INVESTIGATING THE DISPARITY BETWEEN THE EXPECTATIONS AND THE

EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS IN A GRADUATE PROGRAMME AT A GRAUATE

SCHOOL IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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SCHOOL IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

ABSTRACT

Investigating the Disparity between the Expectations and the Experiences of
Students in a Graduate Programme at a Graduate School in Trinidad and Tobago

Jaidath Maharaj

The issue of student attrition was viewed in light of the disparity that existed
between student expectations and their perception of experience in a graduate
programme at a graduate school in Trinidad and Tobago. In a highly competitive
market, it is necessary to understand the phenomenon for survival of the
institution. The research took the form of a qualitative study using interviews as
the data collection strategy. It was found overall that service quality gaps existed
since expectations were being created by the institution and the perceived
experiences of the students within the programme were not aligning to those
expectations.

Keywords: higher education, student attrition, gap analysis, service
quality, qualitative study

INVESTIGATING THE DISPARITY BETWEEN THE EXPECTATIONS AND THE EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS IN A GRADUATE PROGRAMME AT A GRAUATE SCHOOL IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to the members of my family who have supported me throughout the process by being both my greatest critics and also my strongest pillars.

Specifically, I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Pundit. Sondath Maharaj and Shrimatee Binmatee Maharaj (deceased) who both had divergent methodologies for child rearing, but the same desire for their children; success through perseverance and honesty. Specifically, my father, Pundit. Sondath Maharaj, who serves as both mother and father to me and my three brothers in excess of 25 years and who has shaped the lives of all his four sons through the positive life he lives. His life lessons were taught through his actions and not his words with a common theme of perseverance and struggle to gain true success.

I dedicate this thesis to my wife, Shrimatee Vitra Maharaj above all others, for her deep love and her care for my development and who at times had to force me to sit and work on the thesis. She provided all the support I needed to focus on my work and she was my best and most frequent audience.

Finally, I dedicate this thesis to the members of the Swaha Gyaan Jyoti Mandali who from time to time during my engagement with the programme and the thesis did not received the best of me as my efforts were expended on the thesis and not fully on my duties as the spiritual leader of the centre. They have always

understood and remained loyal and supportive of me as their spiritual leader and my efforts and have displayed the core values of our great institution; respect, care, consideration and acceptance. A greater set of people I don't know.

INVESTIGATING THE DISPARITY BETWEEN THE EXPECTATIONS AND THE
EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS IN A GRADUATE PROGRAMME AT A GRAUATE
SCHOOL IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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INVESTIGATING THE DISPARITY BETWEEN THE EXPECTATIONS AND THE

EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS IN A GRADUATE PROGRAMME AT A GRAUATE

SCHOOL IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

I end by thanking my family for their support during this process and for setting

the bar high for achievements.

INVESTIGATING THE DISPARITY BETWEEN THE EXPECTATIONS AND THE

EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS IN A GRADUATE PROGRAMME AT A GRAUATE

SCHOOL IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INVESTIGATING THE DISPARITY BETWEEN THE EXPECTATIONS AND THE

EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS IN A GRADUATE PROGRAMME AT A GRAUATE

SCHOOL IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

INVESTIGATING THE DISPARITY BETWEEN THE EXPECTATIONS AND THE
EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS IN A GRADUATE PROGRAMME AT A GRAUATE
SCHOOL IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to Problem

The study was born out of the researcher's observation that students entering a
programme at a graduate school in Trinidad and Tobago have expressed
disappointment in the experience of the programme based on their expectations
upon matriculation. Compounding the problem was the fact that initial document
analysis showed a high attrition rate in the first semester of the programme.

The researcher has over ten years' experience in the field of education spending
the last nine of those years in an administrative and leadership capacity. Of the
nine years in an administrative and leadership capacity, three of those years have
been spent at the graduate level. The years at the graduate level have given a clear
indication of the service expectations of students who have entered graduate
programmes and the need for the institution to meet those expectations. Having
been involved in the lives of the graduate students at the institution over the last
three years, the researcher has the benefits of direct interaction with students and
thus a basis for further systematic study of the issue of expectations and perceived
experiences of students entering the graduate programme at the graduate school.

The institution under investigation is a graduate school which is part of a larger
institution and was founded under a public private partnership. Therefore, the

school is required to compete in the market for graduate students in order to generate revenue for operation. The student profile is diverse and includes varied backgrounds along the lines of number of years work experience, position in organisations, age, gender, geographic locations, sector, industry and nationality. The expectations of the student body would therefore be varied based on such diversity. Morgan (2013) suggests that with such diversity "comes the need to alter patterns of behavior and the delivery of academic and non-academic support" (p. 25). Initial observation and interaction with students, though, indicate that all students have expectations of good customer service and relevant programmes.

While relevant programmes can be duplicated by any of the many private graduate schools in the market, the differentiator is customer service which the school has identified as one of its strategic priorities. The school has therefore recently embarked on a large scale marketing campaign to create visibility, awareness and impact of the school and programmes in an attempt to strengthen the brand and attract a greater market share.

The marketing campaign was successful in attracting more applicants to the school and the various programmes. Because of the extent of the marketing campaign, the school changed many of its operations to meet the new expectations of students which were created during the marketing campaign.

INVESTIGATING THE DISPARITY BETWEEN THE EXPECTATIONS AND THE EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS IN A GRADUATE PROGRAMME AT A GRAUATE SCHOOL IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

It has been observed however that during the first semester of the programme, there was a high level of attrition due to factors other than academic performance. In discussions with students who have withdrawn from the programme, they expressed disappointment with their experiences based on the expectations they had upon matriculation. Students have complained officially and unofficially about areas of the school where they feel that the services were not met based on the expectations that had been created when they attended many of the information sessions, application and registration events.

This issue of student satisfaction is of particular relevance given that at the graduate level, students are seen as customers. According to Abdullah (2006), higher education is being driven towards commercial competition imposed by economic forces resulting from the development of global education markets and the reduction of government funds that force tertiary institutions to seek other financial sources.

Globally, this issue of student dissatisfaction in higher education has become an issue of great importance given that it is the fastest growing service industry in the globe according to Hussain and Birol (2011). Because of this reality, Hussain and Birol (2011) state that institutions of higher education need appropriate methods and strategies to meet the current students' needs, keep them happy and attract more recruitment.

INVESTIGATING THE DISPARITY BETWEEN THE EXPECTATIONS AND THE EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS IN A GRADUATE PROGRAMME AT A GRAUATE SCHOOL IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

The research has found overall that schools are moving towards better service quality in light of the views that students are customers and the globalization of education. Quinn, Lemay and Johnson (2009), however, talk of the difficulty in defining who is a customer in higher education. They suggest that there is a need to clarify the definitions of a customer in the educational environment to be able to effectively measure service quality. Quinn, Lemay and Johnson (2009) surmise that unclear definitions of the customer in higher educational environments are a major barrier to effective quality improvements. The level of service quality has been researched and measured using various tools, mainly the SERQUAL model as developed by Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1988a). This model offers an integrated view of the customer-company relationship and shows five (5) gaps that exist in service quality. The model is explained in detail within the literature review.

Understanding of students' expectations and their perceptions of the service offered enables the identification of the various gaps that exist. Once these gaps are identified then they can be targeted for improvement and thus closing of the gaps. Existing research in measuring service quality in higher education does exist and provides a basis for understanding the phenomenon although it is limited globally. It also provides an opportunity to conduct further contextualized research in the area.

INVESTIGATING THE DISPARITY BETWEEN THE EXPECTATIONS AND THE EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS IN A GRADUATE PROGRAMME AT A GRAUATE SCHOOL IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

While there is research that measured students expectations and perception of service quality at higher educational institutes, (Hussain & Birol, 2011; Quinn, Lemay, Larsen & Johnson, 2009; Moru, Persens & Breiteig, 2009; Al-Alak & Alnaser, 2012; Abdullah, 2006; Nadiri, Kandampully & Hussain, 2009) no research has been done in Trinidad and Tobago. Further, only one of the studies uses a semi-structured interview (Moru, Persens & Breiteig, 2009), while the others are quantitative studies. This provides an opportunity for research that would contribute to the closing of the existing gaps in the literature through a qualitative study of a graduate educational institution in Trinidad and Tobago. A qualitative study would provide a deep understanding of the feelings and emotions of the students and would generate rich data on the expectations and perceived experiences of the students from their perspective. The findings could then be researched further using quantitative and further qualitative studies for a greater understanding of the issues in the context of graduate schools in Trinidad and Tobago. The findings can then be compared to existing global research to give further context to the local situation.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Students at a graduate school have expressed disappointment in their experiences compared with their expectations at the graduate school. Given the research that

exists on the need to provide customer satisfaction in the largest growing market globally (Hussain & Birol, 2011); the graduate school must understand the disparity between expectations and perceived experiences from the perspective of the students. This gap between expectations and perception of service has been identified as the noticed gap in Parasuraman's model (1998). The problem provides an opportunity to better understand the gaps in expectations and perceived service that exists at the graduate school in Trinidad and Tobago, with a view to closing the existing gaps and reducing the risk of further attrition and dissatisfaction in the experience felt by students' entering graduate programmes at the graduate school in Trinidad and Tobago.

This disparity in service expectations and perception of experience poses a threat to the institution in light of the need for higher educational institutes to maintain a competitive edge as identified by Al-Alak and Alnaser (2012). He states that "…searching for new and creative ways to attract encourage and maintain stronger relationships with students are vital for each higher educational institute to have a competitive edge…" (Al-Alak & Alnaser, 2012, p 156).

The above is supported by Hussain and Birol (2011) who identify the higher education sector as the fastest growing industry in the world. Because of this reality, Hussain and Birol (2011) suggest that institutions of higher education need appropriate methods and strategies to meet the current students' needs, keep them happy and attract more recruitment.

INVESTIGATING THE DISPARITY BETWEEN THE EXPECTATIONS AND THE EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS IN A GRADUATE PROGRAMME AT A GRAUATE SCHOOL IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

With the proliferation of marketing at the graduate school and the consequent inflow of new applicants and matriculation, the graduate school has not been able to meet the expectations of the students as they enter and thus the institution has experienced attrition.

It is important for the researcher to understand better this situation given the position he holds in the institution. In light of the fact that the researcher is part of the leadership of the institution and thrust with the responsibility to also find solutions to the problem experienced by the school in meeting expectations, the research is needed to prevent further occurrences of dissatisfaction and thus attrition of students.

The institution aims to be a market leader in graduate studies and thus it is relevant for the institution to fully understand the various components of the gaps that exist, a notion supported by Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1988a). This understanding will allow the school to close all gaps and thus gain a sustainable model for moving forward on a sound and informed platform.

Given the limited literature available on the topic in the context of a graduate school in Trinidad and Tobago, the researcher has an interest from an academic stand point, being a student of both education and quality to create contextual knowledge and thus close the existing research gaps that exist.

INVESTIGATING THE DISPARITY BETWEEN THE EXPECTATIONS AND THE EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS IN A GRADUATE PROGRAMME AT A GRAUATE SCHOOL IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The study seeks to investigate the disparity between students' expectations and their perception of experience from their perspective upon entry to a selected programme at a graduate business school in Trinidad and Tobago. The researcher seeks to understand from the students' perspective their expectations on entering the programme, factors that contributed to the creation of those expectations, their perceived experiences in the first semester and the factors that contributed to their experiences from their perspective.

In light of the stated purpose, the following are the research questions

1.4 Research Questions

1. What were students' expectations on entering the programme from their perspective?

2. How were the expectations of students created from their perspective?

3. What were students' experiences during their first term of the programme at the school compared to their expectations from their perspective?

4. What factors contributed to the disparity between students' expectations and their experiences of the programme from their perspective?

INVESTIGATING THE DISPARITY BETWEEN THE EXPECTATIONS AND THE EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS IN A GRADUATE PROGRAMME AT A GRAUATE SCHOOL IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

The first two research questions seek to understand the basis of the creation of the expectations of students from their perspective. According to Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1988b), expectations are a function of word of mouth communication, personal need and past experience. Research question 3 and 4 seek to investigate the perceived experiences of the students and how they have differed from their expectations from their perspective.

The research questions 1 – 4 would, therefore, give a clear understanding of the expectations of students, how they were created, and the experiences that differed from the expectations and the factors that are responsible for the disparity in expectations and experiences, all from the perspective of the participants of the study. The investigation into the disparity in expectations and experiences will establish Gap 5 of the Service-Quality Model (Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman, 1988b). This gap is a result of the other four gaps and is referred to as the "noticed gap" since it is the gap that gives rise to the perceived experience of the customer and makes the customer aware that there is a disparity.

The research questions are therefore designed to investigate and understand the expectations and experiences of the students from their perspective and thus provide a platform for the analysis and possible interventions to close the gaps and address the issue as observed by the researcher.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study is significant at both the institutional and national level. Because of the levels of competition within the market, there is a need to have a competitive edge by delivering to the students all expectations as promised by the school through its advertising campaign, literature and face to face interactions. Therefore the institution will benefit from closing the service gaps since it reduces the risk of students' dissatisfaction and possible attrition. According to Quinn, Lemay, Larsen and Johnson (2009), the student is a customer and therefore their service expectations must be met in order to retain them. They also state further that the increased competition for students in the context of increased competition for operational funding and greater selection in the awarding of funding by non-governmental agencies has driven educational institutions to focus on better quality and customer satisfaction. Further, Nadiri and Hussain (2005) state that "in general, service quality promotes customer satisfaction, stimulates intention to return and encourages recommendations" (p.524). Nadiri and Hussain (2005) further support the above by stating that "customer satisfaction increases profitability, market share and return on investment" (p.524). Therefore, strictly from an economic and marketing perspective the school will benefit from the study as it will provide the platform for the institution to formulate interventions to prevent dissatisfaction and further attrition.

Beyond the commercial benefits of the study, students can also gain since the school would understand better the educational needs of its students. By using the findings of the data, the school can design experiences for students that would allow the students to gain the most from their interaction with the school. The information gathered will allow for the school to better manage the various components that contribute to the experiences of the students and thus prevent dissatisfaction. From an ethical perspective, the graduate school will be able to deliver on the promises made to the students given that students have applied for the programme based on expectations that were created. According to Cannon and Sheth (1994), globally universities are questioning curriculum, content, teaching method and the quality of lecturers through the perspective of the student. Seymore (1992) states that "understanding value from the perspective of the student can provide information useful to management for allocating resources and designing programmes that promise better satisfied students" (as cited in Nadiri, Kandampully, & Hussain, 2009, p. 113)

Arising from the significance of the study as explained and supported through literature above, the benefits can be extended to the national level given that graduates are considered output of graduates schools and inputs into organisations. Reavill (1998) outlines a product / process model where graduates are seen as the output or product of the process of education. The customers of this product (the graduate) are the future employers of the graduates. The study,

therefore, as a basis for the closing of existing gaps and thus improved overall service and educational quality as a possible eventuality, would provide the best quality graduate. These graduates as future employees and employers of the various institutions of the nation will strengthen the capacity of the institutions and eventually lead to national development. According to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago Budget Statement 2011, $TT 8.7 Billion has been allocated for education and the government is also partnering with tertiary level educational institutions for the purpose of achieving its strategic objectives.

The study is therefore significant to the long term survival of the graduate school, improvement in the overall quality of all educational components of the school, the reputation of the school as an ethical institution and the long term sustainability and transformation of the nation. The study will also add to the exiting body of knowledge and thus allow similar institutions to have further relevant research to guide their operations.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Service Quality

According to Beckford (2002), quality has emerged and remains a dominant theme in management thinking for the past 50 years. Beckford (2002) states "more recently, organizations throughout the world have begun to embrace the theories and practices of quality" (p. 4). According to Henning-Thurau et al. (2001), educational services fall into the field of services marketing (as cited in Nadiri, Hussain, & Kandampully, 2009, p. 332). The discourse in services marketing and services quality has found itself into the field of education according to Avdjieve and Wilson (2002) (as cited in Nadiri and Mayboudi, 2002, p. 2).

Service quality is defined by Johnson and Winchell (1998) as "the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bears on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs" (p. 48). Satisfaction is defined according to Kotler and Keller (2009) as person's feelings of pleasure or disappointment resulting from the comparison of a product's perceived performance relative to his or her expectations. Satisfaction is therefore viewed as a function of perceived performance and expectations. The service industry is characterized by intangibility, inseparability and heterogeneity according to Hill (1995). Kotler and Lane (2009) further explain that unlike a physical product, services cannot be

seen, tasted, felt, heard or smelled before they are bought and the service provider has to "tangibilize the intangible" and thus gives rise to some unique aspects of a service. Finally, because of the inability to standardize service output due to the fact that each person's needs are different, services are highly variable and thus heterogeneous implying that service quality has different meaning for different people. Patterson and Johnson (1993) postulate that service quality cannot be measured objectively (as cited in Nadiri, Kandampully & Hussain, 2009, p. 113).

