



Assessing Quality of Higher Senior Secondary School Management and Administration Services with Special Emphasis on the use of ICT: Viewpoint of Students

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Abstract

The study aims to scrutinize the students' point of view towards school administration and management. Deliberations on the students' perceptions and expectations relating to the administration quality merit significance as they may help in improving the administration and management of schools in the State of Rajasthan as well as the whole country. Outlining the plausible gaps between the students' expectations and perceptions may encourage the concerned experts and authorities in taking necessary actions to improve the quality of administration services. The study may encourage and facilitate understanding in areas which require improvement, thus making it possible for strategy and policy makers to bring in required reforms for students' satisfaction. The sample for the study, collected in the year 2017, consisted of 204 students from various Private Higher Senior Secondary schools from the State of Rajasthan. Online Questionnaires, utilizing SERVQUAL scale, was prepared and administered, the responses were coded and analyzed to measure and recognize any real or perceived gaps between the student's expectations and perceptions of the managerial/administration services provided by Private Higher Senior Secondary schools. The study was particularly aimed at determining the quality gap in administration service quality. The SERVQUAL scale was modified for the evaluation of administrative services with special reference to ICT usage in schools' administration. The point by point detailed analysis utilizing BM SPSS version 23 resulted in identifying gaps in various dimensions of school administration - Tangible, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy and over all service quality. The maximum and least gaps identified were -1.371 in the Reliability dimension and -1.419 in the Assurance dimension, with a gap of -1.708 between the students' expectations regarding the use of ICT for the school administration and management. The total service quality gap was -1.441, which is by no means insignificant.

Keywords: Academic Administration/Management, Expectation, Gaps, Service Quality

JEL Classification: I29

Paper Classification: Research Paper



Introduction

Private Higher Senior Secondary schools today require good administration which performs its work efficiently. An effective school administration ensures the smooth communication and transmission of data and information from one part to the other. As such the use of ICT is exceptionally useful for school administration. Information Communication and Technology (ICT) may be used for Reporting, Planning, Document Processing, Knowledge Management, Communication, and Decision making. The utilization of ICT can enhance education quality, increase learning opportunities and make education available to numerous students, which is the need of the hour. ICT is essential for the generation of quality information and administration of that information for better decision making pertaining to school administration. ICT may also be utilized in various other different fields including educational modules, curriculum designing, teaching and learning, giving feedback, updating the assessment process etc., which may be broadly divided into three broad areas, student administration, staff administration and general administration.

Review of Literature

The term 'Service quality' comprises 'service' and 'quality'; these ideas are related to consumers. Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985) maintain that 'Service quality' is a subtle and indistinct concept. Abili, Thani, and Afarinandehbin (2012) affirm quantifying and measuring quality is challenging. Grönroos (1984) maintains service has two factors: the expected and the perceived. Researchers have used SERVQUAL, the service quality scale made by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) for measuring the service quality of several services such as financial sectors (Lin, 1999), retail management (Mehta, 2000), tourism (Kaynama, 2000), etc. Several prior studies have confirmed that the SERVQUAL scale is a suitable tool for assessing the quality of education (Al-Alak & Alnaser, 2012; Pariseau & McDaniel, 1997; Stasiak-Betlejewska et al., 2014; Yousapronpaiboon, 2014). It has been extensively used in Higher education sector in the developed countries, and alternative methods for quality assessment e.g. SERVPERF/HEdPERF (Galeeva, 2016) have also been tested and compared with the modified SERVQUAL. However, most previous studies have concentrated on teaching quality (Brocato & Potocki, 1996) or teacher/course assessment (Babbar, 1995); as such the present study aims to assess the service quality of the school administration and management. The study centers on the administrative staff instead of the teaching staff. Moreover, despite the widespread use of ICT for school administration and management, it was noticed that no detailed studies have been done to assess the administration service quality and the usage of ICT for the same. To abridge this gap, the present study takes a look at the students' viewpoint towards the service quality of school administration and management and the utilization of ICT tools for student administration, staff administration and general administration.

