A PILOT EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION INTO STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF SERVICE QUALITY AT THE DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

by

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A research project in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF COMMERCE

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DECLARATION

I declare that the study titled: *A pilot empirical investigation into student perceptions of service quality at the Department of Management of the University of the Western Cape* is the result of my own work, which has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university or campus, and that all sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

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Date: March 2006

ABSTRACT

This pilot research survey was undertaken as a result of the need to assess the service quality within Higher Education in general and the Department of Management at UWC in particular. This report focuses on the complexities of measuring service quality in higher education. The quality of service delivery within education is becoming more important as the competition for students increases.

The literature was searched to find a suitable measure with a sound theoretical structure. This measure was then adapted for the department.

In a preliminary way this instrument was then applied to students in the department and initial results are reported on.

The results revealed that undergraduates overall were uncertain in their attitude to the service quality in the department. On the other hand, postgraduate students tended to rate the service quality rather more negatively ($p < 0.004$). Furthermore there were no gender differences except for tangibles ($p = 000.5$).

This pilot study could serve as a pilot study of the service quality in an academic environment. It is the main contention of this report that students themselves should be part of defining quality.
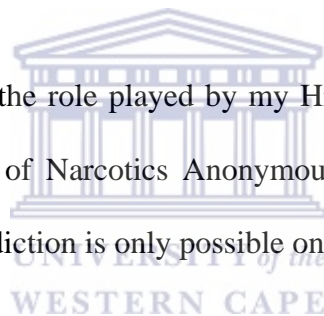
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KEY WORDS

Service quality

Transformation in education

Student's (customer's) perception

SERVQUAL

SERVPERF

Perceived quality

Functional quality

Reliability
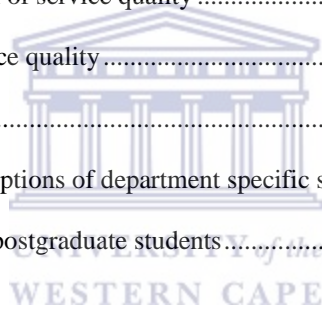
Assurance

Responsiveness

Empathy

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1. BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Since 1994 higher education institutions have experienced dramatic changes, both in their funding and in student numbers. Competitive advantage was a concept alien to the higher education sector prior to the 1990's, but it is important now for institutions to accept that they are in a "market".

O'Neill and Palmer (2004) express a view that higher education has proceeded from a niche service consumed by a small elite, to a mass-market service in which increasing numbers of students are catered to by an increasing number and diversity of providers.

Furthermore they state that the provision of higher education has typically gone from being a centrally planned service to one in which resources are allocated by market forces. They point out that as this market matures, it is service quality that will differentiate one higher education institution from another.
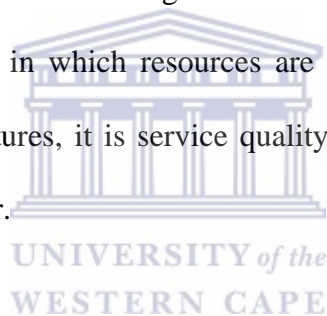
Sahney, Banwet, and Karunes, (2004) contend that the higher education system in particular, finds itself in a market oriented environment. Institutions offering business education must now also be concerned with market share, productivity, return on investment and the quality of services offered to their customers. High levels of service quality can lead to excellence in business education and can have lasting effects on the institution and the students it serves (Le Blanc and Nguyen, 1999).

Oldfield and Baron (2000) point out that in Britain over the past ten years, higher education institutions have experienced dramatic changes, both in their funding and in student numbers.

In higher education the interaction between students and their influence on each other is a powerful determinant of overall satisfaction. In keeping with the socio-economic and cultural transformation that has placed demands on the educational system, the system has been pressurised to shift its focus from one of quantitative expansion to one with an emphasis on quality (Sahney, et al., 2004).

A reconfigured higher education system, which does not have quality at the heart of its education and training provision, will fail to deliver critical national objectives with regard to equity, social justice and socio-economic development (Singh, 2002).

The aim of this study is to investigate the literature for the most stable measure of service quality based on a viable theory, briefly explore in a preliminary manner its properties, adapt it for UWC and use it to explore service performance in the Department of Management. This empirical research report stresses the view that service quality should be determined by the student/client.
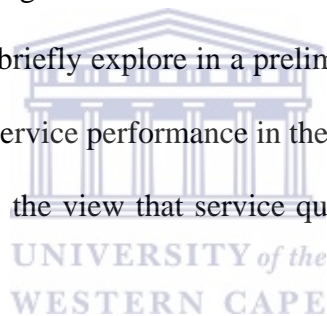
The function of the literature review is to help with the formulation of the problem statements, which will inform this research report.

Similar research into service quality management (measurement) is not on record in the Department of Management and was not available from other institutions in the Western Cape. This research provides a conceptual foundation for investigating service quality. To that end an exploratory pre-pilot survey was first undertaken to investigate the concept of service quality in the department.

O'Neill and Palmer (2004) argue that, while much time is taken up discussing the psychometric performance of tools that measure service performance, their real value to the higher education sector rests with their ability to pin-point service failures and to direct continuous improvement efforts which are of demonstrated importance to students.

Higher education is considered a part of the public sector service industry in South Africa. The White Paper on Service Delivery in the public sector in South Africa, titled Batho Pele – (People First), lists eight principles that should guide discussions on service quality improvement: Consultation, Service standards, Access, Courtesy, Information, Openness and transparency, Redress and Value for money.

University business education is an important contributor to the reconstruction and economic development in the South African setting. Overall, the transformation reality within higher education is about cutting back and doing more with less whilst improving quality. The South African higher education environment is being transformed at both system and institutional levels. Singh (2002) says that this brings South Africa in line with processes of far-reaching change within higher education systems around the world in response to greater accountability demands, shrinking resources and diversifying student populations.

Furthermore Singh (2002) points out that South Africa is a late entrant in the quality assurance world where longstanding systems already operate in countries like the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and New Zealand. Countries like India and others in Central and Eastern Europe as well as in Latin America are in the process of consolidating relatively new quality assurance systems and may very well have very valuable lessons for the Higher

Education Quality Committee as it develops a quality assurance system in a developing context.

In South Africa the formation of the Council on Higher Education's Quality Assurance Committee (HEQC), states in its founding document that a quality assurance system is intended to ensure that higher education and training programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate levels are responsive to the needs of learners, employers and society at large (Singh, 2002).

The approach to quality assurance by the HEQC supports the view that the primary responsibility for the quality of provision and appropriate mechanisms to assure that quality, rests with higher education providers.
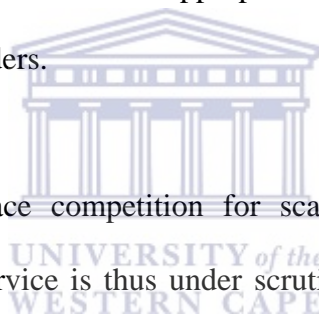
Higher education institutions face competition for scarce funding. The quality of the Department of Management's service is thus under scrutiny and forms part of a university wide recapitalisation process. The process entailed amongst other things a decrease in the cost of delivering education while improving programmes and services quality for students. This report suggests that an appropriate tool for assessing service quality is therefore valuable for managers in higher education within South Africa.

Service quality measures can also serve as a management tool. Brown and Koenig (1993) recommend that customer evaluations of the quality of their education should be an integral part of Total Quality Management (TQM) programmes in business education. Indeed, a better understanding of how customers form impressions of quality can provide valuable information to management for designing service delivery systems that enhance customer

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satisfaction (Seymour, 1992) and for adapting the university environment to the students' needs (Hampton, 1993). In the design of quality improvement programmes it is thus the customers' definitions of quality which count, since management may make the wrong assumptions as to how customers actually assess service quality (Cited in LeBlanc and Nguyen, 1997). Service quality can be assessed along several criteria. Student perception is one such criterion.

O'Neill and Palmer (2004) hold the view that, like many service industries, higher education has tended to focus on technical dimensions. This is manifested in a plethora of statistics, indices and league tables covering such issues as student progression rates, the proportion of students receiving higher grades and the quality of teaching staff, as measured by their qualifications and research performance. Less effort has been spent in probing the functional aspects of quality that impact on students.

Service quality also has a tangible element. Customers cannot see a service but they can see and experience various tangible elements associated with the service. They see service facilities, equipment, employees, uniforms, pamphlets, leaflets, and these are referred to by Zeithaml *et al*. (1992) as "clues" and, as advocated by Shostack (1977), it is possible to "manage the evidence" using the clues. A prime responsibility for the service marketer is the management of available tangibles so that the proper signals are conveyed about the service (Berry, 1980 cited in Oldfield, 2000).

Service satisfaction has been related to a number of factors. Service quality of an academic department can be influenced by a number of factors both intrinsic to the perceiver as well as

to the perceived performance of the academic department and administrative support. This study will explore some of these factors.

The ultimate perception of the quality of an educational institution is the subsequent performance of its students in their business or work environment. The corporate business and societal opinion of a university develops as a result of this performance and it is the ultimate criterion of the service quality provided by that educational institution. This is however, a long term goal and not part of this study.

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2. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this pilot survey is twofold. One, to examine the literature for the best dimensions that students (clients) could use to assess the performance of an academic service provider. Secondly, this measure will be applied and tested. Thirdly, in a preliminary way assess the service quality of the Department of Management at the University of the Western Cape.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Very broadly, quality can be defined in terms of providing goods or services to customers according to a specification that satisfies their needs (Palmer, 2005).

Sahney, Banwet and Karunes (2004) suggest keeping it simple. They state that quality is derived from the Latin word *qualis*, meaning, "what kind of". It has a wide variety of meanings and connotations attached to it and is hence a slippery concept. There is therefore no consensus definition. And quality has been defined with different perspectives and orientations.
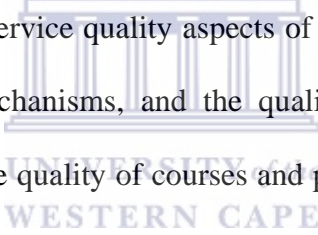
The quality of a service as opposed to the quality of goods is even more elusive, mainly because of the unique features that differentiate services from goods. Intangibility, inseparability of production and consumption, heterogeneity, perishability and variability are the four well-documented features of services acknowledged in the service marketing literature (Berry, 1980; Bitner, 1992; Lovelock, 1983; Zeithaml *et al.*, 1985). Because of these unique features, and the difficulties of defining and delimiting quality as it applies to intangibles, the measurement of service quality in specific service industries still remains a challenge (Babakus and Boller, 1992).

Service quality has been identified as the single most researched area in services marketing to date, and it is maintained that, for service-based companies, quality is the lifeblood that

brings increased patronage, competitive advantage and long-term profitability (Oldfield and Baron, 2000).

The identification of the dimensions which signal quality and the achievement of excellence in business education have emerged this decade as key issues facing the academy. Indeed, like many other organizations, business schools must be concerned now with market share, productivity, return on investment and the quality of services offered to their customers. Service quality can lead to excellence in business education and can have lasting effects on the institution and the students it serves (LeBlanc and Nguyen, 1999).

Much of the published work on service quality aspects of higher education has concentrated on effective course delivery mechanisms, and the quality of courses and teaching. The mechanisms for measuring service quality of courses and programmes often rely on research instruments (e.g. student feedback questionnaires) devised by representatives of the higher education institutions to provide data that address various externally set audit criteria (Oldfield et al , 2000).

Judgements about services are often subjective rather than objective and providing a consistent service is difficult as factors such as the interpersonal skills of contact staff and the demeanour of consumers (students) can be crucial (Kotler, 1982) and will thus confound both inter and intra group comparisons.

These conditions necessitate that institutions should address the issue of quality, not only through the traditional routes of accreditation and course review, student feedback questionnaires on the quality of course delivery and teaching, but also through evaluating what students themselves consider elements in service quality.

(Oldfield et al's 2000) research confirms the situation as it pertains to the Department of Management, that currently, there is an inclination to view service quality in higher education from an organizational perspective. The issue of what constitutes a quality service within higher education is an emotive one. It is important for institutions to look at what their students want and what students consider to be good service and not to collect data based upon what the institution perceives its students find important.

The identification of the dimensions that signal quality and the achievement of excellence in business education have emerged this decade as key issues facing the academy. Indeed, like many other organizations, business schools must also be concerned now with market share, productivity, return on investment and the quality of services offered to their customers. Service quality can lead to excellence in business education and can have lasting effects on the institution and the students it serves (Gaston, 1997).

Service quality theorists have defined service quality in various ways. Service quality has been described in terms of satisfaction. Conceptualising service quality is more complex than for goods. In the research of Oldfield et al (2000) they report that much of the published work

on service aspects of higher education concentrates on course delivery mechanisms and quality of teaching.

