

**SECTION 3 IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF SERVICES**

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### **3.1 Improving public reporting**

Public reporting by the Government in policy, performance and information is covered either by law and regulations or administrative actions.

#### ***By-Laws and Regulations***

- a. The Statutory Bodies (Accounts and Annual Reports) Act 1980 requires the statement of accounts of the statutory bodies to be audited by the Auditor General. The accounts with the Auditor General's report will then be tabled in Parliament.
- b. The Audit Act 1957 (Revised 1972) – Section 6 requires that the statement of accounts of government departments be audited by the Auditor General. The Auditor General's report will be sent to the respective minister and the report will be tabled in Parliament.
- c. Section 16 (1) of the Financial Procedure Act 1957 (Revised 1972) requires that the Government publish a Financial Statement at the end of the financial year.
- d. Section 18 of the Interpretation Act, 1948 and 1967, requires that:
  - all Acts of Parliament and all Ordinances promulgated by the King;
  - all Royal Proclamations, orders, rules, regulations and by-laws;
  - all subsidiary legislation;
  - all Bills; and
  - all matters which are required to be published in the gazette, or which the Government deems necessary to be published for general information,

will be published in the Government gazette.

### ***Administrative Actions***

- a. Publication of Public Complaints Bureau's Annual Report. This report is available to the public.
- b. Annual publication of the report on administrative efforts undertaken by the Government and its progress.
- c. Various other informative publications published by the respective government agencies on their roles, functions and services offered.

The main reasons are:

- to provide a responsive and accountable government;
- to provide information on the financial and managerial performance of government departments;
- to have a better informed public on government policies and activities;
- To ensure a sharing of national vision, values and aspirations;
- To provide an open and transparent government in terms of decision-making;
- To provide a certain level of public expectation from public service delivery systems.

The cost of public reporting is high and is borne by the Government. Some of the documents and publications are made freely available. Some costs are, however, recovered from sales to the public.

There is particularly close links between public reporting and quality management. The setting of standards at the activity and process levels of output, coupled with the publication of these standards in the Client's Charter, further reinforces the openness of government actions.

In a customer-oriented environment, the public needs to be well informed on what the Government is doing. This leads to better understanding and support for government actions.

### **Supporting material**

- (i) Improvements And Development in the Public Service, Government of Malaysia, 1990, 1991, 1992
- (ii) The Civil Service of Malaysia – A Paradigm Shift
- (iii) Annual Report of the Public Complaints Bureau (1992)
- (iv) Statutory Bodies (Accounts and Annual Reports) Act 1980
- (v) Audit Act 1957 (Revised 1972)
- (vi) Financial Procedure Act 1957
- (vii) Interpretation Act 1948 and 1967

## **3.2 Introducing a quality management approach**

Quality management in the Public Service was initiated by the political and administrative leadership. This initiative soon received the support and enthusiasm of public sector agencies as an approach to achieve excellence.

### **The context for change**

The genesis of quality management can be traced to the development administration in the Sixties and Seventies followed by several innovative programmes in the Eighties. The special focus on quality management began with the launching of the Excellent Work Culture Movement in November 1989. The primary objective of the movement was to enhance public awareness on the importance of providing quality products and services, thereby institutionalising a quality culture where a mind-set of quality becomes a way of life. The movement provided the public sector with a new paradigm, one which orientates it towards becoming a distinct customer-driven entity. The basic philosophy of quality management is that it is a continuous process of making improvements aimed at satisfying customers through continuous problem-solving and innovation.

Quality used in the public sector is defined as any goods or services rendered that meets customers or stakeholder's requirements. The key concepts used are:

- Customers include both internal and external customers.
- Internal customers are individuals and/or divisions in the organisation who use the output, while external customers are agencies or individuals external to the organisation who use the organisation's outputs.
- Quality can be assured through prevention activities. Quality problems are prevented from occurring in the first place by focusing on client needs and careful planning.
- The standard of performance is zero-defect, which means meeting targets or standards set all the time and continuously reviewing them and meeting them.
- The cost of poor quality is the cost of re-work and wastage.

