EDUCATIONAL SERVICE QUALITY: PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SCHOOL COMPARISON IN THE TAMALE METROPOLISE

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ABSTRACT

Education in today's competitive environment has not only become a major industry and need of the day but it is also an investment by the parents for their children. In public as well as in private sector the quality of education is an important factor that is considered for attracting and retaining the students who want to get education. The objective of this research is to compare the pupil's expectations and perceptions of service quality among public and private basic schools in Tamale Metropolis. The research adopted the SERVQUAL model of data was collected from 200 pupils from eight schools including 4 private and 4 public basic schools in the Tamale Metropolis of Northern region. These basic schools were selected purposively but pupils were contacted conveniently. The results show that pupils are dissatisfied with services of Tangibility, Assurance, Reliability, Responsiveness and Empathy from both private and public schools. Private schools provide better educational quality of service than public schools, but both kind of schools failed deliver to the expectations of their pupils.

Keywords: Educational Service Quality; Private School; Public School.

INTRODUCTION

Education has the power to shape attitudes, influence behavior and create change in society. Babbar (1995) concludes that the quality of education shapes the long-term prosperity and wellbeing of both nations and their people. The present tenet for enhancing educational value is to expend effort on continuous improvement, to focus on stakeholder interests, and to increase student satisfaction. Student satisfaction is often used to assess educational quality, where the ability to address strategic needs is of prime importance (Cheng, 1990). Quality in education can be said to be determined by the extent to which students' needs and expectations can be satisfied. Various concepts and models have been developed to measure student and stakeholder satisfaction. SERVQUAL is used in this study to achieve its objectives. In Ghana basic education according to the Ghana Education Service is considered as the minimum period of schooling needed for every child to acquire basic literacy, numeracy and problem solving skills that are very critical to every nation's development. In public as well as private sector the quality of education is an important factor that is considered for attracting and retaining the students who want to get education. In fact quality in education is a relative concept given the number of various stakeholders involved (Tam, 2001) which ranges from the single pupil as a primary customer to the state as a secondary customer.

In developing societies the view that public sector organizations have tended to be bureaucratic and process-centered has been extended to the education sector. For example there is a strong perception in northern Ghana that private basic schools surpass their public counterparts in terms of service quality, student performance in examination and general profitability. The growing demand for private basic education among the middle income class in the major cities of Northern Ghana is a clear testimony to the growing popularity of private sector basic schools in the area Parasuman (1988); Parasuraman (1985); Rodrigues, (2011); Shauchenka (2010); Soutar (1996);

Service Quality in Educational institutions in other context has been measured (Pereda, Airey & Bennett, 2007; Atrek & Bayraktaroğlu, 2012). Service quality is very important as it can become one of an organization's competitive advantage (Bigne et al. 2003). Studies have revealed that there is significant positive relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction (Johns et al. 2004; Kara et al. 2005), customer retention (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990), loyalty (Boshoff & Gray, 2004), costs (Wilson et al. 2008), profitability (Rust & Zahorik, 1993; Zeithaml et al., 1996), service guarantees (Kandampully & Butler, 2001) and financial performance (Buttle, 1996) of service businesses (Sohail, 2003). It appears few studies have been conducted in Ghana on service quality and measuring service quality (Hinson et al. 2006). The studies that have been done so far have predominantly been on the banking and hospitality sectors. Little research work has been done regarding service and customer satisfaction in the educational sector Hassan (2008); Hinson (2006); Kotler (2008); Kwek (2010); Malik et al. (2010) Even with the not many studies on educational institutions, the works appear to be from the conventional approach; thus measuring educational service quality on other dimensions and not on Pupils or overall experience (Pereda et. al. 2007). SERVQUAL has been adapted for measuring service quality in the educational sector (Barnes, 2007; Tan & Kek, 2004; Wright & O'Neill, 2002; Gatfield, 2000; Gallifa (2010). This is a comparative study designed to measure and compare quality of basic educational services offered by private and public basic schools in Tamale, the capital city of Northern of Ghana using the SERVQUAL model.

