Quality in Public Service and Necessities for Qualified Public Service

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Abstract
New approaches in public administration within globalization processes and development of information technologies make “quality” notion prominent. Quality is defined by certain authorities as “the ability of a service or product to meet individual or public needs”. As seen in definition, meeting the needs is directly linked with the satisfaction of the ones who benefits from services. When the ability of the meeting the needs is enhanced, satisfaction of beneficiaries is also increased.

From the point of administration, when the quality of public services is issued; generally, the compatibility of public service to pre-determined standards is considered. That is to say; public service is regarded as qualified if this service is compatible with pre-determined standards.

The determining process of public service quality –in terms citizens- emerges during the process of public service in which the citizen and service providers interact. Citizen find public service qualified when the expectances are met. In the situation that the expectances are met or overachieved, the public service is accepted as qualified. On the other hand the public service is defined as poor in the condition of failure of expectance.

In this study, initially the quality in public service will be defined. Afterwards the essential practices by administration for enhancing public service quality will be investigated.

Keywords: Public Service, Quality, Citizen Satisfaction

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INTRODUCTION

Together with globalization, factors such as the spread of information and communication technologies and the change of citizens' demands have necessitated the restructuring of public administration. This situation has opened the way to move from classical public administration to the new public administration understanding by utilizing work management and techniques. With this new concept of public administration, a result -not input- oriented, participatory management approach has been employed with performance-based wage incentives.

Along with rapid changes, citizens being started to question the quality of public services leads to the implementation of total quality management in public administration that is used in the private sector. With such approaches in public administration which reduce costs, increase productivity and take into account citizens' demands and accordingly produce results, citizens are tried to be satisfied with the quality of service offered. However, quality is directly proportional to meeting the needs. For this reason, it is a concept that is open to continuous change and development. However, quality includes subjective evaluations. A product or service that satisfies one person may not satisfy another person. This makes it more difficult to measure quality.

Quality concept in the literature is often used as perceived quality due to the fact that a service being regarded as good quality is related to how much it complies with the expectation of the citizen and how much it satisfies him or her. Nonetheless, quality –objectively- is directly related to the level of compliance of the service with certain standards. If the service meets these standards, it is generally referred to as having quality.

The main purpose of this study is to examine what should be done by the administration to increase the quality of public service. To this end, the concept of quality in public service will first be addressed, then the features that quality public service should possess and the necessary things to be done by the administration in order to increase quality in public service will be explained.

1. Quality Concept in Public Service

Citizens today who are once satisfied with the traditional management understanding of the government have not only demanded more services from the state but also begun to demand these services to be of better quality. Therefore the quality management of services rendered in public institutions should be the top priority of managers in the actual context of an ever changing society. (Titu and Vlad, 2014: 131).
Quality is defined by many authorities as "the ability of a product or service to meet personal or social needs" (Barbara A. Spencer, 1994, 463; Yıldırım, 2005: 19). As can be seen from this definition, quality concept is a quite relative concept because concepts of need and competence are concepts that change over time. This change also affects quality and ultimately necessitates the constant renewal of the quality concept. Therefore quality improvement is an activity that will never end. As seen in the definition of quality, meeting the needs is directly proportional to satisfaction of the beneficiaries of the service. As the level of needs being satisfied is increased, the level of satisfaction of the beneficiaries of the service will increase as well (Yıldırım, 2005: 19).

Quality for service is evaluated in the process of presentation of the service during the interaction between the citizen and the service providers. Quality of the service offered and thus the satisfaction of the customers / citizens emerge as a result of the comparison between the service perceptions and the service expectations. It is seen that in the case of exceeding expectations, the quality of the service is perceived as high, whereas if the expectations are not met, the quality of the service is evaluated as low or poor quality (Leblebici and Karasoy, 2009: 289). However, something perfect for one person may not please another person. For this reason, quality is a relative concept involving subjective evaluations (Demirel et al., 2013: 33).

For a citizen, to find a service as high quality is closely related to the degree of satisfaction with the service he perceives (Öztürk and Seyhan, 2005: 122). For this reason, the concept of quality has been adopted as perceived quality in service literature. The perceived quality is the judgment of the consumer / citizen in terms of excellence and superiority. While satisfaction is related to a specific transaction, perceived quality of service is a more comprehensive judgment. Comparison of service quality (Yıldırım, 2005: 20) is made between the expectation about what service organizations offer and the perceived service performance they offer.

