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SUBMITTED 11 April 2025

ACCEPTED 07 May 2025

PUBLISHED 09 June 2025

VOLUME Vol.07 Issue06 2025

CITATION

Rakhmanov Zafarjon Zayniddinovich. (2025). Concept and classification of public services. The American Journal of Political Science Law and Criminology, 7(06), 21–23.

<https://doi.org/10.37547/tajpslc/Volume07Issue06-04>

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Concept and classification of public services

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Abstract: This article analyzes the concept and classification of public service. The opinions of scientists and specialists on civil service were discussed. The experience of national and foreign countries in the provision of public services is analyzed.

Proposals and recommendations for solving problems related to the industry are given.

Keywords: Public service, provision of public services, problems, proposals and recommendations.

Introduction: Globally, significant attention is being devoted to the development of public service delivery systems, with the aim of ensuring that state bodies fulfill their obligation to serve citizens, simplifying the procedures for granting permits in the field of entrepreneurial activity, and implementing effective mechanisms of modern information technologies within the public service system, all of which are recognized as pressing priorities.

In Uzbekistan, the public service delivery system is being systematically improved and modernized, primarily facilitating the principle that “state bodies serve the people” by enhancing the interactions between interested parties (both individuals and legal entities) and the entities providing public services [1].

When discussing public services, it is first appropriate to pay attention to the concept of “service.” Among the various definitions of service, the following is particularly noteworthy: “Service is one of the goal-oriented activities of individuals, society, and the state. The concept of service can be used in different senses: as a type of human activity, as a socio-legal institution, and as a special system of state bodies. Thus, service encompasses the implementation of state functions, governance, administration, and the provision of socio-cultural services to the population” [2]. The term “unservice” was first used in an economic context by the

French economist J.-B. Say in his work *A Treatise on Political Economy* [3].

The concept of service has become widely applied across various fields, including the legal sphere. The notion of public services has been in use since the early days of statehood. Over time, its essence and functions have evolved positively and become more refined.

Numerous scholars have expressed views on the formation and development of public services. Notably, according to Kandrin, the institution of public services in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was initially studied from the perspective of external economic sciences and, in the 1990s, in connection with public administration reforms in European countries [4].

In general, public services provided by the state are a widely recognized concept in foreign countries and are also referred to as the “public interest.” According to economists J. Buchanan and P. Samuelson, public services possess universal significance, meaning they are intended for general use and are indivisible; when the needs of additional consumers are met, the level of satisfaction of other consumers’ needs does not diminish [5]. In our view, public services should not only be universal but also emphasize the quality and convenience of the services provided.

In legal literature, “state and municipal services” are regarded as a type of public services. According to Yu.A. Tikhomirov, “public services represent lawful and socially significant actions carried out in the interests of society, the state, and citizens” [6]. According to L.K. Tereshchenko, state bodies may provide public services independently, delegate their execution to local self-government bodies, as well as entrust them to commercial and non-commercial organizations [7]. Furthermore, it can be observed that scholars have examined the concept of the state in both broad and narrow contexts. For instance, A.P. Alekhin and Yu.M. Kozlov, when discussing the concept of public service, distinguish between its broad meaning—where public service is carried out by civil servants within state bodies, institutions, and enterprises—and its narrow meaning, which refers exclusively to activities conducted within state bodies [8]. It can be argued that N.V. Putilo offers a broader and more modern interpretation of the concept of public service, defining it as a specific activity of state bodies and their officials that governs daily interactions with individuals and legal entities, from which the citizen or legal entity derives certain benefits. [9].

Analyzing the views of the aforementioned scholars, it can be concluded that public service is a form of

professional activity within state bodies and organizations aimed at ensuring the interests of society, upholding the rule of law, and providing citizens with professional, high-quality, and equitable services. It also encompasses the activities of civil servants who participate in the execution of the state’s administrative functions.

In our opinion, the concept of public service should encompass several key elements, namely:

- professionalism (public service is a field that requires specialized knowledge, skills, and experience);
- rule of law (the provision of public services must be carried out on a lawful basis);
- accountability and transparency (each public servant is responsible for their actions and must be accountable to the citizens);
- integrity and justice (the ethics of public service demand honesty, impartiality, and avoidance of conflicts of interest).

Indeed, public service is not merely an administrative procedure or a means of serving citizens, but rather a foundation for trustworthy communication and effective cooperation between the state and society. A unified and precise understanding of this concept is essential to ensure a transparent, efficient, and citizen-oriented system of public administration.

At this point, the classification of public service also holds significant importance. In the Republic of Uzbekistan, the legal definition of public service was first established through the Law “On Electronic Government,” adopted on December 9, 2015. According to Article 3 of this law, public service is defined as a service provided by state bodies in response to applicants’ requests to fulfill their official duties. If, in accordance with legislation, the functions of providing public services are assigned to other organizations, these organizations may also provide public services. The concept of public service is further reflected in the following normative legal documents: for instance, the Regulation on Interagency Information Cooperation of State Bodies and Other Organizations in the Provision of Public Services, approved by the Resolution No. 120 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated May 13, 2015, clearly defines the content of public service and the mechanism of interaction between the subjects involved.

The Regulation defines public services as “activities carried out by state administration bodies, local government authorities, and other state organizations in response to applicants’ requests, including notification procedures, within the scope of their designated powers, aimed at ensuring the realization of

the rights and lawful interests of applicants as provided by the legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan.”

A more comprehensive classification of this definition would describe public services as an official set of administrative services provided by administrative bodies within their delegated authority to individuals and legal entities upon their request or in cases stipulated by law, through actions such as:

- Providing information;
- Granting material or intangible benefits;
- Conferring rights and privileges;
- Issuing legally binding documents;
- Granting permissions for certain types of activities;
- And other similar acts (or decisions).

Scholars classify public services into four main types currently recognized:

- a) Establishing a citizen’s or organization’s right to something;
- b) Material provision of the above-mentioned right in cases specified by law (for example, the right to receive a pension);
- c) Establishing legal facts and issuing certificates within a short timeframe;
- d) Providing information [10].

In our view, classifying public services into distinct types is a very appropriate approach, as it clearly delineates the content and significance of each service. In certain cases, the state is required not only to recognize rights but also to provide material support for them. For example, services such as pensions or allowances serve to support the living standards of citizens. Additionally, the official registration of significant life events—such as birth, marriage, and death—and the issuance of certificates fall within the scope of public service, and these processes must be efficient and convenient. Finally, it is essential not to overlook citizens’ right to access information. The state’s responsibility to provide clear and open access to necessary information for every individual is crucial because informed individuals are able to make sound decisions.

It should be noted that in our country, the state’s activity in providing public services to the population has only been actively studied and researched over the past decade. To improve and optimize the mechanism of public service delivery, state policy must consistently prioritize a comprehensive analysis of the administrative and legal regulation of public services. From a legal perspective, regulation implies the

establishment, protection, and development of public services in accordance with contemporary requirements through effective, regulatory, and organizational influence.

Simply put, proposals and recommendations for improving and developing the public service sector should not be limited to addressing everyday practical problems. This process also requires identifying existing shortcomings in the field and conducting a thorough scientific and analytical study of them. Theoretical knowledge and scientific research help find solutions to these problems that are long-term, sustainable, and effective, thereby raising the quality and importance of public services to a higher level.

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