



Improving the Quality of Public Administration Service of the Du Hang Kenh Ward People's Committee, Hai Phong City, Vietnam

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Abstract

Public administration reform (PAR) is a global issue that is a motivation to raise economic growth and other social aspects of development. Recently, Vietnam PAR has achieved the positive results such as: (i) public administrative procedures have been gradually reformed towards simplicity and transparency, (ii) the National organizational structure has been reformed towards delayering, and (iii) the quality of officials and civil staffs have been improved in the work capacity, sense of responsibility and serving consciousness. These reforms have contributed to economic growth, while making the state organizational structure become closer to its civil, overcoming many difficulties inherent in the central planning mechanism bureaucrats. The first part of the paper presents a brief summary of the methodology for a service quality and public administration service quality. Based on that, the main content of the article focuses on the application of improving the quality of public administration service of the Du Hang Kenh Ward People's Committee based on eight criteria including (i) Facilities and working conditions, (2) Reliability; (3) Responsiveness (4) Security (5) Empathy (6) Fee, (7) Monitoring and Controlling, (8) Overall evaluation

Keywords: Public administration, service quality



1. Introduction

Due to the strategic defense - security location surrounded by many business and transportation entities with the area over 150 hectares with a dense community of nearly 3 thousand-population, with many fluctuations and changes, PAR implementation at the People's Committee of Du Hang Kenh Ward is very concerned. This issue is closely directed and monitored; starting with reform in the representative work at the department of One Stop Service according to Decision No. 93/2007 / QD-TTg issued on June 22, 2007 by the Prime Minister, and obtained initial positive results. The quality of administrative procedures is gradually improved and supported. However, the direction and implementation of the One Stop Service still remains some problems, the quality is low, not properly arranged in some places; improper regulation, lack of infrastructure (office area and equipment) and information technology, untighten work operation management in receiving records and returning, solving lasted longer than specified time are other issues causing the people unsatisfied. The main causes of these weaknesses are the incomplete, unsynchronized and inconsistent perceptions of leaders and civil staff about the One Stop Service, failures of the head officer to meet the adequate requirements, the unqualified capacity and experience of the officials at the Record Handling and Release department, unguaranteed facilities and equipment service. Simplification of administrative procedures applied information technology in state operating management under the quality management system (QMS) ISO 9001-2008 has just been examined, evaluated and re-issued certificate, met the people's needs of communicating and dealing with local authorities on carrying out administrative procedures in their decentralized authority.

However, the ward's realistic activities showed a lack of awareness of the importance of administrative reforms, uneven monitor progress, failures in meeting the requirements. Some civil servants have not been trained, retrained so they felt embarrassments to learn new knowledge and regulations. Even, there are a party who does not want to reform because of their afraid of coliation, changing habits, innovation from the mechanism of "ask favour" to "service".

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 The concept and characteristics of service

Similar to tangible products, service (intangible products) is the output of a production process or an activity. However, due to its intangible nature, service should be defined as "the result of a process or a certain activity but not visible, measurable and counted".

Service is intended activities that meet the specific needs of people. The characteristics of service are non-existent in a specific product types (tangible) as goods but it directly serves certain needs of the society.

