Managing Diversity in the Civil Service of Mauritius

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Introduction

Mauritius is a small island of about 720 square miles situated in the Indian Ocean some 1500 miles off the east coast of Africa. It has a population which at the end of year 2000 stood at 1,158,000 inhabitants with an ethnic mix consisting of 51 percent Indo-Hindu, 17 percent Indo-Muslim, 3 percent Chinese with the remaining 29 percent being of African, European or mixed descent commonly described as the ‘coloured community’.

Cutting across these ethnic divisions there are other distinguishing characteristics. The Europeans, though mainly French in origin include some British and a sprinkling of other nationalities. The Indians came originally from different parts of the sub continent and they still have lingering loyalties towards these states. As a result, they are also divided along linguistic lines as they may opt for Hindi, Urdu, Marathi, Tamil or Telegu or some other Indian language. The Chinese are divided by religion into Christians and Buddhists, speaking either Hakka or Mandarin.

Notwithstanding the differences among the various groups in the Mauritian population by virtue of their place of origin, colour, community or creed, there are a number of unifying factors as well. There are two main languages which have unifying influences. The first one is creole, which is a derivative of French which was evolved by the ‘creole group’ in the population, i.e. a mixture of two or more ethnic groups mainly African and European, more commonly known now as the ‘coloured community’. It has emerged as the ‘lingua franca’ with a definite local flavour and is spoken by all Mauritians. The second unifying influence is English which is the official language and which is not as a result associated with any single ethnic group living in significant numbers on the island.

In spite of existing communal and linguistic differences, Mauritius is famous across the world for having by and large successfully managed diversity. With a mix of various ethnic groups, cultures, languages, and religions which in many other countries create a chaotic situation, Mauritius has succeeded in creating a stable and harmonious society; even if on a couple of occasions namely in 1968 before acceding to independence and in 1999 on the mysterious passing away in police custody of a popular singer, there has been sporadic outbreak of ‘violence’. It is a place where each community values its own special identity and still respects the other communities making allowance for their right to their different identities. It is one of the few remarkable success stories in the developing world with the following characteristics: political and social stability, quasi-full employment (even an imported labour force of 20,000 mainly from mainland China) growth rates averaging 5% per annum, inflation under 10% per annum and a per capita income of US$3,500.

Mauritius and the development of its Civil Service

The origin of the Mauritian Civil Service goes back to the period of French Colonial rule (1715 – 1810), with the establishment of a Provincial Council with the Governor as Head and a few employees of the French East India Company assisting in the administration of the island. The real development of the island, with the creation of the harbour, roads, bridges, hospitals, schools, courts, prisons and forts started at that time. Over the years the Council expanded, decentralised units were created in the districts and the existing civil administration took care of the maintenance of law and order and the development of infrastructure. With a view to ensuring
a permanent settlement, French notables and settlers were encouraged to participate through the local councils, in the administration of the colony.

In 1810, with the capitulation of the French ‘Isle de France’, the British took over the island and started a period of colonial rule, which was to last for 158 years. From that time the system of British Colonial administration was set in place. The Governor headed a Council of Government which comprised a few ex officio members, the main ones being the Senior Military Officer, the Colonial Secretary, the Procureur General, the Receiver General, the Auditor General, the Collector of Customs, the Protector of Immigrants and the Surveyor General. Over the years, the number of Civil Service departments around these key officers expanded and an increasing number of British Colonial administrators occupied the top posts in the service. The movement for Independence which started during the early part of the last century saw an extension of the franchise to universal adult suffrage in 1958, a gradual decrease in the power and influence of the Governor and British expatriates, the introduction of the ministerial system in 1957, internal self government in 1965 and the speeding up of the process of the mauricianisation of the Civil Service. When the island acceded to independence on 12th March 1968, a Britisher was still Head of the Civil Service; somehow it was a guarantee to the minority groups that their interest would be safeguarded during the transitional period.