Higher Senior Secondary School Administration and Service Quality

To gauge the quality of administration system, a modified and adapted model of SERVQUAL survey created by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) was utilized. This questionnaire was specifically created to quantify service quality by Schneider, and White, 2004. SERVQUAL model has five dimensions, which determine the gaps between customers' desires and expectations (Badri et al. 2005). For the present study, the wordings of some of the original questions were changed to suit the objective of the study; the scales were modified to measure the service quality and the use of ICT for various administrative activities and to evaluate how far the expectations of the students were met regarding the quality of services provided by the school administration.

The dimensions, in the context of the present study, are as follows:

1. Tangibles: How are the school administration's ICT facilities, physical equipment, infrastructure, people and communication material?
2. Reliability: Is the Administration reliable? Does it offer the services as guaranteed and promised? Unwavering reliability reflects and mirrors the schools' trustworthiness and certainty regarding execution of all work pertaining to school management efficiently.
3. Responsiveness: Is the organization willing to provide administration services and help the students? It is used for estimating Administration and managerial staff's responsiveness and receptiveness towards the students.
4. Assurance: Is the managerial/administrative staff well-informed, educated, competent, skilled, tech-savvy and trustworthy? This dimension measures the school administration's skill, courtesy and accuracy.
5. Empathy: Is the managerial/ administrative staff providing careful and customized attention? This is used to assess the school administration's ability to experience the students' sentiments and feelings and to respond accordingly.
6. ICT- Usage: Are ICT based tools available and being utilized to the maximum by the school administration? This segment is introduced by the researchers to assess the use of ICT for school administration.

Methodology

Research Objective

The main aim of this study is to build a tool based on the SERVQUAL model for estimating service quality in school administration and management with special emphasis on the utilization of ICT and to investigate whether it can be utilized to distinguish the gaps between the students' expectations and perceptions, as customers thereby providing the premise and basis for incorporating necessary changes in the school administration system.

Research Hypotheses

For the present research, the following hypotheses were framed:

H₁: A modified SERVQUAL scale can be utilized to decide in which areas of Higher Senior Secondary schools administration upgrades are required, in order to meet the expectations of the students regarding the services provided to them.

H₂: There exists a gap between students' expectations and perceptions of administration service quality provided by the schools with particular emphasis on the utilization of ICT in Private Higher Senior Secondary Schools in Rajasthan.

Research Instrument

The final questionnaire was a modified SERVQUAL tool consisting of 27 items, which were rephrased based on existing models to make them reasonably suitable for surveying the quality of Higher Senior Secondary school's administration service. This structured questionnaire had 22 items for dimensions of each scale based on the original scale with five additional items made by the researchers; one scale measured the students' expectations, and one quantified the perceptions of the received services offered by the school administrations. The additional five

items were exclusively focused on the use of ICT by Private Higher Senior Secondary schools for administration purposes.

The final SERVQUAL questionnaire consisted of the following:

The dimension pertaining to tangibles included questions one to four and investigates physically tangible and visible resources essential for providing the administration services, (for instance ICT facilities, equipment, infrastructure, and so forth). The dimension of reliability was measured by questions five to nine which focus on the ability of the school administration to deliver the guaranteed services precisely and dependably (for instance to resolves students' issues, claims and demands). The third dimension, responsiveness, was measured by questions 10 to 13 and examines the attention given by the school administration to the students, as primary stakeholders, providing prompt benefits and services. The dimension identified with assurance (questions 14 to 18) analyzed the knowledge and graciousness of administrative staff in evoking confidence and trust among the students. The dimension empathy included questions 19 to 22 and focused on the individualized attention and care which is given to the students and their particular needs by the school administration and management. Items 23 to 27 were introduced to gauge the service quality of ICT based tools by the school administration. All items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale.

