Chapter 10
Contribution to the Body of Knowledge, Limitations and
Future Research Directions

10.1 Introduction
This research adds to the body of knowledge relating to public service quality management. It will also be of interest to strategic and operational public service managers and to academics investigating the reliability and value of service quality assessment tools. It addresses key relationships between service dimensions and service quality within the public service.

The role of the SERVQUAL model in analysis of service quality should not be forgotten as it provides a very strong base for further research on service quality. The views of the external customers should be taken in order to assess the service quality from time to time.

The concept of citizens as customers of public services should be inculcated in the minds of the employees. Introduction of professionalism and corporate culture of working should be adopted. Employee welfare should be considered a key issue for quality improvement as only those employees who are satisfied with their job can provide satisfactory services.

10.2 Contributions by the researcher-
A. Recommendations for policy changes- There should be strong and strict policy changes in order to achieve-

1. Improvement of public administration performance- Structural adjustments of public administration in order to improve the efficiency, improve coordination, transparency of government towards the citizens and civil society participation in the decision-making process; Increase of efficiency and effectiveness in the public sector;

2. Improvement in administrative and management capacities of the employees;

3. Improvement in professional and ethical standards and the transparency in public administration;
1. Development of an administration oriented towards the citizen; Increase of ethics in public administration and reduction of corruption;

4. Professionalization of the civil service;

5. Introduction of stringent quality standards for public services for monitoring and assessing public services and the professional activity of civil servants;

6. Decentralization of public services- Development and increase in the efficiency of electronic public services for convenience, monitoring and public interventions;

7. Modernization institutional structures- New system of civil servants which will ensure a modern public service, focus being placed on designing the system with respect to the measures of professionalization and depolitization, on the system in continuous development and on human resource management, the fight against corruption and the consolidation of ethics of civil servants, the introduction of a system of incentives and remuneration depending on performance, and the reform of reward systems and performance assessment criteria in public administration;

8. Simplification and modernization of administrative procedures, such as the creation of E-government. The ‘Sugam’ software in Rajasthan is an example of successful implementation of e-governance.

9. Improvement in performance management system; Incorporation of feedback and learning from complaints; Measurement and publishing of citizens’ satisfaction results;

10. Introduction of the concept of mentoring and appointment of mentors for on the job training of employees and monitoring of employee performance;

11. Establishment and application of remuneration systems for civil servants;

12. Supply of training as strategic means for the development and consolidation of the capacities of civil servants; Education and training of civil servants, for the purpose of gaining new knowledge, abilities and competences required by the development of the modern public administration; establishing a framework for life-long learning and training for civil servants from all the cadres;

13. Creation of a modern system for human resources management: A central electronic database for public service employees and connection of training with service rules;
14. Improvement in law standards and strict implementation of the laws and welfare policies;
15. Establishment of strategic planning and quality monitoring system for the department;
16. Establishment of workload assessment system and appointment of staff for equitable distribution of workload among the employees.
17. Strict policy implementation in order to bring about changes in the current system of administration.

B. Recommendations regarding the State Training Policy-

The researcher’s recommendations are discussed in detail in the chapter on findings and recommendations. The researcher has made a number of suggestions regarding the formulation of the training policy for the department and improvements in the policy for the training of directly recruited officers and those promoted from lower cadres.

A valuable contribution of the researcher is the mission statement of the training policy of Maharashtra. The training policy of Maharashtra is an ambitious document without a vision and long term mission. The researched has contributed a mission statement for the STP-

“The mission of the State Training Policy of Maharashtra is to impart need based training to all the employees of the State Government so as to develop the necessary competencies, right attitude, and sense of commitment, duty consciousness and motivation to take challenges and impart customer friendly services for promotion of welfare of the public.”

C. A model of service quality

A major contribution of the researcher to the literature on service quality is a model of service quality for the administrative services. The model encompasses all the aspects of service quality studied during the process of this research. It is the sum-total of the service quality concepts and processes put together for better service delivery. The PPP concept incorporated in the model is again a contribution towards the development of a better revenue administration.
A model of service quality has been developed by the researcher keeping in mind the characteristics of the services under study.

