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Public service guarantees

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Chapter 5.

An implementation framework for public service guarantees: Results of a concept mapping study[13]

5.1. Introduction

Since the 1980s, New Public Management (NPM) has dominated the reform agenda of many countries. The aim of NPM is to transform organisational cultures and systems to maximise organisational efficiency and competitive success. Through marketisation and competition, customers as the users of public services are placed at the centre of their service relationship with public services (Newman, 2011). In order to achieve this goal, many new concepts have been used, one of these being the service guarantee. The use of this concept started with the introduction of the Citizen's Charter in the UK in 1991, a centrally imposed guarantee framework. The objectives of public service guarantees are to enhance customer satisfaction with the quality of public service delivery and to encourage the more effective use of taxpayers' money (Drewry, 2005). Mechanisms used to realise these aims include empowering customers and creating accountability for performance. Service guarantees are intended to empower customers and to change the culture of public service delivery so as to focus more on the needs of customers (McGuire, 2002). However, many scholars are sceptical of this empowerment mechanism and of the shift of power towards customers (e.g. Bowerman, 1995; Connoly *et al.*, 1994; Falconer and Ross, 1999; Tritter, 1994).

The second mechanism involves accountability for performance. Service guarantees, it is argued, can help central governments impose discipline on public services (Drewry, 2005) by transforming the promises in the guarantee into performance indicators. Central governments can then use these performance indicators to audit the performance of public services, so facilitating comparisons between organisations (Bowerman, 1995), to constrain public services to delivering service quality in conformance with targets and to invoke penalty clauses in contracts. This enables governments to steer from a distance at relatively low costs (Drewry, 2005; Hughes and Griffiths, 1999).

Since the introduction of the Citizen's Charter in the UK, many countries with a NPM reform agenda have adopted service guarantees (Drewry, 2005; Haque, 2005; McGuire, 2002; Ohemeng, 2010; Torres, 2005; Van de Walle *et al.*, 2005). In addition to the term 'public service guarantee' they use various names such as 'service charter', 'public service charter', 'consumer's charter', 'citizens charter', 'client charter', 'customer service plan', 'service pledge' and 'performance pledge'. Reasons for introducing service guarantees vary widely, and include a desire to improve performance, to justify government performance and in response to pressure from aid donors (Drewry, 2005). In addition, the approach used in

implementing service guarantees differs from country to country. Countries such as the UK, Belgium and France have used a top-down approach, imposing a central guarantee framework that emphasises similar standards across various services. In contrast countries such as Australia, Italy, Spain, the USA and the Netherlands have taken a bottom-up approach (Haque, 2005). This divergence has been explained by national policymaking traditions (Clifton *et al.*, 2005) and local conditions (McGuire, 2002).

In 2004, the Dutch government asked all governmental organisations that had frequent contacts with the public to draft service guarantees in consultation with the people who used their services. The deadline was originally set for 2008, but later extended to 2011. The reason given by the Dutch government for stimulating the introduction of service guarantees was to improve the transparency and quality of public services. The government adopted a bottom-up approach by allowing the public organisations to develop their own service guarantees, while limiting its own role to facilitating their development. As such, there are no strict guidelines for the content of these Dutch service guarantees but they generally consist of a number of concrete promises. By 2010, a total of 211 service guarantees had been published on the Burgerlink website (www.burgerlink.nl). Burgerlink was a government organisation established to facilitate the implementation of service guarantees in the Netherlands and it was disbanded in 2011 with the ending of the government programme. Ministries and KING, the quality institute of the Dutch Association of Municipalities, continue to stimulate the use of service guarantees in the Netherlands. Municipalities form the largest group of public organisations that have adopted public service guarantees, with one in three Dutch municipalities now having a service guarantee. The use and context of service guarantees in the Netherlands are the focus of my research. The research questions are:

> *RQ1: What are the most important organisational enablers for implementing a public service guarantee with the aims of increasing customer centeredness and customer satisfaction?*

> *RQ2: What is the overall conceptual and descriptive implementation framework for these enablers?*

In my research, I focus on the implementation of a service guarantee to enhance customer satisfaction with the quality of public service delivery, with an effective implementation

realising this aim. Internal organisational enablers as well as a myriad of external political, cultural and contextual developments influence the effectiveness of service guarantee implementation. In this chapter, I focus on the internal organisational enablers that support the effective implementation of a service guarantee on the organisational level. As Bou-Llusar *et al.*, (2005) have shown for the Excellence Model of the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM), there is a positive relationship between enablers and the results within an organisation. Enablers represent the way the organisation operates (Bou-Llusar *et al.*, 2005), they have also been defined as an ingredient that acts as a vehicle for change (Love and Gunasekaran, 1997). More specifically for service guarantees they have been defined as elements of processes, structures or states that are necessary antecedents to an effective implementation of a service guarantee (Kashyap, 2001). The literature presents a few cases where the implementation of a service guarantee has failed because of the absence of necessary enablers. Instances include, a lack of involvement of employees and middle managers leading to an inconsequent use of service guarantees in daily practice (Sarel and Marmorstein, 2001), the guarantee becoming the target of serious criticisms from employees (Farrell, 1999) or becoming seen as a disciplinary device or as a criticism of the service offered (Wehmeijer *et al.*, 1996). Ohemeng (2010) concludes that staff resistance to customer-oriented change is one of the most underestimated aspects when introducing a service guarantee.