Lewis and Mitchell (1990) define service quality as the extent to which a service meets the needs or expectations of the customer. They explain further that service quality, therefore, is the difference between the customers' expectation of a service and their perceived service. Service quality is deemed to be satisfactory when the expectations of customers are met. If expectations are not met then service quality is deemed to be unsatisfactory and if customers' expectations are exceeded then service quality is perceived to be more than satisfactory. According to Hill (1995), when customers' expectations are exceeded they are delighted. This gives birth to gap theory which focuses on the perception minus expectation conceptualization. There continues to be debate on an accepted definition of service quality. Lewis and Mitchell (1990) postulate that service quality is defined as the extent to which customers' needs and expectations are met by the delivery of the service.

INVESTIGATING THE DISPARITY BETWEEN THE EXPECTATIONS AND THE EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS IN A GRADUATE PROGRAMME AT A GRAUATE SCHOOL IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Higher education in its drive to remain relevant must address the issues of unclear definitions of service quality. It is only through clear definitions can standards be established which will allow for comparison of measures to deal with service quality issues. Edvardson (1998) suggests that service quality improvements begin with analysis and measurements. These can only be useful if they are accurate and thus the need for standards arising out of clears definitions.

2.2 Measuring Service Quality in Higher Education

According to Harvey and Green (1993), service quality in higher education is very complex and a single accurate definition of quality is lacking (as cited in Al-Alak & Alnaser, 2012, p. 158). Due to this, according to Clewes (2003), "the best way to define and measure service quality does not exist yet" (p. 71). Al-Alak and Alnaser (2012) postulate that different stakeholders in higher education would have individual views of quality due to their particular needs adding to the complexity of measuring service quality. The view that service quality is difficult to define and measured is supported by Wisniewski (2001).

O'Neil and Palmer (2004) define service quality in higher education as "the difference between what a student expects to receive and his/her perception of actual delivery…." (as cited in Al-Alak & Alnaser, 2012, p. 158). The measurement of service quality in higher education is of paramount importance given the benefits to the institution in the context of increased competition and

decreased funding (Abdullah, 2006). Therefore, according to Nadiri and Hussain (2005), service quality promotes customer satisfaction, stimulates intention to return and encourages recommendations. According to Al-Alak and Alnaser (2012), measurement of service quality in higher education serves the needs of management; staff and faculty by using the contribution of the research to better understand the needs of students and assist in developing and implementing new programmes to serve the mission and purpose of the school.

According to Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1986), service quality cannot be measured objectively "due to the unique characteristics of services; namely intangibles, heterogeneity, inseparability and perishability" (as cited in Nadiri, Kandampully, & Hussain, 2009, p. 113). Therefore, there is an issue of the selection of the right model and instruments to measure service quality. According to Al-Alak and Alnaser (2012), "the identification and implementation of the right instrument is a challenging task faced by practitioners whose aim is to gain a better understanding of the quality issues at the tertiary education level" (p. 56).

Researchers measure service quality as gaps between expectation and perceptions of service or just as a perceived performance alone according to Hurley and Estalami (1998) (as cited in Al-Alak & Alnaser, 2012, p 157). Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1993) explain the service quality gap which focuses on comparing the expectations of the customer to the observed service delivered.

According to Boulding et al. (1993), "perceptions of service quality are built on prior expectations of what should be and will occur compared to the actual service delivered" (as cited in Al-Alak & Alnaser, 2012, p. 158). According to Al-Alak and Alnaser (2012), "empirical evidence has confirmed that the customer's perception of service quality and customers satisfaction directly affect their intention to positively favor an organization" (p. 158).

Measurement of service quality and the components of expectations and experiences allow for institutions of higher education to address the current context of greater competition in the higher education market and reduced governmental funding as identified by Abdullah (2006). According to Al-Alak and Alnaser (2012), students with positive perceptions of institutions of higher education as it relates to service quality are more likely to contribute money to the institution in the future. Therefore, a conclusion was drawn that the creation of increased expectations of future service touch points leads to a greater perception of quality once the customer has been exposed to the service of the institution. It was also found that students with high expectations of service quality will recommend the university to others and also contribute funding to the university.

2.3 Models of Service Quality

Service quality is based on gap theory and the determination of perception minus expectations. It follows therefore that institutions must gain an in-depth

understanding of the components of expectations and perceptions in order to manage service quality. Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry (1990) explain that the most crucial step in delivering service quality is the understanding and knowledge of the expectations of the customer. There are many models for measuring service quality; however, Nadiri, Kandampully and Hussain (2009) suggest that measuring service quality in higher education should take into consideration the unique meaning of service quality that relates to the situation under study. In the case being considered, service quality refers to the gaps that exist between expected service and actual service received. Various models of service quality postulate different factors that influence customer expectations and experience. Four (4) models are considered in this literature review-:

1. Zeithaml Rater Model

2. Parasuraman SERVQUAL Model

3. Kano's Two Factor Model

4. Gronroos' Perceived Service Quality Model

2.3.1 Rater Model

The rater model produced by Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry (1990) postulate that there are five key areas that comes together to form a quality service from the perspective of a customer.

- Reliability – accurate and dependable performance of promised service

- Assurance - Ability of employees to inspire trust and confidence in their knowledge

- Tangibles – appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication materials

- Empathy – pastoral and caring attention individualized to suit the needs of the customer

- Responsiveness – Enthusiasm and willingness to assist customers and provide prompt and timely service

2.3.2 SERVQUAL Model

Due to the importance of quality within the services industry, researchers have sought to empirically examine service quality within various service industries including banking, hotels, communication, insurance and education according to Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry (1985). While there is still controversy as to the best model to accurately measure service quality, the SERVQUAL model developed by Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry (1988b) has been used to measure service quality in higher education.

The SERVQUAL model was developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988a). The model provides an integrated view of the relationship between an

organization and its customers. The model shows five (5) perception gaps and explains the factors that contribute to the gaps. It identifies gap five (5) as the "noticed gap" which is the result of the other four (4) gaps.

Figure 1: Parasuraman SERVQUAL Model
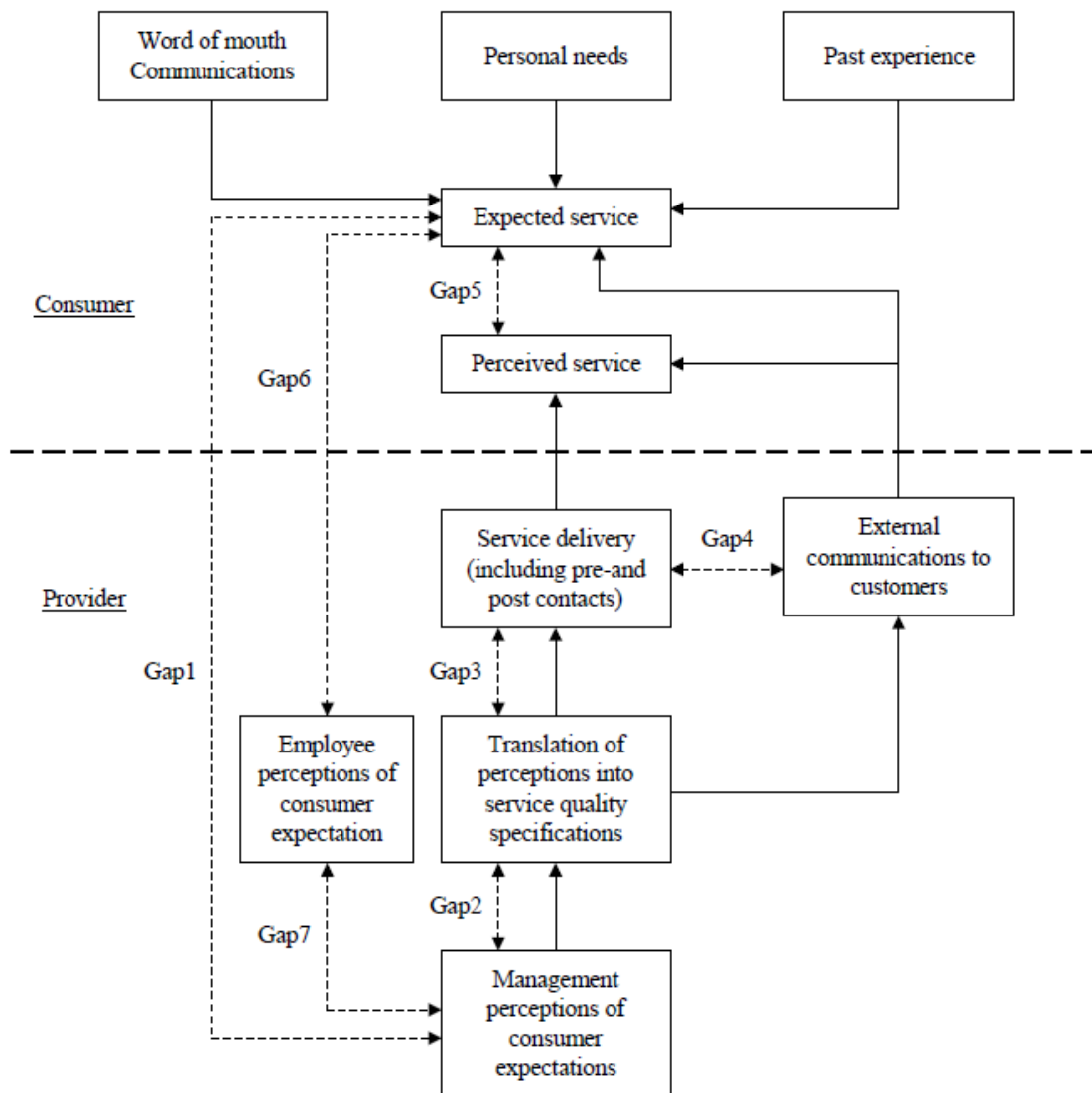
Note. From "A conceptual model of service quality and its implications for future research" by V. A. Zeithaml, Berry, L. L. & A. Parasuraman , 1990, *The Journal of Marketing* , 49(4), p. 44.

INVESTIGATING THE DISPARITY BETWEEN THE EXPECTATIONS AND THE EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS IN A GRADUATE PROGRAMME AT A GRAUATE SCHOOL IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Gap 1 - also known as the management perception gap is the difference between expected service by customers and the management's perceptions of the consumer's expectations. In the context of higher education, this gap exists when the institution is unaware of the needs of the higher education market.

Gap 2 - also known as quality specification gap is the difference between management perception and the actual specification of the customer experience. The pre-requisite for bridging this gap is service design and performance standards. Managers must ensure they are defining the level of service they believe is needed.

Gap 3 - also known as the service delivery gap is the difference between customer driven service design and standards and service delivery. Managers must audit the experience of the customer as delivers by the organization in order to ensure that standards and specifications are met. According to the theory put forward by Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1988a), the service performance gap is affected by a combination of factors including employees' job fit, technology job fit and role ambiguity.

Gap 4 - also known as market communication gap is the difference between the delivery of the customer experience and what is communicated to customers. Organizations at times exaggerate services provided to the customers when communicating through literature and the various media. In an attempt to gain market share, organizations present the non-conservative or best case scenario to

customers. This raises customer expectations and may lead to the harming of customer perceptions if the organization cannot deliver on the promises communicated. Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1988b) says that customers' perception of service quality is negatively affected by the disparity between service delivery and external communications in the form of exaggerated promises and the absence of information about service delivery aspects even when the intention may be good

Gap 5 - also known as the perceived service quality gap is the difference between a customer's perception of the experience and the customer's expectation of the service - Customers' expectations are shaped by word of mouth, their personal needs, communication by the organization and their own past experiences. Surveys after delivering the customer experience are important for an organization to measure customer perceptions of service. Unless Gap 5 is kept under check, it may result in lost customers, bad reputation and negative corporate image.

2.3.3 Kano's Two Factor Model

A two factor quality model of service quality was put forward by Japanese quality guru Noriaki Kano in 1984. The model also referred to as the "Kano Curve" illustrates the difference between must-be, and attractive quality elements. Lin,

INVESTIGATING THE DISPARITY BETWEEN THE EXPECTATIONS AND THE EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS IN A GRADUATE PROGRAMME AT A GRAUATE SCHOOL IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Yang, Chan and Sheu (2010) describe the Kano Two Factor Model showing the effect of availability of must-be quality and attractive quality on customer satisfaction.

Must-be Quality are attributes of a service which customers expect to receive as a standard occurrence. The absence of these attributes will render the customer very dissatisfied. The presence of these attributes on the other hand does not create any high level of satisfaction in the minds of the consumer since he expects these to be a standard occurrence. The minimum acceptable standard therefore becomes a qualifier.

Attractive Quality is the various elements and aspects of a service that exceeds needs and expectations. While must-be quality provides no satisfaction but instead is expected, attractive quality delights and thrills the customer and can act as a service differentiator. Attractive quality excites the customer when it is provided, however the absence of these does not lead to dissatisfaction or comments from the customer.

Figure 2: Kano's Two Factor Model

Customer Satisfaction

Note. From "Refining Kano's quality attributes-satisfaction model: A moderated regression approach" by S. Lin, C. Yang, and C. Sheu, 2010, *International Journal of Production Economics* , 126(2), p. 256.

2.3.4 Gronroos Perceived Service Quality Model

Gronroos (1982; 1984) puts perceived service of consumers against expected service of consumers. Gronroos (1982) identifies functional and technical quality as two service quality dimensions within his model. Functional quality is defined by Gronroos (1982) as the representation of how the service is delivered i.e. the customers' perceptions of the interactions that take place during the service delivery. Technical quality, according to Gronroos (1982), is a reflection of the outcome of the service act, or what the customer receives in the service encounter.

These two quality dimensions impact the image of the organization in the eyes of the customer.

Gronroos model shows the perception gap that exists and the factors that contribute to each side of the gap. Expectations are a function of the following factors-:

1. Market communication

2. Image

3. Word of mouth

4. Customer needs

5. Customer Learning

Experiences are a function of the following factors-:

1. Technical Quality

2. Functional Quality

Technical quality, according to Gronroos (1984), is what the customer receives as a result of the interaction with the supplier and can be measured in an objective manner. For example, when interacting with an educational institute, knowledge is the technical quality dimension. Functional quality, according to Gronroos (1984) is the manner in which this interaction takes place between the supplier and customer and is perceived in a subjective manner.

Figure 3: Gronroos Perceived Service Quality Model
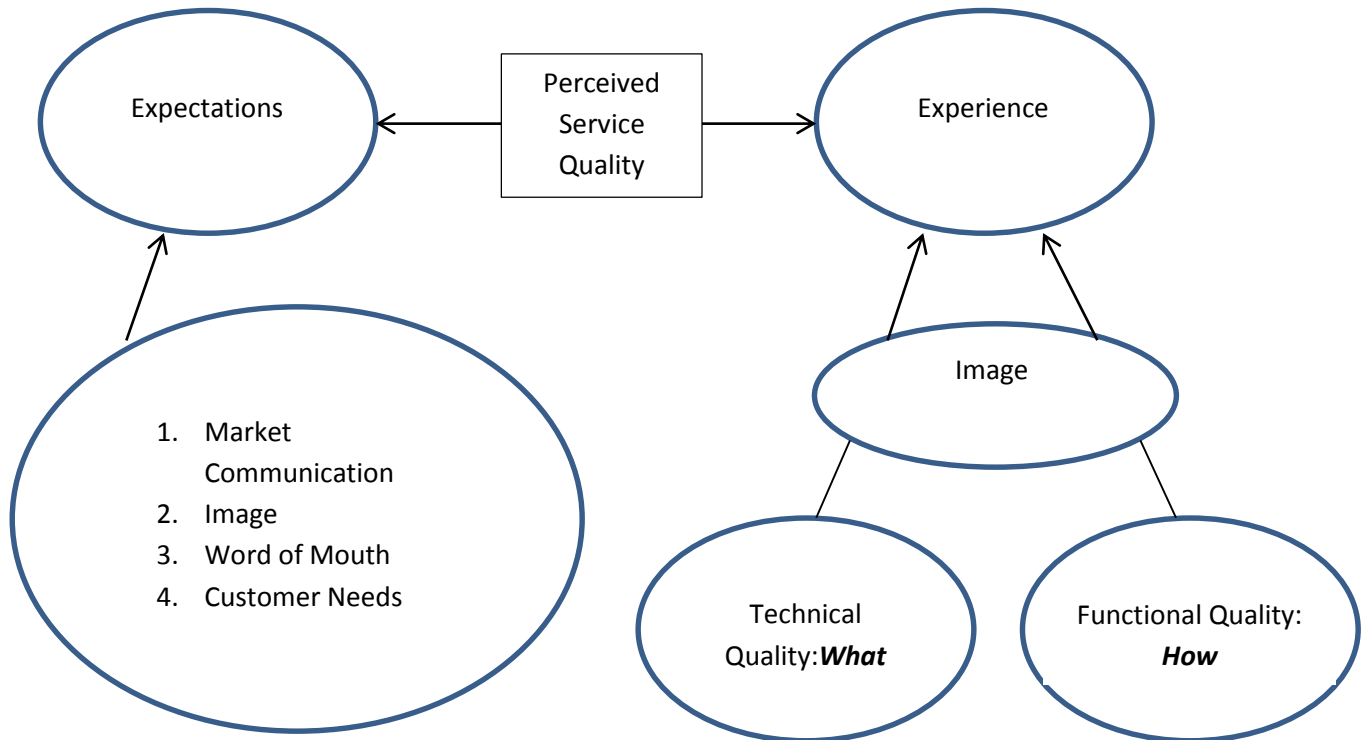
Note. From "A service quality model and its implications" by C. Gronroos , 1984, *European Journal of Marketing* , 18(4), p. 40.

