

STRATEGY 3

RE-ORIENTING THE ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Reforming the public service does not stop at restructuring the organisational environment within which public servants operate. Although this is essential, there is a limit to the gains that are to be achieved through improved structures and increasingly formalised expectations. Strategies for reform must ensure that public servants are self-motivated by a new set of values and assumptions, and most crucially that their own aspirations coincide with organisational goals.

DEVELOPING A CUSTOMER-ORIENTATION

Recent changes within the public service are encouraging a view that public services, like those produced in the private sector, are products to be tested against the needs of service users. This changed emphasis has been encouraged by a conscious reshaping of the work culture to achieve a customer-orientation.

The U.K. Government has made the customer-orientation of public services a priority through the Citizen's Charter, launched by the Prime Minister in July 1991. The Charter is a ten-year programme of radical reform to raise the standards of public service and make them more responsive to their users.

There are six principles which the Government believes should underlie all public services:

- **Standards:** Setting, monitoring and publishing explicit standards for the services that individual users can reasonably expect. Publishing actual performance against these standards.
- **Information and Openness:** Full, accurate information readily available in plain language about how services are run, what they cost, how well they perform and who is in charge.
- **Choice and Consultation:** The public sector should provide choice wherever practicable. There should be regular and systematic consultation with those who use services. User's views about services, and their priorities for improving them, should be taken into account in final decisions on standards.
- **Courtesy and Helpfulness:** Courteous and helpful service from public servants, who will normally wear name badges. Services available equally to all who are entitled to them and run to suit their convenience.
- **Putting things right:** If things go wrong, an apology, a full explanation and a swift and effective remedy. Well publicised and easy-to-use complaints procedures, with an independent review wherever possible.
- **Value for money:** Efficient and economical delivery of public services within the resources that the nation can afford. Independent validation of performance against standards.

Courtesy campaigns, customer-care training, and comprehensive complaints procedures ensure that service users are seen as active, freely choosing customers rather than passive recipients of monopolistically provided state services.

- The Malaysian Government has emphasised throughout the public service that the customer is paramount. Recent guidance notes that the focus of management has shifted to the quality of the final product or service.

The main focus for reforms in the U.K. public service are to widen choice and competition and improved value for money. New Zealand, Malaysia, Namibia, Singapore, Mauritius also emphasise the significance of focusing on service quality for consumers.

CLARIFYING PUBLIC SERVICE ACCOUNTABILITY

An emphasis on personal and institutional accountability runs through all current reform programmes. The practical mechanisms for highlighting accountability include performance contracts, for individuals and agencies, and more systematic feedback to the public concerning the cost and quality of services. This public reporting exposes poor performance by senior officials, agencies, departments or other institutions, including that caused by corrupt practices and is discussed in more detail below.

If enhanced accountability is to act as a pressure for performance improvement, it must be matched by enhanced managerial authority. Devolving responsibility to senior managers allows them the financial and procedural latitude necessary to

The traditional role of auditing in Trinidad and Tobago has been to conduct of regularity audits, embracing all aspects of compliance with laws and regulations and of financial accountability. More recently however, information is also being sought on whether government agencies are achieving the purpose for which they were established and whether they are doing so economically, efficiently and effectively. Consequently, auditors are increasingly being called upon to perform audits that go beyond the traditional determination of whether funds were spent in accordance with legal and financial requirements. This new audit, sometimes called performance auditing or comprehensive auditing, seeks to determine whether monies were used in an economic manner and whether programme results were achieved.

In 1986, the Auditor General's Department established a Comprehensive Auditing Division and introduced full comprehensive auditing procedures in its work programme. To date, eight such audits have been undertaken.

In addition, training was undertaken in the area of management auditing. In 1993, seventy persons were trained to conduct management audits and eight were trained as trainers.

deliver the outputs for which they are held responsible. Modernising the role of the Public Service Commission represents a particular aspect of this necessary devolution to managers or agency chief executives.

- In Australia, state public service boards are being abolished in favour of smaller Commissions, and their controlling role is changing to one of personnel services adviser, training resource, and review body.

The nature of accountability is increasingly affected by the changing relationship between the public sector and the community. There has been a shift towards formalised and specified contractual relationships, capable of being monitored and, where necessary, enforced. While this increased formality enhances accountability by offering rights of redress not previously available, some accountability is increasingly legalistic rather than co-operative.

