

**TOWARDS A CONCEPTUALISATION OF SERVICE QUALITY AT AN
EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION**

by

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DECLARATION

This research has not been previously accepted for any degree and is not being currently submitted for candidature for any degree.

Signed: 
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ACRONYMS

FET	–	Further Education and Training
TQM	–	Total Quality Management
TQC	–	Total Quality Control
E	–	Expectations
P	–	Perceptions
SS	–	SERVQUAL score
KZN	–	KwaZulu-Natal
SRC	–	Student Representative Council
SA	–	South Africa
PZB	–	Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry
USA	–	United States of America
FTEs	-	Full time equivalents

ABSTRACT

FET Colleges are facing two main challenges in the new educational landscape in South Africa, namely; responding to the desired level of delivery to cater for all South Africans as a post-merged institution and responding to relevant programme demands in a globally competitive environment. This research explores the relationship between service quality and user satisfaction. A model that demonstrates how satisfaction can be seen as both a micro-level response to individual transactions, and a macro-level of service quality is proposed, namely the SERVQUAL model. Using an evidence-based approach, gaps between user expectations and perceptions are explored as well as the gap between expectations and managers perceptions of these. Based on this evidence some observations are made about ways in which Coastal KZN FET Colleges could make more use of the information derived from their own organisation user survey to improve their services. This generic study could easily be carried out at other FET Colleges in South Africa and internationally.

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CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

1.1. INTRODUCTION

With the ushering in of the first democratic elections in 1994 and the creation of a new democracy in South Africa, new challenges have emerged for education in general, and more specifically the Further Education and Training (FET) sector. The previously separated and racially segregated Technical Colleges have come together under a single, coherent system of education and training. It must be able to put together a range of imperatives from individual, and local, through to national and global.

As a result, the new education system is based on the right to education and training that is enshrined in the Bill of Rights (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996). This would ensure that citizens' freedom of choice is catered for in the context of equality of opportunity and the redress of inherited imbalances. Therefore Governance at every level of the integrated national system of education is geared towards (Hoppers, Mokgatle, Maluleke, Zuma, Hlophe, Crouch, Lombard, Lolwana, Makhene, 2000: 6):

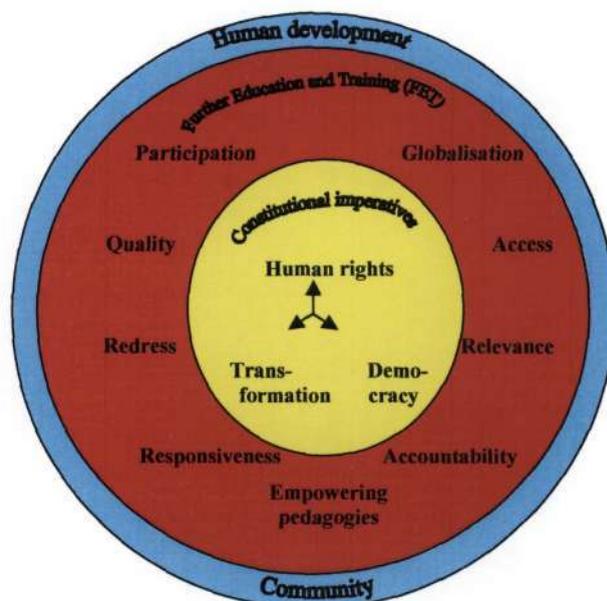
- Maximising the participation of stakeholders in a democratic manner;
- Nation-building with the eradication of racism, tribalism and ethnicity as the basis of educational organisation;
- Ensuring that a balance exists between the national and provincial governments in relation to their legislatures so that the responsiveness and accountability at each level of the system can be ensured; and
- Transforming and re-orienting the education system to greater efficiency

The thrust of the study would concentrate on the last point, that of transforming and re-orienting the education system to greater efficiency.

1.2. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Further Education and Training Institutions were created in terms of the Further Education and Training Act, (Act 98 of 1998). However, the actual declaration of FET Institutions in KwaZulu-Natal was only gazetted in November 2001 and the merger of FET Institutions was promulgated on 11 April 2002, giving rise to larger institutions where the sharing of resources became imperative. The merger brought together erstwhile Technical Colleges that were under the former tripartite government of the House of Assembly, House of Delegates and House of Representatives; and the Department of Education and Training and KwaZulu Government. The Coastal KZN FET College is a product of such a merger between Technical Colleges. With the merger now over two years old, the level of customer satisfaction amongst external clients, namely students and companies who send students to the college can be ascertained as a post-merged institution. The following figure represents what FET aims to attain.

Figure 1.1: FET imperatives, paradigms and concepts



Source: Human Development in Further Education and Training in South Africa, concepts and principles, May 2001: 4.

Back in 1997 it was recognised that the Public Service was still a long way off in ensuring customer satisfaction due to an inequitable distribution of public services, especially in rural areas, lack of access to services, lack of transparency and openness and consultation with clients on the required service standards, lack of accurate and basic information on services and standards at which they are rendered, lack of responsiveness and dealing sensitively with citizen's complaints and discourteous staff (Draft White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service, 1997: 1).

Hence the study aims to identify whether the revised focus of FET Colleges, namely through Service Quality, had been realised or what are the areas of concern and how can the gaps be addressed.

1.3. MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH

The public service in general and more specifically educational institutions have a notorious reputation for poor service delivery to their clients. This research intends to identify the shortfall in service delivery.

The White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service, published on 24 November 1995, identifies eight transformation priorities, with Transforming Service Delivery being the key. The eight principles (commonly referred to as the 'Batho Pele' principles, which is a Sotho adage meaning 'People First') are Consultation, Service Standards, Access, Courtesy, Information, Openness and Transparency, Redress and Value for money. In the Public Service it should be recognised that the provision of Public Service is not a privilege, but a legitimate expectation (Draft White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service, 1995: 2).

1.4 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

It is against this backdrop that a customer satisfaction survey would be conducted at the Coastal KZN FET College. The intention is to establish the satisfaction that students receive from the respective college.

Research is needed to identify what attributes of a given service are important to specific market segments and how well prospective customers perceive competing organisations as performing against these attributes. Strategists should recognise that the same individuals may set different priorities for attributes according to:

- The purpose of using the service
- Who makes the decision?
- The timing of use
- Whether the individual is using the service alone or within a group
- The composition of the group

Students and/or parents or companies that usually make the decision to use the service, make their choices between alternative educational institutions on the basis of perceived differences in quality between them. The management's task in any service business is thus to identify which attributes are determinant and to be aware of how well each competing service performs on these determinant attributes. Findings from such research form the basis for developing a positioning campaign to make Coastal KZN FET College a market leader.

In evaluating service characteristics and establishing a positioning strategy some attributes are easily quantified whereas others are qualitative and highly judgemental. Price of course offerings, for example is a straightforward quantitative measure. Also punctuality of administrative and lecturing staff to their workstations can be quantified and can be generally applied. But quality of personal service received or the condition of the lecturing facilities are more qualitative and therefore subject to individual interpretation.

Hence it is important to identify and monitor customer satisfaction levels within the FET College sector in order to propose a quality management system for quality service delivery to students.

1.5 PROBLEM STATEMENT

In this light, the college needs to continuously review its performance and set benchmarks to attain the quality of service demanded by its clients.

Hence, the question arises as to **“How can a College develop the right service concept for their target segment of students?”**

1.6 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study have been identified as follows:

- To ascertain the customer satisfaction level at the Coastal KZN FET College using a measurement scale.
- To determine whether different levels of service quality are required by students based on gender and age.
- To determine whether different levels of service quality exists between the six campuses in terms of the dimensions identified.
- To make recommendations to the college to improve the systems towards ultimately implementing a quality assurance programme.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The procedure to be followed in satisfying the above objectives of the study lends itself to testing and verification. It is also focussed on reasons for particular events and follows a logical and critical approach. The data gathered can also be generalised across the population membership. Hence a more dominant quantitative approach to our analysis was chosen as this type of research (surveys) lends itself to cause and effect relationships (Ghauri & Gronhaug, 2002: 93), which can be identified more easily and the research is more structured and more controlled.

The type of research design is a cross-sectional analytical survey method as the data represents a snapshot of that point in time (Cooper & Schindler, 2001: 136). It would have been ideal to apply a longitudinal study but time constraints prevent this.

1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE PROJECT

The project will be limited to the Coastal KZN FET College, in Durban. However, due to the homogeneity of the operation and structure of FET Colleges, the results can be inferred to the other Colleges.

All colleges offer vastly similar course offerings and have similar infrastructure, as the merged institutions have been allocated ex Colleges of Education or Skills Training Centres with funding from the Provincial Department of Education and Culture to develop the colleges.

1.9 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

The structure of the study will follow the following chapters, namely:

1.9.1 CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will cover the theory of quality service to attain customer satisfaction in the FET college sector. The service tool for quality assessment, commonly referred to as the “SERVQUAL” methodology would be applied to the study.

Quality is a complex concept, which cannot be conclusively measured by a series of ad-hoc or cross sectional studies. However, the increasing importance of quality as a means of gaining competitive advantage has seen the emergence of comprehensive programmes to research customer expectations and perceptions of service quality. Most of the recent work on service quality can be credited to the pioneering and continuous efforts of A. Parasuraman, Leonard Berry and Valarie Zeithaml who produced a well directed conceptual framework (the Gaps Model) and a measuring instrument, SERVQUAL, for assessing service quality. The SERVQUAL is a multi-item scale used for measuring consumer expectations and perceptions of service quality.

1.9.2 CHAPTER THREE – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter will be broken down along the following lines:

1.9.2.1 Data Design and Collection

Due to the instrument chosen above, the research design is directed towards “Causal research” as this type of research is confronted with ‘cause-and-effect’ problems. Since the problem is structured and well understood it would involve descriptive research from the findings. The secondary data would be collected by means of a cross sectional analytical survey using questionnaires.

In designing the questionnaire the opinions of eleven Student Representative Council members from three campuses with different areas of specialisation in study would form a focus group to

verify whether all of the dimensions listed in the SERVQUAL methodology are relevant. The questionnaire would also be pre-tested using a group of students and a Campus Manager and would be adjusted accordingly.

The population of the FET College sector users will be identified in terms of full-time equivalents (FTEs) and a stratified random sample of the students would be used to conduct the survey. The stratified random sample is used due to its variability and standard error of estimates may be reduced (Ghauri & Gronhaug, 2002: 116). The Campus Managers' and the Rector would also be required to complete the questionnaire.

The questionnaire will consist of a demographic section (Part A), which will comprise of category specific variables with some measured on a nominal scale and others measured on an ordinal scale. The body of the questionnaire will consist of three sections. The first section will measure expectations of students to the services of the college (Part B). The second section will measure perceptions of students to the college services (Part C). Part D would measure the expectations and perceptions of the additional dimension chosen. All three sections will ask questions in a similar fashion. As per the literature search on Customer Satisfaction it will be broken down into five sub-areas to be measured namely tangibles, responsiveness, reliability, assurance and empathy. The additional area to be measured would be value. Each of these sub-areas would comprise of four to five questions within the questionnaire. All questions would be worded using the correct methodologies. All questions would be scored using the likert scale.

1.9.3 CHAPTER FOUR – DATA ANALYSIS

The interpretation and extrapolation of the data will be covered in this chapter and will be as follows:

1.9.3.1 Data Analysis

The data analysis will include both qualitative and quantitative research. The qualitative research will be conducted in both our literature research and our questionnaire analysis.

In terms of quantitative analysis various descriptive statistics will be processed, namely frequency distribution tables and percentages on our demographics. With regard to the expectation/perception survey various exploratory analyses would be conducted, including summary descriptive statistical analysis on the likert scale using means and standard deviations and cross-tabular analysis to check whether patterns exist between the questions. Any patterns or outcomes will be summarised into diagrams using histograms to reveal which areas of customer satisfaction are performing poorly and also which specific questions within each of these areas are also not doing well.

As Kirby and Richardson (2003: 1) note in their article, 'Evaluating Marketing Success', "Measure what is important, don't make important what you can measure".

1.9.4 CHAPTER FIVE – RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

After discussing the analysis and extrapolation of the data, recommendations can be made using the GAP model proposed by Parasuraman et al. (1988), that is the five Gaps.

The conclusions will include a summary of the problem under review with a story of the findings toward the recommendations of the study. This section can only be consolidated once the findings of the research, has been concluded.

1.10 SUMMARY

The public service in general and more specifically educational institutions' have a notorious reputation for poor service delivery to their clients. These days customers are no longer passive recipients of poor quality of service as they have become aware of their rights and voice their expectations. It is against this backdrop that we aim to measure the level of customer satisfaction at a Further Education and Training College, namely Coastal KZN FET College. Hence the problem statement had been detailed as, "How can a College develop the right service concept for their target segment of students?"

The objectives of the study have been elucidated as follows:

- To ascertain the customer satisfaction level at the Coastal KZN FET College using a measurement scale.
- To determine whether different levels of service quality are required by students based on gender and age.
- To determine whether different levels of service quality exists between the six campuses in terms of the dimensions identified.
- To make recommendations to the college to improve the systems towards ultimately implementing a quality assurance programme.

To achieve this, the "SERVQUAL" methodology, developed by Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml would be applied. This is a multi-item scale used to measure customers expectations and perceptions of service quality.

A cross sectional analytical survey would be conducted using the likert scale. In order to measure the level of customer satisfaction of a service, the results for perceptions and expectations need to be calculated for each customer. From these, measures of service quality can be calculated by simply subtracting expectation scores from perception scores.

The outcome of the one-off study will tell the college whether its customer expectations are exceeded or not. The gaps between expectations and perceptions can be very helpful.

The data analysis would take on both qualitative and quantitative presentations and based on the outcomes, recommendations and conclusions would be detailed.

CHAPTER TWO – SERVICE QUALITY

2.1. INTRODUCTION

Service organisations find it difficult in motivating themselves to focus on service quality because “Non-profit organisations that are focussed on themselves rather than on their customers display certain characteristics. They see their services as inherently desirable, blame customer ignorance or a lack of motivation when their services are not used, relegate research about customers to a mirror role ... and assume that they have no generic competition” (Hermon and Altman, 1999: 9).

Many would argue that this attitude is prevalent in many FET Colleges although there is little research to support this assertion. Most Colleges certainly see their work as ‘inherently’ desirable. Whatever the cause, the reluctance of Rectors to take their user’s views into account will damage their institution’s ability to compete and to survive in the current environment.

Retaining and growing the customer base and focusing more energy on meeting their customer’s expectations is the main way for FET Colleges to be competitive in the new education landscape and satisfy the broader needs of South African’s.

A FET College is primarily a service organisation in that it provides a service and does not produce a product. To survive and even prosper requires differentiation of offerings in terms of uniqueness and quality of service. However, it is not an activity of the Rector, management or educators in compartmentalised settings. It is the responsibility of everyone, from the cleaning staff to the Rector. All Colleges must face the task of responding to students’ expectations of quality service.

Researching student’s and company opinions should become an important part of evaluating educational services. The student’s self-determination of needs, based on his/her own perception of wants is important and should be stressed. The reasons to incorporate the views

of student's and industry are vital as there has been a shift in focus from take what is on offer, to the institution will tailor the offering to suit the needs of the client. Therefore new government initiatives imply that the views of student's and industry, the clients, must be taken into account. Citizens also have a higher expectation of public services and they want to be heard.

This study presents the results of an exercise designed to measure perceptions of quality of a Further Education and Training College. The second section includes basic information about Total Quality Management and how it can be applied in educational institutions. The third section describes the SERVQUAL methodology, which was developed to measure clients' expectations of a service and their perceptions of service actually experienced.

2.2 DEFINITION OF 'QUALITY'

The concept of quality has been contemplated for many years and continues to be a topic of intense interest today. There seems to be no global definition of quality, but it seems that different definitions are appropriate under different circumstances.

It must be accepted that the way quality is defined and the technical measures used to determine it are not "value-free" or "neutral". It is possible to approach "quality" measures by looking at it as a system of inputs, processes, outputs and indeed outcomes. Different groupings may view the concept in different ways by focussing on different aspects of the input-process-output models. This can be illustrated by the fact that professionals, such as doctors and lecturers may prefer process-oriented and peer-oriented approaches/reviews to quality whilst managers may prefer quantitative analysis of output that has a scientific basis.

A definition of Total Quality Management by Mossard (1991) explicitly refers to quantitative techniques: "...the application of quantitative methods and human resources to improve the

material and services supplied by an organisation, and the degree to which the needs of the customer are met, now and in the future” (Hart, 1998: 1).

Irrespective of the view of quality, it is widely accepted that the concept of quality requires operationalization in order that performance can be measured.

2.3 SERVICE QUALITY

“People do not want your product or service. They do want answers to problems, solutions to needs, pathways to wants, or a secret door to their heart’s desires. But they don’t want to give you their money to get it (Witt: October 2002: 1)”. The reason they pay the college for education lies inside the buyers mind. The more precisely you can focus your efforts to satisfy the buyers, the more students you can attract.

It is important to know what is being sold. If the perception is that the College is selling education or knowledge or if the answer incorporates mentioning the product’s features then there is no concept of what is being sold. To discover what is really being sold, remember that the College ultimately sells satisfaction. Every product or service has at least one powerful motivator, which can be used to seduce buyers to part with their money in return for the “Promise of Satisfaction”. If the College knows how to promise the right satisfaction, it can dominate the field. Ultimately, people don’t want to buy a product or service because they need it, but because they think it will satisfy some of their needs, fears, or desires.

These days there is talk of terms like total quality management, quality assurance, quality systems and quality control. All these terms and concepts are simply variations of the quality theme, all aimed at the same results, namely continuous improvement of the system and a guarantee that standards will either be consistent or better. From a customer perspective, quality does not relate to a single aspect of a product or service, but to a number of different dimensions of the product or service (Stevenson, 2002: 395).

Quality is an extremely difficult concept to define in a few words. Basically, quality in the education and training sector means continually striving to improve what we do (Hoppers et al, 2000: 173). In other words it means offering clients, industry and the general community products and services that meet, if not exceed, their needs and expectations. The products offered could be classified as learning programmes, assessment and learner awards, learner support and the management of the institution that makes it possible to offer quality service to the customers.

Service quality has been considered a viable strategy for marketers striving to differentiate service offerings, establish customer value and ultimately satisfy customer needs (Ozment and Morash, 1994: 354). Furthermore, satisfied consumers have shown a tendency to exercise repeat purchase behaviour. By pursuing a service quality strategy, it is argued that organisations are able to leverage customer support for their offering(s) to both retain and build a loyal customer base. This has a consequent influence upon assuring the organisation, for example, the College, of enhanced student demand thereby satisfying the mandate of educating students. Indeed studies have also confirmed that companies that have rated highly in terms of service quality are able to charge a premium close to ten percent higher than competitors with a low quality service offering (Sonnenberg, 1989: 56) and still fill their institutions to capacity. A classic example is Model C schools or private schools, which are perceived to offer quality service and the resultant long waiting list to gain admission is evident.

Clients are people who use, need or utilize a service. Quality in a service implies that it is suited for the client's purpose and the issue of quality appears repeatedly throughout client's experiences. There can be both objective measures of quality, as well as subjective measures of quality. Feedback from users is indispensable as a method of evaluating the suitability of the service to the client's needs.

2.4 TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Total Quality Management (TQM) is an approach to improve the effectiveness and flexibility of businesses as a whole. It is essentially a way of organizing and involving the whole organisation. The methods and techniques used in TQM can be applied throughout the organisation. Once TQM gains ground rapidly, it becomes a way of life, the culture, in many organisations.

To be successful in promoting business efficiency and effectiveness, TQM must be truly organisation-wide and it must start at the top with the Chief Executive, or equivalent (Rector in the case of the College), and the most senior directors and management, all of whom must demonstrate that they are serious about quality. The middle management has a particularly important role to play, as they must not only grasp the principles of TQM but they must go on to explain them to the people for whom they are responsible, and ensure that their own commitment is communicated.