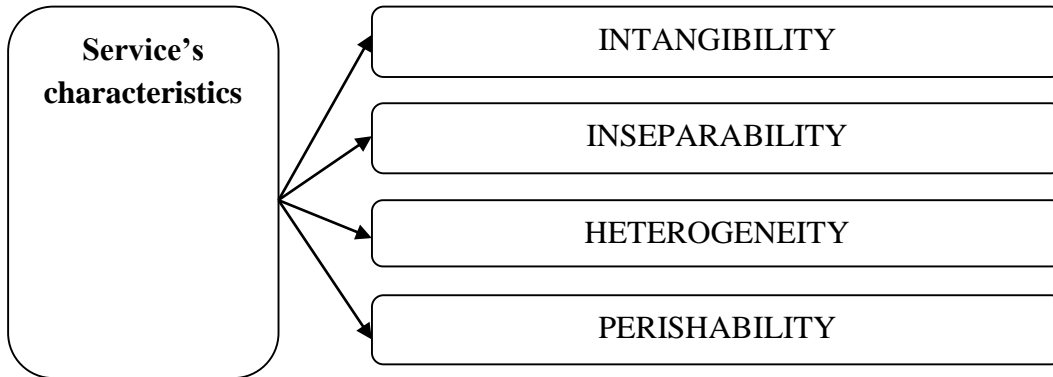


Figure 2.1: Characteristics of service

These characteristics make the differences between service and tangible products: cannot be quantified, undefined and unqualified (Parasuraman, 1985). These features can be explained as follows:

- **INTANGIBILITY:** The customers cannot see, taste, smell, hear, feel or experience before the purchase. They are performance rather than objects (Hoffman and Bateson, 2002). This feature requires the administrators must rely on indirect elements to organize service delivery and service quality evaluation.
- **INSEPARABILITY:** In the service sector, the supply is often done simultaneously with consumption. Therefore, the suppliers may face difficulties to conceal defects or weaknesses of service because there is almost no gap time from manufacturing to consumption as tangible products. Thus, service cannot be reserved, storage, and moreover, customers are one of the factors that directly determine the quality of service.
- **HETEROGENEITY:** Service is very difficult to implement consistently and accurately on chronological basis because the service often change depending on their suppliers, customers, or time and place of operation, etc. This characteristic makes service standardizing difficultly compared with manufactured products. For example, the process of disease diagnosis depends on the experience and attitude of doctors, and one doctor can diagnose diseases right or wrong over time.
- **PERISHABILITY:** Service cannot be warehoused as goods, cannot be stored and sold later. It can be understood in another way that the service would not exist if it is not "consumed" in a certain specified time.

2.2. Service quality

- According to ISO 8402, service quality is the "set of inherent characteristics fulfills requirements" or "service quality is clients' satisfaction measured by the difference between quality expectations and quality achieved. If the expected quality is lower than the quality received, the service quality is excellent, if the expected quality is greater than the quality received, the service quality is not guaranteed, if the expected quality equals the quality received, the service quality is assurance."
- According to Zeithaml (1987), service quality is defined as a consumer's judgment about an entity's overall excellent or superiority; consumers' perceptions of service quality result from the comparing from expectations prior to receiving the service.
- Grontoss (1984) also suggested the two principal components of service quality, namely: technical quality, what customers get and functional quality, how the service is provided.



- However, when it comes to service quality, it cannot be missed in mentioning the great contribution of Parasuraman & CTG (1988, pp.17), who defined service quality as the "differences between users' expectations of service and their perceptions of service".

2.3 Public administration service and assessment criteria of the public administration service quality.

2.3.1 Public service

Public services are known as the direct service dealings between the State (or authorized institutions approved by the State) and citizens as customers. In broad way, the State plays the role as the guarantor who providing services, these services are called public services.

In Vietnam, the concept of public service involves three major service groups: (i) the group of public administration services, the services of this group mostly pure public service; (ii) the basic social service groups or essential social services, these are not pure public services, largely implemented to satisfy the criteria of incompetency in the consumption (for example, education, training creation, health care, culture, etc.); and (iii) the group of impure public services, largely satisfy the necessary needs of consumption (for example, sanitation, water supply, public transport, etc.)

2.3.2 Public administration service

Public administration service is a type of public services provided by the State administrative agencies to implement the basic rights and responsibilities of specific organizations and citizens. In other words, public administration services are activities serving the basic rights and obligations of organizations and citizens, and taken by the State administrative agencies based on the administrative - legal execution authority of the government. According to the Clause 3, Article 3 of Decree 43/2011 / ND-CP, "Public Administration Services are services related to the activities of law execution and non-profit purposes, issued by the State authorized organizations and individuals in the form of legal documents in the fields managed by state agencies".