PUBLIC REPORTING

Public reporting is the practical means by which openness and transparency in government are improved. It is in keeping with a customer-oriented approach. Providing information on the financial and managerial performance of departments enables the public to understand and where necessary criticise or support what the public service is seeking to achieve. This encourages a sharing of national vision, values and aspirations and, very particularly, stimulates an enhanced level of public expectations about public services.

- The Access to Information Act in Canada gives citizens and corporations the right to access to federal government records that are not of a personal nature. The Act aims to make the widest possible use of information within the government, subject to legal and policy constraints.

In the U.K. a Code of Practice on the release of government information came into effect in April 1994. In essence, the principle steps envisaged in furthering the initiative are:

- launch policy and invite reactions;
- receive comments during consultation period;
- identify areas of concern over implementation;
- provide guidance material and training for staff who will be dealing with applications and for senior staff who will have to make the more difficult judgements;
- possible attitude training to ensure that more information is released as a matter of course;
- consider publicity material for new schemes of applying for information. Make sure it is in plain language and easily understood;
- monitor take-up and problems.

EMPHASISING QUALITY

Quality management is the creation of a culture of commitment to identifying and meeting customer requirements throughout whole organisations, within available resources. The approach defines standards for each area of activity, from which performance standards are set for each member of staff and unit of management. Performance is then regularly assessed against customer expectations and satisfaction. Commitment to quality management is openly avowed and performance is made public.

The special focus on quality management in Malaysia 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 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.

The term 'customer' has a broad meaning: any citizen engaged with government, or any person acting as proxy for the public. For example, New Zealand includes the minister as a proxy customer for the policy advice outputs of the department.

The idea of quality management originated in the private sector, but has become increasingly relevant to government as rising expectations have highlighted areas of unacceptably low standards of service to the public, to officials and to politicians. There is growing experience in Commonwealth countries in improving the reputation of government through applying quality management approaches within the public service.

Improvements in quality require improvements in human resource management, with an emphasis on leadership, team-building and performance management, and restructuring, particularly organisational changes leading to flatter pyramids and improved communications.

Changes in the work culture and systems are encouraging respect for excellence at all levels. Success within the public sector is recognised and rewarded. Practical and measurable quality standards are set, with participative mechanisms established to ensure that the need for quality has a broad ownership at all levels of staff. The Malaysian public service provides a clear example of a successful strategy for recognising excellence through the series of awards it offers.

- Singapore was the first public service to introduce Work Improvement Teams, developed from the Quality Control Circles employed in successful and innovative private sector companies. These teams allow groups of

staff from varying levels to discuss obstacles to quality openly and honestly, and to devise practical solutions for service improvement.

- The Botswana Government introduced the Productivity and Quality Improvement Programme in 1993 by creating Work Improvement Teams (WITS) within various institutions and departments.

DEVELOPING A PUBLIC SERVICE ETHOS

The public service ethos is more than a series of injunctions, listing attitudes or behaviours which are not allowed. It is a positive climate in which doing the right thing coincides with what public servants do in fact want to do. The traditional values of the public service emphasise merit, equity, probity, integrity, ethical conduct and political independence. The values of the new culture must also include leadership, quality, productivity and openness. Creating a working culture which incorporates this value set must involve employees and public in the change process.

Public service reforms develop the organisational culture through strengthened employee involvement, transparency in the change process, rewards for team work, recognition of individual effort, and consultation with clients and users.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has adopted the following vision for the public service in its current public service reform activities.

A public service which:

- demonstrates a sense of caring for both its members and its customers;
- is client-driven, always conscious of the needs of its public;
- produces prompt results;
- constantly seeks motivation;
- promotes and demands high standards of performance from its members;
- provides for the growth and development of its members;
- has a "high-speed" processing capacity;
- is results-oriented;
- has a high profile leadership; and
- is adaptable to the changing external environment.

The formal development of codes of ethics within government marks a significant step in moves towards articulating public service values at a time of rapid change within the culture and practice of the public service.

- The Malaysian programme for inculcating positive attitudes provides a successful example of a practical approach to the establishment of appropriate values within an increasingly entrepreneurial public service.

■ The public service of Botswana strives to adhere to the following values and principles:

- prompt and courteous service to people;
- honesty, integrity, faithfulness to the principles of fairness and impartiality;
- neutrality, transparency and permanency of the services;
- professionalism and quality service;
- frugality and prudence in the use of funds; and
- perseverance and patience in the pursuit of good services.