An Evaluation of the Quality Services of Saint Mary's University

Atlabachew Getaye

St. Mary's University, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Abstract

In the field of business it is common to appraise the satisfaction level of customers by firms for they assume their customers are their king. Nowadays, it is becoming common to observe studies being conducted to gather data regarding the satisfaction level of learners to improve the services being offered by educational institutions and make all sorts of adjustments in line with the interest of students. With this premise, the present study is conducted to assess the services of Business Faculty of Saint Mary University being offered to its regular students, applying six attributes such as tangible, content, competence, attitude, reliability and delivery. The study examines whether there is a statistically significant difference between students expectation and actual experience regarding the six attributes. It also tries to see whether there are any statistically significant differences in terms of department, gender, year of study about the services provision. To answer the above questions, the study applies a quantitative method. It used a questionnaire as data gathering tool. And the study reveals that there is a gap between students' expectations and performance of quality services. Nevertheless, there is no statistically significant difference as to gender for expectation and performance services. When it comes to year of study, learners expressed similar opinions about the five attributes of expectation but competence. They study shows to year of study a statistically significant difference in the actual experience of students when it comes to attitude and competence. Similarly, in terms of department, competence and attitude are the sources of differences. Therefore, the institution should narrow the examined gaps.

Introduction

Service quality and quality management are key factors in realizing the goal and mission of institutions and in differentiating service products. Quality services of higher learning depend on many factors such as input, process and output. One of the widely used models to assess quality is the SERVQUAL model, developed by Parasurman *et al.* (1988). The central idea in this model is that service quality is a function of the difference scores or gaps between expectations and perceptions.

Quality services of higher learning depend mainly on the quality and experience of instructors, infrastructure, convenience and reliability of an institution. Instructors play the key role because the missions of higher learning are attained especially in developing countries like ours where there is no much family back up and technology access through institution learning. Quality education is also dependent on the availability of modern facilities and the convenience of an institution. Therefore, assessing the services of instructors, availability of facilities and convenience and reliability of an institution from importance and performance point of view is vital in assuring high-quality services in higher learning institutions.

In business fields, the customer is the king, so are students in education in such a way that students are at the center of the teaching learning process. As customers, students should be part of the evaluation of the services they get from their institution and their evaluation of instruction appears valid and reliable. This is because it is students who listen and observe the lecturers in

classroom, use the facilities in their day to day activities and consult the administrators on different issues. Hence, students' evaluations provide reliable and valid information which can pave the way for good service delivery by pointing out the weaknesses and strengths of the services they obtain. In fact, Saint Mary's University College enrolled the highest number of students (23,408) in 2011/12 (2004E.C.) (Education Statistics Annual Abstract, 2004) which shows that the institution is able to attract the most number of students of all the private institutions. Attracting more number of students means providing excellent quality services. There is, however, a need to check through research. Owing to this fact, different attributes which are subdivided into six key variables of SERVQUAL model is used to evaluate services of Business Faculty of Saint Mary's by the students.

Statement of the Problem

In the midst of higher education expansion, let alone for developing country like ours even for developed countries, it is difficult to have experienced professional, ethical and motivated instructors and administrators. It is not also easy to provide the latest required facilities. The nature of teaching by its nature is very difficult for it requires from teachers to house different student cognitive abilities, student choice for pedagogical styles, socioeconomic status, and personality characters (Chonko 2007). Despite this reality, students are eagerly awaiting in classroom to fetch the best wisdom from the pool of university education. To transform students, the quality of instructors and administrators play a pivotal role in the teaching learning process of higher learning in particular and the realization of a nation's development in general. Their services in the classroom and outside the classroom depend highly on the quality of pedagogical, content and

presentation, administration skills they posses. Delivering poor services by instructors in particular and an institution in general leads to inept outputs. This implies that the country cannot bring about change and press forward with the rest of the world for it lacks the required quality manpower. The role of quality services of higher learning in the knowledge era is at the heart of everything. It is imperative, therefore, to check the quality of services regularly to cope with the dynamic and changing environment of higher learning. This study tries to answer the following questions:

1. From the six attributes in which ones does the Faculty perform better?

2. Are their differences among Marketing, Management and Accounting departments in quality service perception?

3. Are there differences in students' evaluation between the important and performance of quality services?

4. Is there any difference in terms of gender regarding quality services of expectation?

5. Is there any difference in terms of year of study about quality services of expectation?

6. Is there any difference in terms of department about quality services of expectation?

7. Is there any difference in terms gender regarding quality services of performance?

8. Is there any difference in terms of year of study about quality services of performance?

9. Is there any difference in terms of department about quality services of performance?

Objective of the Study

The general objective of this study is to assess the level of quality of services of Business Faculty of Saint Mary's University College. The specific objectives of the study are:

- To measure whether the services of the Faculty are high, moderate or low
- To examine whether there is a mismatch between students evaluation of importance and performance quality of services of evaluation
- To examine the existence of similarities and differences across departments, gender , year of study of Business Faculty of Saint Mary's University College in terms of quality services

Review of the Related Literature

Quality and Its Controversy

Quality is an elusive term. It is elusive because it swings back and forth between subjectivity and objectivity, process and culture. It is highly subjective for some to the extent of saying that it is in the eyes of the beholder. Pirsing in Mishra (2006, p.11), for example, perceives quality as subjective, and he uses a self contradictory expression in such a way that "Quality …you know what it is, yet you do not know what it is…for all practical purposes, it does not exist at all. But for all practical purposes it really does exist…" He seems to say that quality is a paradox. For others it is objective. Realizing the difficulty in defining quality education, they

pinpoint the possibility of making it objective using different quality proxy indicators, associating it to inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes. Still others try to interpret quality based on institutions or programs accomplishments, examining the influence of schooling on students in terms of knowledge, attitudes, values and behavior. In other words, they construe quality by weighing against the attainment of specified targets and objectives set by an institution or a program.

Having examined the above perspectives of quality education, it is clear that unanimous agreement regarding the definition of quality of education is not down to earth. This problem probably occurs because education contains both tangible and intangible assets, and different people have different interest when it comes to the output of education. According to Green and Harvey (1993) there are about five approaches of defining quality: quality as exception, fitness for purpose, consistency, value for money and transformation. There may be people who focus on fitness for purpose alone; others may perceive it from value for money point of view. Hence, these two groups can not have the same type of quality definition. In other words, the term is relative.

Perception of Students Service Quality in Higher Educational Institution

In higher education, it is assumed that there are many stakeholders such as students, their parents and family, academic and administration staff, the government, NGOS, and society (Ruben 1995; Quinn, Lemay, Larsen and Johnson 2009).The expectations and perceptions of quality services of

different stakeholders differ. This can be attributed to the needs and experiences of the stakeholders.

According to Quinn, et al. (2009) even if there are many stakeholders, students are the primary consumers who receive the educational services of a higher education institution. Saint Mary's UC, as a private institution which always encounters competition from other private institutions, needs to check the satisfaction of its students about the services it renders. This is because it is through the students that the academic institution communicates with the external stakeholders: parents, employers and other would be students. In order to get recognition from other stakeholders as best UC, it is essential for Saint Mary's to graduate best quality students. Students are assumed to be best students when they succeed in their examinations and conduct researches without difficulty during their stay in the institution, and display the required skills, attitude and behavior in the world of work. In line with this, Low (2000) explained the merits of offering quality services saying that the provision of better quality services is a key source to attract and retain students, having a direct bearing on the viability of educational institution.

For this to happen, students should be satisfied with the services they attain from the UC. Satisfaction for many scholars emanates from quality service (Cronin & Taylor 1992; Bolton & Drew 1991). Asthiyaman (1997) defined service quality as "… an overall evaluation of the goodness or badness of a product or service". Customer evaluation of service quality is a result of the difference between their expectation of services and the perception of services in practice. In other words, the SERVQUAL model measures the quality of the teaching learning of an institution by comparing the