One of the remarkable characteristics about the civil service in independent Mauritius was the establishment of an Independent Public Service Commission which guarantees that a fair deal is accorded to persons from all groups in the society, when it comes to matters of recruitment, promotion, disciplinary action and issues of Human Resource Development generally. Indeed Section 88 of the Mauritius Constitutional Order, 1968 provides for the establishment of a Public Service Commission made up of a Chairman and four other members appointed by the President of the Republic after consultation with the Prime Minister and the Leader of the opposition. The manner of appointment of the Public Service Commission is an attempt to ensure that the various groups within the society who align themselves either alongside the Government or the opposition will have cause for satisfaction that their interests will not be disregarded or that no blatant bias will be shown by the Commission. As a matter of fact since Independence, the members of the Commission have been drawn from the ranks of former leading civil servants, like retired Heads of the Civil Service and have tended to be representative of the various cross sections of the population. This has enabled the Mauritian Civil Service to sustain its reputation as an independent, representative and credible institution.

The Public Service Commission with its power firmly entrenched in the constitution has been able to ensure that the philosophy of merit and equity and the principle of independence and fearlessness are scrupulously maintained. The result has been that the service itself has not bowed to the whims and caprices of politicians. On the other hand, while achieving a high level of gender and ethnic representation its members have demonstrated an appreciable level of technical competence and an appreciation of the requirements of modern governance. Without undermining the democratic system, the Mauritian Civil Service has been able to marshal arguments from all groups within the society to ensure that public policies mirror the varied demands of a multi-cultural society. It may be argued therefore that, unlike civil services, in quite a number of developing countries, the Mauritian Civil Service has demonstrated a pattern
of political neutrality and managerial competence that place it alongside civil services of more developed western democracies.

**Diversity Management – The Mauritian Model**

Diversity Management is concerned with the promotion of equality through valuing differences between individuals and groups within the society. It strives for inclusiveness and promotes good equal opportunities practice. The aim is to enhance state or organisational performance by utilising a diversity of views, it being understood that different individuals and groups, may possess precious knowledge about their ‘host groups’ which can prove valuable in making rational decisions in the interest of the state as a whole or of specific groups in particular. Additionally if the composition of an organisation mirrors the communities within which it is located, it can be expected to take care of the needs and aspirations of minority communities as well as the majority. It can recruit, promote and retain the best elements from a wide and diverse labour market and thus build a safe, inclusive and protective environment for its members. The basic tenet of Diversity Management is that if the workforce is made up of a diverse population, there is a need to harness difference so as to create an environment which facilitates the achievement of harmony, progress & prosperity. It may be suggested therefore that the success of a country to a large extent depends on its ability to manage diversity successfully at the highest levels.

One can argue that the success that Mauritius has obtained in Managing Diversity lies in the constitution, the Mauritius Independence order 1968 which took effect on the day the country became independent i.e. 12th March 1968. In 1992 the country acceded to the status of a Republic with the President replacing the then existing Governor General, following appropriate constitutional amendments. Since 1992, Mr. Cassam Uteem belonging to the minority Indo-Muslim community has held the high office of President of the Republic of Mauritius. He will complete his second five-year term in office in June 2002. The constitution declares Mauritius to be a sovereign democratic republic within the Commonwealth of Nations. It is the fundamental law of the state and thus enshrines the prevalence of the rule of law with the equal subjection of all citizens, irrespective of race, class, colour, religion or status to the ordinary law of the land. It also contains an impressive list of fundamental Rights and Freedoms enjoyed by citizens and an Independent Judiciary has always scrupulously upheld these. Indeed the prevalence of the Rule of law can be said to be the impregnable foundation of the Mauritian state, enabling all classes and communities including small vulnerable groups to resort to the courts to obtain justice. It is important that an assurance of safety and a reasonable measure of Social Justice be guaranteed to the various groups in a multi-racial society.