The Gronroos Perceived Service Quality Model shows the clear existence

between the expectation and experience gap from the perspective of the customer.

The Gronroos Perceived Service Quality Model, unlike the Kano's Two Factor

Model does not provide dimensions that speak to the delighting customer but to

narrowing the gaps that exist between expectations and experience by showing

the factors that contributes to both expectations and experiences. The Gronroos

Perceived Service Quality Model is similar to the SERVQUAL model in that it

identifies expectations as a function of word of mouth communication, personal needs and communication by the organization to the customer. It differs in that experiences are a function of the image of the organisation which is determined by the actual product or service being offered (technical quality) as well as the manner in which it is delivered (functional quality).

2.3.5 Development of the Higher Education Performance Model (HEdPERF)

According to Abdullah (2006), although service quality has attracted attention within the tertiary education sector, little work has been focused on identifying the determinants from the point of the view of students. The Higher Education Performance Model (HEdPERF), therefore, incorporates the academic components along with the total service environment experienced by the student.

HEdPERF captures the determinations of service quality within the tertiary education sector. The instrument proposes a 41-item instrument that could be used to measure service quality within the tertiary education sector. According to Abdullah (2006), this is relevant as a result of the increased competition due to growth and development within the education market globally. He further states that this measuring scale is critical because of the generic nature of the current models of measuring service quality where the idiosyncrasies of higher education are not considered. Abdullah (2006) identifies previous research in service quality in higher education as one dimensional where the focus was only on academics

with little or no attention being placed on the non-academic components of the educational experience.

The HEdPERF uses both qualitative and quantitative measures to develop an instrument to measure service quality specifically in higher education. Critical factors of service quality from the perspective of the students are determined through qualitative means. The factors are then measured using a quantitative approach. Sixteen (16) students were selected from various schools across Malaysia and asked to participate in focus groups of six to identify critical factors or expectations of service quality. The six factors identified by the focus groups are as follows-:

1. Factor 1: non-academic factors. These consist of items that are necessary for students to complete their study obligations based on duties carried out by non-academic staff.

2. Factor 2: academic aspects. These consist of factors that are strictly the responsibility of academic staff.

3. Factor 3: reputation. This factor includes items that allude to the importance of higher education institutes in projecting a professional image.

4. Factor 4: access. This factor contains elements of accessibility, eases of contact and communication, availability and convenience.

5. Factor 5: programme issues. This factor includes issues of programme scope, reputation of programme, specializations and flexibility of structure and curriculum.

6. Factor 6: understanding. These factors relate to understand the needs of students as it relates to counseling and health services.

These factors were then used to develop a research instrument which was piloted and validated. The entire process outputted a measurement instrument that was relevant to the students of Malaysia.

2.4 Contribution of Research to Gaps in the Literature

Although, Abdullah (2006) claims that measurement of service quality and gap analysis is a gray area, the literature presented shows four models that could be used to understand the creation of expectations and the perception of experiences. Research in measuring service quality in higher education does exist and it provides a basis for understanding the phenomenon which however is limited locally. The research provides an opportunity to conduct contextualized research in the area of service quality and gap analysis at a graduate school in Trinidad and Tobago. Current research in the area of service quality and gap models in higher education has not been completed in Trinidad and Tobago. The experiences of students in the graduate programme within a graduate school in Trinidad and

Tobago can now be analyzed and understood within the context of the gap models. Understanding of students' expectations and their perceptions of the service offered enables the identification of the various gaps that exist. Once these gaps are identified then they can be targeted for improvement and thus closing of the gaps. Further, the HEdPERF can be used to develop an instrument relevant and suitable to students in a graduate programme at a graduate school in Trinidad and Tobago. This instrument can then be validated and applied wide scale to gain a better understanding of service quality in higher education in Trinidad and Tobago using quantitative measures. The process of developing an instrument for measuring service quality, however, requires qualitative data since an understanding of the context of the students in the graduate programme at the graduate school in Trinidad and Tobago is required.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The study employs a qualitative research design as this is seen as effective in illuminating the factors that impact students' expectations and experiences. The literature review shows a gap in research, particularly qualitative research since each of the models identified in the literature review uses quantitative research in measuring service quality. The literature does not provide insights into the factors that created the expectations and perceived experiences of the students at the graduate school in Trinidad and Tobago. The intent of the study is not to measure service quality but to understand the factors that created the expectations and experiences and thus understand the gap that exists. Therefore, a qualitative study is justified as will be seen in the discussions that follow.

The HEdPERF started with a qualitative approach where focus groups were used. This research however was done in Malaysia, where the context is different from the graduate programme at the graduate school in Trinidad and Tobago. A qualitative study is seen as the most relevant approach given the need for a deep exploration into the gaps between expectations and perceived experiences from the perspective of the participants that exists within the graduate programme at the graduate school in Trinidad and Tobago. The researcher, in an attempt to capture deep insights into the experiences of the students used a qualitative research design since this offers the best set of tools to capture the data. Creswell

(2007) suggests that qualitative research is used when one seeks to explore the stories of individuals and groups in an attempt to understand complex issues. The researcher believes that every experience of the students is valuable and contributes to the understanding of the issues and thereby justifying the use of a qualitative research design.

According to Morse and Richards (2002), a definition of qualitative research is not easily located in the literature. Creswell (2007) however explains qualitative research as follows:

Qualitative research begins with an assumption, a world view, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a human or social problem. (p. 37)

Creswell (2007) explains further that qualitative research use various tools to "collect data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and place under study and data analysis that is inductive and establishes patterns or themes" (p. 44). In such research, the voice of the participant is heard.

According to Creswell (2007), qualitative research makes certain philosophical assumptions relating to the nature of reality (ontology), how the researcher knows what he or she knows (epistemology) and the role of values in research (axiology). The philosophical assumptions also consider the language of research (rhetoric) and the methods used in the research (methodology). This study is

founded upon the philosophical assumptions of ontology, epistemology and axiology. Ontology sees reality as subjective and therefore multiple perspectives are embraced. Ontology deals with the study of existence and the nature of reality. And, through the application of hermeneutic techniques to the analysis of the data obtained from the participants, it was believed that the researcher would be able to acquire an acceptable level of understanding of the participants' expectations and experiences and the gaps that may exist between both. The research uses quotes and themes captured through the words of the participants as the evidence of multiple perspectives. These perspectives are captured through deep interviews with the three participants of the study. The philosophical assumption of epistemology shaped the research since the researcher was located in the field. Through interaction with the institution, students and participants of the study, the researcher was able to "know what he knows". The axiological assumption is evident where the researcher reveals the "value-laden" nature of information gathered from the field.

The qualitative research is further shaped by the paradigm or world view of postpositivism and social constructivism as expounded in Creswell (2007). According to Guba (1990), a paradigm or world view is "a basic set of beliefs that guide actions" (as cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 19). Research grounded in postpositivism, according to Creswell (2007), uses a scientific approach to research with an emphasis on empirical data collection, cause and effect

33

relationships and determinations based on prior theories and models. The research being conducted focuses on four main models in its literature review and uses data collection as the basis for analysis of findings. These findings were analyzed seeking multiple perspectives and realities as consistent with postpositivism.

The research is shaped by social constructivism which, according to Creswell (2007), is the world view where individuals try to understand the world in which they work and live. They develop subjective meanings which are multiple and varied and lead the researcher to look for the complexity of views and not narrow meanings. Creswell (2007) explains further that these views are not born out of imprinted ideas in the minds of the individuals but through interaction with others and through cultural norms. These meanings are forged through discussions and interactions with the interviewer. The more the researcher listens, the more meaning can be forged by the individual. The more interview questions move along the open-ended continuum, the greater this process is facilitated. Creswell (2007) explains the importance of context in social constructivism. The context of the individuals and the researcher comes to bear on the interpretation of the research and the researcher therefore tries to make sense of the individuals' personal, cultural and historical experiences through his own background. The research focuses on expectations of students and their perception of experiences from their perspective. Perception is based on subjectivity born out of personal, cultural and historical experiences.

INVESTIGATING THE DISPARITY BETWEEN THE EXPECTATIONS AND THE EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS IN A GRADUATE PROGRAMME AT A GRAUATE SCHOOL IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Creswell (2007) details five approaches to qualitative studies. The research adopts the phenomenology and case study approach. The study is a phenomenological one since it describes similarities in the lived experiences of several individuals facing a phenomenon. Van Manen (1990) states that phenomenology reduces the individuals' experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence or a "grasp of the very nature of the thing" (as cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 58). The study focuses on *hermeneutical phenomenology* which is explained by Van Manen (1990) as the orientation towards the lived experience of individuals and the interpreting of "text" of life (as cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 59).

Case studies as a qualitative study approach involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (Creswell, 2007). In this particular case, the fact that the research involved samples of a single cohort in one school investigated over a relatively short period of one semester meant that the study was bounded by both time and place. Case study, according to Creswell (2007), uses in-depth data collection involving multiple data sources, for example observations, interviews documents and audiovisual materials.

3.1 Participants and Sample

Creswell (2007) suggests that purposeful sampling is best suited for qualitative studies as it selects individuals that can purposefully inform the understanding of

the research problem and phenomenon under study. Patton (1990) states that "the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting *information-rich cases* for study in depth" (p. 169). He explains that information rich cases are those from which a great deal of relevant information can be gleaned relating to the central problem being investigated. Purposeful sampling seeks to select information rich cases that can illuminate the problem being studied. Patton (1990) identified sixteen (16) different purposeful sampling strategies which can be used in selecting information-rich cases. He suggests that an eclectic strategy to the selection of the sample can be employed where a combination of strategies are used in selecting the sample given that the focus remains in selecting information-rich cases that best elucidate the issue under investigation. In light of this, the following purposeful sampling strategies as explained by Patton (1990) were used with the accompanying justifications is presented in Table 1.

Table 1.

Purposeful Sampling Strategy

Purposeful Sampling Strategy	Purpose	Justification
Intensity Sampling	Information-rich cases that manifest the phenomenon intensely but not extremely. Heuristic researches use intensity sampling.	Participants who experiences extreme dissatisfaction exited the programme. Further, they are at higher risk of withdrawing from the programme thereby

INVESTIGATING THE DISPARITY BETWEEN THE EXPECTATIONS AND THE

EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS IN A GRADUATE PROGRAMME AT A GRAUATE

SCHOOL IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Purposeful Sampling Strategy	Purpose	Justification
		increasing the risk of attrition of the sample. Students with intense experience served the purposes of the study.
Maximum Variation Sampling	Identifies common patterns that cut across variations. Through the use of maximum variation sampling the research would show similar themes and core experiences of students across variations.	Given that the sample is small and heterogeneous (3 students), this strategy allows for the identification of core patterns and experiences that would cut across the variations identified.
Stratified Random and Cluster Samples	Provides assurance that subgroups are being sampled. Spreads the sample over a wider cross-section of the information-rich cases	Using stratified random sample insights would be gained from different subgroups within the population.
Criterion Sampling	Selecting all cases that meet defined criteria. This is used particularly in quality assurance research	The research is focused specifically on quality assurance and quality improvements. The criterion identified for the selection of cases was students who experienced disparity between the service they expected and the actual service experienced.
Random Purposeful Sampling	Reduces judgment in the selection of samples and add to the credibility of the study when the	The number of suitable cases was large and exceeded planned sample number of three.

Purposeful Sampling Strategy	Purpose	Justification
	number of suitable cases is too large for selecting all.	

Note. From *Qualitative evaluations and research methods,* by M. Patton, 1990, Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Considering all the purposeful strategies detailed above, the purposeful sample was selected for the study. Using student issues tracking sheets and learning logs, all relevant cases were selected considering students who had intense experiences and met the criterion of expressing disparity between expectations and experiences. These cases were then clustered based on number of years' work experience and position within the industry. The clusters were then random sampled and the three (3) samples emerged as follows-:

Table 2.

Sample

Students	Demographics	Positions
1	3 – 5 years' work experience	Entry Level
2	6 – 10 years' work experience	Middle Management
3	10 years and beyond	Senior Management

INVESTIGATING THE DISPARITY BETWEEN THE EXPECTATIONS AND THE
EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS IN A GRADUATE PROGRAMME AT A GRAUATE
SCHOOL IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

The research was reflective in nature, where the students recalled their expectations and then gave their experiences based on the flow of the interview.

3.2 Data Collection Methods

In light of the approach to the study, interviews were used as the data collection method. It was believed that the lived experiences of the three students at the graduate school could best be solicited by applying an appropriate interview instrument. The information is highly subjective since the students' experiences are influenced by their expectations, therefore making other data collection methods such as questionnaires less suitable for this study. In order to find out the reasons for the disparity in experience and expectations, appropriate interview questions were asked that drew the experience of the students about the graduate programme within the first term. This information was then used to feed into further decisions relating to the programme and the expectations.

The interview instrument used for the collection of data for research question (1) was an interview guide (see appendix 5) which facilitated an informal, fluid conversational type interview. While the interview instrument guided the general flow of the interview, questions emerged from the immediate context and were asked in the natural flow of the interaction. Since the three students were from different demographics within the graduate programme, the nature of the

questions was changed based on the direction of the conversation. The objectives of all the interviews remained the same but the questions varied based on the particular interviewee and the flow of the conversation. This type of interview is unstructured according to Kerlinger (1970) where the content, sequence and wordings are highly flexible and determined by the interviewer based on the responses of the interviewee. Research questions (2, 3 and 4) employed a more structured line of questioning since the researcher was trying to understand the reasons for the creation of the expectations that arose from research question (1). He was trying to understand as well perceived experiences and the factors that contributed to those experiences from the perspective of the participants. The interview, while guided for research questions (2, 3 and 4), still allowed for a free flow of discussions and flexibility between the interviewer and the interviewee.

The four (4) research questions required students to narrate their experiences in order to answer the questions, reinforcing the interviews as the best suited data collection method for finding the answers to all the research questions.

Ethical Safeguards: The researcher sought the permission from the leadership of the institution in order to conduct the research. Assurance was given that the research would not identify the school by name and no sensitive and confidential information would be shared with unauthorized parties. This condition was critical to the school given the competitive market in which it operates. The institution was provided with a justification for the conduct of the study and the

benefits that could be gained from the research under consideration. No formal letter of consent was required from the institution for the conduct of the research. It was also agreed that the findings of the research would be shared with the leadership of the school for the purpose of addressing the issues of disparity between expectations and experiences.

Prior to the start of the interviews, the participants were informed of the overall objectives and purpose of the study. The researcher shared the structure of the study through a short discussion that served to establish comfort between the interview and the interviewee. The participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity as it relates to their names, programmes and nature of the discussions. This step was important since the participants expressed concern of victimization should the school become aware of any expressions of negativity towards the institution. They were assured that all recorded and transcribed data would not identify their names. The recorded interviews were deleted after the interviews were transcribed and the study completed. These considerations created a relaxed, non-threatening environment that allowed for effective discourse. The students were made aware they could withdraw from the study and the interviews at any point in time. They were also guaranteed that any such withdrawal would not impact on their grades or other dimensions of their life at the school. The interviews were conducted off campus to prevent the participants from being identified.

The study evolved over time as the interaction and play between literature and findings brought clarity to the entire study and the issues at hand. Therefore, regular interaction with the interviewees was required to clarify and gain new insights as issues emerged. The research required extensive interviews that averaged approximately thirty (30) minutes for each research question per interviewee. The total time spent on the interviews approximates to five (5) hours.