Data Analysis

The information gathered from the Questionnaire was coded. IBM SPSS form 23 was used for analyzing the information collected from the students who voluntarily participated in the study. For each dimension, quality scores were calculated based on the difference between the students' perceived service quality of the school administration and the expectation that they had from the administration service:

$$\text{Administration Service Quality} = \text{expectations} - \text{perceptions}$$

$$ASQ = E - P$$

The students were requested to respond to the ideal circumstance as indicated by their opinion under the expectation section of the questionnaire; while in the observation segment they were solicited to express their assessment of the present circumstance or recognition with respect to the administration in performing managerial and administrative tasks. Descriptive statistics was utilized to calculate the Average Mean of expectations and Means for perceptions, and gap score. t-test was used for comparing and ascertaining whether there were any significant differences between the students' expectations and perceptions.

Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated to find the reliability of the survey for all the segments of the questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha which is a coefficient of reliability was computed utilizing SPSS to quantify the internal consistency and close relation among the set of determinants in each of the dimensions. In exploratory examinations, an estimation of 0.60 or more is considered as adequate for internal consistency. It was observed that Tangibles dimension showed a value of less than 0.70 in students' expectations demonstrating lower internal reliability, while Assurance has the highest Cronbach's alpha value for students' expectations showing that expectations of the students are primary concerns. Another observable fact is that the internal consistency of dimensions and determinants of perceptions were higher than those observed for the expectations. In this study, none of the Cronbach's values were over 0.90. The Cronbach's Alpha was computed for each subscale of administration service quality dimension in the study. The results are tabulated in Table 1.

Table 1. Alpha Reliability for Dimensions

Dimensions	No of items	Cronbach's Alpha for Expectations	Cronbach's Alpha for Perceptions
Tangibles	4	.670	.856
Reliability	5	.779	.859
Responsiveness	4	.757	.869
Assurance	4	.828	.883
Empathy	5	.809	.852
Quality ICT	5	.804	.868

Result Analysis

Demographics: The sample consisted of 204 students from various private schools in the State of Rajasthan, India. Among the participants, 164 (80.4%) were male and 40 (19.6%) were female, approximately 18 years old. 136 (66.7%) students were from Private English medium Higher Senior Secondary schools and 68 (33.3%) were from Private Hindi medium. 66 (32.4%) from rural regions and 138 (67.6%) from urban areas of the State.

Findings

The results for the two scales - expectations and perceptions of the students and administration service quality gaps are tabulated below, in Table No.2. The perception with respect to the quality of service provided was evaluated and compared, by carrying out t-tests.

Table 2. Mean Scores of Students Expectations and Perceptions and Administration Service Quality Gap

ITEMS	E	P	GAPE-P	t	Sig-2-tailed
TAN1 Infrastructure for facilities including ICT based facilities	6.338	4.936	-1.402	12.771	.000
TAN2 Visually Appealing Physical Facilities and resources including ICT based facilities	6.363	4.971	-1.3922	12.464	.000
TAN3 Neat and Professional Appearance of administrative staff	6.377	5.564	-0.8137	8.968	.000
TAN4 Modern and Latest appearance of facilities including ICT based facilities	6.652	4.716	-1.9363	15.108	.000
TANGIBILITY	6.433	5.046	-1.386		
REL1 Time line promise using ICT Tools	6.554	5.201	-1.3529	12.38	.000
REL2 Administrative staff makes effective use of ICT based tools and gadgets for communication with students e.g. Dissemination of information in the school, e-media for the processing and display of results etc	6.51	5.059	-1.451	13.018	.000
REL3 Administrative staff gives feedback on students' progress regularly using latest technologies	6.485	4.897	-1.5882	12.802	.000
REL4 Administrative staff is helpful and well-trained especially in the use of ICT for Administration purposes e.g. work allotment/ Automation of attendance/ e-circulars etc	6.554	5.456	-1.098	10.929	.000

