SERVICE QUALITY IN PUBLIC SERVICE: A CASE OF GHANA NATIONAL SERVICE SCHEME

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ABSTRACT

This study was carried out to ascertain whether personnel serving their mandatory year of service in Ghana were satisfied with the quality of service provided by the Ghana National Service Scheme. The satisfaction of service personnel was measured by employing the gap model and factors influencing the personnel's satisfaction were also determined by factor analysis based on principal component extraction using Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization rotation method. The results indicated that service personnel were satisfied with the empathy, assurance and responsiveness aspects of service delivery. Alternatively, service personnel were not satisfied with the tangibility and reliability dimensions which had a negative gap score. Some of the key factors which significantly contributed to service personnel's satisfaction included the willingness of National Service Scheme staff to answer personnel questions and the ability of staff to quickly respond to the needs of personnel. Developing training policy for staff of the scheme was recommended as one of the measures to deal with these important aspects of quality service delivery. This study is among the foremost attempts to use the SERVQUAL model to examine the service quality of public service organizations in Ghana.

INTRODUCTION

This research sought to determine whether National Service Personnel were satisfied with the quality of service rendered by the National Service Scheme in Ghana. The service quality gap model which was developed by Parasuraman et al., (1985) was used. The model postulates that service quality is a function of both perception and expectations. The gap score was computed for each item and the overall score for each dimension was calculated. The score for each dimension represented the level of satisfaction of a service personnel associated with the dimension.

Ghana's National Service Scheme requires every student who graduates from an accredited tertiary institution to offer one year mandatory service to the country. The national service structures and policies are formulated and implemented by the National Service Secretariat on behalf of the Government of Ghana. In general, the National Service Scheme is perceived as delivering low quality service to the National Service Personnel. There is the perception that some public officers have a "take it or leave it; we careless" attitude. Their customers exhibited high levels of frustration and anger, which led to the establishment of the Public Sector Reforms Ministry to help re-orient these institutions to be more customer-centric in their activities by setting service quality delivery targets. The managers of public institutions signed the "NEW CHARTER"(Boahene, 2008), which was an agreement whose main objective was to ensure monitoring of performance to set targets. The specific objectives of the research

were to; find out whether National Service Personnel are satisfied with the service rendered by the scheme and to determine the factors that influence National Service Personnel satisfaction. Decades ago, people were not concerned about the services of organizations within the service sector in Ghana. Currently, according to the Ghana Statistical Service (2013), the service sector contributes 50.6% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the Ghanaian economy. So, in the face of increased competition coupled with rising expectations from customers who are more aware of what they need and what is available in terms of service alternatives pragmatic efforts are required to improve service quality.

The service sector of Ghana's economy is experiencing several changes which require using the concept of service quality. According to Bharadwaj, Varadarajan, and Fahy (1993) and Shank and Govindarajan (1994) as companies which render services look for ways of getting competitive advantage, service quality is a valid choice to obtain a competitive positional advantage. Both an intrinsic culture and an extrinsic reputation are often developed by organizations with a service quality orientation. These skills are more sustainable as compared to those that are simply subject to replacement or imitation (Barney, 1991).This section is followed by a review of related literature on service quality and public institutions. The data and the methodology used in the study are presented under section three (3). Presentation of results, discussions and conclusions follows respectively.

LITERATURE REVIEW

<u>Service Quality</u>

Service quality has attained considerable attention and arguments in research literature due to the complexity in defining it as it is a multidimensional concept (Jamal & Naser, 2002). Everyone has a different meaning to it (Bennington & Cummane, 1998). Because service is conceptual (Sureshchandar, Rajendran & Anantharaman, 2002), it is not easy for service providers to give explanation and for customers to appraise (Edvardsson et al, 1994). Diverse definitions of service quality are accepted under different circumstances since there is no global definition of quality but for some time now quality has been the focus (Reeves & Bednar, 1994). Bennington and Cummane (1998),defined quality differently as excellence, conformance to requirement (Crosby, 1979), value (Abbott, 1955), fitness for use (Juran, 1974), conformance to specification (Gilmore, 1974), meeting and going beyond customers' expectations (Gronroos, 1985 as cited in Parasuraman et al,. 1988) and loss avoidance (Ross, 1989).

According to Zeithaml (1987),while the quality of products are tangible and can be evaluated by dispassionate indicators such as durability, features and performance, service quality is intangible and it is defined in terms of perception, attitude and subjectivity. Service quality is a focused assessment of the customer's perception of particular dimensions of service: tangibles, assurance, reliability, empathy, responsiveness. Price, quality of product, service quality, situational factors and personal factors are perceptions that influence satisfaction (Zeithaml & Bitner 2003). Customer satisfaction can offer numerous benefits such as forming a recommendation by word of mouth which can be of great importance to the organization, providing an excellent reason for buying and developing of customer loyalty and the relationship between company and customers becomes harmonious (Tjiptono, 1997).

