

**AN ANALYSIS OF SERVICE QUALITY MEASUREMENTS IN TERTIARY  
COLLEGES IN KENYA. A CASE STUDY OF ZETECH COLLEGE.**

**BY**

**MPTHIA MUTHOMI RAPHAEL**

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## **DEDICATION**

To my parents Justus Mputhia and Beatrice Muthoni for investing in my knowledge. My beloved wife Juliet and daughters Peace and Kate.

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## **ACRONYMS**

- JKUAT:** Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology.
- ABE:** Association of Business Executives.
- KNEC:** Kenya National Examination Council.
- ICM:** Institute of Commercial Management.
- KASNEB:** Kenya Accountants and Secretaries National Examinations Board.
- IATA:** International Air Travel Association

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## DEFINATION OF TERMS

**Expectations:** Are the performance anticipated or expected by the customer. They are formed by word of mouth, advertisement and past experiences. They form the baseline against which products or services performance is compared.

**Perception:** Is the customer's judgment about the service encounter.

**Service:** Any activity that is offered to a customer that is consumed simultaneously as it is produced it encompasses the process, delivery and outcome of the activity.

**Service quality:** Is the customer perception of the level of success or failure in meeting expectation. It is a measure of how well service level delivered marches customer expectation on a consistent basis.

**SERVQUAL:** Stands for SERVICE QUALity

**SERVQUAL dimensions:** Refers to Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Communication, Credibility, Security, Competence, Courtesy, Understanding and knowing the customer and, Aces.

**Tertiary college:** Refers to institutions of higher learning offering post secondary education. For the purpose of this study the term refers to middle level colleges.

## **ABSTRACT**

The role of service quality in tertiary education institutions has received increasing attention during the last two decades. Tertiary education institutions should ensure that all services encounters are managed to enhance students' perceived service quality. While there is consensus on the importance of service quality, its measurement is a challenge that tertiary education providers who aim to gain a better understanding of the quality issues of students experiences face. In fact, the use of the most appropriate measurement tools would help managers to assess service quality provided by their institution, thus having the ability to use the results to better design service delivery. In an effort to increase student's satisfaction, it is imperative that tertiary education institutions measure the quality of services they provide to be able to improve on them. Student's perceptions of the quality of services experiences against actual service received should be assessed. In a competitive higher education market place, the quality of services delivered separates an institution from its competitors. Therefore the results from service quality measurement can be used to position a tertiary education institution strategically in the market. Zetech College is one of the leading private tertiary education providers in Kenya. There has been an urgent need to measure service quality recently due to increased students complains on service delivery even with the existence of a very nicely articulated customer service charter. The study aim at measuring service quality in tertiary education institutions in Kenya. A case study of Zetech College will be conducted. The study will highlight the students' expectations about the quality of tertiary education services they are receiving at Zetech College. It will also examine the current service quality levels and determine the size and direction of the gap between students perceived service quality and service expectations. The information from this study is expected to be very useful to all tertiary education providers in Kenya. The study will be carried out on the basis that the sampled students are able and willing to make an evaluation and assessment of services received. The study will be a case study of Zetech College. The ex-post facto research design will be used. Stratified random sampling will be used to select one hundred and twenty two(122) students out of five thousand one hundred and twenty four (5124) Zetech college students taking course for seven (7) examination bodies. Descriptive statistics will be used for final analysis and results.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.0 Overview**

This chapter provides the background on which the research is based on, the objectives of the research, the significance and limitations of the study.

#### **1.1 Background of the study.**

Service industries are playing an increasingly important role in the economy of many nations. In today's world of global competition, rendering quality service is key for success and many experts concur that most powerful competitive trends currently shaping business strategy is service quality. Service quality is important to all organizations as it is regarded as the driver of corporate marketing and financial performance (Buttle, 1996). It has also been put forward as a critical determinant of competitiveness and a source of lasting competitive advantage through service differentiation. (Lewis, 2001)

According to Wambui et al. (2010) service quality is a pervasive strategic force and a key strategic issue in any organization. It is not surprising that practitioners and academics alike are keen on accurately measuring and understanding issues affecting service quality delivery and ultimately establish methods for improving quality to achieve competitive advantage and build customer loyalty. The pressure driving successful organizations towards top quality services make the measurement of service quality and its subsequent management of utmost importance. Interest in the

measurement of service quality is thus understandably high. However the problem inherent in the implementation of service quality has been compounded by the elusive nature of service quality constructs, rendering it extremely difficult to define and measure. Although researchers have devoted a great deal of attention to service quality, there are still unresolved issues that need to be addressed and the most controversial one refers to the service quality measurement and what constitute service quality.

With these challenges, service organizations seek to provide valuable services to their end customers. According to Brown (2009), in the critical moment of truth, only those organizations which will be in a position to enhance quality in their end products and services will sustain and maintain their positions. Nowadays, quality has changed from a complementary to a single corporate strategy. Taking into consideration the claims of Robinson (1999), that “quality is in the eyes of the beholder”, its proper measurement is demanded. Yang (2003) and Sinclair et al (1999) have emphasized the importance of service quality measurement as it judges not only the external perception but also the internal effectiveness of an organization’s operations. Edvardsen et al. (1994) asserts that the starting point in service quality improvements is its measurement and analysis. He argues that there is a need to measure service quality to enable management to identify high quality and to determine where problems exist. It is important to measure service quality to identify quality related problems, to allow for comparison before and after a service change, and to establish standards of service delivery (Bryceland et al 2001)

According to Plank et al (1997) it is likely that students base their continued enrollment in tertiary colleges and universities, in part, on how well an institution's programs and services meets their expectations. When students are dissatisfied with an institution's services they are likely to defect to competitive institutions Plank et al. (1997). Smith et al. (1989) has noted that some academicians have suggested that institutions efforts to measure service quality and students satisfaction have fallen short.

In an effort to stem possible student's defection, it is imperative that colleges and universities measure the quality of services they provide in an effort to improve them. Many a times institutions measure things that may not be important to their primary customers, the students. Parasuraman,(1985), Zeithamal,(2006) and Berry et a., (1991) , all agree that each time a student experience some occurrence of institution's services, that service is judged against expectations. In an increasingly competitive higher education arena, research indicates that service quality is an important determinant of student's satisfaction (Yound et al (1997))

Zetech college has been credited as one of the fastest growing tertiary college in Kenya. The college is currently in transition to become a private university by September 2014. The college has experienced immense growth in terms students population, number of campuses , number of academic programs and human resource. Its located in the central business district of Nairobi city. Due to declining

service level standards and increasing students complaints on service quality, the leadership team deemed it necessary to produce a clearly stated service policy to be followed by the College's service providers to eliminate these problems. The charter was launched in January 2012. However for the last two (2) years, since this charter was launched, customer complains on service quality still remain high. Across check on service quality complain books shows that there are an average five complains received every day in each of the of six (6) campuses. The process of preparing the service charter did not include the service quality levels and expectations of the students who are the main service recipients in this college. A survey across all campuses shows that there is increasing service quality complains despite existence of a service charter. Consequently there has been a serous need by the college her service quality level from the standpoint of the students who are the College's key external customers.