The topmost level of the Judicial set up is quite significant as regards the successful management of the diversity of expertise in the Judiciary. The Judges of the Supreme Court represent all the existing communities as well as a balance in terms of gender. By and large the same situation tends to obtain in the Judiciary as a whole. What can be deducted from this situation is that Mauritians of all classes and ethnic groups have the possibility of taking up studies of their choice and of graduating therein; they are also able to enter into professions of their liking, even the most sophisticated ones and can legitimately aspire to reach the topmost levels, notwithstanding their class or ethnic background.
The Mauritian Constitutional document also provides for the appointment of an Ombudsman whose function is to safeguard the public at large against injustices sustained in consequence of maladministration. The jurisdiction extends over the public services and places an obligation on public officers to act in a fair and non-discriminatory manner. In the Mauritian system of government and administration Ministers are responsible to Parliament, the Courts dispense justice to aggrieved citizens and statutory tribunals exist to deal with special classes of claims and controversies. Still the existence of the Ombudsman is a means of reassuring vulnerable groups within the society that a totally independent person can investigate complaints with a view to rectifying isolated cases of injustice and strengthen confidence between administrators and ordinary citizens without impeding the business of government. The founders of the constitution have thus taken care to supplement the normal judicial process by another one, less obtrusive and swifter in action. And the very existence of such an institution would tend to reduce any possibility that those authorities will perpetrate discriminatory practices. The present Ombudsman is Mr. Hatteea, Soleman Mamode, who hails from the Indo-Muslim Community. Prominent members of minority communities hold a number of other important constitutional posts. Striking examples are Mr. Babet Maurice, Chairman of the Local Government Commission, Mrs. Chui Yew Cheong, Ah Foon, Director of Public Prosecutions, Mr. Taujoo Moussa, Director of Audit and Mr. Abdool Rahman, Muhammad Irfan, Electoral Commissioner. At the highest level of the state, there is a rational approach to ensure that no one is debarred from the topmost positions.

In a general way, the Mauritian constitution provides for a system of representative and responsible government. Elections take place every five years or within a lesser period. Alliances of political parties comprising elements from various communities and classes tend to win elections and form governments. The Prime Minister emerges as a towering figure, wary of preserving his image as a champion of the various groups within the society. The three Prime Ministers that we have had since Independence are Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, Leader of the ‘Labour Party’ (1968 – 1982), Sir Aneerood Jugnauth, Leader of the ‘Mouvement Socialiste Militant’ (1982 – 1995), Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, Leader of the Labour Party (1995 – 2000) and Sir Aneerood Jugnauth again (2000 to date). Dr. Navin Ramgoolam is presently Leader of the Opposition. All our Prime Ministers had their education in the finest temples of learning in Britain and have been able to display qualities of leadership, which they had no doubt imbibed during their formative years. They were able to allow the civil service to follow its own course of natural growth and development devoid of political pressure or interference.

Within the framework of the Whitehall/Westminster system of Government, the Cabinet in Mauritius has tended to be representative of the various ethnic groups within the society. In line with a convention established since 1968, all ethnic groups within society are represented in cabinet in a way, which is deemed to be fair and reasonable. It is a means of strengthening the unity of the state. The various communities have thus found themselves represented at the highest level of the decision making process in the state in equitable numbers. One can surmise that these representatives would echo the needs and aspirations of their members and that Government would consider these views. Again the Prime Minister has had a key, pivotal role in ensuring confidence in the existing state. The latest development in this regard is that the Prime Minister following a pre electoral arrangement, has agreed to step down in 2003 and to allow the leader of the other government party, the Movement Militant Maurician, Mr. Paul Berenger,
from the minority coloured population group to become Prime Minister. This should constitute an interesting development in power sharing in multi-ethnic democracies.