As a result, it is necessary to consider quality issues in the sector so as to further increase productivity within the sector. Quality has turned out to be a very significant factor for successful companies because it is believed that the competitiveness and long term profitability of both service and manufacturing organizations are determined by quality. Allowing firms to more and more distance themselves from competition, Wiley (1991) stated that quality has also been included as a way by which organizations may improve upon their differentiation strategies. For instance, quality and customer service skills were identified by Bharadwaj, Varadarajan, and Fahy (1993) as possible sources of competitive gain. They maintain in their contingency model that, to sustain competitive advantage, service quality delivering can

help sustain an organization's competitive position just as in cost synergies, organizational expertise, and brand equity do.

According to Owanko, (1999) several researchers defined quality to mean value for money, fitness for a purpose, and actions leading to expected standard or to the achievement of set goals. Gronroos (1984) considered service quality from two distinct perspectives. These are technical and functional service qualities. The technical quality of service quality refers to the basis of technical accuracy and procedures. It is explained, in this situation, on the basis of the technical accuracy of operational procedures. Functional service quality on the other hand looks at quality from customer point of view since they may lack the technical expertise to assess the service quality of the organization. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) also explained that they rely on "how" service is delivered and qualities such as responsiveness, reliability, empathy (which is related with the service encounter) happen to be important since it may not be easy for the customer to measure the technical quality. In discussing service quality, it is believed that there is a direct relationship between service quality and satisfaction. Consumers will always feel satisfied with a superior quality service. According to Parasuraman et al (1988), a service quality arises when expectations are met or exceeded and a service gap occurs when expectations fall below perception or expectations are not met. Whenever customer's expectations are met or exceeded, they become satisfied and consider the service to be of high quality.

Service Quality Dimensions

Companies desire to get loyal customers in order to ensure continuous purchases of product or services and in turn increasing their maximum revenue. The five service quality dimensions; The tangible dimension takes into account the appearance of the physical surrounding (including personnel, physical environment and facilities, communication materials and equipment). The evidence of care and attention of a service provider is depicted by the condition of the physical surrounding (Fitzsimmons & Fitzsimmons, 2001). The other aspect of the tangible dimension of service quality is about creating first hand impressions. It is the desire of every company that all its customers get a unique positive impression so that they would never forget first-hand impression which would possibly make them come back in the future. Organizations use the tangibles to express their image and signal quality (Zeithaml et al., 2006).

This dimension is how the firm cares and offers individualized attention to its consumers to make them feel exceptionally appreciated and special (Chase et al, 2001). The features of empathy include; effort to understand the consumer's needs sensitivity and approachability (Fitzsimmons & Fitzsimmons, 2001). When customers like the National Service Personnel feel they get quality and individualized attention, it is more likely that they will go back to the organization and do business again there. One example is the ability of the staff of the scheme to make a service person who has misplaced their identity card or posting letter his/her own trouble and find ways of resolving it.

Reliability is a service quality dimension which refers to how a company consistently performs the service accurately and dependably. Customers expect reliable service performance and this is seen when the service is completed on time without any errors in a similar way every time. Service reliability according to Berry *et al.* (1990) is the service "core" to the majority of consumers and so managers ought to make sure they use every chance they get to present an attitude of "do-it-right-first". Reliability issues are supposed to be incorporated in companies' mission statements. Companies must teach the staff the significance of reliability during training programs, set reliability standards, appoint reliability committee to study particular services and to find ways to enhance reliability, evaluate error rates and compensation error-free service. Delivering service by showing how reliability and consistency are portrayed can take two paths. First, service is produced by stressing the dependability of the process and technological superiority – a high tech approach. Although technological drivers like the web technology, digital, satellite and advances in telecommunications increase the tradability of services (Braga, 1995) and

expedite the globalization (Lovelock, 1999), gaps still exist in the level of technological growth between developing and developed countries. For example, timely receipt of their national service allowance each month is important to the service personnel.

This dimension symbolizes the alacrity of the firm to assist their customers by providing them with a fast, good and quality service. Customers kept waiting for no reason generates negative perception of service quality which is not necessary. If failure occurs during service delivery, the ability of the firm to recover rapidly with professionalism can generate a perception of quality which is very positive (Fitzsimmons & Fitzsimmons, 2001). Many service firms are concerned about how long their queues are since the waiting time of customers will have a negative influence on customer's perception of service. Both partners value time; the customer and the firm. In others words, when waiting time is very lengthy, service firms may lose transactions; and on the other, customers regard waiting time as a sacrifice to receive the service. This is one of the reasons why several service customer-oriented firms position themselves to offer a time advantage to customers. They recognize the essential role of time (Lovelock and Gummesson, 2004). Waiting time has four features namely: objective (The length of time a customer will have to wait before he/she is served is referred to as Objective waiting time (Davis and Vollman, 1990; Taylor, 1994). This is normally measured by customers with a stop watch); subjective (The subjective waiting time is the consumers' guesstimate of time waited.