Figure 1. The service quality model Gronroos (1988)
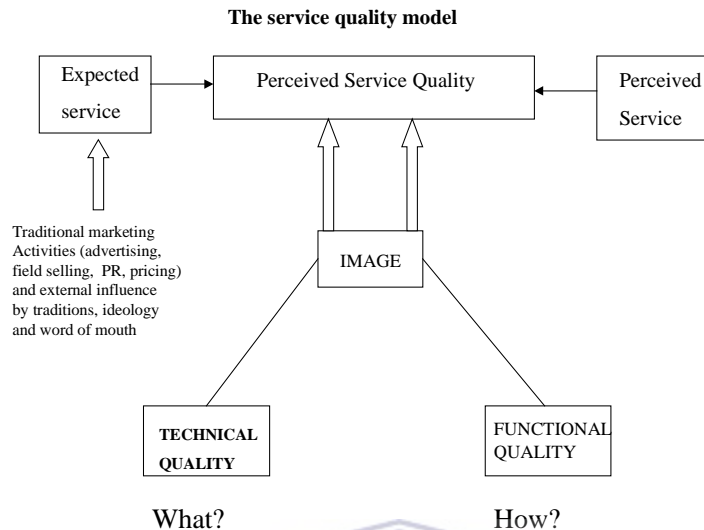
The service quality model

The design of quality measures for specific service providers should lead to a better understanding of the construct and to the adaptation of quality improvement programmes which correspond to service company needs. From the design perspective, dependable measures of service quality for specific service industries are a viable research strategy to pursue (Brown and Koenig, 1993; Carman, 1990; Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Finn and Lamb, 1991; Zeithaml, 1988).

Following Gronroos' model (Figure1.) and the results of the pre-pilot study an additional dimension was added to the model developed for the present study and this is the perceived image of the institution. Image is what and how the institution is perceived by its students since image is expected to influence perception of service quality. It is related to tradition,
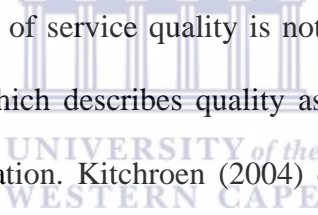
ideology, business name, reputation and variety of services, and to the impression of quality communicated by each person interacting with customers (Solomon et al, 1985). It can be argued thus that corporate image is an important quality indicator for customers. Given that services are intangible, particularly education, investigating how reputation relates to quality appears warranted.

The quality viewpoint within management only started to gain formality from the nineteen seventies onwards. Hellriegel, et al (2004) says that quality is therefore a relatively new viewpoint. They cite amongst others that contemporary organisations are dynamic and whether they are small or large they face formidable challenges. These include pressure from customers and competitors to deliver high-quality services on time, reward ethical behaviour of employees, and to develop plans to manage highly diverse customers and workforces alike. Customer demand for high quality services may be the dominant theme for the foreseeable future. Quality therefore can be defined as how well a service does what it is supposed to do – how closely and reliably it satisfies the specifications to which it is made. It can thus be argued that managers in successful organisations should be quality conscious and should understand the link between high quality services and competitive advantage.

3.1 The definition and dimensions of service quality.

The literature is strewn with research that contains various views how service quality should or should not be measured. One notable view that was espoused recently deserves mention as it accords with debates that were considered when this study was undertaken. Palmer and O'Neill (2004) address the issue of service quality evaluation within the higher education

sector and stress the need to develop measures that are both psychometrically and practically sound. They point out that recent debates surrounding the development of such measures have been too strongly geared toward the psychometric performance, with little regard for their practical value. While their research supports the need to develop valid, reliable and replicable measures of service quality, they suggest quite adamantly that educators and management must not lose sight of the original purpose for which these measures were designed, i.e. their practical value in informing continuous quality improvement efforts. This is very relevant for the transforming environment at UWC which witnesses periods of high staff turnover i.e. academics as well as administrative staff. Measures, which are user friendly and easy to interpret, will support the aim of continuous improvement. As well as rapid feedback for students who seek improvements in the department's service quality.

Since an all-embracing definition of service quality is not possible, I will employ Zeithaml and Bitner's (2003) definition which describes quality as the ability of an organisation to meet or exceed customer expectation. Kitchroen (2004) cited Sasser, Olsen, and Wyckoff (1978), also list seven service attributes, which they believe adequately, embrace the concept of service quality. These include Security, Consistency, Attitude, Completeness, Condition, Availability and Training of service providers.

To that end, Parasuraman et al. (1993) hold the view that their SERVQUAL items are the basic skeleton underlying service quality that can be supplemented with context specific items when necessary.

SERVQUAL is a well-known and much-used instrument for measuring customer perceptions of service quality (see Buttle, 1996 for a comprehensive review of its properties). However, while versions of SERVQUAL continue to be critiqued and improved, SERVQUAL stands as the pre-eminent instrument for assessment and measurement of perceived quality (Pariseau and McDaniel, 1997). The instrument's 22 questions include multi-item measures of service processes, interpersonal factors and physical evidence - the three distinct components of service quality.

The original SERVQUAL questionnaire was designed to measure both expectations (forecast) and perceptions (what actually happens) of a firm's service quality. Cronin and Taylor (1992) disputed the appropriateness of measuring the gap between expectations and perceptions. They developed and tested an alternative instrument which measures performance only (SERVPERF) based on the construct that "service quality should be measured as an attitude" (Cronin and Taylor, 1992: 64).
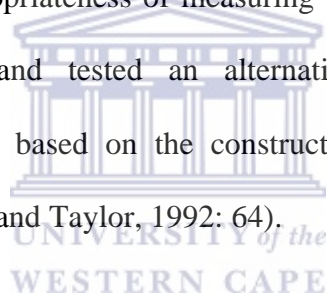
SERVPERF is the measure of service quality most often found in the literature. The theoretical structure of SERVPERF is given in figure 2.

Service quality within education is a subject, which is debated from a number of viewpoints in the literature. Almost all the research undertaken agrees that service quality has many faces and is multi-dimensional. In this regard the following position is taken up by Le Blanc & Nguyen (1997), they state that the design of quality measures for specific service providers should lead to a better understanding of the construct and to the adaptation of quality improvement programmes which correspond to service company needs. From the design perspective, dependable measures of service quality for specific service industries are a

viable research strategy to pursue (Brown and Koenig, 1993; Carman, 1990; Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Finn and Lamb, 1991; Zeithaml, 1988). SERVQUAL has five dimensions: Reliability, Assurance, Responsiveness, Tangibles and Empathy.
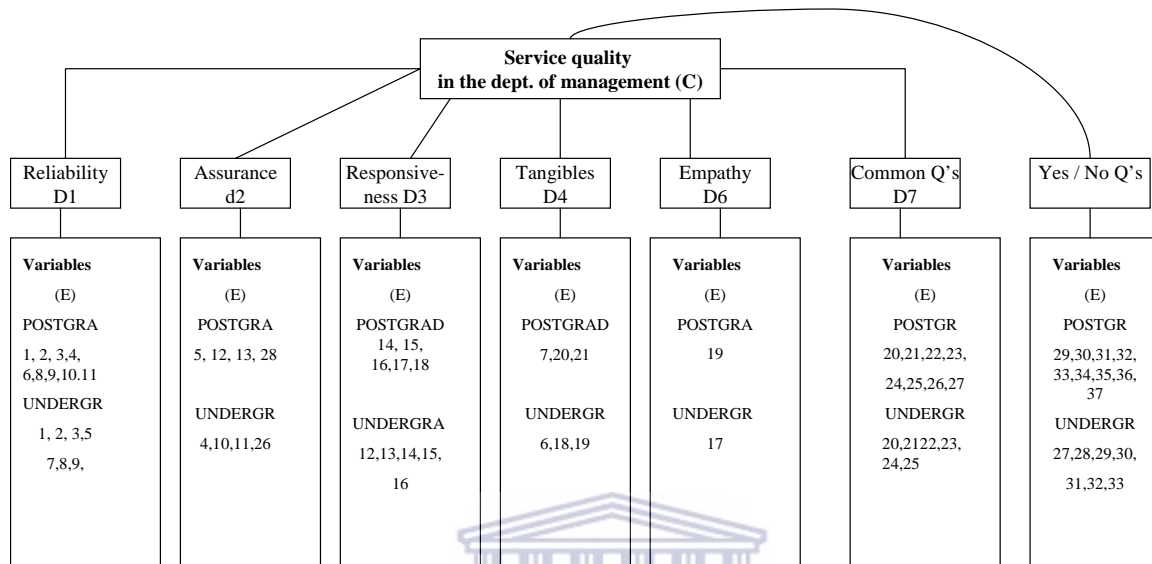
Figure 2: Service quality as conceptualized by Parasuraman et. al., 1988.

3.2 Factors which affect perception of quality

There is evidence in the literature that gender influences the perception of service quality. Le Blanc and Nguyen (1997) have shown that male students are more likely to focus on social value during service consumption, while females are more critical of the price/quality relationship as it relates to value. If there is a sex difference in SERVPERF scores then the gender composition will bias studies in service quality and gender corrections will have to be made whenever SERVPERF scores are compared.

Moreover, gender is found to impact on value perceptions where female students give less importance to social value. Interestingly, their results show that as female students progress

in their area of specialisation, they tend to believe that the price/quality relationship deteriorates at their business school (Le Blanc and Nguyen, 1997).

Levels of a student's maturity are also expected to influence the perception of service quality. Oldfield and Baron (2000) conducted their research in a UK University and management faculty. The survey they conducted was very close in its aims to the present study. Their exploration examined student perceptions of service quality and highlights the need to recognise that not all students' needs are the same. Their study compared the perceptions of first and final year students. They argue that while it is recognised that undergraduate student views of course/programmes will vary over the three or four years of study according to the modules taken, it is largely assumed that the generic elements which make up service quality (e.g. the physical environment, or the availability of academic staff) are perceived in a similar way by students of all years. They state that there is, of course, a distinct possibility that student evaluations of different elements of service quality may alter over time as they proceed from year to year, especially in the case of sandwich degree students who will have experienced a different culture during their studies.

Also, there is a tendency for course management teams to assume that students across all years of a course or degree require the same provision with respect to all of the varied features of student evaluation of perceived quality. This would suggest, therefore, that there would be a uniform model of quality across all years. The challenge for management would be not only how to better meet student needs per se, but also how to meet those needs, should it be found that they alter over time.

Earlier it was stated that competition for students now also has an impact on the Department of Management. Lovelock (2004, 59) posits that different service firms vary widely in their abilities to serve different types of customers. Hence, rather than trying to compete in an entire market, perhaps against superior competitors, each firm should adopt a strategy of market segmentation, identifying those parts, or segments, of the market that it can serve best. Firms that are in touch with customer requirements may choose to use a needs based segmentation approach, focussing on those customers identified by research as valuing specific attributes. The implication is that a service quality tool must be developed for each environment. In a way this is what this exploratory research has done by eliciting student's views on various elements of service quality within the department of management. Lovelock (2004) suggests that only research into consumers' perceptions of quality can deliver the basis for a service concept for a specific segment.

Zeithaml and Bitner (2003) cite cultural influences on service expectations as a contextual factor. Masculinity and femininity are dominant sex role patterns in the vast majority of both traditional and modern societies. Masculine societies value assertiveness, performance, ambition, and independence, whereas feminine societies value nurturance, quality of life, service, and interdependence. The authors point out that, marketing efforts will perform better when matched with cultural characteristics. These typologies will help us understand the differences in values across cultures and can be of immense importance as service marketers develop and market service offerings. Care must therefore be exercised when importing measures and other tools designed in a Western European setting into a different culture.

Le Blanc and Nguyen (1999) use gender and year of study as a basis for comparing student's value judgements of business education. Their survey was similarly conducted amongst business students. This study therefore investigates differences in students' assessments of service quality based on gender and study level.

4. METHODOLOGY

Choosing an appropriate methodological framework is an important aspect of all research. In this investigation into student perceptions of service quality in the Department of Management at the University of the Western Cape there are three main questions driving the process. Another facet of the method is the two stage approach adopted to give rationale for the specific adaptation of the SERVPERF instrument.

4.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the levels of service satisfaction in the Department of Management as measured by the SERVPERF, at the global level, SERVPERF dimensional level and at the SERVPERF item level? This result can also serve as a baseline for further studies.

2. Are there any significant gender differences on the assessment of quality of service in the academic setting and on which dimensions- reliability, assurance, responsiveness, empathy, tangibles- do these differences occur?

3. Is there a significant difference on SERVPERF scores between postgraduate and undergraduate students and on what dimensions of SERVPERF are differences significant?

The effect of culture will not be considered at this stage.

4.2 SERVPERF

To apply the SERVPERF-based survey in the higher education context, Oldfield (2000) recommended that two operational issues be addressed. First it was recognised by the founders themselves (Parasuraman et al., 1991) that the wording of the questions needs to be tailored to the specific service application, in a language with which the respondents can identify.

