STUDENTS AS OUR CUSTOMERS:

A PARADIGM SHIFT

A STUDY OF THE CHANGING FOCUS FOR POLYTECHNICS AS A RESULT OF THE TERTIARY EDUCATION REFORMS

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ABSTRACT

Tertiary Education in New Zealand has undergone major reform since 1990. The fourth Labour Government of the mid 1980's with its New Right philosophy made the whole New Zealand economy more market driven and this included education. New legislation was passed in the form of the Education Act 1989 and the Education Amendment Act 1990. The National Government elected in October 1990 continued the reforms which included a student loan scheme and changes to the bulk funding regime.

This thesis seeks to identify those aspects of the tertiary reforms which have had a significant impact on polytechnics and explains their effects. In particular it considers aspects of the philosophies of customer service, service quality and customer expectation which come from this business perspective and also seeks to determine how this market orientation fits into the context of tertiary education.

A case study approach using qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection was adopted for this research and seeks to identify whether the customer service paradigm has impacted on one large urban polytechnic. Two faculties in this polytechnic were used for the case study, and staff and students were surveyed and interviewed, to determine whether customer need and expectation were being met in some key areas identified by student focus groups. The results of the case study reveal that there has been a paradigm shift in the polytechnic studied and students are being recognised as customers of the institute.

The findings of this research reveal four major themes which are discussed in the context of the interview transcripts, survey data and supporting literature. The first shows the influence that the government's drive for efficiencies and cost effectiveness has had on polytechnic teaching strategies as well as institutions needing to meet the expectation of its major customers: the students. The second finding is that the greater autonomy the tertiary reforms gave to polytechnics to develop their own academic programmes through to degree level, is in fact under threat from the stringent approval and accreditation procedures set by NZQA; the influence of the National Qualifications Framework; and the need for polytechnics to determine their customers' needs, be they students and/or industry. Thirdly there is a dilemma faced by institutions in trying to find a balance between providing the raft of facilities and services their customers need and expect, with the financial constraints of bulk funding and acceptable fee levels. Finally the results show that the primary marketing tool of the institution is student satisfaction with the education received and services provided. This is communicated by word of mouth and at no cost to the institution and outweighs the influence of expensive marketing strategies.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Objective

The genesis of this thesis grew from an intense interest by the researcher on the impact of a series of education administration reforms in New Zealand, and in particular in the tertiary or higher education sector. The researcher is a senior manager in a large urban polytechnic, and involved in interaction between students and the administration of the institute. It was not only out of his administrative involvement but also having been a student of that same institution and then another tertiary institution, that the issue of customer service and the concept of students being customers of the organisation arose. Over the last three years this interest has grown into a passion to understand just what students expect from their tertiary institution in terms of service delivery, both from the teaching and learning processes, as well as administrative support and other facilities.

The purpose of this study is to understand the concept of students as customers of tertiary institutions in the context of the tertiary reforms which have taken place in New Zealand and using a case study design within one polytechnic.

1.2 New Zealand Education Context

The administration of education in New Zealand is divided into four sectors: Early Childhood, Primary, Secondary and Tertiary. Until 1989 these were largely administered by ten Education Boards and the Department of Education, although each institution had committees, Boards of Governors, or Councils to oversee the day to day operations but with little or no authority to make any major decisions. University Councils had more authority than the rest of the sector but were still subject to some centralised control. Most of the institutions were funded by reimbursing grants with major expenditure including salaries administered by the central agencies. In some situations the appointment of staff was also handled centrally.

Over the last nine to ten years education administration in New Zealand has undergone substantial change. This was largely initiated by new thinking which emerged during the term of the fourth Labour government and which Lauder (1990:1) calls "a New Right revolution in New Zealand which has sought to change the relationships between the state, the economy and civil society." A number of reports were commissioned by the former Department of Education in response to requests from former Labour and National governments. A very significant report for education administration as a whole was the Tomorrow's Schools report which was the government's response to a working party chaired by Brian Picot. Picot (1988:xi) comments that the administrative structure for education was overcentralised and made overly complex by having too many decision points. He suggested that to be effective an administrative system must be as simple as possible with decisions made as close as possible to where they are carried out and that the structure should be open to scrutiny and should promote responsiveness to client (or customer) demands. Among the report's recommendations was the dissolution of Education Boards and instead, the establishment of Boards of Trustees to manage Early Childhood, Primary and Secondary education and, to give more authority to the Councils of Polytechnics and Colleges of Education. It is worthwhile noting that Universities were outside the terms of references for the Taskforce led by Brian Picot.

The fourth Labour Government adopted a number of the recommendations of the Tomorrow's Schools report which included changing the Department of Education into a Ministry primarily responsible for education policy and funding leaving the Board of Trustees to be responsible for decision making and day to day operation of schools at the local level.

1.3 Tertiary Education Reform

Immediately following the release of the Tomorrow's Schools report the Labour government commissioned a report into tertiary education, this time including Universities. The working group was chaired by Professor Gary Hawke and similarly recommended sweeping changes within the entire tertiary sector. Hawke (1988) cites the Picot report as containing recommendations which are equally appropriate for post compulsory education and training. He also discusses competition between tertiary institutions as always existing where scarce resources have to be allocated. On the other hand he also promotes co-operation between institutions stating - "Intelligent individuals and well-managed organisations recognise that they damage their own interests by not finding what they can do best while co-operating with people and organisations who are better able to provide some complementary service or good" (ibid:24) He further states that education is no different from other businesses and that the essential objective is to find the best balance of co-operation and competition. Comments like this seem to have been latched on to by current National government and funding constraints, and other government policy initiatives are forcing the beginning of the era of an education industry.

A further aspect of the changes proposed in the Hawke report is the balance between public and private funding of tertiary education. He takes the philosophy of "user pays", which was first flagged in Treasury briefing papers to the government in 1994 and promoted to a more in depth extent in their briefing papers to the incoming government in 1987, to promote alternative options to government funding. The 1995 report by the government taskforce led by Jeff Todd made significant recommendations concerning funding for tertiary education and these are discussed further in Chapter Two.

One of the innovations by the government following the Hawke report was the introduction of the student loan scheme in 1991. This scheme has not been without its controversy since its introduction and still today is often the central feature of student protests along with fees and tertiary funding issues in general. There have been many newspaper articles and other media publicity about the loan scheme and an example of recent research is Baldwin *et al* (1995) who investigate the hypothesis that negative perceptions of debt to fund tertiary study may be inhibiting student enrolment at university. That study was made from the perspective of secondary school pupils as prospective students. The case study within this thesis will also consider some aspects of the student loan scheme with current students.

While the two reports commissioned by the fourth Labour government refer to tertiary education as a whole, Hawke also makes specific mention of polytechnics. This is particularly directed at the delivery of tertiary education and makes recommendations which included polytechnics being free to adjust their mix of courses to suit the needs of their community including the ability to offer degrees. Proposals for mechanisms to deal with such educational development are dealt with under a national educational qualifications agency which, since the Education Amendment Act 1990 was enacted, is known as the New Zealand Qualifications Authority. While this thesis does not investigate policies related to the National Qualifications Framework and other aspects of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority's administration, the case study does investigate the options and choices now available to students as a result of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority policy and whether those choices do provide the flexibility for study that the student as the customer seeks.

It has already been stated that a large number of recommendations contained in both the Picot and Hawke reports were adopted by the government of the day and legislated in the Education Act 1989 and the Education Amendment Act 1990. These have resulted in much greater competition between institutions, particularly in the larger urban areas, to attract students, provide a broader spectrum of programmes of study together with new and improved facilities for students.

As mentioned earlier the 1990's has seen the dawning of the era of the education industry and therefore tertiary providers, both government and private funded, have in effect become businesses as "service providers". They have to be efficient, cost effective and providing educational programmes to suit the needs of their customers. Student Services, or similar departments, have emerged or been strengthened to provide course advice and a variety of support functions to assist students before, during and after their programme of study. Registries and enrolment centres have also needed to enhance enrolment processing, and student loans and allowances have become an integral part of the student's enrolment package.

1.4 Quality Systems and Customer Service

With the government's emphasis on the business style operation of tertiary educational institutions, the concept of quality, which is a key word in the business world these days, has become important with education being no exception. Once again a number of reports and journal articles have emerged from overseas which have researched into the concept of quality in higher or tertiary education, and all bring out the need for institutions to see students as customers and to provide quality learning programmes and administrative services. Reports of research are beginning to emerge in New Zealand concerning the concept of students being customers, but to date there appears to be little which evaluates whether institutions, and in particular polytechnics, are treating their students as customers and improving or increasing their service provision. It was Hawke (1988) who initiated the notion of the student as a customer by stating that students are the direct clients or customers of the learning institution and that the institution must be responsive to the needs of the customer. The concepts of customer service and service quality are therefore investigated both in a business setting and in the context of tertiary education

1.5 Methodology

This thesis uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection in a case study approach. The case study is in two faculties of a large urban polytechnic and seeks to ascertain the student and staff perspectives of customer service and identify the extent to which customer expectation is being met. Focus groups were first established to identify issues which students considered were important to them and the outcomes were grouped into key areas to form the questions for the surveys. The student survey was carried out on a random group of classes, on an agreed day early in the second semester of 1997, whilst the staff survey was conducted via a pigeonhole drop at the same time.

A series of in-depth interviews were also carried out with voluntary participants. The interviews sought to explore further the key issues raised by the questionnaires by drawing on the experience and opinions of eight students, six academic staff and three mangers. Their responses are then discussed in association with the four key themes which emerge from the findings of the surveys and in the context of the tertiary reforms and customer service paradigm. Implications of these findings for the government, tertiary education in general, and then more specifically for the polytechnic sector are then discussed and finally some recommendations for further research are made.

As already stated the main focus of this research is on the polytechnic sector and the specific aims are :

- To identify and outline the tertiary reforms promulgated through the Education Act 1989 and the Education Act 1990 as they relate to polytechnics;

- To investigate the philosophy of students as customers, studying the attitudes and perceptions of polytechnic staff, both administrative and academic, in considering their students as customers;

- To identify the changes or new services, study options, and teaching delivery modes available to students in terms of meeting customer needs;

- To study and document student expectation of service provision.

1.6 Organisation of Thesis

This thesis comprises seven chapters, the first being this introduction which sets the scene for the research and provides an outline of the New Zealand education context.

Chapter Two identifies the tertiary reforms from the various reports commissioned by the two governments of the late 1980's and the associated legislation, and then discusses those reforms and their impact on the polytechnic sector Chapter Three investigates some of the literature on customer service both from a business perspective and an educational perspective again relating this philosophy to polytechnics. Chapter Four provides a detailed explanation of the research methodology.

The remaining three chapters of the thesis discuss the case study. Firstly in Chapter Five by reporting the results of the surveys, then in Chapter Six some conclusions are drawn from the findings and expanded further by the use of the interview transcriptions. Finally in Chapter Seven some implications for government, tertiary education generally, and more specifically for polytechnics, are identified. The thesis concludes with five recommendations for further research relating to tertiary education and also for the institution which has been the subject of the case study.

CHAPTER TWO

EDUCATION POLICY AND TERTIARY REFORMS

In order to explore the concept of students as the customers of polytechnics it is first necessary to identify and discuss the reforms in the New Zealand tertiary education sector which have taken place in the past ten years. This is the first of two chapters of literature review and focuses on the relevant literature within the New Zealand context.

2.1 Fourth Labour Government and the New Right

Since the first Labour Government of 1935 there has been a commitment to state funded education. Although there have been several reviews of education administration during the period up until 1984 there has been little change in the way education administration has operated for the last 100 years. The fourth Labour government was elected in 1984, and as quoted in Chapter One but is worth repeating, Lauder (1990:1) signals the government as "creating a New Right revolution in New Zealand which has sought to change the relationships between the state, the economy and civil society." He suggests that the Treasury was primarily responsible for the promotion of such policies, even going as far as to suggest that they were advocating some of the most pristine New Right policies in the western world. Codd (1990:195-196) makes the comment that, "following the 1984 election, Treasury became the most powerful bureaucratic influence in state policy-making." He believes that Sir Roger Douglas, then Labour's Minister of

Finance, was "Treasury's voice in Cabinet which enabled them to provide the blueprint for Labour's programme of monetarist reforms (ibid)." In addressing education in its briefing papers to the incoming government, Treasury states -

> The poor performance of the education sector has adverse effects on the adjustment of the labour market directly, and indirectly on the overall economy. Demand for education is substantially derived from the need to acquire labour market skills and because of this individuals have clear incentives to invest in education. To the extent that the responses of the education sector are overly lagged in adapting to changes in underlying demands, labour market adjustment is impeded rather than assisted.
> (The Treasury, 1984:268)

It is Lauder's (1990:11) opinion that this passage encapsulates New Right thinking. He says that Treasury's view that education is "fundamentally a vehicle for the acquisition of marketable skills, and hence wealth and status, and the idea that education is a personal investment are both concomitants of the possessive individual, of their human nature and its economic offspring, the theory of human capital" (ibid). He goes as far as to say that Treasury's claim that education has performed poorly is not made on the basis of research but rather a deduction from New Right dogma that all state monopolies are inefficient.

Lauder (ibid.) sees the New Right educational policy as based on two fundamental principles: the first is the view that education is a private good and should therefore be paid for by the individual, and the second principle is that of competition. He says that for the New Right, the absence of competition leads to inefficiency within the educational system resulting in a mismatch between the skills produced by schools and those required by the labour market.

Although Treasury was making such comments as those above in its briefing papers to the incoming government, the Labour Party itself, in its manifesto for the 1984 election, included a policy proposal to provide greater autonomy to technical institutes through a Technical Institutes Grants Committee. This signalled, to a limited extent, that the government intended to make a partial review of tertiary education. To reinforce this notion, the Minister of Education, The Honourable Russell Marshall, immediately after election to office, sought advice from Mr John Hercus (then Director of Christchurch Polytechnic) and Mr Ian Young (then Director of Continuing Education in the Department of Education) to advise him how to proceed with such a review (Probine, Fargher, 1987:1). Their report was presented to the Minister in August 1985 and because the two could not agree on the method of establishing and supporting a Technical Institutes Grants Committee they gave two options:

(a) an authority which is outside of any Government department or any other authority, with its own staff and having direct responsibility to the Ministry; or

(b) a Grants Committee, set up by, and answerable to the Minister, while working within and largely drawing its resources from the Department of Education.

2.2 Probine/Fargher Report

Following the Hercus/Young report two more options were added, but since there was a lack of agreement on any of the options, the Ministry set up a further working party jointly chaired by Dr Mervyn Probine and Mr Ray Fargher. Their brief was largely to study the management, funding and organisation of continuing education and training. Forty-six recommendations emanated from this report, the most radical recommendation being that the responsibility for continuing education be separated from the Department of Education, and that the present responsibilities of the Department in this area, plus the Labour Department's responsibilities for training, pass to a statutory Board to be known as the Continuing Education and Training Board.

A number of the recommendations were more of an administrative, operational nature and many of these have been implemented, intentionally or unintentionally, following the implementation of the Hawke report which is covered later in this chapter.

2.3 Picot Report and Tomorrow's Schools

A change of Minister of Education during the first term in office of the fourth Labour government, saw the commissioning of a taskforce to look at a much wider picture, that of education administration as a whole. The taskforce led by Auckland businessman Brian Picot were given five key elements in its terms of reference. The report compiled by the taskforce entitled Administering for Excellence (Picot, 1988), became more well known as the "Picot" report, and recommended wide sweeping changes for education administration including the demise of the ten education boards; changing the Department of Education into a smaller Ministry; the establishment of school boards of trustees for the country's early childhood and compulsory school sectors, together with some increased powers for the Councils of Polytechnics, Colleges of Education and Universities. In the executive summary of the report they state:

> An effective administrative system must be as simple as possible and decisions should be made as close as possible to where they are carried out. Because the state provides the funds and retains a strong interest in educational outcomes, there must be national objectives and clear responsibilities and goals. To ensure these goals are reached, decisions must be made in a co-ordinated way in a structure in which decision makers have control over the available resources and are then held accountable for what is achieved. Finally the structure should be open to scrutiny and should promote responsiveness to client demands (Picot,1988: xi).

This is where the first hint is given of the term "client" or "customer" being used in the sphere of education. The report contained nine major recommendations and the government response to the recommendations is in the publication entitled Tomorrow's

Schools (Lange, 1988). The Picot report only briefly mentions tertiary education and Tomorrow's Schools is specifically for primary and secondary education. As a consequence the government set up two other working parties to consider early childhood care and education, and post-compulsory education and training.

It is worth noting that the taskforce led by Brian Picot was commissioned in July 1987 around the time of the election campaign for the 1987 general election. At the same time Treasury was preparing its briefing papers to the incoming government and devoted a whole volume to educational issues. The Picot Report was released in May 1988 and Tomorrow's Schools in August 1988. The changeover to the new education administration system was scheduled to take place just over a year later on 1 October 1989.

2.4 Treasury Briefing Papers

With its powerful role in government policy making, Treasury once again presented to the incoming government in 1987, albeit the re-elected Labour Government, its comments on various issues affecting the economy of the country, continuing the theme it began in its briefing papers to the fourth Labour Government in 1984. As Labour was remaining in power, they vowed to continue their commitment to review the administration of education in the country. In response to this, Treasury devoted a whole volume of its briefing papers Government Management to 'Educational Issues'. Codd (1990:200) sees this document as "presenting a graphic account of an education system that is relentlessly squeezed between fiscal and political pressures." He suggested "an analysis reveals a crisis in which state policy-makers, faced with absolute limitation of resources, could no longer meet public expectations and political demands for further extension and improvement of educational provision."

Treasury's comment on the role of government in education is:

> Education's investment benefits, which bring long-term benefits to society as well as the individual, may lie behind the feeling that education does not belong in the marketplace. Education tends to be thought of as a natural sphere for government intervention because it is a social or public good and because of concerns about equity in the private costs and benefits flowing from education. In the technical sense used by economists, education is not in fact a 'public good'...(The Treasury, 1987, Vol. II: 32)

This is a very clear statement of the Treasury economists' views that education is a commodity that belongs in the marketplace like toothpaste or cars or perhaps a service like the hotel industry which is competitive and there for the individual's benefit. They go on to focus more on the individual's benefits of education by stating that not only is a graduate likely to gain a higher wage than a non-graduate but is also likely to gain "psychic" income from higher prestige, greater self confidence, the ability to open more doors and so forth. On the other hand he or she will be subject to societal costs through the taxation needed to pay for higher education perhaps by being a member of a community with higher social tensions, resulting from the inequalities which give value to his or her degree. They conclude that in this way externalities are internalised and become part of the overall package of entitlements expected or accepted by individuals (ibid).

Boston (1990:170), on the other hand, argues that education is a public or *merit* good or *positive right*. He states that most advanced industrialised democracies have not designed their policies for the funding of tertiary education in accordance with the principles of welfare economics. Instead they have adopted a policy framework based on various normative concepts such as rights, social citizenship and the public interest. He considers that one of the most important social rights is the right to be educated and defends it on various grounds. For example:

1. Education is necessary for the development of rationality and autonomy and plays a crucial role in fashioning an individual's character, values, preferences, gifts, talents and capacities.

2. The acquisition of learning and knowledge is closely related to the acquisition of economic and political power. Consequently, access to education is vital if people are to enjoy the benefits and obligations of citizenship and contribute to the governance of their nation and world.

3. Likewise, access to education is crucial for obtaining marketable skills and hence for the capacity of individuals to secure employment and enjoy the wider opportunities of life (Boston, 1990:170).

He goes on to state that if education is regarded as a social right, "it will be incumbent upon a just society to ensure that educational resources are readily and equally accessible to all of its citizens." He acknowledges that this doesn't give individuals the right to consume any kind or amount of education at the state's expense but gives some credence to the notion that the state should be the dominant funder of education, including tertiary education (ibid: 171). Baliles (1994:11-12) also endorses this notion. While Baliles is speaking of America's higher education system the same applies just as much to New Zealand, that is that national leaders do not sufficiently recognise the value of higher education in today's world citing their budget decisions as proof that higher education as a priority is slipping. He also places some blame on the institutions suggesting they do not sufficiently recognise the need to make changes that will keep higher education the number one asset of this nation.

It is probably fair to deduce that Treasury's view is that the state should fund tertiary education to some extent; what percentage that should be remains unstated in their briefing papers. However they do pick up the concept of the individual contributing something to the cost of their tertiary education. They devote a whole chapter to tertiary education acknowledging that at this level institutions are more straightforwardly meeting the demands of their customers. Here again the term "customer" emerges in conjunction with tertiary education and implies that something is being purchased.

They acknowledge there are some benefits from tertiary education and indicate there are already a variety of public and private providers to meet the demand due to technological and social change and increasing emphasis on adult and continuing education, however they pose the question as to why should the government intervene. They state that government intervention cannot make young people independent, it only substitutes dependence on the taxpayer for dependence on the family. They therefore suggest that independence can only be achieved by young people through borrowing on a financial market which has not been crowded out by government subsidy (The Treasury, 1997, Vol. II:172). The concept of "user pays" for tertiary education emerges here and the need to finance it in some way through private means. The Treasury paper uses the scenario that if individuals do not have to borrow to pay for their tertiary education, they will be in a position to use that long term asset of tertiary education to obtain long term debt for other assets. They deduce from this that government subsidy of the costs of tertiary education has the effect of displacing consumer demand for credit from tertiary education to other assets (ibid:177).

Boston (1990:168) picks up on Treasury's acknowledgement that some state funding of tertiary education can be justified on a number of grounds. He cites these as including:

1. the positive externalities generated by such education;
2. the pursuit of equity objectives; and
3. the public returns to state investment in the tertiary sector (Boston 1990:168).

He notes that Treasury considered that current government spending on tertiary education was both excessive and poorly targeted. As has been stated above no specific figures are quoted, but Boston (ibid) suggests that the document makes it plain that most tertiary students should pay the bulk of their course costs as well as their living expenses.

The Treasury report acknowledges the recommendations of the Probine, Fargher (1987) working party, indicating that they go some way toward freeing up the supply side of tertiary education. However, they consider that their effectiveness is greatly reduced due to the considerable powers still retained by a central agency (The Treasury, 1990, Vol. II:195). Their conclusion is that the general availability of government funding for all students is liable to be inefficient and inadequate. They, therefore, see that for the generality of students, only limited government subsidy, to reflect general social benefits not captured by the individuals concerned, can be justified as possibly effective and not grossly inequitable. Beyond that, targeted assistance for those disadvantaged in borrowing money on the capital markets may help meeting equity and agency concerns (ibid:286).

2.5 The Hawke Report

Professor Gary Hawke was requested by the Cabinet Social Equity Committee to convene a working group to specifically look at the role of government in Post-Compulsory Education and Training (hereafter called PCET) drawing together a number of reports over the previous two years and to recommend to the government what decisions should be made.

These reports include some of which have been commented on earlier:

> Probine/Fargher Report on Polytechnics (*The Management, Funding, and Organisation of Continuing Education and Training; March 1987)*
> Shallcrass Report on nonformal education (*He Tangata : September 1987)*
> The Treasury Briefing Papers (*Government Management, Vol. II, Educational Issues: 1987)*
> Watts Report on Universities *(New Zealand Universities: Partners in National Development: October 1987)*
> The Tertiary Review *(Report on Submissions to the Tertiary Review:February 1988)*
> The Report of the Royal Commission on Social Policy *(The April Report: April 1988)*
> The Picot Report on Educational Administration (*Administering for Excellence: May 1988).*

Hawke (1988:14) defines postcompulsory education and training as "the *plural curricula* experienced by persons over the age of 15 and includes all state and independent institutions providing formal education and training and arrangements for informal, on the job education and training provided by enterprises and other organisations for their employees." He sees PCET as a very wide process covering a range of institutional teaching, on job training, organised self-motivated learning and informal acquisition of knowledge and understanding. He considers that within the economic and social role of PCET is the need for structures and mechanisms to be both appropriate and flexible enough to ensure that the overall system is responsive to the needs of individuals, the economy, the state and society (ibid).

He acknowledges that New Zealand's PCET system could contribute more to both economic efficiency and social equity. The report recommends a degree of decentralisation allowing major decision making to take place within the institutions, suggesting this should create greater economic efficiency (ibid:6). Like the Picot report before it, Hawke recommends that charters be established by the institutions as the main link between a Ministry of Education and the institution. The report contains a total of fifty-three recommendations under five broad headings:

1. Economic and social role of PCET
2. Role of government in PCET
3. Funding Issues
4. The central structure
5. Delivery of education and training
   (Hawke, 1988:8-13)

One of the significant and perhaps radical recommendations of the Hawke report is that New Zealand follow the Australian system of fees and government-funded income-contingent loans. Boston (1990:171) states that this proposal would involve students paying 20 per cent of their course costs and funding this, where necessary, by means of a government loan. He also notes that some exemptions of fees would apply to certain courses. He criticises Hawke's proposal that the loan scheme, because of its use of the tax system, be referred to as a 'graduate tax,' although students would have to pay the tax surcharge regardless of whether they completed their studies or not. It is his view therefore, that it could hardly be called a 'graduate' tax (ibid:172). Boston also comments on the Hawke proposal for the 20 per cent fee structure using the defence that the tertiary sector desperately needed additional resources to cope with expanding rolls and to improve educational standards, and that the state could not afford to spend any more on tertiary education. Boston refers to the report as contending that it was equitable for students to bear a greater proportion of their tuition costs because of the substantial private benefits which most students, particularly those who attend university, are said to derive from their courses (ibid:172). Once again the "New Right" philosophy appears to be coming to the fore, that education is a more of a private good than a public good.