Researchers suggest that this aspect is calculated by way of the perceived waiting time, Hui and Tse, 1996; Pruyn and Smidts, 1998). Obviously, the estimated time depends on objectively calculated elapsed time, Hornick, 1984; Antonides et al., 2002); affective (The affective aspect entails emotional responses to waiting including as happiness, irritation, pleasure, frustration, boredom, stress, etc (Taylor, 1994; Hui and Tse, 1996; Pruyn and Smidts, 1998); and cognitive (The cognitive aspect of the waiting time is the customers' evaluation of the wait whether it being reasonable, acceptable and tolerable (Durrande-Moreau, 1999) and also considering the wait to be short as opposed to long (Pruyn and Smidts, 1998). The affective and cognitive feature forms the appraisal of the wait (Pruyn and Smidts, 1998).Delaying customers has negative influence on the whole service assessment (Taylor, 1994; Katz, Larson, & Larson, 1991; Hui and Tse, 1996); and more specifically, how satisfied they are with the service (Pruyn and Smidts, 1998). In addition, customers' wrath and their assessment of how punctual the service is have an effect on the whole service performance (Taylor, 1994). Likewise, Hui and Tse (1996) discovered that service assessment is affected by the affective response to the wait. Furthermore, Pruyn and Smidts (1998) show that both the affective and cognitive dimensions' appraisal of wait affect the service satisfaction positively. Another element of responsiveness is customer complaint handling and customers switch service providers more possibly because their problems are not resolved satisfactorily (Hart et al., 1990).

If a Service Personnel member complains, the response of the Secretariat can change the state of the Service person from dissatisfaction to satisfaction. Anecdotal evidence recommends that when the service provider resolves the problem by accepting responsibility the customers become "bonded" to the company (Hart *et al.*, 1990). When a Service person complains, they offer the Secretariat the opportunity to resolve the problem and interestingly, if the Secretariat recovers successfully, it brings about loyalty and profits to the company (Fornell and Wernerfelt, 1987). Hence, handling customer's complaint is capable of having influence on customer retention and satisfaction.

The courtesy and knowledge of the staff of an organization and the ability to convey confidence and trust is known as assurance. The assurance dimension consist of competence to carry out the service, communicating effectively with the customers, politeness and respect for the customers, and the character of the service provider who has the customer's best interests at heart(Fitzsimmons & Fitzsimmons, 2001).In relationship marketing assurance is used to describe a business relationship which determines the level to which each party feels they can rely on the truthfulness of the promise offered by the other

party(Callaghan et al., 1995). This definition is broadly accepted as the basis for relationships (Sullivan and Peterson, 1982; Crosby et al., 1990; Andaleeb, 1992; Houston et al., 1992; Moorman et al., 1992). According to Moorman et al.*,* (1992)and Martin & Sohi (1993), it has been considered as a very important component of business relationships.

Gronroos (1990), documented this in a form of an exchange relationship and Morgan and Hunt, (1994) identified it as a key construct in modeling relationship marketing. The components of these three dimensions, that is, reciprocity, empathy and bonding have been to trust and this leads to cooperation (Anderson and Narus, 1990; Morgan and Hunt, 1994), bargaining (Schurr and Ozanne, 1985) and communication (Bialaszewski and Giallourakis, 1985; Anderson and Narus, 1990; Mohr and Nevin, 1990). In general, it appears that, if there is high level of trust between the supplier and customer, there is a greater possibility of continued relationship or long-term existence (Martin and Sohi, 1993). Relationships can only exist between persons or networks of individuals since it requires strong element of interpersonal obligation rather than between organized corporate groups (Eisenstadt and Roniger, 1984). The concept of trust can be proposed as not coming from system trust but rather primarily from personal trust. Trust in this context refers to personal trust which is the foundation of person-to-person and supplier-customer relationships. Trust has been conceptualized by Morgan and Hunt (1994) to exist when one party/person has confidence in the integrity and reliability of the other partner. In truth, trust could be seen at the firm level (Moorman et al., 1993) or at the level of individuals (Rotter, 1967). Additionally, trust could also be considered as "trust in the service itself" when it is conceptualized as a service quality dimension (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1985, 1988).