Figure- 10.1 Model of service quality developed by the researcher

This model of service quality is the researcher’s own contribution to the literature on service quality.
D. Applications of Deming’s Principles to Administrative Services-

The researcher has tried to apply the quality principles of Deming to the quality of services in the Government setup.

10.3 Implications of the study

The study has added its contribution to the validation of the SERVQUAL construct to another set of services; it offers some application to the management of administrative services, especially the Revenue Tahsil offices; it also provides guidelines for policy development for employee training and administrative reforms to certain extent.

The results of the study contribute to the long debated controversy on the dimensionality of SERVQUAL. One application of the study’s results is that it’s three dimensional model does not support the assessment of Administrative services on the basis of a typical five dimensional model. Parasuraman et al suggested the application of SERVQUAL and sorting of the data into five dimensions only on the basis of description and contents of the data. The dimensional structure developed by using factor analysis needs further review. The application of a typical SERVQUAL approach reduces the confusion but does it truly reflects the dimension of the service under study is a question. Application of the SERVQUAL gap model as it is, that is, the expectation minus perception is a very straightforward method of quality assessment. The method does not provide much scope for addition or deletion of dimensions but tries to fit all the services into the same structure of five dimensions. Thus the study contributes to the debate on SERVQUAL as a diagnostic tool for assessment of service quality.

The SERVQUAL instrument does provide an insight into the perceptions of the service by the external customers but the factor analysis provides more relevant and meaningful information about the possible areas of improvement. The moments of truth at the point of service delivery and the customer satisfaction based on the point of transaction need to be explored in order to find out the applicability and possible modifications of the SERVQUAL instrument. The point becomes more relevant in case of complex services like the public administrative service under study.
The results of the study provide insights into the improvements in the quality of the Tahsil offices in particular and the administrative services in general. The application of the study suggests the use of the customers’ perceptions of the service quality in order to assess the service quality and not merely their singular views about the satisfaction about the service. The gap model of SERVQUAL helps the administrators and scholars to get a picture about how people perceive their services and where and how much the services lack in fulfilling the customer expectations.

Another weakness of the SERVQUAL instrument is that it tries to assess the service quality only from one angle, that of the external customers. Thus it tries to assess the half truth about service quality. A service transaction is incomplete without the existence of a provider and a receiver. Hence studying the service quality merely from the receiver’s side makes the assessment one sided. The study strongly supports that the perceptions of the service provider about the service experience is equally important in order to get a holistic view of the service quality. The SERVQUAL instrument falls short of this expectation.

The study reveals that training is an integral part of quality management especially in case of administrative services in which the service quality is judged by the customer on the basis of the behavior of the service provider. The moment of service delivery or the so called moment of truth is the actual point of service experience and training helps the employees to make this moment of truth a pleasant experience for the customers. The customer expectation about employee’s knowledge, ability, skills and behavior emerge from their experiences of the moments of truth. The customers indicate that the behavior of the employees is most important in service delivery. This behavior is of two kinds-

1. Behavior in training terms which pertains to the knowledge, skills and attitude of employees which is based on their knowledge and skills;
2. Behavior in psychological terms which pertains to the attitude of the employees based on his/ her beliefs, social background and way of thinking.

Behavior of the first kind can be modified through training but the behavior of the second kind needs special efforts to modify. Training, when supported by non-training interventions like infrastructure and policy, will augment the efforts to provide the desirable service quality.
The study provides exhaustive guidelines for improvisation in the State Training Policy and formulation of a Departmental Training Policy for the Revenue department in particular and other departments in general.

10.4 Strengths and Limitations of this study

A. Strengths

- The strength of this study is its empirical application of the modified SERVQUAL instrument to an administrative setting using actual customers available at the time of data collection. The data has been personally collected by the researcher and hence its authenticity is beyond any doubts.
- The study tries to analyze the quality of services of the Tahsil offices from the viewpoint of both the customers and service providers (in other words citizens and employees). The two sided study, though deviates from the typical SERVQUAL study, gives a very clear and holistic picture of the factors affecting the service quality.
- It also reveals the awareness of the internal employees about the concept of service quality and the customer expectations.
- The study is in congruence with other studies on service quality, which have developed models with more or less number of dimensions than the five dimensions suggested by Parasuraman and his colleagues.
- As the services provided by the Tahsil offices are unique and have no competition validation of the results was a bit difficult. A comparison between Maharashtra and Rajasthan, gave a point of reference and validity to the results of analysis of the data
- The results of quantitative data analysis for both internal and external customers gave comparable results thus supporting and validating the outcome of the study.

