

Benchmarking the Citizen's Charter in Jamaica: an Empirical Evaluation

Jimmy Kazaara Tindigarukayo (Ph.D.)
Senior Lecturer, Sir Arthur Lewis
Institute of Social & Economic Studies
University of the West Indies
Mona Campus, Kingston 7, Jamaica

WORK TELEPHONE: (876) 927-1234
FAX NUMBER: (876) 927-2409
CELL TELEPHONE: (876) 422-9976
E-Mail: jimmy.tindigarukayo@uwimona.edu.jm

Benchmarking the Citizen's Charter in Jamaica: an Empirical Evaluation

Abstract

Benchmarking entails importation of best practices from other organizations and/or countries in order to improve performance, especially service delivery, in the recipient organization and/or agency. To that end, the Citizen's Charter Program which was initiated in the UK in 1991 by then Prime Minister John Major was later imported into Jamaica in 1994 by then Prime Minister P.J. Patterson, in response to citizens' concern over lack of responsiveness of state agencies to the needs of government service users. The purpose of this paper is to examine empirically how the benchmarking of the Citizen's Charter in Jamaica fared, through the use of structured surveys to interview both clients and staff of those agencies that were implementing the Charter in 2004. As indicated by results of both surveys, the Citizen's Charter in Jamaica has been successful in the following areas: improvement in service provision, increased work productivity, improved surroundings where services are provided, greatly reduced waiting time for services, improvement in the treatment of customers by staff and overall increase in customers' satisfaction. Despite these successes, a level of dissatisfaction was expressed by staff of the agencies surveyed towards the overall treatment of staff, especially in relation to staff benefits.

Key words: benchmarking, citizen's charter, agencies, customers, services

Introduction

Defined as "a process for identifying and importing best practices to improve performance" (Patricia Keehley, et al, 1997: 39), benchmarking has increasingly become a useful tool for public sector reforms. It has helped organizations to identify standards of performance in other organizations and to import them successfully to their own. In particular, public sector organizations have been

able to borrow some best practices from the private sector for the improvement of their organizational performance (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992).

According to Fischer (1994: S4), public sector organizations should benchmark for three main reasons:

- (i) to determine the criteria that underlie their performance, in order to allow for comparison with other organizations;
- (ii) to identify problem areas within respective services, in order to prioritize which services need immediate attention; and
- (iii) to improve the delivery of services by importing best practices from other organizations.

The concept of best practices is characterized by a number of criteria which makes it an effective tool for benchmarking. These criteria include (Patricia Keehley, et al.1997: 26-29):

- A best practice must be successful over time, with a proven track record. The argument here is that by focusing on successes, scholars and practitioners alike are exposed to useful approaches which can be adapted to other organizations that lack successful reforms.
- A best practice should be characterized by shared vision, a clear perception of the current reality, creativity and innovation, and learning through practicing (Senge, 1990). The practice should represent a genuinely radical change rather than a mere incremental change.
- A best practice should be generic in a sense that it is grounded in general rather than industry-specific terms, which makes it “more flexible, more easily changed, and more readily adopted to a variety of business situations” (Hiebeler et al 1998: 21). In short, it should be replicable with modification.

- A best practice must produce quantifiable results. As Keehley et al (1997: 27) have argued, “the success of a practice is conveyed through output, outcome, timeliness, efficiency, or effective measures”.
- A best practice involved in service delivery should be customer-friendly in order to increase the number of clients served and to improve levels of interaction between clients and the staff serving in the organization.
- A best practice should be results-driven, and where quantification of results is limited, a best practice can be recognized through the analysis of the extent to which the practice contributes to the organizational accomplishment of its stated mission, its goals and objectives.
- Finally, before adopting a new practice, managers should ensure that the practice will survive in the long run and will produce sustained desired results within the organization.

The above criteria of best practices are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive. The purpose here is to examine the extent to which some of the above and other related criteria of best practices are being utilized in the implementation of the citizen’s charter programme in Jamaica, and to analyze their levels of success.

Objectives of the study

Since the concept of Citizen’s Charter was introduced in the UK and then in the USA and Australia, it has gained favourable recognition by governments worldwide based on its successful implementation and positive feedback from assessment studies.