In general, the literature shows mixed findings on the effectiveness of public service guarantees. Successful examples are reported in British (Falconer and Ross, 1999) and Korean (Kim, 2009) public services, Spanish regional and local governments (Torres, 2005, 2006) and the Australian Tax Office (James *et al.,* 2005). Other publications show that, in some cases, the effects have been limited in scope and/or in duration (James *et al.*, 2005; Pollitt, 1994) because of poor implementation. Ohemeng (2010) comments that the service guarantees introduced in Ghana are not the 'holy grail' of service delivery because the concept has been badly implemented. In general, it seems that, often, insufficient attention is given to implementation (Falconer and Ross, 1999).

I start with an overview of the relevant literature on enablers in service guarantee implementation. Following this, I introduce the used methodology and the participants, and then continue by presenting the findings of the concept mapping study including a Delphi study conducted among service guarantee experts in the Dutch public sector. I focus on the

experience of experts who have been responsible for, or supported, the implementation of Dutch service guarantees. I conclude this chapter by discussing the results and drawing conclusions from this study.

## 5.2. Potential enablers in the implementation of service guarantees

In reviewing the public- and private- sector literature on service guarantees I found relatively few empirical studies that focussed on the enablers of implementation. This is in line with the conclusions of Hogreve and Gremler (2009) who, based on an extensive analysis of marketing and services management literature related to the private sector, concluded that publications have devoted relatively little attention to internal and operational aspects of service guarantees. However, there is ample rhetoric on enablers. In developing my descriptive framework, I started with an inventory of possible enablers as suggested in the literature, with the results being reviewed with experts at a later stage. Enablers have been identified in the literature on the integration of service guarantees into an organisation's customer-focussed strategy (Hart, 1988; James *et al.*, 2005; Kashyap, 2001; Morris and Haigh, 1996) and on the inclusion of service guarantees in a broader approach to improving service quality (Falconer and Ross, 1999; Raffio 1992; Torres, 2005). In addition, many scholars describe the crucial role of top management in an effective implementation in terms of personal involvement, the personal commitment of leaders and leadership style (Evans *et al.*, 1996; Kim, 2009; Lewis, 1993, Lovell, 1992, Sowder, 1996). Creating a customer- and service-oriented culture is also seen as important in ensuring that the guarantee is viewed as an opportunity within the organisation (Elcock, 1996; Lovell, 1992; Sowder, 1996). In facilitating this, the way in which a service guarantee is implemented (the implementation process) seems to be important (Fabien, 2005; Falconer and Ross, 1999; James *et al.*, 2005; Morris and Haigh, 1996; Raffio, 1992; Sharma and Agnihotri, 2001; Sowder, 1996; Torres, 2005). In this respect, involving employees in the implementation process is crucial in committing them to the service guarantee (Donath, 1997; Fabien, 2005; Raffio, 1992; Sharma and Agnihotri, 2001; Torres, 2005; Wirtz, 1998). Other ways to empower employees include training (Fabien, 2005; Sowder, 1996; Torres, 2005; Wirtz, 1998), giving them greater authority to take decisions (Evens *et al.*, 1996, Wirtz, 1998) and integrating the content of the guarantee into employee appraisal systems (Raffio, 1992; Sowder, 1996). In addition to involving employees, the literature refers to enablers in relation to the involvement of customers in the implementation process and to the use of customer inputs in developing the service guarantee (Fabien, 2005; Hart, 1988; Kashyap, 2001; Steele, 1992; Wirtz, 1998). Enablers have also been mentioned in

the context of issues such as the improvement and control of operational processes (Evans *et al.*, 1996; Sarel and Marmorstein, 2001; Wirtz, 1998), internal cooperation (Kashyap, 2001) and the sufficiency of the labour force as well as IT capacity (Kashyap, 2001; Sarel and Marmorstein, 2001).

5.3. Research methodology

To determine which enablers support the implementation of an effective service guarantee I conducted a concept mapping study, with an integrated Delphi study, in the Netherlands. Concept mapping is used as an empirical and advanced statistical approach to clarify ambiguous, multidimensional or controversial concepts. Concept mapping is an explorative consensus procedure supported by multivariate statistical techniques and consists of six steps (see Figure 3, adapted from Kane and Trochim, 2007).

