

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (U.A.E)

Size: 84,000 square kilometers
Population: 3 million
GNP per capita: 17,360 US \$ (1997)

I- GENERAL STRUCTURE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

1.1- THE STATE AND ITS CONSTITUTIONAL BASIS

The United Arab Emirates comprises seven emirates: Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Um Elquin, Al Fujairah, Ajrnan and Ras El Kheima. The Federation came into effect in December 1971. Before that, the seven emirates were ruled independently. The Constitution issued in July 1971 interprets the nature of the political and administrative system, as well as the distribution of authority between the judiciary, legislative and executive bodies.

1.1.1- The federal government

Article (120) of the Constitution stipulates that the Federation is empowered with legislative and executive authorities in the following areas:

- Foreign affairs
- Defense and federal armed forces
- Education and health
- Federation finance, taxes, customs and loans
- Postal, telecommunications, roads, electricity services, etc.
- Money and currency
- Federation nationality, residency, passports and naturalization

As for the powers and authorities of the Federation, the following bodies are recognized by the Constitution:

- i- The Supreme Council of the Federation* (SC) is the highest authority in the Federation. It is constituted of their Highnesses the Rulers of the seven emirates. The Council is responsible for the formulation of the public policy of the Federation, the ratification of federal laws and decrees, international agreements and tackling higher control affairs, etc.
- ii- The President and his Deputy.* The SC selects the President and his deputy from the members of the Council. The President has the authority to appoint the ministers and diplomatic representatives and supervises the enactment of laws, decrees and federal decisions.
- iii- The Cabinet* is the executive body of the Federation and is responsible for foreign and internal affairs in accordance with the Constitution and federal laws.
- iv- The National Federal Council* (NFC) is constituted of the representatives of the emirates, and each emirate has the right to nominate its own representatives. The NFC is

responsible for reviewing drafts of federal laws and international agreements and discussing the public issues that concerns the Federation.

- v- ***The Federal Judiciary System.*** According to the Constitution, a high court is established in addition to preliminary federal courts. The Higher Federal Court is empowered to adjudicate on conflicts between the emirates or between the federal government and the emirates. Moreover, it is also authorized to see whether laws, legislation and by-laws are constitutional, to interpret the Constitution and to question ministers and top civil servants.

In addition to the above-mentioned bodies, there are several public corporations and specialized units established to work within the federal framework.

1.1.2- The local government

According to the Constitution, the emirates have full authority over their territories, i.e., maintaining law and order, provision of public services, development of social and economic standards within the emirate, enforcement of local ordinances, etc.

The general structure of public administration has been intact since its formulation in 1971. No drastic changes have been introduced in the past or are expected in the near future.

II- THE LEGAL DIMENSION OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

2.1.1- LEGAL BASIS

The legal system, as well as the public administration system, is characterized by stability through a long period of time. This is actually an advantage because it gives adequate time for implementation and thus discovering the loopholes in the system.

2.1.2- PUBLIC BIDDING PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES

Public bidding in procurement and public works is organized by the Ministry of Finance and Industry (MOFI) and the Permanent Projects Committee (Ministry of Planning). The bidding procedures are established by the directives and decisions of the MOFI.

2.1.3- LEGAL SYSTEM PROTECTING THE CITIZENS AGAINST THE DECISIONS TAKEN BY PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

The citizens can legally dispute the decisions taken by public administration authorities either by complaining to the Chairperson of the organization in which the dispute has taken place or by adjudication.

As said earlier, the system is fairly stable and no changes are expected in the foreseeable future.

III- CIVIL SERVICE

3.1- CURRENT SITUATION

The federal government structure comprises a set of ministries, public corporations, authorities and agencies. **The Civil Service Council (CSC)** is the technical arm of the Cabinet that caters for the development of the civil service, productivity within governmental organizations and follow-up the executive units in carrying out their stipulated duties. Also the CSC ensures that the *Civil Service Law* is adhered to by the different governmental units.

3.1.1- Basic statistics

- In 1998, the total number of employees in the different ministries who work for the federal government stood at 58,680, excluding the armed forces, i.e., Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior.
- 61,4 % of the total number of employees work for the Ministry of Education and Youth.
- The females in the civil service were 27,302 compared to males whose total number was 31,378.
- The percentage of the civil service employees to the total population is about 2.5%.

3.1.2- Categories

The Civil Service Law (No. 8/1973) regulates the different aspects of employees' service. The civil service posts are classified into four groups, and each scale is divided into grades, the total of which is fourteen. These are as follows:

Group 1: *The top management*, which includes the post of Under-Secretary and two other grades (1 and 2) reserved for the Directors of departments.

