

In an Era of Guarantee Public Service Delivery, How Good are Public Services: An Analysis

***Dr. Mahendra**

Abstract

One of the crucial tasks carried out by a government is the provision of public services, which foster welfare and justice in society as well as national growth. Public services are distinguished by promptness, quality, and the resolution of complaints during service delivery. The delivery of quality public services are crucial because it affects how satisfied and confident the public feels in their government. Service delivery was emphasised as the most crucial element of the governance process during the 1990s governance discussions. Public services were viewed as a platform for citizen-government interaction through low-level state agents to further the welfare and wellbeing of the populace. The formulation and execution of the Citizen's Charter, social audits, the e-Governance initiative, the Public Service Guarantee Act, and other developments have influenced India's governance discourse.

This essay focuses on the importance of quality in the delivery of public services in India, the necessity for the quality-satisfaction-trust triad, challenges to delivering quality public services, safeguards for ensuring the quality of public services in India, and global best practises.

Keywords: Guaranteed public service, quality of services, citizen's charter

Introduction

Global governments are tasked with a variety of tasks. The major categories of these tasks include development, regulation, service provision, security, and others. Regardless of whether a nation is growing or developed, the provision of public services is essential to the operation of every government because the majority of people rely on it to provide them with services. Democracies are characterised by the provision of effective and efficient public services, so it is important to strengthen the government at all levels, particularly at the local level. Every government creates a provision for this reason, ensuring that citizens receive public services in a timely manner. The quality and quantity of services the government has really provided are another factor influencing the residents' trust in it. The ideas of New Public Management and Public Choice Theory, which put a heavy emphasis on service delivery, were first introduced in the 1960s and 1970s. However, as the idea of governance took shape in the 1990s, the need for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of public services gained strength. Delivery of public services is today regarded as a crucial step in the governance process that ensures the welfare, advancement, justice, and equality of all members of society. The goal is to improve the openness, responsiveness, accountability, and citizen-centricity of the government. When India gained its independence, the country's private sector was small and

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fragile, giving government agencies a natural monopoly over the provision of services. Furthermore, a select few services, such as the granting of permits, certificates, and licences, etc., invariably needed the participation and physical presence of the government. With the introduction of privatisation during the 1990s economic reforms, the situation has evolved over time.

A similar set of objectives, such as universal accessibility, enhancing customer pleasure and experience, and achieving desired results via services, are sometimes used to define quality in public services. The quality of public service, the timely delivery of public services, and the grievance redressal process are the three core components of public service. The first aspect of public service, quality, is the focus of this article. The word "quality" refers to tangible goods whose physical characteristics, such as height, weight, hardness, and so forth, can be evaluated in terms of their quality. Quality has been defined as the process of eliminating non-conforming items, however this process takes place after a product has been made but prior to the recipient actually using it.

Questions about why the discussions on public services at this time were concentrated more specifically on the quality component of public services were raised in response to the emphasis on quality during this time. Quality was deemed to be a crucial variable because it is the criterion that includes all other facets of service delivery within itself. Additionally, it considers non-quantifiable factors that would normally go unnoticed yet have a big impact on the overall standards of services rather of relying solely on numbers to guarantee service standards. However, the idea that quality can be attained if the services match the criteria of customers' expectations is generally accepted. The debate so clarifies that the efficacy, efficiency, and competency of the employees assigned the responsibility of providing public services determine the overall quality of those services. It emphasises the necessity of official development for fulfilling the customer promise, which can be accomplished through capacity-building initiatives and the adoption of cutting-edge management techniques like performance-based management systems.

Methodology

The article's goal is to highlight the significance of quality in public service delivery and how it affects people's contentment with and faith in the government. The post also seeks to identify the issues with delivering services with the stated quality, as well as the international best practises and Indian instruments for doing so.

This review article, which explores the need for and strategies for guaranteeing quality in public service delivery, is based on the body of existing literature. The secondary information was gathered from a variety of sources, including books, journal articles, and newspaper stories. The study is qualitative in nature, and the growing requirement to assure quality in the provision of public services has been highlighted.

