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## RECRUITING PUBLIC PERSONNEL: A COMPARATIVE APPROACH

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### ABSTRACT

Recruitment in the public sector is a multifaceted process influenced by various criteria, including merit, political considerations, patronage, and ascriptive factors. In different countries, governments use different approaches to recruiting public personnel. This article examines the way in which governments select administrators, and thereby one of the ways in which they narrow the range of possible outcomes of the policy-making process. Through this, we will see what those recruitment methods are, what characterises them and how they differ from each other. By addressing the challenges, we will explore the complexities of public sector recruitment, highlighting the need for a balanced approach that values merit while also promoting inclusivity and representation.

*Keywords:* Recruitment, Meritocracy, Competence, Political Patronage, Political Appointments, Representation.

### INTRODUCTION

In the history of public administration, the issue of recruitment has gone through different phases. The effort to recruit bureaucracy based on individual abilities began in the early periods. China was the first real society to create a class of "scholar-officials" who, due to their dominance in education, were the first bureaucratic elite. If China was the first modern administrative state, then Rome was certainly the first administrative empire, which had an organizational doctrine that made its soldiers much more effective than competing forces – and because its legions were supported by a sophisticated administrative supply system based on regular taxation.

The 19th-century reforms began with the **Northcote-Trevelyan Report** in 1854, which emphasized the establishment of open competition in civil service recruitment and merit-based promotion.

**Woodrow Wilson**, in his 1887 essay "*The Study of Administration*", called for intellectual engagement within public administration. His proposed quest for a science of administration and his assertion that business techniques are applicable to the public sector all became part of the dominant image of public administration during the classical period.

With the introduction of **Public Management** into public administration, the evaluation of civil service employees' performance shifted from input-based to performance-based assessment. At the same time, management techniques from the private sector began to be applied in the public sector as well.

All these efforts, across different periods, were made with the aim of finding better ways to appoint civil servants in public administration.

The literature on public personnel recruitment highlights several themes: merit-based versus patronage-based recruitment, political appointments, representative bureaucracy, the role of

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political influence, the impact of bureaucracy, and the significance of transparency and accountability. In many countries, recruitment has traditionally been based on political affiliations, often leading to patronage systems. However, the shift towards merit-based recruitment in recent decades has been emphasised in public administration literature as a means to ensure efficiency, reduce corruption, and increase public trust in government institutions.

Several studies have pointed out the need for modernisation in recruitment processes, especially with the advent of technology and globalisation. Public recruitment systems that embrace transparency, fairness, and competency-based assessments are seen as more efficient and are widely advocated in academic discussions. Four ways of recruiting public personnel will be discussed: merit-based, political appointments, patronage, and representative bureaucracy.

## **MERIT SYSTEM**

Several somewhat conflicting themes have dominated the discussion of administrative recruitment (Peters, 2018). The first of these has been the search for efficiency through merit recruitment. One of the defining characteristics of Weber's model of bureaucracy was that civil servants should be selected on the basis of achievement criteria and merit, rather than ascriptive criteria such as caste, race, class, or language. This has been referred to as selection by "neutral competence" (Kaufman, 1956). The criteria used to select personnel, therefore, may be either their training and expertise for certain identified positions in the bureaucracy, or their general competence and intellectual abilities. In either case, the assumption underlying merit selection of personnel is that bureaucracy must be able to recruit the best possible personnel, and merit recruitment is the logical means of filling positions with the best qualified personnel.

In developmental terms, a second impetus for adoption of merit recruitment was the desire to remove the appointment of administrative positions from political patronage and to require merit qualifications (Peters and Pierre, 2004). Thus, in addition to removing the inequalities and possible inefficiencies of ascriptive recruitment, the merit reforms of the civil service were intended to remove the inefficiencies and favouritism of political appointment. However, as desirable as the idea of employing the best person possible for each job in the public service may be from the perspective of enforcing the achievement norms of a modern society, and perhaps of achieving contemporary goals of social equality in a developing society, some important inefficiencies may result from merit recruitment.

**Max Weber's Vision of Meritocracy:** One of the defining characteristics of Weber's model of bureaucracy (Page, 1992) was that civil servants should be selected on the basis of achievement criteria and merit, rather than ascriptive criteria such as caste, race, class, or language. The office is an "Occupation". It is expressed first after the requirement of a prescribed course of training, which entails working in a capacity for a long period of time and generally has a prescribed special examination as a prerequisite for employment.

