

THE AFRICAN CHARTER ON VALUES AND PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC SERVICE AND ADMINISTRATION CONTRIBUTIONS IN MAURITIUS

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Abstract

Mauritius recently ratified the African Charter of Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration. This paper examines how this tool contributes to the enhancement of governance in Mauritius. Application of its protocols, highlights on article 20 and 25, recognition and award systems, in key areas as well as performance management are discussed to see how their contributions towards professionalization in the Mauritian context. Overall it acts as a catalyst to improved quality of customer services towards excellence. The charter is also an instrument for regional and continental integration.

Keywords: African Charter, Mauritius, administration, values and principles, public service.

Introduction

On 23rd January, 2012 Mauritius set down the ratification tools of the African Charter on Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration (PMG, 2013). Mauritius is the second African country to have passed the African Charter on Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration. This charter aims to safeguard the innovative and quality delivery of transparent services that meet the needs of the users, and promote moral and ethical values inbuilt in the public service agents' activities (PMG, 2013). Thus, in this paper I will discuss how the African Charter on Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration contributes to the enhancement of governance in the open government era with respect to Mauritian public service.

Discussion

The African Charter on Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration
Performance Management Criteria



Figure 1

Article 20

Performance Management of Public Service Agents

1. State Parties shall institute a performance culture within the Public Service and Administration.
2. Public Service Agents shall undergo a process of performance management based on clear and measurable criteria.
3. State Parties shall carry out continuous monitoring and evaluation to assess the performance of Public Service Agents in order to determine their promotional requirements, development needs, levels of efficiency and productivity (PMG, 2013).

Article 25

Recognition and Award System

1. State Parties shall institutionalize a transparent and impartial system for recognizing outstanding performance, creativity and innovation in Public Service and Administration.
2. The Conference of State Parties shall promote mechanisms to support activities for the improvement of Public Service and Administration.
4. The Commission shall promote innovative experiences and institute a system of awards for Innovation in Public Service and Administration (PMG, 2013).

The Context

The Republic of Mauritius is an island country in the Indian Ocean a population of more or less 1.2 million, half of which is Hindu. French colonial rule lasted from 1767 to 1810, when the British captured the island. Mauritius became independent in 1968 (Chow-Chua & Komaran, 2002, p.78). The French settlers brought slaves from Africa and India, and following the abolition of slavery, Indian indentured workers were brought in great numbers. The Chinese came to the island as traders and merchants. The Mauritius constitution provides for freedom of religion, and there is no state religion in the country (Agus, Barker & Kandampully, 2007, p.180). With a per-capita income of \$12,600 and an unemployment rate of 7.9 percent, eight percent of the population lives in poverty. Mauritians is multiethnic. Even though English is the official language, more than eighty percent of the population speaks Creole. Mauritian females have legal equality, and the government and nongovernmental organizations have worked together to improve the status of women and address inequities that do exist (Brown, Churchill, & Peter, 1993, p.128).

On the other hand, Mauritius is well-thought-out as one of the most stable, best governed and prosperous country in the continent of Africa. It is a consistent democratic country that has endorsed social and economic development from the time it has acquired its freedom and liberation in the year 1968 (Anderson, 1995, p.36). On the whole, the Mauritius government has coped democracy deeply and successfully. It has supported the rule of law, exhibited open-mindedness for opposition parties, and protected and supported fair electoral measures, with even substitution of power (Chow-Chua & Komaran, 2002, p.79).

The African Charter on the Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration ratified by Mauritius is aimed predominately to:

Figure 3

1. be a valuable tool for professionalization and modernization of the public management system and
2. Subscribe to a common language linked with African public service that completely takes into consideration the cultures, characteristics, traditions and history in the objectives of each country (PMG, 2013).
The major points of this Charter are to:
 1. hearten and support the users and citizens to take part in the procedure of offering public service, in particular by means of consultation, communication, and active contribution to the preparation and origination of administrative dealings;
 2. endorse the ethical and moral values intrinsic in the responsibilities of public service staffs so as to guarantee transparency in the delivery of public services;
 3. contribute to enhancing the working situations of public service staffs and safeguarding their rights;
 4. support States Parties to harmonize their procedures and policies with a view to nurturing continental and regional integration; and
 5. Motivate the exchange of good practices and experiences with an opinion to build up a knowledgeable community amongst States Parties (PMG, 2013).