The idea of TQM was to create an effective system for integrating such elements as quality development, maintenance and improvement together with all the functions in an organisation. Most of the doctrines belonging to TQM have their origins in the manufacturing industry and that is why many of the terms and models are difficult to use in service fields such as education. Morgan and Murgatroyd (1994), as cited by Hart (1998: 1) argue that when TQM methods are applied to health, education and welfare fields, the following are noted, namely:

- ❖ Performance indicators do not speak for themselves, but have to be interpreted.
- ❖ Many performance indicators are overly simplistic.
- ❖ Few of the available indicators focus on customer satisfaction.

This lack of focus on consumer satisfaction may be attributed to the positioning of the consumer against that of the relevant 'professional'. If it is argued that only a professional can assess the quality of service that has been provided, then the consumer is left out. However, in

practice, the quality of a service may well be assessed by reference to output measures, such as waiting times, examination successes etc.). Renade (1994), again cited by Hart (1998: 2) argues that in a service industry such as healthcare or education, there are good theoretical grounds for making the user's experience core rather than peripheral to the definitions of quality. Consumers tend to judge quality by comparing the service they receive against expectations of what they should receive. Both perceptions and expectations are experiential states of minds rather than necessarily real. In services like healthcare or education, the experience of the user is actually the product being consumed. The behaviour of the consumer is also an integral part of the production process. For example, the extent to which patients like or trust the doctor or nurse may affect their willingness to cooperate in their treatment.

From an educational perspective, the student's commitment to his/her studies is dependant partly by the confidence he/she enjoys in the lecturer's knowledge of the subject matter.

Implementation of TQM may well inhibit other developments of quality in service organisations. But it is true that organisations in service fields implement quality in whichever way possible. Quality and cost are two of the most important criteria by which people evaluate their educational purchasing decisions. Quality has become a key strategic level for educational management in the face of a growing number of highly informed consumers.

An approach will be detailed which addresses one of the specific questions raised by Ranade, that is, the relationship between the consumer's expectations of a service and the perception of the service as actually experienced. This works on the premise that instruments that only measure satisfaction are inadequate. The system required is one that recognises that consumers have expectations of a service as well as actual experience of it.

Analysts who were concerned about quality in service industries had addressed this issue. Use will be made of a systematically developed measurement tool, which measures the gap between

expectations and perceptions of quality and applied to any service industry, either in the private or public sector.

2.4.1. TQC in FET Organisations

Total quality control (TQC) has the same aim as TQM, that is, to produce a quality 'product' which satisfies the client's needs. Traditionally, it has been put in practice more in Japan than in the Western countries. Considered to be the father of quality control in Japan, Deming asserts that achieving excellence in quality starts with top management. Deming notes that management must develop the proper theory and tools to manage quality. He proposed a 14-point plan, which will help top-level management to improve productivity, competitive position, and stay in business.

Deming's 14 points can also be applied to education organisations in the following manner (adapted from Vartiainen & Hart, 1996: 5-8):

➤ *Create constancy of purpose.*

The College needs to create constancy of purpose in the quest for continuous improvement of technical quality and the customer perception of quality. The College's organisational philosophy should reflect this total commitment to constantly improving quality in all ways. Without a clear vision of the future, it is doubtful that an educational organisation will achieve its goal.

➤ *Adopt the new philosophy for a changing economic age.*

The top-level management of the College will have to launch their organisation into a new economic age that recognizes the need to meet and surpass the expectations of customers.

➤ *Cease dependence on mass inspection.*

Reliance by monitoring of quality of delivery to students by means of classroom inspections by Heads of Division in the old methodology cannot undo the damage caused by lecturing in

the wrong way. Colleges need to work together with reputable vendors and suppliers to ensure compliance to acceptable quality levels, such as highly accredited train-the-trainer courses.

➤ *Cease buying based on price tag alone.*

The need to cease buying based on the price tag alone is important where equipment such as drawing pencils, meat and haircare products are purchased from reputable suppliers to ensure quality outcomes. Technology is also becoming a major selling point for the quality of lecturing provided by educational institutions.

➤ *Constantly improve the system of production and service.*

Everything we do is a process; so in each area or function of an organisation there will be many processes taking place (Oakland, 1995: 33). The constant improvement of a College should be preceded by a realisation of the need for standardisation and training in areas of quality improvement.

➤ *Institute training on the job.*

Colleges usually emphasise a great deal of training, especially of educators and administrative personnel. Lack of training often leads to misuse and abuse of devices.

➤ *Adopt and institute leadership.*

One of the goals of a College's leadership should be to motivate employees to be part of the broader organisation and to understand its purpose.

➤ *Drive out fear.*

One common fear that administrative staff and educators face is the fear of making mistakes. Another fear is the fear of change. The fear of implementing outcomes-based education is a prime example of resistance to change. Change management training and assurance from management in addressing uncertainties should be precedent.

➤ *Break down barriers between departments.*

The College process is multidisciplinary in nature; it draws upon the expertise and support of several departments and people. One way to eliminate barriers is to use cross-functional teams, involving personnel from various functions and departments to carry out projects.

➤ *Eliminate slogans, exhortations and targets for the work force.*

Slogans are not very common in Colleges. They are no substitute for training.

➤ *Eliminate numerical quotas for the work force and numerical goals for management.*

Work standards and standard costs are not traditionally employed in Colleges. Work sampling techniques are more applicable. Clearly defined areas of operation and role clarification are more important.

➤ *Remove barriers that rob people of pride of workmanship. Eliminate the annual rating or merit system.*

The performance appraisal system employed by organisations can be a major motivator or inhibitor to continuing improvement. Performance evaluation is based on a point system. Without an adequate management and control of the process producing the variation, performance may continue to be erratic.

➤ *Institute a vigorous program of education and self-improvement for everyone.*

Progressive organisations are beginning to realise that people are the most important assets of an organisation. Educational institutions need to show a strong commitment to investing in employees.

➤ *Put everyone in the College to work to accomplish the transformation.*

In order to put everyone in the College to work to accomplish the transformation, some key factors are important:

- Management should demonstrate an unequivocal commitment to total quality management.

- Management should drive out fear and eliminate other inhibitors and barriers to quality improvement in the organisation.
- Quality improvement must be preceded first by the education of the employees on what quality means and what the needs of the customers are.
- Quality is not a departmental function. It is everyone's business.
- Quality improvement is a continuous, never-ending process.
- Inspection by the Provincial Administration or any other agency does not mean quality control.
- Quality improvement cannot be accomplished without the total involvement of employees.

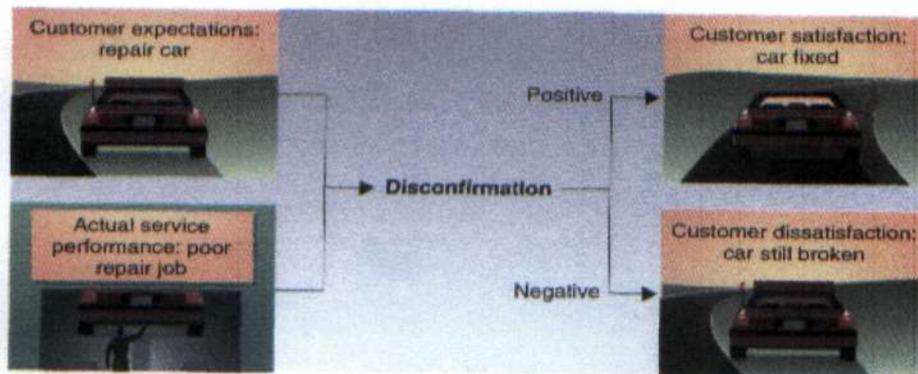
2.5 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SERVICE QUALITY AND SERVICE SATISFACTION

An important stream of research relates to service encounters/experiences or "moments of truth". The assumption is that customer perceptions of service encounters in the service industry are important elements of customer satisfaction, perceptions of quality and long-term loyalty.

Consumer satisfaction, dissatisfaction and complaints are important outcomes of the consumer purchase decision process. Judgements of satisfaction and dissatisfaction are results from the comparison between a person's expectations about a purchased service and the service's actual offering. Purchases of negative disconfirmation result in worse than anticipated feelings whilst purchases that turn out better than expected or positive disconfirmation, are evaluated positively (Bearden, Ingram & Laforge, 1995: 122).

A simple model of customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction relationship is shown in figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1 A model of consumer satisfaction.



Source: Bearden, W.O.; Ingram, T. N. & Laforge, R. W., 1995: 123.

Initially the consumer's prior experiences with services or brands establish expectations. Comparison between the purchaser's expectations and the service performance levels result in the confirmation or disconfirmation of expectations and the resultant satisfaction or dissatisfaction. These feelings then continue as inputs of future attitudes and expectations. Although disconfirmation is generally the most significant determinant of satisfaction, expectations and feelings also influence satisfaction. This is related to research that suggests that consumers with higher expectations experience higher levels of satisfaction, and in terms of performance, independent of positive or negative disconfirmation, has a direct effect on feelings of satisfaction (Bearden et. al, 1995: 122).

Over and above influencing subsequent expectations and purchase behaviour, dissatisfaction with a service can result in several forms of consumer complaints:

- Voice responses – the consumer seeks satisfaction directly from the seller by voicing their dissatisfaction to, for example, management or lecturers or administrative staff.
- Private responses – bad-mouthing to friends and family.

- Third party response – legal recourse may be sought or filing complaints with consumer agencies or the Minister/Senior Officials of the Department of Education.

It should be noted that word-of-mouth communication are very influential in directing the responses of future clients. Complaints are customer feedback that should never be taken lightly. Dissatisfied clients talk to more people than satisfied clients, whilst the dissatisfied clients never always make the complaints to the company (Bearden, 1995: 123). Since new customers are more difficult to find, it is vital to maintain satisfaction amongst existing clients.

2.6 SERVQUAL METHODOLOGY

Advancing service quality research is vital in enabling service companies, such as Colleges, to identify and implement strategies to meet consumer expectations. Research in service quality and the related area of customer satisfaction, was first pioneered by European researchers. However, the foundation for the more recent conceptual work can be credited to the American academics Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml. Parasuraman et al (1985; 1988) proposed a conceptual framework for capturing the criteria utilized by consumers when evaluating service quality. These evaluative criteria were then applied within a gap model where consumers compared their prior expectations of what service should be provided with their post-experience perceptual reality. This was later formed into a multi-item scale, entitled SERVQUAL, for measuring consumer perceptions of service quality (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Specifically, Parasuraman et al. (1988) identified five distinct components of service quality: assurance, empathy, reliability, responsiveness, and tangibles and these would be expounded upon later.

Unlike the quality of goods, which can be measured objectively by such indicators as durability and number of defects, service quality is abstract and elusive because of three features unique to services: intangibility, heterogeneity and inseparability of production and consumption.

The SERVQUAL methodology is primarily developed to measure satisfaction with service industries. The method is well known in Total Quality Management circles. The fundamental approach is that it is necessary to measure the difference between consumer's prior expectations of a service and the quality of the service actually experienced. The method is premised upon the gap to be derived between clients' expectations of a service and their perceptions of a service as actually experienced.

Research has shown that regardless of the type of service, consumers use basically similar criteria in evaluating service quality. The criteria falls into 10 key categories, which are labelled 'service quality determinants'. According to Williams (2002:170) these ten determinants are:

- **Reliability**, which involves consistency of performance and dependability. It means that the firm performs the service right the first time and that the firm honours its promises.
- **Responsiveness** concerns the willingness or readiness of employees to provide service. It involves timeliness of service.
- **Competence** means possession of the required skills and knowledge to perform the service.
- **Access** involves approachability and ease of contact.
- **Courtesy** involves politeness, respect, consideration and friendliness of contact personnel (including receptionists, telecom operators and administrative staff as well as management and lecturers).
- **Communication** means keeping customers informed in a language they can understand and listening to customers.
- **Credibility** involves trustworthiness, believability and honesty. It involves having the customer's best interests at heart.
- **Security** is the freedom from danger, risk or doubt.
- **Understanding/knowing the customer** involves making the effort to understand the customer's needs.

- *Tangibles* include the physical evidence of the service like physical facilities and appearance of personnel.

2.6.1 The Service Quality Model

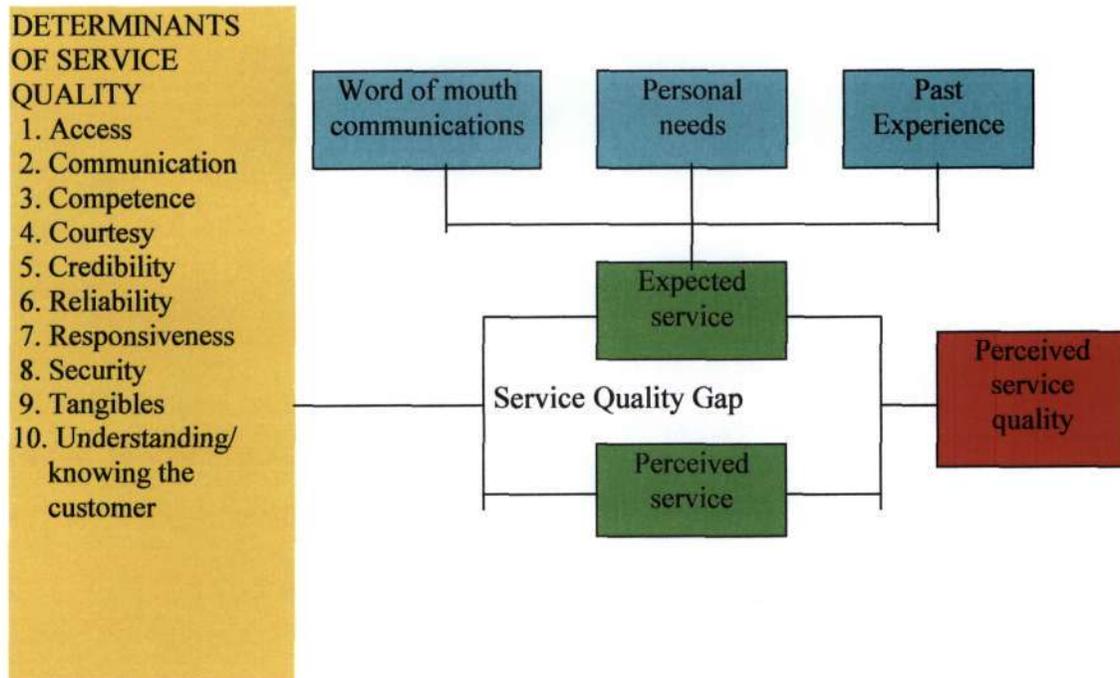
Due to the intangible nature of services, service quality is generally more difficult to measure than product quality. In their initial paper, Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (PZB) (1985) proposed a conceptual framework for service quality. This model was based on the interpretation of qualitative data from a wide range of exploratory research (focus groups and in-depth executive interviews) performed in four service organisations (Cook & Verma, April 2002: 5). Their research revealed 10 dimensions (which would be expounded upon below) cutting across different types of services that customers use in forming expectations and perceptions of services received. PZB also identified five gaps on the service provider's side that potentially affect customer perceptions of service quality.

2.6.1.1 Determinants of Service Quality

Only two of the ten determinants, tangibles and credibility, can be known in advance of purchase, the other determinants are often only evidenced once a service transaction has taken place. While customers may possess some information based on their experience or on other customers' evaluations, they are likely to re-evaluate these determinants each time a purchase is made because of the heterogeneity of services. Two of the determinants, competence and security, consumers cannot evaluate even after purchase and consumption.

Figure 2.2 indicates that perceived service quality is the result of the consumer's comparison of expected service with perceived service. It is quite possible that the relative importance of the 10 service quality determinants in moulding consumer expectations may differ from their relative importance with regard to consumer perceptions of the service delivered.

FIGURE 2.2. Determinants of Perceived Service Quality



Source: Cullen, 2000: 2.

Since the introduction of the conceptual service quality model, PZB published the 22-item instrument referred to as SERVQUAL (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1988). The original intention was to provide a tool for assessing customer perceptions of service quality in service and retailing organisations. Perceived service quality is the degree and direction of discrepancy between customers' perceptions and expectations. Customer expectations are the standards or reference points for performance against which service experiences are compared and are often developed in terms of what the customer believes should happen. The gap between expectations and perceptions may be analysed with reference to five dimensions. An examination of the content of the ten service quality items allows for a construction of five dimensions in SERVQUAL, of which three are from the original list of items (*tangibles*, *reliability*, *responsiveness*) and two are combined dimensions: (*assurance* including communication, credibility, security, competence and courtesy; and *empathy* including

understanding/ knowing customers and access). The final list of five dimensions and the concise definitions are as follows:

- ✦ *Tangibles*: physical facilities, equipment and appearance of personnel.
- ✦ *Reliability*: ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.
- ✦ *Responsiveness*: willingness to help customers and provide prompt service.
- ✦ *Assurance*: knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence.
- ✦ *Empathy*: caring, individualised attention that the organisation provides to the consumers of its services.

The last two dimensions contain items representing seven original dimensions: communication, credibility, security, competence, courtesy, understanding/knowing customers, and access that did not remain distinct after the two stages of scale purification. Therefore, while SERVQUAL has only five distinct dimensions, they capture facets of all 10 originally conceptualised dimensions.

In the questionnaires the dimensions are divided into a 22-item, 7-point scale. Dimensions may not be regarded as equally important. Each client may allocate points out of 100 to each of the five dimensions so that the instrument is sensitive to an individual's perceptions of the relative importance of each dimension.

SERVQUAL has a variety of potential applications. It can help a wide range of service and retailing organisations in assessing consumer expectations about and perceptions of service quality. It can also help in pinpointing areas requiring managerial attention and action to improve service quality.

Application of SERVQUAL can be used to make comparisons globally over time. Moreover, it is possible to ascertain those elements of services in which the gap between expectations and

perceptions is widest. The application of this instrument and the results of measurement allow possibilities of more specific management action to redress perceived shortcomings. Although well-developed and extensively used in the USA, studies are only just commencing in utilising the methodology elsewhere in the world.

The SERVQUAL instrument remains as one of the most widely used approaches to measure service quality. The instrument has been used in a variety of service scenarios across the world. However, it has been subject to much criticism. The dimensionality and reliability of SERVQUAL has been the subject of many studies (Carman 1990; Cronin and Taylor 1992; Babakus and Boller 1992; Cronin and Taylor 1994; Van Dyke, Prybutok, and Kapelman 1999). Since the inception of the original instrument, Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1991; 1994) and other researchers have produced many refinements, reassessments and rebuttals to criticism (Chang, Chen & Hsu, 2002: 5).