- All work is seen as a process whereby work activity supports another activity. Work well done at every point in the process will finally assure quality service/product to the customer.

Environmental dictates (domestic and international) prompted the concerted effort and commitment into quality management. The factors which have led to the adoption of quality management are:

- a. An increase in public expectation and demand for better services. This is due to the higher level of educational attainment by the public which enjoys a better quality of life.
- b. The proclamation of Vision 2020 as the national aspiration to attain a "fully industrialised and developed nation status" within the next three decades prompted the public service to provide better quality products and services. There is an urgent need to develop an administrative system that is mission-oriented and has the inherent ability to focus on effective quality service delivery.
- c. The need to support the private sector, which is the nation's engine of growth, and to improve national competitiveness in the international trade. Thus the public service needs to streamline and upgrade its services as incentives for local and foreign investors to expand their businesses.

### **Implementing change**

Based on the public service experience in quality management implementation, the following are important considerations:

- set quality objectives for the department;
- establish organisational quality policy;
- define quality for each department;
- identify the customer and establish features (e.g. timeliness, speed, accuracy, reliability, etc.) of service required by them;
- establish standards for each feature of service provided;
- involve and commit every member of the organisation to quality improvement by together establishing quality objectives, solving problems through team-work and encouraging innovation and creativity;

- training must be done on the concepts of quality, ensuring that everyone in the organisation has a common understanding of quality;
- Although quality is everyone's responsibility, establishing a proper structure to manage it facilitates the process of installing and later institutionalising the quality culture, mind-set and practices. A quality structure refers to the setting up a Steering Committee on quality, chaired by the head of the department with senior managers as members. Their main duties are to plan for quality initiatives, develop a strategic direction for the organisation and monitor the progress of quality implementation. The next layer is the Quality Co-ordinator and their team members. Their main duties are to conduct training, facilitate quality implementation and advise on quality problems. Quality Improvement Teams are established to solve quality problems.

The emphasis given by the Government to quality management does not merely hinge on exhortations but is reflected in the concrete action programmes taken. These action programmes are reflected in the following:

- Publication:* A manual on quality implementation was published in June 1990, six months after the launching of the Excellent Work Culture Movement. It outlines the critical stages involved in implementing quality management at organisation level. There are several bulletins on productivity and quality which highlight success stories in quality management. A public service magazine is published which provides a forum for the dissemination and adoption of ideas on administrative reforms, productivity and quality improvement and advances in information technology.
- Twenty *Development Administration Circulars* were introduced and compiled. These Circulars serve as guidelines for a more efficient and effective public service.
- A *comprehensive training programme* has been formulated. Training on all the Circulars mentioned above is conducted by the National Institute of Public Administration, the Government's training institute. This is to ensure that all civil servants are equipped with sufficient knowledge and skills to implement effectively the programmes advocated, as well as to internalise the desired values. To ensure that civil servants imbue these values in the future, the contents of these Circulars have been included in the syllabi for all public service examinations. Candidates considered for promotion have to attend a management course. Part of the curriculum of the course is based on the contents of the Circulars.

- d. *Monitoring:* The success of the implementation of quality improvement programmes can be achieved by diligent monitoring. Surprise visits and inspections are conducted therefore by the Chief Secretary to the Government and the heads of departments/branches to check implementation on the ground.
- e. *Recognition:* Several recognition incentives are introduced to reinforce positive behavioural attitudes that contribute to creating and sustaining a quality culture at organisational and national levels.

The initial steps taken in implementing quality management are directed at agencies involved in revenue collection, counter services and economic development. Currently, all agencies are expected to implement quality management practices.

Quality management is related to the following:

#### ***Human Resource Management***

The involvement of every individual in quality management in an organisation is vital to its successful implementation. Top leadership must take the initiative to create an environment for quality management to happen by setting the future direction of the organisation and getting everyone in the organisation to rally round and realise the vision. More participative management has to be encouraged as problem-solving and the generation of solutions are done through team-work.