The African Charter and Mauritian Public Service Context

After Kenya, Mauritius is the second African country to have approved and endorsed the African charter on the Values and Principles of Public service and administration. The ratification tools were set down by the foreign affairs ministry, international trade and regional integration at the African union commission on 23rd January, 2012, during the eighteenth African union conference organized in Addis Ababa (PMG, 2013).

Thus, in an age of all the time more complicated challenges, from food insecurity to climate change and the economic and financial crisis, Mauritius is in need of a public service staffed by officers who are extremely talented and creative than ever and all set to encounter the unidentified challenges (Bitner, Mary, Booms, B. & Mohr, 1994, p.98). According to the Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms, Hon. Sutyadeo Moutia, the aptitude of a society to uphold and preserve indispensable public services and safety, safeguard human rights, keep up a well-organized structure for activities taking place in the market and to arrange free and fair elections on the basis of the sense of purpose and skills of the public officers functioning as a group or team (PMG, 2013). Therefore, devoid of a successful public service, prosperity and democracy are virtually unachievable (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, Valerie & Berry, 1994, p.114). In Mauritius, the public officers at each and every level of the grading and hierarchy are carrying out a spectacular work, both in the front position as well as unconnectedly and individually behind the curtains. Thus, by means of the work it carries out, the Public Service supports housing, infrastructure, education, law and order, health services, poverty relief and makes the appropriate environment for the people of Mauritius to live a decent living, nurture a family and earn a pleasing and gratifying lifestyle (Gowan, Seymour, Ibarreche & Lackey, 2000, p.275). In addition, the public service plays a crucial role in the

progress and development of Mauritian democratic procedures as well for the country's socio-economic expansion.

The United Nations Public Service Day (UNPSD) and the APSD or Africa Public Service Day are celebrated every year on June 23rd (PMG, 2013). The APSD works as a display place for the public service to exhibit innovations and best practices, recognize and recompense good creativities and steps in the area of public sector and to endorse values for instance, integrity, accountability and professionalism in the delivery of the services. A number of strategies have been introduced and carried out in Africa with the intention to improve public services deliver as well as good governance (PMG, 2013). In the soul and essence of African Unity, several networks, conferences and summits for African leaders have been organized, together with the Pan-African Conference of Ministers accountable for Civil Service Administration, Public Sector Management and Public Service.

Moreover, along the lines of the African charter and Mauritian Government's vision of prioritizing its people, the civil service and administrative ministry improvements is actively supporting a scheme to boost the level of customer/counter services, especially at the level of department/ministries that cope extensively and directly with the public members (PMG, 2013). During the last five years, approximately eighty projects have been carried out all over the civil services for the modernization of Customer/Counter Services. A few examples are the establishing of a cohesive and incorporated customer service centers at the department of fire services and the arrangement of an electronic search room as well as an online application counter (PMG, 2013). In addition, to promote the execution of this system, user friendly rules and strategies on offering quality customer/counter services have been issued and extensively circulated to public officers working at counters in departments/ministries.

Also, the Departments/Ministries in Mauritius have been requested to take on a customer center approach and carry out uncomplicated measures to improve and strengthen the Customer/Counter delivery Services. These measures are related to:

Figure 4

- the delivery of unremitting services during lunch hour;
- the introduction and conception of proper waiting areas;
- attaching the clear directional symbols and signs; and
- taking on the true attitude when addressing the customers (PMG, 2013).

Therefore, under this system, funds and resources are allocated to Departments/Ministries for the modernization and up gradation of their counter services, for instance, by means of the delivery of electronic machines for ticketing, comfortable waiting chairs and directional signs for the public sector members (PMG, 2013).

The Mauritian Ministry also makes sure that that developments and reforms in the physical settings of the counters are supplemented by initially, reviewing and streamlining of

Processes and procedures, together with the ones of back office in order that public sector members are offered with expedient and timely services; and next the attitudinal modifications on behalf of the counter officers, which are maintained and reinforced by sensitization and training programs in the field of customer care.

Supporting the provision of quality customer services along the lines of the aim of the civil service and administrative ministry reforms to keep up the provision of quality customer services, till today, majority of the Ministries and important departments in Mauritius have issued their citizens/customers charters (PMG, 2013).

