possible by well – established administrative structures, clear lines of responsibility, performance monitoring systems and modern technology.

Transparency is equally emphasized and is seen as essential for building accountability and preventing corruption in developed civil service systems, decisions, procedures and the allocation of public funds are subject to public scrutiny. The is facilitated through the implantation of freedom of information laws, open data initiatives and independent oversight bodies such as audit institutions or embodiment. (OECD, 2026).

Challenges of Civil Service in Developed Countries.

Civil Service in the developed countries face some challenges that can hinder efficiency and transparency. (Elliot, Botton, Elennor & Connor, 2025). They are as followed.

1. **Bureaucratic Inertia and Resistance to Change**

One of the persistent challenges faced by civil services in developed countries is bureaucratic inertia that is the tendency to maintain existing structures and resist change. This resistance to modernization can slow the implementation of new technologies or approaches that could improve efficiency.

2. **Political Interference and Polarization**

Although civil services are meant to operate independently of political pressures, in practice, political interference remains a significant challenge. In some developed countries, senior civil service appointments are influenced by political consideration, which can undermine the principle of meritocracy and neutrality.

3. **Aging Workforce and Talent Attraction**

The demographic profile of the civil service workforce in many developed countries presents another pressing issue. A significant portion of the public sector employees are nearing retirement particularly from the baby boomer generation,

leading to concerns succession planning and the preservation of institutional knowledge.

4. Technological Challenges

Adopting to rapid technological change is both a necessity and major handle for civil service in the digital age. The stride towards digital transformation as often slow legacy it systems, limited technical expertise and budget constraints hinder progress.

5. Public trust and Accountability

Maintaining public trust is growing challenge for civil service in developed nations. For instance when the citizens perceive government institutions as corrupt, inefficient out of touch with their needs or unrepresentative of their values and communities, trust is weakened.

6. Efficiency and Performance Pressures

In an era of fiscal constraints and growing demand for public services, civil service face intense pressure to improve performance and do more with fewer resources. Citizens increasingly expect fast, efficient and high-quality services akin to those provided by the private sector.

Characteristics of Civil Service in Underdeveloped Countries

Underdeveloped countries, refers to nations characterized by low indurtrialization, limited infrastructure, wide spread poverty and low human development indicators. Those countries can also be referred to as developing countries (World Bank, 2023).

The key characteristics of the civil service in underdeveloped countries are as followed.

1. Polarization and patronage

One of the defining features of civil service systems in underdeveloped countries is the high degree of politicization. Civil service appointments are often made based on political loyalty, ethnic affiliations or personal relationships rather than on merit. This patronage system weakness the neutrality and professionalism of

the bureaucracy, thereby undermines the effectiveness and integrity of the civil service.

2. Lack of Accountability and Transparency

Civil services in underdeveloped countries often lack effective mechanisms to hold officials accountable for their actions without transparency in decision – making and performance evaluations, mismanagement and abuse of power can go unchecked, hindering good governance.

3. Weak Implementation Capacity

The policies may be well – intended the civil service often struggles with implementation due to limited resources, poor planning and coordination problems. This weakness reduce the impact of government programmes on poverty, reduction, infrastructure development.

4. Centralized Structure

Civil service in many underdeveloped countries tend to be highly centralized with decision making concentrated in capital cities or senior official. This limits the responsiveness of government to local needs and slow down service delivery in rural or remote areas.

5. Resistance to change and innovation

This resistance slows down modernization efforts and adaptation to new challenges due to the entrenched traditions fear of job or lack of incentives, civil servants may resist reforms or new technologies that could improve efficiency.

6. Poor Remuneration and Motivation

Civil servants in underdevelopment countries often receive low salaries and inadequate benefits. This lead to low morale, lack of motivation and sometimes drives employees to seek supplement their income, poor motivation further reduces productivity and quality of service.

7. Inadequate Training and Professionalism

Many civil servants lack proper training and professional development opportunities. This results on poor skills and limited knowledge to perform their

roles efficiently. Without continuous learning and capacity – building the civil service struggles to implement policies effectively and adapt to changing needs.

8. Corruption and Nepotism

Corruption is a major problem in the civil services of many underdeveloped countries. Officials may engage in bribery, embezzlement, or favoritism undermine public trust and fairness of government operations. Nepotism the favouring of family or friends inn hiring and promotions is also very common, leading to lack of meritocracy and poor performance. (Roggor, 2025 & Isake & Ugwuanyi, (2023).

Recruitment and Training in the Civil Service of Underdeveloped Countries

Recruitment in the civil service of underdeveloped countries often faces significant challenges that undermine the effectiveness of public administration. One of the primary issues is the prevalence of nepotism and political interference, which frequently lead to appointment based on personal connections rather than merit.