Figure 3. Concept mapping research design
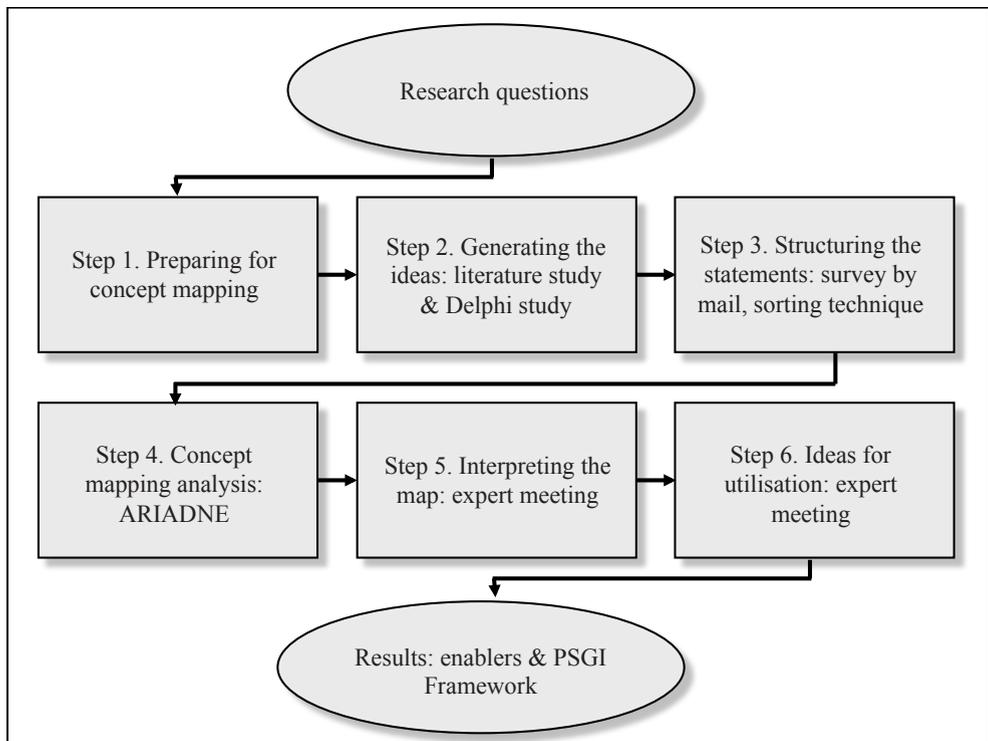
During the first step, 'Preparing for concept mapping', one defines the subject of the research and determines potential participants. In the second step, 'Generating the ideas', Kane and

Trochim (2007) suggest brainstorming sessions to generate ideas followed by reducing and editing the set of items discussed. I have chosen to use a more thorough and in-depth approach in this step by conducting a literature study followed by a Delphi study. The Delphi technique has seen widespread use in concept and framework development (Okoli and Pawlowski, 2004). I first searched for articles in peer-reviewed journals on the application of the service guarantee concept in both public and private sectors using EBSCO Host (Business Source Premier, Academic Source Premier). I searched for articles using the following search terms: 'service charter', 'public service charter', 'citizen's charter', 'patient's charter', 'consumer's charter', 'client charter', 'customer service plan', 'public service guarantee', 'service pledge' and 'performance pledge', 'private service charter', 'service guarantee', 'service promise', 'unconditional guarantee', 'money back guarantee' and 'satisfaction guarantee'. This resulted in a list of 309 articles. I then systematically studied the abstracts of these articles to see if they addressed implementation issues, reducing the list to 82 relevant articles. Next, I systematically studied the selected articles for references to enablers for the implementation of service guarantees. This literature study resulted in a list of 47 enablers that was then reviewed and discussed by the research team. This list formed the input for the Delphi study. The goal of the Delphi study was to rank the enablers on the list, plus any other enablers suggested by the experts, and then to reduce the list to a final set of enablers through consultation with experienced experts. I conducted a conventional reactive 'ranking-type' Delphi study in the sense that there were three rounds with participants filling in digital questionnaires and receiving feedback on the results of each round (Clayton, 1997). The participants were not informed about who else was participating in the Delphi study. The Delphi approach was reactive since the design team developed the list of 47 enablers for the first round (McKenna, 1994).

In order to include any additional relevant enablers and exclude irrelevant ones, the experts were asked to rate the importance of the proposed enablers *in a general sense*. It was stressed that they should not take the situation in their own organisation as their reference. I used a four-point Likert scale with response categories: unimportant, moderately important, important and very important (Linstone and Turoff, 2002). In all three rounds, the experts could reformulate the enablers and propose new ones. The research team analysed each round's results and determined the status of each enabler. The cut-off points used were in accordance with the suggestion of Minkman *et al.* (2009): enablers that 80 per cent or more of the experts rated as 'important' or 'very important' were to be included, and those which at

least half rated as 'unimportant' or only 'moderately important' excluded. The research team then considered the experts' suggestions for reformulating those enablers that fell between the include and exclude categories, and these were either reformulated or left unchanged on the list for the next round, along with any newly proposed enablers. After each round, the participants were all informed of the results and received a list indicating the included and excluded enablers. In the final round, any enabler that failed to reach the 80 per cent 'important' or 'very important' criterion was excluded. After the three rounds, the Delphi study resulted in an unstructured list of 45 enablers.