As a result, the first stage of the research was to consult students through a pre-pilot study. The purpose of the pre-pilot was to get some ideas of how students perceive the Department of Management and the University of the Western Cape in order to test, and refine the wording and understanding of potential survey questions.
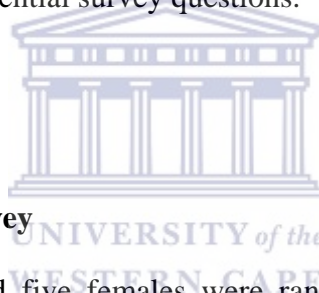
4.2.1 Stage 1: The pre-pilot survey

Ten respondents, five males and five females were randomly selected from a third-year undergraduate marketing class. Using the same profile another group from the postgraduate segment was chosen to answer the same questions.

They were asked:

- What they liked about the department;

- What they disliked about UWC;

- What they disliked about the department;

- And what one thing they would like to change.

For the pre-pilot results refer to annexure 1 which, contains a summary of the pre- pilot results.

The anonymous responses to the questions above served as the basis for the wording and development for potential questions for the research instrument. More importantly the answers to these questions allowed for more probing of the literature and the choice of a theoretical model that could be applied to the department.

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4.2.2 Stage 2: The pilot undergraduate and postgraduate student survey

All second-year and third-year undergraduate students and all postgraduate students who were registered for their respective second semester were approached to participate in this study to measure the service quality in the Department of Management. The assumption being that the sample will approximately represent management students at UWC even though the main aim of this study is to explore measures of service quality and to tentatively study the performance of a chosen measure.

When the survey was implemented the lecturer's for the respective classes were asked for five minutes at the beginning of their classes. Students were briefed on the aims of the survey and were asked to complete the questionnaires.

4.2.2.1 The questionnaire

One of the ways to tap individual student perceptions was to reduce the construct, service quality, to observable behaviours and characteristics. The SERVPERF theoretical structure (figure 2.) referred to earlier provided, an operational model garnered from the literature. Operationally defining the concept so that it becomes measurable was achieved by Parasuraman (1988) by looking at the various dimensions of service quality. These

dimensions were then separated further into measurable elements. These in turn provided the shape of the actual variables, which could then be subjected to measurement.

The postgraduate students answered two additional statements as these pertained to their part-time status – *"Support staff is smart and know how to deal with part-time students."* and *"The opening hours are convenient for me."* The rest of the questions were divided, like that of the undergraduates, into the five "Dimensions": Reliability, Assurance, Responsiveness, Tangibles and Empathy (see table below).

Table 1. Dimensions of service quality

Elements	Description
Assurance	Knowledge and courtesy of employees (academic and administrative staff) and their ability to inspire trust and confidence
Responsive	Willingness to help customers (students) and provide prompt service
Empathy	Caring, individualised attention the Department of Management provides its customers (students)
Reliability	Ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately
Tangibles	Condition of facilities, equipment, and appearance of personnel

Source: Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry , 1988.

As a result of the pre-pilot, a final set of 37 SERVPERF statements/questions for postgraduate students and 34 for undergraduate students was derived to use in the second stage of the research. The items for both undergraduate and postgraduate were measured on a 7-point, Likert-type scale that varied from 1 = much worse than expected to 7 = much better than expected, and mid-points on the scale were thus not labelled (Le Blanc, et al 1997).

Thus the instrument used in this survey was designed to measure student perceptions of service quality in the department, and focussed on those elements not directly involved with content and delivery of course modules. Performance-only adaptations of the SERVQUAL research instrument are referred to by the authors as SERVPERF, (see appendix 1). The target student population had been at the university for at least one term at the time of the survey, it is unlikely that they would have been able to retrospectively rate their expectations in a way that was uncoloured by their experiences as required by SERVPERF. SERVPERF was thus used instead of SERVQUAL.

Tenability of the questions in this research was tested using the independent sample t-test and Levine's test was used to assess the homogeneity of variance in order to decide whether to use the unequal variance version of the t-test. A histogram was used to examine if distribution scores can be classed as normal.
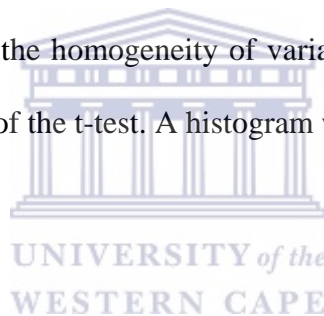
4.2.3 Department Specific Questions

Department specific questions were added to the SERVPERF in order to explore the concept of service quality a little further and to make it more specific to the Department of Management.

Items Q20, Q23 and Q24 were included and could be labelled "Social value", and was found in the literature to constitute the utilities that students derive from having friends in their classes, as well as the group and social activities which add value to their learning experience.

20. Does the calibre of your classmates enhance the learning process?

23. Do you feel your classmates emphasise individual achievement at the expense of teamwork?

24. To what extent are interpersonal skills stressed in the curriculum?

Q21, Q22 and Q25 designate "Functional value, want satisfaction". These items relate to the economic utility associated with a business degree and its worth to students with regard to gaining future employment and attaining career aspirations.

21. How would you appraise the Department of Management in preparing you for a successful career in business?

22. Did you receive practical information during the programme that was usable in your first job?

25. How would you judge the Department of Management's network and connections that can help you throughout your career?

4.2.4 Closed questions

Nine additional statements were included which required respondents to answer yes or no. In contrast to the Likert scaled questions above, here, the researcher was able to probe responses where students were given less choice.

5. RESEARCH RESULTS

5.1 Description of the sample

191 questionnaires were completed and returned by the undergraduates and 109 postgraduates. Completed questionnaires were captured using the SPSS 12 statistical package for analysis. When the samples were combined, using the process of case wise deletion (SPSS 12), a total of 217 responses were obtained. The mean age was 26.74 years with a standard deviation of 8.29.

Table 2. Characteristics of the sample.

Characteristic	Undergraduate (N = 191)		Postgraduate (N = 109)	
	Frequency	Percentage %	Frequency	Percentage %
Second year of study	61	32	61	55
Third year of study	128	67	17	16
Full time student	175	92	35	32
Part-time student	13	7	73	67
Female	50	50	34	31
Male	95	50	70	64
Marketing major	N/A		31	28
HR major	N/A		19	17
Finance major	111	58	26	24
Employed full-time	N/A		76	70
Part-time	N/A		11	10
Unemployed	N/A		21	19

5.2 General description of the results of Undergraduates

By adapting the SERVPERF research instrument to measure student's perception of functional quality at UWC's Department of Management, we aim to increase our understanding of the undergraduate and postgraduate student experience.

The questionnaire contained 38 variables related to different aspects of the Department of Management's service offering, such as projected image, physical facilities and instruments, operating procedures, service delivery, along with faculty and administrative personnel. As pointed out earlier SERVPERF consists of the following theoretical dimensions:

1. Tangibles consist mostly of items that are associated with the physical environment where the service is produced and consumed.

2. Reliability concerns items that relate to the service providers' ability to perform dependably and accurately.

3. Responsiveness comprises items that are associated with the service employees' willingness to help customers and provide prompt service.

4. Assurance is made up of items, which describe the knowledge, and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence.

5. Empathy, for its part, contains an item, which corresponds to the caring, individualised attention which service companies give to their customers.

Details of the mean and standard deviation for each statement, grouped by quality dimension and ranked in terms of importance appear in the tables below.

Using the transform and then compute function in the statistics package SPSS 12 composite scores were computed for each dimension by simple addition of the scores on each item.

Individual item's means were then compared to the composite mean. The main aim was to derive a point of departure for a discussion of this report's findings.

5.2.1 Reliability dimension – Undergraduates

The Reliability items relate to the service providers' ability to perform dependably, accurately and within reasonable time limits. The reliability dimension consisted of seven items. The results for this dimension are shown in table 3 below. The reliability dimension thus refers to service processes that are carried out by both academics as well as administrative staff.

Table 3. Contains elements considered to constitute reliable service delivery.

Undergraduates			
Questions	N	Mean	Std. Dev
Q9 Academics are willing to give students attention.	168	4.59	1.52
Undergraduates			
Q5 Administration keeps accurate records.	174	4.51	1.66
Q3 Administrative staff are sincere.	173	4.38	1.75
Q2 Queries are dealt with efficiently and promptly.	173	4.25	1.59
Q1 Department provides its services within Reasonable time limits.	174	4.22	1.65
Q7 Services performed right the first time.	172	4.12	1.52
Q8 Administrative staff keeps promises.	168	4.11	1.51

Overall mean 4.30

All the means of the items under this dimension hover around the mid-point of four on the seven point scale. The standard deviations are stable (range from 1.51 to about 1.75) indicating a relatively homogeneous variance. The rather moderate deviations suggest that there is a fairly low variation round the mean implying that undergraduate respondents are possibly relatively uncertain and non-committal with regards to the department's service. It

can be argued that neutrality for the sample as a whole is not necessarily good in this regard. Given that management would want to know where to improve as well as where satisfaction resides in terms of whether the department's personnel are dependable, accurate and that delivery happens within a reasonable time limit.

Each of the items making up this dimension will now be analysed:

Q1, "This department provides its services within the time one might reasonably expect", shows a mean of 4.22 (1.65) a student rating below the dimension overall mean of 4.30. First off the bat it is noticeable that students, who spend a lot of time at the university i.e. undergraduates, do not rate the department's timely delivery positively. Undergraduate students seem unsure whether the department is able to provide its services within a reasonable time and seem to give responses close to the neutral point.

Q2. Has a mean of 4.25 (1.59) is also below the average for the dimension. This tends to suggest that students are uncertain about the department's efficiency and promptness when queries are dealt with.

Two items referred specifically to administrative staff. Similarly the undergraduate rating of the administrative staff - items *Q3, "When I have a problem, administrative staff in the department show a sincere interest in solving it"*, shows a mean of 4.38 and Q8, *"When the administrative staff in the department promise to do something by a certain time, they do so"* shows a mean 4.11 not far from the midpoint value. The tendency to choose the midpoint may represent an inclination not to offend.

It is possible therefore to discern the Undergraduates rating of the department's administrative staff as average.

The mean response for Q5, *"Administration keeps accurate records"* 4.51 (1.66) shows less hesitation on the part of students. Student perceptions of the central role, that administration, at a university pertaining to record keeping, does vary somewhat unexpectantly around a mean of 4.5.

Q7, "Services in the department are performed right the first time" gave a mean of 4.12 (1.51) which is also below the average for this dimension.

The response to the item (about the reliability of academic staff), Q9, "Academics are willing to give students individual attention during their consultation time". Analysis of "This department provides its services at the time it promises to do so" resulted in a mean response of 4.59 (1.52). The student's perception of academic's availability seems rather high though not to far from the midpoint. The result might be an indication that undergraduates are unsure of the availability of academics during their consultation times. Alternatively it could be suggested that the manner in which academics communicate this information to students is in doubt. However, it should be noted that this question contains two concepts and hence the results could refer to either the first or the second question. This question should be rephrased or reconstructed for further research using this instrument.

5.2.2 Assurance Dimension Undergraduates

Assurance is made up of items, which describe the knowledge, and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence. In the adapted SERVPERF assurance is made up of four items. The results are shown in table 4.

Table 4. Contains elements considered to constitute Assurance

Undergraduates			
Questions	N	Mean	Std. Dev
4. Academic staff knowledgeable to answer.	172	4.82	1.6
10. Academics understand the needs of their students.	166	4.16	1.47
11. All staff consistently courteous to me.	168	4.21	1.49
Undergraduates			
26. I feel secure in my transactions.	162	4.33	1.47

Overall mean 4.38

Academic staff was rated slightly higher than administrative staff. The result also shows reluctance on the part of students to be too critical of academic staff (the standard deviation is also low). Perhaps students have greater confidence in the academic staff.

5.2.3 The Empathy Dimension

The Empathy dimension referred to a single item, which corresponds with caring and individualized attention, which service companies give to their customers.

The empathy dimension Q17 is to what extent a*cademic staff in the department deals with me in a caring fashion.* The student response mean as with the prior statements shows ambivalence. Undergraduates are non-committal.

It is difficult to imagine how an organisation would deliver "caring individualised attention" to customers independent of its employees. Empathy implies that employees will pay attention, listen, adapt and be flexible in delivering what individual customers need. For example, research documents that when employees are customer oriented, have a good rapport with customers, exhibit perceptive and attentive listening skills, customers will evaluate the service more highly and be more likely to return (Zeithaml and Bitner, 2003).

T*able 5. Contains an element considered to constitute Empathy*

Undergraduate's			
Questions	N	Mean	Std. Dev
17. Academic staff are caring.	164	4.15	1.36

5.2.4 The Tangibles Dimension

The tangibles consist of items that are associated with the physical environment where the service is produced and consumed. The results for this dimension are contained in table 6 below.