expectation of learners with that of their practical experiences. The users of the services are assumed to be the best people to define the important aspects in delivering services and in checking the actual services they experience during the teaching learning processes. The expectations of the students should serve as a standard in defining what is accessible, comfortable and timely. They should also witness whether they have got what they expected with regards to the competence of instructors, content of the curriculum, adequacy and comfort of the facilities, care, respect and promise of the institution, etc.
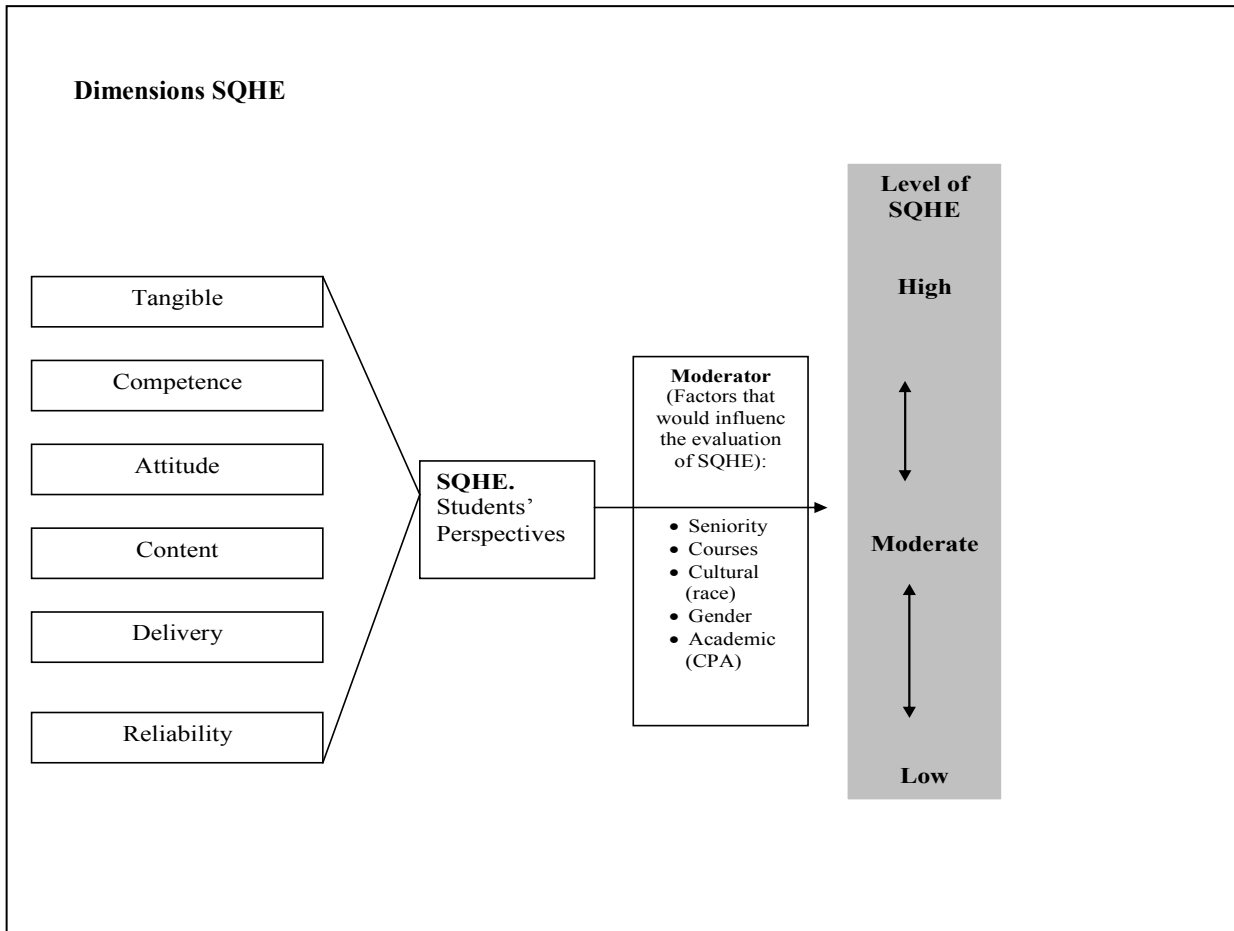
Dimensions of Quality

One approach which is frequently applied by researchers whenever they try to investigate service quality is to list down the features of quality. Previous studies applied the SERVQUAL model by modifying from the original. Initially, Parasuraman et. al (1985) used ten service quality dimensions: reliability, responsiveness, competence, access, courtesy, communication, credibility, security, understanding and tangibles. The same researchers (1988) brought it down to five during their second study by confining to reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy and responsiveness. Lithtinen and Lithtinen (1992) classified service quality into three: interactive, physical and corporate. Gronous (1978) also divided it into three saying technical, functional and reputational.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

Reviewing the works of different writers such as Gronous (1978), Lithtinen and Lithtinen (1992), and Parasuraman et. al (1985), Jusho et al (2004, p 20) formulated the following conceptual framework. The present researcher makes use of the model for this study.