Thus, vital to the success of the Citizen's Charter Programme is a regular monitoring of performance to establish the extent to which citizens are aware of programme benefits and to assess the impact of the programme on its stakeholders, including organizations implementing it, their respective staff, and clients who utilize services provided by implementing organizations. Hence, the objectives of this study were three-fold:

- (i) to assess the extent to which the public was aware of the Citizen's Charter Programme in Jamaica, and the benefits associated with it;
- (ii) to assess the extent to which the introduction of the programme has improved the delivery of services to customers; and
- (iii) to assess how the service delivery organizations and their staff have been affected by the Charter programme.

An Overview of the Citizen's Charter Programme as a Best Practice

The Citizen's Charter Programme was initiated in the UK in 1991 as a government programme by then Prime Minister John Major, who felt that citizens are entitled to high quality services from government (United Kingdom, 1991). The programme was originally intended to last ten years, aimed at raising the standards of public services within government organizations by making them more responsive to users (Sadler, 1999). To that end, the Charter provided the framework for enabling government departments and agencies that provided direct services to the public to put into practice the principles contained in the framework. The UK Citizen's Charter was not implemented in those agencies that provided services indirectly to the public or those agencies that functioned as regulatory or policymaking bodies.

A Charter Mark Award Scheme, which was introduced in UK in 1992, recognised excellence within organizations providing services to the public and encouraged them to be more responsive to the needs of users.

In 1997, the newly elected Labour Government in the UK reviewed the Citizen's Charter programme and agreed to re-launch it as part of its wider initiative to modernise and to improve government. The new programme focussed more on the needs and wishes of those who used and delivered public services (Sadler, 1999).

Baker and Bent (1997) have summarised the rationale for the Citizen's Charter initiative in the UK:

- all public services are paid for by individual citizens, either directly or through their taxes;
- citizens are therefore entitled to expect high quality services, provided efficiently at a reasonable costs; and
- where the state is engaged in regulating, taxing or administering justice, these functions too must be carried out fairly, effectively and courteously.

In the UK today, Citizen's Charters are an integral part of public sector service delivery and part of the management process in almost all public sector agencies.

Studies carried out have shown that in the UK the Citizen's Charter programme has raised the awareness of users about their rights in relation to services provided by government agencies, and has had some positive impact on culture change among service providers. In particular, some marked improvements relating to the establishment of the Charter have been noticed in the following service areas: the health sector, the court system, services provided by housing, social security, utilities and Inland Revenue (Sadler, 1999).

In the USA, following an executive order by President Bill Clinton in 1993, the “Putting Customers First program” was established. This programme included most of the fundamental principles on which the UK Charter Programme had been developed. At the forefront was the commitment to improve services that customers received from the government. To ensure this, the government sought to become more customer oriented. The service standards of government were, therefore, expected to match or even to exceed those of private organisations.

“Putting Customers First” placed emphasis on consultation with customers and on measuring the success of service providers in achieving their stated standards. Agencies were compelled to identify and to survey their customers and to report back to the President by early 1994. These surveys provided information about levels of customer satisfaction, which served to establish benchmarks against which agencies would be able to measure their success and performance against their customer service plans. Consequently, agencies were able to develop and to improve their service standards that customers expected from government departments (Al Gore, 1993).

Studies conducted on the charter program in the USA have indicated that improvements have been made in the following areas: customer satisfaction with courtesy of staff, ease of access to services, reduced waiting time and the provision of information which is clearer and easier to understand (Service charters, 2001, p, 4).

In Australia, the idea of developing Citizen’s Charters gained political support in 1994 when the shadow Minister for Consumer Affairs expressed the importance of developing a customer service ethic in the public sector, and recognised the practical value of using the Charter concept. In 1997, the Australian government

developed and published its Principles for developing “a Service Charter” (Australia Department of Industry, Science and Tourism, 1997).

While the UK and USA applied the concept of the Charter mostly to service delivery agencies, the Australian government applied, from the outset, the Charter principle to all government departments and agencies, including regulatory bodies whenever they provided a service to the public. This was also widened to include services contracted on behalf of the government and delivered by the private sector.

Since the establishment of the charter in Australia, agencies have reported that customers’ feedback have resulted in improvements to the way things are done, for example improvements to the telephone service, speeding up review processes and provision of public access to computer terminals (Service charters, 2001, p, 4).