The Concept of Educational Quality

Quality was originally developed in the manufacturing industry. The concept of quality is not well defined in education (Cheng & Tam, 1997; Pounder, 1999). In the area of education, the adoption of quality control has been superficial and diluted by the exercise of academic freedom (Lagrosen, et. al. 2004). The concept of quality in education is quite new and until now not a well-developed field of study (Cheng & Tam, 1997; Pounder, 1999). There is no unified terminology and the term "*quality of education*" is understood in different ways by different authors. All authors, however, adopt the concept of quality of education from industry, as in the following definitions: excellence in education (Gilmore, 1974; Peters & Waterman, 1982); value addition in education (Feigenbaum, 1951; Brigham, 1994); fitness of educational outcome and experience for use (Juran & Gryna, 1988; Dorweiler & Yakhou, 1998); defect avoidance in the education process (Crosby, 1979); and meeting or exceeding customer's expectations of education (Parasuranman et al. 1985). Therefore, a single definition of education quality is not possible. Rather, it would be more appropriate to define education quality based on the criteria that stakeholders use to judge quality, and also to consider the competing views when assessing the education quality (Green, cited in Sahney et al. 2004). Cheng & Tam`s (1997) satisfaction model of education quality will be adopted in this research to answer the questions. Thus "*service quality is the difference between customers' expectations of service and perceived*

service" (Wiesniewski, 2001). Generally, service quality is assumed to be the difference between customer expectations and the perceptions about the services being received by a customer from the service provider (Parasuraman, et al. 1988; Zeithalm et al. 2013).

The Concept of Expectation and Perception

Expectations represent an individual's psychological state that relates to future behavioral consequences for that person (Bruhn & Georgi, 2006). Expectations mean the wants of the customers. That is, what they feel a service provider should offer (Parasuraman et al. 1988). Parrasuraman et al. (1994a) redefine expectations as what customers feel a service provider "*would*" offer, rather than what they "*should*" offer, and the latter is a measure of the normative expectation. Also, Parrasuraman et al. (1994b) have elaborated on expectations, distinguishing desired from minimum expectations. Minimum service level expectations are described as the lowest level of service that a customer would consider adequate. Between the desired and minimum levels of expectations is the zone of tolerance. Hinson (2006) concludes that Customer expectation is what customers believe will be provided by a service encounter.

Perception is accepted as customers' views on performance of the firm when providing the services (Parrasuraman et al. 1988). Therefore, perceived service quality could be the product of the evaluations of a number of service encounters and in this case of a student. These could range from encounters with office staff, to encounters with teachers, the head of school, etc (Hill, 1995). The perceived quality is defined as ones' justification about the excellence of a product or service (Zammuto et al. 1996). The service quality in the educational sector is the fundamental aspect of educational excellence. According to Alridge & Rowley (2001), when students perceive the institution's quality their interest in the organization will explicitly be retained According to Soutard & McNeil (1996) both academic and administrative issues of an institution are extremely important in determining the performance of students, development of organizational image and quality assurance. Where students also become motivated by the reliability of the facilities they are provided with, their attraction and affiliation with the institution will be high (Keller, 1993). Value in service marketing is quality is mostly co-created by the administrative staff, faculty staff and the pupils. Majority of pupils will become de-motivated if they realize that the staff is not compassionate and kind. According to Hasan et al. (2008) for quality assurance an institution must instill a good sense of coordination, cooperation, compassion and empathy among its workers (Jacoby & Chestnut 1978).

Research conducted by Parasuraman et al. (1985, 1988) provides a basic frame for measuring customer satisfaction for services. They suggest that it might be the perception of service quality that leads to customer satisfaction and, thereby, these authors use the gap between customer expectation of provider performance and the actual perceived experience of that performance. This means that, if a customer perceives the service to be of high quality, then the customer will be satisfied. The SERVQUAL model defined service quality using five dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. This SERVQUAL model has been adapted for the study of Basic schools in Tamale metropolis.