2.3.3 Criteria for assessing the quality of public administration service

- Criteria for the operational objectives of the State administrative agencies

Each institute has its own specific goals that contribute to the common goal of implementing state management as delegated or assigned, in accordance with the functions and duties prescribed by law, ensuring stability and order and social justice in their assigned jurisdiction; and better serving the needs of the people. Although these goals do not directly create the quality of a public administration service in particular, but identifying the target properly demonstrate the State administrative agencies' commitment in serving people. The objective of serving people's demand is often demonstrated in the quality codes issued by the State administrative agencies when applying the set of standards ISO 9001: 2000.

- Criteria reflecting the input elements of administrative agencies

Input factors contribute to the quality of administrative services as:

+ Infrastructure: includes buildings, equipment, information tools, and other technical vehicles, etc. Thus, the infrastructure is a factor creating service quality of public administration, and also a set of criteria to evaluate the quality of this kind of service.



- + **Administrative personnel:** is a very important criterion, decided the quality of public administration services. If the officers and employees have the quality of responsiveness, capability (especially skilled and professional) will fulfill the assigned tasks.
- + The requirements of customers (citizens and organizations) are the needs or expectations of them toward the services they need to enjoy. Requirements of the customers belong to the people themselves, but the performance satisfying these requirements under a certain form due to the state agencies (often referred as citizens' profiles).

- Criteria for handling citizen's records

This criterion reflects on the activities of the staff and civil officers in solving the needs of the citizens. The requirement for this process is to be held democratically, fairly and information transparently; with polite behavior and empathy with the customer; reliability and willingness in serving; job satisfaction of employees, customer satisfaction, etc.

- Criteria reflect the output of the administration services

The output of the service is the result of resolving requests from citizens and organizations, representing by the documents, administrative records that they get from the state administrative agencies. To evaluate these results, it should consider the following three criteria:

First, whether the results given to people are in time and on request or not. This is the responsibility of the agencies dealing with administrative works.

Second, the time duration of handling work. This is the responsibility of the agencies who issuing the procedures, administrative processes and agencies dealing with administrative works.

Third, whether the documents, administrative records solving people's request is accurate or not. If they are incorrect, they would cause problems for people who using the documents for a purpose.

- Criteria for result evaluation

The output results are evaluated by two criteria:

The first criterion is whether the results have achieved the management goals or not. This criterion is directly related to social life in terms of the way the outcome of the subjects' behavior has directly impacts on the society. For example, many investment projects licensed in a given time not necessarily bring good results for the society, if these investors are not really investing, but only occupy resources.

Second, how the results of services benefit people in the future. If people have to spend a lot of time, effort and even money to get a certain administrative documents/ records issued by the State administration agencies, but they are not very useful, then it does not make sense.

The search criteria above are tough and complex, then how to evaluate the quality of public administration services under these above criteria is not an easy work. In the author's opinion, there are two ways used to assess the service quality of public administration, presented following:

First, conducting service quality measurement of public administration under the above criteria (applicable to the criteria that can be quantified) and compare the results with the standards have been set out (quality requirements). This measurement method should be used for socio-economic statistics and taken by administrative agencies or service performance evaluation organizations who required high level of honesty and objectivity.

Second, determine the level of satisfaction of customers (citizens and organizations). In order to determine this, it is necessary to use sociological methods such as survey questionnaires or interviews, combined with public assessment methods.



Thus, the quality assessment criteria system of a public administrative service must reflect all aspects of the components in the administrative process and influence (be impacted) by the administrative services later. At the same time, they must reflect the actual expectations of the users (citizens and organizations) about a certain administrative services. In the author's opinion, each public administration services should have a specific criteria system that is consistent with the nature and characteristics of services supplied. Certainly, through the construction of a system of criteria, along with evaluation of the administrative services quality, that will significantly improve the quality of public administration services. Based on the annual results of public administration services assessment, the responsible agencies would conduct service quality classification that agencies could know their ranking positions and improve their weakness.