In Jamaica, the Citizen’s Charter Programme was announced by the then Prime Minister P. J. Patterson to the House of Representatives in December 1994, emphasizing the obligation of public entities to improve the quality of service, which they provide to members of the public, their customers. According to the Charter, organizations providing services should:

Set and display standards for key areas of performance in a form which the customer understands, publish information regularly on performance against those standards, and show how they are meeting their standards (Government of Jamaica, 1995: 1).

The Citizen’s Charter sets performance targets to include the following (Government of Jamaica, 1995: 1-2):

- standards should be genuine;
- standards should be demanding but realistic;

- agencies providing services should continually look to improve their existing standards;
- service standards should reflect the priorities of the customer, be set in consultation with customers and be tested through customer surveys;
- for any adverse performance, customers should be provided with an explanation and details of any corrective action taken;
- performance information should be used to improve the service delivery system; and
- important performance claims should be checked or validated by external or independent sources.

In his speech entitled "the Citizen's Charter: raising the Standards of Service," at a services orientation seminar on March 5, 1998, the then Prime Minister of Jamaica, P. J. Patterson, reaffirmed his commitment to improving customer service to the public. In his words (P. J. Patterson, 1998: 2):

The critical ingredients in achieving better customer service include accurate and timely information, consultation and choice, courtesy and helpfulness, value for money and putting things right when they go wrong.

All state agencies in Jamaica are required to design Citizen's Charters, detailing their mission and their service standard. At the same time the public is required to hold them to those promised levels of service.

As a best practice imported from the UK, the introduction of the Citizen's Charter in Jamaica has highlighted customer service, by requiring the public sector organizations to put customers first among their priorities. It has also served to set high standards within government organisations, thereby enabling them to improve their performance and to achieve their missions.

Methodology

In order to fully address the three objectives of the study mentioned earlier, three methods of data collection were utilized:

- **Secondary data analysis**, which involved a critical review of government documents, reports, and other written materials on the Citizen's Charter Programme.
- **Elite interview**, conducted among top executives of twelve organizations that were randomly selected for the study (see the list in the Appendix), who were involved in policy formulation and/or policy implementation of their respective Citizen's Charter Programmes.
- **Surveys**: Three types of surveys, addressing each of the three objectives mentioned above, were conducted as indicated below.
 - (i) **Survey of the general public**, which sought to establish the extent to which members of the general public were aware of the Citizen's Charter Programme and the extent to which they utilized the programme.
 - (ii) **Staff Survey**, which targeted the staff of the twelve studied organizations which have implemented the Citizen's Charter Programme. The staff members that were selected from those organizations must have been there before the implementation of the Charter, and were thus required to compare service delivery before and after the launching of the Citizen's Charter.
 - (iii) **Survey of service users**, which targeted people who utilize services provided by the twelve studied organizations that have implemented

the Citizen's Charter, in order to assess the extent to which the introduction of the programme has affected the delivery of service to clients.

A Survey of the General Public on the Citizen's Charter in Jamaica

The first survey targeted members of the general public in order to establish the extent to which they were aware of the Citizen's Charter Programme in Jamaica and the quality of services they received under the programme. This survey was carried out among Jamaican households which were randomly selected from the whole country, using maps prepared by the Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN) for each of the fourteen parishes in Jamaica.

Trained interviewers on the STATIN reserve list, who are located in every parish in the country, were hired to conduct the interviews. From each selected household, the interviewers were required to identify one person that mostly utilized services provided by government agencies/organizations, and to subject that person to an interview.

Sampling of Respondents

Maps indicating the number and location of households in each parish were acquired from STATIN. On the basis of these maps, and in proportion to numbers of households per parish, a sample representing the number of households to be surveyed country wide was drawn as indicated below.