### **1.2 Statement of the problem.**

The subject of service quality has recently aroused considerable interest among business people, buyers and academics Kelso (2008). This interest largely rotates around service quality measurement. Conceptualizing the quality of service is more complex than for goods and the first aim of this research is to review a conceptual framework for evaluating and measuring service quality from the perspective of customer. The work of Zeithmal et al (2006) suggest that one of the prime issues of poor performance in service organizations is not knowing customers' service quality expectations. Thus tertiary education institutions and other institutions of higher

learning are bound to fail if they do not have an accurate understanding of what students expect of them. It is against this background that this research will want to find out what constitute service quality at Zetech College from the perspective of students as the primary external customers and service recipients.

### **1.3 Objectives of the study.**

The general objective of this study is to determine components of measuring service quality in tertiary colleges in Kenya using Zetech College case study.

The study will be guided by the following specific objectives.

- i) To determine students' expectations about the quality of tertiary educational services at Zetech college
- ii) To find out the current service quality level at Zetech college.
- iii) To examine the size and direction of any gap found between students' perceived service quality and service quality expectations.
- iv) To determine the customer service training requirements for the direct service providers at Zetech College in order to be able to provide services that match the students' expectations of quality services.

### **1.4 Research Questions.**

The study will address the following questions:

- i) What are the students' expectations about the quality of tertiary Educational services at Zetech College?
- ii) What is the current level of service quality at Zetech College?
- iii) What is the size and direction of the gap between students' perceived



Service quality and service quality expectations on the services received at Zetech College.

- iv) What are the customer service training requirements for the direct service providers at Zetech College in order to be able to provide services that matches the students' expectations of quality services.

### **1.5 Significance of the study.**

Commonly, the measurement of institution's quality in higher education is defined predominantly by the institutions rather than by the students. Consequently, measure of quality in higher education often focus on areas that contribute to institutional prestige and stature like the prestigious courses offered, state of the art facilities, employability of the graduates, level of research expenditures, high qualification of faculty members among others. Many of this institutional measure of quality may be of limited importance to students. Owuor, (2012) concurs that in spheres of higher education counting these as quality continues to be contested. Students come into contact in variety of ways, each time forming impressions about the services encountered. There is limited is limited literature on measurement of service quality in tertiary colleges on specific students variables.

Therefore this study will contribute valuable information on service quality measurement in tertiary colleges and in particular the dimensions of tertiary colleges service quality. This study will help Zetech College achieve strategic competitive advantage by incorporating the student's expectation on service quality and by trying

to narrow the gap between the student's service quality expectations and the current college service level. It will also help Zetech College in training the service delivery team in line with the student's expectations on service quality standards. Finally, Zetech College will find the results of this study helpful in revising her service charter in future.

Future entrepreneurs venturing the tertiary education sub sector will find this study of immense benefit as a reference point in determining quality standards that they should offer to their students. It will also equip these entrepreneurs with prior knowledge of what students expect and perceive as quality educational services. Above all, this study will contribute immense knowledge in the field service quality measurement in tertiary education in Kenya being the first study to be conducted in Kenyan tertiary education institution.

### **1.6 Scope of the study.**

The study will be a case study of Zetech College. The college has a current students population of five thousand one hundred and twenty four students. The college is accredited to train students by seven examination bodies- KNEC, JKUAT, ABE, ICM, CIM, KASNEB and IATA. Students from each examination body will be proportionately represented in the sample.

### **1.7 Limitations of the study.**

The study will be conducted only at Zetech College which is located at the central business district of Nairobi city. The findings of this study will therefore be generalized to other tertiary educational institutions in almost similar environmental setting. The data for this study will be collected using take away survey questionnaire and the participants will have the option choose to participate or not participate in the questionnaire.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Overview**

This chapter provides the theoretical basis for the study supported by relevant literature, concept and measurement instruments of service quality in tertiary education.

#### **2.1 Quality as a strategy.**

According to Hardie and Walsh, (1993), quality has many different definitions and there is no universally accepted definition of quality. This, he claims, it is because of the elusive nature of the concept from different perspectives and orientations and the measures applied in particular context by the person defining it. Negi (2009) concurs that the variations in the definition of quality is caused by the intangible nature of its components since it makes it very difficult to evaluate and define quality uniformly across various manufacturing and service industries.

According to Juran (1999), quality is product performance which results in customer satisfaction and free from product deficiencies which avoids customer dissatisfaction.

The German Standard DIN 55350 defines quality as the totality of characteristics and features of a product or process, which facilitate realization of a given requirement. According to the definition by the International Standards Organization (ISO), Quality is the totality of features and characteristics in a product that bears on its ability to satisfy states or implied needs. This American National Standard Institute

has also upheld the ISO definition of quality. Garvin (1984) presents five different approaches to defining quality. These are:

The transcendent view: According to this view, quality cannot be defined precisely; instead, quality is a simple, una

nalyzable property we learn to recognize through experience. The product based

view: This view holds that quality is a precise and a measurable variable and that differences in quality reflects differences in quantity of some ingredients or attributes

possessed by the product. According to Abbott (1955), this view of quality considers it as the units of goodness packed into a product or service and thus a higher quality

product or service is considered to be containing more units of goodness than a lower quality product or service. The manufacturing based view: According to this view,

quality is defined as the conformance to requirements' (Crossby (1984). The Value based view: This view defines quality in terms of costs and prices. It defines a

quality product as one that provides performance or conformance at an acceptable price or cost. This view point considers quality as a cost to the producer and a price to

the customer. The user based view: user based definition is based on the premise that quality lies in the eyes of the beholder. Quality is the fitness for use. The definition of

quality in this view takes the approach that lies on the organization to determine customer's requirements and then meet these requirements. This study will adopt the

user based view of quality. The relevance of this definition to this study is that quality is more if not equally important to the customer and this therefore means that service

providers must consider the needs, wants and desires of customers in order to design

services that satisfy them. According to Schneider and White (2004), the user based view of quality is particularly useful in trying to define the quality in the domain of service.

According to Schuler (2007) commitment to continuous quality improvement is the new way of doing business. According to Oakland (1994) the reputation enjoyed by an organization is built by quality, reliability, delivery and price. Quality is the most important of these competitive weapons. Schuler (2007) has notes that increasingly, battles for competitive superiority are being won by achieving outstanding quality. Foster (2007) notes that quality is strategic and it is the foundation for achieving competitive advantage. According to Ghylis et al., (2008) since company managers believe that the power of quality guarantees high profits in business, companies try to understand how to keep the quality level high at every point within production, manufacturing and even providing services. From the above discussion and according to Chingang et al., (2010), there are two forms of quality: The product quality and the Service quality

## **2.2 Service Quality**

According to Ghylis et al., (2008) Service quality is considered as an important tool for firms struggling to differentiate themselves from their competitors. The relevance of service quality to companies is that it offers a competitive advantage to companies that strive to improve it and hence bring customer satisfaction. Definitions of service quality revolve around the idea that quality has to be judged on the assessment of the

user or the consumer of the service. According to Eshghi et al., (2008), service quality is defined as the overall assessment of service by the customer. Ghylin (2008) points out that, by defining service quality, companies will be able to deliver services with higher quality level resulting in increased customer satisfaction.