Management of the Office, at the least, all specialised office management, normally presupposes complete and expert training. This also holds for the modern executive and employee of private enterprises, just as it applies to the state official. Management of the office generally follows rules, which are more or less stable, comprehensive, and can be learned. These rules require knowledge (involving jurisprudence, administrative, or business management) which officials learn through special technical learning.

Neutral Competence: Herbert Kaufman defined neutral competence as “the ability to do the work of government expertly, and to do it according to explicit, objective standards rather than to personal or party or other obligations and loyalties” (1956: 1060). Neutral competence, in evaluating various advocacy viewpoints and compromises among policy alternatives, can assist political forces in a variety of ways, including avoiding hazards through careful deliberation of policy alternatives, and add a level of credibility to policy proceedings through the inclusion of nonpartisan analysis (Weimer, 2005).

Ideally, neutral competence serves political forces with less regard for more partisan objectives and greater attention to quality of implementation. Administration thus serves as a “wealth of knowledge and skills available in the corridors of bureaucracy that all elected officials, no matter what their political persuasion, could call upon for both useful information and disinterested advice in designing national policy” (Rourke 1992: 539). While a strict separation of politics and administration is likely a myth, it is nevertheless still an ideal of public administration that administrators accomplish the goals of political leaders and do so in a nonpartisan manner (Kearney, 1988). Administrators are capable of complex technical work associated with the machinery of government; benefit from cost analyses and decision-making based on documentary requirements require knowledge and skill and are technical enterprises (West, 2005).

While it may be instinctive for an elected official to fill administrative positions with staff of like mind, such individuals may lack necessary skills to make government function properly, despite their considerable political acumen. While political appointees have ample boldness to direct change, they may not have “the recognition that they will have to live with the consequences of misplaced boldness” (Hecklo, 1975).

Thus, in addition to removing the inequalities and possible inefficiencies of ascriptive recruitment, the merit reforms of the civil service were intended to remove the inefficiencies and favouritism of political appointment. As desirable as the idea of employing the best person possible for each job in the public service may be from the perspective of enforcing the achievement norms of a modern society, and perhaps of achieving contemporary goals of social equality in a developing society, some important inefficiencies may result from merit recruitment which will be discussed in the next section.

## **POLITICAL APPOINTMENT**

### **Definitions of politicisation**

At the most basic level, by politicisation of the civil service we mean the substitution of merit-based criteria for political criteria in the selection, retention, promotion, rewards, and disciplining of members of the public service (Peters and Pierre, 2004).

Unlike the use of patronage appointments in many less developed countries (World Bank, 2000/2001), politicisation in the industrialised democracies implies attempts to control policy and implementation, rather than just supply jobs to party members or members of a family or clique. The definition of politicisation advanced above is broad and requires some ramifications. The first point is that almost all civil service systems have some level of political involvement in personnel matters that is considered appropriate.

A second point to consider is that the nature of the political criteria being employed when the public service is being politicised may vary. We usually think of these as being partisan political loyalties but attempts at politicisation may also reflect policy and even stylistic issues,

as they are manifested in the activities of public servants. For example, during the Thatcher years in the United Kingdom it was often argued that politicisation was occurring less on the basis of allegiance to the Conservative Party and more on the basis of being “one of us”, i.e., being committed to a programme of radical reform of the public sector (Clifford and Wright, 1997).

A third point is that the manner in which the political criteria are employed may matter for the performance of the administrative system. For example, permitting merit criteria to dominate the selection and promotion of public servants for most of their careers, with the political criteria being used primarily to remove very senior officials and to replace them (particularly after a change of government), is less destructive of the principles underlying merit systems than is more overt selection of civil servants throughout their careers. Likewise, the focus on policy goals as opposed to partisan allegiance mentioned above may be less destructive to democratic values than would be strict partisanship in selection.

Fourth, politicisation may also mean that public servants begin to take on tasks that formerly (and formally) might have been considered to be political. There is some evidence that ministers find it increasingly difficult to separate their political roles from their governmental roles and require civil servants to perform tasks that might be better performed by political aides, or by political party personnel (Savoie, 1999).