Many countries lack transparent and standardized recruitment process. Competitive examinations, which are the hallmark of merit-based recruitment systems, are either pooly administered or not used at all making it difficult to attract and select qualified candidates. (Transparency International, 2025).

Training is another area where many underdeveloped countries struggle, as there is often a lack of will – established institutions dedicated to the continuous development of civil servants without ongoing training, civil servants cannot keep pace with modern administrative techniques, technology, and policy changed hampers the overall efficiency and responsiveness of the government. (Shahda, 2023).

Efficiency and Transparency in Civil Service

In underdeveloped countries, the performance of the civil service is often hampered by inefficiencies and lack of transparency which in turn undermines public trust, weakness service delivery and impedes national progress civil efficiency is frequently compromised by outdated bureaucratic procedures. A major cause of efficiency is the lack of performance management systems.

In underdeveloped countries, the civil service is often perceived as opaque and corrupt with the decision made behind closed doors and public resources mismanaged or misused one of the key areas where transparency is lacking is in recruitment and promotion process. In many cases, jobs in the civil service are obtained through favouritsm, political connections or bribery, rather than merit. (Muhdiatta, 2025).

Challenges of underdeveloped countries civil service

1. Limited Financial Resources

One of the most significant challenges faced by civil service in underdeveloped countries is the chronic lack of financial resources. Government budgets are often small due to a narrow economic base and poor fiscal management. These countries rely heavily on foreign aid and loans to fund basic operations. Making their civil services vulnerable to the shifting priorities and conditions imposed by international donors.

2. Corruption and lack of Accountability

Corruption is a widespread problem that deeply undermines civil service in many underdeveloped nations. Public funds intended for service delivery are frequently diverted through embezzlement, bribery and frequent procurement practices. Lack of transparency and weak institutional checks and balance allow corrupt practices to flourish with little consequence.

3. Inefficient Bureaucracy

Their bureaucratic systems are played by inefficiency and excessive centralization. Decision making process are slow and mired in red tape which delays service delivery and frustrates both citizens and government employees. Many procedures are still manual or paper – based due to lack of technological infrastructure, making them prone to errors and difficult to audit.

4. Weak Legal and Institutional Framework

Legal and institutional structures that govern civil service in underdeveloped countries are often poorly developed or in-consistently applied public service regulations may exist on paper but are rarely enforced resulting in a lack of discipline, ethical conduct and performance standard among civil servants

5. Technological Gap

The lack of access to modern technology is another major barrier to effective civil service in underdeveloped countries. Many public institutions lack the digital infrastructure needed for efficient service delivery, data management and communication. The absence of reliable data systems also make evidence – based policy making difficult thereby limiting the ability of civil institutions to respond effectively to public needs.

6. Public Distrust and low civil Engagement

Years of inadequate service delivery, corruption, and mismanagement have led to widespread public distrust in civil institution. Many citizens view government service as inefficient, unfair or in accessible, particularly those in rural areas or from marginalized communities.

7. Political Instability and Conflict

Frequent political upheaval, civil unrest or armed conflict can severely disrupt civil service delivery in many underdeveloped countries, changes in government result in the complete overhaul of civil service leadership with new appointees often lacking experience or a clear mandate such inability hampers long term planning and policy implementation. (Ibeto & Kehinde, 2021) and (Berkman, 2019).

The similarity between civil service in developed and underdeveloped countries

1. **Bureaucratic Structure:** In this contexts both civil services are organized hierarchically with clearly defined roles, responsibilities and reporting lines. Government ministries and departments are typically segmented into sectors such as health, education, finance and public works, regardless of the country's development status

2. **Rule – Based Operation:** Another key similarity lies in the rule – based operation of civil services both developed and underdeveloped countries rely on laws, regulations and administrative procedures to govern how civil servants are recruited, promoted, and disciplined. Though the degree of

enforcement may differ, the foundational idea that civil servants should operate within a legal framework is common across all systems.

3. **Public Service Mandate:** The civil services in both groups of countries have same core function which is to implement government decisions, formulate policies, and deliver essential public services such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure. Regardless of development levels, civil servants are tasked with maintaining the day to day operations of government.

4. **Similar Administrative Functions:** These include policy planning, budgeting, service delivery, data collection, and regulation enforcement. The core duties of managing government affairs, maintaining records and interacting with citizens are universally shared.

5. **Resistance to Change and Reform:** Even in the advanced economies, introducing efficiency or performance – based systems can meet with internal opposition, just as it does in less developed contexts.