REL5 Administration provides information using ICT regarding student administration e.g. use of electronic media for student admissions/ registration / enrolment/ time table in electronic form/ attendance of students etc	6.613	5.245	-1.3676	13.158	.000
RELIABILITY	6.543	5.171	-1.371		
RES1 Administrative staff provides Prompt services to students using Information and Communication Technology e.g. academic details of students to their parent through e-media/ information about hostel accommodation/ transportation/ examination etc	6.618	5.221	-1.3971	12.07	.000
RES2 Administrative staff use latest technologies to handle inquiries, appeals and claims timely	6.578	5.147	-1.4314	13.185	.000
RES3 Administrative staff is accessible, when the students need help	6.618	5.245	-1.3725	13.475	.000
RES4 Administrative staff is never too busy to respond to student requests promptly	6.24	5.074	-1.1667	12.048	.000
RESPONSIVENESS	6.514	5.135	-1.379		
ASS1 Administration motivates communication and use of ICT based content in class	6.583	5.24	-1.3431	12.01	.000
ASS2 Administration behavior instills confidence in students	6.632	5.206	-1.4265	12.983	.000
ASS3 Administration prepares students for professional career through the use of appropriate ICT based materials	6.608	4.814	-1.7941	14.284	.000
ASS4 Administration dependable and friendly	6.392	5.279	-1.1127	11.26	.000
ASSURANCE	6.554	5.135	-1.419		
EMP1 Administrative staff provides individual care and attention to each student	6.304	4.833	-1.4706	12.592	.000
EMP2 Administrative staff has adequate time to advise and assist the students	6.475	4.917	-1.5588	13.425	.000
EMP3 Administrative staff assigns appropriate and pertinent assignment and duties to the students	6.294	4.912	-1.3824	10.41	.000
EMP4 Administration has students' interest in mind in delivering lecture, giving tests and evaluating answer books etc	6.426	5.054	-1.3725	13.634	.000
EMP5 Administration is respectful towards the students	6.377	5.201	-1.1765	11.167	.000
EMPATHY	6.375	4.983	-1.392		
SQICT1: Administration uses latest ICT tools for record keeping, result declaration, scheduling, communicating with students etc	6.672	5.098	-1.5735	15.030	.000
SQICT2: Administration uses latest ICT tools for school management e.g. for attendance, demographics, online grade books, modules, etc	6.608	4.706	-1.9020	16.686	.000
SQICT3: Administration uses latest Assistive Technology for Inclusive classrooms for the abled/ disabled e.g. Digital recorders/ books, Graphing calculators, Electronic math worksheets, Mobile technology (tablets, iPods, iPads, smartphones) Speech recognition software etc	6.520	4.412	-2.1078	15.284	.000
SQICT4: The HS School faculty will provide excellent quality of service in evaluation of students work, projects and assignments	6.603	4.990	-1.6127	15.132	.000
SQICT5 Administration uses latest ICT tools for communicating with parents, e.g. emails, websites, blogs, online surveys, sms, social media, online forums etc	6.691	5.348	-1.3431	13.212	.000
ICT	6.612	4.911	-1.708		
SERVICE QUALITY	6.505	5.064	-1.441		

Discussion

Table 2 indicates ICT5 ‘Administration uses latest ICT tools for communicating with parents, e.g. emails, websites, blogs, online surveys, sms, social media, online forums etc.’, showed the highest score on the expectations scale i.e. 6.691, and RES4 which alludes to Reliability, that is ‘Administrative staff is never too busy to respond to students requests promptly,’ obtained the lowest score of 6.24 on the same scale. While TAN3 “Neat and Professional Appearance of administrative staff” showed the highest score on the perceptions scale i.e. that is 5.564, ICT3: “Administration has latest Assistive Technology for Inclusive classrooms for the abled/ disabled e.g. Digital recorders/ books, Graphing calculators, Electronic math worksheets, Mobile technology (tablets, iPods, iPads, smartphones) Speech recognition software etc.” showed the lowest score of 4.412 on the same scale.