The study used a sample size of 1100 respondents which, in relation to the total Jamaican population of 2.6 million, has a margin of error of plus/minus 3%, implying that the results derived from this sample represent the total population from which it was drawn by 94%. Using this sample size, the number of respondents for each parish was calculated using the 2001 Jamaican population

census, as follows: the parish population size was divided by Jamaican total population and then multiplied by the sample size of 1100. This provided proportional representation of respondents from each parish, as indicated in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Proportional Sample size of Respondents from Parishes

Parish	Total Population	Sample size
St. Andrew	555, 828	234
St. Catherine	482, 308	203
Clarendon	237, 024	100
Manchester	185, 801	078
St. James	175, 127	074
St. Ann	166, 762	070
St. Elizabeth	146, 404	062
Westmoreland	138, 947	059
St. Mary	111, 466	047
Kingston	96, 052	041
St. Thomas	91, 604	039
Portland	80, 205	034
Trelawny	73, 066	031
Hanover	67, 037	028
Total	2,607,632	1100

Source of total population data: Jamaica Census 2001

Findings from the Survey of the General Public

The survey of the general public on the Citizen's Charter Programme was conducted during the months of February and March, 2005, across the entire island. A pre-determined sample size for each parish was divided into urban and rural residents proportionally to their numbers. Ultimately, out of the original predetermined sample size of 1,100 potential respondents, 930 were actually interviewed, providing a comfortable response rate of 85%.

Biographic Characteristics of Respondents

- (i) **Age:** Although the modal age category was 20-30 years (32%, n=924), most of the respondents were 40 years and below (65%, n=924).
- (ii) **Gender:** Majority of the respondents were female (56%, n=930)
- (iii) **Location of respondents:** Most respondents lived in urban areas (69%, n=930).
- (iv) **Occupation:** Although the modal occupational category was skilled (38%, n=930), most respondents were either semi-skilled or unskilled (49%).
- (v) **Education:** Majority of respondents had attained Secondary School Certificate (57%, n=930).

Respondents' Knowledge of the Citizen's Charter Programmes in Jamaica

When the respondents were asked about the Citizen's Charter Programme, just half of the respondents (50%, n=930) knew about it, mostly from urban areas (75%, n=463).

Main Sources of Services for Respondents

Respondents were requested to indicate whether they got services from any government department and/or agency, and if so which. All respondents got services from government, as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2: Respondents' Main Sources of Services

Source	Respondents	Percentage
National Water Commission	386	42%
Post Office	115	12%
Inland Revenue	106	11%
Ministry of Health	102	11%
National Housing Trust	55	06%
Registrar Generals Department	36	04%
Ministry of Labour	25	03%
Other sources combined	105	11
Total	930	100%

Respondents were given a list of services expected to be provided by government departments and/or agencies which were implementing the Citizen's Charter programmes, and were requested to indicate their levels of satisfaction with each. Items included in the list were based on the performance targets originally set by the Jamaican Citizen's Charter, mentioned earlier in this paper. For purposes of clarity in the analysis, items on the list provided to respondents have been divided into two categories: those relating to customer services directly, as indicated in Table 3, and those relating to organizational efficiency in the provision of services, as indicated in Table 4.

For ease of analysis, the values of the categories "very dissatisfied" and "dissatisfied" were combined to constitute the category "**generally dissatisfied**", and the values of the categories "very satisfied" and "satisfied" were also combined to constitute the category "**generally satisfied**".

Table 3: Items Measuring Levels of Satisfaction with Customer Services

Item	N	Generally Satisfied	Generally Dissatisfied
Organizations' provision of information about services available to customers	930	40%	60%
Consultations with service users	926	33%	67%
Staff's courtesy and politeness towards customers	930	67%	33%
Staff's redress to customers when service standards were not met	913	47%	53%
Timely response to customers' complaints	922	55%	45%
Provision of services at the convenience of customers	902	57%	43%
Giving customers choice about services they receive	923	39%	61%
Improved access to services for customers	925	65%	35%
Overall customer satisfaction	887	54%	46%

Results in Table 3 show that respondents were more satisfied than dissatisfied with the provision of customer services. Of the nine items analysed in Table 3, respondents were satisfied with five (or 56%).

Table 4: Items Measuring Organizational Efficiency in Provision of Services

Item	N	Generally Satisfied	Generally Dissatisfied
Standardized procedures for handling complaints	924	63%	47%
Organizations' timeliness in the provision of services	927	52%	48%
Organizations' operational procedures	928	43%	57%
Physical environment where services were being provided	928	76%	24%
Speed in processing documents	927	56%	44%
Organizations' level of accountability	909	42%	58%
Transparency within organizations	902	38%	62%
Customer service surveys	917	25%	75%
Organizations' overall provision of quality services	927	59%	41%

Of the nine items measuring organizational efficiency in the provision of Services in Table 4, respondents were generally satisfied with five (or 56%), similar results as in Table 3 dealing with direct customer services.