Measuring Service Quality using SERVQUAL Model

It has been suggested by Lewis (1987) that what can be measured is the thoughts/perceptions. Thus, the level of satisfaction can be determined by finding the difference between perceptions and expectations. The idea is comparable to the service quality model propounded by Parasuraman et al (1985). They identified five (5) gaps issues as a potential influences on a customer's evaluation of service quality. These are; Gap 1 refers to the gap between National Service Personnel (customer) expectations and National Service Secretariat's (management) perceptions of those expectations; Gap 2 refers to the gap between National Service Secretariat's perception of what the National Service Personnel wants and specifications of service quality; the difference between service delivered and service quality specifications is denoted by Gap 3; Gap 4 refers to the gap between service delivery by the National Service Secretariat and what the Secretariat promises to the National Service Personnel (customer) through external communication; the gap between National Service Personnel (customers') service expectations and their perceptions of service performance denotes Gap 5.A study by Zeithaml and Bitner (2003) suggests that, to achieve service quality, management, employers and customers' expectations and perceptions gaps must be well managed. In this case Gap 5 is the most relevant depicting customers' perception of actual service performed and the customers' expectation of the service. Thus the National Service Secretariat must lessen the customer gap in order to achieve quality service. However, the Secretariat cannot achieve this without the contribution of the other four (4) gaps because they all, directly or indirectly, may hinder the delivery of quality service. This calls for pragmatic efforts to ensure that the expectations of National Service Personnel of service performance are met. Following this gap model was the design of the SERVQUAL instrument by Parasuraman et al. (1985) to examine and measure the gaps between customers' perceptions and expectations of service quality. They further defined five (5) quality dimensions namely; tangibles, empathy, reliability, responsiveness, assurance (all defined above). Mathematically, the instrument proposes the following equation; $Q=P - E$. Thus, the perception score minus expectation score of National Service Persons indicates the service quality level.

Service Quality in the Public Sector

Definition of service quality in the public sector has a wider scope than the private sector (Wisniewski, 2001). This is because public sector institutions are answerable and liable to deliver quality service to the citizens and communities in a country as well as customers and other users of the service users. Researchers on service quality in the public sector include Black, Briggs and Keogh, (2001), Wisniewski and Donnelly, (1996), Brysland and Curry, (2001), Donnelly, Kerr, Rimmer and Shiu, (2006), Williams, Staughton and Saunders, (1999). Evidence from literature suggests a strong support for the use of the SERVQUAL model to measure service quality in the public sector (Brysland and Curry,2001).Service provision in the public sector is very complex (Gowan et al., 2001). Apart from meeting the expressed needs of customers, employees will have to allocate resources, find unexpressed needs, set priorities and publicly justify and account for what has been done.

Overview of National Service Scheme

Ghana, like most African countries, recognized immediately after the attainment of political independence in 1957, the urgent need for youth mobilization. The indispensable role of the youth in the present and future circumstance of the nation has been the overriding consideration and motivating force behind all attempts at youth mobilization in the country. On 7th September, 1973, the National Redemption Council Decree 208 was passed. This Decree brought to being the Ghana National Service Scheme. This perspective of the National Service Scheme was initiated by an Act of Parliament. The Act 426 of 1980was enforced in 1982 by the Provisional National Defense Council. The Decree was in response to the ever increasing need for vacancies in government ministries, educational institutions and urban oriented commercial and industrial concerns to be filled with well-trained manpower. With the passage of time, a new dimension and perspective were given to the scheme to enable it meet the changing trends in the country.

The people who are required by law to do national service are Ghanaian students who graduate from accredited tertiary institutions and it is for a period of one year. The National Service Secretariat (NSS) has been given the constitutional mandate to provide the national service structure and formulate policies. Tens of thousands of students graduate every year and are posted to different sectors as National Service Personnel. Some of the sectors where personnel are posted are the private sector, education, health, ministries, department and agencies. In 2009 – 2010 service year, about sixty seven thousand (67,000) personnel were posted while in the 2010 – 2011 service year, fifty thousand and sixty nine (50,069) personnel were posted. Between sixty (60) and seventy (70) percent of the personnel are posted to augment the effort of teachers in our various public schools and the rest are distributed among the other sectors. Regardless of the sponsorship received by a student or the country in which the tertiary programme was completed the individual must enroll and complete one year National Service. The rules and regulations of the hosting organization govern the conduct of the personnel. In cases where the organization's rules conflict with that of the National Service Scheme, the former is ignored. However, in a situation where an institution sponsors a student to pursue a programme in the tertiary institution, the graduate is posted back or returns to their mother organizations. All benefits which the service personnel are due shall not be given to them till the personnel complete their service.

The National Service Scheme of Ghana, since its inception in 1973, has endeavoured through several means to improve the quality of service delivery. These means include pre-service and post-service activities. Prior to the pre-service orientation, a list of all final year students of the accredited institutions are submitted to the National Service Office and Pin Numbers are provided to all prospective National Service Personnel through their tertiary institutions. During the pre-service orientation, both the user agencies and the personnel are made aware of their roles. The personnel are enlightened on National Service; when and how it started, what it does, the need for the personnel to do the service which is

associated to its benefits. The personnel are also taught how to use the pin numbers to enroll on the net. Knowing the various qualifications or backgrounds available, both private and public organizations are asked to bring their requests for the number of National Service Personnel they may need with their respective backgrounds but with no specific names of service personnel attached. Based on the vacancies declared by the various organizations or institutions, personnel are posted to institutions and departments in the district, municipal and metropolitan assemblies across the nation. Postings of personnel are released on the net making it easier for them to assess it anywhere in the country unlike the manual type where postings were assessed only at the regional offices before registration at the region in which they are posted to.