6. **Political Neutral and Permanent Employees:** In both developed and underdeveloped nations, civil servants are ideally expected to be politically neutral and permanent employees, serving that civil servants should after professional expertise and institutional memory, regardless of the ruling party.

The Dissimilarities Between Developed and Under – Developed Countries

1. **Level of efficiency and professionalism:** In developed countries civil service are generally characterized by well-trained personnel, clear procedures and strong institutional capacity. Civil servants are usually selected based on merit with transparent recruitment process. In contrast, civil services in underdeveloped countries often suffer from inefficiency, lack of training and inadequate human resource. Recruitment may be influenced by favoritism, nepotism or political patronage.

2. **Level of Corruption and Accountability:** Developed countries tend to have stronger systems for ensuring transparency, monitoring performance and

holding civil servants accountable for misconduct. On the other hand in many underdeveloped countries, civil services are plaqued by corruption, weak enforcement of rules and limited checks and balances. Bribery, embezzlement and misused of public funds are more prevalent.

3. **Degree of political interference:** Many developed countries civil services are largely insulated from political pressure, allowing them to function independently and uphold the law impartially in the underdeveloped countries, civil services are often heavily politicized with appointments, promotions and transfer influenced by political loyalty rather than competence.

4. **The availability of resources and Infrastructure:** civil services in developed countries typically operate with better funding, modern technology to enable them deliver services more effectively and efficiently. While underdeveloped countries often face severe resource constraints, including outdated equipment, inadequate office space, unreliable communication systems.

5. **Ability to implement and enforce policy:** development countries usually have well – coordinated mechanisms for policy implementation, including strong inter – agency co-operation, performance, monitoring and feedback systems. In underdeveloped countries weak institutions poor co-ordination and limited monitoring capacity often result in policy failures.

Lessons from Developed to Underdeveloped Countries Civil Service

The following are the lessons the underdeveloped countries civil service can learn from the developed ones.

- Merit – based recruitment and promotion
- Professional development and training
- Strong institutions and rule of law
- Use of technology and E-governance
- Performance management systems
- Political neutrality and professionalism
- Citizen – centered service delivery

- Transparency and anti – corruption measures

Reference

Peters, B. G. (2010). The politics of bureaucracy. An introduction to comparative public administration. New York: Routledge.

Rainey, H.G (2009). Understanding and managing public organisations. San Francisco, CA: Jossey- Bass.

Transparency international (2025). Corruption perceptions index. Retrieved from https://www.transparency.org/en/cp.

Nyadera, IN & Dugba G. (2002). Public administration features in developed and developing countries,. Singapore: Sprunger.

Niedobitek, M (2025). Development of Civil service in a comparative perspective. London: Taylor & Francis Pub.

Shahda, E A (2023). Public Sector performance reforms in developing countries. Comtemporary Arab Affairs, 16(3), 244-361

Roggor, D (2025). The lives and times of civil servants in the developing world. Retrieved from http://voxderang/topic/publiceconomis/lives-and-times-civil-servants-developing-world.

Isah, M.A., Ugwuanyi, B. I (2023). Public bureaucracy and national development in developing countries. International & interdisciplinary journal of language, law & political science administration, 1 (2), 55-66.

Muhdiatta, U (2025). Investigating the challenges of bureaucratic reform in developing countries. 110mata social science journal 6(1), 1-10.

Enahoro, E (2020). The role of bureaucracy in good governance in Nigeria. International journal of advanced legal studies and governance, 11 (1), 115-128.

Ibeto, C. U., & Kehinde, M. O (2021). Public bureaucracy and sustainable development in Nigeria: challenges and prospects. Journal of Management Studies and Economic systems, 8(3), 233-242.

Safdar. G. (2021). Administrative issues and reforms in the bureaucracy of Pakistan. Social science Review 6(2), 45-57.

Berkman, U. (1999). Corruption in and public administration: are the underdeveloped more prone? Bilkent: University Press.

Kelly, A (2024). Civil Service. Uk: Journal of Administration 73(1) 21-32.

Darlebbayera, Z.Z., Utepkaliyera, BT & Dussipor Y.S (2024). Enhancing the professionalism of Civil Servants: the experience of the DECD Countries. Journal of Economic Research & Business Administration 145(1) 125-135.

Organization for Economic co-operation and Development (2025). Workforce insight from Central government UK: OECD publishing.

Elliott, I.C., Botton, K.A, Glennon, R. & Connor, K (2025) educating a civil service that is fit for Purpose Public Management Review, 45(2), 119-128.

Fukuyama, F. (2017) Political order and political decay from the industrialized revolution to the globalization of democracy New York: Straus and Groux & Publishers.