Fifth, increased politicisation in the partisan sense may imply depoliticisation in other senses. One target of would-be politicisation in many countries has been the close connection of social and economic interest groups with ministries, and with individual civil servants. For that functional, corporatist relationship, concerned politicians would substitute a partisan or political loyalty. The commitment of bureaucrats to the values and interests of the policy area is generally seen as just another reason for the difficulties that ministers encounter when attempting to manage their programmes and their departments. This is especially true for parties that come to office after some period in opposition and find that there are working relationships in place that they do not favour. Still, substituting the influence of political parties and politicians means that other political actors, the interest groups, will be less influential.

A final consideration arising from this definition of politicisation is that in some ways political criteria may be more important for ensuring democratic values in governing than are conventional merit values. One standard critique of conventional bureaucracies is that the permanent, career public service is not sufficiently responsive to changes in the priorities of their political leadership<sup>2</sup>. They persist in their own conceptions of appropriate policies, regardless of what their ministers want. Replacing those permanent employees with more responsive, if politicised, public employees may actually improve the correspondence between electoral results and policies (Peters and Pierre, 2000). Despite that possibility, the term politicisation has a generally negative connotation in democratic societies.

### **Targets of politicisation**

The above definition implies that there is no single way of achieving politicisation, and that there are numerous targets that might be addressed. For example, politicisation is usually discussed in terms of the *employees of the public sector*. The assumption is that the best way to

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<sup>2</sup> The Dynamics of Public Policy: A Comparative Analysis. (1976). Edited by Rose, Beverly Hills and London: Sage Publications, 1976.

gain control over the public bureaucracy is to have the capability of appointing one's own faithful to positions that influence or control public policy. There are, of course, numerous examples of those appointees "marrying the natives" and becoming simply new components of the machinery, they were meant to direct, but politicians generally persist in the view that appointing personnel into the bureaucracy is a crucial mechanism of control. Public organisations are particularly good at capturing any new members of their nominal leadership, given that the careerists tend to control information and to control contacts with interest groups in society.

Actual appointment of partisan loyalists to those positions in the bureaucracy may not be so crucial if the political leaders are able to influence the *behaviour* of the personnel already in those positions. Indeed, this is a much less expensive strategy, in terms of the political capital required, and in terms of the wastage of personnel resources in government. If the same goals can be achieved by winning over the career bureaucracy, then everyone may be better off. This desired effect on the behaviour of public servants may be achieved in several ways. One strategy is to use ideology and leadership to mobilise the public service – this can be seen in Tony Blair's success with the British civil service, as well as in many mobilisation regimes in the Third World. Fear of loss of employment, demotion, transfer, etc is, of course, another and much less positive means of achieving those same behavioural ends.

Following closely from the strategy of changing behaviour is a political strategy of attempting to change the *attitudes and culture* of the public service. As intimated above, this strategy has some positive democratic connotations if the purpose of the proposed change is to have the bureaucracy follow the election results, and to consider that their task is to be more than grudging executors of government policy. That said, however, changing the component of civil service culture that supports detachment from the politics of the day in favour of a more responsive and political conception of the role may not have entirely positive consequences for government, or for the public service.

### **Why politicise?**

The most obvious reason, as already mentioned above, is that politicians want to be able to control what their government organisations do. The usual complaint about the bureaucracy is that the decisions taken by ministers simply trickle into the sand. If there are loyal party members administering public programmes, so it has been argued, there will be less deflection of policy directions than in a system dominated by the career public service.

One answer is that the process of administrative reform so common during the past several decades has tended to remove the controls that previously helped to control the actions of the bureaucracy. This has at once necessitated introducing some additional form of control and presented the opportunity for using political means to achieve that control. For example, "Next Steps" in the UK and analogous de-concentrations of the public sector have purposefully freed major parts of the public sector from direct ministerial control. This greater freedom in turn imposes a need for some form of control over policy and administration. The managerialist perspective inherent in these reforms assumes that the managers should manage, and by extension that controls over those managers are not desirable. Likewise, the tendency to "deregulate government" (Peters, 1998) also removes a whole range of mechanisms for controlling the civil service and its behaviour in office.

## Politicisation in different countries

As we said early, is that almost all civil service systems in different countries have some level of political involvement in personnel matters that is considered appropriate. So let's observe the level of politicisation in some countries. The remainder of this section will be a series of studies of politicisation in some industrialised democracies. This "sample" of countries excludes perhaps the most extreme cases of politicisation encountered in many less developed political systems, with dominant political parties attempting to impose their control over the political system.