While every effort is made by those in power to sustain unity in diversity, Civil Society in Mauritius is equally very active, mainly because of the fundamental freedoms that people enjoy. As a result there is a multiplicity of non-governmental organisations and many of these appeal primarily to members of only one ethnic community. They occupy an important place in the network of state, government, local government and the public service. On the one hand the state is able, through the regular interaction of its officials with leading figures in these NGO’s to obtain their views before framing its policies and is thus able to show that it is sensitive to the way that its policies will be received by the various ethnic communities. On the other hand the accessibility of members of the government and senior officials to leaders of these organisations is a reassurance that the state is responsive to their needs and aspirations. It is a means of ensuring that no single ethnic community is excluded from the policy-making process.

The Civil Service – Developments in the Post-Independence Period

In the wake of independence in 1968, when Mauritius became a sovereign democratic state with a cabinet system of government within the framework of the rule of law, the country stood in need of a civil service at least adequate for discharging the increased responsibilities which the government of an independent country takes on. The Government had taken responsibility for External Affairs and Women’s Rights: it expanded social services, health, and education and, with the co-operation of the private sector, air travel, industry and banking services. In addition, the government had to allay the fears, which had prevailed among minority groups, following a virulent campaign led by those who opposed Independence.

Strapped for funds and qualified personnel, the civil service was bent on taking up the challenge. It may be said that the generation of civil servants of that period was endowed in sufficient numbers with firm commitment to implement the governmental programme. They hailed from various socio-cultural backgrounds but had imbibed the classical civil service ethos, which would enable them to work with an ‘esprit de corps’ to tackle the problems which the country faced. The model of the type of government that Mauritius adopted was heavily marked by the British system: it was the only model to which Mauritian civil servants had been exposed to any significant extent. This led to the widely accepted view that the Government should become an important provider of goods and services. The Mauritian civil service model that emerged was thus characterised by an emphasis on political and social development.

It is no surprise therefore that the model was soon found to be in need of adaptation in support of the country’s economic development. As a result, a number of initiatives were taken to set up new bodies, which would cope with the rising demands of the population for better services and an enhanced quality of life. The Government launched the Public Sector Management Investment Programme (PSMIP). Three key areas were identified for reform – Financial Management, Human Resource Management and Physical Assets Management. Subsequently, a new Financial Management Manual and a new Personnel Management Manual were introduced. With regard to Physical Assets Management, a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) team noted examples of buildings being inappropriately utilised, frequent and long
delays in equipment maintenance and occurrences of vehicles being retired much earlier than necessary.

The Ministry for Civil Service Affairs was created to replace the previous Establishment Division within the Prime Minister’s Office, and given the responsibility for aspects of the public service which did not come within the purview of the executive service commissions and which related to the size of establishments, salaries and wages, conditions of service and staff relations. This Ministry has been playing a key role in spearheading several incremental reforms toward improving the level of service offered by ministries and departments. Reviewing and reorganising processes in the public service to offer an efficient and cost-effective service has become a regular feature covered by this Ministry.

A series of initiatives were taken to improve public sector management. A number of structures were set up with a view to modernising the service viz:

- The National Computer Board was established for the development of national policies in informatics.
- The Central Informatics Bureau was established with responsibility for coordinating the computerisation in the civil service.
- The State Informatics Ltd was established with responsibility for software development for the public sector.
- The Central Information Systems Division replaced the Data Processing Division and, SITRAC (State Informatics Training Centre) Ltd was created to cater for end-user training in informatics.

Several Ministries and Departments have computerised their systems to improve administrative efficiency. Further, the training of staff in different fields has been an ongoing feature to upgrade the skills of officers so as to enable them to perform their tasks with greater efficiency and with greater attention to the national interest.