Today, public service organizations have a very important role in community life due to the duties they perform. For this reason, it has become obligatory to enhance the quality of public services in order to reach the efficiency and productivity level expected by the society (Aykaç and Özer, 2006: 184). With a rapid pace of privatization in our country, a new concept of public service on public goods and services has developed. Thus, in order to increase the quality of services further in the presentation of classical public services, new methods and mechanisms are being developed along with administrative and legal changes (Bayrakçı and Kahraman, 2017: 300-301).

Classically, when quality in public service is described, the appropriateness of public service to specific characteristics comes to mind. In other words, if the public service provided meets predetermined standards, this service is regarded
as good quality. The State does not take into account the possibility that the
wishes and expectations of the people may change over time as these standards
are set. This approach assumes that people have common expectations and
that these expectations will not change in the long run (Ay and Gülgün, 1998:
254). However, besides this, this understanding also ensures that the service
provided by these predetermined standards is constantly checked for
compliance with the specified standards. By this way, it is possible to maintain
the quality of the service at a certain level.

In our country, the General Directorate of Local Administrations carried out
"Project for Enhancing Participatory Strategic Governance at the Local Level"
in 2011-2013 with the joint financing of the EU and the Republic of Turkey.
Four books were prepared as a result of this project. One of them, the book
titled "Citizens' Carnets", encourages citizenship practice that grades the
quality of public services based on the information received from the citizens.
According to Citizens' carnets practice (2014: 29), the quality of service
components are indicators of input, output, productivity (efficiency) and
outcome (effectiveness). Accordingly, input indicators are material resources
such as human resources, management standards, procedures and methods
used in the execution of a service. Output indicators are physical product of a
service such as the number of complaints coming in and the rate of realization
of the investment made. Productivity indicators are the rate at which input is
required to perform a service (output / input). For example, the number of
satisfied users versus the cost of maintaining and operating the cultural center
(the number of satisfied users / total money spent). Outcome indicators show
citizen satisfaction with the services offered.

2. Characteristics of a Qualified Public Service

According to the OECD Public Administration Service's, Quality public
service must have the following characteristics:

- Transparency: Citizens should know how things are done in public
  administration, who the authorities are and what kind of
  responsibilities public employees have. Citizens should be able to
  know how to solve a problem related to the services provided for them.
- Participation: Citizens should be able to benefit more from public
  services, for example, they should be effective in the identification and
  presentation of the qualifications of services.
- Meeting Citizen Needs: Public services should be identified and
  presented in accordance with the services and characteristics of
  citizens as much as possible, and the necessary flexibility should be
Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988) also argued that there are five dimensions of service quality that may apply to all service sectors. Each service sector has its own characteristics, but it is possible to talk about five dimensions of service quality that may be applicable in the whole service sector. Let’s give a brief description of these service dimensions (1988:23):

1. **Tangible**: The physical features of public organizations in providing services such as tools and equipment used in public and appearance of public personnel – dress & suits

2. **Empathy**: Public employees should put themselves in the shoes of citizens and show personal interest to the citizens within this framework. The emergence of such an understanding will ensure that public employees have an opportunity to understand the citizen.

3. **Responsiveness**: The behavior of public servants when they help citizens and deliver services quickly.

4. **Assurance**: The ability of public employees to be knowledgeable and courteous about the work they are doing. This let citizens be confident to employees.

5. **Reliability**: The ability to deliver service accurately, reliably and on time.

Titu and Vlad’s case study (2014: 133) is about evaluation of quality and the quality management based on the quality indicators in the local public administrations. You can see the following figure about these indicators:
These indicators consist of five dimensions:

1. The quality of services rendered by the human resources from the local public administration towards citizens;
2. The professionalism of collaborations with citizens – persons employed in the legal field;
3. The quality of collaborations in between the branches of the public institution;
4. The concordance between the institution’s objectives and the quality of services rendered;
5. The quality management of services offered by reducing the response time to solicitations.

Quality in public service is a key factor for citizen satisfaction. However, it is difficult to determine the quality of public services because it is very difficult to determine the inputs and outputs of public services. It is also difficult to determine the monetary value of outputs in the public sector. In the private sector, the efficiency is measured as monetary profit. However, the main goal of public institutions is to serve citizens cheaply with high quality. For example, it is difficult to monetize the service or product such as defense, education and judiciary. In addition, such services are monopolized (Kılavuz, 2000:149; Parlak, 2005:281).

Nowadays, it is common that definitions related to service quality are always customer / citizen oriented. A definition of "satisfying customer / citizen..."
expectations" or "continuously satisfying customer/citizen demands" are good examples for today's service quality understanding. According to this, "quality of service can be defined as to what extent the client/citizen's expectation about the level of service given is satisfied" (Gündoğdu, 2009: 2).