Servqual Model

The SERVQUAL model is frequently used and adopted in extant literature to evaluate the students' perceived service quality in the education industry (Russell, 2005). SERVQUAL represents service quality as the discrepancy between a customer's expectations for a service

offering and the customer's perceptions of the service received, requiring respondents to answer questions about both their expectations and their perceptions (Parasuraman et al. 1988). The use of perceived as opposed to actual service received makes the SERVQUAL measure an attitude measure that is related to, but not the same as, satisfaction (Parasuraman et. al. 1988). The discrepancy between customers' expectations or desires and their perceptions of the actual service performance was elaborated in the Disconfirmation of Expectations model (Patterson, 1993) which related satisfaction to customer's pre-purchase expectations and perceptions of service performance and identified any differences as Disconfirmation. The comparisons which form the basis of the model of Table 1 are as follows.

Table 1 COMPARISONS AND RESULTS OF EXPECTATIONS AND PERCEPTIONS		
S/N	Comparison Process	Results
1.	Perceived Performance > Expectation	High Satisfaction (Delight)
2.	Perceived Performance = Expectation	Merely Satisfied
3.	Perceived Performance < Expectation	Dissatisfaction

Source: Arokiasamy (2012).

SERVQUAL Dimensions used For Judging the Quality of Basic Schools

1. Reliability: Ability of the teacher and staff to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.
2. Assurance: Knowledge, courtesy, and ability of the teachers and staff to inspire trust and confidence among the students
3. Responsiveness / Commitment: Willingness of the teachers and staff to help students and provide prompt service
4. Empathy: Caring and individualized attention given to students by teachers
5. Tangibles: Appearance of physical facilities equipment in the class rooms, computer lab, library, dress code, non-teaching staff, examination materials, attendance register and project reports.

The SERVQUAL though widely criticized (Buttle, 1996; Ladhari, 2008; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Brown et. al, 1993; Taylor & Cronin, 1994; Clow & Vorhies, 1993) has been extensively adopted by several academic researchers and practitioners worldwide to measure service quality. The value of adopting this model in this research can be summarized as follows: the diagnostic value is very high. SERVQUAL has the ability to capture all dimensions within a service. Elements that are not captured can be incorporated in the dimensions. For example, the SERVQUAL instrument has 22 items (measures) distributed amongst the five dimensions. Depending on the industry being evaluated, these measures can be added to suit the industry so that all important elements can be captured.

Research Methodology

The SERVQUAL model that has been developed by Parasuraman et al. (1985) is adapted in this research to measure the gap between customers' expected level of service and their perceptions of the actual service received (Kwek et al., 2010). The SERVQUAL questionnaire (Parasuraman et al. 1988) was employed as a medium to obtain the data needed. There are two parts to the questionnaire. Part a measures expectation of educational service quality. Part b measures perception of educational service quality delivered. Each part consists of 22 items. Each of the items falls within one of the major SERVQUAL variables: Tangibility; Reliability; Empathy; Assurance; Responsiveness. The scores for each item ranged from "*1*" for strongly

*disagre*e" to "*5*" for "*strongly agree*" on a five-point Likert scale. The items of the scale were pre-tested for wording, layout and understanding.

The Table 2 below provides the SERVQUAL dimensions and the respective questions (Q) on the 22 item scale on the questionnaire.

Table 2 SERVQUAL DIMENSIONS AND QUESTION ITEMS	
SERVQUAL DIMENSIONS	Questions on Questionnaire
TANGIBILITY	Q1,Q2,Q3,Q4
RELIABILITY	Q5,Q6,Q7,Q8,Q9
RESPONSIVENES	Q10,Q11,Q12,Q13
ASSURANCE	Q14,Q15,Q16,Q17
EMPATHY	Q18,Q19,Q20,Q21,Q22

Source: Parasuranman et al. (1988).

The data analysis for this study was conducted with the aid of 'Statistical Package for Social Science' software or SPSS version 16. Descriptive statistics mainly involving the mean and standard deviation were used in the data analysis. The mean simply put is the average of the sum of all values (Salking, 2009) which is representative of a distribution with several discrete or continuous variables that cannot be employed wholly. Standard deviation seeks to measure the average amount of variability in a set of scores (Salking, 2009); Yesilada (2010); Yildiz (2009); Zeithaml (2008) between values and measures.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study had more male respondents participating in the study than the female participants. More so the JHS level participants were more than the upper primary. This is further presented in Table 3.