2.6 Learning for Life: One, and Learning for Life: Two

The government in responding to the Hawke report sets out its policy and the direction for post-compulsory education and training in two documents Learning for Life: One which was released in February 1989 and Learning for Life: Two which was released in August 1989. The government also signalled that the statements in Learning for Life: One that refer to the broad policy and philosophical aspects of PCET should be taken to refer to all education and training over the age of fifteen, but that in practical terms the delivery of PCET remains split between the school and post-school sectors. The institutional administrative reforms in the documents apply purely to post-school institutions. (Lange & Goff 1989. Vol. 1:1). It is worth noting that the timing of the release of both these documents is prior to the implementation of the review of education administration as promulgated under Tomorrow's Schools (Lange, 1988) on 1 October 1989. This implementation includes the disestablishment of the Department of Education and the establishment of a Ministry of Education, which was also an integral part of the implementation of Learning for Life (Lange & Goff, 1989).

It is intended to consider these documents more fully as they form the basis of the way in which polytechnics operate today and bring to reality the philosophies of the New Right and a "user pays" society specifically in tertiary education. The key decisions are summarised in seven statements in the introduction to Learning for Life: One -

- **Institutional independence and freedom to make operational and management decisions.**
- **Ministry of Education to be a policy ministry not an operational department.**
- **New mechanism for government funding**

- **Changes in funding of scholarship and research**
- **A national education qualifications authority**
- **Charters and Corporate plans of Institutions to encourage greater participation in post-school education and training.**
- **Overall the post-compulsory education and training system will actively encourage excellence.**

(Lange & Goff 1989. Vol. 1:2-3)

What do these key statements mean in real terms?

The Structure of Institutions:

Post-school education and training institutions were to be defined in legislation as bodies-corporate with extensive powers (ibid:11). As further consideration was given to the implementation process by the government's implementation team the second publication Learning for Life: Two adds that those powers will not be unlimited. Institutions are required to operate under a charter, similar to that required in the primary and secondary school sectors provided in the Tomorrow's Schools (Lange, 1988) implementation process. The corporate plan has become a vital part of each institution's planning and operational objectives, and Learning for Life: Two describes specific information which must be contained in the corporate plans. (Goff, 1989. Vol. 2 18-20). Institutions are specifically required to demonstrate a commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi and to specify methods of attracting disadvantaged groups to post-school education and training. (Lange & Goff. 1989:13).1 Although polytechnics, (as well as universities and colleges of education) already operated with governing councils the new policy revised the composition of those councils and required new councils to be elected upon the introduction of the new system. Learning for Life: Two dealt with these issues in a more detailed manner. A fundamental element for staff of the post-school or tertiary education sector has been academic freedom. The Learning for Life documents recognise this and state that this will be set out and protected in the legislation (ibid:19-28).

The government, in its drive for competition and a business approach within the sector, recognises the role of private training providers and indicates that not only can such institutions negotiate charters with the Ministry of Education under the new legislation, but they may also qualify for government funding in some instances (ibid:23).

With the introduction of the charter and corporate plan also came the annual report. Tertiary Institutions are subject to the Public Finance Act 1989 and therefore the annual report is required, not only to be tabled in parliament, but to include information required by the Controller and Auditor-General. The intention also being for the performance of the institutions to be measured against their corporate plan and achievements detailed in the annual report (Lange & Goff, 1989. Vol. 1:13 and Goff, Vol. 2:29).

Both the documents refer to the review and audit of institutions to be subject to a Review and Audit Agency proposed in the Tomorrow's Schools reforms. However the Education Review Office, as it has become known, was not given powers to review tertiary institutions. The only external audit is carried out by Audit New Zealand. However, as proposed in the tertiary reforms, the National Education Qualifications Authority known as the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, is required to accredit institutions to deliver national qualifications (ibid: 29). This is dealt with further in point number three.

Anecdotal evidence would suggest that these parts of the reforms have certainly been welcomed by polytechnics, as well as the other tertiary institutions, as it has let them develop their own cultures and academic direction including many new entrepreneurial initiatives not previously possible. One of these initiatives is the marketing of polytechnics overseas to attract international students to New Zealand to study. These students are required to pay the full cost of tuition thereby creating new income streams for the institutions. The government's Skill New Zealand[1] policy and the advent of Industry Training Organisations (ITO's) has also resulted in highly competitive contracts being negotiated with Polytechnics and a proliferation of private training providers all contesting for the dollars to deliver off-job training programmes.

The Funding of Institutions:

This is one of the most significant aspects of the tertiary reforms and one which has probably caused the most controversy. Learning for Life: One stated that a bulk funding mechanism would be adopted from which institutions would meet all their own costs including capital spending. It also announced that it would be determined by a funding formula based on the nominal value of full-time-equivalent students (hereafter called EFTS) (Lange & Goff, 1989. Vol. 1: 17). This heralded a significant change for polytechnics as they had previously been funded on reimbursing grants based on student hours, and teaching staff had been paid through the national teachers' payroll system. At the time of publication of Learning for Life: One a task force was established to analyse the proposed funding model with the intention that the overall level of

[1] Skill New Zealand is the government's strategy to raise the performance of New Zealanders in the workforce through industry-driven training. The Skill New Zealand strategy is co-ordinated by the Education Training and Support Agency and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (described later in this chapter).

funding would be set three years in advance on what was to become known as a rolling-triennium (ibid:17). Learning for Life: Two gave considerably more detail of the proposed funding scheme although no actual figures were provided at that point. It did, however, state that from 1 July 1990 the bulk funding of institutions would commence with the first triennium operating from 1 January 1991.

Included in the proposed funding regime was the adoption of Hawke's (1988) recommendation that students pay a proportion of their course costs. Lange and Goff (1989:18) adopted the 20 per cent fee level linked to a loan scheme, but did not adopt all the facets of the loan scheme recommended by the Hawke (1988) report. Boston (1990:172-3) notes that the Labour Government adopted a uniform fee for each year of full-time study rather than the Hawke proposal which would see the fee varying from one course to another. They also rejected the idea of using the tax system as the instrument for collecting loan repayments. Instead they proposed a state supported loan scheme operated by banks and other private sector financial institutions. Boston (ibid) comments that if the experience of other OECD countries was anything to go by the banks would not be keen to co-operate. The United Kingdom is an excellent example of this. Woodhall (1994:95) reports that when the government introduced a loan scheme there was bitter controversy over the scheme as a whole and the banks refused to co-operate. A special Student Loans Company was established and began operation in 1990. New Zealand was to experience the same opposition when the Labour Government tried to set up a loan scheme. This proved Boston to be right! It is proposed that later in this chapter further comment will be given on the loan scheme as it has been established.

While the bulk funding regime was designed to provide greater autonomy and efficiency within institutions, the government was still faced with the dilemma of funding any expansion of the tertiary sector. Boston (1990: 176) looks at several options for funding tertiary education recognising that there are few available. Options such as the government limiting its expenditure in real terms at their present levels and preventing institutions from increasing fees; restricting entry to some courses; and increasing the top marginal tax rate are all espoused with their corresponding pros and cons. He deduces that, if all such options are rejected, the only feasible way of funding an expansion of places in the tertiary sector is by increasing the proportion paid by students. One particular concern of Boston is that if the Labour government's EFTS funding regime was adopted, there would be nothing to stop successive governments reducing the level of expenditure resulting in a corresponding increase in the level paid by students (ibid:176). Needless to say the EFTS system was introduced in 1990 by the government with a fixed 'base' tuition fee, although there were some rebates and exceptions on income related and selected course basis.

The Role of Institutions:

Another significant part of this section in the Learning for Life documents is the role of institutions and other providers. It recognises that post-compulsory education and training is delivered in a variety of ways, using a wide range of institutions and other providers. In a move to make the delivery of tertiary education more competitive, the government allowed colleges of education to be able to offer a variety of courses in the manner of polytechnics and universities (Lange & Goff, 1990: 22), and polytechnics to be able to offer courses at degree level. The methodology for this was not to be the same as for universities, but instead, by a validation or accreditation process through the New

Zealand Qualifications Authority. This has opened up a new doorway for polytechnics and many are now offering degrees at the Bachelor and Masterate level. Some polytechnics have developed partnerships with universities by offering some first and second year courses while others have developed their own degrees. Some of these are in disciplines which have traditionally not been offered by the universities, such as Nursing, Tourism, Quantity Surveying, and Construction. Most institutions have developed business degrees which compete strongly in the marketplace for students from the university sector. Competition between institutions within the tertiary sector is certainly a desired outcome of the New Right and the fierce marketing strategies by all agencies bears this out.

The concept of marketing tertiary education is a new phenomenon in New Zealand and is in various stages of development. In its broadest sense marketing includes such issues as market research for new 'products', pricing, distribution, customer service, customer facilities, promotion and so on. At this point in time most institutions have been focusing on promotion, although aspects of pricing and the importance of customer service is emerging. It is very difficult to gain an accurate picture of the expenditure on all the marketing components, but certainly advertising and associated promotional activity costs appear to be on the increase. One institution states that its costs have increased 20% over each of the past two years and 15% in each of the three years prior to that. The media being used ranges from newspapers and magazines through to exhibitions and open days, informative printed material, the use of radio and television, and of course now, the Internet. A report produced by the Business Research Centre indicates that in 1994 the polytechnic sector budgeted an average of $7,617,550 for their marketing activities with the greatest amount being spent by the six largest Polytechnics of $4,863,000 equating to about $165.42 per EFTS. (1994:12) Interestingly very little was spent on electronic media at that stage with most being spent on newspaper promotions and printed material. At that stage few, if any, polytechnics were advertising over television. However a report by AGB:McNair Dataline Service (1997) on advertising expenditure by Tertiary Institutions, by medium, over the months from September 1996 to August 1997 indicated that several universities were already making use of the medium of television to promote their programmes and facilities.

This drive by institutions to promote themselves to their prospective customers appears not only necessary to ensure they meet their funding targets, but also in order to ensure their survival in the future as more private training establishments emerge and also as the government continually reviews its role in the level of funding it should provide for tertiary education.

Embedded in this requirement for institutions to meet and hopefully exceed the ministry-funded EFTS targets under the bulk funding regime, is the need to continually monitor their own performance, especially their recruitment and retention statistics and programme viability. It has actually proven quite critical for institutions to exceed the government funded EFTS allocations each year in order to receive additional funding for the following year. By mid year every institution is required to put in a "bid" to the Ministry of Education via a statement of objectives, not only to show what their projected enrolments are likely to be, but also to indicate new programme development for which they are seeking government funding. As already stated the bulk funding process is therefore a crucial element in promoting competitiveness within tertiary education.

The election of a National Government in the 1990 elections came right in the middle of the implementation of the tertiary reforms. The new government continued on the path already set by Labour. A new Education Act had been passed by Parliament in 1989 and further amendments to the Act in 1990. National retained the flat tuition fee, but increased it slightly for 1991 and immediately set about revising the bulk funding regime. The new National Minister of Education, Hon. Dr Lockwood Smith had strongly campaigned on abolishing the compulsory fee and leaving it up to institutions to charge or not to charge a fee. New approaches were made to design and implement a loan scheme. The loan scheme will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter as well as the National Government's review of the tertiary funding policies.

Central Agencies:

Learning for Life recommends changes to several government and quasi governments agencies which it refers to as central agencies. The following outlines those changes.

(a) Education Ministry -

The Ministry of Education is defined as responsible for policy development across the entire education sector from early childhood to post-compulsory education and training. The Ministry is also required to place a particular emphasis on employment and labour-market needs throughout the entire education process and, as a new move, will include Access and apprenticeship programmes as part of its policy responsibilities (Lange & Goff, 1990: 25).

(b) National Education Qualifications Authority -

A major innovation of the reforms was the establishment of a National Education Qualifications Authority, which became known as the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (hereafter called NZQA). This was designed to be a free standing policy advisory organisation, and to be totally self-funding in its activities in the vocational and advanced academic areas and partially self funding for its activities within the schools area. Several quasi-government organisations were to be abolished, some of which were contracted to NZQA. The Authority was required to carry out a number of functions including the establishment of policies and criteria for the validation of courses leading to national qualifications and the establishment of a process for institutions and other providers to be accredited as deliverers of education and training courses that can lead to national qualifications. The school certificate, sixth form certificate and university bursary examinations were also put under the control of NZQA.

One of the principal roles of NZQA was to develop a framework for national qualifications. The framework was to ensure that all qualifications have a purpose and relationship to each other which clients and the public can understand; and to ensure that it provides a flexible system for the gaining of qualifications with recognition of competency already achieved. Another founding principle of the Authority was that it was to be based on a student-centred approach to learning and assessment which stresses the competency of students to understand and apply their acquired knowledge (Goff, 1990: 44). NZQA has adopted a unit approach to build a framework of qualifications similar to that used by the Scottish Vocational and Educational Council (SCOTVEC). Elley (1996:67) points out that unlike the SCOTVEC model which was designed for vocational training qualifications NZQA proposed "to extend the system into all educational courses including those traditionally known as academic subjects, such as English, history, science, geography, mathematics and languages." It has been widely criticised over the years and some aspects of this are discussed later in this chapter.

(c) Training Support Agency -

A further decision in the Learning for Life policy was the establishment of an Education Training and Support Agency (hereafter called ETSA) which took over some of the training responsibilities of the Department of Labour, specifically the administration and servicing of Access and apprenticeships. (Lange & Goff. 1988:51) This was to follow through on the labour market focus across the whole PCET system which was to be one of the fundamental functions of the policy making Ministry of Education (ibid:25). Since the establishment of ETSA many private training providers have emerged who contract with ETSA to deliver specific off-the-job training programmes. Polytechnics are heavily involved in the delivery of these programmes and are also required to contract with ETSA for funding of such programmes. Training Opportunities Programmes (TOP) have emerged as a replacement for Access and Maccess [2]courses and form an excellent bridge for unemployed people to acquire new skills for re-entry to the workforce.

ETSA also plays a key role in working with ITOs to develop mechanisms for the delivery of both on- and off-job training and this is mentioned again later in the chapter in a section about ITOs.

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[2] Access training courses were designed to re-train unemployed people to enable them to return to the workforce. These courses were funded by the Department of Labour and contracted to Polytechnics and Private Training Establishments for delivery. Maccess was the same type of training courses specifically for unemployed Maori people.

(d) Vocational Guidance and Careers Advisory Agency

This is another agency which was established as a free standing agency chartered and contracted to the Ministry of Education. This agency resulted from a policy decision which came in the second round of decisions in August 1989. (Goff, 1989:53). It is known today as Careers Services *Rapuara* and specifically provides occupational, education and training information. All tertiary institutions provide data for a national database of career and training information. Like NZQA and ETSA, Careers Services *Rapuara* was designed to be self funding within a certain period.

Related Issues:

The final section of the Learning for Life (Lange & Goff, 1989) reports refer to Research and Scholarship, Abolition of Certain Bodies, National Advisory Agencies and Personnel and Industrial Relations in the Post-school Sector. Most of these issues were dealt with by working groups set up in the six months between Learning for Life: One (Lange & Goff, 1989) and Learning for Life: Two (Goff, 1989). Hawke (1988:45) recommended that a Public Scholarship and Research Agency be established but this was taken up by the government. The government considered that teaching and scholarship were inseparable at the post-school level and that funding for scholarship, teaching and research should be part of the bulk funding allocation to institutions. Further investigations were proposed for contestable research funding and this is now largely handled through the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology.

As already stated, several bodies were disestablished to coincide with the establishment of NZQA. These included the Authority for Advanced Vocational Awards, the Trades Certificates Board, the Universities Entrance Board, the Vocational Training Council, the Board of Studies, the University Grants Committee and the National Council of Adult Education (Lange & Goff 1988:31).

Finally in relation to Personnel and Industrial Relations the government decided that they would be dealt with in the context of the State Sector Act (Goff, 1988:59). One of the most significant moves in this area was the removal of university staff from the jurisdiction of the Higher Salaries Commission and that the salaries of senior management in the post-school sector would be set by contract rather than the collective bargaining process. This appears to have been an advantageous move for the personnel concerned in polytechnics, although no specific research or evidence has been obtained for this opinion, rather it is a result of collegial discussion.

2.7 National Government

October 1990 saw the election of a national government. Again New Right philosophy emerged in their education policies with the continuing drive towards user-pays in tertiary education. They expressed support for all the education reforms and promised to push towards bulk funding in the primary and secondary sectors. For the tertiary sector one of the principal platforms on which the Hon. Dr Lockwood Smith campaigned was that the national government would abolish student fees. Another innovation of Lockwood Smith was a seamless education system, almost a 'cradle to the grave' philosophy. The following expands on some of the policy decisions which the national government has implemented.

The Tertiary Funding Scheme:

With the Education Act 1989 and the Education Amendment Act 1990 in place, the new government was committed to following through on their implementation unless they put through more amending legislation. As stated above, the Minister of Education, the Hon. Dr Lockwood Smith had promised that the tertiary tuition fee would be abolished. What happened in reality, was that the former Labour government's tertiary tuition fee was abolished but the EFTS funding regime was not increased, and institutions had no option but to increase direct charges to their students. Butterworth and Tarling (1994:249) state that the National Government picked up where the Labour Government left off and, using universities as the example, the new government then reduced the EFTS payment leading the universities to raise fees. The same applied in the Polytechnic sector as well.

The government introduced a scheme in 1992 known as Study Right which targets school leavers and those on long term social welfare benefits taking courses to re-train. The Minister of Education encouraged institutions to offer corresponding lower fees to students who qualified under the Study-Right criteria. Some opted to charge a flat fee regardless of entitlement or academic programme studied, while others offered a range of fees.

The EFTS funding system is based on the classification of courses into specific discipline related groups, and institutions received 95% of that specified funding level for students meeting the Study-Right criteria, while they paid 85% to non-qualifiers for Study-Right. Over the ensuing years Institutions have seen this percentage reduced by the government although, as the government would argue, they have put more money into tertiary education by funding more places. As indicated earlier institutions are awarded their funding on the basis of a "funding bid" put to the Ministry in the form of a Statement of Objectives. The government makes its allocations on the basis of recommendations from the Ministry of Education. Institutions have argued vehemently that the demand for tertiary education is growing, and although the government may have increased funding to allocate more places, the erosion of the funding level per EFTS and the demand for more places exceeding those allocations, has left institutions with no option but to increase the level of contribution by students to compensate. As already indicated these resultant 'unfunded' places, interestingly enough, form one of the bases on which institutions contest for funding each year. It is perhaps seen as a form of 'reward' as those institutions which exceed the Ministry's funding allocation may gain a greater portion of the allocation of the following year's funding than those who achieve or fall short of the Ministry's allocation.

There is tangible evidence that the increased autonomy given by the tertiary reforms and the introduction of the EFTS funding regime has certainly been crucial to creating competition between institutions, especially where there is more that one provider in the same city. The development of the Albany campus by Massey University is clearly an attempt to gain a bigger stake in the tertiary education marketplace in Auckland. Other institutions around the country have followed by placing 'outpost' campuses in urban and rural centres in order to increase their customer base. Even now mergers and discussions about mergers and strategic alliances are taking place which may result in a more cost effective approach to the delivery of tertiary education and ensure the survival of the smaller institutions, be it all under a slightly different guise.

Student Loan Scheme:

Earlier in the chapter we looked at the proposal by the fourth Labour Government to set up a loan scheme as part of the tertiary reforms promulgated through the Learning for Life: Two (Goff, 1989) policy decisions. It was their intention to set this up with the private banking sector but as noted earlier, Boston (1990:173) speculated that the banks would not be keen to co-operate. On the other hand the National Government's proposal was an income-related scheme as recommended by Hawke (1988:9). The first contract was awarded to the Bank of New Zealand Ltd., who set up a separate company to operate the government funded scheme. Basically students could borrow the cost of their compulsory fees, an amount towards other course costs capped at $1000 and a living allowance component for those full time students who did not qualify for a student allowance. (This is the government's income tested scheme of student support during full time study) Both course related and living cost components of the loan are based on the Equivalent Full Time Course (EFTS) factor as determined by the tertiary funding regime. Compound interest was charged on the debt with a facility for an interest rebate if the student did not obtain employment on completion of their study. Repayment of the loan could either be by lump sums or through the tax system as a surcharge once an income threshold had been reached. The New Zealand scheme is not dissimilar to the Australian scheme although the interest rate is higher and the income threshold lower.

The loan scheme has been subject to much media comment and student outrage since its inception in 1992. The most recent concerns are about the amount of the amassed debt in the four years of the scheme. Brett and Chamberlain (1997:34) states that some 214,246 tertiary students have amassed debts of $1.78 billion, including principal and interest, to July 1996. He quotes estimates that by the year 2000, if current rates of borrowing are maintained, that students will owe $4 billion, and by 2005 student debt will have exceeded the nation's debt. Brett (Brett & Chamberlain 1997:34) interviewed Simon Carlaw, executive director of the New Zealand Bankers' Association, who says that as a member of the banking industry he is worried about the downstream effects of high debt levels concentrated among the nation's future professional classes, for example, the inflationary pressures they will exert on the economy as they try to drive up the price of dental, medical and lawyer's fees to recoup the costs of their education. He asserts that "while the Minister of Education may be quoting only 17 per cent of the work force having loan debts, 100 per cent of the population will want to go to the doctor, and that means we will all be affected (ibid)." There is also concern that particularly young students do not know how to manage the loan money effectively. Morgan (1997) comments that the concerns of the mounting student debt compared with the national debt are meaningless and as irrelevant as comparisons of the amount outstanding on mortgages with the national debt. He is more concerned with the individual debt that is occurring by students who may not be using that money effectively for the purposes for which it is intended. He considers that the assumption that those taking on the debt are making conventional commercial decisions is questionable. It is his opinion that young students fresh, from a world of pocket money and possibly some spending cash from after-school jobs, are plunged into one where money is no longer scarce but is "tagged" in the form of an obligations to pay in future. Anecdotal evidence would confirm this suspicion. While Ministry of Education staff advise institutions that they must inform students of their maximum limits, there is no way to control the borrowing to ensure it goes to their education, except the compulsory fee component where the student has not already paid their fees by some other means. Loans staff are able to talk of instances where parents have paid their son's or daughter's fees but the student has still applied for the loan, and use it for consumables other than their education, as Morgan (ibid) notes "in the naive belief that payback day is too far away to be an issue."

It seems clear that if New Zealand is to continue in this "user pays" environment for tertiary education, and if direct government funding is not increased then some more responsible approach will be needed to ensure that access to borrowing has greater limitations, not only to safeguard the borrower, but also to ensure the debt is repayable within a reasonable period during the students working life. If this does not occur the total debt will continue rising above the national debt and create a huge burden for the country's tax payers, who must surely be the ultimate financiers of such a government sponsored scheme.

National Qualifications Framework:

As mentioned earlier the New Zealand Qualifications Authority was one of the statutory bodies to rise out of the 1990 legislation. As also stated previously one of NZQA's principal roles was to develop a national framework of qualifications built on defined standards. By adopting a unit approach with associated credit, the units become like a series of building blocks which a student can collect over a period of time towards a qualification, a form of educational 'currency'. When NZQA announced the proposed design of the framework they indicated it would have eight specified and hierarchically organised levels, and that it would incorporate all national and nationally recognised qualifications. As Codd (1996:57) points out, "there was no mention of university qualifications, but in terms of the diagrammatic representation of the framework, 'degrees' were shown at the higher levels."

The ongoing development of the framework has seen the registering of many thousands of unit standards. These units have been grouped in broad disciplines, known as fields, then further divided into subfields and domains. The unit standards are developed in consultation with various standard setting bodies including ITOs and other professional associations, for example, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of New Zealand and the Institute of Professional Engineers. Once the process has been completed the units are registered on the framework. The same groups are also involved in designing the qualification which is the grouping of unit standards into a cohesive package. Education providers are required to be accredited by NZQA in order to be able to deliver unit standards and for the learner to gain credit on the framework.

NZQA is very clear that unit standards are not learning modules, they are coherent and meaningful groups of skills, knowledge and attitudes - the outcomes of learning. It is the delivery of these unit standards which has found their way into the teaching programmes of secondary schools, polytechnics and other tertiary providers. At this point in time it is apparent that polytechnics have become the major deliverers of national and local programmes using unit standards, although some private providers and secondary schools have been accredited to deliver unit standards. However Roberts (1997:178) comments that polytechnics and other private providers were initially supportive of the framework but now, along with their secondary school colleagues, many are complaining about the cumbersome nature of the new system. Anecdotal evidence would indicate that compliance costs for curriculum development and accreditation processes are enormous for these institutions. For example, the accreditation process for a new degree costs approximately $20,000-25,000, and this does not take into account the curriculum development time or cost incurred by the institution.

Another major philosophical element of the unit approach is that of standards-based assessment. No longer is the student compared to other students, so they do not receive a mark, grade or a percentage. Instead the students are assessed as being competent or not. They must get every bit of the material right or they don't pass the standard and don't earn their credits (Chamberlain, 1996:117). Chamberlain says that "the fact that students who don't achieve the standard the first time can, theoretically, come back again and again until they achieve the standard creates a nightmare for the institutions in timetabling and carrying out reassessments (ibid)."

It is not just reassessment that can present a problem, the whole standards based assessment methodology has come under fire from educationalists over the years that the framework has been evolving. The New Zealand Qualifications Authority has been quite defensive of its policies and in particular standards based assessment. Barker (1995:15) comments that any consideration of assessment is not only a technical issue, it is a social and therefore political issue. He also contends that no form of assessment is perfect. David Hood, the founding Chief Executive of NZQA was interviewed by Jenny Chamberlain before his retirement. She calls David Hood "a true believer in the National Qualifications Framework and standards-based assessment (Chamberlain, 1996:118)." She reports him as saying that the framework removes barriers, and it is a shift away from systems that rank student against student, and instead tests students against standards: what they ought to know about a subject.