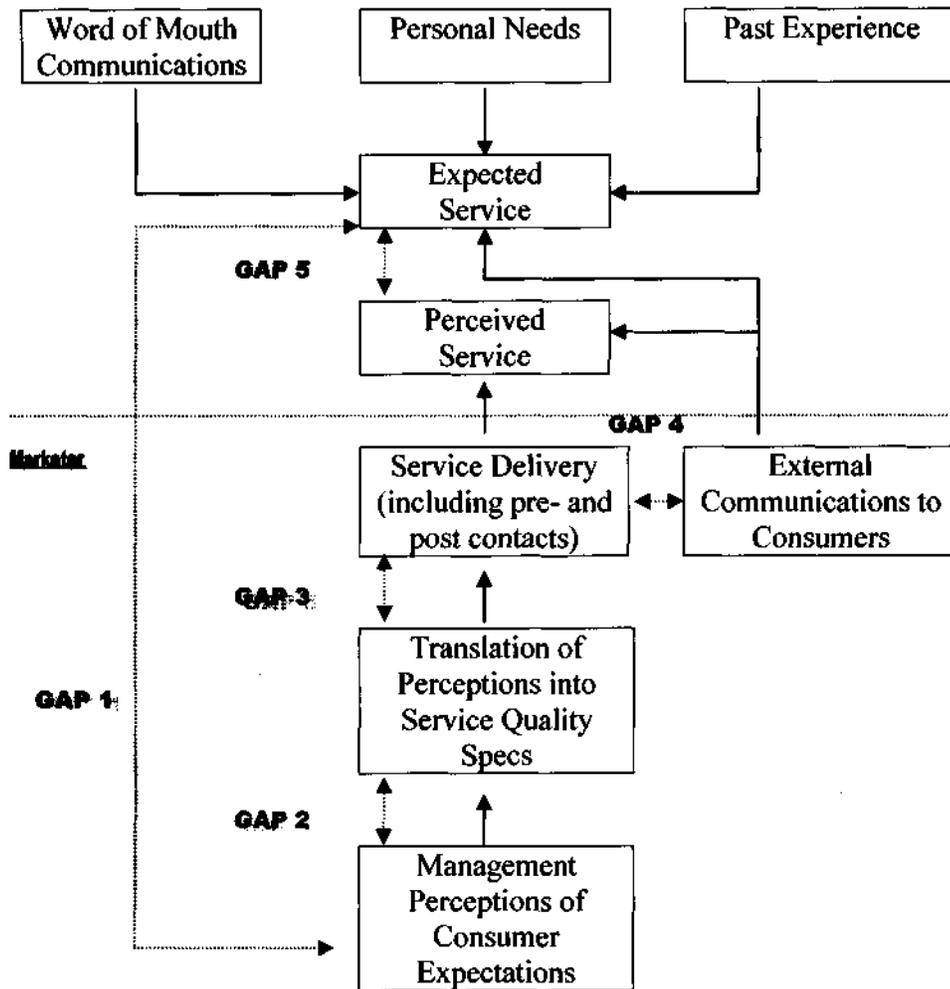
2.6.2 The Gap Model

The Service Quality model is focussed on meeting these expectations and retaining customers: “Quality Service is a competitive necessity for business and service organisations,” according to Altman and Hermon (1998: 53). They go on to say that assessing service quality is the first step in retaining customers in today’s competitive environment. When customers are faced with a variety of alternative channels of being educated; from other FET Colleges, private colleges, e-learning institutions and correspondence colleges, the public FET College sector would have to re-examine the range and quality of services they provide and develop systems for consultation and co-operation with their customer and stakeholder groups. They need to ensure that their services both meet customer needs and customer expectations to the highest degree, that is they need to compete both in terms of service quality and customer satisfaction.

In the SERVQUAL model quality is defined as 'perceived quality' rather than 'objective quality', that is it is based on the customer's perception of what they can expect from a service and what they believe they have received, rather than any 'objective' standards determined by a professional group or in conventional performance measurement. The model is best known for its definition of gaps between customer expectations and perceptions. Parasuraman et al (1985) defined five gaps from their research data (figure 2.3 reflects the gaps graphically):

- ✚ Gap 1. The discrepancy between customer's expectations and what are management perceptions of these expectations.
- ✚ Gap2. The discrepancy between management's perceptions of customers' expectations and service quality specifications.
- ✚ Gap 3. The discrepancy between service quality specifications and actual service delivery.
- ✚ Gap 4. The discrepancy between actual service delivery and what is communicated to Customers about it.
- ✚ Gap 5. The discrepancy between customers' expected service and perceived service delivered.

Figure 2.3 A conceptual model of service quality.



Source: Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V.A. and Berry, L.L., 1985: 44.

The first four gaps contribute to Gap 5, that is the Gap between customer expectations and customer perceptions of service received and it is this last gap which will be the main focus of this study.

Whist all gaps would be covered there would be more interest in Gap 3, the discrepancy between service quality specifications and actual service delivery. Gap 1 would also be of

interest, that is, the discrepancy between customers' expectations and management's perceptions of these expectations.

The relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction is a complex one. Service quality is defined as a component of customer satisfaction, and vice versa. Herson and Altman (1999: 4), for example, cite a definition of satisfaction derived from a number of marketing experts, namely "the emotional reaction to a specific transaction or service encounter", but they go on to say that the satisfaction may or may not be directly related to the performance of the company on a specific occasion. As they explain, "a customer may receive an answer to a query but be unsatisfied because of an angry or upsetting encounter. Conversely, although the query might remain unanswered, another customer might feel satisfied because the encounter was pleasant, and the helper interested and polite."

Satisfaction may involve long-term perceptions as well as short-term perceptions, and a personal reaction to service built up over a number of transactions of varying quality. In addition it would seem that in the complex interchange of customer expectations and perceptions across the services delivered by an organisation, customer satisfaction at the micro level concerning an individual service will contribute to the dimensions of service quality; that is tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and at a global or macro view of quality of service derived from all the services with which the customer has interacted, and integrating the five dimensions of service quality, will contribute to the overall satisfaction with the organisation.

While some organisations are content with focussing on simply achieving customer satisfaction, gaining and maintaining customer loyalty constitutes the ultimate desire of many service providers. Loyal customers buy more, are willing to spend more, are easier to reach, and act as enthusiastic ambassadors for the institution (Harris & Goode, 2004: 5).

This approach has several advantages compared with a traditional customer satisfaction survey. The main point is that it is possible to weigh the importance that consumers attach to one element of a service compared to the other and becomes valuable as it can be used across a range of service industries. An example is that a researcher could hypothesise that a factor such as 'assurance' is more important to customers in the educational field than purchasers of insurance. Also it is possible to rate expectations against perceptions on each of the five dimensions outlined. Hence SERVQUAL is a powerful managerial tool as well as a research instrument as it can clarify fairly precisely those dimensions on the scale in which the gap between expectations and perceptions is widest. Manager's can extend this 'gap analysis' and even make comparisons between similar sub-units eg. different campuses within the College. Cook & Heath (2002: 1) noted that SERVQUAL serves as a useful tool at the local level.

2.7 THE MEASURING INSTRUMENT

In accordance with SERVQUAL: A Multiple-Item Scale For Measuring Consumer Perceptions of Service Quality by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (Volume 64, Number 1, 1988), the original instrument states that the following questions should be asked in the measuring instrument (Odayar, June 2003: 41-44);

Directions: This survey deals with your opinion of services. Please show the extent to which you think firms offering services should possess the features described by each statement. Do this by picking one of the numbers from 1 to 7 next to each statement. If you strongly agree that these firms should possess a feature, circle the number 7. If you strongly disagree that these firms should possess a feature, circle 1. If your feelings are not strong, circle one of the numbers in the middle. There are no right or wrong answers, all we are interested in is a number that best shows your expectations about firms offering services (E stands for EXPECTATIONS).

- E1. They should have up-to-date equipment.
- E2. Their physical facilities should be visually appealing.
- E3. Their employees should be well dressed and appear neat.
- E4. The appearance of the physical facilities of these firms should be in-keeping with the type of services provided.
- E5. When a firm promises to do something by a certain time, they should do so.
- E6. When customers have problems, these firms should be sympathetic and reassuring.
- E7. These firms should be dependable.
- E8. They should provide their services at the time they promise to do so.
- E9. They should keep their records accurately.
- E10. They shouldn't be expected to tell customers exactly when services will be performed.
- E11. It is not realistic for customers to expect prompt service from employees of these firms.
- E12. The employees don't always have to be willing to help customers.
- E13. It is okay if they are too busy to respond to customer requests promptly.
- E14. Customers should be able to trust employees of these firms.
- E15. Customers should be able to feel confident in their transactions with these firms' employees.
- E16. Their employees should be polite.
- E17. Their employees should get adequate support from these firms to do their jobs well.
- E18. These firms should not be expected to give customers individual attention.
- E19. Employees of these firms cannot be expected to give customers personal attention.
- E20. It is unrealistic to expect employees to know what the needs of their customers are.
- E21. It is unrealistic to expect these firms to have their customers' best interests at heart.
- E22. They shouldn't be expected to have operating hours convenient to all their customers.

Directions: The following set of statements relate to your feelings about XYZ. For each statement, please show the extent to which you believe XYZ has the feature described by the statement. Once again, circling a 7 means that you strongly agree that XYZ has that feature, and circling a 1 means that you strongly disagree. You may circle any of the numbers in the

middle that show how strong your feelings are. There are no right or wrong answers, all we are interested in is a number that best shows your perceptions about XYZ (P stands for PERCEPTION).

- P1. XYZ has up-to-date equipment.
- P2. XYZ's physical facilities are visually appealing.
- P3. XYZ's employees are well dressed and appear neat.
- P4. The appearance of the physical facilities of XYZ is in keeping with the type of services provided.
- P5. When XYZ promises to do something by a certain time, it does so.
- P6. When you have problems, XYZ is sympathetic and reassuring.
- P7. XYZ is dependable.
- P8. XYZ provides its services at the time it promises to do so.
- P9. XYZ keeps its records accurately.
- P10. XYZ does not tell customers exactly when services will be performed.
- P11. You do not receive prompt service from XYZ's employees.
- P12. Employees of XYZ are not always willing to help customers.
- P13. Employees of XYZ are too busy to respond to customer requests promptly.
- P14. You can trust employees of XYZ.
- P15. You feel sure in your transactions with XYZ's employees.
- P16. Employees of XYZ are polite.
- P17. Employees get adequate support from XYZ to do their jobs well.
- P18. XYZ does not give you individual attention.
- P19. Employees of XYZ do not give you personal attention.
- P20. Employees of XYZ do not know what your needs are.
- P21. XYZ does not have your best interests at heart.
- P22. XYZ does not have operating hours convenient to all their customers.

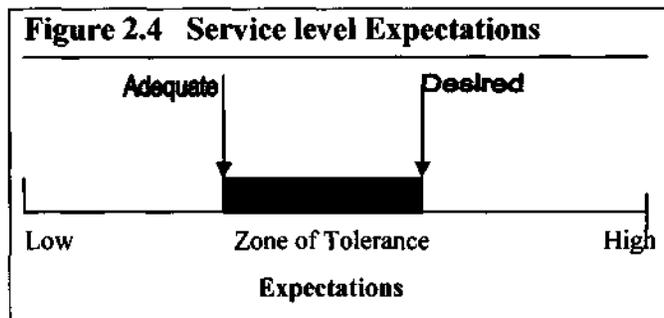
A seven-point scale ranging from “Strongly Agree” (7) to “Strongly Disagree” (1), with no verbal labels for the intermediate scale points (ie. 2 through 6), accompanies each statement. Also, the statements were in random order in the questionnaire.

2.8 CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS OF SERVICE

In order to provide a superior service it is important to understand customer expectations, as customers compare what they perceive to receive with the expectations that they had. In essence it is considered that service expectations have two levels: desired and adequate (Parasuraman et al, 1991: 39). It is asserted that the adequate level of service is that which the customer finds acceptable. However, the desired level of service is one that he/she would like to experience.

2.8.1 The Zone of Tolerance

The separation between the desired and the adequate service level is the zone of tolerance and this is depicted in figure 2.4. The zone of tolerance varies between customers and between situations, even for the same customer. Parasuraman et al (1991) argue that the zone of tolerance is likely to differ for the outcome dimension of reliability and the process dimensions of tangibles, assurance, responsiveness and empathy. The point is that reliability is considered the core of service delivery and hence customers are less willing to compromise on it. Thus the zone of tolerance for the outcome dimension of reliability and the process dimensions of service would typically be reflected in figure 2.4. Hence firms and the College have a greater chance of successfully exceeding customers’ expectations in the process dimensions than with the outcome dimension.



Source: Parasuraman, A., Berry, L. L. and Zeithaml, V. A., 1991: 42.

The zone of tolerance can be influenced by the following factors.

Customer experience: Experienced customers are likely to have higher service expectations and to voice their disapproval if they are dissatisfied than new customers. An example is a student that has studied at another educational institution with perceptions of more superior services and hence would have higher expectations from the College.

Affiliated party: The expectations may rise if customers view that the service they receive will impact on their service delivery to others. Employed students, such as apprentices or artisans may have a higher expectation of service based on the fact that their performance at College would influence whether they get promoted or not.

Number of service alternatives: The numbers of service providers also affect the level of customer expectations. The zone of tolerance is smaller if there they feel that there are many service providers, such as other public and private FET Colleges. If the choices are limited then customers effectively settle for less (Parasuraman et al, 1991: 43).

Emergency and service-failure situations: Emergency and service-failure situations also affect the adequate service level temporarily and this narrows the zone of tolerance. A service-

failure situation relates to the fact that students may react more strongly if a lecturer is absent from class for a protracted period and they were not taught, or emergency situations where transport is not arranged for a scheduled field trip. This would tend to raise the customer's adequate level of service temporarily and reduce the zone of tolerance.

Ultimately, by recognising that customer expectations exists at a dual level and is constantly changing, and realising the factors that drive the change, may assist managers to narrow the gap between expectations and perceptions and even exceed customer expectations.

2.9 SUMMARY

The thinking of most, if not all FET Colleges, especially the government-funded institutions is to offer what is available and in a manner of take it or leave it. However, it is becoming increasingly apparent that to be competitive in today's business environment requires quality of service from the providers. Very few organisations listen to the needs of the customer, or even undertake research and development to improve on what they offer at present.

Advancing service quality research is vital in enabling service companies, such as Colleges, to identify and implement strategies to meet consumer expectations. The foundation for the more recent conceptual work can be credited to the American academics Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml. They proposed a conceptual framework for capturing the criteria utilized by consumers when evaluating service quality. Their SERVQUAL methodology is primarily developed to measure satisfaction with service industries. The method is well known in Total Quality Management circles.

SERVQUAL has a variety of potential applications. It can help a wide range of service and retailing organisations in assessing consumer expectations and perceptions of service quality. It can also help in pinpointing areas requiring managerial attention and action to improve service quality. In the SERVQUAL model quality is defined as 'perceived quality'

rather than 'objective quality', that is it is based on the customer's perception of what they can expect from a service and what they believe they have received, rather than any 'objective' standards determined by a professional group or in conventional performance measurement. The model is best known for its definition of gaps between customer expectations and perceptions. Chapter three will address the research methodology to be adopted in conducting the research to evaluate the levels of customer satisfaction at the College.

CHAPTER THREE – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

No longer considered “passive service recipients”, there are expectations by service users to be treated as a customer, with the associated demands for quality and satisfaction from the service they receive. In line with the principles of inclusion, equity and empowerment of service customers, we aim to investigate customer perceptions of quality of service at Coastal KZN FET College, sold in a competitive market and include students’ from a broad community, including learners with special education needs.

3.2 PROBLEM DEFINITION

The question arises as to **“How can a College develop the right service concept for their target segment of students?”**

3.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study have been identified as follows:

- To ascertain the customer satisfaction level at the Coastal KZN FET College using a measurement scale.
- To determine whether different levels of service quality are required by students based on gender and age.
- To determine whether different levels of service quality exists between the six campuses in terms of the dimensions identified.
- To make recommendations to the college to improve the systems towards ultimately implementing a quality assurance programme.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

A descriptive study would be conducted as the problem is structured and well understood. This type of research design is a cross-sectional analytical survey method as the data represents a snapshot of that point in time (Cooper & Schindler, 2001: 149). It would have been ideal to apply a longitudinal study but time constraints prevent this.

The SERVQUAL instrument had been identified within the literature review as a broad-based instrument of the evaluation of quality across service industries. It is not our contention to test the validity of this statement, but to utilise the instrument as a tried-and-tested method of determining customer satisfaction within service industries, such as a FET College. A Gap analysis would be conducted at the end of the study, as management would also be required to complete the questionnaire, namely the Rector and Campus Managers to determine their expectations of quality and their perceptions of quality to comment on Gaps 1 and 2 of the Gaps Model. Gaps 3 and 4 would result from the broader application of the research questionnaire, with Gap 5 being a combination of the gaps outlined earlier.

3.4.1 SAMPLING

The particular purpose of the research greatly influences the sampling process and the population to be studied is determined by the issue of interest. It is noted that a survey cannot be conducted of the entire population and hence a smaller sub-group would be determined by the different divisions of the College, based on the various campuses. Inferences would be made from the sample population.

3.4.1.1 Probability versus Non-probability sampling

The sampling technique to be used would be probability sampling as each student has a known, non-zero chance of being selected. In order to enhance the objectivity of the research we would apply the stratified random sampling technique.

3.4.1.2 Sampling frame

We will divide the population into various FET college sector users, in terms of type of study (full time or part-time) and course studied. This would be further broken down into different campuses (six in total) as they may experience a different level of service and hence reflects different levels of customer satisfaction. This would require that a homogenous strata be created from these groups. Random sampling would then be applied to each group.

3.4.1.3 Sample size

The population size (after the delimitations have been applied) is six campuses, and the sampling per campus would be based on the different divisions within each campus and the number of FTE's per campus, per division. A sample size of 300 questionnaires was chosen and would be based on the stratified random sampling of the population of campuses within the College. A smaller sample size could be chosen as the stratification process is accurate, and as such will improve the accuracy of our various population parameters.

The stratified sample would be based on the Full Time Equivalentents (FTE's) for 2003, per campus and the stratification process is reflected in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Sample size and profile

Campus	Division	RAW FTE's	Frequency	%age	Sample of Questionnaires	Theory		Part Time	Practicals	
						Male	Female		Male	Female
Durban	Engineering Studies	1028.85	19.52	25.29	53	30	18	5		
	Utility Studies	288.53	19.78	76.78	15	3	12			
	Skills courses	0.73	18.93	0.19	0	0	0			
	Sub-total	1318.11			0	0	0			
					0	0	0			
MASC	Maths	78	19.50	50.00	4	2	2			
	Science	78	19.50	50.00	4	2	2			
	Sub-total	156			0	0	0			
					0	0	0			
Swinton	Engineering Studies	1183.49	19.52	29.09	61	30	13		13	5
	Business Studies	451	19.52	51.34	23	4	17	2		
	Utility Studies	87.24	19.78	23.22	4	1	3			
	Skills courses	98.32	18.93	25.97	5	1	4			
	Sub-total	1820.05			0	0	0			
					0	0	0			
Umbumbulu	Engineering Studies	66.87	19.52	1.64	3	2	1			
	Business Studies	59	19.52	6.72	3	1	2			
	Skills courses	147.98	18.93	39.08	8	4	4			
	Sub-total	273.85			0	0	0			
					0	0	0			
Umlazi BB	Business Studies	368.5	19.52	41.95	19	7	12			
	Skills courses	84.94	18.93	22.43	4	1	3			
	Sub-total	453.44			0	0	0			
					0	0	0			
Umlazi V	Engineering Studies	1789.06	19.52	43.98	92	67	22	3	17	7
	Skills courses	46.66	18.93	12.32	2	1	1			
	Sub-total	1835.72			0	0	0			
					0	0	0			
	TOTAL	5857.17			300	156	116	10	30	12

Engineering Studies	4068.27
Business Studies	878.5
Utility Studies	375.77
Skills Courses	378.63
Maths & Science	156
	5857.17

% of total	No. of Q	
69.4	208.38	208
15.0	45	45
6.42	19.26	19
6.46	19.38	20
2.66	7.98	8
100	300	300

3.4.1.4 Sample Profile

The sample profile applicable to the study would be male and female students based on the demographics of the institution. Furthermore, the FTEs' relevant to the respective study units/divisions at the six campuses would be considered. Table 3.1 detailed the profile of the survey undertaken.

3.4.2 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The customers' expectations and perceptions would be determined using analysis of the questionnaire. It has been noted that a framework has been developed against which customer views on quality can be specifically measured via questioning on the five variables of the SERVQUAL instrument; namely tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy and a sixth variable of value. Use of the structured questionnaire allowed for quantitative data collection, which could be analysed. This method was selected over a qualitative approach, as definitions of quality would be harder to control under the later method.

The questionnaire was also selected over an interview method due to time availability.

3.4.2.1 Questionnaire Design

The first section of the questionnaire collected some demographic information of the customers participating in the data collection process. This part was kept to a minimum to ensure that the questionnaire did not become too long and time consuming to complete. However, the data collected can allow for analysis and inferences.

The design of the second section of the questionnaire was based on the SERVQUAL methodology, utilised by Parasuraman et al (1988), in their multi item scale for measuring consumer perceptions of quality. Four to five questions were asked on each of the five dimensions, namely:

Tangibles: Questions 1 to 5.