Several reforms were brought about on an ad hoc basis to respond to the economic needs of the country, such as the setting up of the One Stop Shop to curtail bureaucratic delays and to simplify and speed up the processing of applications for industrial licenses, investment projects and work permits. Strict budgetary measures were adopted and posts found unfilled after a specified period of time were abolished. Possibilities for early retirement combined with voluntary measures for doing so were used as incremental reforms for keeping control on the optimum size of the workforce needed. Budgetary discipline went in line with job inspections so as to scrutinise and audit manpower needs and assess whether manpower requirements matched the prevailing workload and whether the human resources available were fully utilised at the level they were expected to operate. The overall objective was to eliminate situations, which could be to the advantage of a few.
The Setting up of Work Improvement Teams, and measures to enhance the quality of service to customers through ISO 9000 Standards have shown promise of prompt improvement of service in particular sectors, thus reassuring the community at large that their interests were being catered for. Steps are taken for bringing about changes in the provision of better health for all citizens of Mauritius, Rodrigues and Agalega (two of our dependencies) through a decentralised management of operational health services. A review of the Police Department, in collaboration with a British Expert was carried out with the aim of making proposals for a more efficient and effective Police Force with greater emphasis on Community Police. A National Information Technology Strategy Plan of Action (NITSP) is being implemented on a phased basis with the aim of enabling inter alia the service sector to grow and develop into a business hub to enhance the competitiveness of Mauritius in the global context thus bringing additional wealth for the well being of the population at large. The Government seized the unique opportunity of pushing through simultaneously the set of reforms of the judiciary, local government, education, health and the public service.

The Modern Civil Service
In the new millennium a complex system of administration has come into existence in order to meet the needs of the people and the objectives of government. Industrial firms, trade unions, societies of various kinds, welfare organisations and other bodies abound and require the efforts of civil servants. The central administration has responsibilities that stretch out into Rodrigues and Agalega, the former through departments guided by the Ministry for Rodrigues and the latter through the Outer Islands Corporation, both of which operate from the capital city of Port Louis.

Appropriate instruments for providing services required by the public are ministries and directorates attached to them. The Prime Minister’s Office is at the heart of the whole system. It is the residual legatee of every problem of internal government not specifically assigned to some other department and many of these problems are politically sensitive, straddling the controversial borderline between liberty and order. It is therefore necessary to review occasionally the machinery of government and determine the units or bureaus in each ministry that could advantageously be transferred to another ministry. The Prime Minister is a powerful figure symbolising the identity, the integrity and the inclusiveness of the modern state.

Developing a client-oriented approach
Managing cultural change is a major concern of the public service. To achieve the objectives of the organisation, the values, beliefs and expectations of the workforce are being changed. Public service managers are being driven into becoming more customer aware and client oriented, aiming at doing things right and providing services that meet the needs of the customer. The quality of service delivered thus becomes a most important concern of the manager.

Citizens’ Charter
In line with government policy of making appropriate Public Services available to the people, the providers of such services like hospitals, schools, town halls and district councils, the police and prisons, the Accountant-General’s Office, the Central Electricity Board, the Central Water Authority, the Telecommunications Service and banks are being encouraged to formulate citizens’ charters with regard to the services they offer. In these Charters the respective service agencies have to commit themselves to providing prompt, efficient, courteous, honest and fair
service. The model of a Citizens’ Charter is found in the White Paper, *The Citizens’ Charter*, issued in 1991 by the British Prime Minister’s Office. “It seeks to achieve: published standards of service; consultative arrangements with the public; clear information; courtesy and efficiency from named staff; user-friendly complaints procedures and independent validation of performance”. The very existence and enforcement of citizens charters is a guarantee that all citizens of the state are placed on the same footing and need to receive the same attention from public authorities.

**A Public Service Counter-Service Award Programme** is being instituted for granting awards to the departments running the three most excellent counter services. The choice of departments is based on the following six criteria:

(a) facilities for customers;
(b) preparation to receive customers;
(c) good practices adhered to by counter staff;
(d) management support;
(e) staff involvement; and
(f) efforts to identify the requirements and expectations of customer.

**Developing a Public Service Ethos**
In the climate of change and reform, Government is putting emphasis on Ethics in the Civil Service. Developing the public service ethos is more than a series of injunctions, listing attitudes or behaviour, which are not allowed. It is positive climate setting in which doing the right thing coincides with what public servants are willing to do. The values of the new culture comprise leadership, quality, productivity and openness in addition to traditional values of the public service emphasizing merit, equity, probity, integrity, ethical conduct and political independence. The formal development of codes of ethics marks a significant step towards articulating public service values at a time of rapid change within the culture and practice of the public service. The Code of Ethics which has been in force since January 2000 may be found in Annex I. All officers are required to abide by its provisions.