Quality in Public Service is required

When the Charters failed to live up to the expectations of the citizenry, the necessity for high-quality public service became apparent. When various committees looked into how Charters worked, they discovered that their goals were hazy, meaningless, and nebulous. In a 2008 research, the Indian

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Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi, found that the Charters lacked content, were poorly designed, lacked detail, and had ambiguous objectives. It was also realised that the performance efficacy of the administrative machinery involved in the task of delivering public services was directly or indirectly related to the quality of service. The 2004 World Bank report on Making Services Work for the Poor People demonstrated how India's bureaucratic apparatus had failed to provide services to the underprivileged. Similar to this, the term "Flailing State" (a state with a sound elite institution at its core but no connections with field-level agents, resulting in failure to implement policies and programmes) has been coined for India. This is because of the steel-frame bureaucracy's ineffectiveness in carrying out public policies (Pritchett, 2009). India has also been referred to as a "Soft State," meaning that it rarely makes tough choices, undermining its ability to uphold the law and leading to an increase in corruption, crime, and violence (Myrdal, 1972). India's administrative reforms have been relatively slow to adapt to the country's changing needs. According to the Political and Economic Risk Consultancy Report, 2018, India's bureaucracy had one of the highest scores in all of Asia, 7.25 out of 10, on the perception of corruption in Asia (PERC, 2018). On the Corruption Perception Index 2018, Transparency International rated India 78th out of 180 countries, highlighting the country's administrative deficiencies (Transparency International, 2018). The World Bank asserts that one of the most crucial foundations for developing good governance in a country is a corruption-free administration. The foundation for maintaining justice, equity, and equality in society is the concept of good governance, which assures the equitable provision of public services. Overall, the bureaucracy supports the public sector, so it is crucial to choose qualified individuals who are sensitive to and responsive to the needs of society. It is also important to capitalise on their potential, set performance benchmarks to ensure that they are effective and efficient, and implement appropriate and timely reforms in the delivery of the public service. Finally, it is important to adhere to the standards of good governance in the country.

Quality-Satisfaction-Trust: The Triple Aim

Three separate but linked concepts—quality, satisfaction, and trust—have a direct relationship with one another. These are the three factors that are considered in relation to the citizens or users of public services. Numerous experts' research projects have revealed a strong connection between them. A change in the first will result in a change in the second, which will then lead to a change in the third. It indicates that if the government employees continue to provide high-quality services, the citizens will feel satisfied since they are getting what they are entitled to (World Bank, 2004). The quality of a public service is determined by how satisfied its users are with it.

It is one of the most important factors that determines how well a service is delivered. The citizens then develop a sense of trust in the government and its employees as a result of their contentment. According to Bouckaert and Van de Walle (2003), the government's internal and external variables affect the confidence of its constituents. They categorise the administrative and political aspects of trust in the government as internal elements, whilst the societal and personal aspects are considered external. Public administrators, who are charged with the duty of providing public services of a specific calibre, have been considered to play a key role in this causal link. According to this standard, the delivery of services by government employees is dependent on the behaviour and contentment of

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the general public, which either builds or destroys their confidence. Contrarily, mistrust would result in a reduction in the legitimacy of the government and the rejection or disregard of established laws and regulations (Bouckaert & Walle, 2003). It is crucial to keep them happy and maintain their trust as a result. Trust can also assist in overcoming outside issues like citizen participation and involvement that may influence the delivery of quality services.

Obstacles to the Delivery of Quality Public Services

The quality of services has declined as a result of numerous issues. The apparent cause of the poor quality of service is a disagreement between the service provider and the customers; however, the real cause is a discrepancy between the customer's expectations and his pleasure with the services actually received. However, the major issue that still exists is the lack of consensus on a single, universally accepted metric for gauging the calibre of public services. Other issues can also be roughly divided into functional and technical issues. These issues can be severe, requiring immediate treatment, or they can have a milder impact. However, both of these problems are solvable if the service-delivery organisations act appropriately and promptly to uphold the established service standards and guarantee justice and equality in society.

All issues that are inherent in providing high-quality public services are referred to as functional issues. These issues are simple to recognise but challenging to solve because they largely affect the calibre of service delivery. Setting unattainable goals, a lack of staff in the organization's administrative machinery, ineffective training of staff members (due to a lack of capacity-building programmes), an inherent rigidity in the organisational structure, and a focus on rules and regulations that is too strict are a few examples of functional problems with the delivery of high-quality services.

International Techniques for Increasing the Community Services

Many nations around the world struggle with the problem of the quality of public services. In order to ensure that the public services provided to the population meet the necessary standards, they have devised particular methods. As the Residents' Charters ensure that public services of the proper standards will be provided within a specified timeframe and address citizens' complaints, quality becomes a fundamental component of service delivery. The following is a discussion of some of the best practises that have been widely adopted and have significantly helped to raise the calibre of public services:

UK's Charter Mark Scheme

The Citizens' Charter needed to be more successful and efficient, so this programme was put in place in the UK in 1991. It was created with the idea of forcing organisations and institutions to take on the burden of delivering public services while working to fulfil their objectives. There are six criteria that make up the standards. These standards include: establishing high standards and performing well; actively engaging with clients, partners, and employees; being fair and accessible to everyone without discrimination and promoting their choices; continuously developing and improving; making the best use of available resources; and making a positive impact on the quality of life in the communities one serves.