According to Parasuraman et al., (1985) and Ladhari (2008), understanding service quality must involve acknowledging the characteristics of service which are intangibility, heterogeneity and inseparability. This way service quality will be easily measured. According to George et al. (1996) definition of service quality must focus on meeting customers' needs and requirements, and how well the service delivered marches the customers' expectations of it. In this study, service quality can be defined as the difference between customers' expectations for service performance prior to the service encounter and their perception of service received. Valarie (2003), has noted that customer's expectation serves as the foundation for evaluating service quality because service quality is high when performance exceeds expectations and service quality is low when performance does not meet their expectations.

### **2.3 Service quality versus Customer expectation and Perception.**

Perception and expectation of the service by customers has been identified by Valarie et al.(2003) as the essential factor that define the quality of service. In particular Gronroos (1984) points out that it is reasonable to state that the perceived quality of a given service is the outcome of an evaluation process where consumers compare their expectations with the service they perceive they have got, that is, they put the

perceived service against the expected service. In this sense, a product or firm image depends solely upon the consumer perception. Parasuraman et al (1985) concludes that service quality as perceived by consumer's results from a comparison of perceived service with expected service. According to Valarie (2003), customer's expectations are beliefs about service delivery that functions as standards or reference points against which performance is judged. Her argument is that, customers compares their perceptions of performance with these reference points when evaluating service quality and therefore thorough knowledge about customer expectation is critical to service providers.

According to Valarie (2003), knowing what the customer expects is the first and most critical step in delivering quality service. She asserts that being wrong about what customers want can mean losing a customer business when another company hits the target exactly. Being wrong can also mean spending resources, money and time on things that don't matter to customers. Cadotte et al (1988) who investigated the key factors in guest satisfaction in the hotel industry focusing on complaints and compliments. They found out that there are service quality feature which they labeled "dissatisfies" which earn complaints if presents, but no compliments if absent and "satisfiers" which earn compliment if present but no complaints if absent. They believe that it is vital for organizations to identify elements of service which are potential satisfiers and or dissatisfies. A study by Parasuraman et al.(1985) suggest that customers do not perceive service quality in un dimensional way but rather they judge service quality on multiple factors relevant to the service context. They have



offered the most widely reported set of service quality dimensions that are important in molding customer's expectations and perceptions of delivered services. These are: Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Communication, Credibility, Security, Competence, Courtesy, Understanding and knowing the customer and, Access.

These ten dimensions were subsequently collapsed into five generic service quality dimensions as follows:

1. Reliability-The ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.
2. Responsiveness-The willingness to help customers and provide prompt services.
3. Assurance- The service provider's knowledge and courtesy and their ability to inspire trust and confidence.
4. Empathy- Caring and individualized attention given to customers.
5. Tangibles- The appearance of physical facilities, equipments, personnel and written materials. According to Topiero (2001), these dimensions represent how consumers organize information about service quality in their minds. On the basis of exploratory study By Topiero (1996), these five dimensions were found relevant for banking, insurance, education, security brokerage, retail, telephone services and cross many other service business. He also found that sometimes customers will use all of the dimensions to determine service quality perceptions and other times not.

#### **2.4 Dimensions of Quality in Tertiary Education**

In today's environment of ever increasing global competition, providing quality services is a key to the survival and success of many organizations and many experts speculates that delivering superior service quality is the most powerful competitive

trend shaping present day strategy. According to Mazzarol (1998), Tertiary education institutions can be classified as service organizations.

According to Kelso (2008) the definition of service quality in the tertiary education sector is no less elusive than that in business world. “Service quality is like beauty it lies in the eyes of the beholder; in other words, it is person dependent and has different meanings for different people”. Galloway and Wean (1998). According to Sahney, (2004) most definitions of quality when applied to services are customer-centric .However the ambiguous nature of service indicates that the search for a universal definition of quality has been unsuccessful. Despite the lack of a specific definition, according to Sahney et al.,(2004) quality in tertiary education follows the definition of quality in general.

Quality in tertiary education has been defined as “excellence in education and Value addition in education” (Feigenbaum, (1951); “fitness of education outcome and experience for use” Juran et al (1998); “Conformance of education output to planned goals, specifications and requirements” Phipps (2001) “Defect avoidance in the education process” Crosby (1979) and “meeting or exceeding customer expectations of education” Parasuraman et al., (1985).

Zemsky (2005), in his contribution to educational quality entitled “Remaking the American University: Market Smart and Mission Centred ,” describes tertiary education quality as “calibrated I terms of endowment and expenditure per student, class sizes, faculty-student ratio, and the quality of freshman class as measured by

test scores, high school ranks, and grade-point average. He indicates that the faculty response to the definition of quality might likely be the same, with the additional caveat that “what really count is research and scholarship-the hiring of and retaining of a research productive faculty which drive both prestige and educational quality.

According to Zemsky (2005) tertiary education quality as seen from the vantage point of an outside observer is bewildering. Upbeat images of record numbers of students crowding college campuses have, in outsider view means quality. Most colleges care about service quality less passionately that they care about knowledge creation. He concludes that the definition of quality in Colleges and Universities is therefore multifaceted and diverse. According to Sahney (2004), regardless of quality definition in the tertiary education, it most certainly encompasses more than solely a service component. It includes within its ambit the quality of inputs, in the form of students, faculty, support staff and infrastructure; the quality of processes in the form of learning and teaching activities: and the quality of output in the form of the enlightened students that moves out of the system. He further concurs that the array of potential services and service characteristics can include a wide range of measures , including the institution ‘s emphasis on teaching students well, faculty availability for students consultations, library services, class sizes, information systems and feedback and recreation and classroom facilities.

Tertiary education has a number of complimentary and contradictory “customers”. Being mindful of the large number of stakeholders the education system serve, this

study will measure the service quality dimensions exclusively from the students perspective – with the students deemed the primary external customers of the education system. According to Seymour (1993) institutions of higher learning serve students, and may well be considered service organizations similar in characteristics to other service industries. According to Hill (1995) students are considered to be the primary customers of the Colleges and universities, and being the direct recipients of services provided, students-perceived service quality has turned out to be extremely important issues in issue for Colleges and Universities management. Sureshchandar et al., (2002) has noted that in today's highly competitive world, the key to sustainable competitive advantage lies in delivering high quality service that will, in turn, lead to satisfied customers. Analogous to their business contemporaries, many tertiary education institutions are becoming more attuned to the critical factors impacting service quality and customer satisfaction. Like their other product business cousins, long standing emphasis on service quality and customer satisfaction, a growing number of Colleges and universities have adopted measures in an effort to exceed their students' expectations. However, according to Lewis et al (1994), a number of Tertiary education institutions are very hesitant to consider themselves as customer-driven entities. They have observed that every college and university has mission, but very few fully identifies who they serve.