When public organizations fulfill public services, they must first take into account principles and values such as social justice, social responsibility, public benefit, public interest. In addition, it is accepted that public institutions are obliged to fulfill basic public services even if they are not profitable and productive, due to the social state understanding and the responsibility given by being a state.

If a more flexible and simple structuring can be implemented in public institutions like private institutions, they will be able to be more sensitive to citizens' demands by having the ability to move faster in decision making and implementation. This will increase citizens' satisfaction in public services.

Quality in public services is perceived as very important not only because it gives importance to citizens but also because it serves the society on equal terms and contributes to social development and the values and experiences of the members of the society. In order to achieve this, public institutions need to be cooperative, complementary and at the same time competing with each other (Yıldırım, 2005: 22).

3. Requirements to Increase the Quality of Public Services

In order to increase quality in public service, the principles of the OECD Public Service and the dimension of quality of service of Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry have been mentioned earlier. All of these will undoubtedly contribute to the provision of high quality public service and therefore to the satisfaction of the citizen. However, in order to increase the quality of public services and to fulfill citizens' expectations, it is important to apply the basic principles of public service without compromising. Likewise, if the public service operating principles that emerged along with the globalization process and make the citizen more important are fully implemented, it will lead to a quality public service. In addition to all these, we can also talk about a number of other applications that we think may contribute to increasing quality in public service by benefiting from Öztürk–Coskun 1997: 154:

a) **Determination of Service Standards:** Public institutions may set certain standards related to the public services they perform. Through these standards, it is determined which service will be taken by citizens in what condition. Thus, citizens are informed about the public service and the quality deviation is prevented by controlling the quality of service continuously. Two different strategies can be applied in setting public service standards. The first is the practice so-called "new bureaucracy". Service standards in this strategy
are determined by politicians or professionals from above. Service standards are perceived and binding as traditional orders and instructions. At this point the participation of the people benefiting from the service or their provision of new ideas are not possible. The second strategy is "Market Strategy". The standards of service are determined by the customers and the citizens from the opposite side of the first strategy (Öztürk and Coşkun, 1997: 154). This can be regarded as a more suitable strategy for today's modern management understanding and public service operating principles. Implementation of such a strategy will also lead to an increased citizen satisfaction in public services

b) Providing Information and Openness: Citizens who receive public service should be provided with regular and accurate information about the services, goals and performance. This idea is in fact a reflection of modern management approach. Applying such an understanding will provide citizens easy access to topics that they are curious about. Informing the citizen can also cause to change the expectations of public services. Because they do not have enough information, citizens who hold their expectations too high can find a chance to reexamine their expectations when they are well informed. However, although public services are determined based on the expectations of the citizens, the presentation of these services depends on the public servants. The quality of the service provided is proportional to how well the staff is doing their job. In other words, there may be some disruptions due to the staff in the transformation of the service standards determined by the administration to the practical application. If this can be explained to the citizens well, it is possible to prevent the citizens from accusing the administration unfairly.

In order to regulate the quality level of public services offered by public organizations in accordance with the wishes and expectations of beneficiaries of the service, it is necessary to provide a citizen-focused understanding of the service providers. (Sezer, 2008: 168) The information and opinions to be provided from beneficiaries of public services can be regarded as important data in the formation of public service policies (Acar, 2003: 51-52).

c) Preferences and Counseling: Public institutions should regularly analyze the opinion of citizens about the services they offer. Moreover, they should consider whether the services are related to the necessities of citizens. In this way, public institutions can get feedback for the services they serve. Feedback enables public institutions to produce new policies.

d) Leading Personnel Practice: One of the main factors of public service quality is the decision or satisfaction of citizens. At this point, the level of satisfaction is also affected by the behavior of public servants as well as the service provided.
For this reason, managers should not ignore to improve the service quality such as by motivating the employees. The motivation of the employees can be enhanced by close recognition, understanding, satisfaction and improvement. Effective and high-quality services can be provided by the employees' care about the work they do, how they value the work they do and their satisfaction from the work they do (Torlak ve Özdemir, 1999:324).

Personnel who are in constant contact with the public should be trained continuously through in-service training on how to treat the citizen. Thus, the leading personnel in the institution will guide the citizen applying to the institution. At the beginning of this training, staff should be equipped with the information about the function and structure of the institution to which the staff is affiliated. They must know very well which tasks the institution is doing, how the institution operates, who does what, who is responsible and how the documents related to services are passed through. In this way, the leading personnel of the institution will be able to help the citizen who applies to the institution in guiding whom they will communicate with. In this way, wasting time in the institution will be prevented.