3.3 Approach to Data Analysis

Transcribed interviews possess tremendous potential to sufficiently illuminate the research issue. It is essential, however, that the data be methodically analyzed to effectively illustrate the significant ideas that would help provoke a broader understanding of the problem. In order to successfully sort through the collected data and extract the noteworthy concepts, it was necessary to engage in coding and categorizing of the data, which focused on the ascription of significance to selected portions of the data. The researcher was therefore provided with valuable insights into the problem and participants under study. Basit (2003) explains qualitative data analysis as follows, "It is a dynamic, intuitive and creative process of inductive reasoning, thinking and theorizing" (p. 143).

According to LeCompte (2000), the analysis of data involves the transformation of raw data into research results that can be used to adequately describe the

circumstances being studied. Creswell (2007) states that it involves the, "…collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is inductive and establishes patterns or themes" (p. 37). In explaining the importance of codes in the qualitative research process, Strauss and Corbin (1990) state that codes are critical in the generation of theories. They identify the process of coding as, "…the operations by which data are broken down, conceptualized, and put back together in new ways" (p. 16).

In answering the research questions, the data was analysed using a non-hierarchical analytical approach allowing for the emergence of relevant categories that lead to a comprehensive understanding of the disparity between expectations and experience within a graduate programme at a graduate school in Trinidad and Tobago. This non-hierarchical method of analysis followed the principles of open coding and axial coding outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1990). In the open coding stage of the process, the transcribed data was perused extensively and meticulously to identify significant words or phrases to form the initial set of codes.

Following the first stage, the codes were further refined using axial coding where the codes were collated into logical groupings. This clustering process prevented identical codes from repeating themselves. For example, after open coding, the initial codes – *signage / visuals, media ads, brochures, features in magazines and journals* were all clustered into one code – *marketing*. When this process of

perusing and clustering was completed, the final set of codes was used to build the major categories. The process was iterative which allowed for greater levels of assurance of the firm establishment of the relationships between the codes and categories. This process was non-hierarchical in nature allowing for equal levels of importance of all codes and categories in relation to the others. Given that iterations of the data analysis process could generate new codes and categories, the non –hierarchical approach allowed for an unbiased view of the data since there were no predetermined codes, nor was any emergent ideas excluded.

3.4 Delimitations and Limitations

According to Best and Kahn (2006), delimitations refer to the "boundaries of the study," while the limitations are, "…conditions beyond the control of the researcher that place restrictions on the conclusions of the study and their application to other situations" (p. 39). There are delimitations of this study. Firstly, it was delimited to only one cohort of one programme of a graduate school within Trinidad and Tobago. The study used a sample size of three (3) students. The study was conducted over a period of three months within a set environment outside of the institution. The study was, therefore, bounded by time and place. The study considered the disparity between expectations and experiences of three students in one programmes of ten (10) programmes. These

factors combine to present delimitations that significantly diminish the generalizability of the study. The study is therefore delimited to a single programme at a specific graduate school in Trinidad and Tobago.

There were a few inherent weaknesses that emanated from the methods of data collection. Firstly, with interviews, there was the possibility that bias may have arisen due to the fact that researcher and the manager were the same person. The researcher, therefore, had to establish mutual trust and naturalness with the students before the interviews so that there would have been no uneasiness and reluctance to respond to questions due to fear of victimization. Another issue may have been clarity of questions given that a very fluid interview guide was used. The students may have responded to questions based on what they perceived the researcher wanted to hear. Other notable potential problems included partiality due to reflexivity (Creswell, 2007), and inaccuracies due to poor recollection on the part of the interviewees.

However, it was hoped that the semi-structured interview protocols employed, coupled with the devoted efforts of the researcher, might have helped reduce such biases and broaden the authenticity of the study. The experience and interviewing skills of the researcher or interviewer, thus, became critical in counteracting many of the limitations identified.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The data analysis technique used was open coding where the data was segmented to identify relevant insights to bring to life the research questions. The data was taken apart for the purpose of identifying categories and themes where the question of "what is this about?" was asked. Portions of the data were labeled with color codes for the purpose of linking them to the relevant research questions. Given that interviews were the data collection method used, coding was considered to be the best suited data analysis approach.

Basit (2003) states that "Codes or categories are tags or labels for allocating units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study" (p. 144). Such a unit or portion is known as a code, and can typically be as short as a single word, or an entire paragraph. Miles and Huberman (1994) notes that codes can range from straightforward terms, to more intricate concepts expressed as metaphors that will aid the researcher in connecting with the data. The overall premise is that codes will help to generate a holistic understanding of the issue based on the descriptive data.

The data was initially coded using an open coding method, where the transcribed data was scrutinized to identify significant words or phrases. These were highlighted and the codes recorded in the right margin of the document. The

codes obtained were further refined using a non-hierarchical form of axial coding. This helped to create a more ordered list of codes that pre-empted any duplication of near identical concepts. The coded transcripts were then repeatedly examined to detect the prominent categories that emerged from the data, and to identify any relationships or cross-linkages that may have existed within the analyzed data.

The analysis of data and the findings are presented below.

Research Question 1 –: "What were students' expectations on entering the programme from their perspective?"

In answering research question (1), the transcribed data was perused and codes were identified. These codes were grouped into sub-categories and supported with segments of data that were solicited from the interviews with the students. The codes, sub-categories and segments of data are presented in appendix 1.

Codes and Sub-categories

The coding process garnered thirty one (31) different codes drawn from the interviews with the participants of the study. These codes were clustered and seven sub-categories (see appendix 1) emerged as follows:

- Facilities
- Faculty

- Programme Materials

- Administration

- Customer Care

- Teaching and Learning

- Programme Benefits

Facilities

Facilities as a sub-category are constituted of the following five (5) codes:

- Maintenance

- Suitability and quality

- Safety

- Technology platform

- Library facilities

For each of the five (5) codes identified above, the interviewees had expectations of good quality as is evident by the following sample quotes, "the physical environment must be outstanding" and "I believe that a solid technology platform is now a basic expectation of a tertiary level institution".

Faculty

Faculty as a sub-category is constituted of three (3) codes as follows:

- Professional Experience

- Suitability

- Reputation

Overall, students' expectations for faculty were high given the importance of faculty to the successful outcomes of the programme. This is evident by the quote, "I was aware of the level of professional experience that existed amongst the faculty and so I wanted to be a part of the programme".

Programme Materials

Programme materials as a sub-category consists of three (3) codes as follows:

- Relevance

- Available in physical and electronic form

- Access

Students indicated that easy access to relevant materials in various forms are expected especially at a tertiary level institution as evident by the quotes "again I would say that a basic requirement of a tertiary level institution is proper library facilities" and "I expect to have access to all forms of relevant information and knowledge".

Administration

Administration as a sub-category consists of three (3) codes as follows:

- Care

- Competence

- Allow for focus on classes (without having to be concerned about administration)

Overall students expected that administration, through its competency would allow for them to focus on their classes and not have to expend too much time and worry on administrative matters. It was expected that the school would manage the administrative issues and requirements as far as possible on behalf of the students. This is supported by segments of the interview as follows, "I expected to not have to focus on any administrative matters but simply my classes" and "really at this stage administration must be competent and able to guide students".

Customer Care

Customer care as a sub-category consists of five (5) codes as follows:

- Good customer care

- Continued excellent care

- Professionalism

- Clear and consistent communication

- Similar experience from that which was experiences in past and current organisations

Students expressed their desire for good customer care throughout the entire programme as evident by the quote ""I really expected the service to continue to

be excellent". Therefore, beyond the initial great customer care which was experienced by the students at the early touch points during their engagement with the institution, they expected this good customer care to continue throughout their life in the programme. The following segment of the interview supports this point, "so naturally I expected to have this level of professionalism continued when I entered the programme".

In addition to professionalism and good customer care, the students expressed an expectation of clear and consistent messages. This is evident by the following segment of the interview, "one of the expectations I had was really clear and consistent communication of messages by all staff of the school".

Interviewees expressed their expectations of customer care to resemble that which they have experienced in past organisation and their current organisations. The three participants interviewed are all employees in organisations and so would have experienced customer care within and outside of their organisations and expected that the graduate school deliver customer care that reflects good experiences they would have had. Coming into education which is a service industry, good customer care was expected by the students. This is reflected in the segment of the transcribed data as follows, "having come from industry into a service oriented sector, I really expected to see the same level of care given as I am accustomed to".

Teaching and Learning

Teaching and learning as a sub-category consists of eight (8) codes as follows:

- Relevant content

- Quality of classroom interaction

- Development of relevant content, skills and techniques

- Active engagement

- Authentic experiences

- Completeness of content

- Varied activities

- Integration of technology in the teaching and learning process

Expectations of good teaching and learning featured prominently as evident by the number of codes relating to teaching and learning (eight) harvested from the transcribed data. Under teaching and learning, participants had expectations of relevant content, the development of relevant skills and acquisition of relevant techniques. These three expectations from the perspective of the participants, the development of the context, skills and techniques, are seen by the participants as necessary for success in their career. This is reflected in the segment of the interview as follows, "in developing the tools I need to succeed in my career" and "I have been told this is also an academic experience, but there are specific tools I need to develop that I hope to learn". The interview segment suggests that

students within the graduate programme at the graduate school in Trinidad and Tobago expect the programme to transcend the academic realm alone and provide the necessary content, skills and techniques that would benefit their careers as evident by the data segment, "in developing the tools I need to succeed in my career". Therefore, the term "relevant" here referees to expectations of outcomes that are pertinent to the career development of the participants.

Adding to the expectation of relevant content, participants also expressed an expectation of completeness of content. They expected that content would not only be relevant, but would cover all areas that would allow them to function in their positions within organisations. This is supported by the quote, "well I expected that the content be relevant to me in the sense that it covers everything I would need to be able to function in a position". This code supports the point made in the previous paragraph where "relevant" from the point of the view of the participants pertains to career.

Teaching and learning activities featured as an important expectation for the participants in the study. All participants indicated during the interview that they expected a high level of classroom interaction with their peers and with expert faculty. This is evident by the following segments of the interview, "…and at this level I want to discuss and share ideas with experts and practitioners" and "I know that I still would need to learn new content but I was not looking for a classroom where the lecturer would stand and talk to me and I would be listening passively

or taking notes. I wanted to be engaged in discussions with the lecturer and amongst the cohort". This second quotation touched on the expectation of authentic experiences which was an expectation by the participants. According to one of the participants, he "really wanted to get hands on training……..to solve real problems, to be exposed to real businesses and situations". The different authentic activities expected by the participants tie in with the expectation of varied activities during the course of the teaching and learning process. This is evident by the segment of the interview as follows, "I expected that while the materials were relevant, it be delivered using various activities".

While participants expected varied and authentic activities as part of the teaching and learning in the programme, they also expected that the teaching and learning be delivered using appropriate technology. All three participants expressed that they expected extensive and state of the art technology integrated within the classroom and the teaching and learning process. The following segments of data supports this point, "in this day and age of teaching and learning technology, I was looking for smart boards, tablets, and simulations" and "expected extensive use of technology in the teaching and learning process".

Programme Benefits

Programme benefits as a sub-category consists of four (4) codes as follows:

- Networking

- Address the specific needs of the industry

- Preparedness for desired position

- Career advancement

Networking as a code featured highly amongst the participants since they saw the programme as an opportunity to network with the right people. This is evident by the following quotes, "at the least I would know more businesses men, managers and corporate persons and this would build my personal network" and "and who knows…….if I impress the right people it could work out well for me career wise". The second quote leads into the code "career advancement" as an expectation of one participant. The participant sees networking as an opportunity to not just meet the right people, but to use it as a launch pad into career advancement.

Beyond the networking benefits of the programme and the associated personal benefits of networking, participants also saw the programme as preparation for desired position. This suggests that the participants are not as yet in the position they desire and expect that the programme outcomes would catapult them into the positions. This is evident by the quote, "prepares you for top level management".

Participants also had expectations of the programme that go beyond personal benefits and into the realm of industry. The quote, "I wanted a programme that would address the specific needs of my industry", suggests that the participants

expected the programme to address the needs of the industry beyond just the personal needs of the participants.

Categories

Upon continuous interaction with the sub - categories and the data, it is seen that the seven (7) sub-categories could be grouped into three (3) major categories that answers the research question "What were students' expectations upon entering the programme from their perspective?"

The seven (7) sub-categories are grouped into the following three (3) major categories:

1. Service Expectations

   - Facilities

   - Administration

   - Customer Care

2. Programme Expectations

   - Programme Materials

   - Faculty

   - Teaching and Learning

3. Developmental Expectations

- Programme Benefits

In summary, research question (1) sought to gain an in-depth understanding of the expectations of students upon entry to the graduate programme at the graduate school in Trinidad and Tobago from their perspective. Upon continuous interaction with the data, seven sub-categories emerged. These seven sub-categories were further categorized under three major categories that answer the research question "What were students' expectations upon entering the programme from their perspective?"

Research Question 2 –: "What factors contributed to students' expectations on entering the programme from their perspective?"

Research question (2) sought to understand the factors that contributed to the creation of participants expectations as presented in research question (1). In seeking the answers to research question (2), the transcribed data was perused and codes were identified. These codes were grouped into sub-categories and supported with segments of data that were solicited from the interviews with the students. The codes, sub-categories and segments of the data are presented in appendix 2. After the initial coding and categorizing of those codes into sub-categories, further discussions were held with the interviewees, where pointed

questions were asked to ensure that the factors that contributed to the creation of
the expectations identified in Research Question (1) were captured. The
researcher therefore sought to ensure that the participants provided insights into
the factors that created the expectations for each of the codes harvested from the
interviews.

Codes and Sub-Categories

The coding process garnered nineteen (19) different codes drawn from the
interviews with the participants of the study. These codes were clustered and
seven sub-categories (see appendix 2) emerged as follows:

- Marketing

- Information sessions

- Reputation of the school

- Taste of programmes

- Administration

- Previous engagement with the school

- Personal needs

Marketing

Marketing as a sub-category consists of four (4) codes as follows:

- Visuals / signage

- Media ads

- Brochures

- Features in magazines and journals

Marketing was responsible for the creation of expectation in the minds of the participants. According to the interviewees, the marketing of the programme and the school was extensive and of a high quality. This is evident by the segments of the interviews as follows, "the school was visible….where ever you go you would see billboards and signs advertising the programmes" and "the quality of the marketing was outstanding…..it truly created an appeal and spoke of a quality". The marketing of the institution and its programmes was done through various media; inter alia, signage, media advertisement, brochures and features in relevant magazines and journals. The sub-category named marketing and contained in appendix 2 details the various marketing strategies employed by the institution from the perspective of the participants in the study. The marketing of the institution created expectations from the perspective of the participants as follows:

- Faculty

- Programme benefits

- Customer care

INVESTIGATING THE DISPARITY BETWEEN THE EXPECTATIONS AND THE EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS IN A GRADUATE PROGRAMME AT A GRAUATE SCHOOL IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

The creation of students' expectations relating to faculty and programme benefits from their perspective as presented in the findings of research question (1) are seen from the following segments of the interview: "the brochures I saw were really detailed and classy………it contained information about the benefits of the programme, professional expertise of the faculty, programme structure…….so I can safely say that expectations were influenced by this" and "full colored glossy paper, multiple pages…..even booklets were provided. They showed alums, lecturers who were professionals…..persons known in the field…..programme benefits………..testimonies……….these really created an expectation of an outstanding programme in all regards". The presented segments of data under marketing, shows how the expectation of professional experience, suitability, reputation and ability to provide insights which falls under the category 'Faculty' was created. Further, the segments of data presented speak to the creation of programme expectations from the perspective of the participants. Specifically, mention was made of the communication of programme benefits and programme structure as part of the marketing of the school and the programmes.

In addition to the creation of faculty expectations and programme benefit expectations, the analysis and findings of the data shows that expectations of customer care was created through the marketing of the institution. This is evident by the quote, "the ads ran consistently and gave a lot of information on the

programme…….benefits, qualification of lecturers, outstanding service…..I was sold!"

Information sessions

Information sessions as a sub-category consist of four (4) codes as follows:

- Comprehensive information

- Organisation of sessions

- Personal touch

- Quality of presentations

Information sessions were a strong engagement by the school that created expectation from the perspective of the participants. Information sessions contributed to the creation of expectations in the seven (7) sub-categories identified in research question (1). The following quote speaks to the influence of the information sessions in creating expectations from the perspective of the participants; "I feel that the information sessions were responsible for the creation of my greatest expectations about the school……faculty, teaching and learning, facilities……..the overall programme". The quote shows that the information sessions created expectations of facilities, faculty, teaching and learning and programme benefits, which were all identified as expectations of the graduate programme at the graduate school in Trinidad and Tobago, from the perspective of the participants within the study. Diving deeper into the analysis, a segment of

the data under Information Sessions shows how the expectation of reputation, which is a code under faculty as presented in research question (1) was created; "the use of industry experts in the information sessions really boosted the quality and created an expectation of the faculty that would be available in the class room".