Lewis et al (2001) have also noted that Academia is inundated with academicians and administrators that do not acknowledge that they serve customers and according to Keller (1983), some are offended at the comparison with competitive business

enterprises. Lewis et al (2001) in institutions that do admit that they have customers; there is a general agreement that business, government agencies and the society at large are their customers. Specifically, tertiary institutions typically serve a consortium of internal customers (students, faculty and administrators) and external customers (government, community, sponsors, alumni, and accredited agencies). It is important institutions identify who their customers are.

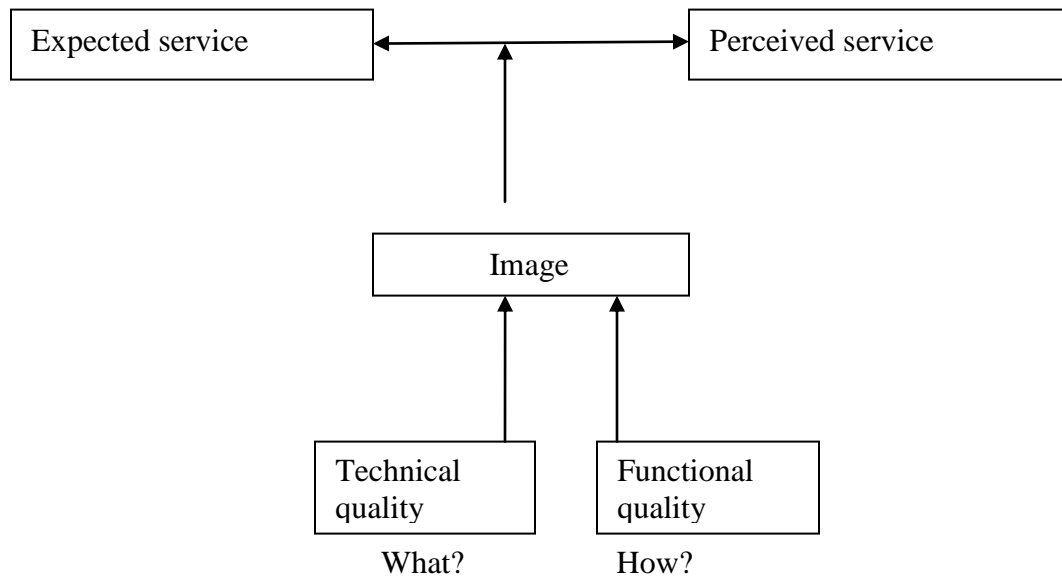
Lewis et al (2001) suggests that the students be identified as the customers of Tertiary education. However, they have several important differences from the archetypal business customer, for example: Colleges and universities often admit students selectively based on certain academic standards and requirements. Business usually doesn't do that. In fact they do not ordinarily prevent prospective customers from buying their products and services. Also in tertiary education, students do not fully pay for their tuition and other fees. These expenses are sometimes covered by the payments from parents, state subsidies, bursaries and students loans. In business customers generally pay for the goods and services with their own funds. Another difference is that once students are admitted, they are continually tested and graded to determine how well they have learned. They must maintain good academic standing in order to be able to take more advanced courses and complete their program of study. Businesses do not do that to their customers. Despite these differences, students are generally acknowledged to be the primary customers of Tertiary education institutions (Hill, 1995). Without students, there will be no business for tertiary education institutions, no research to conduct or service to provide.

## **2.5 The service quality Models.**

### **2.5.1 The Nordic Model**

Early conceptualization of service quality was formed by Gronroos (1984). He defined service quality by technical or outcome (what consumer receive) and functional or process related (how consumer receive the service) dimensions. According to Gronroos (1984), image build up by technical and functional quality and effect of some other factors (marketing, communication, word of mouth, tradition, ideology, customer needs and pricing). Nordic model is based on comparing perceived performance and expected service. This was the first attempt to measure service quality.. Gronroos model was general and without offering any technique on measuring technical and functional quality. However, Rust et al., (1994) tried to refine the Nordic model by the Three Component Model. They suggested addition of three components to this model.: service products, that is the technical quality, service delivery, that is the functional quality and service environment.