Dimensions SQHE

Tangible		Level of SQHE
Competence		High
Attitude	SQHE. Students' Perspectives	
Content	Moderator (Factors that would influenc the evaluation of SQHE):	Moderate
Delivery	• Seniority • Courses • Cultural (race) • Gender • Academic (CPA)	
Reliability		Low

Tangibles refer to facilities provided by the institution in serving good conditions to their

Competences refer to the sufficiency and highly qualified nature of the academic staff, the program structure and the capabilities to render good image and strong attraction in teaching. Attitude is concerned with the communication, caring, individual attention and understanding students' needs. Content in the context of education is referring to the curriculum design and how it can develop and prepare the students for their potential job market. Delivery means the capability in giving lecture and presentation effectively. The final dimension is reliability. It is concerned with keeping promises, handling complaints, giving resolutions and solving problems (Jusho et al 2004).

Methodology

Sources of Data

The source of data for this study was primary data. Based on the review of the available related literature, a structured questionnaire was developed and distributed to Business Faculty of Saint Mary's University College students.

Sampling Procedure

Evaluation research does not go for generalization, and it is conducted to generate specific knowledge to a particular setting regarding the worth, advantage and value of an educational phenomena (Gall, Borg and Gall 1996). A stratified random sampling was used to select 180 students from a total of 741 regular students of the Faculty of Business. Students were

selected stratifying them on the basis of year and department. 180 students were selected from Marketing, Management and Accounting departments proportionally.

Instruments of Data Collection

A structured questionnaire was employed to gather data from students. The questionnaire covered six quality service dimensions: tangibility, competence, attitude, content, delivery and reliability. The questionnaire had two parts, having 72 items: part one was related to the importance of the service quality attributes with 36 items, and part two was related to the actual performance of the institutions with 36 items. The importance services were measured using rating scale. The rating scale applied a 4 point scale which ranged from extremely important to not important. The performance services employed a four point scale: SA, A, D and SD. After piloting the questionnaire using Cronbach alphas on 30 students to ensure the reliability coefficient, it was distributed to the subjects' after adjusting the components of the questionnaire. The results of Cronbach alphas were 0.9132 for expectation attribute and 0.8651 for performance attribute which were well above the recommended lower limit 0.70. From the distributed questionnaire, 15 were not filled out properly, so they were discarded.

Method of Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Mean, median and standard deviation from descriptive statistics and T- tests, ANOVA and regression from inferential statistics were applied while analyzing the data.

Analysis of the Results

In this chapter, analyses and interpretations of the findings regarding the expectation performance of quality services and their comparisons by sex, department and year of study are made.

Mean Comparison of Importance of Aspects of Quality Services and their Actual Performances

As indicated below in Table-1, the one to one comparisons between means of the respondents perception of the importance of quality services and the actual performance revealed that there was a statistically significant variation between respondents perception on the importance of all attributes of quality services and the actual practices in the study area. Thus, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the observed differences between mean of respondents perception of the importance of quality service aspects and the mean of the actual performance is far beyond chance, but due to actual variation between their perceptions of the importance of quality service aspects and their perceptions of the practices of quality service aspects. In other words, the results of this research show that there is a gap between student`s perceptions and student`s expectations among the six factors such as tangible, competence, attitude, content, delivery and reliability.