Thus, of the 18 items in Tables 3 and 4, listing services expected to be provided by organizations implementing the Citizen's Charter programmes, members of the general public interviewed who use government services (n=930) were generally satisfied with ten (or 56%) and generally dissatisfied with eight.

A Survey of Clients

The second objective of the study was to assess the extent to which the introduction of the Citizen's Charter Programme in Jamaica has improved the delivery of services to customers. Thus, in addition to surveying members of the general public, it was decided that clients of the twelve randomly selected organizations that have implemented the Citizen's Charter Programme be interviewed to enlist their perspective about the services they receive from their respective providers.

With the permission of the organization's management, trained interviewers were placed in the lobbies of each selected organization with questionnaire forms, and were instructed to interview every third person that had finished conducting business in the organization. This was done for a week in each studied organization. Where the organization had many branches, effort were made to ensure that each part of the organization was covered. The total number of clients interviewed in this survey was 387.

Findings of the Client Survey

Clients from twelve organizations randomly selected for the study were interviewed during the months of February and March 2005. Below is the detailed discussion of the findings for this survey.

Biographic Characteristics of Respondents

- (i) **Age:** Although the modal age category among respondents was 31-40, majority of respondents (61%, n=366) were 40 years and below.
- (ii) **Gender:** Majority of respondents (58%, n=387) were females.
- (iii) **Occupation:** The modal occupational category was skilled labour (31%, n=309).
- (iv) **Education:** The modal educational attainment among respondents was Secondary School Certificate (37%, n=370).

Clients' Levels of Satisfaction with Services provided by their Agencies

Respondents were given a list of services expected to be provided by their agencies, as per the original list provided by the Jamaican Citizen's Charter, and were requested to indicate their levels of satisfaction with each of them. For this analysis, items on the list provided to respondents have been divided into two categories: those relating to customers directly and those relating to organizational efficiency in the provision of services.

Table 5: Items Measuring Levels of Satisfaction with Customer Services

Item	N	Generally Satisfied	Generally Dissatisfied
Organizations' provision of information about services available to customers	374	71%	29%
Regularity of organizations' consultations with service users	315	55%	45%
Staff's courtesy and politeness towards customers	370	76%	24%
Staff's redress to customers when service standards were not met	307	48%	52%
Timely response to customers' complaints	264	53%	47%
Provision of services at the convenience of customers	332	63%	37%
Giving customers choice about services they receive	307	59%	41%
Overall customer services satisfaction	324	60%	40%

Of the eight items in Table 5, measuring levels of clients' satisfaction with customer services in their respective organizations, respondents were generally satisfied with seven (or 86%). The only item with which respondents were dissatisfied was "staff's redress to customers when service standards were not met". On this same item, 53% of respondents in the general public survey (Table 3) were also generally dissatisfied.

Table 6: Items Measuring Organizational Efficiency in Provision of Services

Item	N	Generally Satisfied	Generally Dissatisfied
Standardized procedures for handling complaints	334	61%	39%
Organizations' timeliness in the provision of services	369	45%	55%
Organizations' operational procedures	365	73%	27%
Physical environment where services were being provided	358	85%	15%
Speed in processing documents	355	57%	43%
Organizations' level of accountability	264	59%	41%
Transparency within organizations	256	66%	34%
Organizations' customer service surveys	225	40%	60%
Efficient delivery of services	322	62%	38%

As indicated in Table 6, respondents were satisfied with seven out of nine items (or 78%) measuring organizational efficiency in the provision of services.

Overall, respondents from the clients' survey were generally much more satisfied with both the provision of customer services and organizational efficiency of their respective organizations than respondents from the general public survey.

Survey of Staff within the Studied Organizations

The final objective of the study was to assess how the service delivery organizations and their staff have been affected by the Citizen's Charter Programme. Hence, the questionnaire for this survey was filled out by members

of staff who were working in their organizations before the implementation of the Citizen's Charter Programme and were still working in the same organizations at the time of the survey. The total number of respondents for this survey was 347.

