

Canada's Implementation of Bilingualism in Public Service: Lessons for Sri Lanka

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Language and communication barriers should be shed down to achieve long lasting peace within a multicultural society. Canada with its population of Anglophones and Francophones (native English speakers and native French speakers), has accepted English and French as their two official languages by its official languages act of 1969 and has made provisions to offer English and French languages equal status under its government. Sri Lanka as a country with a majority of Sinhala speakers declared Sinhala as the official language in 1956, failing to give recognition to the Tamil language spoken by its three large minority groups (Indian Tamil, Sri Lankan Tamil and Moor Communities). After two decades, the Official Languages Act was amended in 1987 and in 1988, and both Sinhala and Tamil were accepted as the Official Languages in Sri Lanka and English language was considered as a link language. By now, both Canada and Sri Lanka have constitutional provisions to provide most of the public services in their official languages. Despite having similar provisions, the level of implementation and achievements appear to be dissimilar. This paper is focused on discussing the Canadian and Sri Lankan constitutional provisions for Bilingualism, analysing why the achievements and implementation of those provisions differ between the two countries. Canada and Sri Lanka have political, socio- economic and cultural differences between them, but they strive to achieve the same goal of making their nations capable of receiving public services in their two official languages. This paper would analyse why both states endeavour to achieve similar constitutional goals in terms of Realism, National interest and power concepts. The objectives of this paper are as follows: identifying the Canadian and Sri Lankan constitutional provisions for Bilingualism in the public service, examining the level of implementation and status of achievement by Canada and Sri Lanka, analysing the major reasons for the differences of implementation and status of achievement, major strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of implementing bilingualism in public service of Canada and recognizing what can be adapted to the Sri Lankan public service framework and the ways to adopt. Online sources are expected to be the mostly used type of data as the author is based in Sri Lanka. The data related to Canada and its constitution would be found through primary data.

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