

THE CONCEPT OF THE OMBUDSMAN AND HOW THE OMBUDSMAN CAN BE USED AS A TOOL TO STRENGTHEN GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS TO BE AN EFFICIENT SERVICE THAT IS RESPONSIBLE AND RESPONSIVE TO THE NEEDS OF THE CITIZENS.

The fundamental principle and the basic learning of the Ombudsman philosophy is equitable service delivery and fair play centred on truth, justice system and transparency built on unfettered relationship. It is a curative as well as preventive strategy of societal ills and maladies in search for good governance and establishment of stable polity and equitable social order by mitigating the intractable indices of administrative injustice at the corridors of power and their surrogates.

Democratic environment is desirous of a legal equitable just administrative system and egalitarian social order guaranteed by dispassionate men of tested track records and proven integrity. The search therefore rests strongly on authorities or persons who resent lofty heights but endeared to the practice and triumph of constitutional democracy, never drawn by falsehood, manipulation or derides in sectionalism and graft but dwell in what is the truth. The age-long search is found in the Ombudsman and its institution which sometimes steps on toes, leaves stones upturned, realigns and modifies unjust administrative action relying on truth through his beliefs and practices of naked truth to achieve social, administrative and other forms of justice for the aggrieved and the less privileged.

THE CONCEPT OF THE OMBUDSMAN

The word Ombudsman is Swedish in origin and means representative or officer or spokesperson. In English, it is modified to Ombudsperson or Ombuds office. Rowat (1986) defines Ombudsman as an independent and politically neutral officer of the legislature who receives and investigates complaints from the public against administrative Review of Public Administration and management action and who has the power to criticize and publicize, and order the reverse of such action.

Sultan (2007) sees Ombudsman as an institution established under the constitution or by the legislature that receives and investigates complaints reported by individual citizens against any government and institution, and

recommends corrective actions. An Ombudsman is an office provided for by the constitution or by an Act of the legislature or parliament and headed by an independent, high-level public official who is responsible to the legislature or parliament, who receives complaints from aggrieved persons against government agencies, officials, an employer or who acts on his motion, and has the power to investigate, recommend corrective action, and issue reports. (Haller 2010).

The Ombudsman institution uses an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanism. Its method of resolving conflicts covers arbitration, conciliation and mediation. The Ombudsman is an embodiment of democratic tenets, principles, practices, value and norms. He is an impartial arbiter, citizen-friendly, apolitical, admired and embraced globally because of his proven integrity.

HOW THE OMBUDSMAN CAN BE USED AS A TOOL TO STRENGTHEN GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS

- It facilitates membership statute of a country into the comity of nations to ensure that the country adheres to and practice true democracy based on universal suffrage.
- Policy interpretation
- It enshrines, protects and promotes equal and benevolent treatment for all citizens' rights and privileges in all circumstances.
- It promotes probity, accountability and transparency in public service and administration.
- In its corrective approach to governance issues, it fosters the establishment of a strong, virile, stable and united polity.
- It engenders public confidence in government and governance through the affirmation that governmental actions can be questioned, and where appropriate, remedied.
- It puts the government on its toes with the knowledge that its actions are subject to public probity and the authority of an independent institution which is not subject to the control of government. This is why the nomenclature of Ombudsman institutions in some countries like Uganda is called the Inspector-General of government.
- It bridges the gap between the citizens and the leaders.

- It assuages citizens' grievances and acrimony before they fester into widespread discontent and a breakdown of law and order in a society.
- Most importantly, the Ombudsman is cost-free and easily accessible to the less privileged in the society.