In the implementation of the leading personnel, this personnel should be easily accessible. For this reason, this person should be located at the entrance of the institution and should establish the first contact with the citizens coming to the institution. Particularly, public personnel who provide individual services to the citizens should participate in the proposals for improving the quality of service. Thus, public employees will also have the opportunity to be encouraged to make final decisions about the quality of their work (Yıldırım, 2005: 35).

e) Making Citizen Complaints Review Units Effective: Another important point in increasing the quality of public services is the establishment of mechanisms by which citizens can express their dissatisfaction in public services. We see that such units are established in our country. Nevertheless, it is a reality that these units are not operating effectively. Once these units are activated, it can be understood that citizens are complaining about which public services. This will contribute greatly to the increase in quality of services, as well as providing citizens with appropriate services (Zengin ve Erdal, 2000:50).

Once an analysis of the citizens' complaints has been made, it is necessary both to create and present some new public service policies in order to solve these complaints. Otherwise, it will not make sense to only learn complaints. For complaints of citizens, the complaint boxes in the institutions must be made functional. The complaints left in these boxes should be evaluated and the result should be delivered to the citizens. In addition to this, it is necessary to make employees feel that the complaints that the citizen has made are
evaluated. If the complaints are due to the employees, an administrative action must be made in relation to this. Thus, when public complain about them, they will see that these complaints are taken into account by the managers. If an effective process of complaints can be implemented, it is inevitable for institutions to change their point of view on public service, especially in our country where there is no culture of complaining about public services (Torlak, 1998: 363).

f) Using of Information and Communication Technologies: Along with globalization, there have been significant developments in information and communication technologies. These developments have changed the direction of state-citizen relations. These changes have led to the emergence of new approaches in public administration and the changing expectations of citizens from public service units; and institutions without effective, satisfactory and fast services have begun to qualify as unsuccessful (Örselli ve Bayrakçı, 2016: 40). For this reason, it has become a necessity to adapt the concept of public administration in the light of developing information and technology.

In our country, especially after 2000s, important public policies have emerged in order to become an "information society". An example of this is the e-Transformation Turkey Project (EDTP) initiated in 2003. The main objective of this project is to support the formation of an information society compatible with the Turkey's future vision. In line with this project, "Information Society 2006–2010 Strategy and Action Plan" was prepared in 2006 (Karkın, 2013: 680). Today, the 2015–2018 Information Society Strategy and Action Plan has been published and is now in effect.

The most important step in becoming an information society is undoubtedly the transition to the e-government portal. The e-government is a concept that explains the effective use of public services through information technologies and thus increases the communication skills between citizens and government agencies and among themselves and thus the transition of bureaucratic processes to automation (Baştan and Gökbunar, 2004: 72).

The e-government has made it possible to provide services faster and more effectively in conjunction with the moving of public services to online platforms, thereby increasing the level of satisfaction citizens expect to get from the services. Improved e-government, e-municipal services will increase the communication between citizens and the central administration and the local government and provide better quality services. Turkish public administration is having difficulty in catching up with change in information and technology due to the problems such as cumbersomeness, unnecessary formalities, collecting authority in one person. Public administration needs to evolve into a more flexible organizational structure to produce better quality services.
GENERAL EVALUATION/CONCLUSION

Today, along with the rapidly advancing information and communication technologies, there is a constant change in the expectations of the citizens. This necessitates constant renewal of the public administration who wants to have high citizen satisfaction by providing high quality public service.

Satisfaction of citizens from public service is the main factor in determining the quality of public service. However, determining the quality of public services is not as easy as in the private sector. In the private sector, profit is taken as a measure of efficiency. In public institutions, the public benefit is given priority. The delivery of quality services to citizens is superior to productivity and earning profit. In addition, for public, there is no opportunity to receive services such as defense and justice from another institution if they are not satisfied with them. When public organizations fulfill public services, they must first prioritize principles and values such as social justice, social responsibility, public benefit, public interest.

If a more flexible and simple structuring can be provided in public institutions like private institutions, they will be more sensitive to citizens' demands by having the ability to move faster in decision making and implementation. This will increase citizen satisfaction in public services.

However, in order to provide good quality public services, service standards should be determined first. Citizens must have information about how they will get a service and how much time it will take. Citizens should be included in the process of public service delivery. Citizens should be informed about the service to be provided and a citizen-oriented approach should be adopted by the administrations. Thus, the positive or negative feedback provided by the citizens will improve the quality of the services offered.

Important regulations are implemented in our country in order to be an information society. One of the most important of these is the e-government. With online provision of public services, they have become faster and more effective. However, citizens experiencing difficulties in using e-government and some disruptions in services of public institutions weaken this effectiveness. The elimination of these drawbacks will further improve the quality of public service delivery.
REFERENCES