Table 1: Paired Mean Test of Perceived Importance and Perceived Performance of Quality Services

	Paired Differences			t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean			
Im Tangible –Per Tan	.440	1.178	.091	4.810	165	.000
Im Competence – Per Com	2.283	4.222	.328	6.967	165	.000
Im Attitude – Per Att	2.133	4.862	.377	5.651	165	.000
Im Content – Per Con	1.717	4.555	.354	4.856	165	.000
Im Delivery – Per Del	2.783	7.489	.581	4.788	165	.000
Im Reliability – Per Rel	3.711	6.902	.536	6.927	165	.000

Note: Im refers to importance and Per stands for Performance

Quality Services of Importance as a Function of Sex

Table 2 indicates mean comparison by sex. When mean values of respondents perception of importance of quality services aspects were compared, results depicted that there was no significant variations between male and female respondents perception of the importance of the quality service aspects. Thus, for all aspects of quality services, there is a good reason to claim that females perceive the quality service aspects under study as important as their male counterparts conceive.

Table 2: ANOVA Summaries for Test of Mean of Perceived Importance Aspects of Quality Services as a Function of Sex

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Tangibility	Between Groups		11.024	1	11.024	1.338	
	Within Groups		1326.841	161	8.241		
	Total		1337.865	162			.249
Competence	Between Groups		4.955	1	4.955	.598	.440
	Within Groups		1333.745	161	8.284		
	Total		1338.699	162			
Attitude	Between Groups		.001	1	.001	.000	.992
	Within Groups		1591.410	161	9.885		
	Total		1591.411	162			
Content	Between Groups		.088	1	.088	.010	.919
	Within Groups		1365.629	161	8.482		
	Total		1365.718	162			
Delivery	Between Groups		7.842	1	7.842	.560	.455
	Within Groups		2253.103	161	13.994		
	Total		2260.945	162			
Reliability	Between Groups		6.922	1	6.922	.557	.457
	Within Groups		2000.992	161	12.429		
	Total		2007.914	162			

Test of mean difference between male and female participants for tangibility ($F=1.338$, $P=.249$); competence ($F=.598$, $P=440$), attitude ($F=.0, p=.992$), content($F=.010, P=.992$), delivery ($F=.560, p=.445$) and reliability ($F=.557, p=.457$) were all not found to be significant. We accept the null hypothesis that for equivalence of all means. Thus, it can be concluded that there is no statistically significant variation between males and females in

their perception of the importance of aspects of quality services and the observed mean differences between participants of the two sexes were due to chance error.

Mean Comparison of Importance by Year of Study

The examination of test of significance for mean difference of importance between participants by their year of study indicated significant differences for competence (F=4.277, p=.016). Accordingly, we reject the null hypothesis stating that there is no statistically difference between respondents from different study year in their perception of the importance of competence as aspects of quality service. Hence, we have a good reason to conclude that respondents significantly vary in their perception of the importance of competence as quality service as a result of their being at different year of study.

However, mean comparison of importance for tangibility (F=1.512, P=.224), attitude (F=.567, P=.568), content (F=1.391, p=.252), delivery (F=1.196, p=.305) and reliability (F=2.094, p=.127) were not found to be significant. Therefore, we accept the null hypothesis and reject the alternative hypothesis and conclude that the observed mean difference between respondents of different year does not go beyond mere chance error than actual variation in their study year.

Moreover, a Tukey post hoc test revealed a statistically significant difference between for perceived importance as aspects of quality service for students who are in the second year and third year.

Table 3: ANOVA Summaries for Test of Mean of Perceived Importance Aspects of Quality Services as a Function of Study Year

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Tangibility	Between Groups	24.807	2	12.404	1.512	.224
	Within Groups	1312.211	160	8.201		
	Total	1337.018	162			
Competence	Between Groups	67.226	2	33.613	4.277	.016
	Within Groups	1257.572	160	7.860		
	Total	1324.798	162			
Attitude	Between Groups	11.145	2	5.572	.567	.568
	Within Groups	1572.266	160	9.827		
	Total	1583.411	162			
Content	Between Groups	22.714	2	11.357	1.391	.252
	Within Groups	1306.464	160	8.165		
	Total	1329.178	162			
Delivery	Between Groups	34.463	2	17.232	1.196	.305
	Within Groups	2304.923	160	14.406		
	Total	2339.387	162			
Reliability	Between Groups	51.361	2	25.681	2.094	.127
	Within Groups	1962.553	160	12.266		
	Total	2013.914	162			

Mean Comparison of Importance by Department

Comparison of means for importance of quality service by department of the participants did not yield in significant differences for tangibility (F=1.362, p=.256), competence (F=1.305, p=.274), attitude (F=2.347, p=.099), content

(F=.233, p=.801) and delivery (F=1.471, p=.233). Therefore, we accept the null hypothesis for equivalence of the mean for these aspects of quality service and conclude that participants do not show any variation by departments in their perception of the importance of these aspects of quality services and the observed mean differences happen due to chance error.