When asked the question that many academics raise, that unit standards seem to be an unsatisfactory rigid way of testing academic subjects like history, and seem better suited to vocational subjects like metalwork, Hood's response was that he saw no difference between academic and vocational subjects. He did not draw any sharp distinction in terms of assessment between repairing a television set and the critical analysis of a poem by Chaucer.

Roberts (1997:170-171) argues a distinction between vocational and academic modes of education might be exactly what is needed if the unique characteristics of certain forms of learning, and the assessment systems appropriate to them, are to be recognised. He suggests that the National Qualifications Framework is more appropriate for some programmes of study, particularly those which require the development of a finite set of demonstrable skills. Roberts goes on to say that "if 'vocational' programmes prepare people to become skilled professionals and technicians, an 'academic' education might be said to prepare a person to be become a 'knowledgeable' critical thinker." He also acknowledges that there is a considerable degree of overlap between the two forms of education.

Other critics of the framework also do not agree with Hood's philosophy and indeed Roberts has referred to many of them in his own writing. For instance, Irwin, Elley and Hall (1995:25) see some very positive aspects which include more flexibility in packaging outcome objectives to meet the needs of learners, clearer course and programme outcomes, improved cross-crediting and credit transfer arrangements, the potential for recognising prior learning and the potential for teacher development arising from involvement in the moderation processes. However they do express concern about the assessment methodology, especially the reliance on internal assessment and pass-fail standards-based assessment which, in their view, results in the loss of valuable information about levels of individual performance.

The question of excellence is one which is raised by several critics from within the university system. Elley (1996:68) comments that a scheme like the framework is attractive to employers "because it provides coherence in our vocational qualifications". Elley, in his own article, expands on some of the problems mentioned in his joint report with Irwin and Hall which is quoted above. Elley (ibid:69) expresses doubt that unit standards can be established for subjects which contain large bodies of knowledge, such as history, English literature, and biology. He purports that the "huge numbers of concepts and principles and facts which students are expected to master, understand, relate and transfer to new situations" cannot be summarised into "neat, logical, homogenous categories or ordered into a linear, progressive sequence as you can in many skill-based subjects". He further expresses concern that excellence cannot be recognised in the framework records using competency-based assessment. Elley (ibid:75) is highly critical of standards-based assessment for academic subjects, and in 1991 when he first challenged the viability of the framework, he saw a number of problems and says that even now most of them are still there, "yet the bandwagon charges on, gathering momentum and new adherents all the time"

Codd (1996:59) also takes up the argument that unit standards are not only incompatible with the notion of excellence, they emphasise "measurable behaviour at the expense of creative problem-solving and higher level cognitive capabilities". He, along with other critics, holds the view that "the central feature of most academic courses is their concern with the advancement and criticism of knowledge" (ibid 64). He also states that "university courses aspire to standards of criticism and judgement leading to excellence rather than competency (ibid:65)." This question of excellence is one of several factors which the New Zealand Vice Chancellor's Committee raises in its opposition to the inclusion of degrees in the framework.

Degree programmes, therefore, whether provided by universities, polytechnics or private providers, are still outside the framework. The National Government envisages a seamless education system from Parents as First Teachers through to Tertiary Institutions, as indicated in the Ministry of Education document Education for the 21st Century (1994:32). The plan at the PCET level is to have a system which allows students to move in and out of tertiary education as their needs change, with all credit accumulated being recognised regardless of where it has been obtained. As already indicated, the National Qualifications Framework is a fundamental part of this and the objective is that a student's education is built on a series of building blocks. The student can start gaining credit in the post-compulsory years of secondary school and continue to accumulate credit until they form bigger qualifications called National Certificates and Diplomas. As Chamberlain (1996:116) states, if the scheme gets this far, university degrees, including master's and PhDs, will be earned in this way which, as already stated, is opposed by the universities.

In an effort to resolve the issue of the non-inclusion of degrees as part of the new qualifications framework, in May 1994 the Minister of Education announced the establishment of a Tertiary Lead Group to work on the implementation of the framework across the whole tertiary sector. Codd (1996:58) sees this as a strategic move by the State "for the purpose of resolving a contested policy issue". Strategic it might have been, as the terms of reference were very clear that one way or another degrees were to be included in the framework, even going as far as to suggest that the government intended to make legislative changes in 1995. When the Tertiary Lead Group produced its report in November 1994, it contained some twenty-eight recommendations. Codd (ibid:59) signalled that while some of the universities' concerns were addressed in the report there were still a number which were unresolved.

Catherall (1994), in providing a newspaper journalist's report, said that a tertiary group set up by the Minister of Education had been working to find a solution, and that in their report they stated that tertiary qualifications would have to meet clear goals, and Institutions' courses audited to ensure they meet national standards. She indicated that universities were still expressing concern that their degrees would have to be broken down into tiny areas of learning. She added that the report of the working group hoped that all tertiary qualifications would be registered by 1997. Smellie (1995) says that although universities had acquiesced to proposals to entice them into the centrepiece of Lockwood Smith's "seamless education" system, they were far from ready to relinquish their power to set standards for degrees to a wider body covering all tertiary institutions including polytechnics and teachers' colleges. It is also very important to note that although the above comments mention universities, the whole question of degrees going on the framework is extremely important to polytechnics, and their degrees will continue to stand outside the framework until some consensus and protocol is determined.

As a further step in implementing the recommendations of the Tertiary Lead Group, the Ministry of Education set up another working group in February 1995, known as the Tertiary Action Group. The major thrust of their terms of reference was "to provide advice to the Board of the New Zealand Qualifications authority on incorporating degrees and postgraduate qualifications in a single harmonised Framework, while remaining mindful of existing policies and procedures" (NZQA, 1996b:70).

During the consultation and deliberation process, the Tertiary Action Group produced three discussion papers before releasing its final report in April 1996. Codd (1996:62) indicates that very little had changed in the final report from the proposals raised in the three discussion papers. Hall (1997:72) comments that taken together, the TAG report, and a joint Ministry of Education and NZQA announcement in May 1996, "represent a significant softening of the stand adopted by NZQA on its requirement that all senior secondary, tertiary and vocational qualifications be specified in terms of unit standards. This shift in stance no doubt reflects the growing opposition from educationalists in universities, polytechnics and secondary schools to the unit standard model and its perceived limitations." Suffice it to say that the joint Ministry of Education and NZQA announcement allowed for provider qualifications to be part of the future structure, as long as they met some specific quality criteria.

The concept of a National Qualifications Framework obviously has its supporters and its detractors and the ongoing development is no doubt using a tremendous amount of resources. Following the work done in 1996 by the Tertiary Action Group the government has, in mid 1997, released a "green" discussion paper on the National Qualifications Framework. It seems quite obvious that there will be a legislated change in its direction which will allow some of the factors raised by its critics to be resolved. However, Chamberlain (1996:113) uses an apt description when she says, "that of all the changes which have occurred in education .....unrelenting, tumultuous, exhausting though these have been in a grievously battered profession, they are mere flash floods compared with the framework's silent swelling tsunami force." The tide has not begun to ebb yet!

Industry Training Organisations:

A brief mention has already been made of Industry Training Organisations (ITOs) which were formed following the Industry Training Act 1992. Under the Act, ITOs are to:

- set national skill standards to be registered on NZQA's framework;
- develop arrangements for delivery of training (both on- and off-job); and
- develop arrangements for monitoring training and assessing trainers.

In the Ministry of Education document Education for the 21st Century (1994:32) it states that ITOs are to be "set up and owned by industry". Smelt (1995:6) comments that "ITOs are seen in Education for the 21st Century as an integral part of the move to a 'seamless' education system." A key role therefore, for ITOs, is the development of qualifications to be registered on the National Qualifications Framework, and they may also be involved in developing arrangements for the delivery of training. In this respect ITOs have a strong link with ETSA, as it controls ITOs access to any publicly funded training.

Some concerns have been expressed over the role of the ITOs, particularly where some of the boundaries seemed 'blurred' between the purchase arrangements for the delivery of training and the involvement of various ITOs in the delivery of training themselves. Smelt (ibid:39) considers that the system, as it has been set up, is quite bureaucratic and rule-driven, and that a more hands-off, market driven approach, which allows companies, students and providers to choose the unit standards and qualifications which suit them and which have the best reputation, would be preferable.

Smelt (ibid:38), in this report, provides some very detailed analyses of the interface between ITOs, industries, training providers, funding, employers, students and so on. He expresses a number of concerns about the direction of ITOs and questions whether the development of an industry training system is in fact market driven, but rather by a "complex web of incentives created by an evolving system of public funding and licensing of property rights."

It is worth noting that the industry training system together with the National Qualifications Framework, at least at this point in time, appears to be totally geared towards the acquisition of a set of skills together with on- and off-job training which can then be assessed as to whether competency is achieved or not. There seems to be little or no recognition of the knowledge based subjects which require assimilation and application to different situations and which has already been discussed earlier in this chapter.

2.8 Todd Task Force Report: Funding Growth in Tertiary Education and Training.

In August 1993, before being re-elected in the 1993 general election, the government set up a Ministerial Consultative Group to advise them on the funding of growth in tertiary education. The group consulted with interested parties from the tertiary education and training sectors, including students, Maori and representatives of Pacific Island communities. Included in the terms of reference was the Ministry of Education's discussion document Education for the 21st Century. This document sets out a number of targets the government has for tertiary education, for example:

> The number of New Zealanders in undergraduate tertiary education will by
>
> 1995 be 136,000 equivalent full time students
> 1998 be 153,000 equivalent full time students
> 2001 be 165,000 equivalent full time students
>
> The number of Maori students in tertiary education will by
>
> 1995 be 10 percent of the total tertiary student population
> 1998 be 12 percent of the total tertiary student population
> 2001 be 15 percent of the total tertiary student population.

> The number of New Zealanders undertaking postgraduate education (at honours, masters and doctoral level) will by
>
> 1995 be 9,300 equivalent full time students
> 1998 be 10,500 equivalent full time students
> 2001 be 11,300 equivalent full time students
>
> (Ministry of Education, 1993:29)

The principal task set for the Ministerial Consultative Group was how such ongoing growth can be funded. The Group, under the Chairmanship of Jeff Todd, presented its report and recommendations to the government on 12 May 1994. The ten member group could not bring one single recommendation but instead presented what became known as Option A and Option B. Four members supported Option A, four supported Option B and two members supported neither option and opposed any further increases in private contributions.

The majority of the group recommended that:

(i) the government make finance available for investment in tertiary education and training;

(ii) tertiary education and training generally be funded through the tax system;

(iii) notional EFTS funding per capita be reduced;

(iv) the student loans scheme be retained;

(v) assistance for living costs be income tested and be uniform for students and non-students:

(vi) rolling triennial funding be introduced;

(vii) private training establishments be permitted to compete with state providers of education and training on a more even basis;

(viii) recent reforms to post-compulsory education and training be endorsed;

(ix) future reviews of funding of tertiary education and training be undertaken every six years with the first review in 2000;

(x) the effects of policy changes on participation in formal tertiary education be researched and monitored; and

(xi) the ongoing contribution of industry to the education and training of the workforce be recognised (Todd, 1994:20-21).

Essentially Option A proposed that the contribution by students be increased to 25% by the year 2000. This is to be achieved in an incremental way by the reduction of the per capita EFTS subsidy by 1% per year until then. On the other hand Option B proposed that the student contribution be increased to 50% by the year 2000 with targeted assistance to under-represented and low income groups. As already stated, the two members opposing any increase in the student contribution favoured growth in tertiary education and training being funded from general taxation.

During the period from May 1994 when the Todd report was made public, until the government made a decision, the opportunity was given for submissions to the Minister of Education. The Business Roundtable (1994) submitted that the government should reduce subsidies faster and further than the Todd report recommended. They argued that the observed behaviour of students suggested that private, rather than public benefits are the primary motivating factors in the choices they make, and that private rates of return are significant. They also suggested that subsidies be phased out of the loan scheme to make it more "user pays".

Brett and Chamberlain (1997:37) also point out that the Todd report raises the issue of public and private benefits of education, and that, while recognising that society had much to gain from an educated and skilled work force, individuals gained even more and so should expect to pay more. They also give the counter-argument of critics of the Todd report, who point out that it assumes that the entire earnings differential is due to tertiary education, ignoring secondary school qualifications, ability, background, labour-market conditions and most importantly the "opportunity" costs of foregone earnings while undertaking study. Robertson (1996) also picks up on the private versus public row. He puts forward all the arguments about earning potential, an educated society and so on. However he also raises the issue of the increasing student debt as a result of higher fees, and the likelihood of a flow-on effect to the economy as graduates will have less discretionary spending while they repay their debt, or pass that cost on to consumers in the form of higher charges for services.

Easton (1997) on the other hand, puts the case for low cost tertiary education, at least for the first qualification. He makes his defence using both the commercialist approach and a socialist approach but despite the choices which students have, he feels that an entitlement approach would at least provide all citizens with a right to a certain amount of low-cost education after they have finished their secondary schooling.

The government announced their decision in January 1995 that they would adopt Option A with the reduction in the EFTS subsidy commencing from 1996. There was strong criticism of the decision from students and some of the institutions themselves. Scott (1996) believes that students, the tertiary sector, and the public were subjected to a cynical deception by the government and the Ministry of Education. He accused the Ministry of using different methodology for calculating tuition costs than what is reality in the tertiary sector. He demonstrates that the "real" funding by the Ministry was already at the 74% level in 1993 and that by 1995 the average percentage of government contribution in the polytechnic sector had dropped to 69%. Scott suggested that the government was moving closer to the Todd Report's rejected option of 50% subsidy and that they should reinstate funding to the promised level of 77% for 1997.

2.9 Coalition Government

The reality of the funding reductions are now taking place as institutions are caught in the struggle between balancing budgets, meeting industry and customer demands for programme development, providing resources and minimising fee increases. Already in 1997 there are reports of reduced surpluses or even deficits in the balance sheets of many tertiary institutions. Polytechnics, along with the other tertiary institutions, are non profit making organisations and any surpluses are poured back into developing their academic programmes and campuses. Now with the 1996 elections bringing in a coalition government the sector is facing yet another review. New Zealand First campaigned in their education policy that they would conduct a review of tertiary education with a view to identifying efficiencies. Matheson (1997) believes the review will be conducted by officials behind closed doors. He quotes the university students' association president as warning that an officials' review, rather than a consultative group, would not lead to lasting policies. Crozier (1997) suggests the proposed "comprehensive review of all aspects of tertiary education" as stated in the Coalition agreement, implies a far-reaching and open-ended review. He believes a review is potentially necessary and welcome, but also warns that it must be given full opportunity for participation by those involved in the sector.

At the time of completing this thesis, there are already two discussion documents proposing reviews of the funding regime, national qualifications framework, ways of increasing participation rates and so on. The outcome of these will not be known until 1998 but there is no doubt that the pressure will be on tertiary institutions to be highly responsive to the needs of the customers.

2.10 Conclusion

The span of this study of tertiary education policy has been over a period of 10 years. There have been many changes and obviously they have not finished yet. However the purpose of this literature review has been to outline the key issues of the tertiary reforms and identify those which have brought about significant changes to Polytechnics, which is the first research theme or objective of this thesis. The key outcomes of the reforms which relate to polytechnics and which are also of concern to students as their major customers are:

- The autonomy of Polytechnics
- The funding policies of government and student fees
- Competition between tertiary institutions
- The student loan scheme
- The development of the National Qualifications Framework
- The freedom institutions have to develop their own programmes
- The development of "contract" education through agencies like ETSA and ITOs

CHAPTER THREE

CUSTOMER SERVICE AND CUSTOMER EXPECTATION

The previous chapter has identified the major tertiary reforms of the late 1980's and early 1990's which have had a significant impact on polytechnics. The principal driver behind these reforms is the market economy espoused by the fourth Labour Government, the National Government re-elected in 1990 and now the Coalition Government of 1996. This philosophy has resulted in polytechnics becoming far more customer focused and ensuring they deliver quality educational programmes which focus not only on the needs of industry and the business world, but also on the student as their principal customer. In this chapter, literature relating to customer service and customer expectation is examined, firstly from a business perspective, and then as it relates to the Polytechnic sector and the tertiary reforms.

3.1 Who or What is a customer?

It is difficult to come up with a clear definition of "customer". The Oxford Dictionary uses the term "buyer" within its definitions. There is also reference to "client". These words all imply buying a product or service and when linked with the word "client" may also include using a service for which there may or may not be payment involved. However there is sometimes an argument over limiting the term "customer" to someone coming into a business to purchase a product or service. Some companies, including professions like lawyers and accountants, prefer to use the term "client", particularly where a longer term or ongoing relationship develops. Others would say that the customer is not limited to the person purchasing the product or service, but that there are also internal customers in a business - those people in departments of the business who may interact with each other. An example is an accounts department which provides a service to all the other departments of the organisation. Those other departments may not be physically purchasing the accounting service, but they are certainly users of it, and therefore arguably customers of that department. In tertiary education there has been great difficulty in accepting education as a commodity that can be traded in the marketplace (Kelsey, 1993) yet this has been an essential part of the educational reforms of the last eight years. Taking this a stage further it has also been difficult for some staff in tertiary institutions to accept that students are customers (or clients) of the institution. However whichever way the terminology may be interpreted, Albrecht and Bradford (1990:18) provide a valuable range of statements or slogans which they have taken from an unknown source and which are worth reflecting on:

> A customer is the most important person in any business
> A customer is not dependent on us. We are dependent on him. (*sic*)
> A customer is not an interruption to our work. He is the purpose of it. *(sic)*
> A customer does us a favor when he comes in. We aren't doing him a favor by waiting on him. *(sic)*
> A customer is an essential part of our business - not an outsider.
> A customer in not just money in the cash register. He is a human being with feelings and deserves to be treated with respect. *(sic)*
> A customer deserves the most courteous attention we can give him. He is the lifeblood of this and every business. He pays your salary. *(sic)*
> Without him we would have to close our doors. *(sic)*
> Don't ever forget it.
>
> Author unknown

These statements appear quite applicable to tertiary education, especially the penultimate line. Regardless of the terminology used - customer or student, it is logical that without them, tertiary institutions would have to close their doors.

3.2 Customer Service and Quality of Provision.

Customer service is essentially providing the customers of the business with the product or service they need, and also ensuring that the product or service is of the highest quality, to meet or exceed their expectations. Brooks (1995:15) suggests that businesses today are discovering that commercial success, their profitability, comes from focusing on three critical factors -

1. Be absolutely committed to customer service
2. Have the products and services your customers need.
3. Deliver these products and services effectively.

Customer service is more than training front-line staff to say "Good Morning" and "Have a nice day", or more than a willingness to serve, it is actually having the products and services the customers want and not merely those that we enjoy making or providing. (ibid: 19). Freemantle, in his introduction (1993:xv), says that customer service is a concept that is applicable to all industries and organisations and all their employees. He points out that so often it has been a concept which has been confined to front-line people who have to serve in shops, hotels, restaurants and airlines and all organisations.

As stated above, management in some organisations often take just that view; that customer service only applies to the front-line staff, and therefore put minimal resources into providing quality customer service involving the whole organisation. Disend (1991:33) also picks up a similar theme saying that in many traditional organisations, service is seen as an extra, "a marketing ploy, something soft." He says that as a result, systems and procedures for delivering service are frequently not planned or managed.

This has undoubtedly been the case in the tertiary sector. Providing good customer service has often been seen as the task of non-teaching staff, for example - the course information office, the enrolment centre, faculty offices and telephonists. Of course it is essential that these areas are efficient, have friendly, helpful and knowledgeable staff, but the question must also be asked of the teaching staff. It is the teaching staff who actually deliver the service or facilitate the learning experience, and they are the ones who have the greatest 'face to face' contact with the customer. It is therefore vital that they provide the customer with all the information they need in relation to the course of study they have chosen, and there must be quality in the way that service or learning experience is provided. This reinforces Freemantle's (1993:vx) point that customer service involves the whole organisation.

It is appropriate, at this point, to return to the question asked a few paragraphs back - whether education is a product or a service - a commodity to be traded in the marketplace. In Chapter Two reference was made to the debate as to whether education is or is not a public good. The New Right view being that it is not a public good, rather a commodity in the marketplace, and that if there was less State involvement this commodity would be delivered more efficiently and effectively to its consumers. Ball (1990:4) suggests that if an education marketplace is created, then five elements emerge: "**Choice, Competition, Diversity, Funding and Organisation.**" Decisions made by the two previous governments have certainly put tertiary education in New Zealand 'on the road' to being market driven, and the above five elements are clearly emerging. Customers (or students) have choices - between institutions and programmes of study. There is competition emerging between institutions. There is greater diversity such as polytechnics now offering degrees, private providers offering tailored programmes of study and so on. There is the funding debate as to who should pay for tertiary education, and what proportion the State should pay and what they should expect from the institution in return.

Finally there is reform in the way institutions are organised and managed. Whether this market driven philosophy for education is right or wrong is a matter which will be debated in education circles for some time yet. However, students are paying a greater share of their tertiary education costs each year and therefore demanding certain standards of quality of delivery of the educational programme and the associated support services. It may be more appropriate to think of education as a service rather than a product as it is not something which is purchased in a completed stated like a car or an ice cream. Instead there is interaction between the service provider and the customer which actually results in a life changing experience for the customer. The customer, when she or he first purchases the course of study, may start out knowing little or nothing about the academic content of that course, but by the end she or he has not only acquired a qualification, but has increased knowledge, gained some new experiences and is therefore a different person. The completed qualification may arguably be the product, and the service provided is the facilitation of the learning experience gained on the way. In this case it is the relationship between the customer and the service provider which becomes important.

The Customer as an asset:

Earlier in this chapter a definition used by Albrecht and Bradford was quoted which stressed the importance of the customer. They also propose an interesting notion of seeing the customer as an asset. (1990:12) They comment that most organisations are very conscientious about managing the quality of their products but they don't often view the service to the customer as a product itself. It is their view that many companies fail to realise a critical truth: "the customer is your most valuable asset!" (ibid: 13).

It is interesting that Albrecht and Bradford (ibid), identify how businesses keep track of their tangible assets; for example buildings, stock, equipment, furniture and computers, and take out adequate insurance in the case of loss, check on them regularly to see that they are running properly, and provide maintenance to keep them in good condition. However, if customers are to be considered as assets, Albrecht and Bradford pose the question whether they are treated in the same way, that is, how businesses keep track of them and protect them as a valuable part of that business against loss. (ibid: 13). This is a sobering question for polytechnics to consider. There are numbers of students who enrol but find the courses too tough, or work and personal issues crowd in and the student drops out. The questions must then be asked - "What follow up takes place?" "Are there support mechanisms available to assist the student before he or she drops out?" While it is not proposed to answer these questions here, some comment will be made in chapter five when data from the case study is analysed.

Zeithaml *et al* (1990:9) say that excellent service pays off because it creates true customers - customers who are glad they selected a firm after the service experience, customers who will use the firm again and sing the firm's praises to others. This surely makes the customer a real asset to an organisation.

What do customers really want?

In terms of both products and services it is agreed that customers want quality. They do not want something second rate or inferior; they want it "to be fit for its purpose; they want it to be reliable and they want the organisation to be adaptable" (Brooks, 1995:57-61). Brooks sees fitness for purpose as giving the customer what they want in terms of the actual product or service. Secondly, he suggests that reliability, both of the product and in providing services, not only keeps customers happy but reduces costs, leads to efficiency and increases productivity. Thirdly, he sees that adaptability is important for an organisation to be able to respond quickly to survive in a rapidly changing world. This has also become vital for polytechnics in the now, very competitive tertiary education market. These concepts will be explored a little more later in the chapter.

Zeithaml *et al* (ibid) say that to ensure that the service is excellent, businesses must ensure that they provide what they say they will provide. This is becoming very important in New Zealand because of two major pieces of legislation: the Fair Trading Act 1986 and the Consumer Guarantees Act 1993. The Fair Trading Act has been in place for some time and it is designed to protect consumers against misleading and deceptive conduct in trade or commerce. Consumers (or customers) are now becoming more aware of their rights to demand honest and accountable business dealings and exercising those rights and students are no exception. The Consumer Guarantees Act specifies guarantees in relation to goods and services purchased by consumers, and enables those consumers to enforce manufacturer's guarantees on goods sold at retail. Customers have the right to demand their money back or some other form of redress if the product or service they have purchased is not of acceptable quality, or the guarantees provided by the supplier are not met. As already indicated businesses have to be conscious of these two pieces of legislation when they promote their products or services and tertiary education is no exception. Brooks (1995:23) maintains a major cause of customer dissatisfaction is failure to deliver what was promised. To ensure this does not happen it is essential that there are systems underpinning not only product quality, but also service quality. In terms of tertiary education, and as discussed previously, service quality is vital. Zeithaml *et al* (1990:19) define service quality as "the extent of discrepancy between customers' expectations or desires and their perceptions." They suggest that factors influencing expectation include "what customers hear from other customers - *word of mouth communications* is a potential determinant of expectations. Secondly, *personal needs of customers* might moderate their expectations. Thirdly, *past experience* with using a service could also influence customers' expectation levels. Fourthly, *external communications* from service providers play a key role in shaping customers' expectations."

It has already been stated that customers expect more than just a quality product, they also want quality service to support that product. Organisations therefore need to put resources and effort into ensuring they give quality service, and a major component of that quality service is their interaction with the customer.

Gober (1992:19) lists twelve basic needs that customers have in terms of the way we deal with them:

- Control
- Goals
- Self-image
- Fairness
- Friendliness
- Understanding
- Security
- Approval and Recognition
- Importance
- Appreciation
- Belonging
- Honesty

The business would probably call these "intangibles" but to the customer they are very "tangible". People want to feel valued and important, not only to the organisation, but to the staff member they are dealing with. Gober (ibid) also says that to determine the particular needs of an individual customer in a given situation it is essential to ask questions, listen and observe.