Findings of the Staff Survey

The survey of staff members from twelve organizations, which were randomly selected for the study, was conducted during the months of February through early April 2005. Below is a summary of the findings for this survey.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

- (i) **Age:** Although the modal age category was 31-40 years (33%, n=312), the majority of respondents (53%) were 40 years and below.
- (ii) **Gender:** Most of the respondents (71%, n=347) were females.
- (iii) **Education:** The modal educational attainment among respondents was secondary school certificate (37%, n=326).
- (iv) **Position of respondents within the Agency:** The dominant position among respondents was non-managerial (45%, n=332), followed by Junior Managers (31%), Middle Managers (19%) and top managers (05%).

Changes since the Introduction of the Citizen's Charter Programme

- (i) **Level of change:** Respondents were asked to indicate the level of change that had occurred in the operations of their organizations since the introduction of the Citizen's Charter. Table 8 shows the results.

Table 7: Level of change within organizations since the Citizen’s Charter Status

Level of change	Frequency	Percentage
No change	011	03%
Little has changed	127	38%
Important changes	144	43%
Very significant changes	056	16%
Total	338	100%

Majority of respondents (59%, n=338) indicated that both important and significant changes had taken place in their organizations since the introduction of the Charter.

- (ii) **Direction of change:** Respondents were requested to indicate whether the changes that had occurred were positive or negative.

Table 8: Direction of changes that have taken place

Direction of change	Frequency	Percentage
Positive	281	87%
Negative	016	05%
Both positive & negative	013	04%
Other	015	04%
Total	338	100%

Clearly, according to results in Table 8, the direction of change has been positive.

- (iii) **Comparing before and after the Citizen’s Charter status:** Respondents were requested to compare services within their respective organizations before and after the introduction of the Citizen’s Charter Programme; intended to

measure the impact of the Charter on the functioning of organizations involved. The items utilized in this assessment fell into three main categories: items relating to provision of services to customers, items relating to organizational achievements and items relating to staff issues.

Table 9: Items relating to provision of services to customers

Service/item	Better now than before	Same as before	Worse now than before	Hard to tell
Regular consultations with service users (customers)	61% (n=338)	27%	01%	11%
Providing services at the convenience of customers	77% (n=339)	17%	03%	03%
Courtesy & politeness to customers	69% (n=337)	24%	02%	05%
Redress to customers when service standards are not met	56% (n=336)	26%	02%	16%
Speedy handling of customers' complaints	67% (n=339)	21%	03%	09%
Improved access to services for customers	74% (n=340)	19%	02%	05%
Provision of accurate information about services available to customers	75% (n=337)	16%	03%	06%
Giving customers choice about services they receive	59% (n=326)	28%	02%	11%
Timely response to clients' complaints	69% (n=332)	19%	02%	10%
Customer service training by staff who deal with public	73% (n=333)	20%	00	07%

As indicated in Table 9, the surveyed staff felt that all ten items measuring the provision of services to customers by their respective organizations were

generally doing better, on every item in the table, at the time of the survey than before the introduction of the Citizen’s Charter.

Table 10: Items relating to organizational achievements

Service/item	Better now than before	Same as before	Worse now than before	Hard to tell
Setting performance standards for the organization	73% (n=334)	16%	04%	07%
Publication of performance against the set standards	51% (n=328)	32%	02%	15%
Organizational transparency	45% (n=330)	33%	09%	13%
Standardized procedures for handling complaints	65% (n=333)	26%	02%	07%
Easy to understand operational procedures	53% (n=331)	32%	05%	10%
Putting things right when they go wrong	56% (n=338)	29%	05%	10%
Timeliness of services	66% (n=330)	29%	01%	04%
Physical working environment	48% (n=332)	33%	16%	03%
Speed in processing documents	56% (n=330)	33%	04%	07%
Organizational Accountability	57% (n=323)	27%	04%	12%
Levels of creativity and innovativeness in the agency	50% (n=340)	30%	06%	14%
Customer service surveys	38% (n=320)	30%	03%	29%
Overall efficient delivery of services to customers	68% (n=330)	24%	02%	06%

Of the thirteen items utilized to measure organizational achievements in the delivery of services to customers, three (or 23%) were rated less than 50% in the category “better now than before”. The rest of ten items (or 77%) were each rated more 50% in the same category.