Reliability: Questions 6 to 10

Responsiveness: Questions 11 to 14

Assurance: Questions 15 to 18

Empathy: Questions 19 to 22

Added to this was a variable identified by the Focus Group, that of 'Value' to the customer.

Section D

Value: Questions 1 to 5

Particular emphasis was given to the wording of the questions to ensure that it is clearly understood. In other words, the principles of “plain English” were applied.

The questions that were asked were close-ended so that the data received was quantifiable. Questions were also carefully crafted for specific data responses and the questions were coded in a manner that allowed for easy scientific measure.

3.4.2.2 Pre-Testing the questionnaire

A group of eleven Student Representative Council members were used as a focus group and the session was valuable in testing whether all the dimensions of the SERVQUAL instrument were applicable and whether additional dimensions would apply (refer to Appendices A, B and C). The questionnaire was adjusted accordingly in terms of the six dimensions identified.

Further, prior to implementation, the questionnaire was tested using a group of Student Representative Council members and a Campus Manager. This group was required to comment on any aspects of the questionnaire with regard to comprehension, clarity of instruction, time taken to complete and any other matters they consider important in undertaking such a study. Questionnaires circulated to this group were returned to the researcher for adjustments to be made prior to the wider application, but these statistics were not included in the final results presented.

3.4.2.3 Questionnaire Completion

Administration of the questionnaire also required careful attention. It was important that the students were not coerced into completing the questionnaire or their privacy invaded. In order to achieve this, the following was adhered to:

- ❖ The questionnaire clearly indicated the purpose of conducting the research and to introduce the questionnaire to the students.
- ❖ No information was contained on the questionnaire that could identify the student. The only personal information requested was gender, age group, highest education level attained, full-time or part-time student status and home language. This was done to allow for some comparison on the way measurement of quality is prioritised by different customer groups.
- ❖ Coding of the questionnaire allowed for a link to a particular service quality dimension and to allow for campus specific analysis of the data, without any knowledge of who was completing the questionnaire.
- ❖ Questionnaires were distributed via the Campus Managers, Heads of Division, Portfolio Managers, Senior Lecturers and Lecturers at the various campuses, and not directly by the researcher. However, assistance was offered by the researcher to clarify points when the questionnaire was being completed.

The Management of the College, namely the Rector and Campus Managers were also required to complete the questionnaire in order to determine their expectations and perceptions of the services being provided by the College. This would assist in Gaps 1 and 2 of the Gap Model. Information regarding Gaps 3 and 4 of the Gap Model would be extracted from the student data analysis. Gap 5 would result from an analysis of the four Gaps detailed earlier.

3.4.2.4 Question of Reliability

It is imperative to test reliability, as it is a necessary contributor to the validity of the research (Cooper & Schindler, 2003: 236). The simplest measure of internal consistency is the Split-half Cronbach's alpha. The split-half technique is used when the measuring instrument has many

similar questions and statements to which the subject can respond. It measures the degree to which instrument items are homogenous and indicate the same underlying construct (s) and is free from random and unstable error. Only the alpha (Cronbach's alpha) is used.

Odayar (2003), in his studies of the "...levels of customer satisfaction within the waste disposal industry", concluded that reliability coefficients were consistently lower where negatively worded items were utilised. He also cites the fact that the reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alphas), were consistently lower in the original Parasuraman et al study (1998) where negatively worded statements were utilised. Hence to improve reliability with the project, only positively worded statements would be enunciated.

Cronbach's alpha would be used to test the reliability of the survey.

3.4.2.5 Question of Validity

In order to assess the validity of the research, it is contended that for the measurement to be valid the observed score must be equal to the true score (Ghauri & Gronhaug, 2002: 68). However, since our research is a cross-sectional analytical survey, we do not have the privilege of conducting the research multiple times and hence we will consider other forms of validity.

- Face validity – The instrument used to test the expectations and perceptions of the clients of the Coastal KZN FET College is a tried and tested instrument and valid despite criticisms and adjustments.
- Divergent validity – The instrument, due to its clear delineation of constructs based on the five dimensions identified, measures what is intended, without ambiguity.

Factor analysis and correlations would be used to test the validity of the survey. Factor analysis looks for patterns among the variables to discover if an underlying combination of the original

variables can summarize the original set (Cooper & Schindler: 2001: 613). The objective of factor analysis is to reduce to a manageable number many variables that belong together and have overlapping characteristics. Factor analysis is recognized as an independent technique where each factor is considered in relation to all others (Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2002: 165).

3.5 HYPOTHESIS

The hypothesis for this research project would be:

Ho – There is no significant difference between customer perceptions and expectations of service quality at Coastal KZN FET College.

H1 – There is a significant difference between customer perceptions and expectations of service quality at Coastal KZN FET College.

The T-Test would be used to test the hypothesis.

3.6 MEASUREMENT

There are various techniques for analysing research data, ranging in complexity from straightforward frequency distributions, means and percentages to complex multivariate statistical tests. We will use both descriptive and inferential statistics in our research.

The nominal data collected provided information on categories such as gender, the various divisions within campuses and sub-divisions, which are mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive.

3.6.1 Descriptive statistics

A statistical descriptive analysis would be carried out on the nominal and ordinal data using frequencies and percentages; means and standard deviations.

3.6.2 Inferential statistics

Inferential statistics can be used to comment on the various dimensions, as they exist at the different campuses, groups and even sub-groups of the population. Different statistical techniques would be utilised to present the analysis, such as T-Tests and means to obtain the SERVQUAL scores. The findings would concentrate on the SERVQUAL instrument and comments would be made regarding the average scores between students and management using histograms in chapter five. The hypothesis would be tested using the T-Test. Reliability would be tested using Cronbach's Alpha and the validity of the research would be tested using factor analysis and correlations.

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The following ethical considerations would be applied as the research has implications for the image and positioning of the College in the minds of the general public:

- ❖ There would be a clear distinction between the role of researcher and that of being a member of management at the college.
- ❖ There would no misuse of any data obtained through the research by:
 - Ensuring that consumers can be completely confident of the confidentiality of the answers provided.

- Providing contact arrangements for clarification of the questionnaire.
 - Careful regard being given to obtain follow up responses if fewer than required questionnaires are received.
 - Campus Managers and campus-based staff were requested to collect the data.
- ❖ Ensuring that it is clearly understood that this is the first of the type of research conducted and follow-up research may reveal different results. This research is conducted as a cross-sectional analytical survey and not a longitudinal study.

3.8 SUMMARY

In a post democratic South Africa, students have an array of avenues to study at. The success of an educational institution depends on the level of satisfaction it is able to offer to customers. As such the study aims to evaluate the level of customer satisfaction at Coastal KZN FET College. The problem definition and objectives have been clearly elucidated upon in Chapter 1 and would therefore not be repeated.

The type of study conducted was descriptive as the problem was structured and well understood. This type of research design was a cross-sectional analytical survey method as the data represents a snapshot of that point in time. Although it would have been ideal to apply a longitudinal study, time constraints prevented this.

It was not practical to survey the entire student population; hence a sample from the different divisions at the respective campuses was selected. The sampling technique used was probability sampling as each student had a known, non-zero chance of being selected. In order to enhance

the objectivity of the research the stratified random sampling technique was applied. A sample size of 300 questionnaires was selected and seven for the Campus Managers' and Rector.

The questionnaire had been pre-tested using a group of SRC students to evaluate whether all the dimensions would apply. Also the questionnaire was pre-tested on a group of SRC students and a Campus Manager and adjusted accordingly.

Descriptive and inferential statistics would be presented to comment on the findings of the survey conducted. These would lead to recommendations and conclusions from using the SERVQUAL instrument and the gap scores calculated.

CHAPTER FOUR – DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Three-hundred questionnaires were distributed to students and seven questionnaires were distributed to the management staff of the College (Rector and six Campus Managers). However, only two-hundred and sixty returns were received and the analysis would be based on this number, which includes the seven management staff. The returns varied per campus, but are sufficient to be able to interpret the findings.

4.2 QUESTIONNAIRE DATA ANALYSIS

The following statistical information was extracted from the questionnaires administered:

4.2.1 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Section A

Table 4.1 Percentage of respondents based on the sample chosen

		Respondent	
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Student	236	90.8
	SRC member	17	6.5
	Management	7	2.7
	Total	260	100.0

Table 4.1 represents the total of 260 questionnaires that could be utilised and the percentages in terms of the categories they represent. The choice of SRC members is to make sure that they are represented as they are regarded as the voice of the student body and usually more outspoken or critical in their comments.

Table 4.2 Respondents classified according to gender

		Gender	
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Male	153	58.8
	Female	107	41.2
	Total	260	100.0

Table 4.2 represents 58.8 percent of males to 41.2 percent females who completed the questionnaires and this represents a fair proportion of the student population. Seven of these respondents are however, from the management echelon of the College comprising six males and one female.

Table 4.3 Age categories of respondents

		Age	
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	15-24	216	83.1
	25-34	37	14.2
	35-44	2	.8
	45-54	2	.8
	55 & above	3	1.2
	Total	260	100.0

Table 4.3 indicates that the majority of students attending classes at the College are school-leavers who have either completed grade nine to twelve or earlier and hence make up the majority in the 15-24 age group category. The 25-34 age category represents a much smaller percentage with the percentage comprising mainly part-time students and those studying skills/practical courses. The 35-55 & above age categories represent the management of the College. The maturity level of the students to fully appreciate the quality of service is questionable, but nonetheless represents the bulk of the student population being catered for.

Table 4.4 Highest Educational Qualifications of Respondents

		Highest Educational Qualification	
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	0	2	.8
	Grade 8 and below	1	.4
	Grade 9	6	2.3
	Grade 10	7	2.7
	Grade 11	14	5.4
	Grade 12	217	83.5
	Diploma/Higher diploma	8	3.1
	Degree/Higher degree	5	1.9
	Total	260	100.0

Table 4.4 represents the educational qualifications of students. The majority of students fall between the categories of grades 8 to 12, with 3.1 percent having attained a diploma/higher diploma and 1.9 percent having attained a degree or higher degrees. The management of the College attained these degrees or higher degrees. The majority of students are matriculants and therefore well educated in understanding the content of the questionnaire.

Table 4.5 Full time and Part time status of respondents

A4

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	0	7	2.7
	Full time	244	93.8
	Part time	9	3.5
	Total	260	100.0

Table 4.5 represents the registration status of the students with 93.8 full-time and 3.5 percent part-time. This is a fair representation of the student population and hence inferences can be made to the entire population of students.

Table 4.6 Campus that the respondent represents

		Campus			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.0	1	.4	.4	.4
	Umlazi V	75	28.8	28.8	29.2
	Umlazi BB	24	9.2	9.2	38.5
	Umbumbulu	12	4.6	4.6	43.1
	Swinton	73	28.1	28.1	71.2
	MASC	8	3.1	3.1	74.2
	Durban	67	25.8	25.8	100.0
	Total	260	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.6 represents the data of fully completed questionnaires per campus. The Swinton, Durban and MASC campuses represent a high completion rate whilst the fully completed returns from the Umbumbulu, Umlazi BB and Umlazi V campuses were much lower. However, the percentages of fully completed questionnaires still warrants findings to be drawn.

Table 4.7 Home language of respondent

		Home language	
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	English	59	22.7
	Zulu	173	66.5
	Afrikaans	2	.8
	Other	26	10.0
	Total	260	100.0

Table 4.7 indicates the home language of respondents. The majority of respondents have Zulu as their home language with the 10 percent of respondents indicating primarily Xhosa as their home language. However, all respondents are taught in the English medium and as such are able to respond to the questionnaire with ease.

Table 4.8 Previous registration status of respondents

		Previous registration	
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	0	66	25.4
	NC(OR)	3	1.2
	N1-N3	123	47.3
	N4-N6	54	20.8
	Module 1-3	4	1.5
	Module 4-6	1	.4
	Maths/Science	3	1.2
	NIC/NSC	6	2.3
	Total	260	100.0

Table 4.8 represents the previous registration status of respondents at the College. The respondents that did not respond to the question or had not registered at the College previously was 25.4 percent, which included the 6 Campus Managers and the Rector. The balance, which represents the majority of students, had enrolled at the College previously and would therefore be in good position to be critical of the quality of service offered, realizing an improvement or deterioration in the quality offered.

Sections B-D

Table 4.9 Percentages in terms of responses per question EXPECTATIONS

	0		Strongly disagree		2		3		4		5		6		Strongly agree	
	Count	Table %	Count	Table %	Count	Table %	Count	Table %	Count	Table %	Count	Table %	Count	Table %	Count	Table %
B1	1	.4%	10	3.6%	4	1.5%	6	3.1%	11	4.2%	38	14.6%	23	8.8%	165	63.5%
B2	4	1.5%	9	3.5%	5	1.9%	10	3.8%	22	8.5%	48	18.5%	41	15.8%	121	46.5%
B3	1	.4%	7	2.7%	2	.8%	11	4.2%	20	7.7%	43	16.5%	51	19.6%	125	48.1%
B4	3	1.2%	26	10.0%	6	2.3%	14	5.4%	26	10.0%	34	13.1%	45	17.3%	106	40.8%
B5	7	2.7%	17	6.5%	2	.8%	13	5.0%	29	11.2%	47	18.1%	52	20.0%	93	35.8%
B6	0	.0%	5	1.9%	4	1.5%	4	1.5%	7	2.7%	22	8.5%	25	9.6%	193	74.2%
B7	4	1.5%	6	2.3%	2	.8%	5	1.9%	14	5.4%	38	14.6%	46	17.7%	145	55.8%
B8	4	1.5%	13	5.0%	5	1.9%	8	3.1%	11	4.2%	27	10.4%	41	15.8%	151	58.1%
B9	5	1.9%	13	5.0%	1	.4%	5	1.9%	13	5.0%	21	8.1%	31	11.9%	171	65.8%
B10	2	.8%	5	1.9%	3	1.2%	4	1.5%	5	1.9%	19	7.3%	35	13.5%	187	71.9%
B11	1	.4%	9	3.5%	5	1.9%	9	3.5%	22	8.5%	42	16.2%	51	19.6%	121	46.5%
B12	2	.8%	9	3.5%	8	3.1%	13	5.0%	19	7.3%	54	20.8%	53	20.4%	102	39.2%
B13	2	.8%	12	4.6%	1	.4%	6	2.3%	26	10.0%	44	16.9%	48	18.5%	121	46.5%
B14	1	.4%	13	5.0%	8	3.1%	8	3.1%	25	9.6%	41	15.8%	54	20.8%	110	42.3%
B15	2	.8%	15	5.8%	4	1.5%	4	1.5%	17	6.5%	39	15.0%	42	16.2%	137	52.7%
B16	3	1.2%	10	3.8%	4	1.5%	9	3.5%	13	5.0%	39	15.0%	38	14.6%	144	55.4%
B17	6	2.3%	14	5.4%	0	.0%	4	1.5%	15	5.8%	30	11.5%	40	15.4%	151	58.1%
B18	2	.8%	6	2.3%	2	.8%	6	2.3%	10	3.8%	25	9.6%	49	18.8%	160	61.5%
B19	1	.4%	29	11.2%	7	2.7%	6	2.3%	26	10.0%	30	11.5%	39	15.0%	122	46.9%
B20	2	.8%	8	3.1%	2	.8%	11	4.2%	15	5.8%	33	12.7%	60	23.1%	129	49.6%
B21	2	.8%	11	4.2%	1	.4%	11	4.2%	21	8.1%	47	18.1%	54	20.8%	113	43.5%
B22	1	.4%	11	4.2%	6	2.3%	9	3.5%	21	8.1%	30	11.5%	51	19.6%	131	50.4%

Table 4.9 represents the percentages of responses for each of the five dimensions in terms of questions 1 to 22. All questions reflect a high tendency that the respondents strongly agree with the statements in terms of expectations that a College offering a high level of service quality should possess. Although some questions reflect less than 50% in the last column the majority of scores are close to 5/6 in these respective columns indicating a high level of expectations.

Table 4.10 Percentages in terms of responses per question - PERCEPTIONS

	0		Strongly disagree		2		3		4		5		6		Strongly agree	
	Count	Table %	Count	Table %	Count	Table %	Count	Table %	Count	Table %	Count	Table %	Count	Table %	Count	Table %
C1	0	.0%	86	33.1%	24	9.2%	21	8.1%	26	10.0%	31	11.9%	27	10.4%	45	17.3%
C2	1	.4%	61	23.5%	37	14.2%	27	10.4%	38	14.6%	36	13.8%	27	10.4%	33	12.7%
C3	2	.8%	32	12.3%	12	4.6%	25	9.6%	51	19.6%	39	15.0%	33	12.7%	66	25.4%
C4	5	1.9%	119	45.8%	27	10.4%	29	11.2%	29	11.2%	21	8.1%	10	3.8%	20	7.7%
C5	2	.8%	91	35.0%	24	9.2%	37	14.2%	33	12.7%	28	10.8%	17	6.5%	28	10.8%
C6	2	.8%	27	10.4%	19	7.3%	23	8.8%	60	23.1%	31	11.9%	30	11.5%	68	26.2%
C7	3	1.2%	30	11.5%	18	6.9%	26	10.0%	56	21.5%	49	18.8%	33	12.7%	45	17.3%
C8	3	1.2%	23	8.8%	11	4.2%	22	8.5%	44	16.9%	48	18.5%	48	18.5%	61	23.5%
C9	4	1.5%	53	20.4%	17	6.5%	20	7.7%	38	14.6%	41	15.8%	39	15.0%	48	18.5%
C10	5	1.9%	21	8.1%	13	5.0%	13	5.0%	38	14.6%	22	8.5%	47	18.1%	101	38.8%
C11	1	.4%	29	11.2%	17	6.5%	25	9.6%	46	17.7%	39	15.0%	43	16.5%	60	23.1%
C12	4	1.5%	31	11.9%	13	5.0%	25	9.6%	42	16.2%	58	22.3%	46	17.7%	41	15.8%
C13	0	.0%	58	22.3%	34	13.1%	30	11.5%	35	13.5%	35	13.5%	27	10.4%	41	15.8%
C14	2	.8%	36	13.8%	16	6.2%	31	11.9%	33	12.7%	37	14.2%	49	18.8%	56	21.5%
C15	4	1.5%	37	14.2%	9	3.5%	21	8.1%	42	16.2%	50	19.2%	39	15.0%	58	22.3%
C16	3	1.2%	29	11.2%	13	5.0%	31	11.9%	38	14.6%	55	21.2%	43	16.5%	48	18.5%
C17	6	2.3%	32	12.3%	14	5.4%	22	8.5%	42	16.2%	52	20.0%	44	16.9%	48	18.5%
C18	5	1.9%	41	15.8%	17	6.5%	26	10.0%	54	20.8%	43	16.5%	37	14.2%	37	14.2%
C19	5	1.9%	96	36.9%	22	8.5%	29	11.2%	43	16.5%	27	10.4%	16	6.2%	22	8.5%
C20	2	.8%	36	13.8%	16	6.2%	26	10.0%	48	18.5%	57	21.9%	44	16.9%	31	11.9%
C21	4	1.5%	57	21.9%	14	5.4%	38	14.6%	40	15.4%	41	15.8%	39	15.0%	27	10.4%
C22	2	.8%	33	12.7%	15	5.8%	18	6.9%	35	13.5%	39	15.0%	37	14.2%	81	31.2%

Table 4.10 presents the percentages of responses for each of the five dimensions in terms of perceptions. The percentages are fairly evenly spread with the exception of questions C4 and C5, where the respondents strongly disagree with the statements and question C10, where the respondents strongly agree with the statement. Hence the respondents have a fairly moderate perception of the quality of service offered by the College.