#### ***Training And Development***

Training is important to ensure that all levels of management fully understand quality principles and concepts.

#### ***Performance Management***

Performance measurement and management need to be emphasised. There must be continuous monitoring of whether outputs produced or services rendered meet the standards set.

#### ***Recognition***

Recognition systems must be instituted both for organisations which exhibit quality features and individuals who have performed well. This is to ensure continued and sustained interest in quality until quality practices become a way of life.

The customer-driven orientation as introduced by quality management culminated in the adoption of the Client's Charter by all public agencies. The display of the Client's Charter by public agencies reflects their commitment to honour their pledges to their clients.

Generally about two years is required for the start-up phase: creating awareness of the importance of quality, training and the formulation of quality objectives, policy and the setting up of the formal structure to manage quality implementation. Internalisation of quality values may take longer. A fully-fledged quality system may take more than five years.

### **Supporting material**

- (i) Productivity and Quality Management in the Public Sector in Malaysia, by Dr. Abdullah bin Abdul Rahman, Director-General of the Malaysian Administrative Modernisation and Management Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department
- (ii) The Civil Service of Malaysia – A Paradigm Shift, Chapter 1
- (iii) Development Administration Circular No. 4 of 1991, Guidelines On Strategies For Quality Improvement In The Public Sector
- (iv) Development Administration Circular No. 1 of 1992, Guidelines On Total Quality Management in the Public Sector
- (v) Development Administration Circular No. 3 of 1993, Guidelines On Client's Charter

### **3.3 Establishing a customer orientation**

#### **The context for change**

The seeds of the customer-orientation culture were first sown with the implementation of quality management in public sector agencies. Quality management was further reinforced by the launching of the Development Administration Circular No.3 of 1993 titled "Guidelines on Client's Charter" by the Prime Minister on 2 June 1993. Public sector agencies can use these guidelines to formulate their respective Client's Charter.

#### **Implementing change**

A Client's Charter is a written commitment by an agency to its customers. It is an assurance, commitment or guarantee of service based on quality standards set by the agency. It also spells out the rights of a customer and service recovery mechanism should it fail to fulfil its pledges. The Client's Charter is informative to the customer because it informs the customer on the standard of service expected from the agency.

The basic principles in establishing the Client's Charter are:

##### ***Setting standards of service***

The formulation of quality standards is based on the quality features required and valued by its customers, as well as on the capacity of the agency to deliver such services. For example, the standard for speedy service could be two hours of waiting time before a patient can see the doctor; three months before a certain licence can be approved etc.

##### ***Measurement***

Agencies are expected to monitor their performance on whether they are meeting the standards as promised to their clients.

##### ***Customer feedback***

Customer feedback is encouraged as this will form a good indicator of agency performance as well as assisting the agency in making improvements. Customer feedback is solicited through customer surveys, suggestion boxes, toll-free calls etc.

##### ***Recovery mechanism***

If the agency fails to live up to its promises, a recovery mechanism has to be instituted. A recovery mechanism is not an ad hoc matter but has to be designed

and planned. It has to be implemented where there is service failure. A guide on how to institute service recovery has also been prepared to assist public agencies in this endeavour.

As at December 1994, a total of 318 agencies have formulated their Client's Charter. The Client's Charter is exhibited, either posted at strategic places or produced in booklet form for distribution. As an encouragement, an award for the best formulated Client's Charter was introduced in 1993. Currently, an exercise is being carried out to measure the effectiveness of the Client's Charter.

The overall approach to the formulation of a Client's Charter can be summarised as:

- identification of customers and their requirements;
- identification of services rendered to customers and the quality features of such services;
- formulation of standards for the identified quality features of such services;
- formulation of relevant work processes, or improvement of existing work processes, to ensure standards promised are met;
- training in customer handling and customer relations;
- continuous monitoring on whether standards are met.

The Development Administration Circular No.3, 1993 entitled "Guidelines On Client's Charter" clearly outlines the steps in formulating the Client's Charter.