**Figure 1: The Nordic Model**



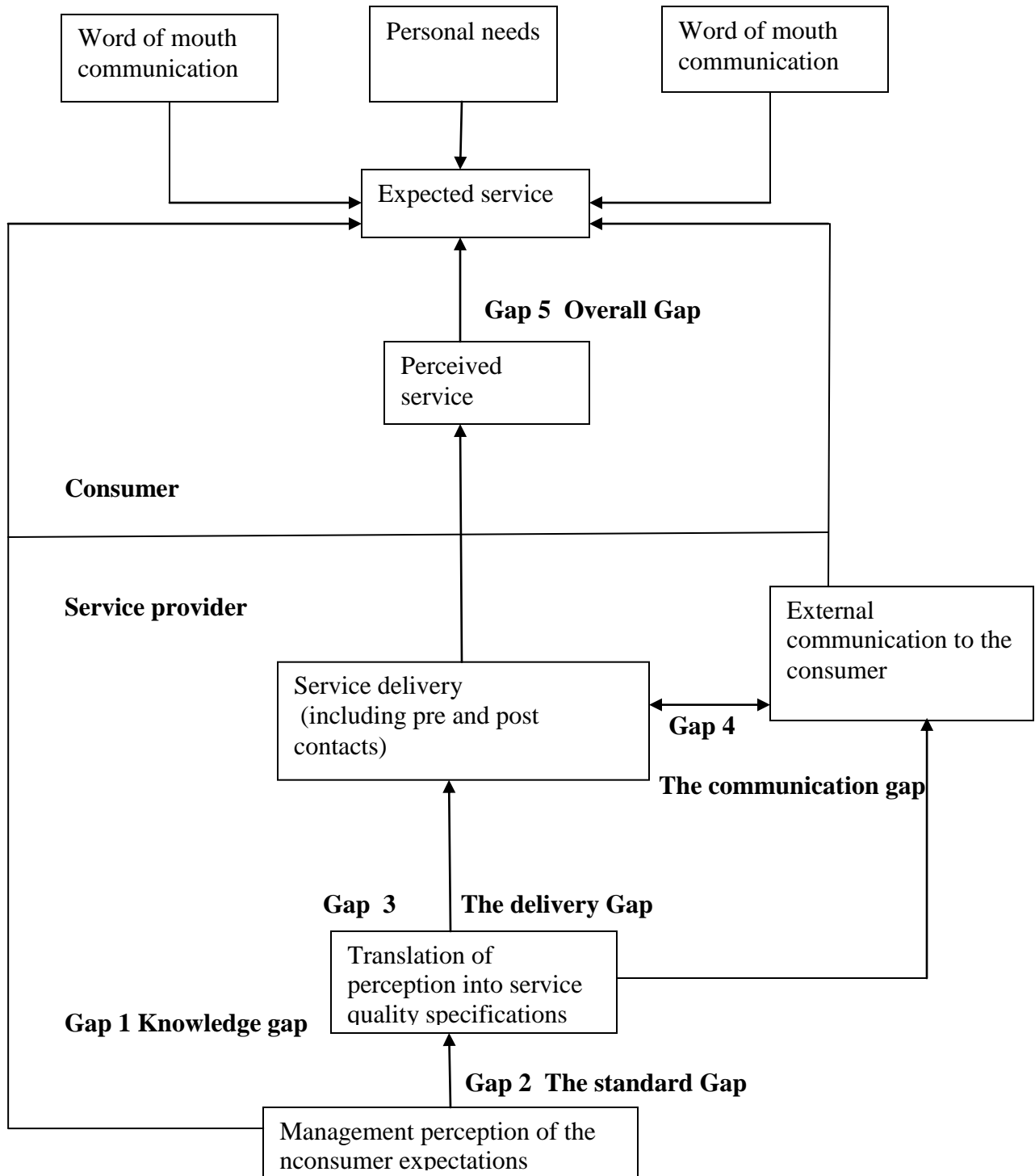
**Source: Gronroos (1984).**

### **2.5.2 The Gap model.**

This model holds that service quality is a function of the difference between expectation and performance along the quality dimensions. Unlike goods quality which can easily be measured objectively in terms of number of defects and durability, service quality is an elusive construct that may be difficult to measure (Parasuraman et al,1988). Parasuraman et al (1985) research revealed that service quality stems from comparison of customer expectation or desire from the service provider with their perception of the actual service performance.

Based on their findings they developed service quality model based on Gap Analysis.

**Figure 2. Gap Model**



Source: Parasuraman et al (1985)



According to the Gap Model, the knowledge gap is the difference between the customer's expectation and the management perception of those expectations, that is, knowing what customers expect. The standard gap is the difference between management's perception of customers expectations and service quality specifications, that is , improper quality standard service. The delivery gap is the difference between service quality specifications and service actual delivery, that is, service performance gap. The communication gap is the difference between service delivery and communication to customers about service deliver, that is, whether promised service quality meet delivered service quality, and finally, the overall gap is the difference between customer expectations and perceived service quality. This gap depends on the direction of the four previously mentioned gaps associated with the delivery of the service on the service provider's side.

Parasuraman et al (1985) argues that perceived service quality is the degree of the direction of discrepancy between consumer perception and expectation. The first four gaps are identified as functions of the way in which the service is delivered , whereas the overall gap pertain to the customer and as such is considered to be the true measure of service quality. SERVQUAL MODEL is based on the Overall Gap. However this does not explain the measures necessary to disclose these gaps.

## **2.6 Measuring service quality in Tertiary education colleges.**

According to Asuboneng et al., (1996) due to intense competition and hostility of environmental factors, service quality has become a cornerstone strategy for almost all organizations whose core business is providing services. This means that service

based companies are being compelled to provide excellent services to their customers in order to have a sustainable competitive advantage. Asuboneng et al. (1996) asserts that there is a need for these organizations to understand what service quality is in order to attain their objectives. According to Bitner (2003), a key strategy for customer focused firms is to measure and monitor customer satisfaction and service quality. Such measurement and evaluations are needed to track trends, to diagnose problems and to link to other customer focused strategies. Mohanty et al (2008) concurs that there is a need for service quality measurement at various levels in the organization. He has also noted that measurement of service quality is an important aspect in the quality improvement process because it provides feedback about the type of service provided and the extent to which it meets customer needs. He further explain that measuring service quality can have the benefits of creating a basis for assessing the degree of customer satisfactions so that necessary actions can be initiated to improve the process through which service is offered and that measuring service quality provide the right motivation for better performance by suppliers, vendors, departments and organization units. He concludes that the effectiveness of service quality program depends upon the extent to which an organization is successful in measuring it. Lewis et al (1983) have suggested a need for educational institutions to monitor the quality of their services to students in order to commit themselves to continuous improvement. Institutions that are committed to serving students are often focused on continuous improvement of the students' experiences. They strive to understand student's expectations and anticipate their future requirements. To accomplish these tasks, these educational institutions strive to listen

to their students and gather their feedback regarding items such as academics, admissions, rules, policies, facilities, and registrations, to name a few. It is essential to measure students' perceived satisfaction with tertiary education services in order to continually institutions study programs, teaching and facilities. Over time this, this continuous measurement provides vital information necessary for effective decision making, monitoring performance, and effectively allocating resources.

Common among the institutions of higher learning is a department or an office to measure and monitor service quality and in many cases implement policies meant to promote service quality. According to Martensen,et al. (2000), service quality has spread from business to education and many institutions of higher learning have been stimulated and influenced by total quality framework for both teaching and administrative support functions. Kelso R.S (2008) has noted that many institutions have instituted programs to measure the quality of services that they provide to students. As part of these measurement efforts, student's characteristics and demographics are often collected for analysis and comparison.

The objective of this service quality measurement is to measure student's satisfaction with instructional programs, student's services and other aspects of the college experiences in an effort to diagnose opportunities to improve or enhance that experience.

Many universities and tertiary colleges in Kenya have a department of quality assurance whose part of their role is to collect and analyze students opinions relating

to institutional services provided. Unfortunately the published results of these researches are very limited and typically not available for public consumption but rather held very closely by the institutions for the purpose of their own internal planning and service quality improvements efforts. According to Martensen, et al. (2000), quite a number of higher education institutions, research department's world have been collecting and analyzing student's opinions relating to the institutional services provided. As service quality has spread from business to education, many tertiary colleges and universities have been stimulated and influenced by total quality framework for both teaching and administrative support functions. Martensen, et al. (2000) observed that a wide variety of tertiary colleges and universities have been measuring service quality as a centerpiece of their institutional effectiveness efforts over a considerable amount of time. However, Joseph et al.(2005) has noted that research on service quality has relied too strongly on the input from academic insiders while excluding the input from the students themselves. He suggests that academic administrators should focus on understanding the needs of their students, who are the specific and primary target audience.

Researches related to this study have been carried out by few tertiary colleges and universities internationally and locally. The state university of New York is one of the largest Universities in the world, with approximately 413,000 students attending the university, its colleges and other affiliated community colleges in New York. It has four university centers in Albany, Binghamton, Buffalo, and Stony Brook, each with their respective quality measurement and assurance offices. Though it has not applies

SERVQUAL model in measuring service quality, it has implemented a customized version of the Student opinion survey, typically surveying students every three years to measure students satisfaction with college services and facilities , class room experiences, financial aid debt, and other aspects of quality of campus services, programs, and environment. Overtime these surveys have consistently been showing that several factors shows overriding importance in this university, including intellectually stimulating class materials, having a sense of belonging and satisfaction with academic advising services. In general the university has found out that lecturer's preparedness, which has a well known relationship to student's performance and achievement, emerges as a principle determinant of the university service quality satisfaction. The survey also found out that campus services and facilities have limited effects in determining their service quality satisfaction.