It was mentioned above that Zeithaml *et al* (1990:19) consider external communications from service providers as an important element in shaping customers' expectations. Gober (1992:43) also emphasises that communicating with customers is vital in providing quality customer service. This not only includes face-to-face communication but also telephone and written communication. Too often when a customer corresponds with an organisation and does not receive an acknowledgement, uncertainty is created as to whether the organisation ever received that communication. It is obvious that sending some type of acknowledgement advice costs money but it naturally builds customer confidence. This has been observed in tertiary education, where one institution sends written acknowledgement of the receipt of an application for admission, while another may not. In such instances, the lack of any response by the institution for even a long period of time creates uneasiness for the customer, and that person wonders if their application has been lost or if they have not been accepted. Gober (ibid) suggests that quality service-giving depends on effective listening, talking, writing and reading.

Quality service can be summed up as -

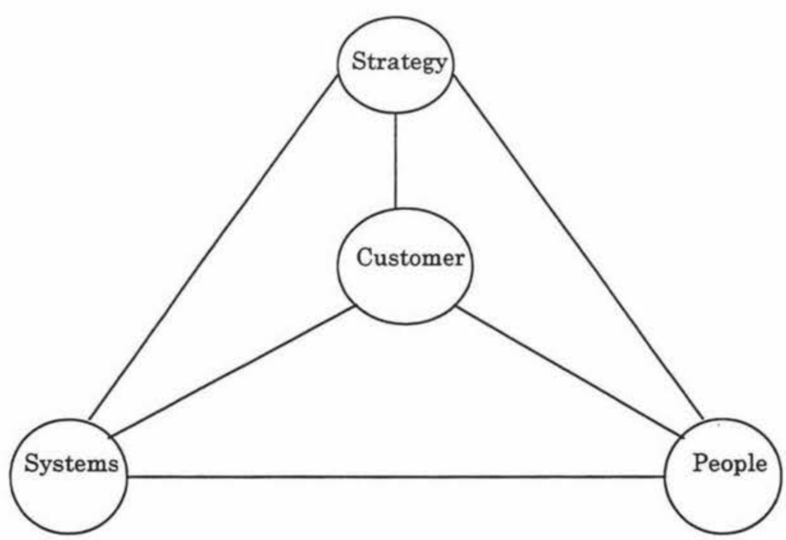
- doing the right thing from the customer's point of view
- doing it right the first time
- doing it better (Brooks 1995:60)

What Brooks is saying here is that it is essential that the organisation provides the right type of service from the customer's point of view; that there is no need for second attempts - the job is done right the first time; and, that there is a philosophy of continuous improvement - trying to provide a better service than the other competitors in the field. This may sound simple and even trite, but in tertiary education, like any other business, if customers have choices between one institution and another it is essential that the quality of education that is delivered is exceptional; that what is stated will be provided in terms of curriculum and resources is provided; that there are no errors or second attempts to put things right; and that the institution has quality systems in place to control and review procedures which seek to improve the service and generate a differential between that institution and its competitors. These are exactly the issues already being tested in the courts today. It is important to reiterate that these issues not only relate to the academic aspects of the institution but also the support services..

Strategies for Quality Customer Service:

Albrecht and Bradford (1990: 27) provide a visual concept they call "The Service Triangle" which is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 **The Service Triangle**



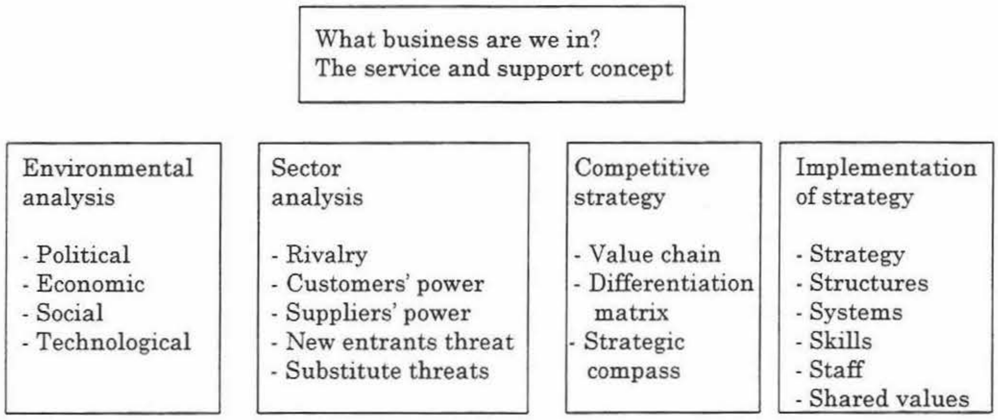
Adapted from Albrecht and Bradford (1990:27)

The focus of this triangle is the customer - right in the centre of everything. The top circle represents the service strategy - the corporate commitment to service, which is internally focused, and the service promised to the organisation's customers, which is externally focused. This service strategy becomes the management model for the organisation's future decisions about the customers, its service and its operations. The bottom right circle represents the people in the organisation - its executives, managers and employees. The line connecting the people circle to the service strategy means there must be a shared set of values about service throughout the organisation. The emphasis is on the word 'shared.' It is vital that everyone in the organisation contributes to, knows and understands the organisation's service strategy, and as a result will be committed to it. The line connecting the people circle to the customer circle represents the face-to-face connection that all company employees have with customers. The fourth circle is the systems circle. Albrecht and Bradford (ibid) state that all persons in the organisation from top management to front-line employees must work within the systems which organise how the business is run. Abrecht and Bradford (ibid) also say this applies to customers, hence the line linking them to the system, because they must work through the organisation's systems in order to do business with the organisation. The emphasis is on the word 'everyone' - that everyone in the organisation must be committed to the customer service strategy - including senior management. All too often customer service is espoused from the top but the systems, training and resources are not provided to ensure the customer service strategy can be implemented successfully.

There are a number of factors which need to be taken into consideration by an organisation in formulating a customer service strategy. Armistead and Clark (1992:18) suggest four key areas which need evaluating. These four areas are: Environmental

Analysis, Sector Analysis, Competitive Strategy and Implementation of Strategy. These are detailed in a diagramatic way in Figure 2. As can be seen in the diagram, two critical questions overarch the four key areas, which each business must ask itself - What business are we in? - What is the nature of customer service and support (ibid: 19)? These questions are being asked in some polytechnics today. They are saying "What is our core business" They are doing their 'SWOT' analysis. They are looking at

Figure 2 **Customer Service Strategy**



Adapted from Armistead and Clark (1992:18)

their strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats. In some locations they may not only be competing with other polytechnics but also with universities and private educational providers, known as Private Training Establishments (hereafter called PTEs). In some instances each institution may be offering the same academic programmes, so other factors have to become the differentiators to obtain that competitive edge. The analyses and strategies suggested by Armistead and Clark in figure 2 above are a good guide for institutions to follow. In the light of a further review of tertiary education by the Coalition Government analysis like this and resultant strategies may be essential to survival.

Quality customer services and supporting quality systems will come to the fore to provide that differential the customer is looking for. Gober (1993:5) uses a similar approach in suggesting ways to build a customer focused organisation. She identifies twelve components as demonstrated in Figure 3. While it is not proposed to go into detail for each of the twelve components, it is essential to state that Gober sees the core component of building a customer focused organisation as the organisational strategy. She points out the need to develop a mission statement that reflects the organisation's commitment to be a customer-focused organisation. She says that it should be more than generalities and platitudes but should contain statements of the organisation's aim to change its behaviour in pursuit of customer satisfaction and retention, and how that behaviour differentiates the nature of it service (Gober 1993:6).

Figure 3 **ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY**

Adapted from Gober (1993:5)

It is with this organisational strategy that each of the other eleven components must interact. Some components will feed information to help formulate the strategy while others are used to implement it. Each component is interdependent on the other.

One important component in Gober's twelve component strategy for building a customer focused organisation is customer-need research. It is not possible for an organisation to determine if it is providing what its customers needs if it does not ask them. It is acknowledged that few, if any, customers in tertiary education will really know what they need in terms of the academic content of programmes or even, in some cases, what to even expect to achieve out of a programme of study other than a qualification. Many of them though, know how they expect the organisation to treat them as a person and what the support services they need and that they will be of good quality, efficient, have friendly, helpful staff, value for money, and so on. These services also need customer feedback. As already stated, education is a life-changing experience. What customers perceive they want when they first enrol in the institution may well change during the time they spend studying. Customer need research can ascertain **what** types of services they need, **how** they want that service presented, **why** they need it, **where** and **when** they want the service to be available and in some cases **how much** they are willing to pay for that service. Gober (ibid:8) suggests a number of ways of doing this - written surveys, telephone surveys, interviews, customer site visits, visits by customers, customer days, focus groups and so on.

Some organisations believe they can address this solely by customer satisfaction surveys. It is their view that if customers tell them how satisfied they are with their products and service then they, the organisation will know, that for those areas for which they receive a positive response, they are providing what the customer wants. In those areas with a poor or negative response, the organisation then can consider to either improve the product and service, or if that customer does not want that particular product or service, withdraw it.

The theory that customer satisfaction surveys can determine customer needs would appear to be flawed. Woodruffe and Gardial (1996:84-85) point out that customer satisfaction is an evaluation process - the customer is required to make a performance judgement. Woodruffe and Gardial develop the concept of 'customer value', which they see as "the customer's perception of what they want to have happen (i.e. the consequences) in a specific use situation with the help of a product or service offering, in order to accomplish a desired purpose or goal." In terms of a polytechnic, customer value can been seen as being what the student expects to happen in order for them to attain a particular qualification to equip them for their desired career or employment opportunity. The student decides to enrol in a programme of study, and linked with that enrolment in, or purchase of, that programme of study is a whole raft of service encounters. Their evaluation of that process is an indication of their satisfaction or otherwise. Woodruffe and Gardial (ibid) see customer value and customer satisfaction as going hand in hand. However they also consider that customer value should be a driving force in an organisation as it tells the organisation what to do - gives it direction. (ibid: 85) This concept is fine as long as there is some mechanism for determining customer value, and Woodruffe and Gardial (ibid) believe that a customer value orientation must be carried throughout the strategic planning process. This is a similar philosophy to Gober's strategy for building a customer focused organisation (Gober, 1993:5), in that the focus on meeting customers' needs and expectations permeates the whole strategic planning process. While Woodruffe and Gardial (1996:85) use the term 'customer value' instead of 'customer focus', and the two are not entirely interchangeable, they are similar enough to reinforce that the emphasis is on the customer being "number one" and on the importance of meeting their needs.

The abovementioned authors all discuss methodology for customer research and stress the importance of gathering data from customers of the organisation about its products and services, as part of the strategic planning process. Gober's suggested data gathering process has been already been given as one example (Gober, 1993:8).

Armistead and Clark (1992: 77-96) discuss the marketing process in a customer focused organisation, pointing out that it is not an isolated functional activity but rather one which includes everyone in the business and some outsiders - what is known as relationship marketing. They point to the internal markets which concern the people who deliver the customer service and support, and the external markets which include the customers, suppliers, employment markets and those who influence purchases. It is true that there is a relationship between them all and that it is necessary to try and ensure that everyone has a shared view of what is required.

Finally, "buy-in" by the employees of an organisation should be considered as vital to the success of being a customer-focused organisation. It is worth repeating what Albrecht and Bradford (1990:27) state, that everyone from top management to front-line staff must be committed to the customer service strategy. This means providing appropriate resources plus training and education of staff. It is useless if one department is trying to provide a quality service when the back-up areas don't care. The whole planning process in the organisation needs to focus on customer need. A typical example in a polytechnic would be when the enrolment process is about to begin but the timetabling has not been done, the budgets have not been approved nor the fees set. The student cannot enrol in a course if they do not know when the classes are going to occur and how much it is going to cost. Everyone has their part to play in order to meet that customer need, that customer expectation.

3.3 Customer Expectation: Are there Gaps between Expectation and Provision?

Some of the strategies for becoming a customer focused organisation have been examined above but what about those gaps between what the customer expects and what the organisation is actually providing in terms of service. Parasuraman *et al* (1991:40) point out quite forcibly that customers expect service basics. Customers expect the staff to be competent, to be informed, to do what they say they will do, to be fair, the facilities to be well presented, to be respectful, and so on. As a result of research done with sixteen focus groups across six service sectors Parasuraman *et al* (ibid:41) have come up with five dimensions of service customers expect -

> **Reliability** - the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.
>
> **Tangibles** - the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication materials.
>
> **Responsiveness** - the willingness to help customers and provide prompt service.
>
> **Assurance** - the knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence.
>
> **Empathy** - the caring, individualised attention provided to the customer.
>
> Parasuraman *et al* (1991:41)

Parasuraman *et al* (ibid) come to the conclusion that reliability is a very major factor and is, what they term, the service outcome. On the other hand all the other dimensions are part of the service process and it is these dimensions which hold the key to exceeding customer expectations.

How are customer expectations determined?

Zeithaml *et al* (1990:19) were quoted earlier as defining service quality as "the extent of discrepancy between customers' expectations or desires and their perceptions." There are a number of factors which influence a person's expectations. In terms of customers, it may be what they hear from other customers - *word of mouth communications*. The personal needs of a customer might moderate their expectations, as could past experience with using a service. Service providers themselves can play a key role in shaping customer's expectations. For example - how the telephones are answered, the appearance of the buildings, the way in which printed material is expressed and presented. Ziethaml *et al* (1990) have been involved in an extensive and ongoing research project funded by the Marketing Science Institute and eight of its corporate sponsors. The fourth phase of their research centres on the topic of customer service expectations and they suggest there are five gaps which may cause service quality gaps or shortfalls (ibid:51).

Gap 1 - Customer's expectations versus management perceptions. As stated above knowing what customers need and expect is fundamental. Zeithaml *et al* (ibid) see this as the first and possibly the most critical step in delivering quality service. If the organisation is to provide services that customers perceive as excellent, it is required that the organisation knows what customers expect. This seems very basic and simple but all too often management think they know what is best for customers. However getting it wrong can mean losing a customer's business to another company who has hit the target exactly. Insufficient market research or inadequate use of research findings can contribute to the gap being created. Market research when developing academic programmes is vital if the programme is going to be viable. This is why it is important to consult with industry and professions to determine what they require in terms of knowledge and skills so that in turn they will employ the institution's graduates. The same applies to the services provides. There is little point the institutions providing a particular facility because they think it would be 'nice' to provide it without first finding out if there is a need. There can always be exceptions and at times it is essential to 'break new ground', invent new things, otherwise the world wouldn't progress. However it is important to fund out what the customer expects if organisations are to deliver quality service.

Gap 2 - Management's perceptions and service quality specifications. Zeithaml *et al* (ibid:83) suggest that here the problem can be an absence of goal setting. They point out that companies that have been successful in delivering consistently high quality service are noted for establishing goals or standards to guide their employees in providing service quality. This reinforces Gober's strategy for a customer focused organisation (1993:5). It is critical that goals are based on customers' requirements and expectations rather than internal company standards.

Gap 3 - Service-quality specifications and service-delivery. Zeithaml *et al* (ibid:97) see role conflict as a major problem here. They say that employees of service firms often experience role conflict; the perception that they cannot satisfy all the demands of all the individuals they must serve. This can especially occur in firms where some form of selling is involved and management emphasise the selling over service and expect employees to sell while they serve. This can leave the employee torn between the company's expectations and their desire to serve customers. Other factors such as poor employee-job fit or poor technology-job fit can also contribute to problems in gap 3. Furthermore, Zeithaml *et al* (ibid:109) raise an interesting issue about managing external customers in relation to closing gap 3. They suggest that "customers sometimes need 'managing' like employees and some of the tactics used for employees can be used on customers." This is not seen as a derogatory comment but simply to point out that there often needs to be guidelines or training for customers to use say, a particular facility For example, ***Role clarity*** - Do customers understand how *they* are expected to perform *their* part of the transaction? - *Is it clear to them they must pay their fees by a certain date?* Do employees provide clear instructions and feedback? - *Have the staff prepared clear instruction as to how to fill in an enrolment form?* ***Ability*** - Are customers able to perform as expected? - *Do students know where to find out about examination rooms or do we expect them to guess?* Are the right segments of customers being chosen? - *Is the right group being selected to use enrolment over the Internet?* ***Compensation*** - Are valuable rewards offered to customers for performing as expected? - *Is there some incentive if the student pays their fees early?* Is the price differential between full- and self- service adequate to induce customers to perform? - *Is there a reduced price if the student does their own photocopying over having it done by the copy shop?* Some of these examples certainly produce some interesting possibilities for customers in the tertiary education sector.

Gap 4 - Service delivery - external communications gap. This appears to be a very common gap, where the actual service performance of an organisation differs from what is stated will be done via its media advertising, sales force and other communications, and which serves as the standard against which customers assess service quality (ibid:43). In the tertiary sector this would also apply to information brochures and possibly even to an institution's policy documents. Zeithaml *et al* (ibid:118-121) make some suggestions as to ways to close this gap. Firstly, to opening channels of communication between all departments and branches of the organisation. They emphasise the need to ensure that what is being advertised is consistent with what products or services are able to be provided by the operations areas; that the human resources, marketing and operations departments all talk to each other to ensure staff training programmes are available, that the right staff are employed, and also that sales staff are fully aware not only of the products or services available, but that the correct advice on back up is given and so on. They point to another key to closing this gap as ensuring that policies and procedures across the organisation are consistent. These issues can also be related to the delivery of tertiary education especially the assurance that what is being published in course brochures and prospectuses reflects what will actually be taught by the department concerned and what the student as a customer can expect to gain through the learning experience.

Gap 5 - The gap between customers' expectations and the perceived service. Zeithaml *et al* (ibid:36) see Gaps 1-4 as being the shortfalls within the service provider's organisation while Gap 5 represents the potential discrepancy between the expected and perceived service from the customers' standpoint. It is the four service-provider gaps that contribute to Gap 5. It could be assumed that if the service-provider closes all the gaps identified, then what the customer expects to receive and what they actually receive will match or even be exceeded. Therefore the more interaction and communication there is between the customer and the organisation, the greater the opportunity for the organisation to know what the customer expects, and so the organisation can seek to exceed those expectations, thereby eliminating the perception that the actual service provision is likely to be different and fall short of those expectations.

Parasuraman *et al* (1991:40) provide a very interesting concept based on their research, that customers' service expectations have two levels: desired and adequate. They see the desired level as being that service the customers hope to receive and that which they consider is adequate. They call this the "zone of tolerance", pointing out that it expands and contracts like an accordion. It can vary from customer to customer and, potentially, from one situation to the next for the same customer. If this concept is linked back to the five gaps discussed previously, and, if Gaps 1 to 4 are closed by the service provider and thus Gap 5 from the customer's perspective, then the "zone of tolerance" will also be totally contracted as the customer's desired service expectation would be met. Therefore it is recognising the dual-levelled, dynamic nature of customer expectations, and understanding the factors that drive them, which should help managers close the gap mentioned earlier, between expectations and perceptions - or even exceed expectations (Parasuraman *et al* (1991:43).

3.4 Where do the Tertiary Reforms fit in with Customer Service

Polytechnics have been used as examples in several situations earlier in this chapter. However it is important to link the whole philosophy of customer service and customer expectation into the tertiary reforms identified in Chapter Two.

Institutional Autonomy and Competition:

One of the most significant outcomes of the 1989-90 tertiary reforms has been the degree of autonomy given to polytechnics, and their ability to manage their resources and develop new academic programmes, but with this has come quite fierce competition with other tertiary providers. Levy and Edlin (1995) point out that the Education Amendment Act 1990 was structured to reform the management and administration of all tertiary institutions, its main thrust being to provide greater freedom for them to manage their own affairs, and, as a consequence, polytechnics particularly began developing new courses and building and marketing their services both in this country and overseas, as well as embarking on entrepreneurial ventures. For some polytechnics this has meant competing with universities in the same city, or even other polytechnics in the same city, but for most, if not all of them, has come competition with the private training establishments. As mentioned earlier some institutions are offering the same or similar academic programmes and therefore they have each had to seek ways to gain some competitive edge over the other in order to attract customers. This is all part and parcel of the philosophy of the New Zealand Treasury that education is a commodity that can be traded in the market place (Joseph *et al* 1995). Brief mention has already been made about the market place philosophy. Ball (1990:2-3) expresses strong criticism of free market policies especially when related to education. He considers that the proponents of these policies do not believe in social equality and justice and that the market doesn't need morals or intentionality - the market itself is fair. He explores the issues of accountability in terms of effectiveness, efficiency and profitability but returns to question about equality and opportunity (ibid:21). Although Ball's discussion relates to compulsory schooling in the United Kingdom, many aspects of this also need to be considered in the post-compulsory education sector. The questions of access, equality and opportunity are just as relevant. He acknowledges that standards and quality are important, but warns that "the ground has shifted again to efficiency and value for money" and the danger that this becomes the driving force replacing any notions of equality and opportunity (ibid).

Similarly Grace (1994:127) reflects on his own experiences of the market place debate in both New Zealand and England. He is a strong advocate that education is a public good, and argues his case against that economic science should not be the controller of education policy. However he admits that "even if the case that education is a public good is conceded, it does not necessarily follow that state or public provision of that good is essential" (ibid:134). As has been indicated both these writers express concerns about the impact of competition between schools, school autonomy, funding, the recognition of customers, and so on, in the compulsory education arena in the United Kingdom. However the placing of post-compulsory education in New Zealand in a more market oriented environment has brought about similar dilemmas, and institutions are having to develop strategies to meet their customer responsibilities, social responsibilities and financial accountability back to the State.

Bulk Funding and Student Fees:

Linked with autonomy has also been the bulk funding system and the need for institutions to charge fees, and consequently the advent of the student loan scheme to help pay the fees. If students, as customers of the polytechnics, are paying part of the cost of study, then they expect those organisations to deliver quality service which meets their needs. At this point it is necessary to acknowledge that students are not the only customers of polytechnics, or indeed the whole tertiary sector. As Cliff (1994:46) rightly points out, customers are those people or organisations who directly make a payment to the polytechnic for the provision of a service, normally the teaching of a course. He identifies the customers as - the Ministry of Education (as the major funding provider); fee paying students; employers or families who subsidise their employees/members' fees and other organisations that pay on behalf of students (e.g. NZ Income Support, Accident Compensation Corporation, ETSA.) However the principal focus here is the student as the major customer, the one who is actually receiving the teaching and, hopefully at the end of it all, graduating with a qualification.

Along with bulk funding and student fees came the Student Loan Scheme. As indicated earlier this has brought with it some controversy in terms of students ending up in debt, while on the other hand, promoting that education is an investment. Institutions have been required to become 'agents' of the Ministry of Education in terms of processing loan applications and in that respect, students as customers of the institutions expect an efficient operation. Several studies have taken place on the impact of the scheme both on the students themselves and on their institutions in terms of enrolments. Baldwin *et al* (1995) carried out a study of secondary students' perceptions of debt, and they concluded that neither students' attitudes to incurring debt for tertiary study nor their probability of enrolment changed significantly following the promotion campaign portraying education as an investment. Anecdotal evidence as well as empirical evidence would support that not only have student enrolments increased each year but also the numbers of students taking out loans. The increasing debt level of students was discussed in Chapter Two but in relation to the use of support services within the tertiary sector Levy and Edlin (1995:53) in interviewing the then President of the Auckland University Students' Association, expressed concern at the mounting student debt together with "the pressure students are under to study resulting in the university's counselling service being in hot demand." As already indicated, the administration of the loan scheme is the responsibility of each institution, and it has become yet another service area which comes under constant scrutiny from the institution's customers.

What do customers want and expect?

The whole focus of this chapter has been on the provision of quality customer service and the key being providing the customers of the business with what they want. Interwoven with the discussion various examples from polytechnics, and in some cases the whole tertiary sector, have been used. The greatest challenge for the sector is possibly finding out what customers want and as already been suggested many of them may not know. While it has been acknowledged that they may not know all they want or need in terms of academic content, there are other aspects such as the form of delivery of the education, for example the use of technology, flexible learning styles, assessment methodologies, support services and so on which they may have quite definite ideas on. The institution that offers programmes over the Internet may be much more attractive to some customers while others may prefer the interaction of a classroom situation. Polytechnics, like other tertiary institutions need to know these things and not just assume them.

The tertiary sector has often been accused of by industry for not consulting with them enough, or even at all, but this may well be a generalisation. In an interview with People and Performance magazine (1994), Dr Brian Rhoades not only suggests that many education providers do not seem to know who their customers are, but even questions the effort they are making to find out. He says that "along with students, their parents, government and a multitude of others, employers should be considered as a very important customer of the education providers." Some groups within the tertiary sector would probably disagree with this while others would say it is extremely important. In the long run it is important that graduates have the right knowledge, skills and abilities to apply that knowledge is different situations in order for businesses to be willing to employ them.

It is certainly true in the polytechnic sector that over many years polytechnics have consulted with industry to determine what they require in terms of skills and knowledge for their potential employees. Some of this consultation has taken the form of advisory committees within individual polytechnics, others have been in the form of national organisations such as the Institute of Chartered Accountants of New Zealand, the Institute of Professional Engineers, the Nursing Council and so on. This still continues and in fact is increasing with the advent of Industry Training Organisations who purchase training from providers. This purchase model is yet another outcome of the tertiary reforms.

However, while this consultation process may deal with the content of courses and programmes, students are demanding quality teaching, and additional support services which were not necessarily provided in the past. Higgins *et al* (1991:12) point out that "if you want to be a good teacher, you must listen to your customers; the students in your classroom, the faculties which teaches courses for which your courses are prerequisites, and the employers of your graduates." They go on to say that faculties do not have to appease students, but they should consider students' thoughts about good instruction when developing and presenting material. Students want to be treated like adults and not children. As noted earlier in the chapter, customers want respect. Punter (1994:37-38) in his article, gives some quite amusing anecdotes of situations which he encountered in one tertiary institution, suggesting that it probably boils down to one word "attitude". If people within the institution have the right, *or wrong*, attitude it does affect the whole institution and the perceptions about it. What he is referring to is quite simply the focus of the organisation on the customer as a real person who is to be valued and who has needs. Punter (ibid) gives a myriad of examples of the ways in which it is often the systems within the organisation which let down any attempts by its employees to deliver quality customer service. It may well be the linking of the customer service strategies already discussed with good quality systems which will see a transformation in the way employees in such institutions think and operate.