The least gap for an item was seen for TAN3 “Neat and Professional Appearance of administrative staff” (-0.8137), while the highest gap was seen for SQICT3, that is Administration uses latest Assistive Technology for Inclusive classrooms for the abled/ disabled (-2.1078), which indicates the lack of assistive technology for Inclusive classrooms. Based on the average values for each one of the dimensions, it was observed that the students’ expectations regarding the administrative services are high. By utilizing the SERVQUAL model, the researchers succeeded in determining the gaps between the expectations and perceptions of the students. Over all, the students have higher expectations than perceptions with regards to the administrative services rendered by Private Higher Senior Secondary Schools. This was clearly seen in all dimensions of school administration.

Utilizing the SERVQUAL scale, it was also possible to calculate a gap score for each dimension of the administration service quality. Moreover, the score thus calculated showed that the administration service was lower than the expectations of the students. Quality was assessed by subtracting expectation from perceptions. The presence of these quality gaps demonstrated that the administration service quality needs to be improved in the opinion of the students.

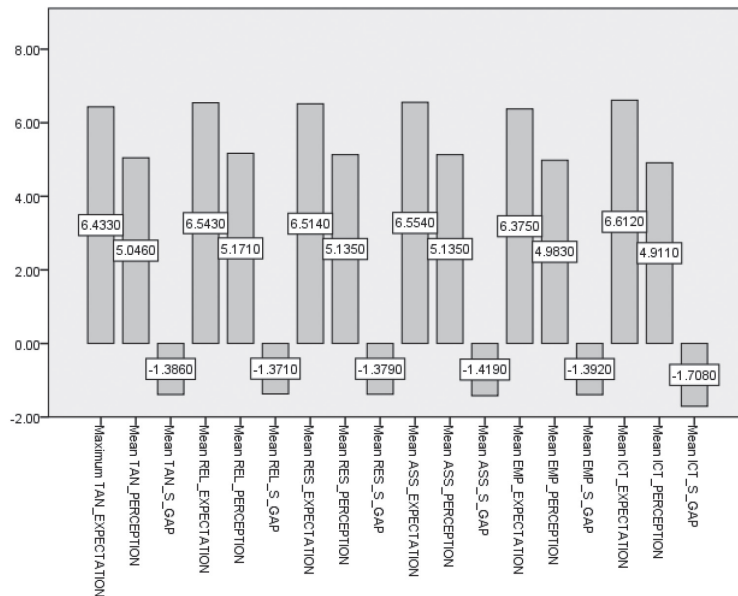


Figure 1. Graph depicting the Expectations, Perceptions and Gaps

The Total gap observed in service quality was -1.441, while the least negative gap was for the dimension reliability (- 1.371), next was responsiveness (-1.379), followed by Tangibles (-1.386), empathy (- 1.392), and assurance (- 1.419), exceeded by the gap in ICT (-1.708). This indicates that the students are greatly dissatisfied with ICT based services; Browne, Kaldenberg, Browne, and Brown (1998) and Guolla (1999) consider students' perceptions regarding the quality of service to be antecedent to their feeling of contentment. The service gap identified that the quality of school administration in the State of Rajasthan needs to be improved.

Tangibles which refer to physical assets (- 1.386) is a dimension with a negative gap which indicates the need for modernization of infrastructure and introduction/ utilization of ICT. Dimensions, responsiveness (-1.379) and assurance (- 1.419), are identified with the nature and quality of the administrative staff - their comprehension and capabilities and their ability to react and respond promptly to the students' needs and perform their obligations with reassurance. Dimension empathy (- 1.392) is connected with the conduct of Administrative staff towards the students, attention given to them, encouragement and support given to them, by being readily available to the students. As these dimensions are related with the Administrative staff's conduct and behavior towards students and indicate the school staffs' eagerness to help and assist the students, it is evident that the school administration needs to put in more determined efforts in managerial/ administrative staff training. It reveals that the students perceive the quality of Human Resource should be improved. The negative gap scores advocate that the senior secondary schools in the State of Rajasthan need to prioritize and concentrate on all dimensions.