Registration process takes place after the postings are released on the net. Personnel assess postings using their NSS Number. During the registration, pictures are taken and ID cards are produced for them. The final registration of personnel takes place at the district after the endorsement by Heads of Departments or institutions at their place of posting. Orientation is organized for the personnel after the registration when they have reported and settled at their various places of posting in the district/region. The orientation is in two (2) phases. The first is done by National Service Secretariat where the District Chief Executive welcomes and thanks them for accepting posting to the district. The education director, the health director, Agric director and the national service director will also address the personnel. The district director of National Service Secretariat will elaborate the calendar for the service year and also go through the payment system with them. The Second phase of orientation is done at their various places of posting.

Monitoring of service personnel is done before the first payment. This is done to find out whether the National Service Secretariat was able to satisfy their user agencies with regards to the request made and check on the personnel at post; accommodation and their place of posting. Service personnel are paid a monthly allowance which is not taxable. The Ministry of Finance always determines the amount to be paid. This approved amount is paid to the personnel throughout the service period. Payment of this allowance is done based on the period the service personnel reports for duty at his/her designated post. However, corporations, statutory boards or churches or quasi-church organizations who accept service personnel in their organizations will be responsible for the payment of the monthly allowance. The service persons enjoy a month's annual terminal leave throughout the month of August each year. A service person shall be given a National Service Certificate after the successful completion of the service. Their supervisors or employers shall assess the service personnel during the one year of service after which the personnel would give their comment and sign. This would then be forwarded to the Regional Director by the end of May each year.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The population for the study was made up of 2012/2013 year group of graduated tertiary students (National Service Persons). All National Service Personnel visit the secretariat every month for their allowance. The researchers made arrangements with the secretariat to administer the questionnaires during one of such monthly visits. A total of three hundred and twelve (312) National Service Persons were targeted for the study. However, out of three hundred and twelve (312) questionnaires distributed, 262 were received and only two hundred and thirty four (234) were eligible for analysis. This represents a response rate of 75%. This is above the average response rate postulated by Baruch (1999, p. 429). Both primary data was used in this study. Primary data was collected using structured questionnaires which were filled out by the respondents. The study adopted the SERVQUAL questionnaire instrument by Parasuraman et al., (1985).The gap model and its accompanying service quality dimensions offered by Parasuraman et al., (1985) were adopted and used in the study. In the model, quality of service is a function of both expectations and perception. This can be modeled as:

$$SQ = \sum_{i=1}^{k}(P_{ij} - E_{ij})$$

(1)

Where:

SQ   = Overall service quality;
k   = number of attributes.
P_{ij} = Performance perception of stimulus i with respect to attribute j.
E_{ij} = Service quality expectation for attribute j that is the relevant norm for stimulus i.

By this model the gap score for each statement was calculated and totaled to compute the gap score for each service quality dimension. Descriptive statistical elements including frequency tables and charts were used to show the results. The compilation, editing and computation of the responses from the questionnaire enabled objective comment on the results. This proved essential in making suitable and objective recommendations on the findings.

RESULTS

Demographic Profile of Respondents

In assessing the satisfaction and perceived service quality of the National Service Secretariat, demographic characteristics such as age, gender, and educational level play a crucial role. They are needed to be able to determine how they influence satisfaction of national service personnel. The detailed finding on respondents' demographic data and background characteristics are shown in Table 1. The age of the respondents (see Table 1) indicated that the age range varied between 18-30 (86.4 per cent), 31-40 (13.2 per cent), and 41-50 (0.4 per cent). 32.5 percent of the respondents employed in the study were females whilst the remaining 67.5percent were males. All the respondents were tertiary graduates with the highest from university constituting 79.06 percent followed by Polytechnics and Post graduates with 20.51 and 0.43 percent respectively. These may have very significant implications on how respondents that is National Service Personnel perceive satisfaction of the service delivery.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Independent Variable	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Age		
18-30	202	86.32
31-40	31	13.25
41-50	1	0.43
Gender		
Male	158	67.50
Female	76	32.50
Educational Level		
Polytechnic	48	20.51
University	185	79.06
Postgraduate	1	0.43
Place of Posting		
Education	174	74.36
Health	23	9.83
Assembly and Other Department	37	15.81

This Table presents demographic characteristics and postings of personnel.