The goal of Steps 3-6 in the concept mapping exercise is to translate this list into a conceptual framework. During Step 3, 'Structuring the statements', the experts received an envelope containing 45 cards, each giving one of the enablers, an instruction sheet and a short additional questionnaire for gathering personal information on the participants. The experts were asked to cluster the enablers in two ways. First, on the basis of importance into five categories: least important (1), slightly important (2), important (3), very important (4) and most important (5). Secondly, participants were asked to sort the enablers into piles in a way that made sense to them on the basis of their similarity rather than importance (Cousins and MacDonald, 1998). Here, they had to make at least five piles, with a maximum of twelve, and each pile had to contain between two and twenty cards. The experts were also asked to give each pile a corresponding label, which were later used in naming clusters and sub-clusters.

During Step 4, 'Concept mapping analysis', the data were analysed using the computer software program ARIADNE version 2.0. (Minkman *et al.*, 2009; Severens, 1995). My analysis was based on the number of participants who had placed the various enablers in the same piles, the objective being to develop a similarity matrix. Using multidimensional scaling analysis, a chart, known as a two-dimensional point map, depicting all the enablers was drawn. Each enabler is included on the map, and those that were relatively often clustered together by the participants appear close to each other on the point map. Following this, a hierarchical cluster analysis was conducted, following the guidelines by Kane and Trochim (2007), in order to determine clusters. This resulted in a cluster-rating map in which the deduced clusters are combined with the importance scores from Step 3. The cluster-rating map is a two-dimensional representation of the group's thinking and reflects all the ideas put forward by the experts. The map shows how the enablers are related to each other and indicates the importance of the various clusters.

Based on practical considerations and as suggested by Kane and Trochim (2007), I combined Steps 5 and 6, 'Interpreting the map' and 'Ideas for utilisation', by organising an expert meeting to which all the 36 participants in Step 3 were invited. Based on the suggestions made by the participants at this meeting, one cluster and two sub-clusters were relabelled. During this meeting the relevance of the findings and their implications for practice were also discussed.

5.4. Participants[14]

Given the specific nature of the concept, I decided to involve only people who had actually worked with service guarantees and could therefore be considered as experts. Each year, the Dutch government grants an award to the public organisation it deems to have the best service guarantee. In selecting my research sample, I contacted all the contact persons in organisations that had entered the contests in 2008, 2009 and 2010. In addition I obtained a list from Burgerlink of other Dutch experts, such as researchers and consultants, who specialised in public service guarantees, and these experts were added to my potential sample. A total of 77 experts were approached, of which 45 (58.4%) agreed to participate in my research. For concept mapping it is not necessary to have a random sample of participants since it is an explorative method. Nor is it essential that all participants take part in every step of the process (Trochim, 1989a). Nevertheless, the participants do have to be heterogeneous and experienced in the field. Table 13 presents the composition of the expert group for each step. Most of the experts had between 1 and 5 years of experience with the public service guarantee concept at the time of my research and were still active in this area.

As Table 13 shows, 37 experts participated in all three rounds of the Delphi study during Step 2. This number comfortably meets the criterion set by Linstone and Turoff (2002) of having 10 to 50 participants. 36 Experts were involved in Step 3, which is within the range of typical group sizes for the realisation of a concept map (Kane and Trochim, 2007; Trochim, 1989 a & b). Finally, 7 experts attended the expert meeting (Steps 5 & 6) in which the results were presented and discussed.

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[14] The group of 37 experts that participated in the Delphi (step 2) is the same as the group that contributed to the Delphi study described in Chapter 2.

Table 13. Constitution of experts participating in steps 2, 3, 5 and 6 of the study

Category	Values	Total	Step 2 Delphi Study	Step 3 Survey by mail	Step 5 and 6 Expert meeting
Number of participants		**45**	**37**	**36**	**7**
Gender	Male	53.3%	54.1%	50.0%	85.7%
	Female	46.7%	45.9%	50.0%	14.3%
Public sector experience with service guarantee	Municipality	68.9%	62.2%	72.2%	57.1%
	Public Agency	8.9%	10.8%	11.1%	14.3%
	Healthcare	8.9%	10.8%	8.3%	-
	Police	4.4%	5.4%	-	-
	Water Authority	2.2%	2.7%	-	-
	Other	2.2%	2.7%	2.8%	14.3%
	In several sectors	4.4%	5.4%	5.6%	14.3%
Type of experience	Implementation and use of service guarantee	71.1%	64.9%	69.4%	14.3%
	Staff support on a sectorial or national level	13.3%	16.2%	11.1%	14.3%
	Commercial consultancy and research on public service guarantees	4.4%	5.4%	5.6%	28.6%
	Other	2.3%	2.7%	2.8%	-
	Various roles	8.9%	10.8%	11.1%	42.8%
Number of years of experience with the concept	0-1 years	11.1%	10.8%	8.3%	14.4%
	1-3 years	46.7%	43.2%	47.2%	-
	3-5 years	24.4%	24.3%	22.2%	42.8%
	5 years and more	17.8%	21.6%	22.2%	42.8%
Still working with service guarantees	Yes	88.9%	86.5%	94.4%	85.7%
	No	11.1%	13.5%	5.6%	14.3%
Expertise in quality management	A lot	34.3%	33.3%	34.3%	57.1%
	Some	45.7%	44.4%	45.7%	42.9%
	A little	20.0%	22.2%	20.0%	-