While the present study revealed the highest and lowest gap in the dimensions reliability and ICT usage, the previous studies in higher education sector have revealed varied results, with the highest and lowest gap in the dimensions of empathy and tangibles (Rasli, Shekarchizadeh, & Iqbal, 2012), empathy and reliability (Legčević, 2009), tangibles and reliability (Yousapronpaiboon, 2014), tangibility and empathy (Enayati, Modanloo, Behnamfar, & Rezaei, 2013).

Limitations and Further study

The present study has its own limitations; it might be noticed that retroactive inquiry of the students' expectation can impact the research results so the students' expectations for further research may be noted towards the start of the academic year. Moreover, the students' expectations and perceptions can be affected with the passage of time they study in a school. Further studies are recommended to make a comparative study to assess whether there are any differences in service quality and students satisfaction between public and private schools or rural and urban schools in the State.

Conclusion

The study accomplished its goal and objective stated initially in the paper. The approach based on a survey instrument, that is a quantitative one was used in this research. It was found suitable for measuring the administration service quality. The modified SERVQUAL scale was utilized for evaluating administration quality of Higher Senior Secondary Schools and the utilization of ICT for the services rendered by them. The presence of negative gaps between students' expectations and perceptions regarding the administration reveal the lack of satisfaction as customers on the part of the students.

Based on the results, it was concluded that both research hypotheses are decidedly affirmed. The SERVQUAL scale after making necessary changes can be used for evaluating Administrative service quality in the higher education sector. The research also revealed

negative gaps between the students' expectations and perceptions of the administration quality. Suggestions for administrators and policy makers are that the model is a valid and useful framework for evaluating and observing how the students as the main stakeholders form view of school administration. Higher Senior Secondary Schools can benefit from the estimation of service quality. However, merely estimating quality is in vain without remedial measure being appropriately and timely being implemented. The present study was successful in uncovering and highlighting negative quality gaps in all the dimensions of administration service quality. It may be pointed that the smaller these gaps, the better is the administration service quality. However, none of the gaps can be viewed as inconsequential based on the evidence. Accordingly, it may be reasoned that improvement is essential in all aspects of the administration service. A systematic deliberate approach is the need of the hour to upgrade and enhance the administration services provided by Higher Senior Secondary Schools in Rajasthan. Moreover, quality evaluation is the initial step towards improvement of any administration and management system. This is made all the more important due to rapid changes in the field of ICT. The organization and administration of Private Higher Senior Secondary schools need to concentrate on eliminating all the noticed negative quality gaps, as customer satisfaction has a positive effect on customer's intentions and loyalty (Fen & Lian, 2005; Magi & Julander, 1996), the students would be more committed if their expectations are fulfilled. Positive perception of the service quality is important to create student satisfaction as well as attract new students through a positive word of mouth (Marzo-Navarro et al., 2005; Mavondo et al., 2004; Schertzer & Schertzer, 2004; Wiers-Jenssen et al., 2002).

It may prove to be challenging to incorporate quality assurance administration and strategic management into a coordinated administration framework, because of the rapid changes in the field of ICT. To fulfill the demands of the students, it is inevitable that more concrete measures need to be taken to bring the desirable changes. A quality assurance system at the level of the Administration may be implemented. Moreover, there should be regular surveys, which would cover all aspects of Administrative service, and their outcomes may be utilized as inputs for setting key targets and developing strategic plans with a specific end goal to ensure improvement in the schools' administration and management.

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