Quality Service Strategies:

In allowing institutions to develop their own programmes, the legislation also provided for the establishment of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority and the National Qualifications Framework. In order for polytechnics to be able to deliver degrees and national qualifications they are required to undergo approval and accreditation processes. Underpinning these processes institutions must have quality management systems in place. Interwoven with these quality management systems must be a strategy to provide quality customer service. This is where models, such as that espoused by Albrecht and Bradford (1991) and Gober (1993) provide an excellent guide. Pick *et al* (1994) in describing the Australian scene, point out that quality issues and the need for higher education (or tertiary) institutions to become customer orientated and to embark on strategies that ensure continuous improvement, has become an increasingly discussed topic since the review of Australia's universities by the Federal Government. It is their belief believe that student centred learning is an important step towards quality in education. They describe a student centred framework which provides a structure that meets the learning needs of students through the flexible management and use of resources, environments and activities that make learning more effective, and increase the students' responsibility for their own learning and development. This is yet another option for discussion in the whole debate of institutions becoming more customer focused.

As part of the development of quality systems there is a need to measure the effectiveness and quality of the service provision both of teaching and support services. Cliff (1994:50) raises the need for polytechnics to measure service quality from the students' perspective because, in his view, they are not measuring this effectively. He quotes the five dimensions of service quality developed by Zeithaml *et al* (1993) which were described earlier in this chapter and proposes that polytechnics, and other tertiary institutions, should implement their SERVQUAL instrument. SERVQUAL is mentioned as one example of a service quality measurement instrument and no doubt there are others which would be just as effective. It does not appear entirely appropriate as a tool for measuring the quality of teaching or for programme evaluation.

As stated at the beginning of the previous paragraph the evaluation teaching needs to be included in the quality service strategy. If it is accepted that teaching is a service and according to Schneider *et al* (1994:685) quoting Bowen and Schneider, teaching can be conceptualised as a service, then it is necessary to consider ways of evaluating that service. (In qualifying this statement they say that (a) teaching processes and experiences are relatively intangible; (b) teaching is typically produced, delivered and consumed simultaneously; and (c) teaching typically requires the presence of customers.) It is their view that the three factors of intangibility, simultaneity and customer presence make service deliverers the key to service quality (ibid). There may be some truth in this, not only for teaching, but for those who deliver support services within the institution - it is the employees of the institution who are the 'human face' of the institution. However the resources and systems underpinning the delivery of those services are also important elements in service quality.

Various methodologies have been developed for measuring the quality of teaching, and indeed of the academic programmes themselves but it is not proposed to discuss such methodologies here. However, it is interesting to note that in discussing discuss aspects of student and lecturer evaluations, Schneider *et al* (1994), from their own research, found that student evaluations of teaching also tell more about the lecturer than could be expected. Although their research may be quite specific in nature it does point to the value of such evaluations in determining, not only how the lecturer is performing in the classroom, but also out of the classroom. Customers perceptions of the quality of an institution are gained from a variety of sources and their evaluation of the performance of the academic staff both in and out of the classroom can be a strong influence in how they communicate to others about the quality of the institution and thus affect its reputation.

Simon Upton, a New Zealand Member of Parliament (1994) also raises the issue of quality of teaching expressing his concern that New Zealand may have oversold the importance of qualifications. He says, "if there is one thing the tertiary reforms have done, they have produced a plethora of qualifications and the list is growing year by year. With tertiary institutions having the right to develop their own academic programmes and especially with polytechnics developing degrees, and by that I mean not only bachelor's degrees but also masters and doctorates, there is a danger that the value of holding a qualification is being undermined and with that could be the quality, despite all the quality management systems being put in place." Upton (ibid) points out that forty or fifty years ago, scarcity value was attached to the holder of a degree or technical qualification. There is a danger that flooding the market with qualifications will see the value Upton refers to, evaporating. This is known as the phenomenon of 'credential inflation'. He quotes the example of a Bachelor of Arts degree being very special in the thirties but "you have to be pretty special in the nineties for a BA to mean much." The evaluation of programmes should therefore be an integral part of the quality service strategy to ensure that the content is up to date, relevant, meeting market needs, and providing the student with the required knowledge and skills to compete in today's market place.

Another facet of customer service strategies is the customer satisfaction survey. Some polytechnics have implemented regular customer satisfaction surveys as one means of measuring their performance. Seymour (1993:41) proposes the view that if higher education institutions "satisfy the customer, everything else follows." He raises a number of issues such as ensuring administrative convenience doesn't take precedence over customer orientation, that time is spent "evaluating whether the sum of our efforts in the classroom will suit our customers' requirements for lifelong learning and earning skills" (ibid:46). He is quite convinced that customer needs are not "warm fuzzy notions" but that they are identifiable. He believes that "customer-driven solutions are better and the way to generate such solutions is by listening, learning, and then taking action" (ibid57-58). He is saying, what has been said by a number of very successful businesses, that if the organisation is customer focused then issues such as customer loyalty, growth and profits will follow. There is a real danger in the current environment for polytechnics, and no doubt other tertiary institutions, to focus on achieving their EFTS targets instead of focusing on identifying and meeting the needs of their customers and ensuring they have quality service strategies and systems in place.

3.5 Conclusion

The reforms of tertiary education in New Zealand have produced a very competitive environment and has, in essence, turned the institutions into businesses. As businesses they have many customers with students being the principal customers purchasing the service. These customers have needs, have expectations and also have perceptions about the quality of the service they are purchasing.

This chapter has considered many aspects of customer service, providing a quality customer service plus strategies to meet the expectations of customers. In this respect polytechnics need to adopt such strategies to ensure that they deliver the kind of education that provides its customers with the knowledge and skills to live and work in the latter years of this century and into the new millennium. They also need to be able to compete with other tertiary institutions to attract new customers and generate a loyalty, which not only ensures those customers come back again and again, but also that they will tell others about the quality of the institutions who in turn will want to study there.

The case study of two faculties within one polytechnic to be discussed in Chapter Five will identify some key issues important to customers of that institution and seek to measure how that institution is meeting the needs and expectations of those customers.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

The previous two chapters have laid the foundation for the case study which is the focus of this research. Chapter Two discussed the tertiary reforms of the last ten years and identified some key issues which relate to the polytechnic sector. Having determined that the student is the principal customer of the polytechnic, and indeed the whole tertiary sector, Chapter Three then set about to discuss the concept of customer service both in a general business sense and more specifically relating to tertiary education and in particular to polytechnics.

It is therefore appropriate to consider the issues surrounding the research methodology being used for this project and some of the literature supporting the largely qualitative approach.

4.1 Qualitative and Quantitative Research

Since the 1960s educational research has often followed the naturalistic phenomenological mode rather than the scientific empirical tradition. Burns (1990:1) comments that "the naturalistic approach to research emphasises the importance of subjective experience of individuals with a focus on qualitative analysis." Such an approach allows the researcher to evaluate personal comments of the individual participant. Merriam (1998:6) in explaining qualitative research cites Patton (1985:1):

> [Qualitative Research] is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. this understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting - what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what's going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting - and in the analysis to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interesting in that setting... The analysis strives for depth of understanding (Patton, 1985:1).

However Patton (1990:10) indicates that qualitative findings can be presented alone or in combination with quantitative data. In fact he suggests that the use of multiple methods is increasing. Creswell (1994:177-8) also presents his views on the use of both research paradigms saying that it helps the researcher to better understand a concept being tested or explored. He provides three models or design approaches: a two-phase design, where the qualitative and quantitative phases are conducted separately; a dominant - less dominant design, where one research paradigm is more dominant than the other; and thirdly, a mixed-methodology design where the research would mix aspects of the qualitative and quantitative paradigm at all or many methodological steps in the design. Essentially this thesis uses a two-phase design but bringing both paradigms together in the overall discussion of the findings. Chapter Five provides an analysis of the quantitative data while Chapter Six uses the qualitative material to enrich the findings and to enable the emergent themes to be drawn through and discussed.

By using qualitative, and to a limited extent quantitative methods of data collection in this research, it is therefore possible, not only to analyse responses to certain questions in numerical terms, but also to be able to tease out issues raised in the interview situation and express them narratively. The quantitative analysis essentially provides a statistical representation of the way in which the institution is meeting customer expectation in terms of the delivery of its teaching programmes and associated services, and to provide some comparison of the staff's perception of what customers expect. On the other hand the use of interviews allows the analysis of those personal comments made by individuals to further support and clarify the quantitative and other qualitative results. Miles and Huberman (1994:10) affirm this by saying that "qualitative data are useful when one needs to supplement, validate, explain, illuminate, or reinterpret quantitative data gathered from the same setting." Furthermore Miles and Huberman (ibid:41) quote Rossman and Wilson (1984,1991:627-643) as suggesting three broad reasons for linking qualitative and quantitative data:

(a) to enable confirmation or corroboration of each other via triangulation;
(b) to elaborate or develop analysis, providing richer details; and
(c) to initiate new lines of thinking through attention to surprises or paradoxes, "turning ideas around," providing fresh insight.

It is certainly the intention in this research, to link the two data sources to provide a richer analysis of the findings.

Reliability and Validity:

One of the criticisms of qualitative research often relates to reliability and validity. Burns (1994:240) points out that when dealing with human beings, rather than inanimate scientific material, it may be possible to measure something reliably but it may not necessarily be valid. It is possible that a survey may measure something in a consistent fashion but further in-depth interviewing may reveal that some aspects of the responses were not true and that other factors influenced the answer. He says that one of the best ways to determine what is reliable and valid in qualitative research is triangulation.

Merriam (1998:204) says that from her own research as well as other qualitative research literature, triangulation is one form of enhancing internal validity, for example, using multiple investigators, multiple sources of data, or multiple methods to confirm the emerging findings. She also points out that reliability is "problematic in the social sciences simply because human behaviour is never static......Qualitative research, however, is not conducted so that the laws of human behaviour can be isolated. Rather, researchers seek to describe and explain the world as those in the world experience it ibid:205)."

Patton (1990:187) also refers to triangulation as an important way to strengthen a study design explaining it as a combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomena. He suggests that this can include a mix of data, design and analysis approaches. In this research the use of surveys with both qualitative and quantitative analysis, interviews with staff and students, plus the data being drawn from two faculties of entirely different disciplines all work to achieve triangulation.

In terms of external validity, Merriam (1998:207) explains that this is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations. She says that the question of generalisation has been a problem for qualitative researchers for quite some time but it must be remembered that in qualitative research, a single case or small non-random sample is selected because the researchers wishes to understand the particular situation in depth, and not necessarily to find out what is generally true for many situations (ibid:208). Multi-site studies can certainly be used to provide some generalisation from the findings, it is not always feasible, or even possible to carry out such investigations. The purpose of this thesis is primarily to consider the impact of the tertiary reforms and customer service paradigm in one polytechnic although it may be possible to expect that such an impact has also occurred in other polytechnics.

As this study involves both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection, one further aspect of validity must involve the measurement tool used. The Likert scale as a measurement tool is discussed again later in this chapter but in terms of reliability and validity, Burns (1994:338) says that the Likert Scale "produces more homogeneous scales and increases the probability that a unitary attitude is being measured, and therefore that validity (construct and concurrent) and reliability are reasonably high".

Case Study Approach:

As mentioned in Chapter One the researcher is intensely interested in the shift which has been occurring towards the recognition of students as customers of tertiary institutions and in particular the institution in which he is a senior manager. In order to understand the concept of students as customers and to carry out a sufficiently in-depth study of student expectations in terms of customer service, it was necessary to set some limit to the data gathering in order to make the project manageable. In view of this it was decided to use a case study approach. Comment was made in the previous section that multi-site studies can assist with external validity of the research, however it was agreed, after discussion with the researcher's academic advisers, to limit the case study to one polytechnic. The fact that the researcher works in the institution creates a "lived experience" for the research. Furthermore, in order to provide a sufficient sample, two faculties within that institution have been used and this has also enabled some comparison when discussing the results. The two faculties have some similarities in that they both offer degrees, diplomas and certificates but the diversity of their disciplines is significant. At this stage also, only two departments within one faculty are offering programmes which incorporate unit standards from the National Qualifications Framework.

Merriam (1998:19) points out that case studies may be quantitative and test theory, they are more likely to be qualitative. She says that "a case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. It is the interest in process, in this case the shift to becoming customer focused, rather than the overall statistical outcomes, and in discovery rather than confirmation which is important in this research project. It is also acknowledged that the case study approach is used extensively in such areas as clinical psychology and developmental psychology and therefore focuses on participant observation. Burns (1994:312) does state that this observation can be of an individual unit, for example, a student, a class, a school, a community and so on. In this instance one polytechnic has been treated as the individual unit which is being observed. Burns quite rightly points out that extensive data must be collected to produce understanding of the entity being studied (ibid:313). Bogdan and Biklen (1992:63) describe an observational case study as one where the focus of the study is on a particular organisation or some aspect of the organisation and that the major data gathering technique is participant observation. They also refer to the group in the organisation on which the study is focused, 'as a collection of people who interact, who identify with each other, and who share expectations about each others' behaviour (ibid:64)." This statement reinforces the researcher's reasoning for confining the participants in the case study to the students and staff of two faculties within the institution.

As already stated this case study combines both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The major data sources used are questionnaires for both students and staff, interviews and some supporting documentary evidence: for example the institution's last student satisfaction survey. Yin (1989:23) also supports the use of multiple sources of evidence as fundamental to the case study.

Yin (ibid:17) states that the survey asks the "who, what, where, how many and how much" questions whilst the case study strategy can be used to ask the "how and why" questions. As stated above the study focuses on two faculties within the institution and the interviews endeavour to address some of the "how and why" questions. Yin (ibid:21) also points out that there are some prejudices and difficulties with the rigor of the case study approach and he stresses that the case study investigator must avoid biased views that influence the direction of the findings and conclusions. Every effort is therefore being made in this research to ensure that there is no bias, but that the participants' views are accurately reported. Yin (ibid) also gives some warnings about generalisation stating that, while it is not possible to generalise to populations and universes, it is possible to generalise to theoretical propositions. It is then possible that if the same theory was tested in other polytechnics, a similar result would emerge.

4.2 Ethical Approval

In accordance with the requirements of Massey University where human subjects form the main participants in a piece of research, a submission must be made to the University's Human Ethics Committee. Details of the data collection instruments, the information sheet for participants, the consent form, details of confidentiality, and interview procedures were submitted to the Committee and ethical approval granted. The Committee requested that the student questionnaire be forwarded at a later date, and this requirement was duly met and approval given. The information sheet and consent forms are provided in Appendices One and Two.

One of the principal issues is confidentiality, and participants have been informed that names will not be used. Fictitious names have been substituted but in some cases the participants' identity may be apparent to some readers by virtue of the comments quoted from their interviews.

4.3 Focus Groups

The purpose of focus groups within this research was to identify key issues of importance to them as customers of the institution. Patton (1990:335) purports that the focus group interview is not a discussion, nor a problem solving session or a decision making group; it is an interview. He also refers to such groups as being able to hear each other's responses and make comment themselves without the necessity to reach a consensus. One critical factor Patton mentions (ibid:336) is that focus groups can be used as part of a needs assessment process and this is why this strategy has been employed in this research.

A series of four focus groups was established, two from each faculty, and volunteers were called for with approximately ten students comprising each group. Each group was quite vocal and with the researcher as facilitator it was only necessary to ask quite broad questions to engender responses. The issues the groups raised fell into four major areas - programme and course information; course delivery and assessment; enrolment; other facilities. Each group brainstormed the four areas raising many issues, some closely related to each other, but others quite unique to the students' own experiences within the institution. The issues raised by the focus groups formed the items for the major questionnaire. Details of all the issues discussed by the focus groups is contained in Appendix Three.

4.4 Development of the Questionnaires

The student questionnaire is one of two main data collection instruments used in this thesis. (Appendix Four) This was to enable a reasonable number of participants to be surveyed in order to give their opinions and ranking of their various service encounters within the institution. As Creswell (1994:119) indicates, the survey provides a rapid turnaround in data collection, and in this case, is a cross-sectional survey as the information was collected at one point in time.

As already stated the principal driver for the questionnaire design was the issues raised by the focus groups. Oppenheim (1992:128-130) gives some basic rules for wording questions but points out that each questionnaire is unique and presents it own special problems. However he says that one of the best ways to check the wording of questions is through the pilot work. In the questionnaires for this research it has been important to word the majority of the questions in such as way as to be able to determine what customers consider important and whether or not their expectation is being met in regard to those issues. It is important to note that the purpose is not to determine customer satisfaction. The Institution itself, surveys customer satisfaction every two years and reference will be made to the 1996 survey in the next two chapters. It appeared that at no point in time has actual customer need and expectation been addressed in the institution.

In designing the questionnaire the Likert scale has been used where measurement of attitude was required rather than a direct 'yes' or 'no' answer. The scale is used with a range from 1 to 5, 1 being the lowest score and 5 the highest or more favourable score. This scale has been used to allow participants to rank the importance of some items, such as the provision of facilities, and alongside to rank the participant's expectation in terms of the institute's provision of those facilities and services. Creswell (1994:121) stresses that it is important to use a proven instrument in data collection, and that modification can distort the original validity and reliability of the instrument. Burns (1994:338) points out there are some limitations in this method of attitude measurement particularly because it does not provide a basis for saying how much more favourable one item is than another, nor does it provide a basis for measuring the amount of change after some experience. The survey has endeavoured to address this by the importance ranking and by other types of question. The biggest advantage in using this method in this research has not only been its simplicity, but, as stated earlier, "its creation of more homogeneous scales and thus increasing the probability that a unitary attitude is being measured (ibid)."

For other questions, where no score is required, respondents simply tick a box for the most appropriate answer. In a few instances additional space has been provided for respondents to make qualitative statements.

A shorter version of the student questionnaire was prepared, mainly modifying the demographic questions to suit the staff, and also omitting the more personal questions asked of the students, such as their reasons for selecting the particular institution and choice of programme of study. This survey was then submitted to the staff in the two faculties, asking them to put themselves in the place of the student and answer what they perceive students would consider important and whether they consider the students' expectations are being met by the faculty and institution. (Appendix Five)

4.5 Testing the Questionnaire: The Pilot

Running a pilot of the questionnaire is essential to ensure that the questions are understood, that they produce the expected outcomes, that the questions are grouped correctly and to test the time required to complete the survey. Oppenheim (1992:47) emphasises the necessity to try out every aspect of a survey before it is put to its intended respondents to ensure that it works as the researcher intends.

Arrangements were made for a small group of students to test the questionnaire. Opportunity was given for them to ask questions, to point out any difficulties in interpretation and, of course, to ask why a particular question was included. Some minor issues arose and consequently changes were made to the questionnaire itself.

4.6 Survey Sample

As the case study focuses on two faculties within the institution, an assessment was made of the number of students in each faculty and then a random selection of classes being held on a particular day were chosen. While the total number of students in the faculties is in excess of 3000, the numbers expected in classes on the day the survey was carried out was approximately 1200. Agreement was reached with the faculty Deans and Heads of Departments for the surveys to be delivered to the lecturers of those classes for completion by the students, on an entirely voluntary basis, in class time. The surveys were collected at the end of the lecture with a return rate of 48%.

Similarly the staff questionnaires were sent through the internal mail system to a total of 200 full time and part time staff. Both teaching and non teaching staff were included and the response rate was 40%.

4.7 Interviews

The second major data collection instrument is the interview. Merriam (1998:71) indicates that interviewing is a common means of collecting qualitative data. She says that "interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behaviour, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them (ibid:72)." In this study volunteers, either from the focus groups or from classes, were invited to participate in an in-depth interview. Eight students and six staff members from each faculty agreed to be interviews along with three corporate managers. Bogdan and Biklen (1992:97) suggest that interviews can vary as to how much they are structured. They say that even when an interview guide is used, the interviewer can still take considerable latitude to pursue a range of topics which gives the subject a chance to shape the overall content of the interview. Furthermore they describe that at the other end of the scale, are very open-ended interviews where subject is encouraged to talk in the area of interest but allows the researcher to probe more deeply into topics and issues the subject may introduce (ibid:97).

For the purposes of this research semi-structured interviews were selected using a broad set of 5 or 6 questions. These questions were devised from the main themes raised by the focus groups and also to some extent they are a more in-depth investigation into issues covered in the questionnaire. Although the interview style was semi-structured, they were designed to be flexible enough to allow the researcher to pick up on comments made by the subjects and seek clarification or pursue a new direction if necessary. Burns (1994:279) lists some excellent advantages of this type of interview which uses an interview guide rather than a specific interview schedule. One of his points is that with semi-structured interviewing the informant's perspective is provided rather than the perspective of the researcher being imposed. He also says that the informant uses language natural to themselves rather than being restricted by very structured questions in a survey type interview thus needing to understand and fit into the concepts of the study. He further comments that using an interview guide gives direction to the interview to focus on the crucial issues of the study but permits a more valid response from the informant's perception of reality. Patton (1990:10) describes in-depth interviews as one of three kinds of data collection used in qualitative methodology stating that the data from interviews consists of direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings and knowledge.

4.8 Additional Data

The institution which is the subject of the case study carries out a student satisfaction survey every two years. Some extracts from the 1996 survey have been used to substantiate and further validate the findings of the current research.

4.9 Data Analysis

In order to analyse the questionnaires, a database was established using Excel computer application software. The responses to the questionnaires from each group were entered into the database and the statistical analysis performed using various formulae. Pie-chart graphs were used to extract demographic data, while percentages and means were used to determine the remaining responses. Where qualitative answers were provided in the questionnaires, these were entered into the database and extracted either as random responses in tables or into common themes to determine the numbers of like responses. The major qualitative data gathering was in the form of interviews which were recorded on audiotape and transcribed. The transcriptions were then coded manually and the relevant extracts quoted to support the research findings.

4.10 Presentation of Findings

As this research is largely following qualitative methodology the research report is, by its very nature, primarily narrative and descriptive. As Burns (1994:376) describes, the report writing process is a logical, descriptive and analytic presentation of evidence that has been systematically collected and interpreted. The report however, includes some statistical manifestations of the findings. Demographic data is presented in graphical form using pie charts, while some survey results are set out in table form to provide a more dynamic way of indicating customer need, perception and expectation.

Merriam (1998:221) says that "the first and one of the most important considerations in preparing to write your final report is deciding whom the report is for." In this study the intended audience for these findings is primarily the polytechnic which is the subject of the case study, but the tertiary sector as a whole may find the information beneficial. Burns (1994:376) suggests that qualitative reports can have a more diverse audience, and that each audience has different needs with no one report being likely to suffice. While implications for the sector are indicated and some recommendations for further research are also given, other institutions will be able to draw out their own conclusions from this report, and will be able to take some of the issues, and explore them in their own environment to determine their customers' needs and expectations.

In summary, this chapter has described the methodology used for the research project together with appropriate supporting literature, the forms of data gathering, the ethical approval required and the format of the report. This leads into the next phase where the questionnaires are analysed and then the findings are discussed in conjunction with the interviewees' responses.

CHAPTER FIVE

ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONNAIRES

5.1 Introduction

The review of Tertiary Education begun in the late 1980's has resulted in some significant changes to the way tertiary institutions operate. This research has focused on two major perspectives of that review; firstly to identify the reforms emanating from the review and how they relate to Polytechnics, and secondly, to consider the notion that students are now customers of those institutions and to determine how an institution may measure up to the expectations of its customers. The tertiary reforms have been identified in Chapter Two. Chapter Three has considered some of the literature available on customer service and expectation and related some of the emerging ideas to the tertiary sector and to polytechnics in particular. In determining how to investigate what was really happening in the sector it was decided to undertake a form of case study approach in one polytechnic. The methodology for the research has been explained in Chapter Four and included discussion on the development of the questionnaires and the interviews via a focus group process. This chapter now seeks to analyse and explain the findings from the two faculties surveyed.

5.2 Focus Groups

As described in Chapter Four, volunteers were called to form two focus groups in each faculty. It had to be accepted that the students were extremely busy with their studies and in order to get volunteers it was agreed, with them, to meet on one occasion only. The express purpose of the focus groups was to identify important interactions between students and the institution and how students expected the institution to perform in terms of customer service and provision. A brain storming approach was taken and each issue was written up on a whiteboard. As the discussion progressed common themes began to emerge and so the issues were able to be grouped within those themes. The actual discussion was not recorded on tape and it was agreed with each group that the lists of issues on the whiteboard would be typed up and would provide a guide for the preparation of the questionnaire. The issues were then analysed, and although not all of them be included in the questionnaire, they were grouped into emergent themes of Course Information; Course delivery; Admission and Enrolment Process; Facilities. The full list of issues raised by each focus group appears in Appendix Three. It must be reinforced that this questionnaire seeks to consider the issues raised by the focus groups and is not intended to be as complex and wide ranging as the institutions own customer satisfaction survey which is carried out every two years.

5.3 Completion of Questionnaires

The questionnaire was distributed to students on one particular day at the beginning of semester two, 1997. The most appropriate day and time was determined in consultation with the head of each department and therefore the questionnaire was only given to classes being held at that particular time and completion was entirely voluntary. Staff questionnaires were distributed the same day via their pigeonholes.