ANOVA Table 4: ANOVA Summaries for Test of Mean of Perceived Importance Aspects of Quality Services as a Function of Dept

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Tangibility	Between Groups	22.201	2	11.100	1.362	.259
	Within Groups	1328.13	163	8.148		
	Total	1350.33	165			
Competence	Between Groups	21.300	2	10.650	1.305	.274
	Within Groups	1330.48	163	8.162		
	Total	1351.78	165			
Attitude	Between Groups	44.760	2	22.380	2.347	.099
	Within Groups	1554.34	163	9.536		
	Total	1599.10	165			
Content	Between Groups	3.726	2	1.863	.223	.801
	Within Groups	1363.31	163	8.364		
	Total	1367.03	165			
Delivery	Between Groups	42.077	2	21.038	1.471	.233
	Within Groups	2331.89	163	14.306		
	Total	2373.97	165			
Reliability	Between Groups	126.705	2	63.353	5.448	.005
	Within Groups	1895.60	163	11.629		
	Total	2022.31	165			

However, findings indicated a statistically significant differences for reliability (F=5.448, p=.005) with at least one of the five quality services. A Tukey post- hoc test also revealed significant difference for perceived importance of reliability (.003) between students from management department and accounting department.

Mean Comparison of Performance by Sex

The investigation of mean difference between participants perceived performance quality service by sex did not show significant difference for tangibility (F=2.319, p=.130), competence (F=1.503, p=.222), attitude (F=2.437, p=.120), content (F=.643, p=.424), delivery (F=.843, p=.360) and reliability (F=2.812, p=.095). Thus, there is sufficient reason to assert that participants do not vary in their perception of the mean performance level of quality services as a result of their difference in sex.

Table 5: ANOVA Summaries for Test of Mean of Perceived Performance of Aspects of Quality Services as a Function of Sex

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Tangibility	Between Groups	16.507	1	16.507	2.319	.130
	Within Groups	1146.070	161	7.118		
	Total	1162.577	162			
Competence	Between Groups	18.470	1	18.470	1.503	.222
	Within Groups	1978.573	161	12.289		
	Total	1997.043	162			
Attitude	Between Groups	38.730	1	38.730	2.437	.120
	Within Groups	2558.178	161	15.889		
	Total	2596.908	162			
Content	Between Groups	11.388	1	11.388	.643	.424
	Within Groups	2850.575	161	17.705		
	Total	2861.963	162			
Delivery	Between Groups	32.185	1	32.185	.843	.360
	Within Groups	6150.134	161	38.200		
	Total	6182.319	162			
Reliability	Between Groups	114.347	1	114.347	2.812	.095
	Within Groups	6546.450	161	40.661		
	Total	6660.798	162			

Mean Comparison of Performance by Year

As shown in Table 6, test of significance for mean difference between participants perceived performance of quality services by their study year depicted significant variation for competence (F=7.293 ,p=.001) and attitude (F=4.997 ,p=.008). Consequently, we reject the null hypothesis in favor of the alternate hypothesis which states that there is a statistically significant variation between participants from different study year in their perception of the performance of competence and attitude as quality services. It can be concluded that participants from different level of study year perceived differently the performance level of competence and attitude as quality service in study year.

However, the results did not disclose significant mean difference for tangibility (F=1.082, p=.341), content (F=.986, p=.375), delivery (F=1.212, p=.300) and reliability (F=.786, p=.457). Therefore, it can be concluded that the observed perceived mean difference between participants in the performance of these aspects of quality service is not due to chance error. In other words, participants from the two of study year perceived the performance level of these aspects of quality service uniformly.

A Tukey post hoc test for determining statistically significant difference between groups as indicated by one way ANOVA depicted that mean difference between perceived performance level of competence (p=.006) and attitude (p=.043) were found significant for second year and third year students respectively. Similarly, a Tukey post hoc test uncovered significant mean difference between second year and third students in their perception of the performance level of competence (p=.011) and attitude (p=.029).