Group II: *High posts*, which are filled by university graduates. The group is divided into four grades (1-4).

Group III: *Middle posts*, which are filled by employees with secondary school or higher institutes (post-secondary) qualifications. The group is divided into four grades (1-4).

Group IV: *Workers and laborers*. The group is divided into four grades (1-4).

The Civil Service Law is applied for the federal government civil servants. The armed forces (Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior) as well as those who work under special laws are excluded from the Civil Service Law. Moreover, temporary employees (i.e., expatriates) are employed on a contract basis.

3.1.3- Recruitment, selection and promotion

Recruitment and selection of civil servants is subject to **competition**. After an advertisement for a vacant post, *interviews* and/or *tests* are usually conducted for the applicants to select a suitable candidate. The selected candidates (except those in group 1) usually go through a six-month probationary period before their final appointment.

According to the Civil Service Law, employees in groups II and III are promoted by seniority. However, 25% of them could be promoted by efficiency criteria.

3.1.4- Retirement and pensions

Retirement age is 60 years. It is extendable for five more years with the approval of the Cabinet. The employees are covered with a pension scheme, except the expatriates, who are entitled to a gratuit commensurate to their period of service.

3.2- DEVELOPMENTS IN PROGRESS

As for the ***reform and modernization of the civil service***, special attention has been given to the efficiency and effectiveness of governmental units. Some of the achievements in this context are:

- Reorganization of the structures of all the ministries and government units;

- Designing and implementing a job description and classification scheme for the civil service;
- Establishment of Administrative Development Units in the federal ministries to cater for the improvement of systems and procedures, as well as employers' training and development.
- Establishment of the Pensions Authority to assume the responsibility for administering employees pensions.
- The Civil Service Law is currently under review and a new one that accommodates the changing factors is underway.
- Currently, the attention is focused on excellence and quality service in public organizations in order to design comprehensive programmes for that purpose.
- Introduction of information technology in civil service organizations.

IV- CIVIL SOCIETY CONFRONTING PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

4.1- Public opinion polls

Though public opinion polls are not a common practice in UAE, the media usually tackles the problems and issues of public administration. Public opinion, which is highlighted through the media, is mostly taken care of by the concerned organizations.

4.2- Place and role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

There are many NGOs working in UAE. They can be classified as follows:

- 1- Professional societies and associations, such as teachers, engineers, doctors, etc.;
- 2- Charitable societies;
- 3- Women societies;
- 4- Youth societies;
- 5- Sports clubs and associations;
- 6- Social and cultural clubs.

All the NGOs are supposed to work under the supervision of the **Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs**, which is entrusted with the implementation of the by-laws that governs the work of NGOs. The *General Authority for Sport and Youth* is partially responsible for the clubs and associations working in the field of youth and sports.

“*Human Rights*” issues are catered for by the Constitution and by-laws. There is also a unit in *Dubai Police General Headquarters* responsible for advocating the problems concerning violations of human rights.

V- ETHICS AND THE PUBLIC SERVICE

5.1- LEGAL BASIS

Civil servants are required to abide by the Civil Service Law, as well as the by-laws and regulations that streamline their conduct while carrying out their duties. Chapter (7) of the Civil Service Law states clearly the required and prohibited official behavior of the civil servant. For those who fail to abide by that, disciplinary measures will be undertaken. Depending on the misconduct, the disciplinary measures could be taken internally within the governmental unit or referred to the court if the conduct is considered a crime by the penal code.

5.2- REPUTATION OF THE CIVIL SERVICE WITH REGARD TO HONESTY

The reputation of the civil service in the media, with regard to honesty and transparency, seems satisfactory. In fact, it is rare to hear an outcry from the public about corruption or dishonesty.

5.3- LEGAL GUARANTEES OF THE CIVIL SERVANTS “NEUTRAL ROLE”

As for the political system, political parties do not exist. Hence, neutrality of the civil service with regard to changes is out of the question because full support to such changes is required from public administration.

5.4- ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND CONTROL

Accountability and control actually exist within the different levels of public administration. At the higher level, the **Supreme Council of the Federation** has the overall control of the Federation affairs. The **National Federal Council (NFC)** can also discuss and evaluate the performance of the executive system. The **State’s Audit Institution**, which reports to the NFC, is responsible for reviewing the administrative and financial performance of the federal government organizations. Moreover, within each organization, accountability is well established throughout the levels of the organizational structure.