2.4 Proposing criteria for assessing the public administration service quality at Du Hang Kenh Ward People's Committee

Based on the theory and actual situation of public administrative services in Du Hang Kenh Ward, the authors have chosen these quality criteria of administrative services as below:

Table 1: Proposing the criteria for assessing the public administration service quality at Du Hang Kenh Ward People's Committee

I. FACILITIES AND WORKING CONDITIONS	
1	Comfortable Parking places
2	Comfortable offices, available seats
3	The number of staff meet the working requirements
4	Equipment, vehicles, and working tools are available and in good conditions
5	The website is friendly and easy to access
II. RELIABILITY	
1	The staff work as promised
2	The working hours are assured
3	The staff solve the records in order as the people are waiting for handling documents
4	The staff listen and help solving difficulties
5	The staff understand the rule, provide right information
III. RESPONSIVENESS	
1	The reasonable requirements are responded quickly
2	The staff guide the procedures clearly, in avoid the cases people have to make many interactions
3	The staff listens and response questions from individuals and organizations quickly and responsively.
4	The staff guides the regulations after finishing the administrative procedures for people.
5	The people are responded their questions in details and clearly through telephones
IV. SECURITY	
1	The procedures are public, with clearly Guidant
2	The staff are experienced
3	The Guidant from the staff is clear
4	The Guidant is easy to be taken
5	The number of time you come for finish the documents is reasonable
6	The records are released in time



V. EMPATHY	
1	Staff careness toward customers
2	Nice staff
3	Not annoying and extortionate staff
4	Sympathy with faraway customers that have hard time traveling
VI. FEE	
1	The fee is relatively low
2	When people uses the public administration service, there is no additional fees or charges
3	The fee and charge of administration services are public clearly
VII. MONITORING AND CONTROLLING	
1	Attention paid from upper leader
2	Leaders attitude towards feedbacks and adjustments made
VIII. OVERALL EVALUATION	
1	Level of pleasantness
2	Would you come again to do administrative procedure
3	Would you introduce to people our services

(Source: The author's survey in 2015)

3. Assessing the quality of the public administration service at the Du Hanh Kenh Ward People's Committee

3.1 Designing the questionnaires and survey step

3.1.1 Designing the questionnaires

In order to design the survey, the author has studied and built a range of questions related to research projects, based on the criteria for assessing the quality of public administration services applied to ward hierarchy. Next, by using expert method, the author were given consults from two leaders, four officers have been undertaking the work at Du Hang Kenh Ward to complete the questionnaire (see appendix 3)

3.1.2 Designing the scales

The scales of all the observed variables of all component elements of public administration services based on Liker scale level 5 (increasing level of agreement):

- 1: Strongly disagree (totally wrong)
- 2: Hardly agree
- 3: No opinion, wondering whether agree or not (neutral)
- 4: Agreed
- 5: Strongly agree (completely true statement)

3.1.3 Method of conducting the survey

Two hundred questionnaires were sent to local people and organizations that using public administration service at Du Hang Kenh Ward People's Committee. Finally, 190 completed responses were collected. Therefore, the final sample size was 190.



3.1.4 Data processing and analysis

After the survey is completed, the collected responses were checked the completeness of the information. Based on the logic of the question, if they were inappropriate, they would be removed with the responses which were lack of information. Then the author preceded the input and used Excel software to calculate.

3.2 Assessing the quality of the public administration service at the Du Hanh Kenh Ward People's Committee

Based on result from the survey, the paper finding the quality of the public administration service at the Du Hang Kenh People's Committee as below:

3.2.1. The interviewee information

- On the 190 responses were analyzed, 85% are individuals and families, the remaining 15% are organizations and 20% were first time to be served by public administration, 30% responded their second procedures and 50% had the third times.

Table 2: Respondents' information

Information	Number	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	90	47%
Female	100	53%
Age		
Under 30	91	48%
From 30-40	40	21%
Over 40	59	31%
Educational level		
High school	25	13,1%
Vocational school	18	9,5%
College	59	31,1%
Undergraduate	73	38,4%
Graduated	15	7,9%
Occupation		
Employees	81	43%
Teachers	5	3%
Businessmen	45	24%
Other	59	29%
Total	190	100%

3.2.2. Facilities and working condition

In general, the "one-stop" department of the ward was evaluated positively in the criteria of the facility, "One-stop shop" was arranged a room at the office of ward People's Committee with an area of 35 m2, equipped with mechanical Full facilities (computers connected to the internet, printers, air conditioners, chairs) to serve the citizens waiting for the transaction. Despite the bad reviews, the Ward leadership is in the process of applying for upgrading the Ward's facilities.