In the Northwestern state university in USA, as part of their quality enhancement plan studying academic and career engagement in this University, the department quality control focused mainly on academic components of the students opinion survey to measure their service quality satisfaction. The grading system, lecturer's availability outside of class and class size relative to type of course. This measurement found that the university has significant disparity and below the National (USA) norms. Satisfaction with library services and facilities, class sizes relative to the type of course recreational and intramural programs and services, and computer services were ranked high in student's service quality satisfaction. They also perceived various areas negatively such as parking facilities and services, purpose for which students

activity fees are used, availability of units at a time you can take them and student voice in college policies. To establish rise in students service quality satisfaction levels in these areas, these results have been established as benchmark against which future improvements will be measured.

Locally, in a survey of customer (students) satisfaction conducted by Kenya Forest service at Kenya Forest College, various factors were ranked as per how they contribute to student's service quality satisfaction. Quality and delivery of teaching, students focus and continued improvement and quality and delivery of examinations were ranked highest in determining student's service quality satisfaction. Adequacy of facilities and utilities and communication were ranked least in service quality satisfaction. Customer satisfaction survey (2012).

Chuka University College commissioned Peak network and consulting limited in May 2011 to undertake a customer (students) satisfaction survey to determine level of satisfaction of services provided by the university. The survey was designed to measure satisfaction on a broad range of issues considered to be important to the university customers such as communication of chukka university college vision, mission and core values, customer focus and continued improvement, lectures and examinations management, commutation, registration, general satisfaction and suggestions (proposed areas of improvements). Satisfaction was highest in lectures and examination management as well as in customers focus and continued improvement. However, communication was ranked least at 39% in level of students' satisfaction. A key highlight from the survey is the level of reported satisfaction with

the staff responsible for the front line delivery of services. They are perceived as courteous, knowledgeable, helpful, efficient and clear in explaining raised concerns. A key driver analysis of importance reveals that while staff attribute received the highest reported satisfaction, it is the service attributes such as adequacy of services that are driving satisfaction.

Tsinidou et al, (2010) did a study on factors determining quality in higher education in Greece among Business and Economics students. The main variables or factors of importance were academic staff, administrative services, library services, curriculum structure, location, facilities and career prospects. The findings indicated that on academic staff, students rated communication skills as the most important; on administrative services, clear guidelines and advice was the most ranked; on library services, students wanted availability of text books and journals; on curriculum structure, students valued practical or hands on experience and on location, an important factor was cost of transportation. Wambui et al. (2010) in a study on comparative analysis of Business students perception of service quality offered in Kenyan universities identified a number of factors important in students' perception of service quality in universities. The most important factors arranged in order of importance were identified as administrative quality, academic quality, program quality, students support and availability of resources in that order. The study shows that students highly look at administrative and academic quality in shaping their perceptions on service quality perception in university education.

## **2.7 Gaps to be filled by the study.**

A lot has been researched on service quality but no research that has been carried out specifically to measure service quality levels in tertiary education institutions in Kenya and at Zetech College. Commonly, the measurement of institutional quality in tertiary education defined predominantly by the institutions management rather than by students. As a result, there seem to be a gap on what organizations state to be their service quality standards and what exactly customers receive and expect and perceive as the best service quality. The current study aim at introducing the concept of using students to measure service quality in tertiary education institutions and to set service quality standards from the students, perspective to close this gap.

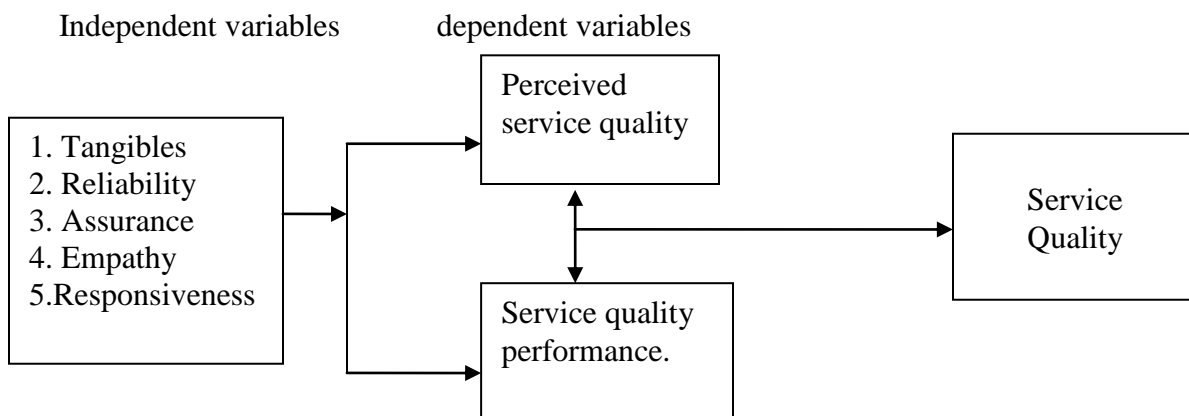
## **2.8 Conceptual framework.**

The conceptual framework explains the underlying process, which is applied to guide this study. The SERVQUAL model is suitable for measuring service quality and customer satisfaction in tertiary colleges offering educational services using the service quality dimensions modified to fit into the tertiary education. We use the same dimensions to measure both service quality and customer's satisfaction because both are related (Parasuraman et al., 1988) and customer satisfaction is an antecedent of service quality (Negi, 2009). The SERVQUAL approach integrates the two constructs and suggest that perceived service quality is an antecedent to satisfaction (Negi, 2009) ‘

In this research, the SERVQUAL model will be modified and additional items included to measure the service quality and customer satisfaction in Zetech College.



**Figure 3. Diagrammatical representation of conceptual framework.**



**Source: Kelso (2008)**

Based on the revision by Parasuraman, (2004) a modified SERVQUAL model, will be adopted to this study in order to identify the most important dimensions that matters most to customers and that bring them satisfaction. According to Grapentine, (1998) several approaches are available to capture the quality of the service delivered, including traditional satisfaction surveys, tracking customer complaints and market and employees surveys. These methods are supplemented with other approaches such as mystery shoppers, focus groups and customer advisory panels.

In their ground breaking research on service quality, Parasuraman, Zeithmal, and Berry (1985) employed the "Gap Analysis" to provisioning of service quality. They offered a framework for measuring service quality whereby it is defined as the gap

between customer expectations versus their perceptions of how the service is performed. According to Kumar et al., 2009, the difference between expectations and perceptions is called the gap which is the determinant of customers' perception of service quality. The goal of any service organization is to close these gaps, which could lead to service quality deficiencies perceived by customers. These gaps are:

### **2.7.1 Service expectation gap.**

Service organizations may not always understand what features a service must have in order to meet consumer needs and what levels of performance on those features are needed to deliver high quality service. This results in affecting the way consumers evaluate service quality.

### **2.7.2 Service quality specification gap.**

This gap arises when the service provider identifies what the consumer want but the means to deliver the expectation does not exist. Some factors that leads to this gap could be resource constraints, market conditions and management indifference. These could affect service quality perceptions of the consumer.