The information sessions created expectation of customer care, administration and programme materials in the manner by which the sessions were organised and executed. This is demonstrated by the following quotes, "the information sessions were so well organized…..from how I was greeted by the staff to the room in which we had discussions to the materials that were provided" and "they knew my name, job title, sector…….I was impressed by the individualized service…..I was not just another applicant..".

Reputation of the school

Reputation of the school as a sub-category consists of two (2) codes as follows:

- Word of mouth / testimonies
- Observation of managers who have completed the programme

The reputation of the school created expectations of programme benefits, faculty and facilities from the perspective of the participants. Through word of mouth and testimonies along with observation of those who have completed the programme, these expectations were created. The following quotes support the point, "I was

informed by graduates of the relevance of the content, professional and academic qualifications of the faculty, the great facilities..." and "I have seen managers who have graduated from the school and they are really top performers in their field. So I expected that I would have the same expertise and insights eventually once I have done the programme". The presented quotes when analysed in light of the expectations of the participants presented in research question (1), shows how the expectations of faculty, specifically "ability to provide insights" and the expectation of personal benefits, specifically "preparedness for desired position" was created.

Taste of the programmes

Taste of the programme as a sub-category consists of three (3) codes as follows:

- Sample of programmes

- Recruitment sessions

- Orientation sessions

Taste of the programme provides powerful insights into the creation of expectation from the perspective of the participants. The sub-category 'Taste' of the programme elucidates the reasons for the creation of expectations of the sub-categories faculty, programme materials, teaching and learning strategies and authentic experiences as identified in research question (1). Through a sample of the programmes, recruitment sessions and orientation, participants were exposed

to activities that resembled the actual experiences that would be engaged throughout the life of the programme upon matriculation. According to one of the participants, "the taste of the programmes offered by the school created an expectation of what the full programme would be like."

In speaking about the 'Taste' of the programme, one participant is quoted as follows, "this event really created expectations...we were given a taste of the programme by engaging in a class session. We were guided by an industry expert and engaged in a simulation and case study. I expected to meet this same experience in the classroom". In analyzing the segment of the data, it is seen that expectations of faculty with professional experience, programme materials, teaching and learning strategies and authentic experiences were created through the Taste of the programme.

Administration

Administration as a sub-category consists of three (3) codes as follows:

- Initial interaction with the school

- Helpfulness of the staff

- Courtesy of the staff

The participants interviewed indicated that expectations of administration were created through their engagement with the school and the helpfulness and courtesy displayed by the administrative staff during these engagements. This is

supported by the following quotes, "the helpfulness of the staff definitely shaped my expectations of the school and programme" and "from the courtesy of the security, receptionist and staff…..administration was great". This segment of the data speaks to the care of administration. Further under the sub-category named administration as identified in research question (1), participants expected administration to be competent. The creation of this expectation of administrative staff competency by the participants can be seen from the following quote, "the staff was very efficient in their communication, provision of information and assistance in the entire process."

Previous engagement with the school

Previous engagement with the school as a sub-category consists of two (2) codes as follows:

- Participation in other programmes of the school
- Visited the school and saw the facilities

The expectations of facilities and programme benefits as identified in research question (1) were created in the minds of participants from their perspective through previous engagements with the institution. Participants in the study indicated that they have visited the school and saw the facilities as well as engaged in shorter programmes offered by the institution. These engagements created the expectations of facilities and programme benefits as revealed by the

following quotes, "…..white boards, multimedia, café, washrooms, library, security……all the facilities spoke of a conduciveness to education and of course I expected that these would benefit me during the programme" and "having completed training programmes with the institution, I was always impressed and had the same high expectations of the longer programmes".

Personal needs

Personal needs as a sub-category consist of one (1) code as follows:

- Programme objectives were congruent with personal needs (content, teaching and learning strategies, real world or authentic experiences and expected outcomes)

Personal needs as a sub-category created expectations of programme benefits, a sub-category identified in research question (1). This is supported by the segment of data as follows, "……and the expected outcomes as presented to me found resonance and I expected to meet these outcomes at the end".

Categories

Upon continuous interaction with the sub - categories and the data, it is seen that the seven (7) sub-categories could be grouped into three (3) major categories that

answers the research question "What factors contributed to students' expectations on entering the programme from their perspective?"

1. Communication Factors

    a. Marketing

    b. Information Session

    c. Reputation of school

2. Interaction Factors

    a. Taste of Programmes

    b. Administration

    c. Previous Interaction with the School

3. Personal Needs Factors

    a. Personal Needs

In summary, research question (2) sought to gain an in-depth understanding of the factors that contributed to the creation of the expectation of participants as identified in research question (1). Through continuous engagement with the data, seven (7) sub-categories emerged that were further grouped under three major categories that answer the research question, *"What factors contributed to students' expectations on entering the programme from their perspective?"*

INVESTIGATING THE DISPARITY BETWEEN THE EXPECTATIONS AND THE
EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS IN A GRADUATE PROGRAMME AT A GRAUATE
SCHOOL IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

***Research Question 3 –:   "What were students' experiences during their first
term of the programme at the school compared to their expectations from their
perspective?"***

In answering research question (3), the sub-categories, codes and segments of the
data presented in research question (1) and attached as appendix 1 were reprised.
The interviewees were asked to provide their experiences from their perspective,
specific to the expectations presented in research question (1). Segments of the
transcribed data from the interviews with participants of the study relating to
research question (3) were juxtaposed to the relevant sub-categories, codes and
segments of the data reprised from research question (1). This comparison is
presented in appendix 3. This table comparing the expectation of participants
from their perspective and the perceived experiences of the participants in the
study facilitated an analysis of the findings, allowing the researcher to answer the
research question, "*What were students' experiences during their first term of the
programme at the school compared to their expectations from their perspective?"*

Considering each of the sub-categories identified in research question (1), we can
delve deep into the analysis to determine the perceived experience of the
participants compared to their expectations.

Facilities

Under facilities, participants expressed satisfaction with the maintenance, safety and suitability and quality of the facilities, as well as the library as compared to their expectations. The following segments of the data drawn from appendix 3 supports the point, "I feel that the school has met my expectations as far as the premises and most of the surrounds are concerned" and "the experience with the library has been good". The data, however, shows that all three participants were very disappointed in the experience with the technology platform as evident by the following segments of the data, "I had a horrible experience with the internet services at the school…." and "technology has been a huge disappointment for me".

Faculty

Participants expressed disappointment in the level of professional experience of the faculty. While they indicated that the faculty does possess a level of professional experience, they expected a greater level based on the expectations created. This is evident by the following segment of the data, "from the recruitment and taste of programmes, I thought that most of the faculty would be the outstanding practitioners in their field…………I was disappointed".

As far as the match between faculty and subject matter, the participants all felt that the faculty was suitable. This is seen in the following quote, "I felt based on

the delivery of the lecturer that they were suitable to the various courses". While the participants felt that the faculty was suitable to the courses they did not believe that the faculty were the reputable experts known in the industry. This is evident by the segment of data as follows, "and besides the few that were used for the recruitment events and sample of the programmes, the faculty we met were not reputable". Faculty who are experts in their fields are best able to provide insights and so due to the use of faulty who were not reputable and experts in the field, participants did not experience the level of insight that they expected from the faculty. This is reflected in the segment of the data as follows, "the really experienced ones provided insight…..this was very few".

Programme Materials

Programme material met the expectations of the participants as far as relevance and form as seen from the following segments of data, "yes…..the text books, readings and cases selected for the courses were relevant and useful" and "the required materials were available in both physical and electronic copies". While the materials were relevant and available in both hard and soft copies, the expectation of access was not met as participants indicted that the "consistent late delivery" of text books and "poor internet service" affected access to the hard copies and electronic copies of materials.

Administration

Administration was a great source of disappointment for the participants in the study and no area of administration identified in research question (1) met with a satisfactory experience compared to the expectation from the perspective of the students. The following segments of data supports this analysis, "I was really disappointed with the administrative care when I began the actual programme" and "administration was totally oblivious of the procedures and policies and did not seem to care that I was lost". In addition to the care and competency expected from administration, participants had an expectation of being able to focus on their classes and not be required to handle administrative requirements. This expectation was not met as seen from the following quote, "my hopes of focusing on classes alone were lost as I had to always run behind administrative matters".

Customer Care

Similar to administration, participants expressed disappointment in the experience in all areas of customer care compared to the expectations from their perspective. Participants did not see the same level of customer care they came to expect through their previous interactions with the institution. This is evident by the quote, "I wondered whether this is the same institution I visited a few weeks before……customer care fell badly". Participants also felt that "professionalism was lost" based on the "way the staff talked, walked, dressed and behaved".

Participants also experience disappointment in the way in which messages were communicated as they felt it was not clear and consistent. This is evident by the quote, "communication was poor….information given by staff was always mixed up and inconsistent".

The participants of the study all hold different positions within industry and entered the graduate programme at the graduate school in Trinidad and Tobago with significant and varied industry experience. This experience created an expectation of good customer service as revealed in research question (1). The perceived experience was below the expectations from the perspective of the participants as evident by the quote, "the customer service was definitely not on par with service organisations that project themselves to be customer focused".

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning expectations from the perspective of the participants and identified in research question (1) when compared to the perceived experiences of the participants varied significantly amongst the codes within the sub-categories. Firstly, in terms of the development of relevant content, skills and techniques, participants felt that while they have learnt content, they have not as yet seen the development of the skill or the acquisition of the relevant techniques. Participants did, however, indicate that these skills and techniques may be gained over the life of the programme and so it has as not yet been experienced. This is supported by the quote, "I honestly don't feel that I have thus far developed relevant

skills……..maybe it's a long term benefit but at this stage I believe that I should see changes". While participants indicated that content was gained, the manner in which the courses were delivered fell below the expectations of the participants as revealed by the quote, "Content was always left out or left to us to do on our own". Therefore, the expectation of completeness of content was not met.

As it relates to classroom interaction, participants felt that the experience compared to the expectation was inconsistent. This is revealed in the quotes, "in some cases interaction was great……lecturers were engaging and encouraged peer discussions…….in other cases classes were talk sessions" and "when the interaction was active it was really special……….this was rare however". The classroom experience of participants was below expectations due also to cohort members who peers who "were too inexperienced and young to make real contributions to the sessions" and faculty who were "very green" meaning they lacked the necessary experience and expertise. Authentic experiences contribute in part to the quality of classroom interaction. The expectation of authentic experiences however, while created during the 'Taste' of the programmes, did not continue through as evident by the quote, "I expected visits to organisations, working on real world problems………classes were lecturers and use of text books'.

Participants expected that the programme would be delivered using "state of the art technology" (appendix 3) and also that technology be used "extensively"

(appendix 3). While the participants acknowledge that technology was used, their expectation of extensive use and state of the art technology integrated into the classroom was not met as evident by the quotations, "besides a multimedia and the course management system, technology was not used in delivery" and "with the technology available to the school, I was disappointed in the limited use of technology in the teaching and learning process".

Programme Benefits

The benefits of the programme from the perspective of the participants can be separated into industry benefits and personal benefits. Personal benefits can further be divided into networking and developmental benefits. Industry benefits contain the code addressing the specific needs of the industry (appendix 3). From the perspective of the participants, this expectation has been met as evident by the quote, "the content is specific to the needs of the industry". It should be noted however, according to one participant, that the extent to which the content addresses the needs of industry has been limited "because of the quality of the faculty".

Networking as an expectation of the programme has been met through the experiences of two (2) of the participants as evident by the quote, "the team work structure allows for me to know business people and for them to know me…..I am satisfied with the networking opportunities". One of the participant however felt that the networking opportunity did not meet his expectations since he was much

more senior than the other members of his cohort. The relevant quote is as follows, "really within my class I was much more senior to the others and I feel that I am not benefiting from the networking opportunities".

With regard to the expectation of preparedness for desired position, participants all felt that the experience did not meet this expectation. According to the participants, the expectations are not being met because "the focus is so much on content" and "the school focuses heavily on team work". Participants feel that the focus on team work alone is not enough to prepare them for their desired position.

Participants believe that the expectation of career advancement has not as yet been met, but recognize that the programme has not as yet been completely engaged and so they cannot say whether this expectation will be met. The following quote supports the point, "cannot as yet say….I feel that I should give it a chance". It should be noted that one participant believe that "based on the current trajectory" the expectation will not be met while another participant believes that only of the programme changes would the expectation possibly be met.

The analysis of research question (3) reveals that students experienced different satisfaction levels for the different expectations identified in research question 1 (appendix 3). In pulling together the analysis of research question (3), the participants' experiences compared to their expectations can be categorized as follows-:

1. Met expectation

2. Below expectation

3. Not as yet met

It can be noted here that none of the experiences from the perspective of the participants compared to the expectations produced a "beyond expectations" experience where the student was "thrilled" as put forward by Kano's Two Factor Model. This note however will be reprised and discussed further in the Discussion and Recommendation chapter.

Research Question 4-: What factors contributed to students' experiences during the first term of the programme from their perspective?

Research question (4) sought to understand the factors that contributed to the disparity in expectations and perception of experience from the perspective of the students as presented in research question (3). The interview data was transcribed and coded, after which the codes were grouped into categories and supported with segments of the data. The categories, codes and segments of the data are presented in appendix 4. The table in appendix 4 also juxtaposes the categories and codes that caused the disparity between expectations and the perceived experiences of the students as presented in research question (4) to the various disparities that were identified in research question (3) attached as appendix 3.

Codes and categories

The coding process garnered nine (9) different codes drawn from the interviews with the participants of the study. These codes were clustered and categories (see appendix 4) emerged as follows:

- Marketing factors

- Communication factors

- Competence factors

- Work ethic factors

Marketing factors

In answering research question (4), marketing emerged as a category under which three (3) codes were clustered as follows:

- Overselling

- Exaggeration

- False / misrepresentation

The analysis of the data shows that participants believe that disparity in perceived experiences compared to expectations from their perspective was due to overselling of the programmes, exaggeration by the school and misrepresentation of aspects of the institution. This is supported by the segments of data as follows, "…because the school oversold the benefits of the programme…unreal

expectations were created" and "the school really exaggerated the features of the programme and school……….definitely my expectations were not met". The codes identified and clustered under marketing, when analysed against the findings of research question (3), reveal the various gaps that were created due to marketing factors (see appendix 4).

Communication factors

Communication factors emerged as a category when answering research question (4). Two (2) codes were clustered under communication factors as follows:

- Inconsistent messages
- Inaccurate information

Having analyses the data, it is seen that participants believe that disparity in perceived experience compared to expectations from their perspective was due to inconsistent messages and inaccurate information provided by the institution. This is supported by the segments of data as follows, "information from different departments was inconsistent…….this made the experience disappointment" and "there was so much inaccurate information provided at all stages of the programme.". The codes identified and clustered under communication reveal the various gaps that were created due to communication factors (see appendix 4) when analysed against the findings of research question (3).

Competence factors

While answering research question (4), competence factors emerged as a category under which two (2) codes were clustered as follows:

- Faculty

- Administration

The data analysis shows that participants believe that disparity in perceived experience compared to expectations from their perspective was due to competencies of the faculty and administration as hired by the institution. The following segments of the data supports the point; "the greatest expectation of course would be the growth experience in the classroom….the disappointment came I feel because the faculty are not qualified to deliver on the promise given by the school" and "from one unit to the next……administration showed that they were not competent to manage students at this level". The codes identified and clustered under competence, when analysed against the findings of research question (3), reveal the various gaps that were created due to competence factors (see appendix 4).

Work ethic factors

Work ethic factors emerged as a category while answering research questions (4) under which two (2) codes were clustered:

- Inconsistency

- Focus

Upon the analysis of the data, it is seen that participants believe that disparity in perceived experience compared to expectations from their perspective was due to inconsistent work ethic and different focus by different departments and staff of the institution. This is supported by the segments of data as follows, ""while the initial staff was extremely customer focused the other members of staff that I was exposed to were completely different." and "the focus of the initial staff…marketing, recruitment was really customer focused……the administrative staff during the programme was not customer focused". The codes identified and clustered under work ethic reveal the various gaps that were created due to work ethic factors (see appendix 4) when analysed against the findings of research question (3).