Table 3: Results of assessing the facilities and working condition

Criteria	Survey results										Mean
	1		2		3		4		5		
1. Convenient parking place	4	2%	5	3%	144	80%	27	15%			3.08
2. The working office has enough waiting seats	9	5%	18	10%	126	70%	18	10%	9	5%	3.00
3. The number of staff meets the working requirements	36	20%	4	2%	126	70%	13	7%	1	1%	2.66
4. Machines, vehicles, and working equipment	27	15%	36	20%	108	60%	9	5%			2.55
5. The website is easy to access	4	2%	54	30%	90	50%	32	18%			2.83
Average value											2.82

(Source: The survey results)

3.2.3 Reliability

Table 4: Survey results of reliability

Criteria	Results										Mean
	1		2		3		4		5		
1. The staff do as promised	0	0%	5	3%	90	50%	85	47%			3.44
2. The working hours are assured	18	0%	18	10%	27	15%	117	65%			3.35
3. The staff always listen and help solving difficulties	18	10%	104	58%	36	20%	22	12%			2.34
4. The staff understand the regulations, provide exact information	72	10%	21	12%	87	48%		0%			2.08
5. Solve the records in order as the people are in queue	18	40%	72	40%	90	50%		0%			2.40
Average value											2.72

(Source: The survey results)

3.2.4. Responsiveness

Table 5: Survey results of responsiveness

Criteria	Survey results										Mean
	1		2		3		4		5		
1. The reasonable requests are responded quickly	126	70%	0	0%	9	5%	36	20%	9	5%	1.90
2. The staff guide sufficient procedures	45	25%	5	3%	31	17%	99	55%		0%	3.02
3. The staff listen, response to the people' questions	22	12%	104	58%	40	22%	14	8%		0%	2.26
4. The staff guide sufficient regulations after finishing the procedures	54	30%	117	65%	9	5%		0%		0%	1.75
5. The people are responded via telephone	54	30%	90	50%	36	20%		0%		0%	1.90
Average value											2.17

(Source: Survey results)

3.2.5. Security

Table 6: Survey results of the security

Criteria	Results										Mean
	1		2		3		4		5		
1. The procedures are publicizing	0		18	10%	72	40%	36	20%	54	30%	3.70
2. The staff have experience	72	40%	9	5%	72	40%	9	5%	18	10%	2.40
3. The staff's guidant is understandable	4	2%	90	50%	18	10%	54	30%	14	8%	2.91

4. The staff's guidant is easy to follow	4	2%	90	50%	18	10%	54	30%	14	8%	2.91
5. The number of transactions for finishing the procedures is reasonable	18	10%	108	60%	18	10%	36	20%	0	0%	2.40
6. The documents are returned in time as promised	36	20%	54	30%	18	10%	72	40%	0		2.70
Average value											2.84

(Source: Survey results)

3.2.6. Empathy

Table 7: Survey results of empathy

Criteria	Survey results										Mean
	1		2		3		4		5		
1. The staff care about the difficulties of people	4	2%	4	2%	90	50%	71	40%	11	6%	3.45
2. The staff is friendly	11	6%	23	13%	90	50%	36	20%	20	11%	3.17
3. The staff is not troubling, causing difficulties	0		0		24	13%	108	60%	48	27%	4.13
4. The staff sympathy with the people in remote localities	0		72	40%	90	50%	18	10%	0		2.70
Average value											3.36

(Source: Survey results)

3.2.7. Fees

Table 8: Survey results of fees

Criteria	Survey results										Mean
	1		2		3		4		5		
1. The level of fees of services is relatively low	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	180	100%	5.00
2. There is no additional fees	0	0%	4	2%	140	78%	0	0%	36	20%	3.38
3. The fees, charges are publicizing clearly	72	40%	90	50%	18	10%	0	0%	0	0%	1.70
Average value											3.36