Table 4.11 Percentages in terms of responses per question - EXPECTATIONS

	0		Strongly disagree		2		3		4		5		6		Strongly agree	
	Count	Table %	Count	Table %	Count	Table %	Count	Table %	Count	Table %	Count	Table %	Count	Table %	Count	Table %
DE1	2	.8%	9	3.5%	5	1.9%	5	1.9%	40	15.4%	32	12.3%	31	11.9%	136	52.3%
DE2	4	1.5%	10	3.8%	2	.8%	10	3.8%	20	7.7%	35	13.5%	29	11.2%	150	57.7%
DE3	3	1.2%	14	5.4%	3	1.2%	7	2.7%	23	8.8%	48	18.5%	57	21.9%	105	40.4%
DE4	2	.8%	10	3.8%	2	.8%	14	5.4%	14	5.4%	35	13.5%	59	22.7%	124	47.7%
DE5	2	.8%	10	3.8%	4	1.5%	4	1.5%	17	6.5%	30	11.5%	44	16.9%	149	57.3%

Table 4.11 represents the percentage of responses for expectations in terms of the Value dimension. The high percentages in the strongly agree column indicates that the respondents regard this dimension as important.

Table 4.12 Percentages in terms of responses per question - PERCEPTIONS

	0		Strongly disagree		2		3		4		5		6		Strongly agree	
	Count	Table %	Count	Table %	Count	Table %	Count	Table %	Count	Table %	Count	Table %	Count	Table %	Count	Table %
DP1	1	.4%	46	17.7%	15	5.8%	29	11.2%	74	28.5%	29	11.2%	28	10.8%	38	14.6%
DP2	0	0%	43	16.5%	17	6.5%	24	9.2%	36	13.8%	55	21.2%	36	13.8%	49	18.8%
DP3	2	.8%	35	13.5%	11	4.2%	27	10.4%	43	16.5%	45	17.3%	47	18.1%	50	19.2%
DP4	2	.8%	41	15.8%	14	5.4%	17	6.5%	40	15.4%	43	16.5%	50	19.2%	53	20.4%
DP5	1	.4%	36	13.8%	8	3.1%	10	3.8%	37	14.2%	43	16.5%	56	21.5%	69	26.5%

Table 4.12 represents the percentage of responses for perceptions of the Value dimension. The majority of respondents selected a score of 4 for question 1, score of 5 for question 2 and closely related scores of 5-7 for questions 3 to 5. Hence the response was moderate in terms of overall perception of the College with regard to the Value dimension.

Tables 4.13 to 4.15 describe the first objective of the research, ie. to ascertain the customer satisfaction level at the Coastal KZN FET College using a measurement scale.

To create the dimensions such as tangibles etc, the scores for the items that comprise the dimension were totalled. The minimum possible score would range from 1 (ie the lowest code) multiplied by no. of items in the dimension. The highest possible score is 5 multiplied by the no. of items in the dimension.

Table 4.13 Descriptive statistics for the five SERVQUAL Dimensions - Expectations

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Expectations Tangibles	260	8.00	35.00	28.0731	5.91758
Expectations Reliability	260	5.00	35.00	30.7000	5.63449
Expectations Responsiveness	260	3.00	28.00	22.6231	5.05302
Expectations Assurance	260	3.00	28.00	23.7577	4.91854
Expectations Empathy	260	4.00	28.00	22.7808	4.89760
Valid N (listwise)	260				

The mean scores are close to the maximum indicating a high degree of expectations that the respondents have from the College.

Table 4.14 Descriptive statistics for the five SERVQUAL Dimensions - Perceptions

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Perceptions Tangibles	260	5.00	35.00	17.5577	8.14069
Perceptions Reliability	260	3.00	35.00	22.9385	7.38281
Perceptions Responsiveness	260	4.00	28.00	17.2769	6.18382
Perceptions Assurance	260	.00	28.00	17.5538	6.20445
Perceptions Empathy	260	.00	28.00	15.8308	5.95756
Valid N (listwise)	260				

The mean scores are virtually midway for four of the five dimensions, with reliability indicating a higher than average number. Therefore the respondents have an average perception of the College in respect of the four dimensions, but have a higher degree of confidence of the College in terms of reliability. This is the most significant dimension in terms of Quality and augers well for the College.

Table 4.15 Descriptive statistics for the Dimension of Value – Expectations and Perceptions

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Expectations Value	260	.00	35.00	28.9577	6.47554
Perceptions Value	260	5.00	35.00	22.1615	8.10625
Valid N (listwise)	260				

The mean score for expectations is close to the maximum indicating high expectations and the perception score is above average indicating that students are relatively happy with the Value dimension of service quality offered by the College as a whole.

4.2.2 INFERENTIAL STATISTICS

Inferential statistical analysis using the T-Test was used to determine if there was any significant difference in expectations and perceptions based on gender and age. The statistical analysis addresses the second objective of the research ie. to determine whether different levels of service quality are required by students based on gender and age. This would assist in guiding management to deal differently with students based on their gender and age.

T-Test

Tables 4.16 and 4.17 Inferential statistics based on gender

Table 1/2

Group Statistics

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Expectations Tangibles	Male	153	28.0588	6.11860
	Female	107	28.0935	5.64606
Expectations Reliability	Male	153	30.2745	5.91189
	Female	107	31.3084	5.17871
Expectations Responsiveness	Male	153	22.3725	5.62757
	Female	107	22.9813	4.09321
Expectations Assurance	Male	153	23.5294	4.94850
	Female	107	24.0841	4.87992
Expectations Empathy	Male	153	22.1373	5.26040
	Female	107	23.7009	4.18040
Perceptions Tangibles	Male	153	17.9935	8.43590
	Female	107	16.9346	7.69498
Perceptions Reliability	Male	153	23.4575	7.50876
	Female	107	22.1963	7.16838
Perceptions Responsiveness	Male	153	17.2810	6.30106
	Female	107	17.2710	6.04163
Perceptions Assurance	Male	153	17.7386	6.46119
	Female	107	17.2897	5.83744
Perceptions Empathy	Male	153	15.7451	6.21493
	Female	107	15.9533	5.59545
Expectations Value	Male	153	28.5490	6.68063
	Female	107	29.5421	6.15412
Perceptions Value	Male	153	22.5163	8.33517
	Female	107	21.6542	7.77769

Table 2/2

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means		
		t	df	p
Expectations Tangibles	Equal variances assumed	-.046	258	.963
Expectations Reliability	Equal variances assumed	-1.459	258	.146
Expectations Responsiveness	Equal variances not assumed	-1.010	257.582	.314
Expectations Assurance	Equal variances assumed	-.895	258	.372
Expectations Empathy	Equal variances not assumed	-2.665	253.750	.008
Perceptions Tangibles	Equal variances assumed	1.032	258	.303
Perceptions Reliability	Equal variances assumed	1.358	258	.176
Perceptions Responsiveness	Equal variances assumed	.013	258	.990
Perceptions Assurance	Equal variances assumed	.573	258	.567
Perceptions Empathy	Equal variances assumed	-.277	258	.782
Expectations Value	Equal variances assumed	-1.218	258	.224
Perceptions Value	Equal variances assumed	.843	258	.400

From the p value , there is a significant difference in expectations empathy between male and female($p < 0.05$). The means from the group statistics table 1/2 indicates that the female group had a higher score for empathy and as a group need more support from the College as they may be experiencing more problems at College and outside College.

T-Test

Tables 4.18 and 4.19 Inferential statistics based on gender

Table 1/2

Group Statistics

	AGES	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Expectations Tangibles	15-24	216	28.0231	6.08272
	25+	44	28.3182	5.08428
Expectations Reliability	15-24	216	30.5185	5.77965
	25+	44	31.5909	4.81914
Expectations Responsiveness	15-24	216	22.6389	5.01339
	25+	44	22.5455	5.30228
Expectations Assurance	15-24	216	23.6759	4.88725
	25+	44	24.1591	5.10787
Expectations Empathy	15-24	216	22.6713	4.88456
	25+	44	23.3182	4.98263
Perceptions Tangibles	15-24	216	17.5370	8.22127
	25+	44	17.6591	7.82347
Perceptions Reliability	15-24	216	22.6157	7.70295
	25+	44	24.5227	5.34176
Perceptions Responsiveness	15-24	216	17.0417	6.32331
	25+	44	18.4318	5.36309
Perceptions Assurance	15-24	216	17.0556	6.40179
	25+	44	20.0000	4.42509
Perceptions Empathy	15-24	216	15.6667	6.15309
	25+	44	16.6364	4.86607
Expectations Value	15-24	216	28.9398	6.64803
	25+	44	29.0455	5.61954
Perceptions Value	15-24	216	21.8287	8.41667
	25+	44	23.7955	6.18919

Table 2/2

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means		
		t	df	p
Expectations Tangibles	Equal variances assumed	-.301	258	.764
Expectations Reliability	Equal variances assumed	-1.151	258	.251
Expectations Responsiveness	Equal variances assumed	.112	258	.911
Expectations Assurance	Equal variances assumed	-.593	258	.554
Expectations Empathy	Equal variances assumed	-.798	258	.426
Perceptions Tangibles	Equal variances assumed	-.090	258	.928
Perceptions Reliability	Equal variances not assumed	-1.985	84.125	.050
Perceptions Responsiveness	Equal variances assumed	-1.361	258	.175
Perceptions Assurance	Equal variances not assumed	-3.696	84.413	.000
Perceptions Empathy	Equal variances assumed	-.984	258	.326
Expectations Value	Equal variances assumed	-.098	258	.922
Perceptions Value	Equal variances not assumed	-1.796	79.250	.076

The age groups of 25+ were grouped together because of the small sample sizes. From the p value, there is a significant difference in perceptions reliability and perceptions assurance between the age groups as $p < 0.05$, indicating that the grouping of 15-24 need to reassured of the quality of service being offered. This group represents the majority of the student population and attention should therefore be placed on these dimensions.

However, the results of the t-test should be interpreted with caution since there were more under 25's than 25+.

4.2.3 SERVQUAL RESULTS

The SERVQUAL results addresses the third objective of the research ie. to determine whether different levels of service quality exists between the six campuses in terms of the dimensions identified. This is calculated by taking the average (mean) of the perception scores minus the average (mean) of the expectation scores. In order to realize the variance across the dimensions, per campus, the scores were calculated separately for both the students and the management. In this way comparisons could be drawn to determine which arrears to focus on, per campus and whether the management thinking is in line with the evaluation by students. Since management is primarily responsible for the strategic direction of the College, this analysis is therefore significant. Table 4.41 details the results of the survey data, presented per campus and ultimately for the College as a whole. The Campus manager's scores relate to the respective campus that they manage and the Rector's score relates to the College as a whole.

Table 4.20: Results from surveys per dimension and overall for students and management

Campus	Dimension	Expectation		Perception		SERVQUAL score	
		Student	Management	Student	Management	Student	Management
<i>Durban</i>	Tangibles	6.1	6.5	2.7	4.0	-3.4	-2.5
	Reliability	6.5	6.4	4.3	4.4	-2.2	-2.0
	Responsiveness	6.5	6.3	4.9	4.5	-1.6	-1.8
	Assurance	6.5	6.5	5.3	4.5	-1.2	-2.0
	Empathy	6.2	5.6	4.5	3.6	-1.7	-2.0
	Value	6.0	6.2	5.3	3.6	-0.7	-2.6
Total score (1)		6.3	6.2	4.5	4.1	-1.8	-2.1
<i>MASC</i>	Tangibles	5.5	7.0	5.4	5.5	-0.1	-1.5

	Reliability	5.8	7.0	5.3	6.0	-0.5	-1.0
	Responsiveness	5.6	6.5	5.2	6.0	-0.4	-0.5
	Assurance	6.0	6.8	4.5	6.3	-1.5	-0.5
	Empathy	5.9	6.2	4.1	4.8	-1.8	-1.4
	Value	5.9	5.6	5.5	4.0	-0.4	-1.6
Total score (2)		5.8	6.5	5.0	5.4	-0.8	-1.1
<i>Swinton</i>	Tangibles	5.4	7.0	4.4	5.5	-1.0	-1.5
	Reliability	5.5	7.0	4.7	6.0	-0.8	-1.0
	Responsiveness	5.5	6.5	5.0	6.0	-0.5	-0.5
	Assurance	5.4	6.8	4.6	6.3	-0.8	-0.5
	Empathy	5.5	6.2	4.0	4.8	-1.5	-1.4
	Value	5.6	5.6	4.7	4.0	-0.9	-1.6
Total score (3)		5.5	6.5	4.6	5.4	-0.9	-1.1
<i>Umbumbulu</i>	Tangibles	5.2	5.0	3.3	5.0	-1.9	0.0
	Reliability	6.3	5.2	3.9	5.0	-2.4	-0.2
	Responsiveness	5.7	6.5	3.7	5.0	-2.0	-1.5
	Assurance	5.5	6.3	4.5	7.0	-1.0	0.8
	Empathy	5.8	6.6	3.4	5.6	-2.4	-1.0
	Value	5.4	5.0	3.5	6.0	-1.8	1.0
Total score (4)		5.6	5.8	3.7	5.6	-1.9	-0.2
<i>Umlazi BB</i>	Tangibles	5.6	7.0	3.4	4.8	-2.2	-2.3
	Reliability	5.8	7.0	3.5	3.8	-2.3	-3.2
	Responsiveness	5.4	7.0	3.7	4.5	-1.7	-2.5
	Assurance	5.6	7.0	3.4	5.0	-2.1	-2.0
	Empathy	5.8	7.0	3.1	4.6	-2.7	-2.4

	Value	6.0	7.0	3.5	4.4	-2.6	-2.6
Total score (5)		5.7	7.0	3.4	4.5	-2.3	-2.5
<i>Umlazi V</i>	Tangibles	5.6	6.3	3.4	1.0	-2.2	-5.3
	Reliability	5.8	6.6	3.7	2.6	-2.1	-4.0
	Responsiveness	5.7	5.8	3.8	4.0	-1.9	-1.8
	Assurance	5.4	5.8	3.7	5.0	-1.8	-0.8
	Empathy	5.5	6.2	3.7	1.8	-1.8	-4.4
	Value	5.6	5.0	3.6	4.2	-2.0	-0.8
Total score (6)		5.6	5.9	3.7	3.1	-1.9	-2.8
<i>College</i>	Tangibles	5.6	6.5	3.8	4.3	-1.8	-2.2
	Reliability	5.9	6.5	4.2	4.6	-1.7	-1.9
	Responsiveness	5.7	6.4	4.4	5.0	-1.3	-1.4
	Assurance	5.7	6.5	4.3	5.7	-1.4	-0.8
	Empathy	5.8	6.3	3.8	4.2	-2.0	-2.1
	Value	5.8	5.7	4.4	4.4	-1.4	-1.4
Total score (1-6)		5.8	6.3	4.2	4.7	-1.6	-1.6
<i>Rector's score</i>	Tangibles		7.0		5.0		-2.0
	Reliability		6.8		3.6		-3.2
	Responsiveness		6.5		3.5		-3.0
	Assurance		6.8		4.3		-2.5
	Empathy		6.6		4.2		-2.4
	Value		6.6		3.6		-3.0
			6.7		4.0		-2.7

The SERVQUAL scores form the crux of the study and would therefore form the basis of the recommendations in chapter five, that is the recommendations and conclusion section of the study.

4.3 HYPOTHESIS TESTING

The question being asked is whether students are satisfied with the quality of service offered by Coastal KZN FET College and whether it can be statistically questioned. Since the problem is a two-sample problem with paired observations of expectations and perceptions, the solution to the problem lies in subtracting the values of expectations from that of perceptions and create a new variable df. The t-test calculations are reflected in tables 4.21 and 4.22.

T-Test

Table 4.21 Paired Samples Test 5 SERVQUAL dimensions

		Paired Samples Test		
		t	df	p
Pair 1	Expectations Tangibles - Perceptions Tangibles	16.143	259	.000
Pair 2	Expectations Reliability - Perceptions Reliability	14.411	259	.000
Pair 3	Expectations Responsiveness - Perceptions Responsiveness	12.256	259	.000
Pair 4	Expectations Assurance - Perceptions Assurance	15.361	259	.000
Pair 5	Expectations Empathy - Perceptions Empathy	15.215	259	.000

Table 4.22 Paired Samples Test additional dimension - Value

		t	df	p
Pair 1	Expectations Value - Perceptions Value	11.327	259	.000

The purpose of the paired samples t-test, was to compare expectations to perceptions with regard to each of the dimensions. For all pairs of comparisons, the p value is less than 0.05 (in fact 0.000) indicating a significant difference between expectations and perception dimensions. The expectation means are higher than the perception means across all dimensions as indicated in tables 4.13 to 4.15. Hence the Ho (null hypothesis) is rejected and the H1 (alternate hypothesis) is accepted for all dimensions.

4.4 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Before any inferential statistical results can be confirmed it is important to test the reliability and validity of the research.

4.4.1 Reliability Testing

A measure is considered to be reliable if it furnishes the same consistent results. The Cronbach's alpha value indicates the level of stability and internal consistency when measuring a construct.

Table 4.23 Cronbach's alpha test results

Section	Cronbach's Alpha
B	0.9030
C	0.9116
D Expectations	0.8323
D Perceptions	0.8577

From the table above, the alpha values are close to 1, indicating that there is a high degree of stability and internal consistency amongst the items in each section. This provides evidence that the survey results are reliable.

4.4.2 Validity Testing

The Factor analysis was used to find some pattern in which factor I would be heavily loaded (have a high r) on some variables and factor II on others. The attempt is to secure this less ambiguous condition between factors and variables by rotation.

For the expectations section:

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value of 0.878 indicates a high degree of sampling adequacy for the factor analysis.

Table 4.24 Rotated Component matrix - Expectations

Rotated Component Matrix ^a

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
B16	.695	.209	.256	.146	.082
B20	.639	.001	.119	.310	.034
B17	.618	.257	.065	.116	.016
B22	.587	.200	-.023	.150	.258
B18	.556	.402	.183	.068	.146
B21	.507	-.132	.348	.094	.416
B10	.129	.699	.038	.172	.075
B6	.330	.660	.140	-.028	.013
B8	-.009	.650	.190	.308	.291
B9	.202	.581	.337	.222	.097
B12	.344	.456	.331	.302	.048
B3	.073	.036	.683	.063	.022
B5	.297	.226	.559	.055	.226
B1	.146	.386	.553	.103	.161
B2	.111	.205	.533	.402	.016
B14	.323	.113	.023	.776	.223
B7	.069	.380	.239	.591	-.028
B11	.412	.144	.356	.556	.003
B15	.261	.373	-.113	.399	.348
B19	.346	.161	-.073	.041	.719
B4	-.118	.111	.432	.070	.687
B13	.228	.180	.268	.394	.438

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
 Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

Component 1 accounts for 14.216% of the total variance and comprises B16, B17, B18, B20, B21, B22. Component 1 relates to Empathy.

Component 2 accounts for 27.179% of the total variance and comprises B6, B8, B9, B10, B12. Component 2 relates to Reliability.

Component 3 accounts for 37.859% of the total variance and comprises B1, B2, B3, B5. Component 1 relates to Tangibles.

Component 4 accounts for 47.834 of the total variance and comprises B7, B11, B14, and B15 and has two items from Responsiveness.

Component 5 accounts for 56.028% of the total variance and comprises B4, B13, B19 and has 1 item from Empathy.

From the above we have established validity for the Expectations section of the questionnaire.

For the perceptions section:

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value of 0.902 indicates a high degree of sampling adequacy for the factor analysis.

Table 4.25 Rotated Component matrix - Perceptions

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
C11	.738	.141	.040	.331	.070
C10	.722	.097	.214	.130	.117
C9	.693	.275	.176	.170	.142
C12	.670	.147	.389	.001	.120
C14	.668	.170	.328	.086	.197
C8	.603	.271	.168	.195	.017
C1	.126	.828	.098	.096	-.015
C2	.138	.785	.174	.120	.042
C4	.164	.736	-.149	.044	.330
C5	.215	.705	-.124	.080	.299
C3	.079	.568	.446	.237	-.268
C13	.184	.553	.136	.236	-.033
C16	.321	.066	.696	.289	-.005
C17	.353	.098	.691	-.108	.114
C15	.451	.042	.579	.191	.132
C20	.189	.063	.529	.438	.330
C18	.145	.146	.352	.667	.199
C7	.258	.306	-.017	.655	.075
C6	.278	.449	.075	.583	.002
C19	.124	.292	-.073	.070	.718
C21	.179	.004	.375	.105	.690
C22	.236	-.136	.387	.402	.503

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
 Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 15 iterations.