Table 6. Elements considered constituting Tangibles

Undergraduates			
Questions	N	Mean	Std. Dev
6. Physical facilities are visually appealing.	174	4.76	1.62
18. Materials- textbooks, notices etc look good and attractive.	160	4.43	1.6
19. This department has up-to-date equipment.	164	4.4	1.6

Overall mean 4.53

The student's responses to these items are marginally above the overall average.

5.2.5 The Responsiveness dimension

Table 7. Contains elements considered to constitute Responsiveness

Undergraduates			
Questions	N	Mean	Std. Dev
12. Administrative staff respond to a request for assistance.	167	4.02	1.5
13. I have confidence in academic staff.	164	4.41	1.51
14. I have confidence in support staff.	166	4.34	1.48
15. Academic staff are not always willing to help.	161	3.8	1.71
16. Support staff are not willing to help.	165	3.81	1.64

Compared to the previous dimension's results responsiveness has the lowest overall mean result. From table 7 it is evident that undergraduate students ranked items Q15 and Q16 relatively low in comparison with other elements already dealt with but they were still positive.

5.2.6 Department specific questions

Items Q20, Q23 and Q24 were included and are labelled "Social value", and was found in the literature to constitute the utilities that students derive from having friends in their classes, as well as the group and social activities which add value to their learning experience.

Q21, Q22 and Q25 designate "Functional value, want satisfaction". These items relate to the economic utility associated with a business degree and its worth to students with regard to gaining future employment and attaining career aspirations.

Table 8. Contains elements that were specifically designed for the Department of Management.

Undergraduate			
Questions	N	Mean	Std. Dev
21. Do you feel prepared for the world of work?	163	4.63	1.61
25. The department's network and connections.	163	4.54	1.47
24. Are interpersonal skills stressed?	163	4.46	1.31
20. Calibre of classmates enhance learning.	166	4.3	1.36
22. Did you receive practical information?	141	4.25	1.65
23. Classmates are individualistic.	164	4.09	1.53

Overall mean 4.38

5.2.7 Yes or No Question

These items attempted to elicit a student's opinion of the department's eight-week term system, the exam structure of the department and the corporate image of UWC. These responses are expected to be related to service quality. The results are shown in tables 9, 10 and 11.
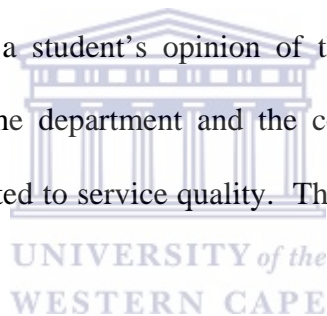
Table 9. Perceptions of the eight-week term

Question (s)	Description	Frequency	Percentages %
27. Eight-week term appropriate.	Yes	103	62
	No	64	38
28. Workload is fair for the eight-week term.	Yes	73	44
	No	69	41

Table 10. Student perceptions of exams in the department

Question (s)	Description	Frequency	Percentages %
29. Curriculum is too oriented to written exams.	Yes	98	59
	No	69	41
30. Should curriculum include oral exams?	Yes	75	45
	No	91	55

Table 11. Perceptions of UWC's corporate image

Question (s)	Description	Frequency	%
31. Does UWC give you prestige in your community?	Yes	118	72
	No	46	28
32. Overall, are you happy studying at UWC?	Yes	137	83
	No	28	17
33. Would you rather study at CPUT, Stellenbosch, UCT ?	Yes	81	50
	No	81	50

It is evident from table 8 that 68% of student's feel that the eight-week term is appropriate. This view of students contrasts quite radically with that of academics in the department who, subsequent to this survey report, voted in favour of scrapping the eight-week term. This decision followed a long debate. Academics felt that it was impossible to deliver quality education in this short space of time.

Most of the undergraduate students (59%) felt that the curriculum is too oriented to written exams, while 55% stated that the curriculum should not include oral exams. These responses

are interesting when compared to those opinions of the eight-week term which allows students very little time for thorough exam preparation. It could be that the response to the inclusion oral exam was based on some fear that time would also be too short for thorough preparation.

Table 11 above shows the results for undergraduate student views of UWC's corporate image.

A total of 72% of undergraduates found that UWC gave them prestige in their communities. Additionally a large portion 83% was also happy to study at UWC. However, in stark contrast to this, 50% felt that if they were given the chance they would rather study at Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Stellenbosch University or the University of Cape Town suggesting indifference on their part. This is a reminder of the view that unless students (customers) are actually asked we may never know how they really feel.
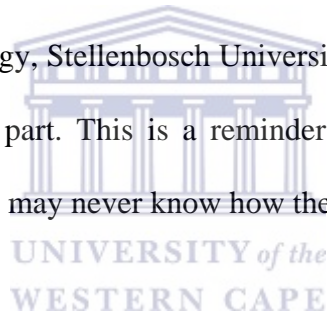
5.3 Postgraduate results and interpretation

5.3.1 Reliability dimension: postgraduates

The reliability could represent dependability and accurate performance of the Department of Management. This dimension consisted of the following nine items. Table 12 shows the postgraduate student's opinions for this dimension.

The mean for the department's Q1, "provision of its services within the time one might reasonably expect" is 3.32 compared to the overall mean of 3.54 for post graduate students. Clearly, the means are indicative of below par performance in terms of providing adequate

and timely service for the sample n=106. Overall, the perception of postgraduate students is that well-timed service is not a particular strength of the department.

Table 12. Contains elements considered to constitute reliable service delivery.

Question (s)	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Post graduates			
Q11. Academics are willing to give students attention.	104	4.19	1.67
Q4Administrative staff are sincere.	108	3.83	1.87
Q10 Opening hours are convenient for part-timers.	104	3.62	1.93
Q3.Support staff know how to deal with part-timers.	108	3.56	1.69
Q6. Administration keeps accurate records.	106	3.54	1.66
Q1.Department provides its services within reasonable time limits.	106	3.32	1.64
Q9.Administrative staff, keep their promises.	105	3.31	1.72
Q2. Queries dealt with efficiently and promptly.	108	3.29	1.59
Q8. Services performed right the first time.	106	3.22	1.59

Overall mean 3.54
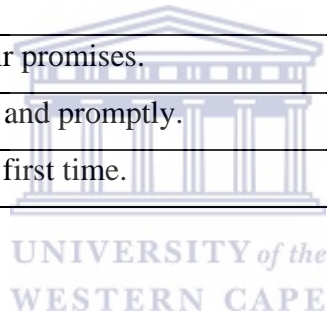
Q2, The mean (3.29) for the department to be effective and prompt when handling queries is below the composite mean of 3.54 for reliability. The department's performance in terms of this element is particularly low and suggests that postgraduate students are dissatisfied with the efficiency in handling queries. Overall, the perception of postgraduate students is that the department is not providing a reliable service to its clients.

Q3, The mean of postgraduate students' perception on knowledge of support staff and how to deal with students is 3.56 compared to the overall mean of 3.54. Postgraduate students are somewhat dissatisfied with the department's support staff in dealing with students. Overall,

the postgraduate students were fairly dissatisfied with the department's support staff and their capability of dealing with students. Support staff refers to tutors, and library staff.

Q4, The postgraduate response to Q4, "When I have a problem, administrative staff in the department show a sincere interest in solving it" shows a mean of 3.83 compared to the overall mean of 3.54. This response can be interpreted as a lack of interest on the part of the support staff in the department. Postgraduate students have little faith in support staff.

Q6. Admin keeps accurate records, shows a mean of 3.55 compared to the overall mean of 3.54. The postgraduate student's perception of accuracy of the department's records keeping is pretty low. Sound administrative records mirror the very nature of the student's relationship with the service provided. The mean result shows that the students do not perceive that the department keeps accurate records

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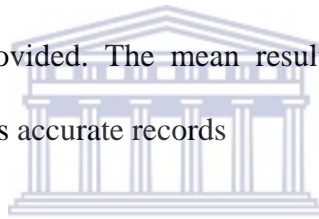
Q8, The student mean of 3.22 is compared to the overall mean of 3.55. It is evident from the overall picture that postgraduates rate the department lowest on this very important item. This statement is always included with this form and content as it summarises the core meaning of the reliability dimension. This result reveals that postgraduate students have a rather mediocre perception of the department's ability to deliver on time.

Q9, When the administrative staff in the department promise to do something by a certain time they do so? The student mean for this statement 3.31 is below the overall average mean of 3.55. We can see that postgraduate students are consistent in their low rating of the administrative staff. Postgraduate students attend classes at night. It would be expected that

their contact with administrative staff will also be after work hours. The results again reveal that their needs are not catered for adequately hence the weak perception.

Q10, The student's response mean is also below the average mean of 3.55. The opening hours of the department are very important for part-time students. Most times the window period for seeking out administrative queries is brief as class times are scheduled at the beginning of each term. The part-time student's response indicates a low-level of satisfaction.

Q11 "Academics are willing to give students individual attention during their consultation times". The student's mean of 4.19 is only marginally more than the average mean of 3.55. Students expect that academics would have consultation times for postgraduate part-timers. Yet students perceive this element of the department's service to be just about average.

5.3.2 Assurance dimension – postgraduates

Assurance variables denote competence, courtesy, credibility and security.

This dimension consisted of the following four statements the results are displayed in table 13.

Table 13. Elements considered constituting Assurance

Question (s)	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Q5 Academic staff are knowledgeable to answer questions.	107	4.55	1.66
Q13 All staff are consistently courteous to me.	106	4.37	1.69
Q28. I feel secure in my transactions.	105	4.04	1.49
Q12 Academic staff understands the needs of their students.	104	3.83	1.63

Overall mean = 4.20

The overall mean for the assurance dimension is 4.20. Students rated Q5, "Academic staff in the department has the knowledge to answer my questions relating to courses offered", mean

4.55. The results of the response rating shows academics are average with regard to their knowledge in answering questions. The very nature of this service requires the department's students to feel secure in this domain and they are unsure.

Q12, "Academic staff understands the needs of their students "shows a sample mean of 3.83 compared to the overall mean of 4.20. Part-time students rate academics below average for their efforts with regard to understanding student's needs. Despite being happy with the course content for example, students feel that with regard to the department's functional domain, service is below par.

Q12, by contrast states "that all staff in the department are consistently courteous to me" with a mean response of 4.37. The average is 4.20. The middle value bias shows uncertainty. Q28, "I feel secure in my transactions with this department" students rated as average, their attitude towards feeling secure within the department. Many issues with regard to security are raised here. This finding suggests that students are unsure about whether to relax when dealing with the department's personnel.

5.3.3 Responsiveness Dimension of service quality

Table 14. Contains elements considered to constitute responsive service delivery.

Question (s)	N	Mean	Std. Dev
Q17. Academic staff are not always willing help.	102	4.63	1.65
Q15. I have confidence in academic staff.	104	4.21	1.65
Q16 I have confidence in support staff.	106	3.92	1.56
Q14. Administrative staff responds to a request for assistance.	105	3.67	1.82
Q18. Support staff are not willing to help students.	105	3.57	1.73

Overall mean 4.00

This dimension consisted of the following five items - the results are displayed in the table above. The overall mean of the student's response to this determinant shows 4.00.

"Administrative staff are never too busy to respond to a request for assistance" has a mean result of 3.67 on the scale. This is below the overall mean of 4.00. Students do not feel that administrative staff, are particularly helpful in responding to their requests for assistance. Two other items also relate to administrative/support staff. Q16, "This department employs support staff in whom I have confidence" and has a mean response of 4.21. Respondents rate their confidence in support staff as average. This response is noncommittal and seems indecisive on the part of students. Similarly the result for Q18, "Support staff in the department, do not always show a willingness to help students" shows a mean response of 3.92 compared to the average. The overall view by the students is not very positive with regard to the responsiveness of administrative staff.
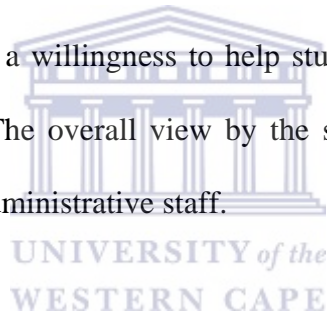
The student's mean result to academic's responsiveness, Q15 "This department employs academic staff in whom I have confidence", is 4.21 this possibly shows that students are unsure whether academics inspire much confidence. Similarly respondents rate Q17, "Academic staff in the department do not always show a willingness to help students", 4.63, which is a bit higher than average with regard to their willingness to help students.

Overall the results for the responsiveness dimension show that postgraduate students do not agree that the department's service staff is particularly responsive when engaged.

5.3.4 Tangibles dimension service quality

The tangibles dimension consisted of three items the results are displayed in the table 15. below:

Table 15. Elements considered constituting Tangibles

Question (s)	N	Mean	Std. Dev
Q20.Materials- textbooks, notices etc look good and attractive.	105	4.08	1.7
Q21. This department has up-to-date equipment.	105	3.93	1.69
Q7. Physical facilities are visually appealing.	105	3.90	1.69

Overall mean 3.97

The overall mean student response mean for the tangibles dimension measured on the scale is 3.97. Three items were included. Compared to the overall mean Q7, "The physical facilities are visually appealing. (i.e. building and surroundings)", is insignificantly lower than 3.97. Students do not agree that the department's physical facilities are visually appealing.