Factors Influencing Service Personnel Satisfaction

One of the objectives of this study was to determine the factors that influence the satisfaction of National Service Personnel in Ghana. This objective was achieved by using Principal Component Analysis based on Oblimin rotation method with Kaiser Normalization. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was found to be 0.872 and Bartlett's test of sphericity was also found to be significant ($p < 0.001$). The result show that factors influencing National Service Personnel's satisfaction in Ghana about service rendered by National Service Secretariat were extracted to three components (see Table 2) Factors under Component One were mainly items from three dimensions of service quality namely empathy, assurance and responsiveness as depicted on Table 2. Considering the empathy dimension, factors that accounted for personnel's satisfaction were the ability of staff to refrain from acting busy or being rude when personnel ask questions; the ability of the National Service Scheme staff to keep personnel informed about when service would be performed; and their capability to understand the specific needs of service personnel. National Service Personnel felt that their satisfaction level about the service delivery would probably go high when they are treated with utmost care and given individualized attention. The major determinants of clients' satisfaction and quality of care which has been established by many studies are friendliness, care, courtesy and respectful attitudes of employees (Morgan, Fenwick, McKenzie, and Wolfe, 1998; Aldana, Piechulek, and Al-Sabir, 2001).

Table 2: Pattern Matrix

Pattern Matrix[a]

	Component		
	1	**2**	**3**
tan6		0.819	
tan7		0.562	
tan8		0.611	
tan9		0.719	
rel10			
rel11			
rel12			
emp13			
emp14	0.651		
emp15	0.844		
emp16	0.835		
ass17	0.646		
ass18	0.577		
ass19	0.570		
res20	0.623		
res21	0.639		
res22			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization. This Table depicts the results of the principal component analysis which was used to determine the factors that influence the satisfaction of the national service personnel. The first column indicates the service quality dimensions. Thus tangibility (tan), reliability (rel), empathy (emp), assurance (ass) and responsiveness (res).

Further, the ability to inform personnel when service would be delivered supports the study by Harding (2000). He reported that effective communication/interpersonal relationship and providing sufficient information are significant determinants of satisfaction to service delivery. According to the Service Personnel, whenever information about service delivery was passed on to them, they felt that their needs and expectations were strongly understood by the secretariat. Avortri et al., (2011) also identified the feeling of being treated with care and respect as a key predictor of satisfaction. This requires a pragmatic effort by the management of the secretariat to develop policies and strategies that would seek to ensure that these factors are incorporated in the daily operations of the National Service Scheme since their presence would have a positive influence on service delivery.

The finding further indicated that factors under the assurance dimension that contribute to personnel satisfaction were, the feeling of being secured by service personnel whenever they enter the National Service Secretariat and use their facility; the ability of the staff to have the knowledge to answer service personnel question; and the availability of everything needed to provide quality service. Fitzsimmons (2011), explained that assurance is the knowledge and courtesy of the staff of an organization and the ability to convey trust and confidence to the customers. It comprises competence to carry out the service, effective communication with the customer, politeness and respect for the customer and the general attitude that the server has the customer's best interests at heart. He advanced an argument that for clients to be satisfied with service rendered, the service provider should be able to convey trust and confidence to the customer. According to service personnel, their level of satisfaction is likely to go high when staff demonstrates the knowledge and ability to render the required or said service. This suggests that management should commit themselves to ensuring that these factors are considered critically so as to help satisfy service personnel.

The finding again pointed out that factors which contribute significantly to personnel satisfaction under component one came from responsiveness. These factors were, the willingness of National Service Scheme staff to answer personnel questions and the ability of staff to respond to the needs of personnel in such a way that personnel would not feel that they are wasting the staff's time. Fitzsimmons (2011) discussed responsiveness asthe willingness of an organization to assist their consumers by serving them with a fast, good and quality service. He asserts that when customers are kept waiting especially for no obvious reason, it brings about unnecessary bad perceptions of quality. This means that national service personnel would not be satisfied with service delivery if it is not delivered promptly. He continued to explain that the ability to recover quickly with professionalism when a service failure arises can bring about very good perceptions of quality. Atinga, Abekah-Nkrumah, and Domfeh (2011) conducted a study in the healthcare industry and identified that waiting time is a significant factor in predicting the satisfaction of patients with quality of healthcare delivery. This means that service delivery with no or little waiting time would positively affect patients' satisfaction. These call for the secretariat to consider and reengineer its operations to ensure that these factors are managed to meet the satisfaction of service personnel.

Factors contributing significantly to personnel's satisfaction about service delivery of NSS extracted under Component Two were mainly from the tangibility dimension. These factors were: the presence of spacious office for convenient conduct of business; the ability to locate the office of the secretariat with ease; the attractiveness and cleanliness of the secretariat at all times; and the availability of up-to-date equipment. According to service personnel, the secretariat lacks space at the office which often results in inconveniences anytime it became necessary for all personnel to meet at the office. These inconveniences consequently lead to their dissatisfaction about services rendered by the secretariat. The result further pointed out that the secretariat lacks up-to-date equipment such as a photocopier which in most cases hampers the operations of the secretariat forcing service personnel to walk long distances in search of photocopiers for copies of their documents to be made whenever the need arose. This negatively affects personnel's satisfaction and perceived service quality of the secretariat. The attractiveness and cleanliness of any facility create a first impression about the quality of service rendered. For that matter, service personnel are of the view that their decision about the quality of service rendered by the secretariat is influenced by the attractiveness and cleanliness of the secretariat. This finding confirmed previous studies conducted in the healthcare industry (Hardy, West and Hill, 1996; Hair, 1998) that one of the strong factors influencing patient satisfaction with the quality of healthcare delivery turned out to be the cleanliness of the hospital surroundings.