Component 1 accounts for 16.754% of the total variance and comprises C8, 9,10,11,12,14.
Component 1 relates to Responsiveness.

Component 2 accounts for 33.294% of the total variance and comprises C1, 2,3,4,5,13.
Component 2 relates to Tangibles.

Component 3 accounts for 45.395% of the total variance and comprises C15, 16,17,20.
Component 3 relates to Assurance.

Component 4 accounts for 54.758 of the total variance and comprises C6, 7, 18 and has two items from Reliability.

Component 5 accounts for 62.919% of the total variance and comprises C19, 21, 22.
Component 5 relates to Empathy.

From the above we have established validity for the Perceptions section of the questionnaire.

For the values data, both factor analyses show that the items group together as one component, indicating that value items 1 to 5 measure 1 concept (either Perceptions value / Expectations value).

Convergent validity

For convergent validity, the inter-item correlation for each dimension must be high. The correlation tables for each dimension are listed below.

Table 4.26 Correlations for Questions 1-5 – Expectations (Tangibles)

		Correlations				
		B1	B2	B3	B4	B5
B1	Pearson Correlation	1	.459**	.321**	.314**	.365**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	260	260	260	260	260
B2	Pearson Correlation	.459**	1	.214**	.242**	.401**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.001	.000	.000
	N	260	260	260	260	260
B3	Pearson Correlation	.321**	.214**	1	.231**	.257**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001	.	.000	.000
	N	260	260	260	260	260
B4	Pearson Correlation	.314**	.242**	.231**	1	.343**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.	.000
	N	260	260	260	260	260
B5	Pearson Correlation	.365**	.401**	.257**	.343**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.
	N	260	260	260	260	260

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.27 Correlations for Questions 6-10 – Expectations (Reliability)

		Correlations				
		B6	B7	B8	B9	B10
B6	Pearson Correlation	1	.269**	.375**	.410**	.353**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	260	260	260	260	260
B7	Pearson Correlation	.269**	1	.452**	.387**	.362**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000	.000
	N	260	260	260	260	260
B8	Pearson Correlation	.375**	.452**	1	.502**	.416**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000	.000
	N	260	260	260	260	260
B9	Pearson Correlation	.410**	.387**	.502**	1	.498**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.	.000
	N	260	260	260	260	260
B10	Pearson Correlation	.353**	.362**	.416**	.498**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.
	N	260	260	260	260	260

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.28 Correlations for Questions 11-14 – Expectations (Responsiveness)

Correlations

		B11	B12	B13	B14
B11	Pearson Correlation	1	.484**	.460**	.563**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
	N	260	260	260	260
B12	Pearson Correlation	.484**	1	.369**	.377**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
	N	260	260	260	260
B13	Pearson Correlation	.460**	.369**	1	.416**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
	N	260	260	260	260
B14	Pearson Correlation	.563**	.377**	.416**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.
	N	260	260	260	260

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.29 Correlations for Questions 15-18 – Expectations (Assurance)

Correlations

		B15	B16	B17	B18
B15	Pearson Correlation	1	.408**	.360**	.311**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
	N	260	260	260	260
B16	Pearson Correlation	.408**	1	.408**	.520**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
	N	260	260	260	260
B17	Pearson Correlation	.360**	.408**	1	.376**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
	N	260	260	260	260
B18	Pearson Correlation	.311**	.520**	.376**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.
	N	260	260	260	260

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.30 Correlations for Questions 19-22 – Expectations (Empathy)

		Correlations			
		B19	B20	B21	B22
B19	Pearson Correlation	1	.282**	.347**	.337**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
	N	260	260	260	260
B20	Pearson Correlation	.282**	1	.340**	.396**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
	N	260	260	260	260
B21	Pearson Correlation	.347**	.340**	1	.332**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
	N	260	260	260	260
B22	Pearson Correlation	.337**	.396**	.332**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.
	N	260	260	260	260

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From tables 4.26 to 4.30 it is clear that there are significant correlations between the items in section B ($p < 0.05$). The correlation values are moderate for B8 and B9, B11 and B14, B16 and B18. All other correlation values are low.

Table 4.31 Correlations for Questions 1-5 – Perceptions (Tangibles)

		Correlations				
		C1	C2	C3	C4	C5
C1	Pearson Correlation	1	.715**	.414**	.527**	.496**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	260	260	260	260	260
C2	Pearson Correlation	.715**	1	.488**	.507**	.466**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000	.000
	N	260	260	260	260	260
C3	Pearson Correlation	.414**	.488**	1	.300**	.299**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000	.000
	N	260	260	260	260	260
C4	Pearson Correlation	.527**	.507**	.300**	1	.691**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.	.000
	N	260	260	260	260	260
C5	Pearson Correlation	.496**	.466**	.299**	.691**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.
	N	260	260	260	260	260

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.32 Correlations for Questions 6-10 – Perceptions (Reliability)

		Correlations				
		C6	C7	C8	C9	C10
C6	Pearson Correlation	1	.484**	.343**	.359**	.356**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	260	260	260	260	260
C7	Pearson Correlation	.484**	1	.309**	.374**	.347**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000	.000
	N	260	260	260	260	260
C8	Pearson Correlation	.343**	.309**	1	.452**	.460**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000	.000
	N	260	260	260	260	260
C9	Pearson Correlation	.359**	.374**	.452**	1	.599**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.	.000
	N	260	260	260	260	260
C10	Pearson Correlation	.356**	.347**	.460**	.599**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.
	N	260	260	260	260	260

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.33 Correlations for Questions 11-14 – Perceptions (Responsiveness)

		Correlations			
		C11	C12	C13	C14
C11	Pearson Correlation	1	.488**	.332**	.531**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
	N	260	260	260	260
C12	Pearson Correlation	.488**	1	.295**	.589**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
	N	260	260	260	260
C13	Pearson Correlation	.332**	.295**	1	.364**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
	N	260	260	260	260
C14	Pearson Correlation	.531**	.589**	.364**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.
	N	260	260	260	260

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.34 Correlations for Questions 15-18 – Perceptions (Assurance)

		Correlations			
		C15	C16	C17	C18
C15	Pearson Correlation	1	.621**	.495**	.368**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
	N	260	260	260	260
C16	Pearson Correlation	.621**	1	.473**	.447**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
	N	260	260	260	260
C17	Pearson Correlation	.495**	.473**	1	.311**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
	N	260	260	260	260
C18	Pearson Correlation	.368**	.447**	.311**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.
	N	260	260	260	260

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.35 Correlations for Questions 19-22 – Perceptions (Empathy)

		Correlations			
		C19	C20	C21	C22
C19	Pearson Correlation	1	.241**	.341**	.264**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
	N	260	260	260	260
C20	Pearson Correlation	.241**	1	.464**	.492**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
	N	260	260	260	260
C21	Pearson Correlation	.341**	.464**	1	.472**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
	N	260	260	260	260
C22	Pearson Correlation	.264**	.492**	.472**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.
	N	260	260	260	260

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From tables 4.31 to 4.35 it is clear that there are significant correlations between the items in section C ($p < 0.05$). The correlation values are high for C2, moderate for C1 and C4, C2 and C4, C9 and C10, C11 and C14, C12 and C14, C15 and C16. All other correlation values are low.

Table 4.36 Correlations for Questions 1-5 – Expectations (Value)

Correlations

		DE1	DE2	DE3	DE4	DE5
DE1	Pearson Correlation	1	.436**	.363**	.336**	.417**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	260	260	260	260	260
DE2	Pearson Correlation	.436**	1	.638**	.622**	.513**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000	.000
	N	260	260	260	260	260
DE3	Pearson Correlation	.363**	.638**	1	.574**	.511**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000	.000
	N	260	260	260	260	260
DE4	Pearson Correlation	.336**	.622**	.574**	1	.573**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.	.000
	N	260	260	260	260	260
DE5	Pearson Correlation	.417**	.513**	.511**	.573**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.
	N	260	260	260	260	260

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From table 4.36 it is clear that there are significant correlations between the items in section D1 ($p < 0.05$). The correlation values are moderate for DE2 and DE3, DE2 and DE4, DE3 and DE4, DE2 and DE5, DE3 and DE5, DE4 and DE5. All other correlation values are low.

Table 4.37 Correlations for Questions 1-5 – Perceptions (Value)

Correlations

		DP1	DP2	DP3	DP4	DP5
DP1	Pearson Correlation	1	.508**	.395**	.535**	.384**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	260	260	260	260	260
DP2	Pearson Correlation	.508**	1	.615**	.598**	.529**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000	.000
	N	260	260	260	260	260
DP3	Pearson Correlation	.395**	.615**	1	.617**	.644**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000	.000
	N	260	260	260	260	260
DP4	Pearson Correlation	.535**	.598**	.617**	1	.628**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.	.000
	N	260	260	260	260	260
DP5	Pearson Correlation	.384**	.529**	.644**	.628**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.
	N	260	260	260	260	260

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From table 4.37 it is clear that there are significant correlations between the items in section B ($p < 0.05$). The correlation values are moderate for DP1 and DP2, DP1 and DP5, DP2 and DP3, DP1 and DP4, DP2 and DP5. All other correlation values are low.

Table 4.38 Correlations for expectations

Correlations

		Expectations Tangibles	Expectations Reliability	Expectations Responsiveness	Expectations Assurance	Expectations Empathy
Expectations Tangibles	Pearson Correlation	1	.562**	.582**	.487**	.443**
	p	.	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	260	260	260	260	260
Expectations Reliability	Pearson Correlation	.562**	1	.640**	.553**	.448**
	p	.000	.	.000	.000	.000
	N	260	260	260	260	260
Expectations Responsiveness	Pearson Correlation	.582**	.640**	1	.658**	.572**
	p	.000	.000	.	.000	.000
	N	260	260	260	260	260
Expectations Assurance	Pearson Correlation	.487**	.553**	.658**	1	.599**
	p	.000	.000	.000	.	.000
	N	260	260	260	260	260
Expectations Empathy	Pearson Correlation	.443**	.448**	.572**	.599**	1
	p	.000	.000	.000	.000	.
	N	260	260	260	260	260

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From table 4.38 the correlation between reliability and responsiveness and the other dimensions are significant ($p < 0.05$). The correlation value of 0.64 shows that the two variables are moderately correlated. Similarly the correlation values between

responsiveness and assurance (0.658) and empathy and assurance (0.599) are moderately correlated.

The above results demonstrate convergent validity.

4.5 SUMMARY

The analysis of the survey was based on the two-hundred and sixty returns received, which was sufficient to interpret the findings.

The first part of the analysis provided descriptive statistics of the sample in Section A, followed by further descriptive statistics of Sections B-D based on the SERVQUAL results of the mean and standard deviations. The outcome of tables 4.13 indicate that the respondents have high expectations of the College, whilst 4.14 indicates the perceptions in terms of the five dimensions are moderate for four except reliability where the respondents have a higher perception of the College. In terms of the value dimension in table 4.15, the respondents are relatively happy with this dimension of service quality.

In terms of the inferential statistics a T-Test was conducted to determine whether different levels of service quality are required by students based on gender and age. The outcome was that females required more empathy from the College. With regard to the age groups there was a significant difference in perceptions reliability and perceptions assurance, indicating that the grouping of 15-24 need to reassured of the quality of service being offered. However, this result needs to be viewed with caution as the 25+ group was too small in comparison to the 15-24 group.

The hypothesis testing resulted in the rejection of the Ho (null hypothesis) and acceptance of H1 (alternate hypothesis) and the reliability testing confirmed the internal consistency of the research, whilst the validity tests confirmed that the research results were indeed valid.

The fourth objective of the study i.e. to make recommendations to the college to improve the systems towards ultimately implementing a quality assurance programme would be discussed in the next chapter using the SERVQUAL results from table 4.20.

CHAPTER FIVE – RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Through the use of the SERVQUAL instrument, the findings of the study conducted at Coastal KZN FET College, are reported with regard to the level service quality offered. As Kirby and Richardson (2003: 1) contend, “if you can’t measure it you can’t manage it.” The findings lead to suggest that there are service quality gaps, which unless addressed would have consequences for the future success and development of the college. The college maintains the slogan of “A Pioneering Centre of Excellence” and this demands being the leader in the FET College sector - provincially, nationally and ultimately internationally. The following service quality gaps would be addressed in terms of the gaps model, with recommendations for ways to address the implementation of total quality management.

5.2 THE GAPS MODEL

There are essentially five gaps that need to be considered, namely:

5.2.1 Gap 1 – The positioning gap

This gap is regarded as the difference between what customers expect and what management perceives they expect (Gabbie & O’ Neill, 1997: 43). This is regarded as vital as failure to understand the desires of customers accurately can result in loss of student numbers to rival public FET colleges and private providers of FET training.

At present there are limited customer satisfaction surveys conducted at the MASC and Swinton campuses. However, the interpretation and use of the data collected to improve the level of services is questionable. The use of customer comment questionnaires/cards can assist in improving the level of service and assist as a vehicle from where employees could derive job satisfaction, where results could perhaps be posted on the notice board on say a monthly basis. However, this practice could be exploited due to deceitful misuse of the tool

by staff. A multi-item tool with an independent moderator should be used to obtain unbiased views/comments from customers.

The organisational structure also plays an important role in being able to deliver service quality. The College functions in terms of a hierarchical structure, with a matrix structure becoming more prominent. However, a matrix structure poses concerns as the staff become confused with direct lines of authority and communication, especially where these are unstructured and multiple with conflicting instructions given around common issues. A functional structure is more practical, consisting of a CEO, the Rector in the case of the College, with functional line managers in dominant organisational areas such as finance, marketing, research and development and human resources. This structure allows for specialization in specific areas, with the active sharing of knowledge within these areas. However, the negative side is the lack of communication and coordination among those representing different functional areas (Hitt, Ireland & Hoskisson, 2003: 351). The Rector would have to make sure that the decisions and actions of individual business functions promote the entire College rather than a single function.

A further concern is whether Senior Management adopts a day-to-day hands-on approach to management or a behind the scenes approach. This practice varies from campus to campus. However, most decisions are still made by Senior Management with staff input being sought regarding operational changes and certain improvements. Staff meetings are important to change this culture and allow staff to voice their opinions and make suggestions in relation to improving service performance.

5.2.2 Gap 2 – The specification gap

Gap 2 is the difference between what management believes customers want and what they actually ask the organization to deliver (Gabbie & O' Neill, 1997: 44). Even with the correct interpretation of customer expectations, management often faces the challenge of converting

the information into relevant service standards, which often include re-training, revising delivery techniques and/or purchasing labour-saving devices. The greatest challenge, however, is the availability and quality of human resources, a critical concern faced by the College at present.

Total quality implementation starts with commitment from the CEO (in the case of the College, the Rector) and should filter down to every sphere of the organization. The entire culture of the college must change to embrace the delivery of Total Quality. Most employees, including management are reluctant to embrace this change as it involves a mediocre change in some instances, but in most instances it involves a revolutionary change in attitudes from employees.

With respect to standardization and setting of goals, this aspect is lacking in most organizations as staff are not required to rehearse scripts before being exposed to the public. In most respects standardization is viewed as an enemy of discretion during the service encounter. It is often felt that standardization could be applied in for example cleaning services where a checklist could be drawn up and service standards are gauged by the completion of the checklist. However, standardization needs to be applied more generally to various levels of administrative and lecturing practices, such as standardization of assessments and evaluation of student performance across campuses. Administrative duties can also be standardized such as answering calls or dealing with examination related queries.

5.2.3 Gap 3 – The delivery gap

The result of a service-performance mismatch often occurs when the service delivered by employees does not comply with the specifications set by management. Operating in a highly interactive environment the college is particularly susceptible to gap 3. Since the operations are highly labour intensive there is a great volatility in all human interactions and thus service quality lies at the forefront of the providers and the amount of effort they assert in willingness to deliver service excellence. Gap 3 asserts that maintaining service quality does not only hinge on setting up appropriate service standards but also on maintaining a group of people both

willing and able to perform the service at the specified levels. As Hitt et al (2003:75) realise, people are increasingly a key source of competitive advantage as organisations compete in the global economy. Hence Cruickshank (1992: 1) also observed that, “if you market to your employees, they will market to your customers.”

One of the critical areas of concern is role uncertainty, especially as a post-merged institution as staff is still grappling with the lack of clear direction with regard to their roles and responsibilities. Staff orientation should not be regarded as a ‘nicety’, but as an imperative for all new employees as well as existing employees who are unsure of their role and responsibilities within the organization or those deployed to new areas of operation within the organization. Often employees are simply “thrown in the deep end”. Mentoring or shadowing should be promoted, and performance appraisal should be timeously and regularly provided at scheduled intervals, not only when performance is below standard. Hence training/retraining and appraisal programmes should be established for all staff (Gabbie & O’ Neill, 1997: 45-46).

Role conflict can become a problem if staff are not adequately trained and do not understand their specific roles. Also the college experiences peaks and troughs in the various job functions and if staff can be deployed to assist in related areas during times of need in the various sections it enhances service delivery, whilst bearing in mind the principle of fairness. Staff cross-training and multi-skilling can achieve this. Also management’s hands-on and flexible approach to dealing with employees will go a long way in addressing these issues.

With regard to job fit, the role of recruitment and selection should be fairly and properly applied. Posts should be widely advertised and candidates should be appointed on merit, whilst taking into consideration the appointment of previously disadvantaged individuals.

Empowerment is a major problem as decisions are usually left to management, but front-line employees could just as easily have dealt with the problem. A formal procedure for handling customer complaints should be put in place as this allows employees to act within the

constraints, but allows for flexibility to deal with a problem on-the-spot and not wait for a manger to be available.

Another area of concern is that of staff reward/incentive programmes and teamwork. Budgetary provisions should be made, within the ambit of an approved policy for financial or other incentive schemes aimed at encouraging staff to provide better service. Promoting team-building outings, parties and regular general staff functions foster closer staff relations and usually result in better teamwork.

5.2.4 Gap 4 – The communication gap

The communication gap results from the discrepancy when externally communicated promises from, for example, vision and mission statements, advertising campaigns, public relations exercises or marketing promotions are exaggerated. Customers express disappointment when the actual service delivery does not meet their expectations based on what they were led to believe. The co-ordination and delivery of services between the different departments, from marketing to administrative to academic must function like a well oiled machine with each meeting up to their roles and responsibilities in the chain of events that lead to complete customer satisfaction. However, this can only be attained through proper consultation and co-ordination between the role-players, with a realization of the constraints faced. Staff opinions are vital to make the process work (Gabbie & O' Neill, 1997: 46).

5.2.5 Customer expectation/perception survey

Having detailed the considerations of gaps 1 to 4, we now concentrate on the customer expectations and perceptions of service quality using the SERVQUAL instrument as a measuring tool. It is anticipated that this would further confirm the existence of gap 5 – the service quality gap to a greater or lesser extent and thereby propose an investment in a total quality approach (Gabbie & O' Neill, 1997: 46).

For the purposes of this study the student data would take precedence. Table 4.20 would be analysed.

At the outset it needs to be re-iterated that this is a once-off study, but ideally it should be a longitudinal study, which may produce different results as students and management change their view of the quality of service over time. Furthermore, the 0 values indicated in Tables 4.9 to 4.12, which indicates non-completion of these questions, may distort the results to an extent. However, the percentages are not large enough to distort the outcome to a significant extent.

The six dimensions reflected in the charts to follow are in order of Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy and Value.