Similarly students rate , Q21, "Materials associated with course delivery such as textbooks, notices, notice boards, signs, overhead projectors) look good and attractive" as barely average a mean of 4.08. Student's attitude to the last tangible item Q21 "This department has up-to-date equipment" mean of 3.93 is also below the average. The results for this dimension should be of concern to the management of the department.

5.3.5 Empathy dimension

Table 16. Contains elements considered to constitute empathy.

Question	N	Mean	Std. Dev
Q19.Academic staff are caring.	106	3.44	1.71

Only one item was included under this dimension and shows a student mean response of 3.44. "Academic staff in the department deals with me in a caring fashion". This result shows that students in the department do not hold a very positive view of academic's ability to deal with them in a caring manner.

5.3.6 Postgraduate Student perceptions of department specific service quality variables.

Table 17 contains elements that were specifically designed for the Department of Management.
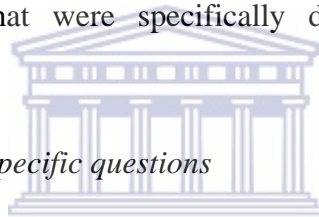
Table 17. Means of Department Specific questions

Questions	N	Mean	Std. Dev
Q23. Do you feel prepared for the world of work?	106	4.69	1.37
Q24. Did you receive practical information?	105	4.66	1.47
Q26. Are interpersonal skills stressed?	103	4.43	1.41
Q25. Classmates are individualistic.	102	4.28	1.68
Q27.The department's network and connections assisted you in your career.	102	3.98	1.51
Q22. Does the calibre of your classmates enhance the learning process?	105	3.67	1.67

Overall mean = 4.29

Q22, "Does the calibre of your classmates enhance the learning process?" the mean for this item is 3.67 which is lower than the overall average. Part-time postgraduate students rate the calibre of their peers below average. The composition of the post- graduate class is not

viewed very positively by students. These classes contain a cross-section of students that are enrolled for qualifications that range from diplomas to master's degrees.

Q23, "How would you appraise the Department of Management in preparing you for a successful career in business?" This mean is above the average for these questions but on the scale the results shows a strong middle point bias on the scale. Which can be read as uncertainty on the part of respondents, but somewhat positive?

Q24, "Did you receive practical information during the programme that was usable in your first job?" shows a mean of 4.56. For this question students are again doubtful. The results indicate that part-time students are not sure whether the work included in the curriculum will be of any benefit when they look ahead to the future.

Q25 asked, "Do you feel your classmates emphasize individual achievement at the expense of teamwork?" The student mean is 4.28 compared to the overall mean of 4.29. The student view is just about average. This finding could mean one of two things, either the department underemphasises this important element of learning or if group work is fostered, students are not given adequate learning opportunities and evaluation of the processes.

Q26 is concerned with the "extent to which interpersonal skills are stressed in the curriculum". The student response mean of 4.43. This is just about equal to the overall average. Interpersonal skills are an integral part of management education. Q27, "How would you judge the department of management's network and connections that can help you throughout your career". The results show a mean response rate of 3.98 for this item. This is

below the overall average. Part-time students, who hope to benefit from the department's ability to network don't agree that they are getting value in this regard.

5.3.7 Categorical Data results – Postgraduate students

Table 18. Perceptions of the eight-week term

Question (s)	Description	Frequency	Percentages
29. Eight-week term appropriate (N =102)	Yes	51	50
	No	51	50
30. Workload is fair for the eight-week term? (N = 103)	Yes	45	44
	No	58	56

Table 19. Student perceptions of exams in the department

31. Curriculum is too much written exams? (N = 106)	Yes	71	67
	No	35	33
32. Should include oral exams? (N = 106)	Yes	56	53
	No	50	47

Table 20. Skills relevant to the workplace

33. Skills relevant to your workplace? (N = 105)	Yes	92	53
	No	13	47

Table 21. Perceptions of UWC's corporate image

34. Does UWC give you prestige in your community?(N = 103)	Yes	71	70
	No	32	30
35. Overall, are you happy studying at UWC? (N = 103)	Yes	92	89
	No	11	11
36.Would you rather study at CPUT, Stellenbosch, UCT ? (n = 102)	Yes	70	69
	No	30	31

5.4 The 8 week term.

Q29 and Q30 probed for the first time what student's views were regarding the eight week timetable. In addition students in the pre-pilot survey also referred to this theme.
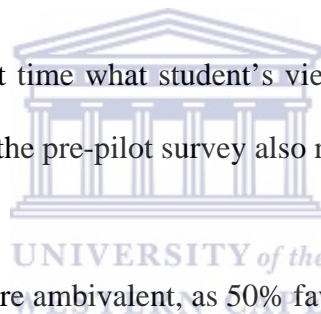
The results show that students were ambivalent, as 50% favored the eight-week configuration and 50% were not in favor. By contrast Q30 asked *whether students felt that the workload was fair for the eight-week term* and the results show that 56% felt that the workload was not fair while 46% of the respondents felt that the workload was fair. It does not appear that students are able to categorically distinguish whether the time and space allocated for management education skill development and practice is adequate. This ambiguity needs further probing.

5.5 Perceptions of exams in the department.

Q31 and Q32 asked part-time students about examinations. 67% said that the curriculum was far too exam oriented. Other forms of effective assessment should be explored. Q32 asked whether more oral exams should be included. 52% indicated a positive response and felt that orals should be incorporated. The result shows that students are amenable to alternatives.

5.6 Skills learnt relevant to the workplace

Q33, Are skills learned, relevant to student's workplace? Eighty eight percent (88%) felt that skills are relevant compared to 13% who answered in the negative. This opens the door to more research to find out exactly which courses are found to be more relevant. The department would naturally want to continue to enrich its curriculum and programme.
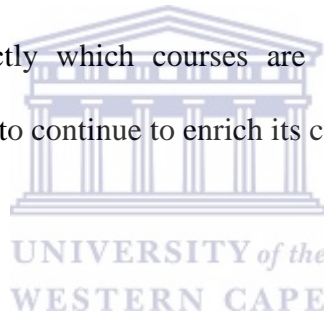
5.7 UWC's Corporate image.

Q34 and Q35 respectively dealt with this service quality determinant. Just over two thirds, 69% of post-graduate programme students felt positive in this regard. A third of the students felt negative about their association with the university as far as their community i.e. their families are concerned. 31% of the respondents felt that the university does not give them prestige in their business communities.

One of the aims of management education is to foster links with the business community that students represent. This finding demonstrates a need to further explore the representation of firms and sectors at the university. The department needs to know what firms/ employers think about our service as many pay students' fees.

Q35, "Overall are you happy studying at UWC? 90% of respondents said yes. But when asked Q36, "Would you rather study at Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Stellenbosch, UCT?", 70% of the part-time students said they would rather study at one of the other higher education institutions. This result shows quite a stark contradiction. A possibility exists that UWC part-time students may have colleagues at their places of work that study at other business schools and this is possibly where comparisons such as these emanate from. The department should be concerned about the word of mouth element of our services marketing campaign.

5.8 Gender differences

The responses of males were compared to the responses of females, for the combined sample, on the SERVPERF using the t-test. It should be noted that when the two groups were combined the total number of respondents was reduced due to case wise deletion i.e. where respondents failed to fill in their gender, this was recorded as missing and was therefore not included in the combined sample. The results are shown in table 22 below:

Table 22: Gender - Overall mean differences

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-value difference	p-value
Male	94	105.31	23.66	2.44		
Female	83	108.16	24.22	2.65		
Difference		2.85			0.791	0.215
Total	177					

Gender difference was analysed using the independent sample t-test for each of the elements of SERVPERF. The result is given in table 22. There is no significant difference in the overall scores on the SERVPERF on the basis of gender.

SERVPERF is, however made up of five components. Table 23 gives the result of the analysis of gender on these components. The p-values were derived from the t-test after using Levine's' test to test for homogeneity of variance. If the variance is not homogeneous then the p-value corresponding to the modified t-test is used.

Table 23. Gender mean differences for the SERVPERF dimensions

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	SE	p-value
Reliability	Male	123	31.976	9.712	0.876	0.438
	Female	97	32.990	9.463	0.961	
Assurance	Male	122	17.164	4.784	0.433	0.500
	Female	99	17.606	4.907	0.493	
Tangibles	Male	120	11.883	3.290	0.300	0.005
	Female	99	13.202	3.514	0.353	
Empathy	Male	127	3.827	1.723	0.153	0.525
	Female	101	3.683	1.649	0.164	
Responsiveness	Male	120	20.567	4.845	0.442	0.739
	Female	98	20.347	4.816	0.487	

These means are pictorially represented as a star plot in figure 3 to illustrate the SERVPERF component profiles for males and females.
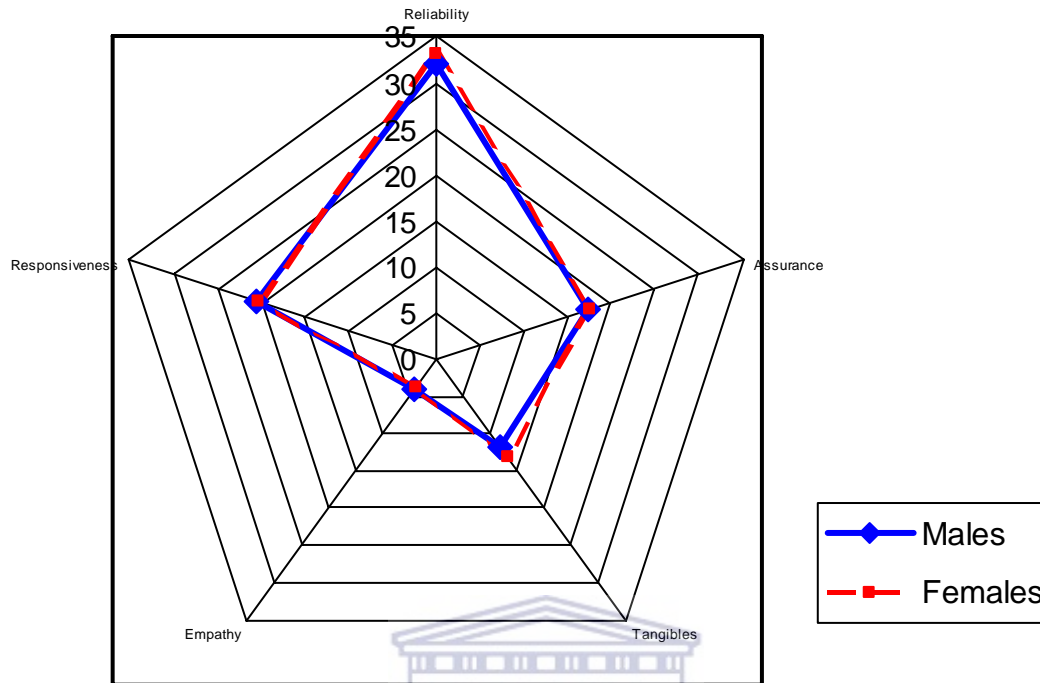
Figure 3. Means differences - Star plot for

gender(responsiveness,reliability,assurance,tangibles,empathy)

The only dimension where there is a gender difference is on tangibles. Females had a higher score suggesting that they are more tolerant with departmental lack of tangibles. The least difference occurred on the dimension of responsiveness. There were also no differences on the dimension of empathy which intuitively is more of a feminine trait.

Gender differences were then analysed for each of the items of SERVPERF. The results are given in appendix 1. Again Levines's test was used to test for homogeneity of variance. Items 27, 39, 31 and 33 did not pass this test and hence the p-values of unequal variance were

used. The most significant differences between males and females are on physical facilities, management appraisal and materials. See Appendix 4., which contains gender differences on all items of SERVPERF.

5.9 Differences between undergraduates and postgraduates

A single database was constructed combining undergraduate and postgraduate responses on common questions.

Table 24. gives the result of the t-test comparing undergraduates with postgraduates on the overall SERVPERV scores. Postgraduates scored significantly lower (p=0.004). Postgraduates are thus significantly more critical.

Table 24. Mean scores for the combined sample undergrads and postgrads

	Study level	N	Mean	SD	SEM	p-value
SERFPERV	Undergrad	121	115.94	21.92	1.99	
	Postgrad	86	106.57	24.18	2.60	0.004

Under-graduates and post-graduates were then compared on the dimensions of SERVPERF. The results are given in table 25.