Gap Score Analysis for Tangibility

Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry (1990) stated that tangibility represents the appearance of physical facilities, personnel, equipment and communication material and the state of the physical environment. Tangibility falls in the functional quality. The results showed that the expectation and perception scores for tangibility were 16.30 and 11.23 respectively (see Table 3). The difference resulted in a negative score of -5.07. The negative score of the dimension stemmed from the fact that the secretariat lacks spacious offices for the smooth conduct of business; there is difficulty in locating the office of the Secretariat; and also, the secretariat lacks up-to-date equipment such as printers and photocopiers as depicted on Table 3 below. However, the score for cleanliness was positive suggesting the premises of the secretariat and the staffs are very clean. These call for management of the scheme to find ways of improving these conditions to help satisfy service personnel.

Table 3: Gap Score for Tangibility

Service Quality Item	Expectation Score	Perception Score	Gap Score
Spacious and attractive secretariat for smooth conduct of business	4.47	2.07	-2.40
Easy location of the National Service Secretariat	4.44	3.00	-1.44
Attractive and clean environment of the secretariat	2.92	3.56	0.64
Up-to-date equipment of the secretariat	4.47	2.60	-1.88
Total Score	**16.30**	**11.23**	**-5.07**

This Table indicates the gap score report for tangibility. This first column presents the quality items and the last column presents the gap score. That is the difference between expectation score (column two) and perception score (column three).

Gap Score Analysis for Reliability

The result revealed that service personnel's expectations as far as reliability was concerned were not met. Their total expectation and perception scores were 12.98 and 10.90 respectively resulting in a negative overall score of -2.08 for reliability. This finding suggests that the National Service Secretariat was not reliable in service delivery. According to the result (see Table 4), the secretariat could not deliver prompt service which led to time wasting and long queues and waiting time. Also, the secretariat works from 8:00 am to 5:00pm but according to service personnel, service delivery starts at around 9:30am and closes before 5:00pm which is a clear sign of not being reliable. Zeithaml, et al (1990) state that "consumers consider reliability to be one of the most significant dimension in assessing service quality. Consumers require service providers to look very good, be responsive, be knowledgeable and nice and be empathetic. Above all, customers require that service providers perform the services they assured to carry out precisely and dependably". For this reason it is imperative for management of the secretariat to put measures in place to ensure that these issues are addressed to help improve service delivery process of the secretariat.

Table 4: Gap Score for Reliability

Service Quality Item	Expectation Score	Perception Score	Gap Score
Prompt service delivery without wasting time	4.33	3.71	-0.62
Quality service delivery at all time	4.32	3.72	-0.60
Working hour between 8:30am and 5:00pm	4.33	3.47	-0.86
Total score	**12.98**	**10.90**	**-2.08**

This Table indicates the gap score report for reliability. This first column presents the quality items and the last column presents the gap score. That is the difference between expectation score (column two) and perception score (column three).

Gap Score Analysis for Empathy

Considering the empathy dimension, service personnel's expectations were exceeded and for that matter they were satisfied. The dimension recorded expectation and perception scores of 16.53 and 17.27

respectively which consequently led to an overall positive gap score of 0.74 depicting high level of service personnel's satisfaction. From Table 5, it is clear that service personnel expectations were met due to the fact that they felt the scheme had their interest at heart and therefore did inform them when service will be performed. Also the staff of the secretariat never acted busy or rudely when service personnel asked questions. This finding supports the study conducted by Peprah (2013) which revealed that the rudeness of nurses and other staff, the ability of the hospital to provide individualized attention to the aged and physically challenged, understanding the specific needs of patients, and keeping patients informed about when service would be performed were some of the key factors under empathy dimension that determined patients' satisfaction. It is therefore necessary that the National Service Scheme increases its efforts in enhancing the empathy aspects of the service delivery since it has great influence on the satisfaction of service personnel.

Table 5: Gap Score for Empathy

Service Quality Item	Expectation Score	Perception Score	Gap Score
National Service Personnel interest at heart by the scheme	4.01	4.46	0.45
The staff acting busy or rude when service personnel ask questions	4.06	4.49	0.43
Informing service personnel of when service will be performed	4.08	4.34	0.26
The staff of the scheme understanding the specific needs of the service personnel	4.38	3.98	-0.40
Total score	**16.53**	**17.27**	**0.74**

This Table indicates the gap score report for empathy. This first column presents the quality items and the last column presents the gap score. That is the difference between expectation score (column two) and perception score (column three).