Some of the changes that will lead to an ethos change are:

- The organisation must have a “mission statement” or a value system.
- Everyone in the organisation must subscribe to it and through an individual’s immediate activities within it contributes to the total quality of the service offered.
- At regular meetings groups centred round each one’s work discuss the constraints and problems existing to hamper the achievement of the quality of the service and decide how to remove the constraints.
- A change in the attitude of management is being evolved in the context of Total Quality Management. A more democratic participative form of management is replacing the authoritarian top-down decision-making process.
Staff recruitment, training and career development
The Civil Service has a well-established and transparent policy for the recruitment of staff. It involves creation of established posts; notification of vacancies, public advertisement, selection by the Service Commission, appointment on a temporary basis and finally confirmation after one year satisfactory service. Recruitment of staff has been on an incremental basis over the years in order to respond to the growing demand and expansion of the economy. The civil service, being the executive arm of the Government, is responsible for the implementation of policies and for providing the necessary institutional framework for action.

The Civil Service is therefore an institution which has no direct influence in the selection of the candidates appointed to man it, except for the involvement of responsible officers in drawing up schemes of service of all posts. The selection of public officers by a body like the Public Service Commission has been a deliberate choice in an attempt to avoid patronage, to make selection on merit, to make competition fair and open and to ensure equal opportunities to all candidates. The Public Service Commission itself in general, tends to be representative of the various ethnic groups on the island and this enables people of whatever community to have trust and confidence in the commission to give a fair chance to one and all.

Training is an important component of Human Resource Development; it is also a key input in a strategy for Public Sector Reform. It is a planned and continuous process, which helps to modify attitude, knowledge through learning experience in order to achieve effective performance. In Mauritius, a strategy for civil service training has been put in place since Independence in 1968.

Every effort is made to ensure that the training that is dispensed will equip officers with the necessary knowledge, skills and tools to enable them to perform their day-to-day duties in a most efficient and effective manner while satisfying both organisational and individual needs. It is also aimed at enabling public officers to move towards higher and more challenging positions in the Civil Service.

The training of officers was formerly effected by the Training Unit of the Ministry for Civil Service Affairs. This function was then taken over by the Mauritius Institute of Public Administration and Management (MIPAM) and it is now the responsibility of the School of Public Sector Policy and Management of the newly created University of Technology of Mauritius which combines both the provision of educational academic programmes leading to the award of diploma and degrees in public sector management as well as intensive short training programmes for the different grades in the civil service. The training organised is meant mostly for general service staff, clerical, secretarial and administrative classes while training for certain technical grades is being organised by respective Ministries.

Successful training can be achieved only if it follows a thorough analysis of training needs at the levels of the organisation, the task and the individual. At the level of the organisation, the analysis aims at identifying the skills and abilities required to cope with the job and to manage change, taking into consideration the organisational culture. Analysis at the task level involves a thorough examination of its requirements within the organisation. Job descriptions and qualifications specify the level of attainment and of the skills demanded for the accomplishment
of a given task. At the individual level training development programmes are being devised to meet the individual’s needs to enable him to acquire relevant knowledge, skills and attitude.

In each ministry and department a senior personnel officer is responsible for identifying training needs. The Ministry for Civil Service Affairs and Administrative Reform is responsible for the preparation of training strategies and programmes, co-opting any other agency, if necessary. Indeed the Ministry is playing a key role in infusing a sense of commitment and dynamism in the service as a whole.

Different modes of training are being adopted depending on the nature of the skills required and the level of officers involved and these take any of the following forms:

- On-the-job training where officers can learn from their experiences on the job;
- Cooperative training which is a mixture of classroom learning and on-the-job experience;
- Attitudinal training which deals not only with attitudes, but also with culture, perception and inter-personal matters; and
- Distance learning.