5.5. Results

Based on the literature study in Step 2, I started the Delphi study with a master list of 47 enablers. As Table 14 shows, the first round resulted in 27 of these immediately qualifying for the final list, 5 being excluded, 4 left unchanged for the next round, and 11 reformulated for including in the second round. Thus, in the second round, there were 15 possible enablers carried forward plus 7 new statements proposed by the participants that leads to a list of 22 enablers for the second round. Following this second round, only 6 remained uncertain and these, together with three new proposed statements, were addressed in the third round with a list of 9 statements. Overall, during the three rounds, the experts had suggested a total of 19 new statements and 53 reformulations. 12 Statements were excluded, most of which were related to securing the service guarantee in daily practice. This involves issues such as integrating the content of the guarantee into the organisation's working procedures and instructions, recruitment and selection criteria and procedures for new employees, and in its appraisal and reward systems. The experts also rejected enablers related to assessing costs and investments and the benefits of implementing a service guarantee. During the course of the three rounds, a saturation effect could be observed. By Round 3, the number of suggested new

statements and reformulations had substantially decreased and it was therefore appropriate to halt the Delphi study after three rounds.

Table 14. Responses in rounds 1-3 of the Delphi study

	Delphi round 1	Delphi round 2	Delphi round 3	Overall
Number of participants	37 (100%)	37 (100%)	37 (100%)	37 (100%)
Number of statements in questionnaire	47	22	9	
Statements accepted by experts	27 (57.4%)	15 (68.2%)	3 (33.3%)	45
Statements excluded by experts	5 (10.6%)	1 (4.5%)	6 (66.7%)	12
Statements unchanged to next round	4 (8.5%)	4 (18.2%)	0	8
Statements reformulated for next round	11 (23.4%)	2 (9.1%)	0	13
New statements added for next round	7	3	0	10
Number of suggestions for new statements	7	9	3	19
Number of experts proposing a new statement	7 (18.9%)	8 (21.6%)	3 (8.1%)	18
Average per expert (new statements suggested/number of experts)	0.19	0.24	0.08	
Min-max per expert	0-1	0-2	0-1	
Reformulations (number of suggestions)	35	18	0	53
Number of experts with one or more suggestions	12 (32.4%)	9 (24.3%)	0	21
Average per expert (reformulations/number of experts)	0.95	0.49	0	
Min-max per expert	0-7	0-4	0	
Number of statements with one or more suggestions	21 (44.7%)	10 (45.5%)	0	31
Average per item (reformulations/number of statements)	0.75	0.95	0	
Min-max per statement	0-4	0-3	0	

The Delphi study resulted in an unstructured list of 45 enablers (a part answer to Research Question 1). Later, the research team excluded one of these enablers due to problems with its formulation.

In Step 3, 'Structuring the statements', the package as described earlier was sent to each of the participants, and 36 envelopes were returned of which 34 could be used in the analysis. The participants, as requested, had clustered the statements resulting from the Delphi study based firstly on importance and secondly in a way that made sense to them. Feeding the data from the 34 participants into the ARIADNE software routine resulted in three main clusters with ten sub-clusters. In Figure 4, their clustering and the attached importance are graphically depicted in a cluster rating map, which can be viewed as a descriptive model and which I refer to as the Public Service Guarantee Implementation (PSGI)-Framework (responding to Research Question 2). The numers of the enablers correspond with those of Table 15.