Table 3 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION		
Gender	Male	56%
	Female	44%
Level of Education	Upper Primary	38%
	JHS	62%

Source: Field Data (2016).

The Expectation and Perception of Educational Service In Private and Public Schools

Table 4 EXPECTATIONS FROM BASIC SCHOOLS					
	School Type	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Outstanding Schools have modern looking equipment	Public	200	4.36	0.772	0.077
	Private	200	4.46	0.784	0.078
The Physical facilities at outstanding Schools are visually appealing	Public	200	4.2	0.841	0.084
	Private	200	4.34	0.702	0.071

Employees of Outstanding Schools are neat in their appearance	Public	200	4.36	0.811	0.081
	Private	200	4.49	0.772	0.077
Materials associated with the service are visually appealing at Outstanding Schools.	Public	200	4.18	0.869	0.087
	Private	200	4.33	0.865	0.087
Tangibility Dimension	Public	200	4.275	0.82325	0.08225
	Private	200	4.405	0.78075	0.07825
Outstanding Schools provide promised services	Public	200	4.17	0.922	0.092
	Private	200	4.22	0.949	0.095
Outstanding Schools show sincere interest in solving pupil's problem,	Public	200	4.2	0.899	0.09
	Private	200	4.25	0.757	0.076
Outstanding Schools perform service right the first time	Public	200	3.93	0.902	0.09
	Private	200	4.28	0.637	0.064
Outstanding Schools provide services at the promise time	Public	200	4.08	0.907	0.091
	Private	200	4.43	0.795	0.079
Outstanding Schools maintain error free records.	Public	200	4.03	1.068	0.107
	Private	200	4.29	0.891	0.089
Reliability Dimension	Public	200	4.082	0.9396	0.094
	Private	200	4.294	0.8058	0.0806
Outstanding Schools inform pupils exactly what services will be performed	Public	200	4.21	0.935	0.094
	Private	200	4.4	0.62	0.062
Outstanding Schools give prompt service to Pupils	Public	200	4.35	0.702	0.07
	Private	200	4.42	0.622	0.062
Outstanding Schools are always willing to help Pupils	Public	200	4.32	0.803	0.08
	Private	200	4.45	0.609	0.061
Outstanding Schools are always ready to respond to Pupils' requests	Public	200	4.16	0.95	0.095
	Private	200	4.32	0.68	0.068
Responsiveness Dimension	Public	200	4.26	0.8475	0.08475
	Private	200	4.3975	0.63275	0.06325

Source: Field Data (2016).

Table 5
EMPLOYESS OF EXPECTATIONS FROM BASIC SCHOOLS

Employees of Outstanding Schools instill confidence in Pupils	Public	200	4.61	3.061	0.306
	Private	200	4.44	0.592	0.059
Pupils of Outstanding Schools feel safe in communication	Public	200	4.26	0.872	0.087
	Private	200	4.5	0.611	0.061
Outstanding Schools are consistently courteous with Pupils	Public	200	3.98	0.853	0.085
	Private	200	4.33	0.726	0.073
Outstanding Schools have knowledge to answer Pupils'	Public	200	4.21	0.729	0.073

questions	Private	200	4.31	0.8	0.08
Assurance	Public	200	4.265	1.37875	0.13775
	Private	200	4.395	0.68225	0.06825
Outstanding Schools give Pupils individual attention	Public	200	4.12	0.891	0.089
	Private	200	4.44	0.656	0.066
Outstanding Schools have operating hours convenient to all their Pupils	Public	200	4	0.974	0.097
	Private	200	4.29	0.769	0.077
Outstanding Schools have employees who give Pupils personal services	Public	200	3.92	1.012	0.101
	Private	200	4.31	0.72	0.072
Outstanding Schools have their Pupils' best interest at heart	Public	200	4.33	0.667	0.067
	Private	200	4.41	0.753	0.075
The employees of Outstanding Schools understand the needs of their Pupils.	Public	200	4.07	0.967	0.097
	Private	200	4.23	0.737	0.074
Empathy Dimension	Public	200	4.088	0.9022	0.0902
	Private	200	4.336	0.727	0.0728

Source: Field Data (2016)

Using the mean statistics of respondents which evaluate the overall level of agreement to the statements, as indicated on the Tables 4 & 5, it can be noticed that most of the respondents expect an outstanding basic school to achieve outstanding performance in almost all statements. Respondents however, had relatively lower expectations in the case of public basic schools on the following: Perform services right at the first time; consistently courteous with pupils; and given pupils personal services. In both basic public and private schools tangibility dimension recorded the highest mean scores of 4.275 and 4.405 respectively; the Reliability dimension recorded the least mean score of 4.082 for public and 4.294 for private basic schools Table 6.