Formulation of the Client's Charter may take a period of three to six months. Once the Client's Charter is formulated, public agencies are expected to implement it, monitor and continuously improve the standards set.

### **Supporting material**

- (i) Development Administration Circular No. 3, 1993, Guidelines On Client's Charter
- (ii) The Civil Service Of Malaysia – A Paradigm Shift 1993, Chapter 3

### **3.4 Ensuring a right of redress**

Under quality management, customers' views and feedback are much sought after in order to make meaningful quality improvements. The Client's Charter further reinforces this practice by redressing or providing service recovery in the event of service failure. It is therefore the responsibility of individual departments to attend to customers' grievances and complaints.

However, quality management with its customer orientation focus is a recent addition to the existing mechanism of managing public complaints. The Public Complaints Bureau of the Prime Minister's Department, established in 1971, was given the task of undertaking this job. It is an independent organisation which looks into the nature of various complaints on all public agencies. Its restructuring in 1992 strengthened its administrative machinery to manage public complaints more effectively. The Bureau functions as the main channel for the public to forward their complaints or grievances on:

- dissatisfaction with services rendered by public servants, e.g. lack of courtesy, delay in providing services etc;
- administrative actions and decisions which are alleged to be unfair, against existing laws and regulations inclusive of misconduct, misappropriation, abuse of power and maladministration.

The re-organisation of the Bureau places great powers on the Permanent Committee on Public Complaints. Its chairman is the Chief Secretary to the Government and its members comprise very senior officials in the public service. These powers are clearly outlined in the Development Administration Circular No. 4, 1992, Managing Public Complaints.

The public is duly informed of their right of redress through:

- publication of the Annual Report of the Public Complaints Bureau;
- information and exhibition clinics held in various parts of the country to explain the purpose and objective of the Bureau;
- radio broadcasts;
- advertisements in local newspapers;
- video production on the functions of the Bureau.

At the end of November 1993, the Bureau had received 4,056 complaints as compared to 3,120 in 1992. It investigated 2,323 cases of which 1,075 were solved.

Having an effective complaint and redress mechanism is essential in an accountable, responsive and customer-oriented government. The above measures are taken to support government commitment and efforts to be accountable, fair, transparent, efficient and effective.

In addition to public awareness programmes on rights to complain if the need arises and the avenues for redress, a liaison officer at departmental level has been appointed to act as a link with the Bureau. These liaison officers are trained to assist them to discharge their functions and responsibilities.

Members of the public can also write in or go personally to the Bureau to make their complaints. In addition, the Bureau goes on a circuit tour of all the states in Malaysia to enable the public to file their grievances against government departments and agencies.

### **Supporting material**

- (i) Development Administration Circular No. 4, 1992, Managing Public Complaints
- (ii) The Civil Service of Malaysia – A Paradigm Shift, Chapters 3 and 8

### **3.5 Improving standard-setting**

Standard-setting has become a widespread practice under quality management. Every job done is seen as a process which consists of a series of actions that produce an output. Standards are required to be set during the process of producing the output, as well as at the final output.

The requirement that standards are determined during the process of producing the output is to ensure that the final output will conform to specific standards set. The guidelines for setting standards are:

- they must be specific;
- they must be measurable and stated in terms of cost, time, quality and quantity; and
- they must be achievable and realistic.

The internal processing standards and the output standards are documented in the department's Quality Handbook or in the Standard Operating Procedures. The Client's Charter records the output standards applicable to external customers. Some examples of standards established by various government departments can be seen in the supporting materials listed below.

The main objective is to provide the best possible service to customers. By setting standards for their final outputs, departments provide a level of service that can be expected by customers. Setting internal operating standards enables staff and employees to know the level of expectation of their departments.

#### **Supporting material**

- (i) Development Administration Circular No.3, 1993, Guidelines on Client's Charter
- (ii) Productivity and Quality Management in the Public Sector in Malaysia, by Dr. Abdullah bin Abdul Rahman, Director-General of the Malaysian Administrative Modernisation and Management Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department