Table 11: Items relating to staff issues

Item	Better now than before	Same as before	Worse now than before	Hard to tell
Staff benefits	20% (n=328)	41%	24%	15%
Management/staff relations	42% (n=324)	39%	11%	08%
Staff loyalty to the organization	42% (n=332)	36%	11%	11%
Staff dedication towards work	48% (n=333)	34%	10%	08%
Provision of incentives to staff members who excel at work	26% (n=330)	36%	22%	17%

The surveyed staff rated each of all five items measuring staff-related issues less than 50% in the category “better now than before”. In other words, respondents were generally dissatisfied with all items relating to staff issues, and more particularly staff benefits which was rated most negative of all five items.

Elite Interviews

Elite interviews were conducted among the top executives of twelve studied organizations to enlist information on such indicators as design, policy, practice and development of Citizen’s Charters. Below is a summary of responses from those top executives to some of the key questions that were put to them.

- According to most respondents, the two main reasons for designing and implementing the Citizen’s Charter were: (i) to provide standards for service delivery; and (ii) to make staff responsive to customers.
- Most top executives interviewed agreed that the implementation of the Citizen’s Charter has been successful thus far.

- In some organizations studied there were both infrastructural and cultural changes, arising from the implementation of the Citizen's Charter.
- Most respondents claimed that their organizations conducted regular customer service surveys to get feedback from clients.
- Most respondents felt that the negative impact of the Citizen's Charter was the increased pressure on staff to meet the set standards. The positive attributes, however, were three-fold: (i) increased interaction among all levels of staff; (ii) improved turnaround time in service delivery; and (iii) more focus on the customer.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

The first objective of this study was to determine the extent to which the public is aware of the Citizen's Charter Programme. As indicated in the survey of the general public, half (50%) of respondents (n=930) were aware of the Citizen's Charter Programme in Jamaica, which is reasonable given the fact that 25% of these respondents came from rural areas.

The second objective was to assess the extent to which the introduction of the Charter has improved the delivery of services. Improvement in the delivery of services has been illustrated by data arising from the three surveys conducted for this study. Levels of satisfaction with the provision of services to customers were distributed among the three surveys as follows: 56% of respondents from the general public survey (n = 930) were satisfied; 86% of respondents from the clients' survey (n = 387) were satisfied; and 100% of respondents from the staff survey (n = 347) were satisfied.

The third objective was to assess how the service delivery organizations and their staff had been affected by the Charter Programme. As indicated in the last section of this study, the top executives interviewed from the twelve organizations studied reported mostly positive impacts of the Charter on their respective organizations. The only negative impact of the Citizen's Charter Programme reported was the increased pressure on staff to meet the set Charter standards. Moreover, out of thirteen items utilized in the staff survey to measure organizational achievements since the introduction of the Charter programme, respondents were satisfied with ten items (or 77%, n = 347).

The impact of the Charter on staff was measured in the staff survey conducted for this study. As indicated by results of that survey, respondents were dissatisfied with all five items which were used to measure the impact of the Citizen's Charter Programme on staff (Table 11).

The single customer service item with which both members of the general public and clients were most satisfied was staff's courtesy and politeness towards customers.

The single customer service item with which both members of the general public and clients were most dissatisfied was staff's redress to customers when service standards were not met.

The single item measuring organizational efficiency with which respondents from both the general public and the clients' surveys were most satisfied was the physical environment where services were provided.

On the other hand, the single item measuring organizational efficiency with which respondents were most dissatisfied was customer service surveys.

Overall, therefore, the benchmarking of the Citizen's Charter Programme within the Jamaican public sector, as one of the best practices, has been successful. As indicated in the social surveys conducted for this study, respondents were generally satisfied with organizations implementing the Charter in relation to their provision of customer services and their organizational efficiency and/or achievements.

Recommendations

First, although half (50%) of respondents from the general public survey were aware of the Citizen's Charter Programme, this figure should be increased in order to make the programme more effective. It is, thus, recommended that a Citizen's Charter awareness campaign should be launched by the Cabinet Office through newspapers, talk-back radio programmes and island-wide seminars in order to reach as wide an audience as possible.

Second, as the Cabinet Office is carrying out the awareness campaign, organizations implementing the Citizen's Charter Programme should ensure that their respective customers are informed about the available services, how to obtain those services, how to make complaints and how to obtain redress. Both the media and posters in the lobbies of implementing organizations can be utilized for publicity.