In summary, research question (1) and research question (2), when analysed using the data harvested from the interviews, reveal the expectations of participants and the factors that contributed to the creation of those expectations from their perspective. Research question (3) went on to present the perceived experiences of the participants which were compared to the expectations of the participants from their perspective thus revealing the disparities or gaps. The final research question (4) then sought to understand the factors that contributed to the creation of the disparity or gaps revealed in research question (3). Therefore, there is a

clear flow of the presentation of the analysis and findings that answer research questions 1 – 4 in a coherent and logical manner.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research was conducted to understand the factors that created students' expectations and the factors that contributed to the actual experiences of participants as well as a comparison of the expectations and experiences of students in a graduate programme at a graduate school in Trinidad and Tobago in the first term. In order to conduct this investigation, four research questions were asked with the data analysed to produce findings. The findings of the research can now be analysed against the various models of service quality discussed in the literature review to better understand the gaps that exist between students' expectations and students' experiences and thus allow for appropriate interventions to be recommended for closing the gaps.

The various models discussed in the literature review allow for an understanding of the disparity that exists between the expectations of students entering the graduate programme in the first term and the perception of experience of the students within the study. The SERVQUAL Model as put forward by Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman, (1985) and the Perceived Service of Quality Model as put forward by Gronroos (1982), when analysed in light of the findings of the study, serve to establish how expectations were created in the eyes of the students as well as the factors that contributed to the experiences of students at the graduate school in Trinidad and Tobago. Following this, the Rater Model as put forward by

82

INVESTIGATING THE DISPARITY BETWEEN THE EXPECTATIONS AND THE EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS IN A GRADUATE PROGRAMME AT A GRAUATE SCHOOL IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1990) and the Kano Models as put forward by Lin, Yang, Chan and Sheu (2010) are explored in light of the findings of the study to understand the perceived experiences of the students interviewed. The Higher Education Performance Model (HedPERF) as postulated by Abdullah (2006) is then used to understand how the findings fit into the instrument developed to measure service quality and serves as a foundation for future measurement of service quality at the graduate school in Trinidad and Tobago.

The SERVQUAL Model developed by Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1985) allow for an understanding of the disparity that exists between the expectations and the experiences of students at the graduate school in the first term. Specifically, Gap 5 of the model allows for the analysis and understanding of the service quality disparity. Gap 5 considers the disparity between expectations and perceived experience.

According to the SERVQUAL model described by Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1985), expectations are shaped by word of mouth communication, personal needs, past experience with the institution and external communication to the customer by the institution.

The findings of research question (1) detail the expectations of the participants interviewed. Drawing on the findings of research question (2), these participants' expectations have been shaped by the following factors-:

Communication Factors

Through a large scale and expanded marketing drive, the graduate school created expectations of high quality and service to the market. The institution used widespread electronic media, social networking, print media and brochures to rebrand its services. The marketing focused on cutting edge faculty, technology, service and course content. Information sessions served to reinforce the message of the marketing to persons who attended the sessions. Communication factors included marketing, information sessions and the reputation of the school.

The interviewees indicated that the school has a solid reputation amongst the graduates and came highly recommended by their managers and coworkers. According to the interviewees, the message about the benefits of the programme was promoted through radio advertisements on the various radio stations. The following quotes supports the point; "The school was visible in the media….full page colored ads describing the benefits of the programmes" and "many of my colleagues spoke highly about the quality of lecturers and lecturing at the school."

Interaction Factors

Past experience has been identified as a factor that creates expectation according to the SERVQUAL Model (Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman, 1985). The findings of research question (2) fit well with the model where interviewees

identified previous engagements with the school through taste of programmes, engagement with staff and previous programmes attended as factors that shaped their expectations. According to the interviewees, expectations of a great experience were created through the various touch points with the graduate school including administrative staff, sample classroom experiences and information sessions. Students indicated that the level of service offered at these touch points created a high expectation of quality throughout the programme. According to one student, "from reception to the exit was excellent". Further, expectations based on previous interaction were created given that students interviewed indicated that they used the facilities previously for staff training and had a great experience.

Personal Needs Factors

Research question (2) reveals that students' personal needs influenced their expectations of the programmes. The structure and components of the programmes as presented to prospects articulated with the needs of the participants and therefore contributed to the creation of the expectations. The interviewed students indicated that their personal needs as it relates to content, teaching and learning strategies, authentic experiences and expected outcomes affected their expectations from the programme. Specifically, students interviewed indicated that the programme content, outcomes, teaching and learning strategies and overall design suited their personal needs. The

programmes as communicated to the students at the time of recruitment and orientation met the personal needs of the individuals thus creating expectation that the needs would be fulfilled though engagement with the programme. According to a student interviewed, "the programme as presented was definitely what I expected as it related to the content and experiences that would be gained."

The Gronroos Perceived Service Quality Model (1982) aligns with the SERVQUAL model as it relates to market communication, word of mouth and customers' need in influencing expectations. The Perceived Service Quality Model (1982), however, speaks of image and customer learning as factors that influences expectations also. The findings of the research suggest that image and customer learnings influenced expectations. According to the students interviewed, the marketing was outstanding and created an appeal and image of high quality. The marketing included high quality full colored booklets featuring top ranked faculty, programme benefits, testimonials from known alums from the world of business and other relevant and attractive content.

Customer learning also influences expectations according to the Gronroos Perceived Service Quality Model (1982). The influence of customer learning on the creation of expectations is evident by the fact that the students interviewed indicated expectation of high quality which was created since their organisations used the facilities for staff training and had great experiences. Further supporting this point, students indicated that they have attended other events and short

programmes hosted by the graduate schools "and have always had a great experience". Students therefore had the same high expectations for all programmes including longer academic programmes.

The SERVQUAL Model (1985) identifies five (5) perception gaps with gap five (5) being identified as the perceived service quality gap. It is the difference between the customer's expectation of the service and the perception of the experience. The perception of the experience is influenced by the service delivery, which includes the pre and post contacts. The findings of the research shows the participants' perceived experiences pre contact and post contact as evident by narrations such as "the customer care that I expected based on my initial interaction with the school was not there."

Similarly, the Gronroos Perceived Service Quality Model (1982) identifies the factors that contribute to the perception of experiences which are referred to as technical and functional quality as explained in the literature review. These two types of quality work in tandem to create an image of the institution and thus affect the perception of experiences. According to the Gronroos Perceived Service Quality Model (1982), disparity between expectations and experiences are caused when perceived experiences differ from expectations. The findings of the research shows that the institution had the technical available quality but did not meet the functional quality of the participants as is evidenced by the narration "access to textbooks were always very late……this affected class preparations." Therefore,

the textbooks were available which is technical quality, but the process of delivery was flawed which is the functional quality and overall affected the perceived experience of the participants. This contributed to the disparity between expectations and experiences of the participants in the graduate programme at the graduate school in Trinidad and Tobago.

In attempting to further understand the perception of experiences at the graduate school, the Rater Model as proposed by Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1990) sheds light on the findings of the research. Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1990) state that the perception of experiences from the point of view of the customer is shaped by five (5) areas-:

- Reliability – accurate and dependable performance of promised service

- Assurance - Ability of employees to inspire trust and confidence in their knowledge

- Tangibles – appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication materials

- Empathy – pastoral and caring attention individualized to suit the needs of the customer

- Responsiveness – Enthusiasm and willingness to assist customers and provide prompt and timely service

Drawing from the findings of the research, interviewees' responses showed their pre enrolment experience with the institution was very positive in the five (5) areas. These initial experiences and touch points created an expectation in the mind of the participants as they entered the institution. This is evident by the following response "the personal touch was outstanding". The interviewees also indicated that the sessions focused on their needs and addressed the questions they had regarding career path thus creating expectations of a caring institution.

The conversion to actual experiences, however, based on the findings of the research, showed dissatisfaction levels with the said actual experiences. Bringing together the Rater Model and the findings of the research the following evidence supports this point.

Reliability

Students expressed mixed views on the reliability of the institution based on the expectation. In one instance, a student indicated that they had a horrible experience with the internet service at the school while at the same time they had a good experience with the library.

Assurance

Students expressed disappointment with the administrative staffs' ability to inspire confidence in their abilities in each dimension as well as customer care. This is evident by the following narration "messages were always inconsistent" Students indicated that they were told one thing while being recruited but another when they actually started the programme.

Participants had mixed views on the ability of faculty indicating that only the few that were used for the recruitment events and sample of the programmes were reputable while the others met during the programme were not reputable. They also indicated that while some faculty have professional experience, the entire faculty did not have the same level of experience as evident by the quotation "all faculty who I have met do have professional experience, some more than others."

Tangibles

According to the Rater Model as proposed by Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1990), tangibles relates to the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication materials. Based on the findings of Research Question (3), interviewees were satisfied with the physical facilities as evident by the narration "the premises are always well maintained." Participants, however, expressed dissatisfaction with the equipment, specifically the IT services

indicating that "technology has been a huge disappointment". Students also expressed disappointment with the administrative staffs' appearance stating that the professionalism they came to expect from the staff was no longer evident based on the manner in which the staff "talked, walked, dressed and behaved". Participants however expressed satisfaction with the quality of the communication material, both visual and auditory. They pointed to high quality printed marketing materials where "full colored glossy paper, multiple pages" booklets were provided showing "alums, lecturers who were professionals, persons known in the field, programme benefits, testimonies". Students spoke highly about the advertisement on the various radio stations identifying specifically an interview where an individual was speaking to the benefits of the programme.

Empathy

Each of the participants interviewed expressed disappointment in the pastoral care provided by the institution. They said that the customer care "fell badly" and indicated that they wondered whether this was the same institution they visited previously. The students expressed that the customer care they expected based on their initial interaction with the school was not there anymore.

INVESTIGATING THE DISPARITY BETWEEN THE EXPECTATIONS AND THE EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS IN A GRADUATE PROGRAMME AT A GRAUATE SCHOOL IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Responsiveness

Participants expressed disappointment with the level of responsiveness of customer care as evident by the following narration "administration was totally oblivious of the procedures and policies and did not seem to care that I was lost."

The Kano's Two Factor Model (1984) when considered in light of the findings of the research shows that the participants are dissatisfied with the experience. Participants expected must-be qualities as evident by the narration drawn from research question (1) "I believe that a solid technology platform is now a basic expectation of a tertiary level institution" and "again I would say that a basic requirement of a tertiary level institution is proper library facilities." According to the Kano Two Factor Model (1984), when must-be qualities are not met; it leads to a high level of dissatisfaction. The findings of research question (3) suggest that participants were dissatisfied when the must-be factors were not met as evidenced by the following narrations "the IT experience has been horrendous" and "technology has been a huge disappointment for me." Further, when must-be qualities were met, it did not create any delight in the minds of the participants but they simply acknowledged that the factors were present. Drawing from research question (1), a must-be factor was identified as proper library facilities. In research question (3), the following narration shows that participants were satisfied but not delighted "the library is well organised and extensive."

INVESTIGATING THE DISPARITY BETWEEN THE EXPECTATIONS AND THE EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS IN A GRADUATE PROGRAMME AT A GRAUATE SCHOOL IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Reprising the note at the end of research question (3) in Chapter 4; Data Analysis and Presentation of Finings, it is seen that in no dimension of the institution did the participants of the study feel "thrilled" indicating that no "attractive quality" was available.

The Rater Model (1990) and the Kano Two Factor Model (1984) considered in light of the findings of the research adds to the understanding of the perceived experiences of the participants as it relates to the expectations. Overall the Rater Model as proposed by Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1990) when considered with the findings reveal that participants had varied experiences compared to the expectations. The area where the experiences have been consistently disappointing is administration and customer care. The Kano Two Factor Model (1984) reveals that all participants must-be qualities were not met which contributed to a negative perception of the experience compared to the expectations.

Perceptions of experiences are also are affected by the competences of resources within the institution. According to Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1988b), the Gap 3 of the SERVQUAL model is the difference between the specification for the service and the actual delivery of the service and is called the service performance gap. According to the theory put forward by Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1988b), the service performance gap is affected by a combination of factors including employees' job fit, technology job fit and role ambiguity.

Reprising the findings of the research it is found that employees are not displaying the right fit for the organisation as it relates to the expectations as evident by the view "administration was totally oblivious of the procedures and policies and did not seem to care that I was lost". Further, the technology platform failed in meeting the new requirements of the institution in light of the expectation as evident by the following narration "technology has been a huge disappointment for me."

In summary, the discussions consider the SERVQUAL Model (1985) and the Gronroos Perceived Service Quality Model (1982) to understand the reasons for the creation of expectations and then the reasons for the perception of the experiences. The Rater Model (1990), the Kano Two Factor Model (1984) and Gap (3) of the SERVQUAL Model were analysed to understand the perceived experiences of the participants in view of their expectations. The findings, therefore, articulate well with the models of service quality presented in the literature review in understanding the disparity between expectations and experiences of students in a graduate programme at a graduate school in Trinidad and Tobago.

INVESTIGATING THE DISPARITY BETWEEN THE EXPECTATIONS AND THE EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS IN A GRADUATE PROGRAMME AT A GRAUATE SCHOOL IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the research, the school should attempt to close the gaps that exist between expectations and perceived experiences in order to offer better service quality. This overall recommendation is made taking into consideration Abdullah (2006), who stated that higher education is being driven towards commercial competition imposed by economic forces resulting from the development of global education markets and the reduction of government funds that force tertiary institutions to seek other financial sources. Given this reality, the institution needs to find ways of addressing the existing gaps in service quality since according to Hussain and Birol (2011) institutions of higher education need appropriate methods and strategies to meet the current students' needs, keep them happy and attract more recruitment. Excellent service quality is critical to the achievement of the mentioned outcomes.

The institution can address this issue of the disparity between expectations and the perception of experiences in a graduate programme at a graduate school in Trinidad and Tobago by managing the factors that contribute to the creation of expectations and also the factors that contribute to the perceived experiences. Given that these two set of factors are responsible for the creation of gaps, addressing either one or both would close the gaps. It is suggested by Gronroos (1984) however, that functional quality or the process of the delivery of the

service is the most critical factor in affecting service quality and thus disparity in expectations and perceived experiences.

The findings of research question (1) and research question (2) address the issues of expectations. The institution in light of the market competition has decided that strategically, building of the brand will attract customers. Considering this strategy, the school should therefore manage the manner in which they communicate to the market through their marketing campaign and promises made which would ensure that expectations are managed. Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1988a) says that customers' perception of service quality is negatively affected by the disparity between service delivery and external communications in the form of exaggerated promises and the absence of information about service delivery aspects even when the intention may be good.

The institution should also manage perceived experiences of participants. The discussions reprised findings of the research and linked it to Gap (3) of the SERVQUAL model as put forward by Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1988a) It informs that the service performance gap is affected by a combination of factors including employees' job fit, technology job fit and role ambiguity. The institution therefore needs to ensure that the staff is trained for their new roles and the technology platform is solid in order to manage the service performance gap.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon where the service quality gap can be measured and quantified, the organisation should administer

questionnaires and surveys to understand the experiences of students. In light of the recommendation, an opportunity exists for the development and implementation of the HEdPERF as proposed by Abdullah (2006). This instrument addresses the one dimensional nature of service quality in educational institutes where the focus is mainly on the academic dimension according to Abdullah (2006) and presents an opportunity to include non-academic dimensions to increase service quality in tertiary education.

In conclusion, the institution cannot manage expectations exclusively since expectations are created in part by factors outside the control of the institution, for example personal ambitions, recommendations and word of mouth. The organisation can, however, control the other elements of its external communication to manage those expectations and of course take the necessary steps to manage the employees and technology fit within the organisation.

Currently, the local post-secondary education landscape is being reshaped with the advent of the Caribbean Area Network for Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education (CANQUATE) and the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) serving as standards organisations. Locally, all post-secondary institutions are required by law to be registered with the ACTT before the commencement of operations as well as to re-register at the end of the registration period. The Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training is now more selective in the approval of programmes for Government Assistance for Tertiary

Education (GATE) funding. It is therefore imperative that institutions of higher learning become more customer focused through greater levels of quality assurance to ensure they meet the standards, legal requirements and approval of the above named institutions as students concerns are central to these institutions. The research provides insights into the expectation of students and the factors that can cause negative experiences which lead to dissatisfaction. Institutions can use this research therefore to strengthen their quality assurance and ensure they can meet the requirements of the named institutions to provide better service quality in the interest of the main customer group (the students) which will ensure their survival and growth within the industry.

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INVESTIGATING THE DISPARITY BETWEEN THE EXPECTATIONS AND THE

EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS IN A GRADUATE PROGRAMME AT A GRAUATE

SCHOOL IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Students' expectations on entering the programme from their perspective

Sub Category	Codes	Supporting Narrative
Facilities	Maintenance	"so really I expect, based on the nature of the school that they maintain proper facilities ……..not just classroom but washrooms, café and study areas"
	Suitability and Quality	"I would not have registered for a programme if the facility was unsuitable to post graduate education"
		"…..the physical environment must be outstanding"
	Safety	"In addition to being comfortable, I expected the facilities to be safe"
		"It is expected that all institutions meet minimum safety compliance"
		"…..and health and safety are of paramount importance".
	Technology Platform	"I expected to have state of the art technology integrated into the classroom"
		"At this level I expect the use of high end technology as a part of the programme delivery."
		"I believe that a solid technology platform is now a basic expectation of a tertiary level institution."