Moreover, in accordance with the African Charter, the Mauritian Government believes that public service sector functions in an age where development and progress ought to be people-centered (PMG, 2013). Fulfilling their requirements and getting up to their expectations allow the Mauritian Civil Service to develop and progress confidently in a highly competitive setting. In this regard, the Citizens/Customers Charter being a perfect instrument to expurgate on red tapism since all requirements and parameters required by the public to be eligible for and take advantage from a specific service are evidently indicated together with the frame of time in which the services will be delivered.

In addition to this, as of October 2006, the government of Mauritius has started the Public Service Excellence Award to promote and reward the competence and efficacy in the civil services (Agus, Barker & Kandampully, 2007, p.178). In this regard, the employment sector in the country is structured and controlled by the 2008 Employment Rights Act. Moreover, the 1988 Reform Institution Act precisely defines the Prison Service in Mauritius.

Here it is important to note that the public service in Mauritius is comprised of more than a few ministries, departments, parastatal bodies and local authorities. Governments and a number of other organizations see cost as a foremost concern which is linked with the productivity. Performance and productivity always imperative (Lewis & Mitchell, 1998, p.13) . Therefore, productivity in the area of public service is mostly assessed because of unorganized staffs, departments with a lot of independence, excess of staffs, shortage of suitable equipment, sloppiness, non-existing rivalry, lack of motivation, job security, unsuitable job content and dawdling services to name some.

The civil service in Mauritius will always look for individuals to fill out the positions, on the other hand challenging the parts, because of the ever rising population and the still and peaceful job market (Cronin & Taylor, 1992, p.57). Moreover, the Prison Service in Mauritius may also by no means lack competent staffs for the reason that they have their individual training department. The increasing rate of literate Mauritian population symbolizes more than enough of candidates to select from. Therefore, if the theory of rising joblessness is true, then the public sector in Mauritius may benefit from a low labor throughput as the employments are pursued after mostly due to job security (Beatson, Lings & Gudergan, 2008, p.219). The trick is that it is extremely difficult to ascend the career path and once somebody leaves a government job, it turns out to be practically difficult to find another position in the civil services which can give rise to a number of people remaining employed at the same time as not unavoidably being contented with their job. It is assumed that the more an individual person is contented with his or her job, the more complicated (s)he will be in it. Organizational and employee outcomes are formed by job association. Moreover, job association is defined as the level to which an



individual involved psychologically with his or her work or the significance of work in his or her complete self-perception (Czepiel, 1990, p.15). In philosophy it is believed that, obligation to the organization is likely to take place if a person is contented with his or her job as an outcome there is a raised probability of higher participation in the work. A discontented employee may turn out to be less engaged in the work and less dedicated to the employer therefore less dedicated to the accomplishments of the organization (Czepiel, 1990, p.16).

In this regard, the government of Mauritius in accordance with the African Charter on Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration works on the parity of opportunity, so as to make jobs a lot more secure and safe. The working conditions must also be in consonance constantly with the instructions of Occupational Health and Safety Regulations. Collective Bargaining ought to be executed in a climate of good faith and trust. Both employers' organizations as well as the government must favor consultations and negotiations with trade unions corresponding to the sacrosanct ideologies of Industrial Democracy and Tripartism as supported by ILO that is the International Labor Organization (Rowley, 1998, p.323).

The public service in Mauritius identifies the apparent risks of getting on various kinds of projects and recognizing the alleged benefits and expense of starting the PPP projects (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2000, p.23). In this regard, the PPP is a votive contract between a private and public entity, whereby the private unit carries out part of the service delivery functions of the government organization, and assumes the linked risks for a considerable time period (Agus, Barker & Kandampully, 2007, p.179).

Public & Private Partnership (PPP) provides operational and strategic options to the government. PPP Tactical utilization nurtures economic development and boost commercial opportunities and rising competition in the delivery of public services, therefore, heartening crowding in of foreign and private investment (Beatson, Lings & Gudergan, 2008, p.212). In this regard, Mauritius has unlocked its economy to the entire world and a number of foreign multinational businesses have acquired the opportunities given by Mauritius and thus better.

Conclusion

Thus, the African Charter on Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration has harmonized the policies and procedures in relation to public service and administration in Mauritius in an initial bid to endorse continental and regional integration.

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