Table 25. Mean differences for the combined sample

	Study Level	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	SEM	p-value
Reliability	Undergrad	161	35.168	8.452	0.666	0.0001
	Postgrad	100	28.990	9.964	0.996	
Assurance	Undergrad	157	18.038	4.617	0.368	0.044
	Postgrad	102	16.814	4.957	0.491	
Tangibles	Undergrad	158	13.367	3.439	0.274	0.0001
	Postgrad	101	11.366	3.255	0.324	
Empathy	Undergrad	165	3.806	1.641	0.128	0.263
	Postgrad	105	3.571	1.731	0.169	
Responsiveness	Undergrad	159	20.830	4.645	0.368	0.217
	Postgrad	99	20.071	5.017	0.504	
Dept. specific items	Undergrad	137	26.058	5.717	0.488	0.476
	Postgrad	98	25.510	5.924	0.598	

Postgraduates scored lower on all items where a seven point grading was used. Scores for the dimensions of reliability, and tangibles achieved the highest level of significance. This may be because the postgraduates were present mostly during off hours when the presence of staff, particularly administration staff, was minimal. Responsiveness showed no difference. There is no difference on departmental specific items. This dimension was very mixed and in future studies this needs to be separated into logical constructs.

Appendix 2 gives the differences between postgraduate and undergraduate students on department specific items.
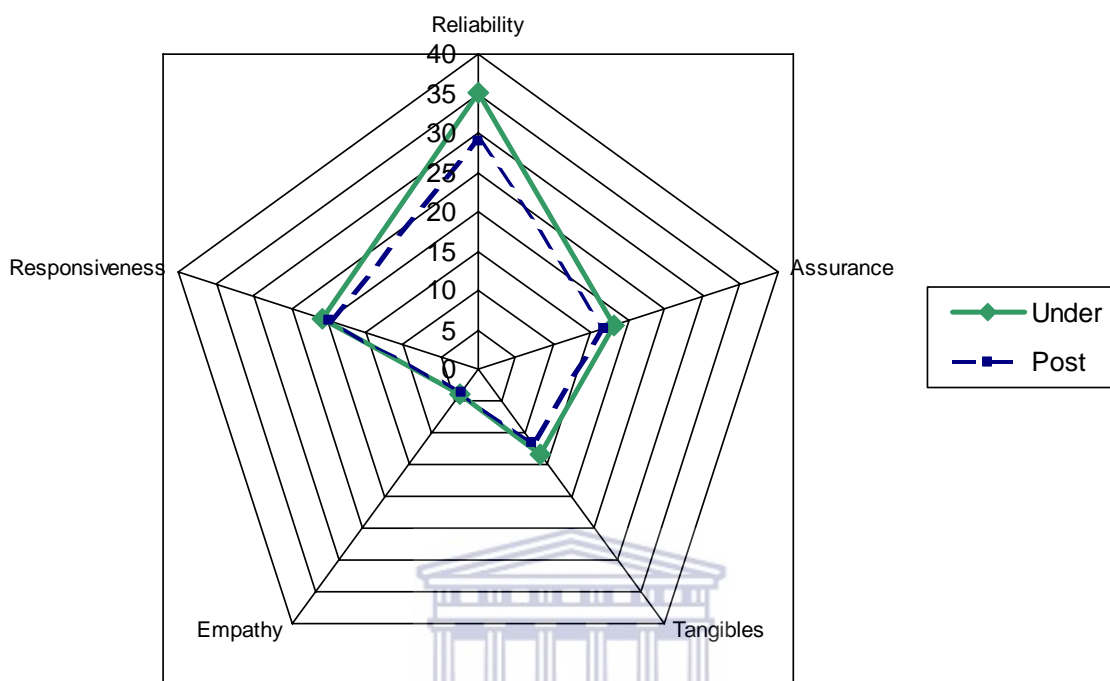
Figure 4. Means differences - Star plot for under-graduate and post-graduate

(Responsiveness, Reliability, Assurance, Tangibles, Empathy)

Table 25 read in conjunction with the star plot figure 4 illustrates the significant differences between under-graduates and post-graduates' perceptions for reliability and responsiveness which differs significantly from one another p = 000.1. Assurance also differs significantly but much less than the previous two p = 0.4. There are no differences on the empathy dimension. Empathy was measured using only one item and therefore possibly lacks psychometric sensitivity.

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The concern for *service quality* in business education and the lack of empirical research on the cues that signal *quality* to students was the bases for this exploratory pilot study on service quality.

The exploratory research results for the pre-pilot and pilot survey analysed and reported above offers several insights and suggestions concerning student perceptions of service quality. Specifically the research revealed dimensions that consumers use about the perceptions of services that can be argued need further refinement and extension within a higher education setting.

6.1 Research questions answered

Research question one - *asked what the levels of service satisfaction in the department of Management were, as measured by the SERVPERF, at the global level, SERVPERF dimensional level and at the SERVPERF item level – And whether these results can also serve as a baseline for further studies?*

6.2 Undergraduates

The results show that in the Department of Management at the University of the Western Cape survey, under-graduate students rate the quality of service as average. In addition these students regard the department's performance in the following ascending order Reliability lowest, followed by Assurance, then Tangibles, Responsiveness and then Empathy.

Moreover for the items specifically designed for the department under-graduates felt that their classmates are too individualistic and rated this item lower than the others. Where they were asked to either answer yes or no 72% of the undergraduates felt that UWC gave them prestige in their communities. 83% indicated that overall, they were happy studying at this institution.

The key question that management in the department has to answer is, whether they are satisfied to be rated as average. The cut and thrust of the current market situation is the need to retain as well as attract new students (customers). In this regard the results do not bode well. However, it does present an ideal opportunity to put in place measures of continuous improvement that could start with the repetition of surveys, such as this one.

6.3 Postgraduates

In direct contrast to above results it was immediately noticeable that the post-graduate student perceptions fell well below the average mean for all of the dimensions. The dimension with the cause for greatest concern is that of reliability. This is followed by the tangible dimension, which was also rated rather negatively by postgraduates. The third most important dimension for postgraduates is responsiveness. On the other hand it should be noted that postgraduates felt a bit more positive in their attitude towards the assurance dimension.

Zeitthaml and Bitner (2003) refer to the results of surveys such as this one as a deliberate effort on the part of the university to find out where its students feel disappointment. The logic which underlies this apparent paradox allows companies an opportunity to develop recovery strategies and gain even greater loyalty as a result.

The Department of Management will have to look carefully at the reliability results of post-graduates as it is emphasised in the literature that reliability i.e. doing things right the first time, is the most critical determinant of service quality across industries.

Research question two: *Are there any significant gender differences on the assessment of the quality of service in the academic setting and on which dimensions do these differences occur i.e. reliability, assurance, tangibles, responsiveness, tangibles and empathy.*

The male female difference reported by Le Blanc and Nguyen (1999) was not corroborated by the present study. The only significant result was on the tangible dimension. This is one factor that management does not really have control of, but one, which does affect their academic environment.
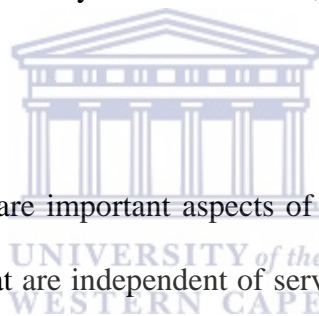
Employee appearance and dress are important aspects of the tangible dimension of quality, along with many other factors that are independent of service employees the service facility, décor, and brochures (Zeithaml and Bitner, 2003).

Many organisations are keen to provide service quality but fail simply because they do not have an accurate understanding of what customers require of them, whilst the absence of well defined "tangible clues" can make this understanding much more difficult than it would be in the case of goods. Kotler and Fox (1985) stated that, even in instances where the core product is intangible (for example, in education such a product could be information), it is "almost always embodied in some tangible form" (Kotler and Fox, 1985: 224).

The intangible element of a service has led to increasing interest in the tangible evidence, which is a feature of service processes (Bitner, 1992; Clarke and Schmidt, 1995; Wakefield and Blodgett, 1994). The physical evidence associated with a service can be designed to create a level of satisfaction. Little has been found in the literature on the effect of the physical environment in organisations of a utilitarian nature (schools, colleges, universities) where customer interaction and encounter with such physical surroundings are not a major component in the service offer. However, whilst an educational establishment could be said to be utilitarian, students spend much of their time in contact with the physical elements of their educational experience (in lecture theatres, libraries, information technology laboratories), and therefore it is likely that they would be influenced by the physical facilities. "Students, who spend hours every day in a school are likely to have attitudes toward the school system that are strongly influenced by the physical facilities" (Wakefield and Blodgett, 1994: 68).
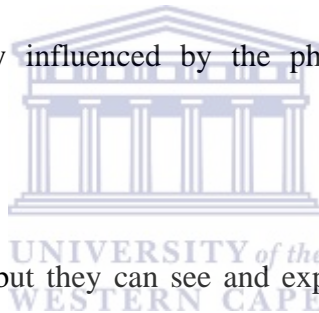
Customers cannot see a service but they can see and experience various tangible elements associated with the service. They see service facilities, equipment, employees, uniforms, pamphlets, leaflets, and these are referred to by Zeithaml et al. (1992) as "clues" and, as advocated by Shostack (1977), it is possible to "manage the evidence" using the clues. "A prime responsibility for the service marketer is the management of available tangibles so that the proper signals are conveyed about the service" (Berry, 1980, cited in Oldfield).

Research question three: *Is there a significant difference on SERVPERF scores between post-graduate and under-graduate students and on what dimensions of SERVPERF are differences significant?*

The major finding was the significant difference between post-graduate and under-graduate responses. The implication is that when comparisons are made this factor must be taken into consideration. The finding also spells serious warnings to cohort studies of service quality.

Market segmentation using quality perceptions has been investigated recently within higher education. Saunders (2005) suggests that there is an increasing awareness in interpreting quality in higher education in terms of a "multi-customer focus". Moreover, this awareness coincides with a growing interest in market segmentation in order to address the needs of students that hold different perceptions on the quality of higher education. These new insights into the segmentation of the higher education sector are of particular importance to educators as service can be tailored to students that have very different quality perceptions.

7. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Firstly, only the immediate users i.e. student's perception were sampled. O'Neill and Palmer (2004), argues that pedagogically sound teaching can be consistent with a method of provision which is perceived as being student-friendly and high in the quality of student support offered. Unfortunately, a coalition of interests, including academics, politicians and employers and the media, has had an observed tendency to identify examples of student friendliness as evidence of "dumbing down".

Secondly, survey instruments such as SERVPERF was developed in cultural settings different from the African context. More particularly, sub-cultural adaptations will have to be considered for application at the University of the Western Cape.

Thirdly, the present study is a pilot on which possible further studies can be based. The intention was not to validate the instrument. This process as well as a full factor analysis will have to be undertaken in a follow-up study.

A fourth point relates to the need to revisit each of the dimensions used in this survey and compare its continued relevance in more current literature. This should also lead to future appraisal of each item within the dimensions so as to ensure that the factors which make up the service quality construct have a sufficient number of items that allows for valid and reliable analysis.

The number of items (questions) in the tangibles and particularly empathy dimensions were low. These will require more items in order to improve measurability for future research.

Careful item analyses needs to be done in order to weed out items which do not really discriminate on the construct it purports to measure.

The possible effects of culture on the perception of service quality were ignored in the present study. This needs to be investigated in future studies.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

The main purpose of this study was to gain more insight into the dimensions that students could use to evaluate service quality and to identify which components of the service delivery process are most important in their judgement. Additionally, to assess in a preliminary way, the Department of Management's service quality (performance) from the point of view of their students (clients) and the following are suggested as pointers:

1. For future studies a full factor analysis should be done on a sufficiently large sample, then elucidate the underlying theoretical structure of SERVPERF, particularly within the South African cultural milieu.

2. These results suggest that management within the department undertake efforts in the area of service quality and customer satisfaction. On a positive note this research can be seen as a step in that direction. This survey's results can serve as a benchmark for future studies into the department's service performance.

3. Regular presentation of the findings should serve as a basis for discussion in the department in order to begin to cultivate a culture of service quality.

4. For surveys such as these to be meaningful it should be periodically administered so as too track performance and to determine whether changes made have been successful in improving quality.

5. The results can be used as a basis for discussion within focus groups with students. This process can help to further define service quality determinants.

6. Making a favourable impression on students and on various stakeholder groups such as prospective employers, government and research agencies, alumni, individuals and organisations, which donate funds to the university, should be a key objective of management. Future surveys should sample these stakeholders' views as an important extension of management's view of the quality of their service.

7. Management working closely with academics should prepare brochures which outline the quality standards each member of the organization must adhere to in the delivery of service and promote these standards to various stakeholder groups. This is particularly important for the post-graduate segment.

8. Communication specialists in the department need to pre-test all advertising, brochures, telephone scripts and Web-site content. Pre-setting should involve a presentation of communication materials to a sample of students in advance of publication (Lovelock, 2004).