5.4 Analysis of Questionnaires

The analysis of the questionnaires has been divided into four groups - Faculty A students, Faculty A staff, Faculty B students, and Faculty B staff, with each group being analysed separately. Within each group, the analysis has been further broken down into the various sections of the questionnaire, and then dealt with question by question. In the case of the demographics it has been more appropriate to use percentages and graphical presentations while in other cases a numerical chart gives a more meaningful representation of the responses. Where students and staff were required to give a rating on a Likert scale the mean has been calculated, although some mention may be made of where on the Likert scale most of the responses were grouped. In the cases where an importance rating with a corresponding expectation rating was required, the mean has been calculated and displayed in a chart format with an indication of the resultant gap between importance and expectation. In analysing the gap, it was decided to follow a similar pattern to the institution's own scale used in the 1996 customer satisfaction survey, but interpreting it as:

<1	is not significant and therefore meeting customer expectation
1-2	is significant and the issue needs addressing
>2	is critical and the institution is failing to provide adequate service

5.5 Faculty A

Student Demographics:

There were 345 responses from this Faculty of which 86% are full time students and 14% are studying part time with only one student not responding to this question. 59.7% of the students are female and 39.7% are male with 2 students not answering this question. Rather than asking a question about student allowances it was decided it was more pertinent to ascertain how many students had some form of paid employment, whether it be full time or part time. Figure 4 indicates the percentages of students in full time, part time or no employment. It is interesting to note that by far the largest majority, 55%, have no job at all. As mentioned above the issue of student allowances was not addressed, however it cannot be assumed that those full time students not in some form of employment are in receipt of a student allowance. This is a highly complex system of financial support while studying and for many students an entitlement to a student allowance is dependent on the level of family income. It is primarily due to the complexity of the scheme that such a question was omitted.

Figure 4

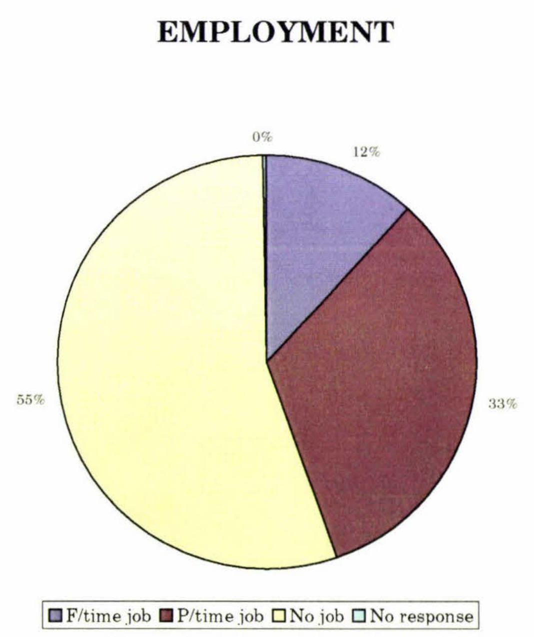


Figure 5 on the next page, indicates the ratio of students in terms of the years they have studied at the institution. It is interesting to note that the majority of students, 61%, are in their first year and this may be partly due to the fact that a number of one year certificate programmes are offered by this faculty.

Figure 5

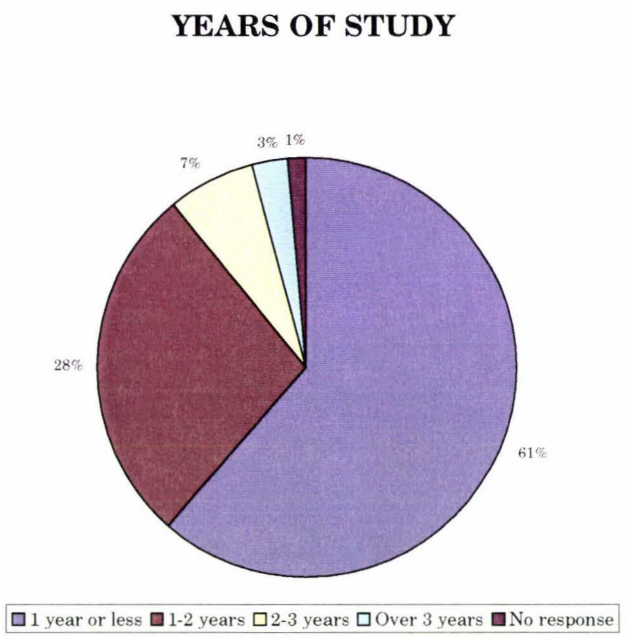


Figure 6, on the next page, shows the age range of students. There is a close correlation between the percentage of students in the under 20 and 20-24 brackets, 30% and 27% respectively, but it is useful to note however, that the remaining 43% are across the age groups of 25 to 40 plus. The gives some credence to the widely-held opinion that more mature students are returning to study, or perhaps even taking up tertiary education for the first time.

Figure 7, on the next page, indicates the ethnic breakdown of the participants in this research. While New Zealand European/Pakeha is the largest single ethnic group at 39%, they are followed closely by those identifying with the Chinese culture at 23%. When all the Asian groups are added together they equal the Pakeha group at 39%. Finally it is worth noting that of the group surveyed on this occasion, 12% identify themselves as Pacific Islanders. This is an increase of 4% on the group which was surveyed by the institution in 1996, and the group surveyed then was slightly larger.

This should be an encouraging sign for the institution as it seeks to increase the participation of Maori and Pacific Island students in tertiary education. Unfortunately there are no comparative figures for Maori students.

Figure 6

AGE GROUPINGS

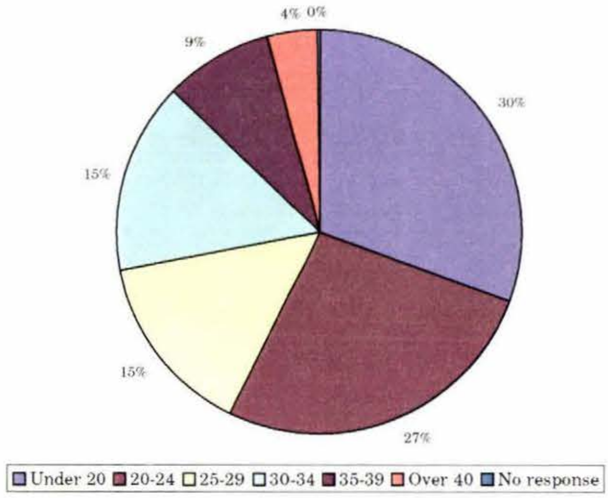
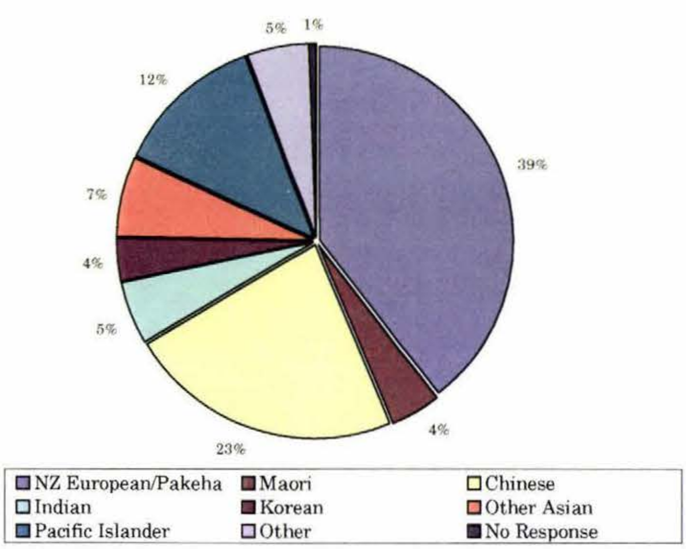


Figure 7

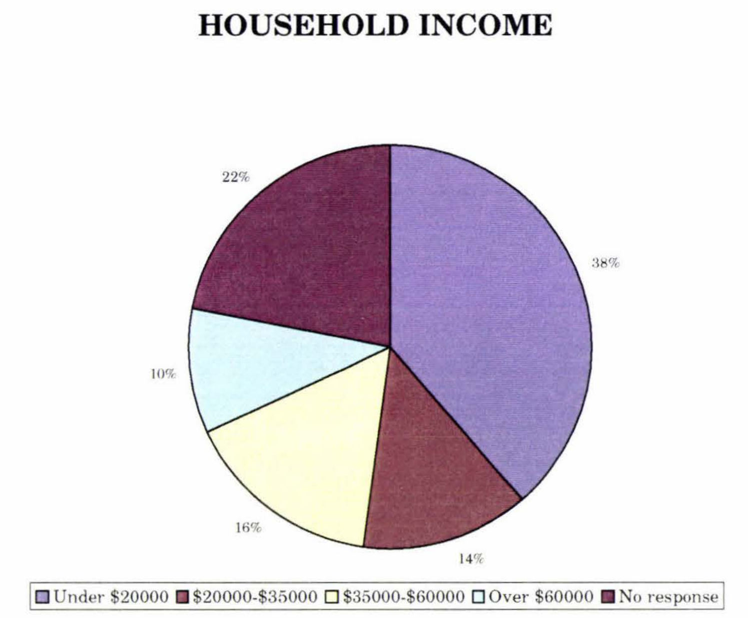
ETHNICITY



The student loan scheme has been the topic of discussion via the media on a number of occasions. In Chapter Two reference was made to the increasing level of student debt. As the advent of this scheme was one of the outcomes of the tertiary reforms it was decided to ask participants if they took a student loan to pay their fees. 51% responded that they took a student loan while 48% did not. 5 students did not respond representing 1% of the participants. Students were also asked to add any other comments about why they did or did not take a loan, or if they used it for any other purpose. Two students responded that they had received full scholarships from their government and one student had their fees paid by parents in another country. The two scholarship students would not have been eligible for a student loan as they would not hold New Zealand citizenship or permanent residency. The third student may have also been an international student and thereby also not eligible for a student loan. A further two indicated that New Zealand Income Support Service had paid their fees, while one student indicated he or she had taken a bank overdraft instead of a student loan, and one other student indicated he or she had used the loan for living expenses and not to pay their fees.

The final two questions in this section covered living arrangements and household incomes. Again similar ratios appear - 51% of students live at home, 48% live away from home, of which two indicated they had their own home, and 1% did not respond. Finally the income brackets are represented by Figure 8. This chart is not intended to indicate socio-economic groupings but rather to portray the picture that the majority of students are either living on a student allowance or income from part-time work. These figures correspond very well with the other responses in terms of living away from home and whether the student has a job or not. Further detailed analysis of this did not seem appropriate for this aspect of the research.

Figure 8



Staff Demographics:

The staff questionnaire followed a similar format to the student questionnaire but with much less demographic information. 48 staff participated in this questionnaire of which 40 were full time and 8 part time. Also of those 48, 42 or 88% were academic staff and 6 or 12% general staff (often referred to as allied staff) with 52% of the respondents female and 48% male. In this faculty an overwhelming number of staff have been at the institution for more than three years, namely 65%, with 12% for one year or less, 11% for 1-2 years and 12% for 2-3 years.

Course Information:

Faculty A offers a wide range of certificate and diploma programmes plus two bachelor's degrees. Students from programmes offered by other faculties, and particularly degree programmes, may also take electives which appear in one of Faculty A's programmes.

Students were asked to indicate their programme of study and of the 345 respondents, 47% were studying at the certificate level, 33% at diploma level, 16% at degree level with 4% not providing that information.

When asked why students chose this particular institution the answers were naturally wide ranging. However contrary to opinion by some quarters of the Ministry of Education, most students are not making judgements as to which institution they will attend on the basis of the quality of the institution or the cost by cost basis. Their decisions are being based on things like - the proximity to their work or home; whether the programme of study they are looking for is being offered; the desire to have a tertiary education to enable them to get a job; or even the fact that their friends are attending a particular institution. There were only one or two students who stated their decision was because of the quality of the institution. The results are best summarised in Table 1 on the next page.

In conjunction with asking why they had chosen the particular programme of study, students were asked to indicate if they had enrolled at any other institution in the current year. Quite surprisingly perhaps, only 33 or 9% indicated they had enrolled at any other tertiary institution, leaving 299 or 87% having only enrolled at this institution, with a further 4% not responding. As 61% of students are in their first year of study and only 9% of students overall in this faculty applied to other institutions, an overwhelming majority only applied to this one institution. Of the 33 who had also enrolled elsewhere, 19 indicated they had applied to one or both of the other polytechnics in the city with the remainder as follows: Auckland University 1; Massey (either Albany or extramural) 3; Waikato University 1; The Open Polytechnic 1; The Waikato Polytechnic 1; Private Institutions 3; and Institutions not named 4.

Table 1 **Reasons for Student Choice of Institution**

The items in this table are not ranked according to frequency

near home	easy parking and close to home
nice place	heard it is a good institute
closer to home	course content appealed
nice campus	offered double major
cheap and convenient	offered best options for me
parking	concentrating in practice
accessibility	to get a New Zealand qualification
to learn English	good academic environment
quality educational system	to get a higher qualification
good environment for studying	institution offers a lot and had a course I wanted
to get a degree	only place offered at diploma level
had the course I wanted	offered me the best, most advanced course I could do
to further my education	providing the specialisation I require
good quality of study	course I wanted but not in university
to get a tertiary education	friendly staff and great atmosphere
for higher education and learning	well known by people
heard the course was great	I wanted to get a solid education for a good career
small classes	was bored at home and wanted to learn
is easy to enrol here	training incentive to go back to work force
advertisement on TV	friend introduced me to come and
father's influence	interested me in this course
recommended from friend	to have the necessary qualifications and skills to enable me to get the job I want
positive feedback from friends	
practically oriented to suit career	
find a job	

NB: 20% of students mentioned the location was near to their home and/or parking was available as the reason for enrolling at the institution.

One of the important factors in providing good customer service is the institution's marketing strategy. As discussed in Chapter Three this encompasses a raft of initiatives and promotion is one of them. The Course Information Centre is part of the Marketing Department of the institution and provides an information and advisory service to prospective and current students. The production of brochures about programmes of study are largely informational in themselves but certainly form an important part of the recruitment and promotional campaign. Major forms of advertising are usually through the newspapers, radio and, to a limited degree, television. In addition the institution has liaison staff who visit schools and other community groups. Printed material is sent to school careers advisers and there are city wide promotional events such as the Coca Cola Expo. The next question in the questionnaire sought to determine how students obtained information about their chosen programme of study. They were then asked to rank that service in terms of whether or not it met their expectations. Responses are indicated in Table 2:

Table 2 **Source of Course Information**

	%
School Careers Adviser	9
Course Info Centre	44
Faculty Office	7
Advertisement	4.5
Current or ex student	10
A range of the above	21
No response	4.5
Total	100

80% of students ranked the 'service' they used to obtain the information between 3 and 4 on the Likert scale of 1 to 5 (1 being "did not meet expectations" to 5 "exceeded my expectations"). The mean was 3.43. One point of interest from the list of responses above is that 44% of respondents used the institution's Course Information Centre, and most of the 21% who used a range of services also nominated the Course Information Centre as one service they used. In an analysis of the students who used the Course Information Centre, the majority ranked that service between 3 and 5 on the expectation scale.

In the discussions with the focus groups, a number of issues were raised relating to information about the various programmes of study and more particularly about the courses within each programme. The next question asked the students to rank a number of items in importance and then allocate a rating in terms of expectations. Staff were also given the same range of items, but they were asked to rank them firstly by what they would consider as important to students, and then by how they considered students' expectations would be met in terms of current course information. Tables 3 and 4 detail the responses:

Table 3 **Course Information - Student Responses**

Description	**Imp**	**Exp**	**Gap**
Course information is presented in a simple clear manner	4.30	3.45	0.85
Information is given about the content of programmes (e.g.course descriptors, core and electives, where appropriate)	4.17	3.38	0.79
Information is given about cross credits	3.83	2.77	1.06
The selection process for entry to programmes is stated	3.99	3.26	0.73
Advice of acceptance on to the programme is given within a reasonable amount of time	4.24	3.23	1.01
Progression from programme to programme is shown by flowcharts in the Prospectus	3.84	3.35	0.49
Job/career prospects are indicated for each qualification	4.11	3.10	1.01

Table 4 **Course Information - Staff Responses**

Description	Imp	Exp	Gap
Course information is presented in a simple clear manner	4.66	3.58	1.08
Information is given about the content of programmes (e.g. course descriptors, core and electives where appropriate).	4.44	3.54	0.90
Information is given about cross credits	3.60	3.03	0.57
The selection process for entry to programmes is stated	4.16	3.66	0.50
Advice of acceptance on to the programme is given within a reasonable amount of time	4.40	3.39	1.01
Progression from programme to programme is given if appropriate	3.98	3.30	0.68
Job/career prospects are given for each qualification	3.81	3.02	0.79

In the above two charts there is some close correlation in the ranking by both students and staff. However information about cross credits is obviously of greater concern to students than staff perceive. While no discussion or explanation has been required as to what students actually require in terms of information about cross credits, hence perceptions between students and staff will differ, the results in fact raise an issue which the Institution needs to explore further. The only other issue of relatively small significance is the difference between student's expectation and staff perception in terms of information about job or career prospects in relation to each qualification. It has been noted that this issue is being addressed by the Institution in their 1998 Prospectus.

Finally in this section, students and staff were asked to rank course information literature in terms of user friendliness and whether or not it is centred on customer needs. The outcome is encouraging although it possibly suggests there is room for improvement. Student respondents rated user friendliness at a mean of 3.92 and meeting customer needs at a mean of 3.50, while staff ranked user friendliness at a mean of 3.44 and meeting customer needs at 3.41. There is only a slight difference between staff and students in terms of user friendliness and an insignificant difference in the ranking of meeting customer need.

Course Delivery:

The focus groups discussed quite vociferously what goes on in the classroom. They talked about the different types of course delivery they preferred, whether they were given photocopied notes, and whether or not they had to take notes or had to do much of the reading and investigation themselves with the lecturer as facilitator. The first part of this section of the questionnaire asked some general questions about the student's own programme of study before asking students to rank importance and expectation in terms of some more specific issues the focus groups had identified.

Polytechnics have been renowned for their small classes but this is starting to change. In some cases the decision to hold large lectures is made on economic grounds - a large lecture with one lecturer produces greater economies of scale than say, six small classes and therefore requiring six lecturers. The decision can also be made on sound academic reasoning. Some subjects or courses can be delivered just as effectively in a large lecture situation with the possibility of smaller tutorials on another occasion. Much of the learning is also done more effectively in interactive groups where there is discussion and investigation done by the students together with their lecturer. This will be mentioned again briefly when class sizes are analysed. Similarly lecturers use different styles of teaching, and of course it must be recognised that some courses may suit a more direct teaching style where students take plenty of notes (the traditional "talk and chalk" approach), while other courses warrant a more student directed approach where the lecturer facilitates the learning but the student does a large amount of reading and research about the topic. Table 5 on the next page shows the analysis of the course delivery and teaching styles which students encountered in Faculty A. In terms of preference of course delivery style, only 76% of students listed their preferences. 50% of that group indicated a combination of delivery styles as preferable, while 23% stated the interactive style as their preference, and one student mentioned that they did not like any group work.

Table 5 **Course Delivery and Teaching Styles - Student Responses**

Course delivery styles	%
Lecture only	10
Combination of lecture and group work	42
Interactive style teaching (plenty of discussion between lecturer and students)	33
A combination of all three	1
Other combinations given by respondents	11
No response	3
Total	100
Teaching Style	
By direct teaching with plenty of notes	17
Mainly student directed learning with lecturer as facilitator	12
A combination of the above	68
No response	3
Total	100

Staff were also asked to indicate the course delivery styles used in their courses, which is contained in table 6, and then comment on which they thought students preferred. The perception of the academic staff matched well with the students' opinions with 50% of staff considering students preferred an interactive style or a combination of lecture and interactive styles. Some staff also pointed out that it can depend on the students' background, and often international students preferred lectures to a discussion format. The staff responses to the teaching styles they used are also indicated in Table 6. Some staff expressed concern that that the points listed under course delivery style and teaching style appeared very similar, but in fact they have some significant difference in the customers' eyes. Mention has already been made of some of the students' views about the ways the classes operate and how the teaching is carried out. These issues were discussed in the focus groups and it was clear that some students did not mind the lecture and group work combinations, for instance, but they preferred clear and direct teaching with printed notes supplied rather than having to do a lot of their own reading and research. While the percentage responses indicate quite clearly that combinations of delivery and teaching style are preferable, some students do have stronger preferences about such matters. Academic staff do take heed of these preferences and often are required to assist some students to cope with the more student directed style of learning. This appears to be particularly related to international students and the staff commented repeatedly that these students usually preferred direct teaching with plenty of notes over any other style. This matter reoccurs in the interviews with some of the academic staff and is discussed in Chapter Six.

Table 6 **Course Delivery and Teaching Styles - Staff Responses**

Course Delivery Style	%
Lecture only	2
Combination of lecture and group work	27
Interactive style	33
Combination provided by respondents	25
No response	13
Total	100
Teaching Style	
Direct teaching with plenty of notes	10.5
Mainly student directed with lecturer as facilitator	10.5
Combination of the above	68.5
No response	10.5
Total	100

It is part of the Institution's policy that an evaluation of each individual course should take place each semester as well as an evaluation of the lecturer. The next two questions in both surveys were included to ascertain if this part of the quality management system was being implemented. Table 7 records the student responses while Table 8 records the staff responses.

Table 7 **Evaluation - Student Responses**

Course evaluation	%	**Lecturer evaluation**	%
Yes	57	Yes	54
No	8	No	10
Some courses only	25	Some lecturers only	26
No response	10	No response	10
Total	100	Total	100

Table 8 **Evaluation - Staff Responses**

Course Evaluation	%	Lecturer Evaluation	%
Yes	83	Yes	79
No	4	No	0
Some courses only	2	Some lecturers only	4
No response	11	No response	17
Total	100	Total	100

It is worth noting that only 57% and 54% respectively of the student responses indicated that evaluations had been carried out for all their courses and all their lecturers during semester one. If the evaluations for all courses and lecturers are added to those for some courses only the totals come close to the staff responses. As the accumulated figures amount to 82% and 80% respectively the question should be raised as to why evaluations are taking place in some courses and for some lecturers only, and not all, when it is a policy of the institution. This is an important issue within the customer service paradigm because this does form valuable evaluative information for the institution. It is understood that a review of the process in currently underway by the institution. It should also be noted that although 10% of students did not respond to this question it is a fair assumption that most of those respondents would have only just joined the course at the beginning of semester two, and naturally no evaluations would have been carried out at that stage.

It has already been mentioned that small classes have been a feature of polytechnics and this has often been seen as an aspect of competitive edge over universities for some courses. The discussions within the focus groups had indicated that the smaller classes are slowly being replaced with larger lectures, so it was decided to explore this a little further in the questionnaires. While some of the increase in class sizes can be accounted for by sound academic reasons, anecdotal evidence indicates this is being done for greater economies of scale, and certainly the annual reports of the institution for the last four years indicate some trends in increasing student/teacher ratios. The indication of student and staff preferences are shown in Table 9 below:

Table 9 **Class Sizes**

Student Responses	%
Large lectures (e.g. 80 plus)	2
Large lectures with small group tutorials	13
Small classes for lectures (under 30)	65
A combination	18
No response	2
Total	100
Staff Responses	
Large lectures (e.g. 80 plus)	0
Large lectures with small group tutorials	6
Small classes for lectures (under 30)	71
A combination	15
No response	8
Total	100

It is very clear that staff and students alike prefer the smaller classes, although a similar percentage each (18% and 15% respectively) consider a combination of larger and smaller classes would be acceptable.

In addition to the course delivery items above which have been dealt with in more detail, Tables 10 and 11 below show a gap analysis between importance and expectation for a number of other issues which the focus groups raised. As in previous questions of this nature, staff were also asked to give their perception of what students would consider important and where the institution may or may not be meeting their expectations.

Table 10 **Other Course Delivery Issues - Student Responses**

Description	Imp	Exp	Gap
The timetable of courses is published before courses begin	4.61	3.72	0.89
The flexibility of the timetable	4.33	3.14	1.19
Information about course content, plan of topics to be covered each week, timetable for tests and assignments is given at the first class	4.44	3.90	0.54
The lecturers are very knowledgeable about their subject areas	4.65	3.78	0.87
The teaching meets the stated course content and learning objectives	4.77	3.61	0.86
The course content meets industry and business requirements	4.50	3.58	0.92
Lecturers use the latest technology to assist with teaching as appropriate	4.25	3.50	0.75
Lecturers are sensitive to my needs and treat me as a customer	4.27	3.43	0.84
Lecturers are available for appointments to discuss matters related to my courses	4.35	3.69	0.66
Feedback is given on assignments and exam papers	4.47	3.23	1.24
Advice of final results is received within a reasonable time frame after final exams/assignments	4.42	3.03	1.39

Table 11 **Other Course Delivery Issues - Staff Responses**			
Description	**Imp**	**Exp**	**Gap**
The timetable of courses is published before courses begin	4.30	3.85	0.45
The flexibility of the timetable	3.56	3.07	0.59
Information about course content, plan of topics to be covered each week, timetable for tests and assignments is given at the first class	4.5	4.37	0.13
The lecturers are very knowledgeable about their subject areas	4.73	4.0	0.73
The teaching meets the stated course content and learning objectives	4.64	3.86	0.78
The course content meets industry and business requirements	4.23	3.57	0.66
Lecturers use the latest technology to assist with teaching as appropriate	3.64	2.85	0.79
Lecturers are sensitive to student needs and treat them as a customer	4.38	3.81	0.57
Lecturers are available for appointments to discuss matters related to their courses	4.32	3.93	0.39
Feedback is given on assignments and exam papers	4.45	3.67	0.78
Advice of final results are received within a reasonable time frame after final exams/assignments	4.64	3.72	0.92

In respect of these issues, many of the ratings by staff were within a small decimal point difference to those of the students', resulting in very similar gaps. However three issues exceed the 1.0 gap in the student responses although the staff's ratings did not produce quite such a significant gap. The flexibility of the timetable is considered very important by students, and while the questionnaire did not ask students to provide details of what sort of flexibility they expected, it is obviously of more concern to them than the staff in Faculty A perceive. Similarly with feedback on assignments and exam papers. Staff may well perceive they are giving reasonable feedback, but from discussion with the students in the focus groups, the students obviously desire more information than purely a grade. The issue of providing final results within a reasonable timeframe is a complex one and it must be recognised that moderation processes and other discussions must take place within departments before final grades can be released. Students obviously have some concern about the time it is taking for them to get final results, and Faculty A may wish to pursue this further to ensure all procedures are sufficiently streamlined to ensure results are released at the earliest possible date and that students' expectations are met. Overall though, the gaps between importance and expectation met are under 1, which is a good indication that there is a commitment by Faculty A to meeting customer need in the areas of course delivery.