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The U.K.'s Customer Service Excellence Scheme

The Customer Service Excellence Scheme was introduced in 2008 after being amended in accordance with the recommendations of "The Customer Voice in Public Service Report" in 2006 (Public Administration Select Committee, 2008). Under this programme, the government agency in charge of providing public services was being evaluated for the quality of the services they provided. And this examination was based on five factors, including customer feedback on the services, organisational culture, information and access within the organisation, delivery within the organisation and punctuality, and service quality.

Colombian Excellence in Public Service Delivery

Through integrated service centres and cross-government collaborations, Colombia's excellence in public service delivery has been created to guarantee good governance and high-quality public services. Five strategies are employed for this purpose: national standards for public service efficiency; recommendations for the proper delivery of public services; enhancements to the service delivery channels; capacity building of the public servants; and policies for collaboration among territorial and municipal entities.

Tools to Monitor India's Service Delivery Quality

As a result of the Citizen's Charter Movement in the United Kingdom and the country's economic changes during that time, India's journey toward providing public services in this regard started in the 1990s. The Chief Secretaries' Conference in India in 1996 was significant because it promoted improving the efficiency and responsiveness of government. The strong enforcement of the Citizen's Charter in all government ministries and departments was suggested in 1997 by the Conference of Chief Ministers, which was called by the then-prime minister of India, Shri I. K. Gujral. Later research that evaluated the efficacy of Charters came to the conclusion that it lacked the necessary accuracy, content, and design. As a result, the focus moved to guaranteeing the delivery of public services within a set timeframe and at a certain level of quality. Last but not least, Madhya Pradesh was the first state to offer its residents privileges based on their legal rights. As of right now, there is no Central Act that ensures public services are provided to inhabitants of India; rather, the states have implemented laws that do so before the Centre.

Public Service Centralized Grievance Redress

Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) Grievance Redressal is a crucial part of service delivery and a crucial determinant of how satisfied customers are with the services they received.

A web-based system called CPGRAMS was created by the National Informatics Centre (NIC) in association with the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances and the Directorate of Public Grievances. It was established in 2007 and offers a platform on which a service recipient may lodge a complaint at any time and from any location against any ministry, department, or organisation of the government. It offers a conduit between the recipient and the delivery agency so that the complaint can be resolved quickly. To enable prompt and effective action to be taken for

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redress, the complaint is transferred immediately to the exact agency against whom the complaint had been made. Additionally, the complaint can be followed online using the specific number provided.

Conclusion

The conversation above demonstrates the growing worries about providing residents with high-quality public services that adhere to set standards to assure their satisfaction and trust. Additionally, it implies that meeting the residents' expectations for a public service requires more than just a promise to provide those services. The provision of services must be in accordance with the needs of the populace in order to satisfy their needs, convey their expectations, win their confidence in the administration of justice, and establish their trust in the government. The concept of quality in public service delivery, government performance, results, and impact on residents have grown in popularity. Right to Public Service Guarantee Acts were passed in an effort to replace the Citizen's Charter with improved implementation and time-bound delivery, however they have fallen short of meeting the requirements for providing public services. Lack of satisfaction from using a public service results in a lack of trust and, more crucially, is seen as a denial of or refusal to use the service. This is true because the residents do not benefit from their rights to increased choices, expanded entitlements, and the ability to access services that meet acceptable standards. Making the government more citizen-centric is the goal of assuring quality in service delivery. There are a number of issues that directly and indirectly impair the quality of public service delivery, but as was already mentioned, there are remedies. Co-production of public services, where various stakeholders, including people, service providers, and market agents, come together to decide and offer the services with the lowest cost, best standards, time restrictions, entitlements, and other criteria, is the most innovative approach. Some best practises can also be copied from countries that have successfully tried out providing their residents with high-quality services. The Second Administrative Reforms Commission's twelfth report, "Citizen-Centric Administration: The Heart of Good Governance," has offered innovative models for India to ensure quality in public service delivery, but their effectiveness depends on how well they are put into practise and how well the organisation adapts and addresses the needs and demands of citizens. Making street-level bureaucrats more sensitive and attentive is necessary in order to better anticipate and respond to citizen requests. Thus, it may be said that the provision of quality public services is crucial in ensuring that service standards meet citizens' expectations, that they are satisfied, that their trust is earned, and that the government is legitimate.

***Lecturer**

**Department of Public Administration
MBR Govt. P.G. College
Balotra, Barmer (Raj.)**

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