Figure 4. The Public Service Guarantee Implementation (PSGI)-Framework

Numbers are statement numbers/enablers
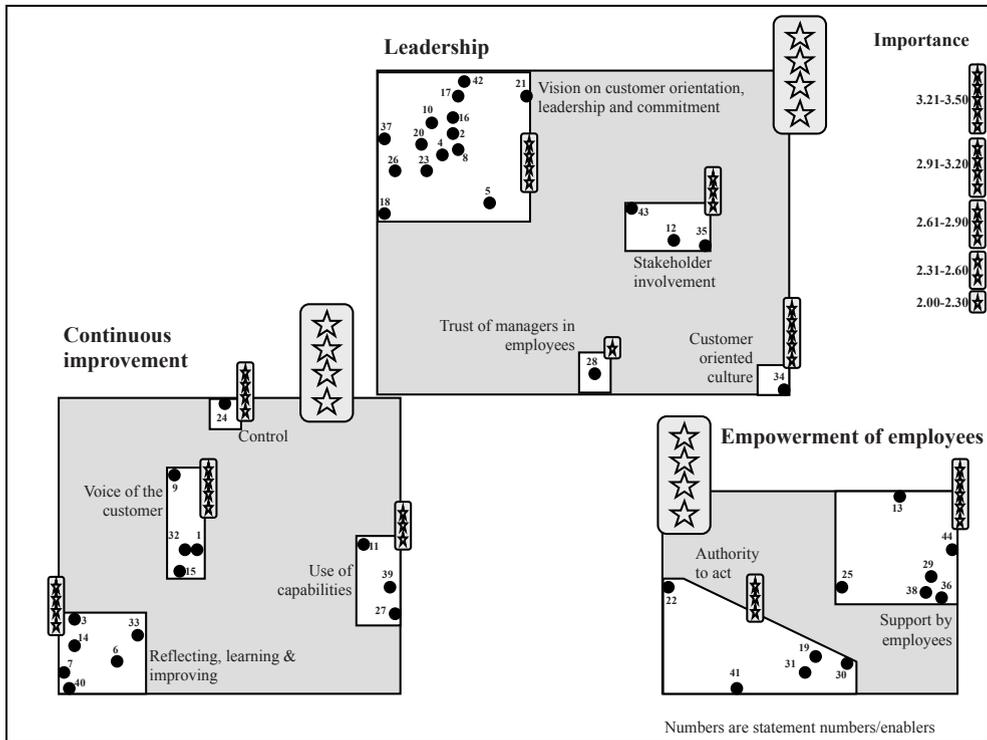
This framework consists of three clusters labelled: 'Leadership' (importance 2.93), 'Empowerment of employees' (importance 3.07) and 'Continuous improvement' (importance 3.04). The leadership cluster contains four sub-clusters: 'vision with respect to customer orientation, leadership and commitment', 'stakeholder involvement', 'customer oriented culture' and 'trust of managers in employees'. Three of the five highest ranked enablers in this cluster are connected with top management. It has to have a vision with respect to the customer and customer orientation, be committed to the service guarantee and promote it. The other two highly ranked enablers are related to the fact that the service guarantee needs to form part of a broader programme for improving the service quality and be positioned as an instrument to improve the quality of service. The second cluster 'Empowerment of employees', has two sub-clusters: 'support by employees' and 'authority to act'. Three of the five most important enablers are related to the need for employees to be involved in the development of the service guarantee so that they believe that the content of the service guarantee can be adequately met in daily practice and become committed to its content and use. The other two of the most important enablers are linked to the existence of a culture of quickly fixing customer problems and to employees having the authority to help customers

immediately the contents of the service guarantee have not been properly met. The third cluster, 'Continuous improvement' has four sub-clusters: 'reflecting, learning and improving', 'voice of the customer', 'control' and 'use of capabilities'. Here, two of the five most important enablers are linked to the role of customers: organisations have to use information resources provided by customers to define the content of the service guarantee; and information on the wishes and expectations of customers should be used in developing the service guarantee. Another important enabler is linked to employees in that the experience of frontline employees, with respect to the wishes and expectations of customers, should be used in developing the service guarantee. The final two key enablers are related to measurement and improvement: the organisation should regularly measure the extent to which it has met the terms of its service guarantee; and it should learn from situations where it fails to meet the terms so it can improve service quality.

In this framework, a few of the statements (enablers 24, 28 and 34), and thus the associated sub-clusters, have a somewhat indeterminate position due to variations in the experts' clustering. For example, some experts associated enabler 34 (customer-oriented culture) with leadership and management, while others considered it to be employee-related.

Table 15. Results per cluster, sub-cluster and enabler (based on output from Step 3)

Leadership Statement numbers and statements	Importance (mean)	SD
Total cluster	**2.93**	**-**
Sub-cluster 1.1: vision with respect to customer orientation, leadership and commitment	**3.02**	**-**
42. Top management is committed to its service guarantee	4.06	1.35
8. The service guarantee is positioned within the organisation as an instrument for improving the quality of service	3.76	1.06
2. Top management (rather than a staff employee) is the promoter of the service guarantee and shows this by its commitment to the concept	3.65	1.82
4. The service guarantee forms part of a broader programme for improving the organisation's service quality	3.59	1.77
37. Top management has a vision with respect to the customer and customer orientation	3.53	1.90
10. 'Customer focus' and quality are central to top management	3.50	1.78
16. The person responsible for implementing the service guarantee (e.g. the project leader) has sufficient authority within the organisation to perform this task	3.09	1.67
20. The service guarantee is derived from the organisational vision regarding customer-oriented service	2.76	2.42
5. In implementing the service guarantee, the manager's leadership style is results-oriented	2.68	1.75
17. If the organisation operates in a political environment, politicians support and stimulate the implementation of the service guarantee	2.48	1.95
23. Preparations for implementing the service guarantee are made on both operational and strategic levels	2.47	1.31
18. The organisation takes time in implementing the service guarantee and is not focused on a quick fix	2.27	1.59
21. The implementers of the service guarantee are aware of its underlying philosophies (customer orientation and quality management)	2.18	1.24
26. Management has developed a specific approach to the implementation of the service guarantee	2.12	1.63
Sub-cluster 1.2: stakeholder involvement	**2.66**	**-**
12. From the outset of the implementation process there was a focus on sensitising all stakeholders	2.79	2.05
43. Managers explicitly show their involvement during the implementation of the service guarantee by the employees	2.71	1.44
35. All organisational units involved approve of the service guarantee implementation	2.47	1.84
Sub-cluster 1.3: trust of managers in employees	**2.03**	**-**
28. Managers trust their employees in the task of compensating customers	2.03	1.97
Sub-cluster 1.4: customer-oriented culture	**3.50**	**-**
34. The organisation has a customer-oriented culture	3.50	2.19