Gap Score Analysis for Assurance

Another interesting finding of the study was that assurance which is explained by Parasuraman et al., (1988) as the knowledge and courtesy of the staff of an organization and the ability to convey trust and confidence had a positive gap score of 0.65 as shown in Table 6. This means that the service personnel's expectations were generally exceeded resulting in high level of satisfaction. This finding agrees with the study of Sultana and Rana (2010) which found out that the assurance gap between expectation and perception of the students was positive meaning that the students' expectations on assurance was being fulfilled.

Table 6: Gap Score for Assurance

Service Quality Item	Expectation Score	Perception Score	Gap Score
The National Service Personnel feel secured to enter the secretariat and use its facility	3.36	3.93	0.57
The knowledge of the staff to answer service personnel questions	4.37	4.00	-0.37
The staff had everything to provide quality service	3.08	3.53	0.45
Total score	**10.81**	**11.46**	**0.65**

This Table indicates the gap score report for assurance. This first column presents the quality items and the last column presents the gap score. That is the difference between expectation score (column two) and perception score (column three).

Gap Score Analysis for Responsiveness

According to Zeithaml, et al (1990) responsiveness is concerned with the extent that the employees are ready to provide service. This dimension is about providing information about the service, giving prompt service, employee's willingness to help the consumers, that is, the employees are on no account too busy to respond to the needs of their customers in this case National Service Personnel. From Table 7, service personnel's overall expectation for responsiveness was 12.49. At the same time, their overall perception about this dimension is 12.98. The difference between expectation and perception on this dimension is 0.49, which shows that the National Service Secretariat is fulfilling their expectation on readiness and willingness to provide service. The service personnel were satisfied with the quality described in this dimension.

Table 7: Gap Score for Responsiveness

Service Quality Item	Expectation Score	Perception Score	Gap Score
The willingness of the staff to answer service personnel questions	4.02	4.44	0.42
The staff make me feel I'm not wasting their time	4.00	4.45	0.45
The staff is willing to help with a sincere interest	4.47	4.09	-0.38
Total score	**12.49**	**12.98**	**0.49**

This Table indicates the gap score report for responsiveness. This first column presents the quality items and the last column presents the gap score. That is the difference between expectation score (column two) and perception score (column three).

DISCUSSIONS

This objective was achieved by making use of the service quality gap model developed by Parasuraman et al., (1985) which states that quality of service is a function of both perception and expectations. Service personnel's satisfaction was assessed on the basis of service quality dimensions. The study found that service personnel's expectations were exceeded in terms of empathy, assurance and responsiveness of the secretariat. They were satisfied with the service delivery of the secretariat as far as these dimensions are concerned. On the other hand, the result further showed that service personnel were not satisfied with tangibility and reliability dimensions as these dimensions obtained negative gap scores. Factors influencing service personnel's satisfaction were determined using Principal Component Analysis based on Oblimin rotation method with Kaiser Normalization. From the analysis factors which contribute significantly to service personnel's satisfaction were the ability of staff to refrain from acting busy or being rude when personnel ask questions, the ability of the NSS staff to keep personnel informed about when service would be performed, and the capability to understand the specific needs of service personnel. Others include the feeling of being secure by service personnel whenever they enter the NSS office and use their facility, the ability of the staff to have the knowledge to answer service personnel questions, and the availability of everything needed to provide quality service. The willingness of NSS staff to answer personnel questions and the ability of staff to respond to the needs of personnel in such a way that personnel would not feel that they were wasting the staff's time were also extracted as factors influencing service personnel's satisfaction. Finally, other factors include the presence of spacious office for convenient conduct of business, the ability to locate the office of the secretariat with ease, the attractiveness and cleanliness of the secretariat at all times, and the availability of up-to-date equipment.

CONCLUSIONS

The objective of the study was achieved by making use of the service quality gap model developed by Parasuraman et al., (1985). Service personnel's satisfaction was assessed on the basis of service quality dimensions. The study found out service personnel's expectations were exceeded in terms of empathy, assurance and responsiveness of the secretariat. The personnel were satisfied with the service delivery of the secretariat as far as these dimensions are concerned. On the other hand, the result further showed that service personnel were not satisfied with tangibility and reliability dimensions as these dimensions obtained negative gap scores. From the Factor Analysis, factors which contribute significantly to service personnel's satisfaction include the ability of NSS staff to refrain from acting busy or being rude when personnel ask questions, the ability of the NSS staff to keep personnel informed about when service will be performed, and the capability to understand the specific needs of service personnel. Others include the feeling of being secure by service personnel whenever they enter the NSS office and use their facilities, the ability of the staff to have the knowledge to answer service personnel question, and the availability of everything needed to provide quality service. It is therefore important that the National Service Scheme considers all the necessary strategies to improve on the strengths and reengineer its service delivery to help satisfy its clients. This research has certain limitations as in other research works. The study focused on only National Service Personnel. Views of user agencies' could not be captured; therefore in future

researchers should consider them. Also the research could be expanded to cover and compare other public and private institutions in Ghana.

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