5.3 DISCUSSION OF SURVEY RESULTS

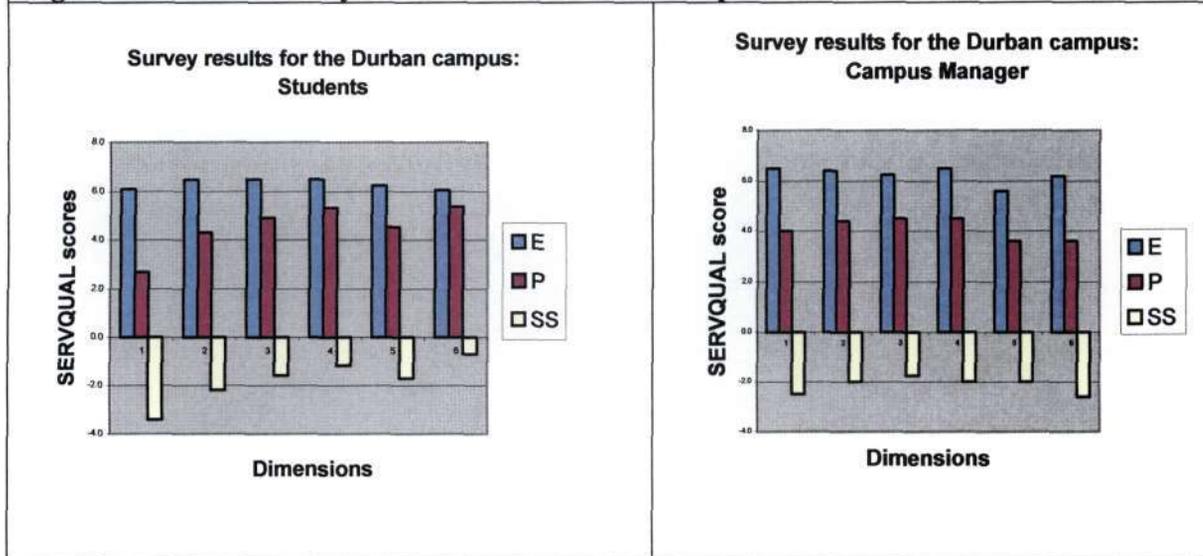
The results would be discussed in terms of the various campuses:

5.3.1 Durban campus

Expectations at the Durban campus were high for all dimensions including the total score; with Reliability, Responsiveness and Assurance scoring the highest. However, the perceptions students have also scored high for Responsiveness, Assurance and Value. The SERVQUAL score for Tangibles was -3.4, indicating that students were primarily dissatisfied with the lack of workshops for practical training and the lack of sporting/recreational facilities. These need to be incorporated in the Strategic Plan of the College where provision is made to address these concerns. The SERVQUAL score for value indicates that the campus has a good reputation in the marketplace, with work opportunities being provided. Also services are being efficiently provided with the limited resources and staff are utilising all equipment and facilities to the maximum benefit of students.

The following charts represent the scores for the Durban campus from a) a student perspective and b) the Campus Manager's perspective.

Figures 5.1 & 5.2: Survey results for the Durban campus



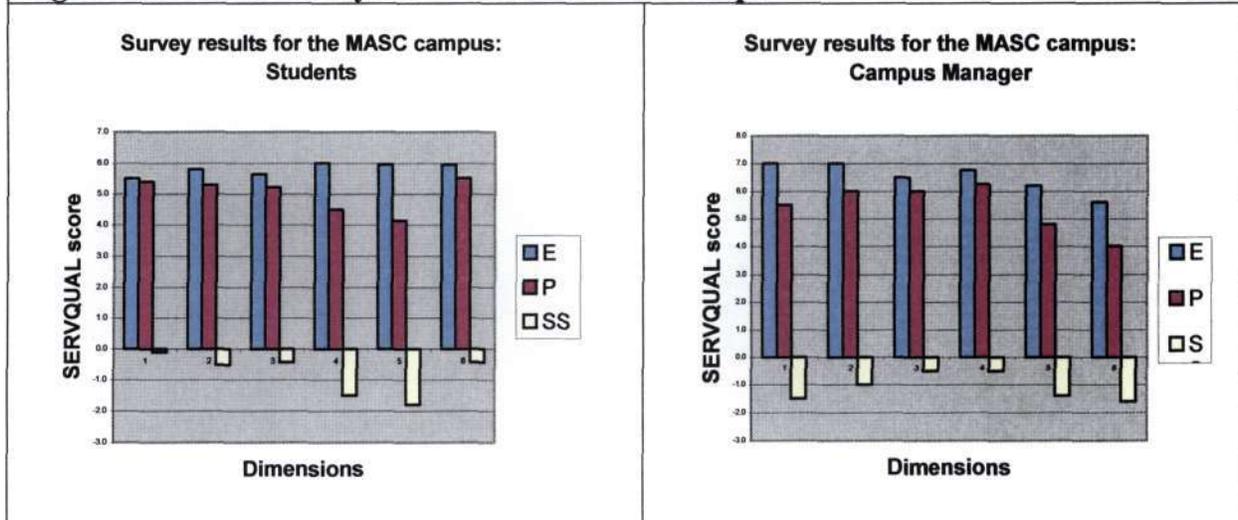
In the overall analysis it indicates that students and the Campus Manager's assessment vary significantly in terms of three dimensions, namely Tangibles, Assurance and Value. There is significant room for improvement in all dimensions, with less concern for Responsiveness, from a student perspective.

5.3.2 MASC campus

The students have high expectations of the campus. However, they have significantly high perceptions of the campus as well. Hence the SERVQUAL scores are relatively low ie. below 1, with possible concern over two dimensions of Assurance and Empathy.

The following charts represent the scores for the MASC campus from a) a student perspective and b) the Campus Manager's perspective.

Figures 5.3 & 5.4: Survey results for the MASC campus



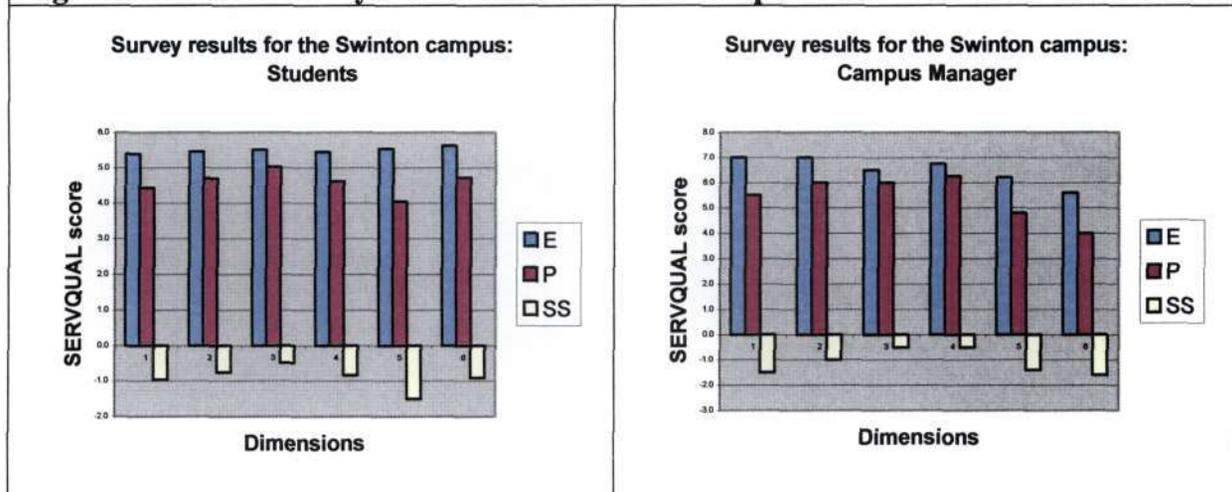
In the overall analysis it indicates that students and the Campus Manger are more or less in agreement with the levels of service quality offered. However, the two dimensions identified, namely Assurance and Empathy require enhancement of people skills by way of human resource development and the provision of support mechanisms for students to deal with issues they have. The tangibles are of less concern than the Campus Manager believes.

5.3.3 Swinton campus

The students have high expectations of the campus. However, they have significantly high perceptions of the campus as well. Hence the SERVQUAL scores are relatively low ie. below 1, with possible concern over two dimensions of Tangibles and Empathy.

The following charts represent the scores for the Swinton campus from a) a student perspective and b) the Campus Manager's perspective.

Figures 5.5 & 5.6: Survey results for the Swinton campus



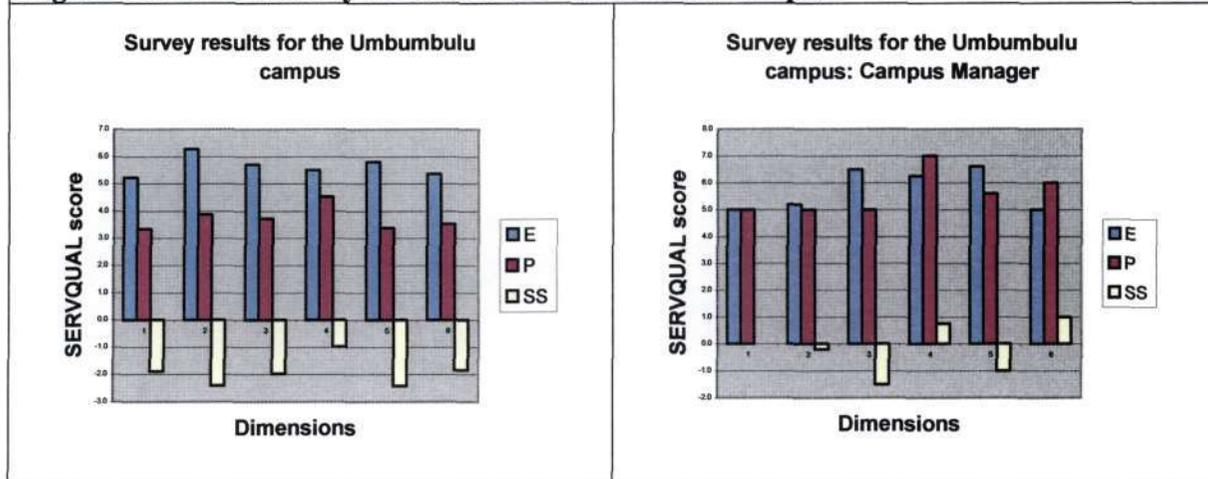
In the overall analysis it indicates that students and the Campus Manger are more or less in agreement with the levels of service quality offered. However, the two dimensions identified, namely Tangibles and Empathy require limited improvement of the College facilities and the provision of support mechanisms for students to deal with issues they have. The two dimensions of tangibles and value are of lesser concern than the Campus Manager believes.

5.3.4 Umbumbulu campus

Expectations at the Umbumbulu campus were high for all dimensions including the total score; with Reliability, Empathy and Responsiveness scoring the highest. The scores for perceptions were relatively low indicating an overall score of -1.9 in terms of the SERVQUAL score. All areas need attention, with perhaps less attention being paid to Assurance. These need to be incorporated in the Strategic Plan of the College where provision is made to address these concerns.

The following charts represent the scores for the Umbumbulu campus from a) a student perspective and b) the Campus Manager's perspective.

Figures 5.7 & 5.8: Survey results for the Umbumbulu campus



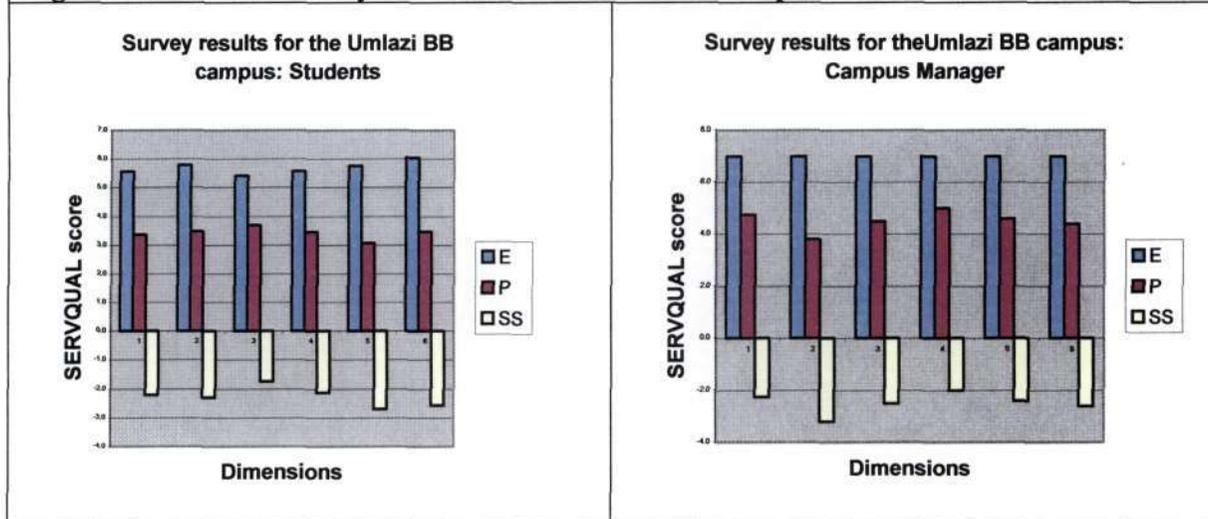
In the overall analysis it indicates that students and the Campus Manger are disparate in their interpretation of the quality of service provided. In order of priority, special attention should be paid to Reliability and Empathy, followed by Responsiveness, Tangibles and Value.

5.3.5 Umlazi BB campus

The students have high expectations of the campus. The perceptions are moderate. Hence the SERVQUAL scores reflect high negative scores above -2 in all dimensions, except Responsiveness. However, this is also of concern, albeit limited. The order, from lowest to highest; were Empathy, Value, Reliability, Tangibles, Assurance and Responsiveness. There has to be some drastic intervention to improve the level of service quality, by perhaps involving students more in the Strategic Plan of the campus, offering Human Resource Development training for staff and support services for students. The facilities also need to be attended to by providing adequate and up-to-date equipment and facilities.

The following charts represent the scores for the Umlazi BB campus from a) a student perspective and b) the Campus Manager's perspective.

Figures 5.9 & 5.10: Survey results for the Umlazi BB campus



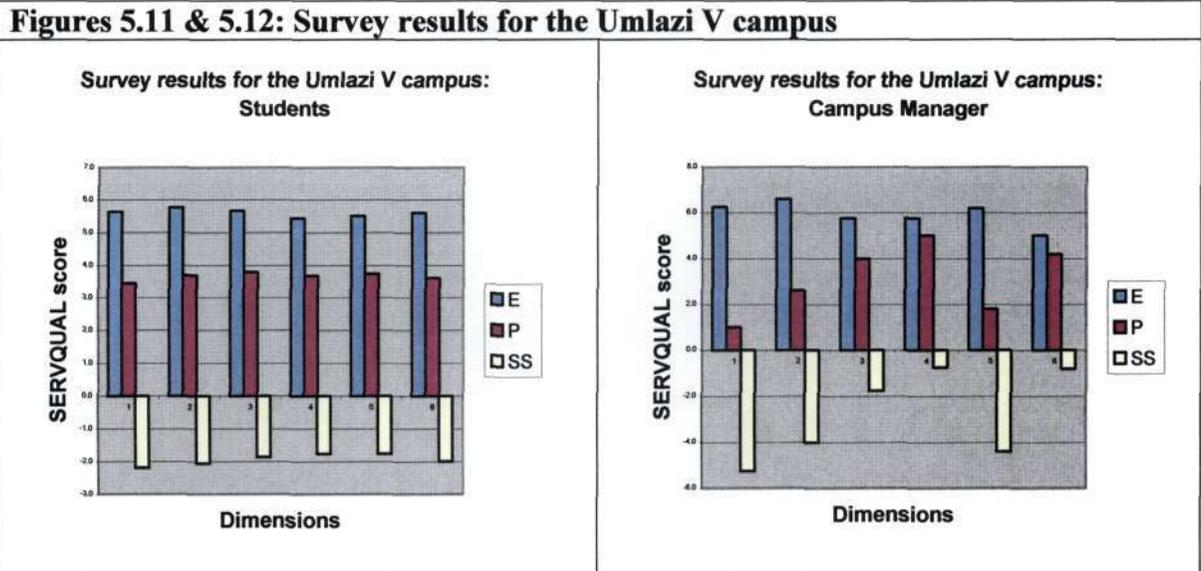
In the overall analysis it indicates that students and the Campus Manager are in agreement with their interpretation of the quality of service provided. However, all dimensions need attention to satisfy students or exceed their expectations. It is interesting to note that this campus has a large number of female students and there is great emphasis on the empathy dimension, which confirms the findings from tables 4.16 and 4.17.

5.3.6 Umlazi V campus

The students have high expectations of the campus. However, they have reasonably moderate perceptions of the campus. Hence the SERVQUAL scores are relatively low across all dimensions ie. above and close to -2. In order of the low scores are Tangibles (-2.2), Reliability (-2.1), Value (-2.0), Responsiveness (-1.9), Assurance (-1.8) and Empathy (-1.8). Hence all dimensions need attention by providing better equipment and facilities, employing a highly skilled workforce, standardising the methods of lecturing and assessment with other campuses,

embarking on human resource development training and providing support services for students.

The following charts represent the scores for the Umlazi V campus from a) a student perspective and b) the Campus Manager's perspective.



In the overall analysis it indicates that students and the Campus Manger are disparate in their interpretation of the quality of service provided. However, the Campus Manager has a more negative perception of the level of service provided, which indicates that there ought to be drastic interventions from Management to improve the quality of service.

5.3.7 The College as a whole

Overall the expectations of students at the College were high, with the perceptions score being moderate to high. In terms of the SERVQUAL scores from lowest to highest they ranked as follows:

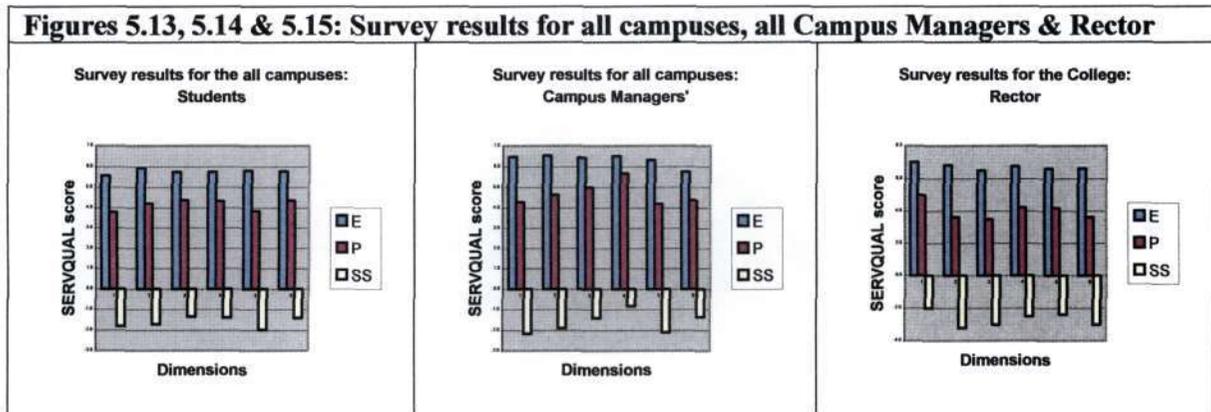
Empathy -2.0

Tangibles	-1.8
Reliability	-1.7
Assurance	-1.4
Value	-1.4
Responsiveness	-1.3

Hence the College is performing below expectation, but with some interventions in terms of what had been proposed, which was based on the outcome of the analysis of data at the respective campuses, the quality of service can be improved or even exceed expectations. The MASC and Swinton campuses have performed considerably better than the rest scoring -0.8 and -0.9 respectively. However, they should not become complacent with their efforts but rather continuously improve customer satisfaction.

5.3.8 Rector's score

The following charts represent the scores for a) all campuses b) all Campus Managers' and c) the Rector's perspective.



The Rector's score of the questionnaire is disparate in terms of the College as a whole, but realistic in terms of the SERVQUAL score of the lowest scoring campus, ie. -2.3 . The fact that the Rector had indicated a low overall score means that considerable effort would be

forthcoming to improve the quality of service and hence have more satisfied students in the long term.