INVESTIGATING THE DISPARITY BETWEEN THE EXPECTATIONS AND THE

EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS IN A GRADUATE PROGRAMME AT A GRAUATE

SCHOOL IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Sub Category	Codes	Supporting Narrative
	Library Facilities	"and a good library is key"
		"I expected that the library would carry all the necessary books, journals and services required to complete the programme".
		"…again I would say that a basic requirement of a tertiary level institution is proper library facilities."
Faculty	Professional Experience	"I was made aware of the level of professional experience that existed amongst the faculty and so I wanted to be a part of the programme"
	Suitability	"I really expected that the faculty be suitable to the programmes given the need to have a right fit between faculty and subject matter"
	Reputation	"Being in industry I know about the reputation of many of the lecturers and so I expected to see these reputable lecturers in front of the class"
	Ability to provide insights	"I felt that this programme would provide me with invaluable insights through the faculty"
Programme Material	Relevance	"I expected to have materials that are relevant to the area of study……..not just generic materials but materials that are specific to the issues in which I am interested"
		"I expected the library to have relevant materials including journals, articles, research papers and theses"
		"……………however I expected that the lecturer provide relevant materials for me"

Sub Category	Codes	Supporting Narrative
	Available in physical and electronic form	"Well I also expected to have access to all forms of relevant information and knowledge"
	Access	"I expected to have access to the materials I needed to complete the programme……………. expected to have access not to just physical resources, but electronic databases"
Administration	Care	"I expected that administratively all my needs would be taken care off"
	Competence	"Really at this stage administration must be competent and able to guide students" "…………and I expect that staff would be familiar with the administrative policies and procedures and guide me accordingly"
	Allow for focus on classes (without having to be concerned about administration)	"I expected that administratively all my needs would be taken care off and that all I would have to focus on is studies" "I expected to not have to focus on any administrative matters but simply my classes"
Customer Care	Good Customer Care	"I also expect to have good customer service" "at the school I expected the same level of service and care"
	Continued Excellent Care	"I really expected the service to continue to be excellent"
	Professionalism	"so naturally I expected to have this level of professionalism continued when I entered the programme"

INVESTIGATING THE DISPARITY BETWEEN THE EXPECTATIONS AND THE

EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS IN A GRADUATE PROGRAMME AT A GRAUATE

SCHOOL IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Sub Category	Codes	Supporting Narrative
	Clear and consistent communication	"One of the expectations I had was really clear and consistent communication of messages by all staff of the school"
	Similar experience from that which was experienced in past and current organisations	"…………..having come from industry into a service oriented sector, I really expected to see the same level of care given as I am accustomed to…."
Teaching and Learning	Relevant content	"I wanted to learn content but also develop skills and techniques that are relevant" "Well I expected that the content be relevant to me"
	Quality of class room interaction	"I expected great interaction and discussions" "…and at this level I want to discuss and share ideas with experts and practitioners."
	Development of relevant content, skills and techniques	"I wanted to learn content but also develop skills and techniques that are relevant" "……and I have been told this is also an academic experience, but there are specific tools I need to develop that I hope to learn." "……….. in developing the tools I need to succeed in my career"
	Active engagement	"………….I know that I still would need to learn new content but I was not looking for a classroom where the lecturer would stand and talk to me and I would be listening passively or taking notes. I wanted to be engaged in discussions with the lecturer and amongst the cohort" "I wanted a very interactive and dynamic learning environment where I could contribute

Sub Category	Codes	Supporting Narrative
		and express my ideas"
		"At the post graduate level I expected that the classroom interactions would be very dynamic"
		"..opportunity to bounce ideas and thoughts off others who are experts"
	Authentic experiences	"At this level I really wanted to get hands on training……..to solve real problems, to be exposed to real businesses and situations"
		"I expected to be solving real world problems"
		"I was looking forward to working with cases and simulations."
	Completeness of content	"Well I expected that the content be relevant to me in the sense that it covers everything I would need to be able to function in a position"
	Varied activities	"I expected that while the materials were relevant, it be delivered using various activities"
	Integration of technology in the teaching and learning process	"……….have state of the art technology integrated into the classroom"
		"…….. expected extensive use of technology in the teaching and learning process"
		"in this day and age of teaching and learning technology, I was looking for smart boards, tablets, simulations"
Programme	Networking	"this I would benefit from networking opportunities and so build my business

Sub Category	Codes	Supporting Narrative
Benefits		network"
		"I looked forward to meeting the cream of the crop from the business world all in one place. "
		"at the least I would know more businesses men, managers and corporate persons and this would build my personal network"
		"and who knows…….if I impress the right people it could work out well for me career wise"
		"………professionals from different sectors and different types of organisations. I really saw this as beneficial as I could build my network…"
		"……… I would meet the top business people throughout the industries……"
	Addresses the specific needs of the industry	"………I wanted a programme that would address the specific needs of my industry"
	Preparedness for desired position	"……..prepares you for top level management"
	Career advancement	"………if I impress the right people it could work out well for me career wise"

Appendix 2: Factors that contributed to the creation of students' expectations from their perspective

Sub Category	Codes	Supporting Narrative
Marketing	Visuals / Signage	"The school was visible….where ever you go you would see billboards and signs advertising the programmes"
		"…..and the quality of the marketing was outstanding…..it truly created an appeal and spoke of a quality.."
		"I would pass and see the school and the signage and the catchy advertising created an expectation about the programmes offered"
		"….electronic signage in different areas promoting programmes, world renowned guest speakers…..that created an expectation for me"
	Media Ads	"The school was visible in the media…full page colored ads describing the benefits of the programmes"
		"I remember hearing radios ads about the programmes on the various stations……..I believe I also heard an interview with the school where someone was talking about the benefits of the programmes"
		"………the quality of the newspaper ads were really outstanding…..looking at the advertising expense really you would expect a great programme"
		"The ads ran consistently and gave a lot of information on the programme…….benefits, qualification of lecturers, outstanding service…..I was sold!

Sub Category	Codes	Supporting Narrative
	Brochures	"The brochures I saw were really detailed and classy………it contained information about the benefits of the programme, professional expertise of the faculty, programme structure…….so I can safely say that expectations were influenced by this"
		……..they detailed all aspects of the programme and explained in details the various benefits of doing the programme." "………full colored glossy paper, multiple pages…..even booklets were provided. They showed alums, lecturers who were professionals…..persons known in the field…..programme benefits………..testimonies……….these really created an expectation of an outstanding programme in all regards"
	Features in Magazines and Journals	"………the school was featured in some top business magazines and journals and so I expected that the programmes would be outstanding"
		……..and I did see the school mentioned in a top business magazine and so expectations about the quality of the school was crated"
Information Sessions	Comprehensive Information	"These sessions created the greatest expectations for me. The information was detailed and covered all areas of the programmes"
		"………they really covered all aspects of the programmes and set up the expectations for the various components of the school"
		" I feel that the information sessions were responsible for the creation of my greatest expectations about the school……faculty, teaching and learning, facilities……..the overall programme"

Sub Category	Codes	Supporting Narrative
	Organisation of Sessions	"……and so well organized that I really expected good things from the school" "The information sessions, from the reception to the exit was excellent……I mean I felt true customer service…….this set up my expectation about the service of the school and I expected that this service be continued throughout my stay at the school." "The information sessions were so well organized…..from how I was greeted by the staff to the room in which we had discussions to the materials that were provided………really I was looking forward to joining the school."
	Personal Touch	"The personal touch was outstanding. The sessions focused on my needs and addressed the questions I had regarding my career path. This created expectations of a caring institution" ……and if this personalized service was a sample of things to come then definitely I made the right choice." "They knew my name, job title, sector…….I was impressed by the individualized service…..I was not just another applicant and I expected that this type of service continue."
	Quality of Presentation	"………..if this is the quality of presentations by the staff then I expected that the class room would be 'wow' experiences" "The quality of the presentations were really outstanding…..the use of multimedia, dress of the staff, provision of materials…..it all spoke of a professional organisation and created an expectation of the overall professionalism of the

Sub Category	Codes	Supporting Narrative
		institution."
		"………and I made conclusions about the quality of the school based in the quality of the presentations at the information sessions."
		"The use of industry experts in the information sessions really boosted the quality and created an expected of the faculty that would be available in the class room."
Reputation of School	Word of Mouth / Testimonies	"…….and many of my colleagues spoke highly about the quality of lecturers and lecturing at the school."
		"My senior managers spoke highly about the school and I was encouraged to attend the school by my manager who is a graduate of the institution."
		"…….and while many of my colleagues choose other institutions for postgraduate study, they spoke highly of the school…..they did not choose the school for other factors besides the quality of the programmes."
		"I was informed by graduates of the relevance of the content, professional and academic qualifications of the faculty, the great facilities and the fact that the programmes are locally developed and tailored to the local industries while still offering a global context."

Sub Category	Codes	Supporting Narrative
	Observation of Managers who have completed the Programme	"I have seen managers who have graduated from the school and they are really top performers in their field. So I expected that I would have the same expertise and insights eventually once I have done the programme. "………and my manager is an alumni and really outstanding." "Some of my seniors have been given additional responsibilities upon completion of the programme……..I wanted to complete the programme for the same experience."
Taste of Programmes	Sample of Programmes	"This event really created expectations……….we were given a taste of the programme by engaging in a class session. We were guided by an industry expert and engaged in a simulation and case study. I expected to meet this same experience in the classroom." "The taste of the programmes offered by the school created an expectation of what the full programme would be like." "For me the sample of the classroom experience really created an expectation of the programme."
	Recruitment Sessions	"At these sessions we were exposed to all aspects of the programme and it created an expectation about the faculty, courses content and teaching and learning strategies." "The recruitment sessions were very well organized and gave great details about the benefit if the programme." These sessions created a lot of expectations about the programme for me."
	Orientation Sessions	"…….seeing all the managers and business men at the orientation sessions I looked forward to

Sub Category	Codes	Supporting Narrative
		networking opportunities."
		"Orientation sessions really concretized my expectations of the school and programme."
		".........the organization, class, treatment, personnel……..the orientation session was spectacular and really made me believe in the value of the programme and school."
Administration	Initial Interaction with the school	"From the initial interaction school with the school administrative care was excellent……..so I expected this to continue."
		"From the courtesy of the security, receptionist and staff…..administration was great."
		"As soon as you walked into the school for the first time, the administrative staff was present and available."
	Helpfulness of the Staff	"The administrative staff was very helpful from the start and I expected this to continue throughout the programme."
		"The staff was very efficient in their communication, provision of information and assistance in the entire process."
		"The helpfulness of the staff definitely shaped my expectations of the school and programme."
	Courtesy of the Staff	"The courtesy of the staff was exceptional…..I expected that this would be consistent throughout."
		"I was impressed by the courtesy of the staff and it created an expectation of the overall school and programme for me."
		"Given the normal service I have experienced; I was impressed by the quality of the staff and

Sub Category	Codes	Supporting Narrative
		believed that this institution got it right."
Previous Engagement with the School	Participation in other programmes of the school	"Having completed training programmes with the institution, I was always impressed and had the same high expectations of the longer programmes."
		"My company used the facilities for our staff training and the entire experience was always great…….so naturally I expected this to continue."
		"I have attended many events of the school and have always had a great experience. I expected the same for all other programmes and so I signed up."
	Visited the school and saw the facilities	"Having visited the school and saw the facilities I expected that I would benefit from all the amenities."
		"……..white boards, multimedia, café, washrooms, library, security……all the facilities spoke of a conduciveness to education and of course I expected that these would benefit me during the programme."
Personal Needs	Programme objectives were congruent with personal needs 1. Content 2. Teaching and Learning Strategies 3. Real world Experience (Authentic Experience) 4. Expected	"The programme as presented was definitely what I needed as it related to the content and experiences that would be gained." "All interactions with sessions and faculty provided a sample of cases and simulations and so I expected that these authentic experiences to be a part of the entire programme." "……and the expected outcomes as presented to me found resonance and I expected to meet these outcomes at the end." "The teaching and learning strategies, content and

Sub Category	Codes	Supporting Narrative
	Outcomes	outcomes were well communicated and expected that these would be followed."

INVESTIGATING THE DISPARITY BETWEEN THE EXPECTATIONS AND THE

EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS IN A GRADUATE PROGRAMME AT A GRAUATE

SCHOOL IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Appendix 3: Students perception of their experiences compared to their expectations from their perspective

Sub Category Based on Research Question 1)	Codes Based on Research Question 1)	Students Expectation (Based on Research Question 1)	Students Perception of Experience (Based on Research Question 3)
Facilities	Maintenance	"so really I expect, based on the nature of the school that they maintain proper facilities ……..not just classroom but washrooms, café and study areas"	"The premises are always well maintained" "The experience with the general facilities has been satisfactory." "I feel that the school has met my expectations as far as the premises and most of the surrounds are concerned."
	Suitability and Quality	"I would not have registered for a programme if the facility was unsuitable to post graduate education" "…..the physical environment must be outstanding"	"The facilities remained suitable to tertiary education." "The classroom and general facilities are of a high standard." "I don't recall having any issues with the suitability and quality of the general facilities."
	Suitability and Quality	"In addition to being comfortable, I expected the facilities to be safe" "It is expected that all institutions meet minimum safety compliance" "…..and health and safety	"The facility was safe…..even staying very late to study was a comfortable experience." "I saw all OSHA requirements so I am confident that the facilities are safe." "From safety videos to

Sub Category Based on Research Question 1)	Codes Based on Research Question 1)	Students Expectation (Based on Research Question 1)	Students Perception of Experience (Based on Research Question 3)
		are of paramount importance".	emergency exits, evacuation signs……..my experience with safety has been good."
	Technology Platform	"I expected to have state of the art technology integrated into the classroom" "At this level I expect the use of high end technology as a part of the programme delivery." "I believe that a solid technology platform is now a basic expectation of a tertiary level institution."	"I had a horrible experience with the internet services at the school……" "Technology has been a huge disappointment for me……" "The IT services has been horrendous"
	Library Facilities	"and a good library is key" "I expected that the library would carry all the necessary books, journals and services required to complete the programme". "…again I would say that a basic requirement of a tertiary level institution is proper library facilities."	"I have had a good experience with the library" "The library is well organized and extensive." "The experience with the library has been good"

INVESTIGATING THE DISPARITY BETWEEN THE EXPECTATIONS AND THE

EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS IN A GRADUATE PROGRAMME AT A GRAUATE

SCHOOL IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Sub Category Based on Research Question 1)	Codes Based on Research Question 1)	Students Expectation (Based on Research Question 1)	Students Perception of Experience (Based on Research Question 3)
Administration	Care	"I expected that administratively all my needs would be taken care off"	"I was really disappointed with the administrative care when I began the actual programme……"
			"I felt like I was in another place………..where was all the love and care from administration?
			"My God………the administrative care and concern was horrible when I actually paid and started the course!"
	Competence	"Really at this stage administration must be competent and able to guide students"	"From ID cards to course schedules to delivery of books……..the administrative staff was totally incompetent"
		"…………and I expect that staff would be familiar with the administrative policies and procedures and guide me accordingly"	"Administration was totally oblivious of the procedures and policies and did not seem to care that I was lost"
			"I saw very little to convince me that the administration was competent."
	Allowance for focus on classes	"I expected that administratively all my needs would be taken care off and that all I would have to focus on is studies"	"….no…………I had too much to worry about administratively and so could not just focus on classes."
			"My hopes of focusing on classes alone were lost as I had

Sub Category Based on Research Question 1)	Codes Based on Research Question 1)	Students Expectation (Based on Research Question 1)	Students Perception of Experience (Based on Research Question 3)
		"I expected to not have to focus on any administrative matters but simply my classes"	to always run behind administrative matters." "I had to manage too much of the administration myself to be able to focus as I would have liked exclusively on classes."
Customer Care	Good Customer Care / Continued Excellent Care	"I also expect to have good customer service" "at the school I expected the same level of service and care" "I really expected the service to continue to be excellent"	".….and from the time I was passed to the programme administration customer care disappeared." "I wondered whether this is the same institution I visited a few weeks before……customer care fell badly." "The customer care that I expected based on my initial interaction with the school was not there."
	Professionalism	"so naturally I expected to have this level of professionalism continued when I entered the programme"	"The professionalism of new staff I met was poor" "I felt that professionalism was lost" "From the way the staff talked, walked, dressed and behaved…………the professionalism I had come to expect was just not there anymore."
	Clear and Consistent Message Communicated	"One of the expectations I had was really clear and consistent communication of messages by all staff of	"Messages were always inconsistent.……..I was told one thing while being recruited and another when I actually

Sub Category Based on Research Question 1)	Codes Based on Research Question 1)	Students Expectation (Based on Research Question 1)	Students Perception of Experience (Based on Research Question 3)
		the school"	started the programme."
			"From one staff to the other, messages were always inconsistent."
			"Communication was poor……..information given by staff was always mixed up and inconsistent."
	Similar experience from that which was experienced in past and current organisations	"…………..having come from industry into a service oriented sector, I really expected to see the same level of care given as I am accustomed to…."	"From experience in my organization, customer care in a service industry should be much better."
			"The customer service was definitely not on par with service organisations that project themselves to be customer focused."
			"This level of poor customer service I am disaccustomed to."
Programme Materials	Relevance	"I expected to have materials that are relevant to the area of study……..not just generic materials but materials that are specific to the issues in which I am interested"	"Definitely the materials selected were relevant to the subject areas"
			"The materials were well selected and relevant to the subject areas."
		"I expected the library to have relevant materials including journals, articles, research papers and	"Yes…..the text books, readings and cases selected for the courses were relevant and useful."