B. Limitations

The study has its own inherent limitations. First one is that the study pertains to the service quality of the Tahsil offices. The results of the study may not be applicable to other offices without further investigations. Second limitation is the size of population-
• Maharashtra State-
  - Area 307690 sq. km.
  - Districts- 35
  - Tahsils - 356

• Rajasthan State-
  - Area- 342239 sq. km.
  - Districts- 33
  - Tahsils - 251

(Source- Official websites of the Governments of Maharashtra and Rajasthan)

The area and number of Tahsil offices is too huge to opt for random sampling. Therefore non-probability convenience sampling method was adopted as it was not feasible to opt for a random probability sampling method. The use of the latter would have added no extra value to the data and its analysis. Thirdly, the study did not have a scope to study the details of the high levels of stress found in the employees. It may be taken up as a separate study.

The motivation, interest and mental setup of the respondents were beyond the control of the researcher. The truthfulness of the participants’ responses while answering the questionnaires was out of control of the researcher. It was observed at some point that the participants are hesitant in responding to the questionnaire bay be because of a fear of writing anything about the Government. However they shared their views in open group discussions

10.4 Prospects for Further Research

As discussed earlier in this chapter the study attempted neither to test existing theory nor to develop new research instruments. This is a primary attempt to apply the instrument to study the perceptions of the customers and service providers towards the quality of the service of the administrative study. The study may be refined to develop an instrument for administrative services.

The application of the study is limited to a representative part of a large Government department. There is a vast scope for application of the SERVQUAL instrument to assessment of service quality to other Government departments. Replication studies, with shared reporting of findings, are recommended for validation and refinement of the instrument.
The pilot study was carried out by using the gap model of the typical SERVQUAL instrument and it gave excellent results which have been published in international journals. The application of gap model is always recommended in order to study the primary and universal applicability of the SERVQUAL instrument in its pure form to an service setting. Identification of the gaps at all the levels of service delivery as envisaged by the model will throw light on the hidden aspects of service quality not explored by this study.

Several issues arose during the analysis of the data. These questions open new prospects for future research. One important question that arose was why the employees are so much stressed? What are the causes of employee stress and what are the possible remedies to the stress?

The instrument used for the internal customers included in all 20 statements on service quality and satisfaction and 10 statements on training. The instrument has an acceptable internal consistency of 0.780 among the items. There is a scope for improvisation in the scale for internal customers. It may be taken up as a part of further research to refine the scale for internal customers or service providers of administrative services.

The regression analysis of the data for internal customers revealed that there are many contributors to the job satisfaction and satisfaction with training. There is a need of more in depth study to analyze and ascertain the major factors contributing to the employee satisfaction with job and training.

There are numerous future directions for research. This is just a small attempt to apply the service quality instrument to administrative setup. The study can be further extended to improve the instrument in order to make it applicable to larger scale administrative service setup. The instrument has been applied to a small representative sample of internal and external customers within the setup of Tahsil offices in Maharashtra. The results of the study pertain only to the Tahsil offices and it will be premature to apply them to any other offices even within the Revenue Department. It will be too early to recommend the use of the results of this study to assess the service quality of any other offices within the Revenue department or any
other public service department of the Government. Independent application of the
service quality instrument to the other offices within the department will throw light
on the service quality aspects of these offices like SDM, DRO, DSO offices. A
separate study has to be undertaken in order to study the service quality of these
offices. This study might be useful as a guideline for further application of the study
on service quality. This study opens a completely a new avenue of study of
administrative services and a means to either further study the service quality
instrument in various service setups or to explore in depth in order to improve the
service quality of the public services.