VI- MANAGEMENT AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

6.1- IMPORTANCE OF THE USE OF MANAGEMENT INFORMATION TECHNIQUES

Computers are used frequently in most of the governmental units. Their usage covers planning and a wide area of government operations. However, computers are used constantly in everyday administrative operations like accounting, inventories, storage, personnel administration, etc. The most commonly used ICT's include computer linking, multimedia and Internet.

The **General Information Authority** was established to promote the introduction of computers within government organizations and to provide the necessary advice and help.

6.2- INTRODUCTION OF MARKET-ORIENTED PROCEDURES

Though the government is providing most of the services to citizens at reduced rates, a **privatization** trend is gaining momentum. Public corporations that are run on economic bases are established on gradual bases, and some services, like health, are under consideration.

The government is currently focusing on the efficiency and effectiveness of public administration. There are ongoing discussions about excellence and *total quality management* concepts and how those concepts could be adopted by public administration.

VII- SENSITIVE BRANCHES OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

71- Higher Education

The **Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MHESR)** is responsible for planning higher education and research in UAE, as well as for licensing and supervising private higher education institutions. MHESR also implements the policies of higher education approved by the Cabinet. Both government and private higher education institutions are operating in UAE.

The scale of higher education institutions is not large, and a close supervision is followed by (MHESR). Accordingly, the results in general are quite satisfactory.

7.2- SOCIAL POLICIES:

The **Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MLSA)** is responsible for carrying all aspects of social affairs, including recommending social policies and plans for social development, implementation and evaluation of those policies and plans. In addition, the MLSA supports and supervises the activities of the NGOs.

The government is actually investing heavily in the field of social development whether through community development or community organization programmes. The outcome of those policies thus far is to a great extent satisfactory.

7.3- ENVIRONMENT

The **Federal Environmental Agency (FEA)** is responsible for the protection and enhancement of the environment in UAE through formulating and implementing the required policies and plans. This, in fact, covers all aspects of the environment. The FEA carefully supervises the plans and activities of the different institutions, makes the necessary coordination and prevents any negative activities that may harm the environment. Though the FEA was established recently, it has accomplished a lot in the field of environment protection. With regard to future changes in the above-mentioned issues, periodic reviews are usually carried out by the concerned parties and changes are introduced whenever necessary.

VIII- GLOBALIZATION

The public administration has already started adapting itself to the economic globalization needs. The UAE is a **member of the WTO**, and accordingly laws and regulations had been reviewed in order to abide by the terms and conditions of the WTO.

Though the current law **encourages foreign investments** and allows the activities of transnational companies, there is a continuous review of those laws to remove obstacles encountered by foreign investors. In addition, **free zones** have been established to attract foreign investment, and *laws have been passed* to convert Dubai to a prestigious e-commerce city. Arrangements have already been made to establish *Securities Market* in UAE.

Privatization is gaining momentum, and a review of public services is under consideration. Some services, like electricity and water in Abu Dhabi Emirate, have already been privatized.

Others, like Etisalat (Telecommunications), are run as public corporations on a commercial basis. Health services are also under study.

A **new strategy for education** has been adopted. Within the next 20 years, the strategy will address all the obstacles of education, reshape the education system and try to ensure that the output of the education process suits the needs of globalization.

Equally, training systems and policies have been reviewed by the concerned parties. Excellence, creativity, re-engineering, total quality management and similar concepts have been introduced in the training programmes. *Competition between organizations* (both public and private) for quality awards has been introduced. Special attention is also being given to preparatory *training programmes for university and school leavers* in order to qualify for organizations' new intake.

Moreover, to ensure the adoption of *information technology*, the **General Information Authority** has been established. The GIA is responsible for facilitating the introduction of information technology in the government organizations by giving advice and training employees.

UAE is a **member of Gulf Co-operation Council Countries**, an alliance that caters for the integration and coordination between the six member states. UAE is also a member of the Arab League.

IX- THE MOST IMPORTANT CHALLENGE

Efficiency and effectiveness are considered the most important challenge of public administration in UAE. Some of the issues are summarized as follows:

- The question of “*emiratization*” of labour, through increasing the ratio of nationals to expatriates without jeopardizing efficiency and effectiveness.
- Reducing the burden of public services rendered by public administration through privatization or by levying the cost wholly or partially on the public. The problem is how to enforce it without pain, i.e., making it palatable.
- How to attain excellence and quality service in public organizations.
- Resizing bureaucracy to cut down cost in an environment that considers the nationals' employment to be the sole responsibility of the government.

The public administration is addressing these issues by designing comprehensive programmes that cater for the different components.