### **2.7.3 Service delivery gap.**

Service providers could have guidelines for performing service well and treating consumers correctly but these do not mean high quality performance is assured. Employees play an important role in assuring good service quality and their

performance cannot be standardised. This affect the delivery of service which has an impact on the way consumers percieve servivice qaulity.

#### **2.7.4 External communication gap.**

External communication from the organization to customers affects not only the customers expectation of service quality but also the customers perceptions of the delivery of quality service. Companies can neglect the to inform consumers of special efforts to assure quality that are not visible to them and this could influence the service quality perceptions by the consumers.

#### **2.7.5 Percieved service gap.**

The key to ensuring good service quality is meeting or exceeding what customers expect from the service and that judgement of high and low service quality depend on how consumers percieve the actual performance in the context of what they expected. This research focuses on this gap, the mesurement of the differences between Zetech college's students service quality expectations and the service quality perception.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Overview**

This chapter describes the research procedures to be followed in conducting the study. This will include the research design, location of the study, population, instruments, validity, reliability and data analysis procedure.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

A descriptive design will be used to gain insight into the customers perceived service quality offered by Zetech College with respect to five (5) dimensions of the modified SERVQUAL scale. According to Mugenda et al., (1999) this type of research attempts to describe such things as possible behavior, values, attitudes and characteristics. Descriptive research describes data and characteristics about the population being studied and is often collected using statistical surveys. Descriptive research answers the question of who, what, where, when and how, (Gay, 2005). The ex post facto research design will therefore be used in this study.

#### **3.2 Target population**

As suggested by Deming, (2000) customers determine quality; consequently, service quality should be researched and measured by studying customer's expectations, preferences, needs and perceptions. The population of this study will be five thousand one hundred and twenty four (5124) Zetech College students taking courses for Seven

(7) examination bodies. The population will be targeted purely at Zetech College premises.

**Table 1. Distribution of Zetech College students as per the different examination bodies.**

<b>EXAMINATION BODY</b>	<b>NUMBER OF STUDENTS</b>
Kenya National Examination Council	2046
Institute of Commercial Management	804
Association of Business Executives	900
City and Guilds	702
Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology	322
International Air Travel Association	220
Kenya Accountants and Secretaries Examination Board	130
<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS</b>	<b>5124</b>

### **3.3 Sample and Sampling Techniques.**

#### **3.3.1 Sample size**

According to Airly (1972) in descriptive studies, a sample of 10-12% is acceptable Mark Saunders (2009) asserts that a sample size of 30 or more will usually result in a sampling distribution for the mean that is very close to a normal distribution but he advises that it's important that a sample size is large enough to provide the necessary confidence in the data. Stutelys (2003) advice of a minimum of thirty (30) as a rule of thumb for the smallest number in a sample.

According to Mulusa (1990), many researchers suggest thirty (30) cases as the minimum number to work with to enable each case an equal chance to be represented in the sample. In this study, the researcher will use a sample of one hundred and twenty two (122) students. This sample size is far above the recommended minimum for the simple reason that some respondent may fail to return back the questionnaires.

### **3.3.2 Sampling procedure.**

The researcher will use stratified random sample. A sample of one hundred and twenty two (122) respondents will be drawn from the seven (7) examination bodies represented in the Zetech College. From each examination body, respondents will be picked randomly to be part of the sample of the study. The total number of respondents to be picked from each examination body will be proportionate to the examination body's students to the total college population. A list of all students from each of the examination body represented in the college will be prepared. A table of random numbers will be used to select respondents from each examination body to be in the sample of one hundred and twenty two (122) who will form the sample of the study. There will be no gender or age consideration in the sample selection.

**Table 2 Summary of sample size.**

<b>EXAMINATION BODY</b>	<b>NUMBER OF STUDENTS</b>	<b>SAMPLE SIZE</b>
Kenya National Examination Council	2046	48
Institute of Commercial Management	804	19
Association of Business Executives	900	21
City and Guilds	702	17
Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology	322	8
International Air Travel Association	220	5
Kenya Accountants and Secretaries Examination Board	130	4
<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS</b>	<b>5124</b>	<b>122</b>

### **3.4 Data Collection**

In relation to this study there is a reality that can be apprehended or perceived; customer satisfaction and service quality do exist. It is a clear fact that companies strive hard to improve service quality and customer satisfaction. The measurement of service quality and customer satisfaction can be captured by trying to find out how customers perceive service quality thus resulting to customer satisfaction.

### **3.4.1 The instruments.**

The instruments to be used in the study will be structured items. Bell,(1993) suggests that whatever procedure for collecting data is selected, it should always be examined critically to see the reliability. Structured questionnaire will be developed from modified SERVQUAL model in which respondents will choose their answers in some questions, and other questions will be open and respondents will be required to give their own responses. The questions in the questionnaire will be derived from SERVQUAL model which is based on perception gap between the perceived service quality and the expected service quality.

Originally ten (10) dimension of service quality were proposed –reliability, responsiveness, competence, access, courtesy, communication, credibility, security, understanding the customer and tangibles. However the researcher intends to reduce these dimensions and concentrate the study on five (5) dimensions namely: Tangibility, Assurance, Reliability, Responsiveness and Empathy.

According to Parasuraman et al, (1985) SERVQUAL instrument has been the predominant method used to measure service quality by comparing customers expectation before a service encounter and their perception of actual service delivered. The purpose of SERVQUAL is to serve as a diagnostic methodology for uncovering wide area of an organization's service quality weaknesses and strength. The SERVQUAL instrument is designed for use in any kind of service business and provides a basic skeleton through its expectation/perception format, encompassing



statements of each of the dimension under consideration (Parasureman et al, 1988). A SERVQUAL instrument will be formulated to measure service quality across the five (5) dimensions.

### **3.4.2 Administration of the Questionnaire.**

The data will be collected by means of structured questionnaires comprising of three (3) sections namely A,B, and C. Section A will contain questions pertaining to respondents and College profile while section B will require respondents to evaluate the service components of Zetech College as per service quality dimensions. Specifically, each item of Section B will be measured on the basis of responses statements that measure (1) the general expectations of the students concerning Zetech College services and (2) the current perception of the students regarding the level of service quality provided at Zetech College. This section will consist of perception questions extracted from SERVIQUAL and modified to fit into tertiary education context. There will be four (4) statements on Reliability, four (4) statements on Assurance, three (3) statements on Tangibles, five (5) statements on Empathy and five (5) statements on Responsiveness, making a total of 21 SERVQUAL statements.

In section C respondents will be asked to provide overall rating of the college service quality and satisfaction of various service offering. In addition, this section will contain open ended questions to allow respondents to give their view on how various aspects of the college services could be improved.

### **3.5 Data Collection Procedure.**

Through the use of research assistants, the questionnaire will be issued to the sampled respondents directly. The respondents will be given two (2) hours to fill the questionnaire appropriately after which they will be collected back with the help of research assistant and kept for further data processing and analysis.

