

Abstract

This study sought to establish the role played by communication in the on-going reform programmes in the public sector and, particularly, in the Department of Immigration in the Ministry of Immigration and Registration of Persons. In particular, it has investigated the function of the service charter as a communication tool both within the department and between the department and users of its services. To interrogate the above issues, the study focused on two populations, viz. employees (service providers) and customers (service consumers). Up to 50 front-line staff, including immigration officers, immigration clerks and others in the operational cadres, were selected through a simple random sampling procedure. In addition, about 100 customers, sampled from members of the public seeking services at the department's headquarters, formed part of the sample for the other population. Further, an interview schedule, with one senior official of the department, was conducted to obtain in-depth information on the topic under investigation. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to analyze the data collected from the study. Quantitative data from the survey were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Some of the key findings of the study were that a large majority of service seekers at the department do not know about the existence of a service charter in the ministry. In contrast, all the service providers know the charter exists and almost all know the promises it makes to the customers and timelines therein. But a considerable number of the staff at the operational cadre do not use the charter as a reference point for service delivery. Similarly, only a handful of the customers use the charter to demand services. Nearly all members of staff say they were not involved in the planning and formulation processes of the service charter nor have they been trained on implementations. The study concludes that the front line civil servants in the ministry are fully conversant with the service charter's content; but because they were not involved in its formulation majority of them do not use the charter as reference point in service provision, neither has the charter influenced their behaviour and attitude in service provision. Further, because the customers do not know the charter exist few of them use it to demand services. The ministry values communication as crucial component in the public service reform programmes. However the communications office feels it is weak both in terms staffing level and position in the ministry's organisational structure. Consequently, the study recommends, among other things, that the government formulate a comprehensive communication policy while ministries and other

government agencies should draw up clear communication strategy thus mainstreaming communication as crucial component in the public sector development programmes.