This pilot study showed that the heterogeneous or generic dimensions of service quality described by Parasuraman *et al*. (1986) are applicable in a university context and that modification of the research instrument to include industry-specific quality features, as suggested by the original researchers, is appropriate.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Gender difference on the items of SERVPERF

SERVPERF Item	Sex	N	Mean	SD	SE	p-value
1. This department provides its services within the time one might reasonably expect.	Male	129	3.69	1.718	0.151	0.1
	Female	103	4.058	1.65	0.163	
2. Queries in the department are dealt with efficiently and promptly.	Male	130	3.831	1.699	0.149	0.852
	Female	102	3.873	1.681	0.166	
3 When I have a problem, administrative staff in the department shows a sincere interest	Male	130	3.938	1.786	0.157	0.0696
	Female	102	4.373	1.818	0.18	
4. Academic staff in the department have the knowledge to answer my questions relating	Male	130	4.754	1.6	0.14	0.7798
	Female	101	4.693	1.684	0.168	
5. Administration keeps accurate records.	Male	130	4.2	1.763	0.155	0.7849
	Female	102	4.137	1.701	0.168	
6. The physical facilities are visually appealing. (i.e. building and surroundings).	Male	129	4.085	1.746	0.154	0.0049
	Female	102	4.716	1.576	0.156	
7. Services in the department are performed right the first time.	Male	129	3.535	1.64	0.144	0.0559
	Female	101	3.941	1.522	0.151	
8. When the administrative staff in the department promise to do something by a certain	Male	129	3.775	1.542	0.136	0.459
	Female	99	3.616	1.682	0.169	
9. Academics are willing to give students individual attention during their consultation	Male	130	4.285	1.571	0.138	0.357
	Female	100	4.48	1.617	0.162	
10. Academic staff understands the needs of their students.	Male	129	4.124	1.611	0.142	0.2571
	Female	100	4.37	1.643	0.164	0.2584
11. All staff in the department are consistently courteous to me.	Male	129	4.163	1.648	0.145	0.6927
	Female	101	4.248	1.565	0.156	
12. Administrative staff are never too busy to respond to a request for assistance.	Male	129	3.845	1.622	0.143	0.3253

	Female	100	4.06	1.656	0.166	0.3267
13. This department employs academic staff in whom I have confidence.	Male	129	4.078	1.628	0.143	0.8949
	Female	101	4.05	1.552	0.154	
14. This department employs support staff in whom I have confidence.	Male	127	4.205	1.449	0.129	0.8328
	Female	101	4.248	1.603	0.159	
15. Academic staff in the department do not always show a willingness to help students.	Male	127	4.48	1.527	0.135	0.5447
	Female	99	4.354	1.599	0.161	
16. Support staff in the department do not always show a willingness to help students.	Male	124	3.992	1.854	0.167	0.0625
	Female	101	3.554	1.597	0.159	
17. Academic staff in the department deals with me in a caring fashion.	Male	127	3.827	1.723	0.153	0.5247
	Female	101	3.683	1.649	0.164	
18. Materials associated with course delivery such as textbooks, notices, notice boards, signs, overhead projectors) look good and attractive.	Male	127	3.709	1.544	0.137	0.02
	Female	100	4.19	1.529	0.153	
19. This department has up-to-date equipment.	Male	124	4.121	1.641	0.147	0.3292
	Female	101	4.337	1.651	0.164	
20. Does the calibre of your classmates enhance the learning process?	Male	127	4.142	1.67	0.148	0.321
	Female	101	4.356	1.553	0.155	
21. How would you appraise the department of management in preparing you for a	Male	129	3.845	1.508	0.133	0.0222
	Female	101	4.297	1.439	0.143	
22. Did you receive practical information during the programme that was usable in your	Male	127	4.567	1.483	0.132	0.5642
	Female	101	4.683	1.542	0.153	
23. Do you feel your classmates emphasize individual achievement at the expense of	Male	118	4.415	1.582	0.146	0.5965
	Female	94	4.298	1.625	0.168	
24. To what extent are interpersonal skills stressed in the curriculum?	Male	126	4.222	1.584	0.141	0.9098
	Female	101	4.198	1.613	0.16	
	Female	102	4.549	1.347	0.133	

26. I feel secure in my transactions with this department.	Male	126	4.23	1.381	0.123	0.4086
	Female	103	4.398	1.688	0.166	
27. In your view is the eight-week term appropriate	Male	127	4.031	1.386	0.123	0.1322
	Female	102	4.333	1.637	0.162	
28. Do you think that the workload is fair for the eight-week term?	Male	127	1.433	0.497	0.044	0.9027
	Female	102	1.441	0.499	0.049	
29. Do you think our curriculum is too much oriented to written exams?	Male	128	1.523	0.501	0.044	0.0836
	Female	102	1.637	0.483	0.048	
30. Do you think our curriculum should include oral exams?	Male	130	1.369	0.484	0.042	0.3709
	Female	103	1.427	0.497	0.049	
31. Does being a student at UWC give you prestige in your community (i.e. your family,	Male	129	1.504	0.502	0.044	0.181
	Female	103	1.592	0.494	0.049	
33. Overall are you happy studying at UWC?	Male	128	1.359	0.482	0.043	0.0139
	Female	100	1.21	0.409	0.041	

Appendix 2: Differences on items at levels of study

Differences on SERVPERF for undergraduates and post graduates

Item	Level	N	Mean	SD	SEM	p-val
1. This department provides its services within the time one might reasonably expect.	Undergrad	174	4.22	1.645	0.125	0.0000
	Postgrad	106	3.32	1.642	0.159	
2. Queries in the department are dealt with efficiently and promptly.	Undergrad	173	4.25	1.590	0.121	0.0000
	Postgrad	108	3.29	1.595	0.153	
3 When I have a problem, administrative staff in the department shows a sincere interest	Undergrad	173	4.38	1.747	0.133	0.0133
	Postgrad	108	3.83	1.867	0.180	
4. Academic staff in the department have the knowledge to answer my questions relating	Undergrad	172	4.82	1.603	0.122	0.1810
	Postgrad	107	4.55	1.661	0.161	
5. Administration keeps accurate records.	Undergrad	174	4.51	1.661	0.126	0.0000
	Postgrad	106	3.54	1.663	0.162	

6. The physical facilities are visually appealing. (i.e. building and surroundings).	Undergrad	174	4.76	1.616	0.123	0.0000
	Postgrad	105	3.90	1.692	0.165	
7. Services in the department are performed right the first time.	Undergrad	172	4.12	1.519	0.116	0.0000
	Postgrad	106	3.22	1.586	0.154	
8. When the administrative staff in the department promise to do something by a certain	Undergrad	168	4.11	1.514	0.117	0.0001
	Postgrad	105	3.31	1.723	0.168	
9. Academics are willing to give students individual attention during their consultation	Undergrad	168	4.59	1.522	0.117	0.0448

	Postgrad	104	4.19	1.667	0.163	
10. Academic staff understands the needs of their students.	Undergrad	168	4.59	1.522	0.117	0.0001
	Postgrad	104	3.83	1.628	0.160	
11. All staff in the department are consistently courteous to me.	Undergrad	166	4.16	1.470	0.114	0.3061
	Postgrad	106	4.37	1.692	0.164	
12. Administrative staff are never too busy to respond to a request for assistance.	Undergrad	167	4.20	1.491	0.115	0.0120
	Postgrad	105	3.67	1.817	0.177	
13. This department employs academic staff in whom I have confidence.	Undergrad	167	4.02	1.499	0.116	0.3213
	Postgrad	104	4.21	1.653	0.162	
14. This department employs support staff in whom I have confidence.	Undergrad	164	4.41	1.506	0.118	0.0092
	Postgrad	106	3.92	1.562	0.152	
15. Academic staff in the department do not always show a willingness to help students.	Undergrad	166	4.34	1.475	0.115	0.1368
	Postgrad	102	4.63	1.653	0.164	
16. Support staff in the department do not always show a willingness to help students.	Undergrad	161	3.80	1.710	0.135	0.4144
	Postgrad	106	3.62	1.802	0.175	
17. Academic staff in the department deals with me in a caring fashion.	Undergrad	165	3.81	1.641	0.128	0.2633
	Postgrad	105	3.57	1.731	0.169	
18. Materials associated with course delivery such as textbooks, notices, notice boards, signs, overhead projectors) look good and attractive.	Undergrad	164	4.15	1.358	0.106	0.0005
	Postgrad	106	3.44	1.708	0.166	

Item	Level	N	Mean	SD	SEM	p-val
19. This department has up-to-date equipment.	Undergrad	160	4.43	1.600	0.127	0.0858
	Postgrad	105	4.08	1.697	0.166	
20. Does the calibre of your classmates enhance the learning process?	Undergrad	164	4.40	1.596	0.125	0.0223
	Postgrad	105	3.93	1.689	0.165	
21. How would you appraise the department of management in preparing you for a	Undergrad	166	4.30	1.363	0.106	0.0015
	Postgrad	105	3.67	1.674	0.163	
22. Did you receive practical information during the programme that was usable in your	Undergrad	163	4.63	1.606	0.126	0.7645
	Postgrad	106	4.69	1.369	0.133	
23. Do you feel your classmates emphasize individual achievement at the expense of	Undergrad	141	4.25	1.648	0.139	0.0452
	Postgrad	105	4.66	1.473	0.144	

Item	Level	N	Mean	SD	SEM	p-val
24. To what extent are interpersonal skills stressed in the curriculum?	Undergrad	164	4.09	1.534	0.120	0.3374
	Postgrad	102	4.28	1.679	0.166	
25. How would you judge the department of management's network and connections that	Undergrad	163	4.46	1.311	0.103	0.8465
	Postgrad	103	4.43	1.411	0.139	
26. I feel secure in my transactions with this department.	Undergrad	163	4.54	1.467	0.115	0.0070
	Postgrad	105	4.04	1.487	0.145	
27. In your view is the eight-week term appropriate	Undergrad	162	4.33	1.474	0.116	0.1199
	Postgrad	105	4.04	1.487	0.145	
28. Do you think that the workload is fair for the eight-week term?	Undergrad	167	1.38	0.488	0.038	0.0629
	Postgrad	102	1.50	0.502	0.050	

Item	Level	N	Mean	SD	SEM	p-val
29. Do you think our curriculum is too much oriented to written exams?	Undergrad	167	1.56	0.498	0.038	0.9970
	Postgrad	103	1.56	0.498	0.049	
30. Do you think our curriculum should include oral exams?	Undergrad	167	1.41	0.494	0.038	0.1660
	Postgrad	106	1.33	0.473	0.046	
31. Does being a student at UWC give you prestige in your community (i.e. your family,	Undergrad	166	1.55	0.499	0.039	0.2197
	Postgrad	106	1.47	0.502	0.049	
33. Overall are you happy studying at UWC?	Undergrad	164	1.28	0.451	0.035	0.5991
	Postgrad	103	1.31	0.465	0.046	

Appendix 3: The questionnaire Undergraduate

University of the Western Cape

Department of Management

<u>**Undergraduate questionnaire**</u>

Please complete the following questionnaire. Your sincere response will be used to improve the service within the department.

<u>Please note/important, this is an anonymous survey ensure that you do not put your name and student number onto the questionnaire.</u>

<u>Read each of the statements below.</u>

Circle 7 if you strongly agree with the statement. Circle 1 if you strongly disagree. If your feelings are not strong, please circle a number between 1 and 7. There are no right or wrong answers.

Only one questionnaire must be completed

1. This department provides its services within the time one might reasonably expect.

	Strongly disagree					**Strongly agree**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2. Queries in the department are dealt with efficiently and promptly.

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

3. When I have a problem, administrative staff in the department show a sincere interest   in solving it.

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

4. Academic staff in the department have the knowledge to answer my questions relating to courses offered.

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

5. Administration keeps accurate records.

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

6. The physical facilities are visually appealing. (i.e. building and surroundings).

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

7. Services in the department are performed right the first time.

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

8. When the administrative staff in the department promise to do something by a certain

   time they do so.

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

9. Academics are willing to give students individual attention during their consultation time. This department provides its services at the time it promises to do so.

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

10. Academic staff understands the needs of their students.

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

11. All staff in the department are consistently courteous to me.

                           1   2   3   4   5   6   7

12. Administrative staff are never too busy to respond to a request for assistance.

                           1   2   3   4   5   6   7

13. This department employs academic staff in whom I have confidence.

                           1   2   3   4   5   6   7

14. This department employs support staff in whom I have confidence.

                           1   2   3   4   5   6   7

15. Academic staff in the department do not always show a willingness to help students.

                           1   2   3   4   5   6   7

16. Support staff in the department do not always show a willingness to help students.

                           1   2   3   4   5   6   7

17. Academic staff in the department deals with me in a caring fashion.

                           1   2   3   4   5   6   7

18. Materials associated with course delivery such as textbooks, notices, notice boards, signs, overhead projectors) look good and attractive.