We start with the *Swedish civil service*. While much of the post-war period saw little change in the political control of the civil service at a systemic level, there developed an indirect type of politicisation through the appointment of civil servants with an overt political affiliation to senior posts in the public bureaucracy. The consequences of this incremental development became obvious in 1976 as Sweden elected its first non-socialist government in more than forty years. The incoming government soon learned that Social Democrats controlled a large number of senior, tenured, meritocratic positions in the civil service (Levin, 1983). Four decades earlier, in 1932, the Social Democrats had come into office with an extensive reform agenda, only to find that the cadre of career senior civil servants were difficult to mobilise for the new type of policies. In both cases, nominally non-political civil servants slowed the execution of policies because they were not convinced about the validity of these new ideas (Pierre, 1995).

*Politicisation of the government's central office in Sweden* today consists of the Prime Minister and twenty-three other ministers. The number of ministers or ministries is not subject to regulation. It is up to the Government to decide how the various duties are to be divided up. Approximately 4,800 members of staff are employed at the Government Offices, of whom around 170 are political appointees (Table 1).

**Table 1: Number of employees by staff category for each year in Sweden Government<sup>3</sup>**

Ministry	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Managers	510	506	513	518	533
Case officers	2,830	2,764	2,774	2,887	2,937
Specialists	574	543	587	570	603
Political appointees	203	181	204	193	167
Support staff	610	570	545	548	542
Government Offices	4,727	4,564	4,623	4,716	4,782

The *German civilservice* exhibits an interesting degree of ambivalence. On the one hand, the principles of a merit-based professional and tenured career civil service are not only – in keeping with the strong 'state tradition' – well enshrined in (constitutional) law; and on the other, the system allows for a number of loopholes for patronage and generally accepts party politicisation more widely than would be expected in light of the Weberian legacy. There is the institution of the 'political civil servant', which applies to the top two ranks of the bureaucratic hierarchy and allows ministers to send their top advisers into temporary retirement without any justification. According to CSW (Civil Service World) at any given

<sup>3</sup>Source: Swedish Government Yearbook, 2022

time, this group of 'political civil servants' comprises some 160 political civil servants – less than 1% of all 22,000 civil servants in all federal ministries<sup>4</sup>.

*In France*, a significant proportion of senior civil servant positions are filled through political appointments. For example, recent analyses have suggested that around 20-30% of top positions in the civil service can be politically influenced<sup>5</sup>.

In the *British civil service*, the most significant period of politicisation is alleged to have taken place since the early 1980s – during the Conservative administrations of Thatcher and Major, from 1979–97 and under the Labour Government of Tony Blair, elected to its second term in 2001. The period therefore covered those civil servants still serving or in retirement. At the same time both the Conservatives and Labour were parties that had been in power for a significant amount of time. This period was an extremely interesting one because while commentators worried about the ability of officials to deal with a new Labour administration in office in 1997 after 18 years of Conservative control, there were repeated, if not increased, concerns about politicisation with changes instigated by the Blair government. This allowed us to put the case for sustained pressures on the civil service rather than focusing on the particular characteristics of the Conservative governments as a 'special case'.

The data show that, on 31 March 2022, there were 4,476 public appointees in regulated roles, who were appointed by UK Government Ministers. Of these, 58% (2,580) were in roles where the appointments were made directly by UK Government Ministers and 42% (1,896) were, in bodies where Ministers have delegated the appointing authority. The total numbers of civil servants in UK Government in 2022 was 480,000.<sup>6</sup>

In the *United States* by the end of World War II the large majority of federal employment was covered by some form of merit selection and management. This development of the civil service occurred at the same time as the institutionalised presidency was developing and more opportunities for political appointments were becoming available within the White House itself (Karl, 1979). The result of the development of the administrative system in the United States is an almost paradoxical mixture of overt political selection and control and extreme commitment to merit and depoliticisation. On the one hand, almost all the top positions in government – at present over four thousand positions – are held by political appointees. (Peters and Pierre, 2004). On the other hand, the remaining public employees are selected by a rigorously enforced merit system and are subjected to numerous restrictions on their political involvement and activities, most notably the Hatch Act.<sup>7</sup> The Office of Personnel Management and the Merit System Protection Board are charged with maintaining the integrity of the merit system, with other institutions in place to pursue any significant violations of the concept of political neutrality.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.civilserviceworld.com/>

<sup>5</sup> OECD, Paper no.6 Study OnThe Political Involvement In Senior Staffing AndOnThe Delineation Of Responsibilities Between Ministers And Senior Civil Servants.