Table 6 EXPERIENCES FROM BASIC SCHOOLS					
	Type of School	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
This type of School has modern looking equipment	Public	200	3.81	1.012	0.101
	Private	200	4.13	0.774	0.077
This type of School 's Physical features are visually appealing	Public	200	3.42	0.669	0.067
	Private	200	4.19	0.775	0.077
Employees of this type of School are neat in their appearance	Public	200	4.15	0.687	0.069
	Private	200	4.19	0.581	0.058
Materials associated with the service are visually appealing at this type of School.	Public	200	4.03	0.703	0.07
	Private	200	4.08	0.8	0.08
Tangibility Dimension	Public	200	3.8525	0.76775	0.07675
	Private	200	4.1475	0.7325	0.073
This type of School provides services they promise	Public	200	3.57	0.868	0.087
	Private	200	3.82	0.978	0.098

	Type of School	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
When a pupil has a problem, this type of School will show a sincere interest in solving it	Public	200	3.87	0.884	0.088
	Private	200	3.89	0.875	0.087
This type of school performs services right the first time	Public	200	3.59	0.78	0.078
	Private	200	3.87	0.706	0.071
This type of School provides services at the promised time	Public	200	3.84	0.677	0.068
	Private	200	3.93	0.671	0.067
This type of School maintains error free records.	Public	200	3.72	1.016	0.102
	Private	200	4.12	0.879	0.088
Reliability Dimension	Public	200	3.718	0.845	0.0846
	Private	200	3.926	0.8218	0.0822
This type of School tells pupils exactly what services will be performed	Public	200	3.93	0.82	0.082
	Private	200	4.1	0.718	0.072
This type of School gives prompt services to Pupils	Public	200	4.05	0.744	0.074
	Private	200	4.11	0.723	0.072
This type of School is always willing to help Pupils	Public	200	4.14	0.636	0.064
	Private	200	4.19	0.631	0.063
This type of School is always ready to respond to Pupils' requests	Public	200	3.95	0.833	0.083
	Private	200	4.04	0.887	0.089
Responsiveness Dimension	Public	200	4.0175	0.75825	0.07575
	Private	200	4.11	0.73975	0.074

Source: Field Data (2016).

Table 7 EXPERIENCES FROM BASIC SCHOOLS					
	Type of School	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
The behavior of employees in this type of School instills confidence in Pupils	Public	200	3.98	0.765	0.077
	Private	200	4.13	0.677	0.068
Pupils of this type of School feel safe in their relationships with staff	Public	200	4.05	0.687	0.069
	Private	200	4.15	0.744	0.074
Employees of this type of School are consistently courteous with Pupils	Public	200	4	0.651	0.065
	Private	200	4.36	0.644	0.064
Employees of this type of School have knowledge to answer Pupils' questions	Public	200	4.09	0.712	0.071
	Private	200	4.24	0.726	0.073
Assurance Dimension	Public	200	4.03	0.70375	0.0705
	Private	200	4.22	0.69775	0.06975
This type of School gives Pupils individual attention	Public	200	3.84	1.012	0.101
	Private	200	3.97	0.87	0.087
This type of School has operating hours convenient to all their Pupils	Public	200	**3.9**	0.759	0.076
	Private	200	**3.99**	0.893	0.089
This type of School has employees who give Pupils`	Public	200	3.99	0.835	0.083

personal services	Private	200	3.99	0.798	0.08
This type of School has their Pupils' best interest at heart	Public	200	4.31	0.692	0.069
	Private	200	4.4	0.778	0.078
The employees of this type of School understand the specific needs of their Pupils.	Public	200	4.05	0.672	0.067
	Private	200	4.21	0.957	0.096
Empathy Dimension	Public	200	4.018	0.794	0.0792
	Private	200	4.112	0.8592	0.086

Source: Field Data (2016).