5.4 MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Parasuraman et al (1991) have concluded some findings in their exploratory research about customer expectations. They realised that the content of customer expectations are basic, but the structure is complex, based on the adequate and desired levels of service quality. Five suggestions have been put forward for managing customers' expectations and raising the perceptions. If managers are to succeed they need to understand quality practices and performances (Biha, undated: 130).

5.4.1 Demonstrate fair play

The zone of tolerance can be increased by the College showing signs of fair play to students by, for example, explaining the policies and practices of the College to students on enrolment. In this way if a student wants to withdraw from the College the policy and practices applicable would be understood without ambiguity or frustration. However, in drawing up the policies and procedures, the Student Representative Council should be involved. This opens the way for two-way communication that paves the path for trust and increased perceptions of service quality.

5.4.2 Be reliable

Performing a service right the first time keeps customers expectations at a manageable level. As mentioned earlier customers value reliability above all other dimensions and as such the college should emphasise reliability in its service design and operations. This can be achieved by, for example proper value chain management using the Supply Chain Operations Management (SCOR) model (Stevenson, 2002: 509), applied to a services organisation. Technology also

assists tremendously in this regard as information about individual customers or groupings can be tracked and service levels of company representatives can be monitored (Robbins & Decenzo, 2001: 450). Parasuraman et al (1991) assert that if managers can promote a philosophy of “do it right the first time” value system and by forming reliability teams to evaluate specific services to reduce failures, measure failure rates and reward failure-free service, this could increase customer service perceptions and reduce customer expectations.

5.4.3 Manage promises

Companies in general and the College is no exception, influence customer expectation levels by the implicit and explicit service promises they make. Hence it is important that the promises reflect the services actually delivered and not an idealised version of the service. The vision and mission statements should also be reflective of this. Underpromising reduces the appeal the organisation has to offer; whilst overpromising increases customers’ expectations beyond the capacity of the organisation to deliver. Hence Parasuraman et al (1991) state that it better for the organisation to portray a cohesive and honest front both explicitly (eg. through advertising and personal selling) and implicitly (eg. through the appearance of service facilities and prices of services). Research, like the one being undertaken, and others would help in collecting information from customers’ perceptions of the quality of service being offered. Also research into prices in customers’ expectations and price-value perceptions would assist the organisation understand their customer market and profiles better.

5.4.4 Leverage the process dimensions

Service delivery is the best way for service firms to portray the quality image. Reliability is the core of service delivery and can be augmented by the process dimensions of quality ie. tangibles, responsiveness, empathy, assurance and what we have identified as value. This is particularly important in service-failure situations and effectively requires the willingness and ability of human beings to be effective servers. Included, but not exhaustive, are the recruitment

of the most promising employees; providing ongoing training in interpersonal and problem-solving skills and technical skills; allowing employees to exercise judgement and creativity in responding to customers special needs; measuring employees capacity for and actual provision of quality service; rewarding those who perform to standard and above with financial, non-financial and career advancement (Parasuraman et al, 1991: 45-46).

5.4.5 Build relationships

Customers' zones of tolerance can be enhanced by genuinely building customer relationships in a controlled manner. This can happen by firstly, customers having access to service when the need arises, by being able to make the contact such as through a toll-free number; secondly, the communication contact should be customer-initiated as well as company-initiated as customers would not perceive a relationship with the company if they have to only initiate the contact; thirdly, they must have the means to tailor the service to meet the specific needs of the customer, or at least to some degree. Finally, besides being able to tailor the service, they should also be willing to do so. In most companies, service is measured by financial gain such as insurance companies that pay their agents commission on the policies sold but not on serving existing clients. This therefore negates the relationship based on service provision, which could potentially damage a company in the long run.

5.5 CONCLUSION

The goal of any educational institution is to provide meaningful insight into knowledge in order that the student can be employable; as an employee or self-employment. By consistently providing high levels of service quality, the College will be able to produce a student that would continue to learn and contribute to the enrichment of the country and promote the concept of life-long learning.

In order to realise this ideal it is imperative that effective research is conducted to ascertain customers' expectations and perceptions of services. This could be achieved by formal and informal means. The SERVQUAL instrument used in this research presentation attained the objectives of ascertaining the levels of service quality at the various campuses and the College as a whole. The reliability and validity of the research were confirmed and the alternate hypothesis was accepted (null hypothesis rejected) as there is a significant difference between customer perceptions and expectations of service quality at Coastal KZN FET College. This lead to the realisation of the gaps that exist in terms of the Gap Model and proposals have been made with regard to the management implications of these gaps and the corrective measures that need to be considered. The key is to communicate this information to all staff so that overall performance can be improved.

The internal customer is perhaps the most important resource for feedback as they interact between the College and the customer and actually represent the College as the first point of contact. Hence there should be more open and flexible lines of communication between management and staff. Furthermore, due to the critical nature of the internal customer as a resource, it is essential that management invest wisely in terms of recruitment, selection and training. Central to this aspect is also the fact that there should be the proper use of reward and incentive programmes to enhance staff performance and loyalty.

Good communication flows, both vertical and lateral, should be promoted and not stifled in any way as this will ensure consistent service quality.

Central to the pursuit of service quality, however, is management commitment to the total quality pathway. Only with this commitment will meaningful implementation and change be realised. Of critical importance is the documentation of systems and procedures as well as task standardisation and goal-setting. Management must steer the course and must be seen as leading from the front.

These days customers are not complacent recipients of service. They have become more educated with regard to expectations of service quality and the College should undergo a complete convergence on exceeding customer expectations. Astute business leaders recognise that old-style corporate cultures must change with the management challenge to integrate customer feedback into every phase of business (Lovelock, 1996: 571).

By embarking on the Integrated Quality Management programme proposed by Department of Education in all earnesty, it would ensure that the College goes a long way in being the 'Pioneering Centre of Excellence'.

5.6 RELATED FURTHER RESEARCH

Understanding the relationship between customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction also demand further research. Also linkages between customer satisfaction and quality on the one hand and internal measures of efficiency and employee compensation on the other are important future directions for research.



APPENDICES

Appendix A - Research Questionnaire

As a SRC member would you like to participate in shaping the future direction of service quality at a Further Education and Training College in South Africa? Do you want your voice to be heard? If so, please complete the following questionnaire and hand it back to Mr T E Pillay at the Durban Campus of the Coastal KZN FET College.

1. Name _____
2. Age _____ 3. Male/Female (M/F) _____
4. Telephone no. & code _____ (h) _____ (cell)
5. Course studying _____ Full/ Part time (please circle)
6. Campus studying at (please tick):

Umlazi V	Umlazi BB	Umbumbulu	Swinton	MASC	Durban
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6. Have you participated in research in the past 8 months? (please tick)

Yes No

7. Do you have a relative working at a FET College? (please tick)

Yes No

8. Do you suffer from any physical impairments? (please tick)

Yes No

If yes, please state nature of impairment _____

I declare that the above information is true and correct at the time of signature.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Should you be successful we will call you on Monday, 25 October 2004, to confirm your place. The focus group will be conducted on Tuesday, 26 October 2004 at 13:00 at the Durban Campus.

To thank you for your valuable contribution, snacks will be served after the session.

Appendix B – Moderator Guidelines

Moderator’s Discussion Guide

Welcome and brief explanation of the Focus Group.

Introduction and Opening

- **Moderator introduces himself.**
- **Explains that they are being taped and they should speak one at a time.**
- **The moderator gives his background, number of children, career and favourite pastimes (this should encourage the respondents).**

Housekeeping

- **Cell-phones off please!**
- **Type of questions would be open-ended to encourage discussion.**
- **Be open and honest with your views.**
- **Please allow one person to speak at a time.**
- **Please respect each others views, no right or wrong answers.**

1. Please introduce yourself

- **Name.**
- **Course and level being studied.**
- **Have you studied at any other tertiary institution?**

2. As SRC members what would regard as the basic services that a College should provide?

3. What made you choose the present institution you are studying at? Maximum of three words only, please.

- 4. Experiences at a tertiary institution, including the College. In your opinion what was;**
- **Good about the service you encountered.**
 - **Bad about the service you encountered.**
- 5. Identify the following *slogans*. Which institutions do they belong to? Why did you recognise/not recognise these?**
- **‘Opening doors to your future’**
 - **‘Driving the Economy through Education’**
 - **‘Your Pioneering Centre of Excellence’**
 - **‘Education opens doors, skills provide the key.’**
- 6. What do you expect from a College such as Coastal KZN FET College?**
- 7. What are your perceptions of the services you currently receive from Coastal KZN FET College?**
- 8. Name any three tertiary institutions in South Africa you would consider to have world-class standards. Why?**
- 9. What does it mean to you to study at an institution that offers ‘value’? Would it entail;**
- **Value for money – being satisfied at the end of your study?**
 - **Enriching your knowledge to perform better?**
 - **Offering relevant services to meet the needs of customers, and using all available resources well to achieve this?**

10. The following are criteria that would improve the quality of service at a College. Kindly indicate what you consider to be three of the most important? Why?

Which two would you leave out completely and why?

- The price of courses. **(tangibles)**
- The course offerings must be relevant to the job market. **(reliability)**
- Potential employers are aware of the reputation of the College. **(assurance)**
- The professional image portrayed by staff. **(tangibles)**
- The up-to-date equipment used for training. **(tangibles)**
- The qualifications I receive would make me easily employable in South Africa and abroad. **(value)**
- The attitude of staff in attending to customers concerns. **(empathy)**
- Willingness of staff to provide prompt services. **(responsiveness)**
- The knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to generate trust and confidence. **(assurance)**
- The College should be caring and attend to my personal problems. **(empathy)**
- The results ought to reflect the level of service being provided. **(reliability)**
- Offering relevant services to meet the needs of customers, and using all available resources well to achieve this. **(value)**
- Offering relevant services to meet the needs of customers, and using all available resources well to achieve this. **(value)**
- The College should provide adequate support for staff to carry out their duties. **(responsiveness)**

Close

- Thank the participants for their valuable time and input.
- Invite all participants for refreshments.

Once the appropriate mix of candidates was selected, they were contacted telephonically to confirm their availability. The session was held in the Library, as this was a comfortable, familiar and quite room that would not intimidate respondents. It was important to create an environment where students felt that they could be open and honest in their responses to the questions being asked.

2. The focus group session

The focus group session was moderated by the researcher, with assistance from a colleague, Mrs K Naidoo, who took notes of the proceedings. At the outset the moderator sought permission whether the proceedings could be video-taped and this was unanimously agreed to.

The participants were welcomed by the moderator and he introduced himself, the position he holds at the College, his family details and hobbies, to break the ice. The house rules were detailed with particular emphasis on the fact that the questions would be open-ended to encourage discussion.

The summary of the proceedings are as follows:

1. The participants introduced themselves by detailing their names, course and level being studied and whether they had studied at a tertiary institution previously.
2. **Question:** As SRC members what would regard as the basic services that a College should provide?

Responses were:

- ❖ Relevant studies aligned to industry needs.

- ❖ Career/open days to introduce courses, with in-depth demonstrations as students are at a loss as to what courses to select on registration.
- ❖ The quality of services should be standardised across the different campuses in similar programme offerings, with standard methods of teaching and assessments.
- ❖ More equipment should be provided for training purposes.
- ❖ Qualified and experienced lecturers should be appointed.

3. **Question:** *What made you choose the present institution you are studying at?*

Maximum of three words only, please.

Responses asked for latitude to include more words and are:

- ❖ Fees are affordable
- ❖ Reputation to find a job
- ❖ Certain campuses have a good name
- ❖ Referred by a friend

4. **Question:** Experiences at a tertiary institution, including the College. In your opinion what was;

- Good about the service you encountered.
- Bad about the service you encountered.

Unfortunately the participants were not willing to talk about services that were good but they commented on the lack of service by identifying the following:

- ❖ There are limited sporting facilities at certain campuses, with none at others.
- ❖ Staff are unapproachable, especially some lecturers.
- ❖ There are no Social Workers to assist students.
- ❖ The lack of common breaks make interaction between students from different Divisions within a campus difficult.
- ❖ Lack of canteen and ablution facilities at certain campuses.
- ❖ Insufficient number of social events are planned for students.

5. **Question:** Identify the following *slogans*. Which institutions do they belong to? Why did you recognise/not recognise these?

- ‘Opening doors to your future’ – **Tekwini FET College** –
0 respondents identified the slogan.
- ‘Driving the Economy through Education’ – **Mangosutho Technikon**
0 respondents identified the slogan.
- ‘Your Pioneering Centre of Excellence’ – **Coastal KZN FET College**
all the participants identified the slogan.
- ‘Education opens doors, skills provide the key.’ – **Sivananda College for FET** –
0 respondents identified the slogan.

6. **Question:** What do you expect from a College such as Coastal KZN FET College?

Responses included:

- ❖ Being able to find a job.
- ❖ The College should only employ qualified and experienced personnel.
- ❖ The education should be recognised internationally.
- ❖ Modern equipment should be provided.
- ❖ Sporting events/competitions are not organised.
- ❖ Lack of practical (only theory) training at certain campuses.
- ❖ Lack of clear communication channels between the SRC and the College.
- ❖ Modern equipment for teaching purposes.

7. **Question:** What are your perceptions of the services you currently receive from Coastal KZN FET College?

Responses included:

- ❖ Staff attitude towards students, especially in the examination section, is bad.
- ❖ College personnel do not follow protocol in dealing with students, which should be via the SRC but students can only communicate via the SRC structures to the College.
- ❖ The syllabus needs to be revised as it is outdated.

8. **Question:** Name any three tertiary institutions in South Africa you would consider to have world-class standards. Why?

Responses: Stellenbosch University, University of Cape Town and certain divisions of the University of Durban Westville.

The institutions portray an image of world class facilities, including sporting, residences, staff professionalism and easy recognition. All members agreed with the first two institutions identified with some respondents having reservations about the third.

9. **Question:** What does it mean to you to study at an institution that offers 'value'?

Responses:

- ❖ Respondents agreed that offering relevant services to meet the need of customers, and using all available resources to achieve this was very important.
- ❖ The College should provide the same level of service at all campuses – fair value.
- ❖ Work opportunities should be provided by the College.

❖ The image of the College should be easily recognised by prospective employers.

10. **Question:** The following are criteria that would improve the quality of service at a College. Kindly indicate what you consider to be three of the most important? Why?

Which two would you leave out completely and why?

Responses:

❖ *After some consideration it was unanimously agreed that all the statements indicated were important and could not be left out completely.*

In concluding the focus group session the moderator thanked the participants for their eager and valuable contributions and advised that their input would be captured in a questionnaire to be distributed to a sample of the student body.

The participants were invited to partake of the refreshments provided.

Appendix D – Survey Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE

Purpose: FET Colleges were merged formally on 11 April 2002. The intention was to provide education and training to a broad population by sharing resources (human and physical) and offer a better service to the student population. This study is geared to determine what the clients expect from the College and what their perceptions are of the services they currently receive at Coastal KZN FET College.

Although the study is being conducted for Mr Thavan Pillay to attain his MBA degree, the findings could have far-reaching consequences in improving the level of service delivery at Coastal KZN FET College and at FET Colleges in general.

Structure: The structure of the questionnaire is in four sections. The first section would collect some demographic information regarding the customers participating in the data collection process. The second section would investigate the expectations that you have as a client of the College and the third section would ascertain the perceived service you, as a client, is receiving from the College. The fourth section addresses the concerns of 'value'. Please answer the statements on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Directions for completing the questionnaire: Please complete the following questionnaire pertaining to service quality. If you feel strongly that the statements indicated are what you expect of your College, please cross 7; but if you feel that it is of little importance, please cross 1. You may feel that these statements reflect varying degrees of importance and you may want to cross in-between 1 to 7. **Please answer all questions.**

Kindly indicate who is completing the questionnaire:

Student 1

SRC member 2

Management

3

6. Course being studied (only for SRC/students to complete):

Engineering: theory 1.1 practical 1.2 Skills courses 2

Business Studies: theory 3.1 Computer studies 3.2

Utility studies: Haircare 4.1 Cosmetology 4.2 Catering 4.3

4

other, please specify _____ 5

7. Home language

English 1 **Zulu** 2 **Afrikaans** 3

other 4 please specify _____

8. Have you register at the college previously? What level was your previous study?

NC(OR) 1 **N1-N3** 2 **N4-N6** 3

Module 1-3 4 **Module 4-6** 5 **Maths/Science** 6

NIC/NSC 7

Section B – Expectations

Your expectations of what the College should reflect.

		Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree			
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
1.	An excellent College should have the latest, up-to-date equipment in classrooms and workshops.								1
2.	The physical facilities should be visually appealing.								1
3.	The college staff will look smart and project a professional image.								1
4.	Sporting facilities will form an important part of the physical facilities of the College.								1
5.	Adequate recreational facilities should be provided.								1
6.	The College will employ highly skilled, knowledgeable and qualified staff.								2
7.	Standardised methods of lecturing and assessments will be applied at all campuses.								2
8.	Students should be able to depend on the curriculum to be current and relevant to the job market.								2
9.	Services should be provided at the time promised.								2
10.	The College should keep their records accurately.								2

		Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree				
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
11.	The College should be able to tell customers when to expect their services.								3
12.	It is realistic to expect courteous service from employees of the College.								3
13.	The College should provide open days for prospective students.								3
14.	Employees of the College will respond to customers' requests promptly.								3
15.	Customers should be able to trust employees of the College.								4
16.	Customers should be able to feel excellent service in their transactions with the College's employees								4
17.	Employees of the College should be polite.								4
18.	The College should provide adequate support for their employees to do their job well.								4
19.	Professional counselling for areas such as HIV/AIDS, rape and trauma should an integral part of the services of the College.								5
20.	It is realistic to expect employees to know what the needs of their customers are.								5
21.	Student peer support groups should be promoted.								5
22.	The operating hours should be convenient to all customers.								5

Section C - Perceptions

Your observation of what the College is offering to you.

		Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree				
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
1.	The College has up-to-date equipment in classrooms and workshops.								1
2.	The College's physical facilities are visually appealing.								1
3.	The College's employees are well dressed and appear neat.								1
4.	The College provides adequate sporting facilities.								1
5.	The College provides adequate recreational facilities.								
6.	The College employs highly skilled, knowledgeable and qualified staff.								2
7.	Standardised methods of lecturing and assessment are being applied at all campuses.								2
8.	The curriculum offered by the College is current and relevant to the job market.								2
9.	The College provides it's services at the time it promises to do so.								2
10.	The College keeps it's records accurately.								2
11.	The College tells customers exactly when services will be performed.								3
12.	You receive courteous service from employees of the College.								3
13.	The College provides open/orientation days for prospective students.								3
14.	Employees of the College are never too busy to respond to customers requests promptly.								3

		Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree			
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
15.	You can trust employees of the College.								4
16.	You feel confident in your interactions with the College's employees.								4
17.	Employees of the College are polite.								4
18.	Staff get adequate support from the College to do their jobs well.								4
19.	Professional counselling for areas such as HIV/AIDS, rape and trauma are provided as part of the services of the College.								5
20.	Employees of the College know what the needs of their customers are.								5
21.	Student peer support groups are promoted at the College.								5
22.	The College has convenient operating hours for all their customers.								5

Section D - Value

Expectations

		Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree			
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	The College should provide the same level of service to everyone at all campuses, to make sure it is fair value.							
2.	The College should provide access to work opportunities with companies.							
3.	Services should be provided in the most efficient way, even with limited resources.							
4.	Staff should utilise all available equipment and facilities to maximise the lecturing experience of students.							
5.	The image of the College should be easily identifiable by prospective employers.							

Perceptions

		Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree			
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	The College provides the same level of service at all campuses.							
2.	The College provides access to work opportunities with companies.							
3.	Services are provided in the most efficient way with the limited resources.							
4.	Staff at the College utilise all equipment and facilities to the maximum benefit of students.							
5.	The image of the College is easily identified by prospective employers.							

END OF QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you!

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- **Acts and Regulations**

1. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996)
2. The Further Education and Training Act, 1998 (Act 98 of 1998).