Empowerment of employees Statement numbers and statements	Importance (mean)	SD
Total cluster	**3.07**	**-**
Sub-cluster 2.1: Support by employees	**3.27**	**-**
13. Employees are involved in the development of the service guarantee	3.56	1.36
44. Employees believe that the contents of the service guarantee can be adequately met in daily practice	3.50	1.78
25. Quickly fixing customers' problems forms part of the culture of the frontline employees	3.26	2.08
36. Employees are committed to the content and use of the service guarantee	3.18	2.03
29. Employees see the service guarantee as a challenge rather than as a threat	3.15	1.95
38. Employees understand the objectives of the use of service guarantees	3.00	1.64
Sub-cluster 2.2: authority to act	**2.84**	**-**
19. Employees are authorised to help customers immediately if they have problems because the contents of the service guarantee have not been properly met	3.18	1.56

30. Employees are trained how to use the service guarantee in their interactions with customers	3.06	1.53
22. Within the organisation, the staff members give each other feedback on the realisation of promises	2.88	1.28
31. If the contents of the service guarantee have not been met, employees are instructed and trained in dealing with the customers and solving their problems in a timely manner	2.85	1.54
41. In order to meet the content of the service guarantee, employees can, in some situations, deviate from the standard procedures and working instructions	2.21	1.69

Continuous improvement Statement numbers and statements	**Importance (mean)**	**SD**
Total cluster	**3.04**	**-**
Sub-cluster 3.1: reflecting, learning and improving	**3.17**	**-**
7. The organisation learns from situations in which the contents of the service guarantee are not met so that it can improve its service quality	4.00	1.18
3. The organisation regularly measures the extent to which it has met the terms of the service guarantee	3.65	1.35
14. Where necessary, the processes and/or communication channels that customers can use are improved in order to meet the contents of the service guarantee	3.24	2.18
40. The organisation has good feedback mechanisms through which customers can react if promises are not kept	2.91	2.45
6. Customers are explicitly invited to react when the promises in the service guarantee are not met	2.82	2.03
33. The service guarantee is intensively communicated to the customers over a lengthy period of time	2.32	1.98
Sub-cluster 3.2: voice of the customer	**3.03**	**-**
1. Information based on resources provided by the customers, such as complaints analyses and satisfaction surveys, are used to define the content of the service guarantee	3.82	1.38
15. Information about the wishes and expectations of the customers is used in the development of the service guarantee	3.47	1.60
9. Top management includes the monitoring of the degree to which the organisation has met its service guarantee in its management reports	3.06	2.35
32. Where necessary, sufficient IT resources are provided to realise the content of the service guarantee	1.76	1.30
Sub-cluster 3.3: use of capabilities	**2.84**	**-**
27. The experiences of frontline employees with respect to the wishes and expectations of customers are used in the development of the service guarantee	3.38	1.65
39. There is a good cooperation between the departments involved in realising the content of the service guarantee	2.68	1.45
11. There is a sufficient labour force to implement the contents of the service guarantee	2.45	1.10
Sub-cluster 3.4: control	**3.00**	**-**
24. Top management stimulates the control of, and compliance with, the contents of the service guarantee	3.00	1.76

5.6. Discussion

The literature on the implementation of service guarantees shows that there is mixed results: there are cases where service guarantees have increased customer centeredness and customer satisfaction, and others where the results are less positive. Based on my literature review and the concept mapping involving a total of 45 Dutch experts, I have identified 44 organisational enablers for effectively implementing a service guarantee 'on the street level' (Hill and Hupe, 2009) that are seen as contributing to the customer centeredness of an organisation and the

satisfaction of its customers. Three main clusters of enablers have been identified: 'Leadership', 'Empowerment of employees' and 'Continuous improvement'. This has resulted in a descriptive model, the PSGI-Framework, which could be used to help public organisations increase effectiveness when implementing a service guarantee.

In general it is fair to say that 'the decision to use a service guarantee has been made, the rest is implementation' (Hill and Hupe, 2009), and recent years have seen a greater focus on implementation in public management (Halligan, 2007). My research contributes to the literature and know-how on service guarantees, their implementation and services management (Osborne, 2010) in the public arena. My results show that, for a service guarantee to be effective and long lasting, well directed changes in structures and systems have to be accompanied by changes in culture and management style (Lovell, 1992). The enablers identified correspond with the five principles of Total Quality Management: customer focus, process focus, teamwork, employee participation and continuous improvement (Murray and Chapman, 2003). This leads to the idea that a TQM Approach may be necessary to implement a service guarantee effectively. Torres (2006) found that, in Spain, the implementation of service guarantees is often connected with TQM initiatives. Torres (2006) and Ohemeng (2010) both concluded that service guarantee initiatives would fail unless they are part of a wide-ranging customer focus strategy. That is, the implementation of a service guarantee is not a stand-alone exercise: it should be part of a broader programme for improving customer centeredness.