### **3.6 Data Analysis.**

Since the study will involve descriptive design, the analysis of the data collected will be through use of descriptive data analysis whereby characteristics and other attributes of service quality at Zetech College will be analyzed. First the data will be processed through coding and classification as per the five (5) SERVQUAL dimensions. Thereafter analysis of the processed data will be done using various statistical indices such as percentages and central tendency measures.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX I

#### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to obtain sincere information on service quality at Zetech College. The information obtained will be used to measure service quality at Zetech College.

Read the instructions for each question carefully and give the appropriate responses.

Do not write your name anywhere in this questionnaire. (The information provided will be treated confidentially)

#### SECTION A

This section is designed to gather the general information about yourself and the College. Please indicate your answer by ticking or filling in the correct answer in the given places.

1. What is your Gender? Male ( ) Female ( ).
2. What is your purpose of enrolling at Zetech College? ? (tick one)
  - (a) No definite purpose in mind ( )
  - (b) To fulfill my sponsor's desire ( )
  - (c) To take a job related course. ( )
  - (d) To take a course for self improvement. ( )
  - (e) To take a course necessary for transferring to another college. ( )
  - (f) Any other reason\_\_\_\_\_.
3. What course are you studying at Zetech College? \_\_\_\_\_.

4. What is your mode of study? Full time ( ) part time ( )
5. How do you pay for your studies? Self sponsored ( ) sponsored by parents/guardian ( ) government sponsored ( ) sponsored by other organizations/ individual(s) ( ).
6. How did you get to know Zetech College? \_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION B**

**RELIABILITY**

7. At the point of registration, is the process done timely and error free?

Yes  No

If No in question 1 above, what level of registration services did you expect in Zetech College. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Does the college keep the students records accurately? Yes  No

If No, what level of accuracy in records keeping do you expect from Zetech College. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_?

9. (a) Describe the reliability of the lecturers in attending classes on time.

(i) Less than 20 per cent

(ii) 21 to 40 per cent

(iii) 41 to 60 per cent

(iv) 61 to 80 per cent

(v) 81 to 100 per cent

10. To what extent are your lecturers capable and proficient in what they teach? (i)

They have mastery of the subject.



(ii) They lack mastery of the content

11. (a) Describe your expected capability and proficiency of the non teaching staff in offering services

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12. To what extent are non teaching staff capable and proficient in offering services (i)

They have in depth knowledge of the services.

(ii) They lack in depth knowledge of the services.

**ASSURANCE**

13. (a) Are the college lecturers and other staff friendly and courteous?

Yes  No

(b) If yes, describe the current level of friendliness and courtesy of Zetech college lecturers and other staff.

Very friendly and courteous

Friendly and courteous

Somehow friendly

Not friendly and lack courtesy

Not friendly -and completely lack courtesy

14. (a) Do you believe in the Zetech College employees in solving your problem?

Yes  No

(b) If No explain why \_\_\_\_\_

15. Does your success in Zetech College depend on Zetech college staff?

Yes  No

If yes explain how \_\_\_\_\_

If No explain why \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**16.** Comment on the security measures put in place to protect College students.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**TANGIBILITY**

**17. (a)** Describe the cleanliness of the class rooms. Very clean

Clean

Somehow clean

Dirty

Very dirty

**18.** Describe the cleanliness of the college offices Very clean

Clean

Somehow clean

Dirty

Very dirty

**19.** What is your level of satisfaction with the dress code of staff at Zetech College?

Very Neat dressed

Neatly dressed

Somehow Neat

Shaggily dressed

Very shaggily dressed

20. ( a) In which of the category can you place the Zetech college facilities

- (i) Outdated and functioning
- (ii) Outdated and broken down
- (iii) Modern and broken down
- (iv) Modern and functioning

**EMPHATHY**

21. Do the college lecturers and staff give individualized attention to students

Yes  No

22. Is the college fair in its treatment to students? Yes  No

23. Are the Zetech college staff sympathetic and supportive of students need

Yes  No

24. Is the access to college facilities and classes convenient to students?

Yes  No

If No explain \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

25. Does the Zetech College staff understand their student's needs?

Yes  No

If No explain why \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**RESPONSIVENESS**

26. Are the lecturers and other staff ready to assist you when you have a problem?

Yes

No

If No in 6 above explain why\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**27.** Describe your expected availability of staff to serve

students\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**28.** Are the Zetech college staffs available to serve students?

Yes.  No

**29.** What is the level of Zetech Colleges staff response speed to students' needs and problems?

Very fast

Fast

Fairly fast

Slow

Very slow

**30.** What is your level of satisfaction with the responses given on your problems by the Zetech College staff?

Very satisfied

Satisfied

Somehow satisfied

Dissatisfied

Very dissatisfied

### **SECTION C**

**31.** Given a chance to take another course, would you consider furthering your at Zetech college? Yes  No

**32.** Briefly explain your level of satisfaction with the service quality at Zetech college.

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**33.** Given a chance to recommend area to improve service quality, what would be your recommendation?

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**34.** Describe the areas that you feel a leading in service quality at Zetech College.

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**THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION**

**APPENDIX II**

**WORK PLAN**

<b>DURATION (2014)</b>	<b>FEBRUARY</b>			<b>MARCH</b>				<b>APRIL</b>		<b>May</b>
	<b>Week 2</b>	<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Week 4</b>	<b>Week 1</b>	<b>Week 2</b>	<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Week 4</b>	<b>Week 1</b>	<b>Week 2</b>	<b>Week 1,2,3</b>
<b>Proposal writing</b>										
<b>Submission for defence</b>										
<b>Defence</b>										
<b>Correction</b>										
<b>Data collection</b>										
<b>Data analysis and interpretation</b>										
<b>Writing research report and corrections</b>										
<b>Submission of final research project</b>										

### APPENDIX III

#### BUDGET

<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<b>UNIT</b>	<b>UNIT COST ksh</b>	<b>TOTAL COST kshs</b>
Stationery			
Ball pens	10	15	150
Files	5	60	300
Foolscaps	5 reams	500	2500
Photocopy papers	5 reams	600	3000
<b>Sub total</b>			<b>5,950</b>
<b>Secretarial and other Services</b>			
Typing proposal	60 pages	20	1200
Typing project	200 pages	20	4000
Photocopying questionnaire	350 pages	3	1050
Printing proposal	60 pages	10	600
Printing project	200pages	10	2000
Data processing			4000
Research assistants	4 x 4 days	1000	16000
<b>Sub total</b>			<b>24850</b>
<b>Total</b>			<b>30,800</b>
<b>Grand total plus 10%</b>			<b>33,880</b>

## APPENDIX IV

The Human Resource Manager,

Zetech College,

P.O Box 2768-00200

Nairobi

Dear Madam.

### **RE: REQUEST TO CARRY OUT PROJECT RESEARCH**

Am a student at Kenyatta University Pursuing a Masters in Business Administration Degree (M.B.A). I am requesting to carry out my research project within the College and at Agriculture house campus. The title of my projects is

**“ An analysis of service quality measurement in tertiary colleges: A case study of Zetech College”.**

The purpose of this letter is to request for approval to do the research project.

Yours faithfully

Raphael Mputhia



