

Abstract

This paper, oriented mainly to a non-academic audience, explores the possibility of implementing a career civil service at the federal level in Mexico. It proceeds by suggesting a definition of civil service and describes its most common forms of implementation in some of the countries with a long tradition of this type of bureaucratic personnel management. After drawing lessons from international experiences, the paper points out the main advantages and pitfalls of a career civil service, and describes with further details a specific type, which bases its internal rules on merit appointment, merit promotion and evaluation. Afterwards, the paper suggests briefly some hypotheses that might explain the lack of a civil service in Mexico, and explores the extent to which recent changes in the political conditions of the country have increased the chances that it will be introduced. Finally, the paper proposes flexibility in the possible implementation of civil service: on the one hand, the task would be to identify key posts in central administration for merit appointment; on the other hand, the goal would be to identify specialized agencies, which already possess an adequate environment, to ensure successful implementation. In any case, the general conditions for its operation would be competition, merit and outcome evaluation.