Using the mean statistics of respondents which evaluate the overall level of agreement to the statements, as indicated in Tables 6 & 7, it can be noticed that the mean scores for all 22 items were relatively lower for expectation than the mean scores for the same items for the perception. The relatively low values were recorded for both private and public basic schools implying that respondents have high expectations for private basic schools.

The Satisfaction Level of Pupils of Private and Public Basic Schools In Tamale Metropolis

Table 8 SATISFACTION LEVELS AT BOTH KINDS OF BASIC SCHOOLS					
SERVQUAL DIMENSIONS	**Type of School**	**Sample Size**	**Expectation**	**Perception**	**Gap**
Tangibility Dimension	Public	200	4.275	3.8525	-0.4225
	Private	200	4.405	4.1475	-0.2575
Reliability Dimension	Public	200	4.082	3.718	-0.364
	Private	200	4.294	3.926	-0.368
Responsiveness Dimension	Public	200	4.26	4.0175	-0.2425
	Private	200	4.3975	4.11	-0.2875
Assurance	Public	200	4.265	4.03	-0.235
	Private	200	4.395	4.22	-0.175
Empathy Dimension	Public	200	4.088	4.018	-0.07
	Private	200	4.336	4.112	-0.224

Source: Field Data (2016).

Table 8 measures the gap between expectations and perception of pupils for both public and private basic schools. For both private and public the study recorded negative values for gap scores. The values range from a low of -0.07 for empathy to high value of -0.4225 for tangibility.

The Level of Service Quality at Private and Public Basic Schools in Tamale Metropolis

Table 9 SERVICE QUALITY AT BOTH PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS					
Item	Type of School	Samples Size	Expectation	Perception	Gap
Service Quality	Public	200	4.194	3.9272	-0.2668
	Private	200	4.3655	4.1031	-0.2624

Source: Field Data (2016).

Table 9 shows expectation, perception and Gap (difference between perception (experience) and expectation). Parasuraman et al. (1985, 1988) introduced the gap score as a means to measure service quality and they identified satisfaction as a determinant of service quality. They however, restricted their inference of satisfaction from service quality to a gap score between perceptions and expectations. The gap scores are the difference between the perception and expectation scores with a range of values from 1 to 5. The gap scores measure service quality and hence customer satisfaction. The more perceptions are close to expectations, the higher the perceived level of quality. As per this study the largest gaps scores recorded in the case of Public basic schools related to Tangibility (-0.4225). Public and private basic schools had reliability gap values of -0.364 and -0.368 respectively. Private basic schools' gap value of (-0.2875) for responsiveness.

The satisfaction level is determined by the Gap score. The negative gap scores depicts dissatisfaction. Therefore respondents were dissatisfied with the level of Service Quality from both types of schools. A study by Bradley, (2006) of the educational services quality using SERVQUAL method among Chinese postgraduate students showed a situation similar to what has been observed in this work. Variations in the negative gap scores show the extent of the dissatisfaction. Smaller gap scores are better than the larger ones. Table 9 shows the service quality at both private and public schools. The average of the five (5) dimensions resulted in the Service Quality for the two types of school. According to Parasuraman et al. (1988), overall service quality is measured by obtaining an average gap score of the SERVQUAL dimensions. Using the gap scores, both type of schools recorded negative means implying dissatisfaction. However, with the perception (Experience) from both types of schools; the Private school type recorded a higher mean of above 4.0 implying some level of agreement on their delivery of service quality. The quality of service in private schools is higher than the Public basic schools due the former recording of -0.0044 less than the later Abdallah (2006). Based on the results, private schools provide relatively better service quality at the basic schools level than public basic schools. According to Parasuraman et al. (1988), it is however common for consumer's expectation to exceed the actual service perceived and this signifies that there is always need for improvement.