Officers who are attending part-time courses at the tertiary education institutions and those on the second year of study for a long-distance course benefit from leave facilities to enable them to prepare for examinations.

Flexible recruitment practices
In order to bring in new blood into the service, the system of filling vacancies by serving officers on the basis of seniority alone is being reviewed. Open recruitment, especially for senior positions and in areas considered scarce, will ensure that vacancies are filled on the basis of market-wide availability of skills and competence. The shift away from career public service based on seniority alone is aimed at creating a nucleus of open-minded officers with a high level of managerial skills.

Facilitating mobility between public and private sectors is an effective way of achieving versatility and increasing professionalism in the service. Incentives such as portable pension rights will help in the interchange between public and private sectors. With an introduction of flexible recruitment, provision is being made for those officers willing to take advantage of employment opportunities outside the service to be able to do so but not to the disadvantage of those who continue to serve in their places without being appointed permanently for long stretches of time. The timely appointment of officers considered capable of doing the job can only bring greater confidence in the service.

The policy of Government since 1968 has been to try to recruit the best elements in the society and to give them the opportunity through a proper career development programme to rise to the topmost levels. It is significant that the six Heads of the civil service that we have had since Independence reached the top after a long career, often starting at the lowest level, but benefiting
from various opportunities for training either locally or overseas. The senior-most officers holding posts of Permanent Secretary and above are fairly representative of the various communities on the island. Most remarkable is the fact that among the last six officers appointed to act as Permanent Secretaries on 21.03.01, five are women. This shows how through education, training and proper career development, serious efforts are being made to ensure a proper gender balance in the Mauritian Civil Service.

**Conclusion**

This paper has tried to highlight the positive aspects of the Republic of Mauritius by way of underlining successful diversity Management in the state in general and in the civil service in particular. It was originally an uninhabited island and the conflicts between indigineous and immigrant population, which have plagued other parts of the world, have been absent. Being an island, it has not been vulnerable to neighbouring countries bent on expansion. The ancestors of the people living in Mauritius came from different parts of the world mainly Europe, Asia, Africa and neighbouring island. It is today a kaleidoscope of races, communities, religions, languages and cultures, existing side by side as a living example of unity in diversity.

Since 1968 when the island became a sovereign democratic state every effort has been made to manage diversity successfully at the level of the state as well as the civil service. Both the Head of State and the Head of Government have provided able national leadership. The country has benefited from an Independent Judiciary, a free press, free and fair elections, representative and responsible government and a balance in the representation of communal, regional and physically vulnerable groups in various institutions. Government has ensured that the best elements in the population have found their rightful place in the civil service and have thus been able to contribute in a meaningful way to the formulation of balanced public policies.

As the executive arm of government the Mauritian civil service has played an important part in nation building and socio-economic development. It has been able to harness the contribution of the best elements from the various groups within the society and has moulded them into a unifying force. Diversity management in the civil service in Mauritius has been an on-going process for several years now. It has ensured that members of minority communities as well as the majority feel physically, culturally, and professionally secure. Not that there has not been any cloud on the horizon. As pointed out earlier, on a couple of occasions the ethnic balance has been fragile, and economically vulnerable groups often seek greater assistance from the State. However, when the social accountancy of the 33 years of independence is finally balanced, Mauritius stands out as a rare example of peaceful co-existence, social harmony and economic success. As such it can serve as a model to developing as well as developed democracies.
CODE OF ETHICS FOR PUBLIC OFFICERS

1. Introduction

This Code of Ethics sets out the standards of correct conduct expected of Public Officers. It emphasises the importance of a responsible, responsive and caring public service and is intended to promote effective administration and responsible behaviour.

Conduct cannot be regulated but a code provides guidance for appropriate behaviour in a variety of circumstances.