                           1   2   3   4   5   6   7

19. This department has up-to-date equipment.

                           1   2   3   4   5   6   7

20. Does the calibre of your classmates enhance the learning process?

                           1   2   3   4   5   6   7

21. How would you appraise the department of management in preparing you for a

successful career in business?

                           1   2   3   4   5   6   7

22. Did you receive practical information during the programme that was usable in your

first job?

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 \end{array}$$

23. Do you feel your classmates emphasize individual achievement at the expense of

teamwork?

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 \end{array}$$

24. To what extent are interpersonal skills stressed in the curriculum?

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 \end{array}$$

25. How would you judge the department of managements network and connections that

can help you throughout your career?

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 \end{array}$$

26. I feel secure in my transactions with this department.

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 \end{array}$$

Circle either Yes or No for the following:

27. In your view is the eight-week term appropriate

Yes   No

28. Do you think that the workload is fair for the eight-week term?

Yes   No

29. Do you think our curriculum is too much oriented to written exams?

Yes   No

30. Do you think our curriculum should include oral exams?

Yes   No

31. Does being a student at UWC give you prestige in your community (i.e. your family,

friends etc)?   Yes   No

32. Overall are you happy studying at UWC?   Yes   No

33. Were you offered an opportunity to rather study at one of the other Higher Education institutions (i.e. Peninsula Technikon, University of Stellenbosch, Cape Technikon or the University of Cape Town), would you accept?

Yes   **No**

Thank you for your participation

Appendix 4: The questionnaire: Post graduates

University of the Western Cape

Department of Management

Professional Management Programme students

Please complete the following questionnaire. Your sincere response will be used to improve the service within the   department. <u>Please note/important, this is an anonymous survey ensure that you do not put your name and student number onto the questionnaire.</u>

<u>Read each of the statements below</u>.

Circle 7 if you strongly agree with the statement. Circle 1 if you strongly disagree. If your feelings are not strong, please circle a number between 1 and 7. There are no right or wrong answers.

❖ **Only one questionnaire must be completed**

1. This department provides its services within the time one might reasonably expect.

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2. Queries in the department are dealt with efficiently and promptly.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

3. Support staff are smart and know how to deal with part-time students.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

4. When I have a problem, administrative staff in the department shows a sincere interest

   in solving it.

<div align="center">1   2   3   4   5   6   7</div>

5. Academic staff in the department has the knowledge to answer my questions relating

   to courses offered.

<div align="center">1   2   3   4   5   6   7</div>

6. Administration keeps accurate records.

<div align="center">1   2   3   4   5   6   7</div>

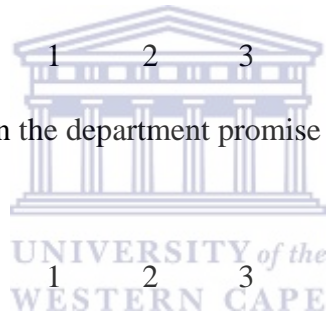7. The physical facilities are visually appealing. (i.e. building and surroundings).

<div align="center">1   2   3   4   5   6   7</div>

8. Services in the department are performed right the first time.

<div align="center">1   2   3   4   5   6   7</div>

9. When the administrative staff in the department promise to do something by a certain

   time they do so.

<div align="center">1   2   3   4   5   6   7</div>

10. The opening hours in the department are convenient for me.

<div align="center">1   2   3   4   5   6   7</div>

11. Academics are willing to give students individual attention during their consultation

   time. This department provides its services at the time it promises to do so.

<div align="center">1   2   3   4   5   6   7</div>

12. Academic staff understands the needs of their students.

<div align="center">1   2   3   4   5   6   7</div>

13. All staff in the department are consistently courteous to me.

<div align="center">1   2   3   4   5   6   7</div>

14. Administrative staff are never too busy to respond to a request for assistance.

                              1   2   3   4   5   6   7

15. This department employs academic staff in whom I have confidence.

                              1   2   3   4   5   6   7

16. This department employs support staff in whom I have confidence.

                              1   2   3   4   5   6   7

17. Academic staff in the department does not always show a willingness to help students.

                              1   2   3   4   5   6   7

18. Support staff in the department do not always show a willingness to help students.

                              1   2   3   4   5   6   7

19. Academic staff in the department deals with me in a caring fashion.

                              1   2   3   4   5   6   7

20. Materials associated with course delivery such as textbooks, notices, notice boards, signs,

overhead projectors) look good and attractive.

                              1   2   3   4   5   6   7

21. This department has up-to-date equipment.

                              1   2   3   4   5   6   7

22. Does the calibre of your classmates enhance the learning process?

                              1   2   3   4   5   6   7

23. How would you appraise the department of management in preparing you for a

    successful career in business?

                              1   2   3   4   5   6   7

24. Did you receive practical information during the programme that was usable in your

    first job?

                              1   2   3   4   5   6   7

25. Do you feel your classmates emphasize individual achievement at the expense of teamwork?

<div align="center">1   2   3   4   5   6   7</div>

26. To what extent are interpersonal skills stressed in the curriculum?

<div align="center">1   2   3   4   5   6   7</div>

27. How would you judge the department of management's network and connections that can help you throughout your career?

<div align="center">1   2   3   4   5   6   7</div>

28. I feel secure in my transactions with this department.

<div align="center">1   2   3   4   5   6   7</div>

Circle either Yes or No for the following:

29. In your view is the eight-week term appropriate?

<div align="center">**Yes**   **No**</div>

30. Do you think that the workload is fair for the eight-week term?

<div align="center">**Yes**   **No**</div>

31. Do you think our curriculum is too much oriented to written exams?

<div align="center">**Yes**   **No**</div>

32. Do you think our curriculum should include oral exams?

<div align="center">**Yes**   **No**</div>

33. Do you find the skills you learn in modules relevant to your workplace?

<div align="center">**Yes**   **No**</div>

34. Does being a student at UWC give you prestige in your community (i.e. your family, friends' etc)?

Yes   No

36. Does being a student at UWC give you prestige in your business community?

Yes   No

36. Overall are you happy studying at UWC?

Yes   No

37. If you were offered an opportunity to rather study at one of the other Higher Education institutions (i.e. Peninsula Technikon, University of Stellenbosch, Cape Technikon or the University of Cape Town), would you accept?

Yes   No

Thank you for your participation

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Appendix 5: The pre-pilot responses

Question 1. What do you enjoy most about studying at the department?	Question 2: What do you dislike most about UWC?	Question 3:What do you dislike most about the department?	Question 4: What one thing would you like to do differently?
Relevance of modules to workplace Affordable education Good admin 8-week modules good Informal atmosphere in the department Lecturers are available telephonically & email Caters for mature students Cultural mix of students Fosters diversity I only enjoys business communication tutorials Structure of the programme Many streams Stimulating and developmental Friends Modules are written off every few weeks - progress Admission without exemption Lifelong learning Open door approach of professional staff	Sometimes the bad image makes me disappointed with my choice so I want UWC to redesign its image If people talk about it, it should be worth to study at Administration is not effective enough We need people who know what they are doing and who do it properly not half-heartedly doing the same amount of work and getting the same salary The perception that you get an inferior education/degree at UWC The lack of adequate resources at the campus Management department in a bit of a disarray Non–timeous response to queries Administrative nightmare Lack of accountability to their clients Individuals who behave like they own jobs, departments or the university	• The services sometimes confuse me e.g last term, when we wrote exams, we did not even know where the venue was. • Not all lecturers offer tutorial sessions. I believe that interaction is very important when lecturing. We learn from each other, so that we get different views on a topic. • **Lack of transparency from the department towards postgraduate student. The perception that only a "few elite" students have access to lecturers and therefore get more attention than other students** • Tendencies to be intolerant of different cultures within the department • Administration is a problem • Every time, I go to claim, I do not know whether I am doing MDP, ADM, or	Having a say in what modules to do as core modules. • My choice of subject selection i.e. IT should be compulsory for all student. • I would like to see lectures and tutorials take place on the some night, thus avoiding one having to come in twice a week. We all are working, part-time pupils. • Offer travelling assistance to from public transport parts. • Facilitation, facilities for disable people, this University has too many disable people. • Have more time arranged with post-graduate student to engage in investigating solutions to on-going problems. • I will prefer to have more case studies to

Group work leads to racial harmony	Innefiency of the department/campus as a whole	Honors.	do especially for the exams instead of the more "formal examinations"
Interaction between lecturers and students	The administration department	• Repetition of same concepts but with different module names	• Do more case studies and brainstorming instead of Formal Final Exams
Applying theory to practice, assignments and case studies	Having to stand in queues to pay fees and then to find that the computers are off line and/or that staff simply close their windows and go to lunch/ tea.	• The fact that we are not being treated as clients.	• I would like to come to a clean and comfortable lecture hall. When I take time off work to sent out admin queries- I would like to resolve it then
Classmates with work experience			
Sharing opinions		• The administration department. Having to stand in queues to pay fees and then to find that the computers are off line/ and or that staff simply close their windows and go to lunch/tea. The book leasing department is a nightmare, they have business hours but are never there during these hours.	
Learning from lecturers	The book leasing department – a nightmare, they have business hours but are never there during these hours		• Not study in the department of management
Relevance of topics in the modules			• Change other cultures belief about UWC as being a "bush institution where qualifications are bought, and where there still exists a "gutter education" system.
Choice of courses			
Courses are linked to workplace situations	Some of the venues are hot and stuffy – no air conditioning		
We are continually equipped with new ideas			
Course structure	Dirty lecture halls etc.		
Modules per quarter			
The fee structure	Arrogance amongst certain lectures toward students, these lectures must remember that all part-time students are adults and that the majority are married and they must stop treating them like kids that have just matriculated.	• Certain lecturers are not prepared to do photocopies or E-mail slides on the chapters beforehand to student. Ps. the department needs to re-introduce the block sessions for students that have time available and would like to complete their degree in a shorter period.	• Saturday classes rather than in the week
Open door policy of ladies in the dept. who are helpful			• I would like more interaction. All lecturers should have tutorials sessions, not only lectures. People are interested to learn by themselves and some narrow minded instead of broadening their minds
I like the class mates with good work experience			
We share different opinions	Pompous officials		
I like some lectures. I can learn from them, esp. I like Kobus Visser	Bureaucracy		• More communication with the study group. More practical of the modules.
I enjoy working in tutorial/study groups people with experience and diverse working backgrounds	It does not have a policy for students who work	• No representation of students at any level (part-time). Computer department is too small. Department don't put into practice	
	Rightwing attitude of certain officials		
I enjoy the different modules and interactive	Payment and accounts department needs to be sorted out		

teaching: theory and practical combined	Little more appreciation for part-time students	what they preach.	
The sensitivity it exhibits to the new South Afirca	Politics between lecturers which affect students	• 8 weeks for the course does not do justice to the course.	
It gives a broad understanding of the role that you need to play within the broader south African environment	Difficult to get parking space near to EMS before lectures (have they forgot that part-time students have cars	• It appears to me that the department isn't managed effectively- not as we are taught in lecturers. Queues for year marks, tutorial marks and assignments	
Vast array of streams	Have to go from one building to another to get books e.g. book loan scheme seems such a waste of time		
Not to stringent entry requirements		• The attitudes of administrative staff and support staff	
"Same cultural" background	The poor administration of student accounts and academic records which requires in my case taking off time from work to sort out problems caused by poor communication and complicated workflow	• Not flexible- complaints are not taken seriously. Follow-ups and responses to queries take to long. Official results take forever.	
There is a logical link between different courses			
Some of the courses are practical and relevant to current trends and events	Some lecturers have an attitude, they forget we are adult learners, not their junior students	• I dislike the attitude of most of the lecturers, they make it very difficult for us.	
I cannot find anything	UWC I have found it to be a very disorganised institution		
I am still studying, I had credits from '97		• Administration: queues are always busy, relevant person never available when needed.	
Otherwise there is nothing that I enjoy about this department	Administration worse, it really needs an improvement, sometimes you leave this place very frustrated because other lectures know the subject but can't teach the subject at the end of the day you are expected to excel		
		• There is too much confusion amongst the admin staff	
	The few resources – broken overhead projectors	• The admin they take to long or give feedback	
	Seating facilities – sometimes uncomfortable and unbearingly hot	• Sometimes information is nor readily available from the department. the course	

	and unbearingly hot Lack of support as I feel that the tutors assist the students more The university offers computer facilities that are booked up and not available to part-time students. At least one lab should be open later than 9pm or 10pm, giving us part-timers access to the labs Admin staff needs retraining to treat students as "the customer is king" Inadequate library facilities Inadequate parking facilities The ineffectiveness of the administration department in general The fact that the university is not doing enough to attract more white students Not enough resources available to students.	outline for 2001 in not yet available • Workloads totally out of hand, especially for part-timers- strategic management and operation management. • The inconsistency of the quality of lecturers. The inability or the fact that the support staff do not even bother to return phone calls.	