Table 6:   ANOVA Summaries for Test of Mean of Perceived Performance of Aspects of Quality Services as a Function of Study Year

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Tangibility	Between Groups	15.546	2	7.773	1.082	.341
	Within Groups	1149.03	160	7.181		
	Total	1164.57	162			
Competence	Between Groups	153.931	2	76.965	7.293	.001
	Within Groups	1688.64	160	10.554		
	Total	1842.57	162			
Attitude	Between Groups	140.678	2	70.339	4.997	.008
	Within Groups	2252.34	160	14.077		
	Total	2393.01	162			
Content	Between Groups	30.719	2	15.360	.986	.375
	Within Groups	2492.31	160	15.577		
	Total	2523.03	162			
Delivery	Between Groups	88.179	2	44.089	1.212	.300
	Within Groups	5820.398	160	36.377		
	Total	5908.577	162			
Reliability	Between Groups	62.351	2	31.176	.786	.457
	Within Groups	6344.594	160	39.654		
	Total	6406.945	162			

Mean Comparison of Performance by Department

When mean differences for perceived performance of quality services by department were tested for their significance the result disclosed statistically no significant differences for tangibility (F=.696, p=.500), content(F=.869, p=.421) delivery (F=.040, p=.961) and reliability (F=.237, p=.789). It can, therefore, be stated that participants do not vary in their judgment of the performance level of these attributes of quality service as a result of their

being from different departments. Nevertheless, results depicted significant differences in the respondents' perception of the performance level of competence (F=7.550, p=.001) and attitude (F=5.881, p=.003) aspects of quality services. As a result, we reject the null hypothesis claiming for the equivalence of mean for competence and attitude across different departments, and conclude that participants from different departments perceived the performance level of these two aspects of quality services due to their actual variation in their departments.

Moreover, a Tukey post hoc test revealed that there was significant difference between participants from Accounting and Marketing Management in their perception of the performance level of competence and attitude. Similarly, a Turkey post hoc test indicated that significant variation between participants from Marketing Management and Management departments in their perception of the performance level of competence (p=.001) and attitude (p=.019). Similarly, a Turkey post hoc test indicated that significant variation between participants from Marketing Management and Management departments in their level of competence (p=.031) and attitude (p=.005).

Table 7: ANOVA Summaries for Test of Mean of Perceived Performance of Aspects of Quality Services as a Function of Dept

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Tangibility	Between Groups	9.913	2	4.956	.696	.500
	Within Groups	1160.62	163	7.120		
	Total	1170.53	165			
Competence	Between Groups	169.397	2	84.699	7.550	.001
	Within Groups	1828.68	163	11.219		
	Total	1998.07	165			
Attitude	Between Groups	175.319	2	87.659	5.881	.003
	Within Groups	2429.71	163	14.906		
	Total	2605.03	165			
Content	Between Groups	30.216	2	15.108	.869	.421
	Within Groups	2833.76	163	17.385		
	Total	2863.98	165			
Delivery	Between Groups	3.024	2	1.512	.040	.961
	Within Groups	6184.01	163	37.939		
	Total	6187.03	165			
Reliability	Between Groups	19.349	2	9.675	.237	.789
	Within Groups	6647.78	163	40.784		
	Total	6667.13	165			

Discussion

The objective of this paper is to assess the level of matches or gaps examined in quality services of Saint Mary's from learners' expectation and performance perspectives. Managing expectation is essential for quality services emanate by comparing the actual performance against students expectations. According to Zeithamal et al. (1993), the desired services can be formulated by customers on the basis of previous experience, word of mouth communication and service promises stated by an institution either explicitly or implicitly, in addition to continuing service intensifiers and

personal needs. Parasuraman et. al. (1988) assumes that the expectation gap is a quality measure that results from customer's expectations of the services versus the service result which in a way represents the degree of success in fulfilling customers' expectations.