<sup>6</sup> Public Appointments Data Report 2021/2022.

<sup>7</sup>The Hatch Act is a U.S. federal law that was enacted in 1939 to restrict political activities of federal employees, as well as employees of state and local governments who work in programs funded by federal grants. The primary purpose of the Hatch Act was to maintain a politically neutral government by preventing public employees from using their official positions to influence or participate in political activities that could interfere with the integrity of government operations.

## REPRESENTATIVE BUREAUCRACY

It should be remembered, however, that in some instances ascriptive criteria may be important for achieving the purposes of a public organisation. An organisation that must provide services to members of minority communities can, everything else being equal, do a better job by using a large number of minority employees in contact with the community than by using members of the dominant community. The concept of “merit” in public office is more complex than it is sometimes assumed to be, and race, creed, colour, and gender of public employees may be important in determining how well government really will deliver its services (Dolan and Rosenbloom, 2015). As ethnicity, gender, and other ascriptive criteria continue to increase in importance as political cleavages within both industrialised and developing countries, issues of representativeness along those dimensions are likely to be even more crucial in the future.

Thus, just as some scholars have emphasised the necessity of merit in the recruitment of public administrators, others have stressed the importance of selecting administrators whose social and economic characteristics are similar to those of the people whom they will serve. The arguments are twofold. The first is that narrow recruitment from any social stratum will tend to bias programmes and policies. This more “positive” conception of representativeness argues that there is a need to ensure that programmes are influenced by the individuals who administer them (Sowa and Selden, 2003). The second argument in favour of greater representativeness is that the ability of the public bureaucracy to hire personnel should be used as a positive means to alter the social and economic structure of the society. Thus, the normative argument is that hiring minority community members can serve not only to attack any prejudices within the society but also to provide a means of economic advancement for members of the minority community.

In both versions of this argument, however, exists the underlying premise that bureaucracies should be representative not simply because it is democratic for them to be so, but because the pattern of recruitment will have a fundamental effect on social structure and social stratification across time. Thus, government may have a special responsibility for fostering greater equality of employment and, over time, creating greater social equality (Beaumont, 1981). This recruitment pattern may be adopted to enhance social equality but may even be important for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery by the public sector. This representativeness is especially important as a means of creating a bureaucracy that will be similar to the clients with whom they come into contact on the job.

To some degree, possessing relevant ascriptive criteria may be an important qualification for the efficient administration of public programmes, especially at the client-contact level of bureaucracy. Language, race, or class differences may prevent proper administration of public programmes because clients may perceive these differences as a measure of the programme’s commitment to their needs. To prevent those differences from becoming too significant in administration, some attention to ethnic or gender balancing of personnel must be given. Thus, to some degree, defining the person best able to carry out a job can depend upon demographic characteristics just as it can depend upon formal education and having certain skills (Peters, 2018).

## PATRONAGE

Patronage is a method of recruitment that fundamentally disregards the skills and competencies of the individual, prioritizing loyalty to a specific political party or adherence to leadership instead.

This recruitment method is often used by governments to reward their party voters or, as Grindle (2011) puts it, "Jobs for the boys." Patronage is generally considered an ineffective and detrimental method of recruitment for several reasons:

***Inefficiency:*** Patronage often prioritises personal connections over qualifications, which can lead to the selection of less capable candidates. This undermines the overall efficiency and effectiveness of public service.

***Lack of Meritocracy:*** When recruitment is based on political connections rather than merit, it discourages talented individuals from pursuing public sector jobs, as they may feel that their skills and qualifications are undervalued.

***Corruption Risks:*** Patronage can foster an environment where corruption thrives, as individuals may feel obligated to reciprocate favours or support their patrons instead of focusing on public service responsibilities.

***Inequality and Discrimination:*** Patronage systems can perpetuate inequality by favouring certain groups over others, often based on political affiliations or social connections, rather than on individual merit.