Admission and Enrolment Process:

The admission and enrolment process is an essential step in the process of entering or continuing in tertiary study. In the last ten years computerised enrolment systems have come into the fore and institutions themselves are constantly evaluating their systems to ensure that they not only meet the needs of the Ministry of Education as the primary funder of tertiary education, but also that the systems are user friendly, for both the students as their principal customers as well as for their own staff to operate. Within the focus groups students considered the enrolment process as a "necessary evil", and that with the increasing numbers of students enrolling and the complexity of the process with all the statistical data required by the Ministry of Education, that there was minimal chance of reducing the time taken to enrol with queues being inevitable. This section of the questionnaire sought to explore how difficult the process is for students and to ascertain their preferences for possible options for providing a better service.

Some programmes of study require students to attend an interview, others require aptitude tests or auditions or the submission of portfolios of their work, while most programmes simply require the student to enrol direct, and if they meet the entry level requirements the enrolment is approved. Respondents were asked to indicate the selection process used for their admission into their programme of study which is presented in Table 12:

Table 12 **Admission Process**

	%
Interview	19
Aptitude Test	16
Audition/Portfolio	3
Direct enrolment	55
No response	3
Combination provided by respondents	4
Total	100

55% of the respondents indicated that enrolment was direct, in other words that there was no special admission process prior to enrolment. Of the 4% of students who indicated a combination, all indicated that they were required to undergo one of the other three options prior to direct enrolment. In fact all students go through the actual enrolment process once they have been accepted into the programme of study via the admission process. The institution has reviewed the admission and enrolment process for 1998 so that students required to undergo some special admission criteria are also provided with the enrolment information at the same time, rather than the latter being a separate function which the respondents to this research were required to undergo in 1997 and prior.

As just mentioned, some students were required to go through two processes and therefore two sets of forms to complete while most were just required to enrol. The next question therefore, asked students to evaluate the complexity of completing those admission and enrolment forms. Staff similarly were asked to evaluate how difficult they thought the forms were to complete, but it is important to note that many academic staff have little involvement in this part of the process so it is possible their evaluation is on the basis of hearsay. Table 13 portrays the ratings:

Table 13 **Admission/Enrolment Process - Completion of forms**

Student Responses	%
Difficult	5
Moderately difficult	22
Easy	45.5
Simple and user friendly	23
Responses including second, third and fourth options	0.5
No response	4
Total	100
Staff Responses	
Difficult	19
Moderately difficult	42
Easy	14
Simple and user friendly	4
No response	21
Total	100

In this particular case 45% of the student respondents found the process easy, with an almost equal response each to moderately difficult, or simple and user friendly. If the third, fourth and extra or fifth responses are added together it is quite clear that the majority of students found the process relatively easy, but such a result should not stop the institution endeavouring to make it more simple and user friendly for every customer. On the other hand, it is interesting that the staff's perception is that the process is moderately difficult - perhaps the student's response rate will convince the staff otherwise.

As stated above institutions are always looking for ways to improve and streamline the enrolment process. Some institutions have invested considerable sums of money to provide telephone enrolment systems where the customer simply presses numbers on their telephone in response to questions asked via recorded instructions. This is known as an 'Interactive Voice Response' system. Others are now looking at the Internet as a new means of enabling the customer to access the enrolment system direct from their own computer terminal. This question relating to students' preferences for the style of enrolment produced an interesting, and perhaps unexpected response on the part of the researcher and the results are displayed in Table 14. Staff were also asked to give their rating here but unfortunately due to the printing error in the staff questionnaire, the two options of using the Internet or enrolling directly by computer on campus were omitted. However in view of the small response rate by students to these two options, the omission of a comment by staff does not impact significantly on the outcome of this question.

Table 14 **Preference for enrolment**

Student Response	%
In person	35
By mail	28
By telephone	1.5
By Internet	1.5
By computer	0.5
Combinations provided by respondents	30
No response	3
Total	100
Staff Response	
In person	19
By mail	17
By telephone	0
A combination	50
No response	14
Total	100

While the majority of students making one single response indicated they preferred to enrol in person with postal enrolment as a close second, a considerable group of students, namely 30%, indicated they preferred a combination of enrolment options. Staff also considered the majority of students would prefer a combination of enrolment options.

In terms of electronic means and in addition to the 1.5% of students who indicated they would prefer to enrol via the Internet, a further 9% indicated they would like it as one of a range of options. It is possible this figure could increase as more people become familiar with the Internet as a means of carrying out business transactions. Similarly, in addition to the 0.5% who indicated they would prefer to use a computer terminal within the institute to enrol themselves direct, another 4% indicated that as one of their preferred range of options. Every respondent who indicated they would prefer a range of options included either the first and second or both of those options, with only 17% also including the third option, i.e. in person, by mail and by telephone. This is an interesting outcome and perhaps the most significant, because this means that some 58% of students still prefer to have the facility to enrol in person with only 18.5% overall indicating any interest in using a telephone system. The question must then be asked by this or any other institution, whether it is worth investing in an interactive voice response system for enrolment purposes.

Course Fees:

Another of the outcomes of the tertiary reforms has been increasing student fees. Apart from the first two years of the reforms when there was a tuition fee component specified by the government of the day, student fees have increased nearly every year, if not each year. Prior to the advent of the student loan scheme institutions were required to offer an instalment system, but now many institutions do not provide many alternatives for students to pay their fees. After discussion with the focus groups and from student feedback within the Academic Registry, it was decided to pose a question to determine which methods students preferred for paying their fees, and table 15 lists the responses from both students and staff. As indicated in an earlier question some 50% of students in Faculty A took a student loan to pay their fees. However this is obviously not necessarily the most preferred way for students, and staff hold the same view. If the second, third and fourth options in the student responses are added together, it reveals that some 61% would prefer to pay cash in one lump sum and/or instalments.

Table 15 **Preference for fee payment**

Student Responses	%
By student loan	32
By cash in one lump sum	18
In instalments	19
A combination of the last two	24
Other responses given by students	3
No response	4
Total	100
Staff Responses	
By student loans	17
By cash in one lump sum	14
In instalments	13
A combination of the last two	31
A combination of loan and instalments	2
No response	23
Total	100

Even of the 3% of students who gave some other options in their responses, they all wanted a combination of the loan scheme and either a lump sum cash option or instalment option. It is worth noting that currently students may pay in cash for all or part of their fees and take a loan, but the institution's policy does not allow students who are eligible for a loan to pay by instalments, and students may only pay in instalments under very strict criteria. In view of the responses to this question, the institution may need to revisit the instalment option as part of its drive to provide a better customer service.

Enrolment Times:

Businesses always face the dilemma of which times of the day customers find the most convenient to do business with them and polytechnics are no exception. While students indicated their preference for some flexibility within the teaching timetable, hence the need to offer some classes in the evening or weekends, they also preferred the same sort of flexibility when it comes to enrolment times. The Academic Registry of this institution is normally open between 8.00am and 5.00pm Monday to Thursday and 8.00am to 4.30pm on a Friday. The exception being at peak enrolment times when the office is open on some days until 7.00pm, or if requested by a faculty, until 8.00pm. No matter what times the office is open customers often complain that it does not suit them for one reason or another. While this issue was only touched on by the focus groups, because it has been raised a number of times by students generally, it was decided to include it in the questionnaire. As indicated in Table 15, by far the greatest majority of students in Faculty A (70%) were happy with the standard business hours of operation. However, as some 14% of students in this faculty indicated they were studying part-time, it was interesting to find that 69% of those part-time students indicated extended opening hours until 8.00pm would be preferable. Very few students indicated any preference to be able to enrol before 8.00am. The breakdown of responses is shown in Table 16:

Table 16 **Preferred times for enrolment**

	%
Before 8.00am	2
Normal business hours	70
Between 5.00 and 8.00pm	20
A combination indicated by respondents	5
No response	3
Total	100

The enrolment process is shared between faculties and the Academic Registry. Course counselling is provided by the faculties and every enrolment must be authorised by faculty academics before the registry staff can complete the enrolment data entry and invoicing process. In discussing this with the focus groups it was obvious that students needed help from faculty staff and registry staff in completing the process. Response to this question will be particularly encouraging to all the staff involved in the process for

Faculty A with 66% indicating a positive response. 23% of students did not consider staff focused on their needs, with 11% not responding to this question.

Student Management System:

Earlier in the chapter comment was made about the evolution of computerised student management systems in polytechnics, particularly over the last ten years or less. In the focus groups students talked about the enrolment system and the need for more terminals to be available on enrolment days; the process to be faster; class data to be entered prior to enrolment times and so on. It was therefore decided to ask students and staff to rate the institution's computerised enrolment system in terms of efficiency. While 47% of students gave it a '3' on the Likert scale and only 13% ranked it as a 1 or 2, a further 26% ranked it as a 4 or 5 thus meeting or exceeding their expectations. On the other hand, staff have a different view, as many of them have some involvement with the system and its apparent idiosyncrasies, which may have influenced their rating. The median rating for staff was only 2.17 compared with the 3.17 by students. It is true to say that any computerised system has its own distinctiveness and no doubt the opinion of staff in other institutions would differ from the students concerning the system used. The institution reports that there is constant evaluation of the performance of the management information system, with any resultant changes or enhancements serving not only to improve customer service but also to increase efficiency for internal users.

ID System:

The issuing of ID cards is part of the enrolment process, and although it was not identified separately on the list of points discussed in the focus groups, it did however form part of the overall enrolment discussion in some groups. The current computerised and digitised photo system is set up in the Academic Registry and students may obtain their card on production of evidence that their fees have either been paid in full or via a student loan. A 'double pronged' question was therefore posed to participants of the questionnaire, not only to determine if they thought the system for issuing ID cards was efficient but also, if they did not think it was efficient, then they could either select some suggested options to improve its efficiency, or offer their own suggestions. The responses demonstrated in Table 17 were quite fascinating because not only was there an overwhelming indication that the system was efficient, 74%, but only 29% of students ticked the suggested options for improvement, and 3% gave other comments about improving the system, although only 19% of them had indicated they thought the system was not efficient.

Table 17 **ID System**

Efficiency of system for issuing ID cards

	%
Yes	74
No	19
No response	7
Total	100

Suggested improvements to ID system

	%
Registry open longer hours	20
More than one camera in Registry	45
System located in Library	12
Combination of the above	23
Total	100

Other suggestions included - cameras being available in faculty buildings; more staff available to operate the system; better trained operators; IDs being taken with class groups on orientation days; more than one area being available for IDs, but obviously not necessarily the library, which was one option suggested on the questionnaire.

Staff were also asked to comment on the ID system as many staff have a photo ID card from the same system, although it is not compulsory within the institution. 42% of the staff considered the system efficient while 39% did not think it was efficient and 19% did not respond. The staff were also asked to provide suggestions for improvement with the same options listed as the students. 25% considered the registry should be open longer hours and have more than one camera. Similar to the students, only 6% thought the library would be a suitable alternative, and one person suggested that the ID card should be produced from a photograph. It is worth noting that this option is available to students but requires submission of a passport size photo. However it is a slower process and few students take advantage of it, most preferring to come and have their photo taken and the ID card given to them immediately. Again the results of this question will be helpful to the Academic Registry in considering further strategies for improving customer service.

Student Loan and Allowance Schemes:

The student loan scheme has been raised twice so far in the analysis of the questionnaire and one further aspect raised by the focus groups was the complexity of documentation for both the student loans and student allowance schemes. As indicated in Chapter Two tertiary institutions are required to act as agents for the Ministry of Education in administering both the loans and allowances schemes. The documentation is provided by the Ministry with some consultation with institutions, but the information required, especially for the student allowances scheme, is very detailed and complex and staff are often required to give students a lot of assistance to complete the forms. Faculty staff are also well aware of the student loan scheme and the controversy over student debt, but they are all warned not to get involved in giving advice to students about eligibility for either the loan or allowance schemes. However few staff would be familiar with the application process itself, so their responses would be based on their impressions which are mainly gleaned from feedback from their students, and this possibly correlates with the high non response rate of 40%. This question was therefore included in both questionnaires, to ascertain just how difficult, or alternatively simple and user friendly, those respondents who applied for one or both schemes found the process. And also to ascertain how the staff perceive the schemes' complexity. Their responses are presented in Table 18:

Table 18 **Student Loan and Allowance Scheme application process**

Student Responses	%
Difficult	12
Moderately difficult	27
Easy	23
Simple and user friendly	6
No response	32
Total	100
Staff Responses	
Difficult	8
Moderately difficult	44
Easy	8
Simple and user friendly	0
No response	40
Total	100

Finally in the admission and enrolment section, students who had been at the institution prior to 1997 were asked to rate whether they considered the overall enrolment and loans/allowances process had become more customer focused over recent years. Only 49% of students responded with 24% allocating a 3 on the Likert scale; the weightings on either side resulting in a median of 2.87. Staff also gave it a similar response with a median of 2.68. There is clearly work to be done by the institution in this area to improve its customer service image.

Facilities:

The focus groups discussed a number of the facilities provided or not provided by the institution. Not every issue could be covered in the questionnaires, so a selection was included and as noted in Chapter Four, the complete list is provided in Appendix Two. In respect of the facilities listed, students were asked to rank each one in terms of importance to them, and then rate it as to how it met or did not meet their expectations Similarly staff were asked to rank the twelve facilities or services in terms of what they consider is important to students, and rate how that facility or service may or may not meet student expectations. Table 19, on the next page, sets out the student responses while Table 20, on the following page, sets out the staff responses.

The ranking of facilities within the institution resulted in some similar responses, which perhaps indicates that staff are correctly perceiving student need and expectation in this area. Both groups agreed that there was a gap in the provision of computer laboratories and their associated equipment, and that the library stock did not meet all expectations. The perennial question of the food in the cafeterias also produced similar results but the remaining items were very close. When asked what other facilities they would like to see provided on campus, students naturally come up with a long list such as swimming pools, bars, food outlets and so on but very few raised additional academic facilities other than more libraries.

Table 19 **Facilities - Student Responses**

Description	**Imp**	**Exp**	**Gap**
Computer labs have up to date equipment	4.45	3.30	1.15
There are sufficient computer labs to meet student needs	4.47	2.89	1.58
The bookshop has everything I need	4.25	3.29	0.96
Adequate car parking is provided	4.41	3.16	1.25
The library is well stocked to suit the study needs for all courses	4.47	3.32	1.15
The library staff are very helpful	4.41	3.92	0.49
The Copy Centre caters for all student printing and binding needs	4.13	3.55	0.58
The Copy Centre charges are reasonable	4.14	3.15	0.99
The cafeterias meet the different food requirements of students	4.07	2.64	1.43
There are sufficient money machines on campus	4.00	3.20	0.80
Health and Counselling services are are staffed with trained professionals	4.05	3.40	0.65
The Learning Centre provides adequate learning support for student needs	4.02	3.34	0.68

Table 20 **Facilities - Staff Responses**

Description	**Imp**	**Exp**	**Gap**
Computer labs have up to date equipment	4.40	3.23	1.17
There are sufficient computer labs to meet student needs	4.35	2.71	1.64
The bookshop has everything students need	4.04	3.21	0.83
Adequate car parking is provided	4.00	2.98	1.02
The library is well stocked to suit the study needs for all courses	4.27	3.15	1.12
The library staff are very helpful	4.52	4.42	0.10
The Copy Centre caters for all student copying needs	3.96	4.02	-0.06
The Copy Centre charges are reasonable	3.95	5.52	0.43
The cafeterias meet the different food requirements of students	3.88	2.77	1.11
There are sufficient money machines on campus	3.27	2.95	0.32
Health and Counselling services are staffed with trained professionals	3.88	3.74	0.14
The Learning Centre provides adequate learning support for all student needs	3.93	3.68	0.25

Table 21 sets out a random sample of student and staff suggestions for other facilities. It should be noted that both groups would like to see some type of licensed facility and more support for students who are speakers of other languages. Most, if not all institutions, would like to provide more services if they could afford to, hence the decision to give all participants the opportunity to state if there are any other facilities they would like to see at the institute.

Table 21 **Suggestions for Other Facilities**

The items in this table are not ranked according to frequency.

Student Responses	
Mc Donalds	good cafe with decent food
better cafeteria	a smoking area in the cafeterias
licensed cafe	shops (e.g. surf stores)
student bar	large bookstore
KFC	more money machines
Wendys	common room
Burger King	swimming pool
more telephones	pool tables
games room	more study rooms and lecture theatres
mini theatre	computer lab especially for using Internet
more car parks	
Staff Responses	
a student common room	career counsellor for students with
more public telephones	English as a second language
a licensed cafe	an International Student Advisor
	more choice in food and coffee bars

Overall Assessment:

From discussion with a variety of students, not only those in the focus groups, there appeared to be a lack of awareness of the opportunities for student input into the decision making processes of the institution. Legislation requires student representation on the governing Council and the institution's statutes require student representation on the Academic Board, plus there are several other opportunities for student input. In some instances selection may be by an election through the student union, while others are either by invitation or purely by volunteering. The graduate destination survey and student satisfaction survey require voluntary participation in that research tool.

Unfortunately there was a significant non response to this part of the questionnaire, possibly because students ran out of time to complete the whole questionnaire within the period allocated by their lecturer, even though the pilot group indicated it could be done within the ten to fifteen minutes allowed.

In terms of the responses, the questionnaire does indicate a reasonably even spread between those that knew about these means of student input and those that did not. Quite clearly students need better communication about how the institution operates, and in particular how it receives and deals with student feedback. Staff similarly seem to be unaware of some of the avenues for student input in to the decision making processes of the institution. In terms of the student satisfaction survey, it is quite likely that the reason 31% of students gave a "no" response and 27% gave no response at all, is because the survey is only run every two years and the last survey was 1996. This would mean that students in their first year of study in 1997 would not encounter a student satisfaction survey until 1998. It would appear that better communication on the part of the institution and the Student Union needs to take place to make sure students and staff are well informed on the various student representation and feedback processes. Table 22 presents this information:

Table 22 **Student Input**

Student Responses	Yes %	No %	No response %
Representation on Council	37	36	27
Representation on Academic Board	30	39	31
Representation on Faculty Programme Committees	34	36	30
Student satisfaction survey	42	31	27
Graduate destination survey	26	44	30
Specialist working parties	21	49	30
Total	100	100	100
Staff Responses			
Representation on Council	66	17	17
Representation on Academic Board	46	29	25
Representation on Faculty Programme Committees	56	23	21
Student satisfaction survey	44	10	46
Graduate destination survey	52	29	19
Specialist working parties	42	42	16
Total	100	100	100

Finally, from an overview stance, respondents were asked to rank, first their faculty in terms of meeting customer need, and secondly the institution as a whole in terms of its commitment to customer service.

Faculty rating	**Institute rating**
Student responses - mean 3.53	Student responses - mean 3.50
Staff responses - mean 3.87	Staff responses - mean 3.50

The above can be quantified further by stating that for the faculty rating, 80% of students rated it in the 3 to 5 range on the Likert scale, and for the institution's commitment to customer service, 81% rated it in the 3 - 4 range. 92% of staff rated their faculty in the 3-5 range on the scale, while 81% of them rated the institute in the 3-5 range.

In the final analysis Faculty A appears to be doing well in meeting customer need with both groups ranking it closely, 3.53 by students and 3.87 by staff. Evaluation of the institution's commitment to customer service ranked equally by both groups at 3.50, which again should be a pleasing results. However both these results are at the upper middle range of the scale, thus there is further room for improvement.

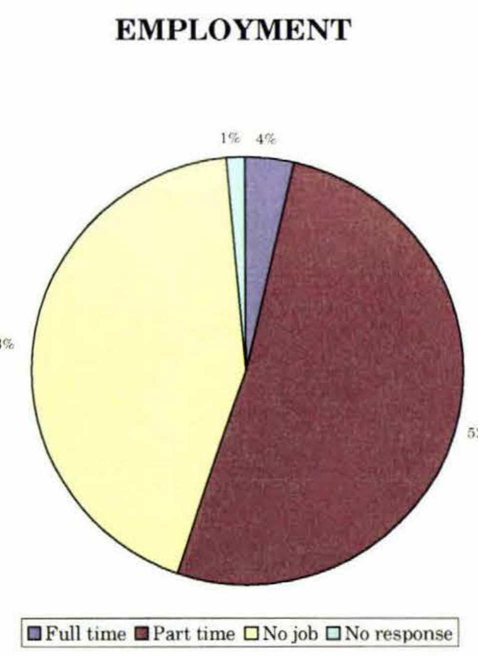
In 1996 the institution carried out a student satisfaction survey and the overall results from Faculty A in terms of satisfaction are fractionally higher at 3.8 than the rating of 3.53 in terms of meeting customer need which was the approach taken in this research. (UNITEC: 1996)

5.6 Faculty B - Students

Demographics:

There were 222 responses from this Faculty of which 94% are full time students and 5% are studying, with two students not responding to this question. 45% of the students are female and 54% are male, and once again two students did not respond to this question. Figure 9 indicates the percentages of students in full time, part time or no employment. Unlike Faculty A where a clear majority of students did not have any job, in Faculty B Figure 9 shows that slightly more students, namely 52%, do have a part time job while only 43% do not have a job.

Figure 9



Programmes of study vary in length and in Faculty B there is an increasing number of degree students, some who will stay as long as five years full time to complete their degree. If students choose to study part-time at any stage then their stay will even be longer. Figure 10 indicates the ratio of students in terms of the years they have studied at the institution. The majority of the 5% of students who have attended for over three years will have started in a diploma programme and undertaken specific bridging courses to transfer into a degree.

Figure 10

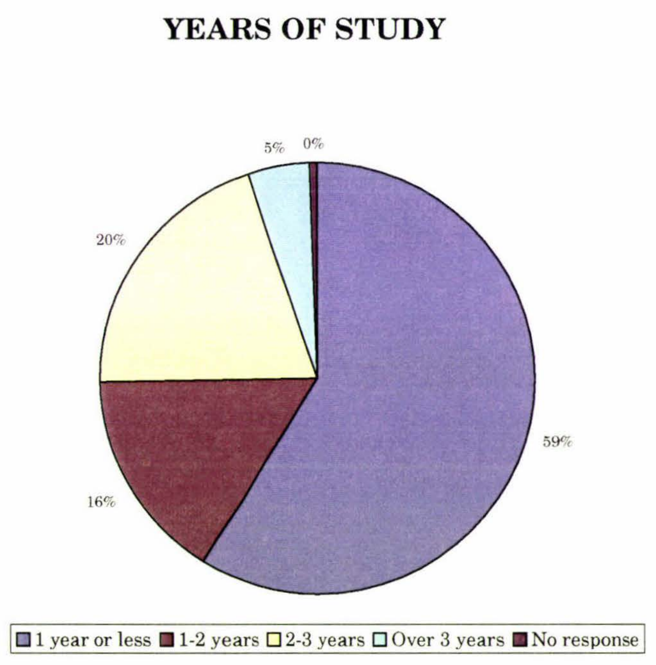
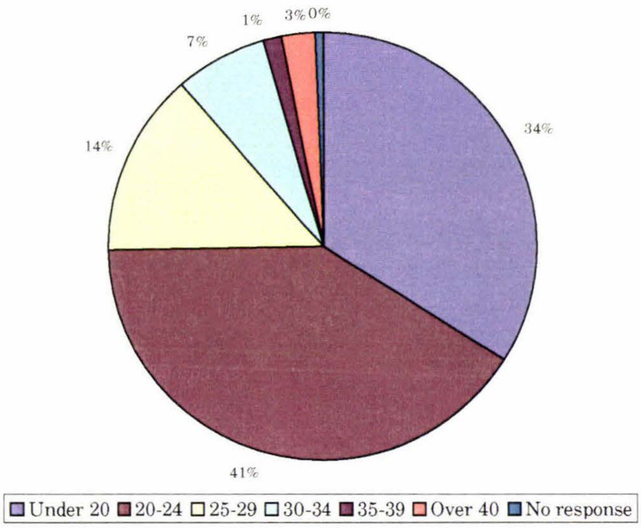


Figure 11 reflects the age distribution of students. However unlike Faculty A where the collective age groups from 25 to 40 plus are just under the totals of the under 20 and 20-25 groups, Faculty B has by far the greater concentration of its students in the 20-25 bracket, namely 41%, with the under 20's a very close second at 34%. This largely reflects that the programmes offered in this faculty attract school leavers or students who have spent a short time in the work force and then undertaken full time study. The degrees offered in this faculty are very focused on professional careers.