Sub Category Based on Research Question 1)	Codes Based on Research Question 1)	Students Expectation (Based on Research Question 1)	Students Perception of Experience (Based on Research Question 3)
		theses"	
		"……………however I expected that the lecturer provide relevant materials for me"	
	Available in Physical and Electronic Copies	"Well I also expected to have access to all forms of relevant information and knowledge"	"Text books were available in physical form while cases and additional readings were available in physical and hard copies."
			"Materials were available in both forms"
			"The required materials were available in both physical and electronic copies."
	Access	"I expected to have access to the materials I needed to complete the programme……………. expected to have access not to just physical resources, but electronic databases"	"Access of text books were always very late….this affected class preparations."
			"……and electronic materials were available but hard to access on campus because of poor internet service."
			"I was extremely disappointed with the consistent late delivery of text books"

Sub Category Based on Research Question 1)	Codes Based on Research Question 1)	Students Expectation (Based on Research Question 1)	Students Perception of Experience (Based on Research Question 3)
Faculty	Professional Experience	"I was made aware of the level of professional experience that existed amongst the faculty and so I wanted to be a part of the programme"	"All faculty who I have met do have professional experience…………some more than others." "I was a bit disappointed since most of the faculty did not have the extent of professional experience I thought I would meet when I registered." "From the recruitment and taste of programmes, I thought that most of the faculty would be the outstanding practitioners in their field…………I was disappointed."
	Suitability	"I really expected that the faculty be suitable to the programmes given the need to have a right fit between faculty and subject matter"	"Faculty was suitable to the courses" I did not see any problems with the suitability of the faculty." I felt based on the delivery of the lecturer that they were suitable to the various courses."

Sub Category Based on Research Question 1)	Codes Based on Research Question 1)	Students Expectation (Based on Research Question 1)	Students Perception of Experience (Based on Research Question 3)
	Reputation	"Being in industry I know about the reputation of many of the lecturers and so I expected to see these reputable lecturers in front of the class"	"……but they were not reputable…….not the names you know from being in the industry." "….and besides the few that were used for the recruitment events and sample of the programmes, the faculty we met were not reputable." "they were suitable to the course, but not the reputable professionals I expected to meet based on what was communicated to me."
	Ability to provide insights	"I felt that this programme would provide me with invaluable insights through the faculty"	"The really experienced ones provided insight…..this was very few." "I would say that generally the faculty depended on second hand experience and did not provide insights from their own experience." "To me there were very little insights provided by the faculty."

Sub Category Based on Research Question 1)	Codes Based on Research Question 1)	Students Expectation (Based on Research Question 1)	Students Perception of Experience (Based on Research Question 3)
Teaching and Learning	Development of relevant content skills and techniques	"I wanted to learn content but also develop skills and techniques that are relevant" "……and I have been told this is also an academic experience, but there are specific tools I need to develop that I hope to learn." "……….. in developing the tools I need to succeed in my career" "Well I expected that the content be relevant to me"	"I honest don't feel that I have thus far developed relevant skills……..maybe it's a long term benefit but at this stage I believe that I should see changes..." "While content is relevant and specific to my needs I feel that the direction of the programme thus far will not lead me to the development of needed skills." "I have learnt a lot of content but no techniques that I can as yet apply……I don't see relevance."
	Quality of classroom interaction	"I expected great interaction and discussions" "…and at this level I want to discuss and share ideas with experts and practitioners."	"In some cases interaction was great……lecturers were engaging and encouraged peer discussions…….in other cases classes were talk sessions." "For me, I felt let down by the classroom interaction as my peers were too in experienced and young to make real contributions to the sessions." "In some cases faculty seemed very green……..in those cases the interaction was very poor………some students may actually have been more experienced than the faculty."

Sub Category Based on Research Question 1)	Codes Based on Research Question 1)	Students Expectation (Based on Research Question 1)	Students Perception of Experience (Based on Research Question 3)
	Active Engagement	"………….I know that I still would need to learn new content but I was not looking for a classroom where the lecturer would stand and talk to me and I would be listening passively or taking notes. I wanted to be engaged in discussions with the lecturer and amongst the cohort" "I wanted a very interactive and dynamic learning environment where I could contribute and express my ideas" "At the post graduate level I expected that the classroom interactions would be very dynamic" "..opportunity to bounce ideas and thoughts off others who are experts"	"When the interaction was active it was really special……….this was rare however." The opportunities for active discussions and engagement were little as lecturers would just come and speak from slides." "I was disappointed with the level of engagement in the classroom."

INVESTIGATING THE DISPARITY BETWEEN THE EXPECTATIONS AND THE

EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS IN A GRADUATE PROGRAMME AT A GRAUATE

SCHOOL IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Sub Category Based on Research Question 1)	Codes Based on Research Question 1)	Students Expectation (Based on Research Question 1)	Students Perception of Experience (Based on Research Question 3)
	Authentic Experience	"At this level I really wanted to get hands on training……..to solve real problems, to be exposed to real businesses and situations" "I expected to be solving real world problems" "I was looking forward to working with cases and simulations."	"No simulations, irrelevant cases, no fieldtrips…….I was disappointed." "I expected visits to organisations, working on real world problems………classes were lecturers and use of text books." "Even the course work which is supposed to be the authentic experience was poorly managed by the faculty…..the benefits I believe were lost."
	Completeness of Content	"Well I expected that the content be relevant to me in the sense that it covers everything I would need to be able to function in a position"	"The courses always had to be rushed o areas on the outline left out." "Courses were rarely completed without a rush." "Content was always left out or left to us to do on our own."
	Varied Activities	"I expected that while the materials were relevant, it be delivered using various activities"	"The normal teaching and learning activity was lecturers with some cases and exercises." "I did not see the innovation of the lecturers in their delivery……..the focus was still on chalk and talk." "Too much slides and talking by the lecturer……..activities

Sub Category Based on Research Question 1)	Codes Based on Research Question 1)	Students Expectation (Based on Research Question 1)	Students Perception of Experience (Based on Research Question 3)
			were certainly not varied."
	Integration of technology in the teaching and learning process	"……….have state of the art technology integrated into the classroom" "…….. expected extensive use of technology in the teaching and learning process" "in this day and age of teaching and learning technology, I was looking for smart boards, tablets, simulations"	"We used a course management system….however the shells in many cases never populated." Besides a multimedia and the course management system, technology was not used in delivery." With the technology available to the school, I was disappointed in the limited use of technology in the teaching and learning process."
Programme Benefits	Networking	this I would benefit from networking opportunities and so build my business network" "I looked forward to meeting the cream of the crop from the business world all in one place. " "at the least I would know more businesses men, managers and corporate persons and this would build my personal network" "and who knows…….if I impress the right people it	"I was happy with the networking opportunities………I met many persons from industry." "Really within my class I was much more senior to the others and I feel that I am not benefiting from the networking opportunities." "The team work structure allows for me to know business people and for them to know me……..I am satisfied with the networking opportunities."

Sub Category Based on Research Question 1)	Codes Based on Research Question 1)	Students Expectation (Based on Research Question 1)	Students Perception of Experience (Based on Research Question 3)
		could work out well for me career wise"	
		"………professionals from different sectors and different types of organisations. I really saw this as beneficial as I could build my network…"	
		"……… I would meet the top business people throughout the industries……"	
	Addressing the specific needs of the industry	"………I wanted a programme that would address the specific needs of my industry"	"The specialized courses have addressed to an extent the idiosyncrasies of my industry."
			"Yes……….but it is limited because of the quality of the faculty."
			"The content is specific to the needs of the industry."
	Preparedness for desired position	"……..prepares you for top level management"	"No………the experience gained is not enough to prepare for leadership."
			I am not seeing how I can be prepared for leadership and management when the focus is so much on content."
			"The school focuses heavily on team work but that alone is not enough for my desire

129

Sub Category Based on Research Question 1)	Codes Based on Research Question 1)	Students Expectation (Based on Research Question 1)	Students Perception of Experience (Based on Research Question 3)
			position……..I am not being prepared."
	Career Advancement	"………if I impress the right people it could work out well for me career wise"	"Based on the current trajectory I will say no………but I am not as yet finished
			"Cannot as yet say….I feel that I should give it a chance."
			If the programmes changes and my expectations are met then yes………currently I cannot say that I am seeing the programme helping me."

INVESTIGATING THE DISPARITY BETWEEN THE EXPECTATIONS AND THE

EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS IN A GRADUATE PROGRAMME AT A GRAUATE

SCHOOL IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Appendix 4: Students' perception of factors that contributed to their experiences in the first term of the programme from their perspective.

Categories	Codes	Narratives	Areas of disparity (<u>categories</u> and <u>codes</u>) identified in research question (3) accounted for by findings of research question (4)
Marketing	Overselling	"Definitely there was overselling of the school and features of the programmes." "……..because the school oversold the benefits of the programme………unreal expectations were created."	<u>Facilities</u>; technology platform <u>Faculty:</u> professional experience, suitability and reputation <u>Programme benefits</u>: preparedness for desired position
	Exaggeration	"The school exaggerated the programme…….I mean the various components were there….but certainly not in the way that was projected…." "Everything was blown out of proportion……the bubble was really burst when I started the programme." "The school really exaggerated the features of the programme and	<u>Facilities</u>; technology platform <u>Faculty</u>: professional experience, suitability and reputation <u>Programme benefits</u>: preparedness for desired position

131

		school……….definitely my expectations were not met."	
	False / Misrepresentation	"I would even say that the school false marketed……….many of the areas that were promised was not even present in any form."	Facilities; technology platform
		"I did not see many of the features of the school and programmes that I expected based on the marketing of the programmes."	Faculty: professional experience, suitability and reputation
		"I was promised many things when I applied and did not receive them……..some basic elements even."	
		"The school certainly does not have the resources to back up their marketing"	
Communication	Inconsistent messages	"Information from different departments was inconsistent…….this made the experience disappointment as I was confused as to what was accurate."	Administration
		"When I started I realized that different staff were saying different things…..I was not sure what was to be done."	Customer care: clear and consistent messages
		"Information was inconsistent…….."	

| | Inaccurate information | "Many pieces of information that was provided was inaccurate……it was not reflective of the right procedure."

"I was shocked at how much the information provided during the recruitment sessions were inaccurate………found this out when I began the programme."

"There was so much inaccurate information provided at all stages of the programme." | Administration

Faculty: professional experience, suitability and reputation

Programme benefits: preparedness for desired position

Customer care: clear and consistent messages |
| **Competence** | Faculty | "Faculty definitely was not competent as it relates to cutting edge teaching and learning…….this definitely accounted for my disappointing experience during the programme."

"The greatest expectation of course would be the growth experience in the classroom….the disappointment came I feel because the faculty are not qualified to deliver on the promise given by the school."

"To provide the type of experience descried and promised by the school, faculty need to have the | Faculty: Ability to provide insights

Teaching and Learning: Quality of classroom experience, development of relevant content, skills and techniques, active engagement, authentic experiences, varied activities and integration of technology in the teaching and learning process |

133

		right skills and techniques…….this was sadly lacking."	
	Administration	"Administration was poor and really led to me having a bad experience."	Administration: care, competence, allow for focus on classes
		"From one unit to the next……administration showed that they were not competent to manage students at this level."	
		"As soon as I was passed to the administration staff from application stage I had a terrible time."	
Work ethic	Inconsistency	"The culture amongst the various departments were completely different……..the focus was not the same throughout."	Administration: Care
		"While the initial staff was extremely customer focused the other members of staff that I was exposed to were completely different."	Customer care: good customer care, continued excellent care, professionalism, clear and consistent messages and similar experiences from that which was experienced in past and current organisations
		"I experienced different cultures at different touch points throughout the organisation."	
	Focus	"The focus of the initial	Customer care: good

staff…marketing, recruitment was really customer focused……the administrative staff during the programme was not customer focused."	customer care, continued excellent care, professionalism
"Customer care did not seem to be as important to all staff as it should in organisations."	
"I feel that the initial staff understood the importance of customer care and I felt a different overall approach then the other administrative staff of the school."	

INVESTIGATING THE DISPARITY BETWEEN THE EXPECTATIONS AND THE EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS IN A GRADUATE PROGRAMME AT A GRAUATE SCHOOL IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Appendix 5: Interview Guide

Good Day and thank you for agreeing to be a part of this research and sharing your experiences and views with me today. As agreed, you will remain anonymous and there will be no consequences to you for sharing your views and experiences.

I am using an interview guide which is very flexible in structure and therefore allows for free flow of discussions and dialogue between you and I; therefore please feel free to share your thoughts and experiences.

Let's get started

Research Question 1: What were your expectations entering the program?

(Research Questions 2, 3 and 4 were asked after the initial coding and categorizing of the expectations of students from their perspective gleaned from Research Question 1)

- **Explain to the participants the process - which the research question (1) was transcribed and coded and the sub categories were created.**

Research Question 2: What factors contributed to your expectations entering the program from your perspective as it relates to the following:

Facilities

- Maintenance

- Safety

- Suitability and Quality

- Technology Platform

- Library Facilities

Administration

- Care

- Competence

- Allowance for focus on classes

  Customer Care

- Good Customer Care / Continued Excellent Care

- Professionalism

- Clear and Consistent Message Communicated

- Similar experience from that which was experienced in past and current organizations

Programme Materials

- Relevance

- Available in Physical and Electronic Copies

- Access

Faculty

- Professional Experience

- Suitability

- Reputation

- Ability to provide insights

Teaching and Learning

- Development of relevant content skills and techniques

- Quality of classroom interaction

- Active Engagement

- Authentic Experience

- Completeness of Content

- Varied Activities

- Integration of technology in the teaching and learning process

Programme Benefits

- Networking

- Addressing the specific needs of the industry

- Preparedness for desired position

- Career Advancement

Research Question 3: What were your experiences during your first term at the

school compared with your expectations as it relates to the following?

Facilities

- Maintenance

- Safety

- Suitability and Quality

- Technology Platform

- Library Facilities

Administration

- Care

- Competence

- Allowance for focus on classes

  Customer Care

- Good Customer Care / Continued Excellent Care

- Professionalism

- Clear and Consistent Message Communicated

- Similar experience from that which was experienced in past and current organisations

- Programme Materials

- Relevance

- Available in Physical and Electronic Copies

- Access

Faculty

- Professional Experience

- Suitability

- Reputation

- Ability to provide insights

Teaching and Learning

- Development of relevant content skills and techniques

- Quality of classroom interaction

- Active Engagement

- Authentic Experience

- Completeness of Content

- Varied Activities

- Integration of technology in the teaching and learning process

Programme Benefits

- Networking

- Addressing the specific needs of the industry

- Preparedness for desired position

- Career Advancement

Research Question 4: What factors contributed to your experiences from your perspective?

You would have given me your experiences in light of the expectation you would have had entering the programme. Please tell me about the reasons you had those experience from your perspective as it relates to the following-:

Facilities

- Maintenance

- Safety

- Suitability and Quality

- Technology Platform

- Library Facilities

Administration

- Care

- Competence

- Allowance for focus on classes

  Customer Care

- Good Customer Care / Continued Excellent Care

- Professionalism

- Clear and Consistent Message Communicated

- Similar experience from that which was experienced in past and current organisations

- Programme Materials

- Relevance

- Available in Physical and Electronic Copies

- Access

Faculty

- Professional Experience

- Suitability

- Reputation

- Ability to provide insights

Teaching and Learning

- Development of relevant content skills and techniques

- Quality of classroom interaction

- Active Engagement

- Authentic Experience

- Completeness of Content

- Varied Activities

- Integration of technology in the teaching and learning process

Programme Benefits

- Networking

- Addressing the specific needs of the industry

- Preparedness for desired position

- Career Advancement