***Low Morale:*** Employees who feel they have been hired through patronage may be less motivated to perform well, knowing that their colleagues were selected based on connections rather than skills.

***Public Trust:*** Patronage can erode public trust in government institutions, as citizens may perceive them as biased or corrupt, leading to a lack of confidence in public services.

In sum, while patronage may provide short-term political benefits, it ultimately undermines the integrity, efficiency, and fairness of recruitment processes in the public sector.

### Summary of Key Statistics

Table 2 below presents key statistics comparing meritocracy, political appointments, patronage, and representative bureaucracy across different countries. The data reveals that countries with a strong democratic system are more oriented towards meritocratic system. Political appointments are more prevalent in countries with centralized political systems, often leading to faster decision-making but sometimes at the cost of impartiality. In contrast, patronage systems, which are more common in certain regions, often correlate with lower government performance and higher levels of corruption. Finally, representative bureaucracy statistics indicate that countries prioritizing demographic diversity in their public service tend to experience more inclusive governance and higher public satisfaction, though challenges in achieving true representation remain.

**Table 2: Comparative analysis of key statistics related to meritocracy, political appointments, patronage, and representative bureaucracy**

Country	Merit-Based Recruitment	Patronage/Political Appointments	Representative Bureaucracy	Diversity/Equity Efforts
United States <sup>8</sup>	80% federal merit-based	1% political appointments	High racial and gender diversity	41% racial/ethnic minorities in federal workforce
United Kingdom <sup>9</sup>	90% civil service merit-based	10% political appointments	Moderate diversity	~25% ethnic minorities in civil service
India <sup>10</sup>	5-20% merit-based (UPSC)	Limited patronage at local levels	Low diversity at higher levels	Focus on affirmative action (reservations)
Mexico <sup>11</sup>	Moderate merit-based	40-50% patronage-based (local)	Low diversity	Growing efforts at reform
South Africa <sup>12</sup>	High merit-based	Moderate political appointments	High racial representation	80% Black in public service
Canada <sup>13</sup>	70-80% merit-based	Limited political appointments	High multicultural representation	25% minorities in public service

## CONCLUSION

Recruitment in the public sector is a complex interplay of various criteria, including merit, political influences, patronage, and ascriptive factors. While merit-based recruitment aims to enhance efficiency and competency by selecting the most qualified candidates, political and patronage considerations often undermine these goals, leading to favouritism and inefficiencies. Ascriptive criteria, such as ethnicity or family background, can further complicate the landscape, potentially perpetuating inequality and limiting opportunities for diverse talent.

Ultimately, a balanced approach that prioritises merit while recognising the broader social and political context is essential for creating a public sector that is not only effective but also equitable and representative. By striving to minimise the influence of non-meritocratic factors,

<sup>8</sup>U.S. Office of Personnel Management, Federal Employment Reports, <https://www.opm.gov>

<sup>9</sup>Civil Service Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (2020), <https://www.gov.uk>

<sup>10</sup>Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), 2020 Report, <https://www.upsc.gov.in>

<sup>11</sup>OECD (2019). Public Employment and Management Reviews: Mexico.

<sup>12</sup>Diversity and Representation: "Public Service Employment Equity Report" by the South African Public Service Commission. <https://www.dpsa.gov.za/dpsa2g/documents/ee/2023/Annual%20Report%20on%20Employment%20Equity%20in%20the%20Public%20Service%202021%202022.pdf>

<sup>13</sup>Public Service Commission of Canada, "Diversity in the Federal Public Service" (2021), <https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/innovation/human-resources-statistics/demographic-snapshot-federal-public-service-2021.html>

public sector organisations can better serve their communities and fulfil their responsibilities to the public.

While political appointments can help align public sector leadership with elected officials' goals, they also pose significant risks to meritocracy, stability, and public trust. Striking a balance between political alignment and the need for qualified, effective leadership is crucial for fostering a public sector that serves the interests of all citizens.

While ascriptive criteria can contribute to diversity and representation, relying heavily on them in recruitment can undermine meritocracy and lead to inefficiencies. A balanced approach that promotes diversity while prioritising qualifications and competencies is essential for fostering an effective, equitable, and responsive public sector. By carefully managing the influence of ascriptive factors, organisations can enhance their ability to serve all citizens fairly.

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