Third, as already indicated in this study, respondents from both the general public and clients surveys were most dissatisfied with staff's redress to customers when service standards were not met. The recommendation here is that all organizations implementing the Citizen's Charter Programme should develop effective redress systems and should train specific personnel to manage them.

Fourth, all organizations implementing the Citizen's Charter Programme should develop easy to understand customer service survey instruments for collecting feedback, on a regular basis, from customers about services being provided. Customer service surveys are primary tools in giving members of the public both a voice and a realization that their opinions are vital in decision making relating to services provided by public organizations. Failure to consult with customers on a regular basis may have disastrous consequences, including an apathetic public that often lead to complacency on the part of public organizations.

Fifth, a high level of general dissatisfaction was expressed by staff of the organizations surveyed towards the overall treatment of staff, especially in relation to staff benefits. This level of dissatisfaction on the part of staff may have the following adverse consequences: poor personnel morale and decline in work effort; difficulties in recruiting and retaining technical and professional staff; high staff turnover; non-transparent forms of remuneration by staff; and strong incentives to use public office for private gain. It is, therefore, recommended that organizations implementing the Citizen's Charter Programme should be more sensitive towards the plight of their staff, especially in relation to staff benefits.

Sixth, as some top executives who were interviewed for this study indicated, there have been some challenges such as inadequate resources to implement all the changes they would have liked, such as disseminating information to the public more regularly and hiring additional staff to support the implementation of the Citizen's Charter. It is, thus, recommended that organizations implementing the Citizen's Charter Programme should be provided with resources, specifically for implementing the Charter.

Seventh, given the success of the Citizen's Charter Programme in making public services more responsive to consumers, as indicated by the clients' survey

conducted for this study, the Programme should be extended to all public sector organizations in Jamaica which provide services to members of the public.

Finally, as a matter of policy, the government should create an outside and independent review process to approve guarantees, standards, complaint and redress systems, and to monitor the implementation of the Citizen's Charter Programme on regular basis.

References

Australia Department of Industry, Science and Tourism (1997), *Putting Service First: Principles for Developing a Service Charter*, Canberra, March 1997.

Baker, John, R. and Dudarick, Brent (1997) *Customers Service: Charters and their Role in Improving Public Sector Service Delivery in the UK and Australia*.

Government of Jamaica, Public Sector Reform Unit (2004), *Annual Report 2003-2004*.

Government of Jamaica (Citizen's Charter Unit). (1995). *Citizen's Charter: Principles into Practice, a Checklist of Public Bodies Participating in the Charter Programme*, Office of the Prime Minister.

Fischer, R. J. (1994), "An Overview of Performance Measurement", *Public Management*, 76 (9), pp. S4-S8.

Hiebeler Robert, Thomas Kelly, and Charles Kettelman (1998). *Best Practices: Building Your Business with Customer-Focused Solutions*, New York, Simon & Schuster.

Keehley Patricia, Steven Medlin, Sue MacBride and Laura Longmire (1997) *Benchmarking for Best Practices in the Public Sector: Achieving Performance Breakthroughs in Federal, State, and Local Agencies*, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass Inc. Publishers.

Osborne, David, and Gaebler, Ted (1992). *Reinventing Government: how the Entrepreneurial Spirit is transforming the Public Sector*, New York, Penguin.

Patterson, P.J. (1998) *Speaking Notes for the Prime Minister at the Services Orientation Seminar*, held at Montego Bay on March 5, 1998.

Sadler, Geoffrey. (1999). "Experience with Citizen's Charter in the UK", Cabinet Office, the United Kingdom.

Senge, P. (1990). *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of Learning Organizations*, Garden City, Doubleday.

Service Charters: www.apsc.gov.au/chaters/international.htm Accessed January 19th 2005

United Kingdom. (1991). *The Citizen's Charter*, HMSO

Appendix: Organizations Randomly Selected for the Study

Government Ministries	Executive Agencies	Other Government Agencies
Ministry of Labour and Social Security	National Land Agency	National Housing Trust
Ministry of Health	Office of the Registrar of Companies	Inland Revenue Department
	Registrar General's Department	Customs Department
	National Works Agency	Post and Telecommunications
		Bustamante Children Hospital
		Passport Office