The study revealed the existence of a statistically significant difference between students' perceptions and expectations in all the six factors. The highest gap is observed between importance reliability and performance reliability, where as the smallest gap is observed between importance tangibility and performance tangibility. Brown, Churchill and Peter (1993) claimed that the expected level of service will almost always be higher than the perceived level of service, and they pinpointed the need of variance restriction in the SERVQUAL data in which this study failed to do so. Taking the caution in to account, the finding corroborates with the results of Khodayari and Khodayari (2011). They found out a gap between students' expectations and perceptions. Similarly, Shank, Walker and Hayes (1995) conducted a study to evaluate service expectation in higher education settings from the professional service provider angle, and the result indicated that students expected more from their professors. The finding, however, disclaims the study of Cuthbert (1996) who came up with higher perception scores than expectation scores. According to O'Neill et al (2001) the SERVQUAL model enables to identify customers' expectations, needs, wants and level of satisfaction, and this information can be gleaned from their ratings. In all cases, the study uncovered the existence of gaps, varying in terms of degree which inform the need to narrow/ avoid the gap or if possible to exceed their expectations.

With regards to gender, both males and females do not show differences in their expectations and actual experience. The findings are in line with the findings of Ashi (2010); Qureshi, Mehmood and Sajid (2008), and Kaleem and Rahmat (2004) who found no difference of opinions as a result of gender. It also supports the study of Maru and Abera (2005) who examined the existence of association in the perception of quality of education at Saint Mary's University College between males and females and their finding displayed that there was no significant difference.

Department wise, having similar opinions for tangibility, competence, attitude, content and delivery, there is a difference of opinion regarding the expectation of reliability between management and accounting departments. Learners from the two departments held different opinions about the expected service promises. Concerning the actual experiences, competence and attitude attributes are the sources of differences among departments and for year of studies. Students from different departments and years vary in their experience of instructors' competence. The competence of instructors i.e., the sufficiency and highly qualified nature of the academic staff, the strong attraction in their teaching and the affection that they show to their students differ from department to department and between first year and third year students which can be attributed to differences of academic, family and economic background of instructors.

Most students conceive the courses they take as routes to improved career prospects, and the delivery of the courses highly depends on the skills of their instructors, and students examine very closely not only the dexterity of

their instructors but their affection too. In line with this, the finding of Pariseau (1997), for instance, showed that from all the attributes, students rated competence as the most important of all the six attributes, followed by responsiveness and attitude. Shevlin, Banyard, Davies and Griffith (2000) also argued that instructors who conduct the teaching learning process with punctuality, precision, reasonability, logical approach and in a student friendly manner are more popular.

Conclusion and Implications

Conclusion

The following conclusions are made based on the findings.

- The results show that there is a gap between students' expectations and performance of quality services.
- Both sexes have similar opinions of quality services, so do in terms of actual performance. As a result of students' gender, there is no difference in terms of quality services expectation and experience.
- As to year of study, learners held similar views regarding tangibility, content, attitude, delivery and reliability. However, they show differences of opinions when it comes to competence. Regarding the actual experience of quality services, the perceptions of learners vary for competence and attitude.
- Department wise, expectation difference is not exhibited to tangibility, competence, attitude, content and delivery. In other words, there is a difference in the opinion of reliability. As to

167

actual practice, difference of performance perception is exhibited when it comes to competence and attitude.

Implications

The following implications were drawn based on the findings.

- It is good to apply the above model in all departments in order to gather data regarding the expectations and performance of quality services of St Mary's. While doing so the data gathering instrument should also encompass qualitative instruments to enrich the finding using learners' views.

- The institution should narrow the gap between learners' expectation and actual practice of the teaching learning process, and it should monitor closely the improvement of the gap through CEIQA by conducting the survey continuously across all departments.

- Senior students have high demand for competence in both their expectation and performance of quality services. Hence, there is a need to assign high profile instructors to them.

- From department perspective again, learners experienced differences in terms of competence and attitude. Therefore, there is a need to narrow the gap by employing instructors who have equivalent competence across departments.

- Departments should show similarity in terms of the care and protection they show to their students.

- Academic staff should be informed systematically that learners require both academic competence and care from their instructors and their demand increases when their year of study increases.

Limitations of the Study

The study is limited to an institution. Adding an institution from public institutions, it would have been good to compare the nature of services between private and public institutions. Besides, the study applies a quantitative method alone by using a questionnaire. It would have been good to use mixed methods and different instruments to triangulate data. Due to shortage of time and budget, the study is limited to Saint Mary's University.

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