Most of the respondents in this study expect excellent performance by basic schools in terms of all five of SERVQUAL. As per the study Tangibility dimension recorded the highest mean score whiles Reliability dimension recorded the least mean score regarding expectation. Three items which recorded least mean scores in terms of student expectations included perform services right at the first time; consistently courteous with pupils; and giving pupils personal services. Regarding perception, respondents from both public and private were unanimous that schools deliver on all items and dimensions except the following: Modern looking equipment; visually appealing environment; delivering on promise; sincere interest is solving pupil problems; delivering services right the first time for both type of schools; insist on error free records for public schools and many more The Assurance dimension recorded the highest means score while the Reliability dimension recorded the least mean score for respondents` perception. This result implied that pupils were relatively more satisfied with the Assurance dimension relative to the other four dimensions of Service quality.

The satisfaction level was determined by the Gap score. All SERVQUAL dimensions recorded negative gap scores. A negative gap score depicts dissatisfaction. Hence, respondents were dissatisfied with the level of Service Quality from both types of schools. In general, it was found that, customers' perceptions of service quality offered by basic schools did not meet

their expectations (all gaps scores the dimensions are negative). Dimensions that reported larger mean gaps were Public basic schools' Tangibility (-0.4225); Public and private basic schools' reliability (-0.364 and -0.368); Private basic schools' responsiveness (-0.2875). These values show that the perception of performance in basic schools is less than the expected level of service quality. Consumers have higher expectations than what they actually receive from basic schools even though the difference is not wide.

Defining and measuring quality service is of importance to educational service providers. Service quality is an interesting approach for discovering student expectations and perceptions on quality. Examination of service quality levels can help us better understand satisfaction levels with service offerings (Yildiz & Kara, 2009). While the importance of service quality is widely accepted, significant disagreements exist with respect to its measurement. These disagreements led researchers to develop several different service quality measurement instruments (SERVQUAL, SERVPERF, HEdPERF, and so on). However, despite their availability, there is no consensus among researchers with respect to which one should be used to measure service quality (Firdaus, 2006a; Sakthivel & Raju, 2006). In this study, the perceptions; expectations; and satisfaction with basic education service quality have been used to identify areas needing improvement at both private and public basic schools, it also identifies those areas in which the schools are effective in providing quality services. Also, it is clear that service quality has relationship with pupil satisfaction. Thus, it confirms what other literature had suggested by improving service quality a school would potentially improve the pupils' satisfaction. Improving students` experience has become the priority of most private institutions due to the fact that they have to compete to attract or retain more students. It is important to note here that the two dimensions in service quality most critical in explaining students' satisfaction are empathy and assurance. Whatever that is done to increase empathy and assurance in service quality could help improve students` experience with the basic schools in the area.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The expectations from private schools were higher than the public schools on all five SERVQUAL dimensions. Interestingly the standard deviations were less at private schools than at public school. This manifestation reports the extent of similarity in agreement of the SERVQUAL dimensions. In addition, the experiences from the private schools were higher than the public schools on all five SERVQUAL dimensions. However, the Empathy dimensions. Both school types are encouraged to improve on their infrastructure with touching teaching and learning facilities and excellent Teacher - pupils' relationship. School Authorities and Stakeholders should ensure the building designs of schools are befitting that of a school rather than the traditional structures currently being built. Teaching and Learning such as updated libraries, security systems, medical facilities, class decoration and facilitation with multimedia and sitting arrangement. Also Student information system (database) is a platform that enables schools to have up to date records of pupils and also easier to retrieve interface.

This is recommended to both school types so that based on the information on pupils, can facilitate in the delivery of educational service. Student Orientations are periodic forums aimed at providing pupil with information and encouragement. The forums are recommended to schools due to its ability to provide pupils with the opportunity to verified issues they are not sure of.   A few limitations of this study are noted but can be seen as opportunities to design and develop future studies. First of all, sample size used in this study limits its ability to generalize these results to broader populations. The sample was collected from only eight schools based on

their performance at the 2012 Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) results. Also, data were collected from current pupils. Therefore, future studies should improve on the sample size.   More so, this present study was a cross sectional, thus future studies could employ longitudinal studies to assess the educational service quality. Future studies might as well attempt at developing new measures for basic education as in the case of SERVPERF and HEdPERF were develop earlier.

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