(Source: Survey results)

3.2.8 Monitoring and controlling

Table 9: Survey results of Monitoring mechanism

Criteria	Survey results										Mean
	1		2		3		4		5		
1. The ward publicized the phone number and hotlines	0	0%	2	1%	90	50%	88	49%		0%	3.48
2. The ward has set the mail box for opinions and comments	0	0%	56	31%	36	20%	88	49%		0%	3.18
Average value											3.33

(Source: Survey results)

3.2.9. Overall assessment

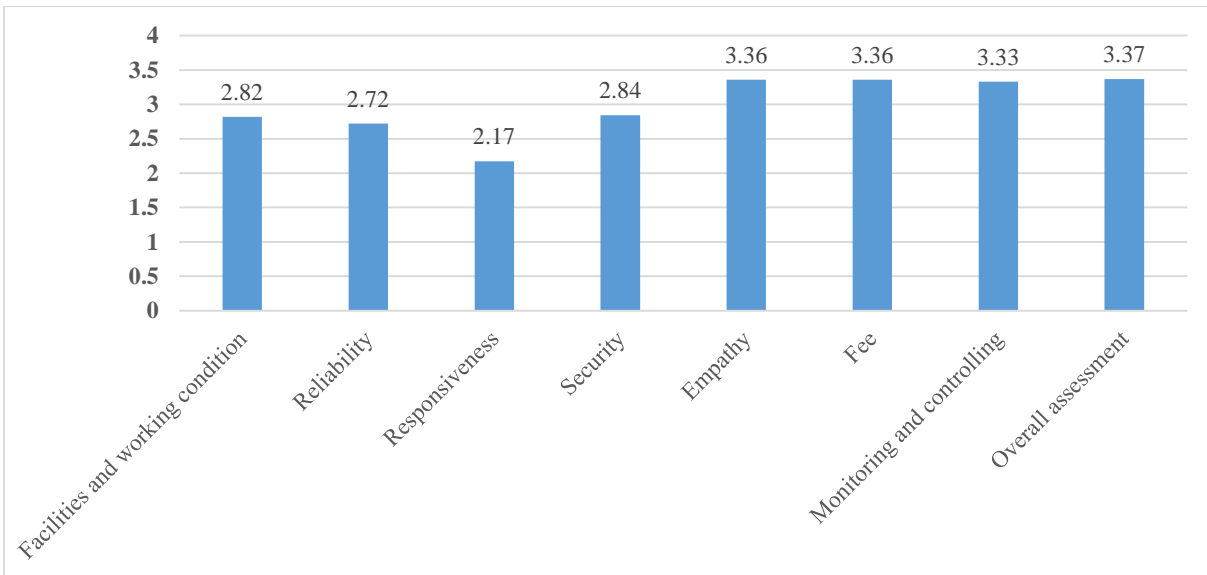
Table 10: Survey results of overall assessment

Criteria	Survey results										Mean
	1		2		3		4		5		
1. You are satisfied with the public administration services	0	0%	126	70%	36	20%	0	0%	18	10%	2.50
2. You would continue to use the services	0	0%	36	20%	18	10%	72	40%	54	30%	3.80
3. You would recommend the services to others.	0	0%	18	10%	72	40%	18	10%	72	40%	3.80
Average value											3.37

(Source: Survey results)

Through the survey and investigation, combined with the assessment from the ward’s managers and staff working, the paper can evaluate the overview of public administration service quality of the Ward

Table 11: Synthesis of quality criteria



From the results of public service quality survey at Du Hang Kenh Ward People’s Committee found that all indicators were below 3.5. Of which, there are 4 indicators below 3. As Responsiveness is 2.17, Reliability is 2.72, Facilities and working condition is 2.82 and Security is 2.84



4. Discussion and Conclusion

In order to overcome the constraints in the quality of public services mentioned, it is necessary to implement measures such as (i) Improving the administrative procedures to create transparency, (ii) Improving the quality of human resources. For example, training in the knowledge of state management, law and soft skills, (iii) Enhancing application of information technology in public service delivery to citizens

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