High performance organisations have credited high involvement routines for much of their success (Murray and Chapman, 2003). Changes based on participative strategies are necessary because a cultural change is required in the shared feelings, beliefs, values, attitudes, assumptions and behaviours of organisational members (Schein, 2010). Only by intensively involving all employees in the implementation of the service guarantee will the necessary commitment be achieved, with the guarantee being seen as an important tool by employees (Raffio, 1992; Wirtz, 1998). Furthermore, it is important that employees 'live the guarantee' and act in accordance with its content in everyday practice, and this requires them to have the authority to act flexibly when necessary. This needs a paradigm shift, from the currently dominant management control mentality to one of a partnership between managers and employees (Lovell, 1992). Participative change in combination with transformational leadership is essential for effective cultural change (Waterhouse and Lewis, 2004). My

research on implementing service guarantees supports this conclusion: having a vision, personal involvement and commitment all seem essential. As Sharma and Agnihotri (2001) and James *et al.* (2005) have observed, my research illustrates that the active participation of employees is not only important but all stakeholders should be actively involved. For service guarantees, the active involvement of customers is important (Fabien, 2005; Kashyap, 2001; Wirtz, 1998). First, customers have an essential role in defining the content of a service guarantee at the start of the implementation process. Then, in measuring performance during the use of a service guarantee, the customers have an active role through using the redress mechanisms. In line with Hart (1988) and Sarel and Marmorstein (2001), my study shows the importance of the customer feedback loop. To ensure effective on-going use of a service guarantee, it is important that an organisation regularly measures the actual realisation of the guarantee's content in daily practice through internal measurements and customer feedback. Here, continuous improvement is critical, having routines that can help the organisation improve what it currently does (Bessant *et al.*, 2001).

My research has shown that systematic methodologies such as a Delphi study and concept mapping are suitable tools for developing operational frameworks for public services. Nevertheless, my study has limitations. I conducted the study within a Dutch context, and the goals, national policies and conditions may differ by country. What works in one national, or sectorial, context may not work in another (Drewry, 2005), and managing implementation is unlikely to be identical in two situations (Hill and Hupe, 2009). To extend the external validity of my findings requires replicating the research in other countries or conducting a multinational study in countries that use service guarantees. Another limitation of my research relates to the organisations involved. The majority of the experts used worked for municipalities, and this may have influenced the results. Research among other public services that have customer contacts, such as government agencies or privatised public services, could give insights into contextual determinants that influence the effectiveness of service guarantee implementation. Furthermore, I have based my explorative research on the subjective perceptions of experts. A logical next step would be a more objective analysis, linking the strengths of the enablers identified in my study with actual results within organisations.

This chapter has focused on the determinants of service guarantee implementation effectiveness from an internal organisational perspective. However, external political, cultural

and contextual developments, such as the public reform agenda, can also influence the use of service guarantees and the effectiveness of their implementation. In some countries, service guarantees are still relatively new, while in other countries, such as the UK, guarantees are no longer a distinct and separate concept but an accepted and common part of a wider modernisation agenda.

In most countries, New Public Management reforms formed the backdrop to service guarantee implementation. New developments continue to change the political and managerial context of service guarantees. Public sectors 'beyond NPM' (Halligan, 2007) are characterised by integrated governance with a move away from fragmentation and vertical structures to cross-agency coordination and horizontal collaboration. There is also an ever-stronger focus on outcomes rather than organisational outputs. This has implications for traditional guarantees, with organisation-level guarantees gradually becoming less relevant and being replaced by service guarantees for complete horizontal service delivery chains. In such cases, multiple organisations become responsible for achieving the guarantee's objectives, requiring permanent coordination between delivery chain partners and a significant need to cope with goal ambiguity. In such a context, the enablers of an effective service guarantee implementation could be different, and this would be another relevant area for future research (see the next chapter).

In developing public value in this way, citizens as customers become co-producers of that value (Moore, 1995; Stoker, 2006). A service-user focus in public management involves public participation and engagement. Citizens become less like consumers and more like participants. Participation in decision-making is fostered, and the experience of users is increasingly acknowledged and valued (Newman, 2011). This can have an effect on the content and use of service guarantees which can become more bilateral in the sense that they not only reflect what customers can expect from public services but also what public services can expect from customers.

Despite the limitations of my research and the on-going developments in public management, I believe that this study has contributed to science as well as practice. While much rhetoric has been published on the subject, this chapter provides concrete results from empirical research in the Netherlands. The value of this research is that the results are based on empirical research and break down the general clusters of leadership, empowerment and

continuous improvement into 44 concrete and specific enablers for the implementation of service guarantees. The developed PSGI-Framework can be used by policy developers to critically reflect when formulating a service guarantee policy; and by policy implementers before, during and after implementing a service guarantee in implementation checks and assessments (Hill and Hupe, 2009).