This Code of Ethics does not have an answer to every problem of ethics or behaviour. It simply lays down a set of principles and guidelines which aim at instilling a high standard of conduct and behaviour in the public service.

This Code applies to all officers irrespective of grade or rank. It complements existing rules and regulations.

2. Values and Principles

This Code of Ethics rests on a number of values and principles which should guide the behaviour and action of Public Officers so as to inspire public confidence and trust. These are:

- integrity,
- objectivity,
- consciousness, and
- loyalty to the Government of the day.

It also recognizes the rights and obligations of Public Officers according to existing laws and established practice.

3. Obligations to the Government of the Day

It is the responsibility of Ministers to determine Government Policy. Public Officers should

- give Ministers honest, comprehensive and impartial advice without fear or favour;
- provide Ministers with all the information at their disposal which may have a bearing on policy decisions;
- carry out decisions efficiently, effectively and economically; and
- maintain a high standard of performance.
4.  **Relationship with Ministers**

Ministers are responsible to the National Assembly. They are helped by public officers in the discharge of responsibilities entrusted to them as Ministers.

The relationship between public officers and Ministers should be based on mutual trust and confidence. Public officers should work with their Ministers to the best of their ability, with integrity, courtesy and respect.

5.  **Relations with the Public**

Public officers should treat the public with care and courtesy. They must give a good service to all members of the public and be responsive to their needs regardless of the status of a person. They should give the required information or advice and provide reasonable assistance. Public Officers must help the public to understand their rights and obligations.

6.  **Responsibility towards the Public**

Public officers should treat members of the public diligently, fairly and sympathetically. When public officers exercise discretionary powers, they should ensure that they take all facts relevant to the case into consideration.

7.  **Duties of Public Officers**

In the performance of their duties, public officers should work as a team and demonstrate a high degree of professionalism. They should comply with the lawful and reasonable directions given by a person having authority to give such directions. They should behave in a way that brings credit to their position and enhances the reputation of the public service.

8.  **Political Impartiality**

Public officers owe their loyalty to the government of the day. They should observe political neutrality in their day-to-day functions. They should avoid activities likely to impair, or to be seen to impair, their political impartiality or the political impartiality of the public office.

9.  **Acceptance of Gifts and Other Benefits**

Public officers should misuse their official position or information acquired in the course of their official duties to further their private interests or those of others. They should not solicit or accept for themselves or for others any gift or favour in whatever form which may reasonably be construed as influencing the performance of their duties.

10. **Conflict of Interests**

Public officers should avoid having any financial or other interest or embark on any undertaking that could directly or indirectly compromise the performance of their duties. They are required to
disclose to their Responsible Officers their private financial or other interests such as directorship, shareholdings, real estate, trusts, etc. which may conflict with their official, duties, and take steps to avoid such conflicts.

11. Disclosure of Information

Public officers may disclose official information or documents acquired in the course of their duties only when they are required to do so by law or when they have the proper authority to do so. In these cases, their comments should be confined to factual information. They should not give an opinion on official policy or practice. They should not seek to influence or frustrate the policies, decisions or actions of government by the unauthorised, improper or premature disclosure of any information or documents to which they have had access as public officers.

12. Use of Public Resources

Public officers should ensure that public assets and other resources are used for official purposes only and are managed scrupulously, properly, efficiently and effectively. Public officers are required to strive to obtain value for money and to avoid waste or extravagance in the use of public resources.

13. Outside Employment

Public officers should not engage in any form of business or employment outside the public service unless prior approval has been obtained form the Responsible Officer. They should ensure that they do not accept employment or engage in activities which may conflict duties or cast doubts on their own integrity or that of the public service.

14. Unbecoming Behaviour

Public officers should engage in gambling, drinking or substance abuse in such a way as to make them liable to judicial action of any kind and certainly not at the workplace. They should avoid smoking where this is likely to inconvenience others. They should not embarras colleagues or members of the public by their dress, their speech and their behaviour.

Ministry for Civil Service Affairs and Administrative Reform
January 2000
REFERENCES