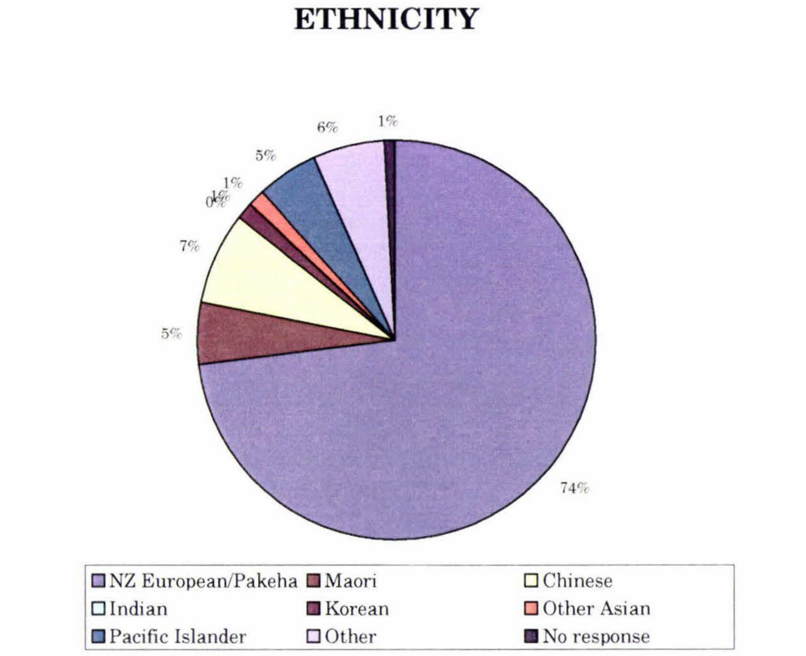
Figure 11

AGE GROUPINGS



The ethnic breakdown is quite different from Faculty A. Figure 12 indicates the percentages across 8 ethnic groups, and it is quite self evident that New Zealand European/Pakeha are by far the dominant culture in Faculty B at 74%. While there is a commitment within the institution to increase the numbers of Maori and Pacific Island students participating in tertiary education, it is possible that the disciplines offered in Faculty B may not be those preferred by other cultural groups. These statistics are quite similar to those produced by the institution in its 1996 student satisfaction survey.

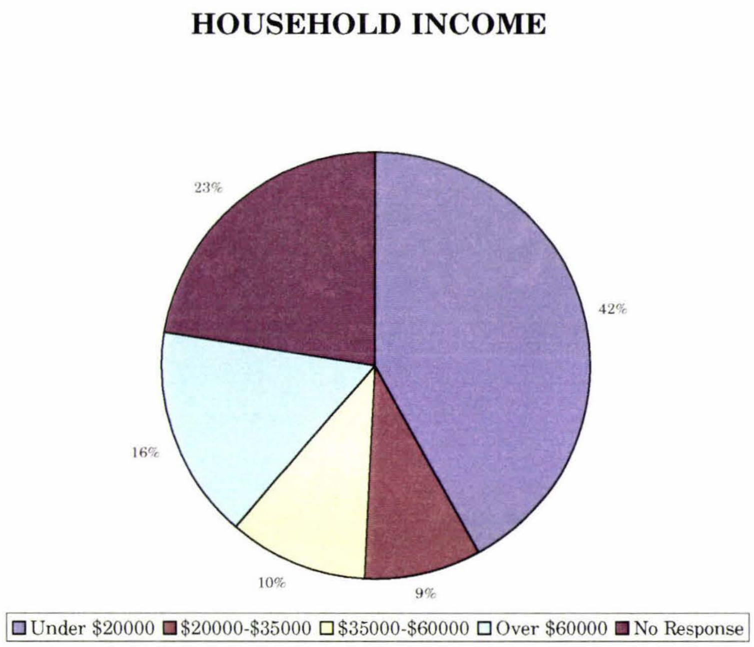
Figure 12



The student loan scheme was referred to in the analysis of Faculty A. The responses in Faculty B indicated a higher percentage took a student loan, namely 62%. A further 37% did not take a student loan and 2 students did not respond representing 1%. When asked to comment if they used the loan for any other purposes, there were only nine responses all of which indicated they had taken the loan to assist with the purchase of equipment and materials for their courses or to provide some funds to meet living costs.

As for Faculty A, students in this faculty were asked to give some indication of their living arrangements and household incomes. 48% of students live at home with 51% living away from home, one of which has their own home. Two students or 1% did not respond. A number of students did not respond to the household income question representing 22.5% of total respondents. As with Faculty A the largest number of students, 42%, indicated an income of under $20000, and as a high percentage of students live away from home and also a fair percentage have some form of employment, it is not surprising that this percentage is so high. Figure 13 gives a graphical portrayal of the income distribution.

Figure 13



Staff Demographics:

In this faculty 31 staff participated in the questionnaire of which 22 were full time and 9 part time. Of those 31, 24 or 77% were academic staff and 7 or 23% general staff, with 39% of the respondents female, 58% male and one person did not indicate their gender. In terms of length of employment at the institution, responses were similar to Faculty A with 50% of the staff having been employed for more than 3 years. 19% had been employed 1 year or less, 16% for 1-2 years and 13% for 2-3 years, with only one staff member not indicating their length of service.

Course Information:

As already mentioned Faculty B currently enrols more students in degree programmes, although certificate and diploma programmes are offered. Cross-faculty study is more limited due to the disciplines offered. In an analysis of the programmes of study stated by the respondents, 65% indicated they were studying at degree level, 17% at diploma level, 14% at certificate level with 4% not responding. These students were also asked to indicate why they had chosen this particular institution and the answers are summarised in Table 23.

When asked if they had enrolled at any other institution in 1997, 23% of students replied that they had applied to other institutions, while an overwhelming 74% said they had only enrolled at this institution. Considering that 59% of the students are in their first year of study and only 23% applied to other institutions, by far the majority of first years only applied to the one institution. This appears to link in particularly well with the reasons given in Table 22 as to why they had chosen to enrol at this institution. Only 5 students did not respond. The 23% of students who applied to other institutions represents 52 individuals, 25 of whom had applied to the other two polytechnics in the city leaving 27 who applied to more than one institution. However most of those students applied to multiple institutions hence the breakdown by institution does not tally with the 52 who indicated they had applied to other institutions: Auckland University 34; Massey University 1; Waikato University 2; Victoria University 7; Wellington Polytechnic 2; Wanganui Polytechnic 1 and a private provider 1.

Table 23 **Reasons for Student Choice of Institution**

The items in this table are not ranked according to frequency.

I wanted to do this course	because I found the course most suited me
to develop a dramatic craft	encouraged by an independent tutor
unique course	because this was the best course in NZ
best course for my degree	in this area
to do this degree	because I believed this is the most
to get a degree	beneficial course NZ has to offer
to gain higher qualification	only institute in Auckland with this
it had the course I wanted	qualification
more practical than University	because it was Auckland based and offered
institution's course is popular	what I wanted
to help me in the work force	to gain qualifications in a field that I enjoy
career change	the only degree in this discipline in NZ
future career	course seem most suited to my interests
friends doing same course	one of the few places who do the degree
brother came here	practical, relevant, personal, new and
location and diversity	flexible
availability	only viable programme available at late
pleasant atmosphere	entry
reputation	careers advisor guided me here from school
Auckland's cool	was the only one I got into
for the parking	attended open day and was impressed
good facilities	university had no provision for adult
closer to home (11)	students

NB: 30% of students indicated very specifically the name of the course which would reveal the identity of the faculty which is to remain confidential.

When students were asked how they found out about their chosen programme of study a number of combinations of the options appeared. 27% of respondents indicated they had heard about the programme from more than one source although 67% of that group stated they used the school careers adviser as one of those sources. Overall the responses are displayed in Table 24:

Table 24 **Source of Course Information**

	%
School Careers Adviser	22
Course Info Centre	25
Faculty Office	8
Advertisement	4
Current or ex student	11
A range of the above	27
Did not answer	3
Total	100

As with Faculty A, most students in Faculty B ranked the 'service' they used to gain information about their programme between 3 and 4 on the Likert scale with the mean at 3.27.

In the next part of this section respondents were required to rank in importance a number of issues about programme and course information, and then rate those issues in terms of expectations met or not met. Some interesting responses emerged from students as shown in Table 25 and staff in Table 26:

Table 25 **Course Information - Student Responses**

Description	Imp	Exp	Gap
Course information is presented in a simple clear manner	4.44	3.16	1.28
Information is given about the content of programmes (e.g. course descriptors, core and electives where appropriate)	4.41	3.00	1.41
Information is given about cross credits	3.71	2.27	1.44
The selection process for entry to programmes is stated	4.21	3.08	1.13
Advice of acceptance on to the programme is given within a reasonable amount of time	4.32	3.17	1.15
Progression from programme to programme is shown by flowcharts in the Prospectus	3.58	2.82	0.76
Job/career prospects are indicated for each qualification	4.11	2.78	1.33

Table 26 **Course Information - Staff Responses**			
Description	**Imp**	**Exp**	**Gap**
Course information is presented in a simple clear manner	4.44	3.27	1.17
Information is given about the content of programmes (e.g. course descriptors, core and electives where appropriate)	4.32	3.30	1.02
Information is given about cross credits	4.08	2.62	1.46
The selection process for entry to programmes is stated	4.37	3.08	1.29
Advice of acceptance on to the programmes is given within a reasonable amount of time	4.22	3.11	1.11
Progression from programme to programme is given if appropriate	3.84	2.96	0.88
Job/career prospects are given for each qualification	4.00	2.92	1.08

Finally in this section, students and staff were asked to rank course information literature in terms of user friendliness and whether it is centred on customer needs. Student respondents rated user friendliness at a mean of 3.68 and meeting customer needs at a mean of 3.27 while staff rated user friendliness at a mean of 3.45 and meeting customer needs at a mean of 3.24. In each case there is minimal difference between student and staff ratings and, as for Faculty A, the ratings are in the median of the range, so some room for improvement is needed to move it into the 4 plus rating area if the institution is to endeavour to exceed customer expectation.

Course Delivery:

As mentioned earlier in the analysis of Faculty A, the focus groups discussed extensively what went on in the classroom. A series of questions asked students to indicate the course delivery styles, their preference, and the teaching styles in their Faculty. Table 27 sets our their responses to their questions:

Table 27 **Course Delivery and Teaching Styles - Student Responses**

	%
Course Delivery Styles	
Lecture only	7
Combination of Lecture and group work	17
Interactive style teaching	10
A combination of all three	53
Other combinations given by respondents	9
No response	4
Total	100
Teaching Style	
By direct teaching with plenty of notes	13
Mainly student directed learning with lecturer as facilitator	19
A combination of the above	66
No response	2
Total	100

In this faculty most students experience a close relationship with their lecturers, and group work and interactive style teaching is common. Only 39% of students indicated their preference but of that group 48% indicated they preferred group work and interactive style teaching, while a further 48% indicated they preferred a combination of styles including lectures. This leaves only 4% of students in that group who preferred lectures only. The students clearly prefer a combination of teaching styles. The staff were also asked to indicate the course delivery styles used in their courses, which is contained in Table 28, and then to comment on which they thought students preferred. In terms of student preference, staff recognise that some students prefer one delivery style over another and most felt a combination of styles is preferable. One staff member commented that it was essential to take into consideration what mode best suits the course. In terms of teaching style staff considered most students prefer a combination of direct teaching and student directed learning, but three staff pointed out that some students clearly prefer a direct teaching style with plenty of note taking or photocopied handouts. Although only 13% of students indicated this preference, staff do take this into consideration by offering a variety of teaching styles as may suit their courses.

Table 28 **Course Delivery and Teaching Styles - Staff Responses**

Course Delivery Style	%
Lecture only	0
Combination of lecture and group work	16
Interactive style	39
Combination provided by respondents	32
No response	13
Total	100
Teaching Style	
Direct teaching with plenty of notes	16
Mainly student directed with lecturer as facilitator	13
Combination of the above	58
No response	16
Total	100

As discussed in respect of Faculty A, it is a requirement of the institution that course and lecturer evaluations take place once during each course. Both students and staff were requested to indicate whether or not these evaluations had taken place during semester one of 1997. Tables 29 and 30 indicate their respective responses. The responses indicate quite clearly that Faculty B is attempting to fulfil its customer service obligations as well as the institution's policies, with 65% and 59% respectively of the students responses indicating that evaluations were carried out in semester one, and similarly 55% and 68% respectively from the staff responses.

Table 29 **Evaluation - Student Responses**

Course Evaluation	%	Lecturer Evaluation	%
Yes	65	Yes	59
No	11	No	15
Some courses only	19	Some lecturers only	22
No response	5	No response	4
Total	100	Total	100

Table 30 **Evaluation - Staff Responses**

Course Evaluation	%	Lecturer Evaluation	%
Yes	55	Yes	68
No	22	No	9.5
Some courses only	13	Some lecturers only	9.5
No response	10	No Response	13
Total	100	Total	100

The trend towards larger classes was discussed earlier in the chapter while analysing Faculty A's data. Similarly Faculty B students and staff were asked to indicate their preferences and the results are shown in Table 31 below:

Table 31 **Class Sizes**

Student Responses	%
Large lectures (e.g.80plus)	3
Large lectures with small group tutorials	17
Small classes for lectures (under 30)	37
A combination	40
No response	3
Total	100
Staff Responses	
Large lectures (e.g. 80plus)	0
Large lectures with small group tutorials	10
Small classes for lectures (under 30)	42
A combination	29
No response	19
Total	100

Tables 32 and 33 analyse the student and staff responses in terms of other issues which the focus groups had raised in connection with the delivery of their programmes and individual courses. It should be noted that the staff's evaluations are their perceptions of what they consider students think to be important and whether their expectations are being met:

Table 32 **Other Course Delivery Issues - Student Responses**

Description	**Imp**	**Exp**	**Gap**
The timetable of courses is published before courses begin	4.19	3.12	1.07
The flexibility of the timetable	3.99	3.02	0.97
Information about course content, plan of topics to be covered each week, timetable for tests and assignments is given at the first class	4.30	3.29	1.01
The lecturers are very knowledgeable about their subject areas	4.76	4.02	0.74
The teaching meets the stated course content and learning objectives	4.56	3.66	0.90
The course content meets industry and business requirements	4.55	3.48	1.07
Lecturers use the latest technology to assist with teaching as appropriate	4.14	3.30	0.84
Lecturers are sensitive to my needs and treat me as a customer	4.24	3.30	0.94
Lecturers are available for appointments to discuss matters related to my courses	4.51	3.75	0.76
Feedback is given on assignments and exam papers	4.63	3.27	1.36
Advice of final results is received within a reasonable time frame after final exams/assignments	4.45	3.06	1.39

Table 33 **Other Course Delivery Issues - Staff Responses**

Description	**Imp**	**Exp**	**Gap**
The timetable of the courses is published before courses begin	4.44	3.38	1.06
The flexibility of the timetable	3.59	3.00	0.59
Information about course content, plan of topics to be covered each week, timetable for tests and assignments is given at the first class	4.00	3.69	0.31
The lecturers are very knowledgeable about their subject areas	4.63	3.88	0.74
The teaching meets the stated course content and learning objectives	4.55	3.81	0.74
The course content meets industry and business requirements	3.96	3.62	0.34
Lecturers use the latest technology to assist with teaching as appropriate	3.92	3.22	0.70
Lecturers are sensitive to student needs and treat them as a customer	4.22	3.65	0.57
Lecturers are available for appointments to discuss matters related to their courses	4.39	3.78	0.61
Feedback is given on assignments and exam papers	4.52	3.92	0.6
Advice of final results are received within a reasonable time frame after final exams/assignments	4.44	3.36	1.08

It is acknowledged that perceptions in a given situation can vary from person to person and the responses above are no exception. There is a reasonable discrepancy in the ranking given by students to information about course content being given out at the first class, and how staff perceive this. The gap between importance and met expectation for students is 1.01, signifying that the issue needs addressing. Similarly there are gaps exceeding 1.0 for timetabling, course content meeting industry requirements, and a considerable gap for feedback on assignments and exam papers with the biggest gap for course results. Staff have quite a different perception on most of these, although they acknowledge a shortfall in providing course results. These issues will need further investigation by Faculty B to ascertain the exact details of student expectation if there is to be any improvement in this aspect of customer service.

Admission and Enrolment Process:

Most students in Faculty B are required to undergo a more detailed selection and admission process, partly because of the limited places in some programmes, but also because of the disciplines involved. While all the students ultimately go through the enrolment process, for most of them it is certainly not directly into enrolment. The responses shown in Table 34 are therefore proportioned differently to Faculty A:

Table 34 **Admission Process**

	%
Interview	38
Aptitude Test	0
Audition/Portfolio	21
Direct enrolment	11
Combination of interview and audition/portfolio	25
Other combinations provided by respondents	3
No response	2
Total	100

Of those who provided other combinations, all indicated an interview was involved and either direct enrolment or audition/portfolio as the other part of the mix.

As mentioned in the analysis of Faculty A, and again in the paragraph before last, all students have to proceed through either the admission and enrolment phases or the direct enrolment in order to complete enrolment process. However the involvement of faculty staff, particularly the academic staff, varies from faculty to faculty. In many cases also, the number of academic staff involved is often limited to the programme leader. In Faculty B a number of academic staff are involved in counselling students in course selection and therefore have some awareness of the enrolment process. It was therefore appropriate to ask both students and staff to evaluate the complexity of the process and their responses are reflected in Table 35:

Table 35 **Admission/Enrolment Process - Completion of Forms**

Student Responses	%
Difficult	5
Moderately Difficult	28
Easy	44
Simple and user friendly	21
No response	2
Total	100
Staff Responses	
Difficult	13
Moderately difficult	48
Easy	16
Simple and user friendly	7
No response	16
Total	100

Here the majority of students have found the process easy or simple and user friendly, but there is still a significant number, 33% who found it in the difficult to moderately difficult range. This is a slightly lower percentage than in Faculty A but none the less it indicates that there needs to be further attempts to make the process more user friendly. It is interesting that the staff perception is almost the reverse with the majority, 48%, considering it moderately difficult.

The question about different ways to enrol produced a raft of responses, but once again the students in Faculty B indicated a clear preference for enrolling in person. Like Faculty A, 27% of respondents added their own combinations, most of which either included enrolling in person with the use of the telephone, computers, or Internet, with 6 of that group combining these with postal enrolment rather than in person. Only one student indicated a preference for using a computer terminal on campus to enrol themselves, with a further 4 including that in a combination of others. Similarly the use of the Internet or a telephone system was not greeted with overwhelming enthusiasm. Staff made similar responses with either enrolment in person or a combination of options as being the most favourable. It must be reiterated that the staff questionnaire, as for Faculty A, omitted to ask about Internet and computer enrolment, but the student responses were low in this area, as also for Faculty A, therefore it has little bearing on the outcome of the research. Table 36 provides the breakdown of results for both groups:

Table 36 **Preference for enrolment**

Student Responses	%
In person	36.5
By mail	27
By telephone	3
By Internet	3
By computer	0.5
Combinations provided by respondents	28
No response	2
Total	100
Staff Responses	
In person	35
By mail	10
By telephone	0
A combination	42
No response	13
Total	100

Course Fees:

Paying fees is not the most desirable of past-times for students and therefore a flexible and customer focused approach is needed. The institution provides credit card and EFTPOS facilities as well as the usual cash and cheques, plus of course the student loan scheme. Some students ask if they can pay their fees in instalments rather than incur the loan interest and other charges, but this facility is only available in the rarest of cases. However, as stated earlier, one of the criteria is that the student must not be eligible for a student loan. The next question aimed to gauge student response to a variety of payment possibilities including instalments, and also the staff were asked to comment on this. Table 37 indicates an even response from students, but a higher proportion of staff thought instalments or a combination of cash and instalments would be more preferable for students:

Table 37 **Preferences for fee payment**

Student Responses	%
By student loan	22
By cash in one lump sum	31
In instalments	16
A combination of the last two	24
Other responses given by students	1
No response	6
Total	100
Staff Responses	
By student loans	10
In cash in one lump sum	10
In instalments	22
A combination of the last two	29
Other combinations	13
No response	16
Total	100

Of the other combinations provided by students, one suggested a combination of loan and cash, which they may not be aware is already available to them, and two suggested a combination of loan and instalments. Once again this group of students have indicated that although 62% of them took loans it is not the preferred way as only 22% indicated a preference for loans. If the second, third and fourth options are added together it reveals that some 71% would prefer to pay cash using some form of instalment combination. As already commented, staff perceive this as more preferable than the loan scheme.

The opening hours of the administrative offices of a tertiary institution are often under scrutiny and especially at peak enrolment times. However the response from the students of Faculty B would indicate that overall, access during normal business hours for enrolment is acceptable to the majority and the results are portrayed by Table 38:

Table 38 **Preferred times for enrolment**

	%
Before 8.00am	5
Normal business hours	51
Between 5.00 and 8.00pm	28
A combination provided by respondents	14
No response	2
Total	100

Of the combinations given, only 3 wanted to add the 'before 8.00' option to the normal business hours; the remainder preferring a combination of extended hours at one or both ends of the normal business day. The institution normally provides extended hours at the end of some days during the peak enrolment time.

Students were asked to reflect back to their experience of enrolment at the beginning of the year and evaluate whether the staff, both faculty and registry, focused on their needs during that process. The outcome of this question indicates a less favourable response than for Faculty A. 58% of students in Faculty B considered that staff had focused on their needs, while 36% felt staff did not focus on their needs, with a further 6% not responding to this question.

Student Management System:

Aspects of the computerised student management system were discussed more fully in the first part of this chapter, but students and staff were requested to rank the system in terms of its efficiency. 42% of students gave it a '3' on the Likert scale with 21% giving it a 4 or 5, and a further 26% ranked it as a 1 or 2, indicating their feelings that the system is inefficient. The resultant median was 2.84. This is slightly lower than that of the students of Faculty A. However the staff in both faculties are less favourable of the system and staff in Faculty B gave it the same rating at a mean of 2.17. Perhaps it is fortunate that the institution reports it is currently re-evaluating the system and its associated processes.

ID System:

The ID system is computerised using a digitised photo printed onto a plastic card similar to a credit card. It provides students with a bar code for access to the library and uses a magnetic stripe which also allows them to use the library photocopier as well as certain student benefits in conjunction with the student union. Increasingly the magnetic stripe is being used in conjunction with security access to certain buildings. Although the card is not compulsory the majority of full time students have one. As the provision of the card is an important customer service it was necessary to seek some evaluation of the process. Students and staff were asked to give two responses, one about the system's efficiency, and the other to indicate any possible ways to improvement the process, with some suggestions provided. Table 37 indicates that 71% of students found the system efficient while only 32% of staff thought that way. It is worthy of note that, as for Faculty A, neither staff nor students appeared to favour a second ID system in the library. Only 5% of students and 6% of staff considered this a viable option although one staff member made the suggestion that an ID system should be available in each department, but obviously they were unaware of the capital cost of such a sophisticated system. The student responses are contained in Table 39:

Table 39 **ID System**

Efficiency of system for issuing ID cards	%
Yes	71
No	26
No response	3
Total	100
Suggested improvements to ID system	
Registry open longer hours	17
More than one camera in Registry	35
System located in library	5
Combination of the above	43
Total	100

Most of the combinations suggested by students and staff included the registry being open for longer hours and more than one camera in that location. There were three other comments, but these either related to the inexperience of the operators of the system or to the personal experience of the student in relation to enrolment documentation before they were eligible to receive their ID card.

Student Loans and Allowances Schemes:

It was indicated earlier in the analysis of Faculty B's data that 62% of the respondents took student loans. Although it was decided not to obtain statistical data about the number of students receiving a student allowance, both the loan and allowance schemes are the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, with the institution acting as agent. In order to obtain some feedback, and as the matter had been raised in the focus groups, students were asked to assess how difficult or easy the applications forms were to complete. Staff again in Faculty B have little involvement with the loans and allowances schemes, but they were asked to give their perception of the ease or difficulty of the application process, hence the high 'no response' rate of 32%. Table 40 provides the analysis of both student and staff responses:

Table 40 **Student Loan and Allowance Scheme application process**

Student Responses	%
Difficult	18
Moderately difficult	40
Easy	19
Simple and user friendly	8
No response	15
Total	100
Staff Responses	
Difficult	10
Moderately difficult	55
Easy	3
Simple and user friendly	0
No response	32
Total	100

Students and staff think alike on this issue with 40% and 55% respectively rating it as a moderately difficult process which is higher than Faculty A, and reinforces the concern expressed by other administrative staff in the institution that the process is too complex and obviously the Ministry of Education need to make it more customer friendly.

Finally in this section, students who have been studying with the institution prior to 1997 were asked to rate whether there had been any change over the last few years in the enrolment, loans and allowances process to make it more customer focused. Only 93 or 42% of students responded with the majority ranking it between 2 and 3 on the scale. The resultant median was 2.42. The staff median rating was 2.90. These are close to Faculty A and reinforce the need for more customer focus in these areas.

Facilities:

It was stated in the analysis of this section for Faculty A that not all issues raised by the focus groups could be included here. Once again, as in previous sections where a gap analysis has been performed, students were asked first to rank in importance the facility and then rate it in terms of their expectation in terms of customer service being met or not met. Tables 41 and 42 tabulate the student and staff responses respectively:

Table 41 **Facilities - Student Responses**

Description	**Imp**	**Exp**	**Gap**
Computer labs have up to date equipment	4.32	3.45	0.87
There are sufficient computer labs to meet student needs	4.40	2.96	1.44
The bookshop has everything I need	4.31	2.85	1.46
Adequate car parking is provided	4.45	2.25	2.20
The library is well stocked to suit the study needs for all courses	4.73	2.68	2.05
The library staff are very helpful	4.55	3.76	0.79
The Copy Centre caters for all student print and binding needs	4.31	3.34	0.97
The Copy Centre charges are reasonable	4.43	2.74	1.69
The cafeterias meet the different food requirements of students	4.22	2.69	1.53
There are sufficient money machines on campus	4.13	1.98	2.15
Health and Counselling services are staffed with trained professionals	4.09	3.14	0.95
The Learning Centre provides adequate learning support for student needs	3.86	3.18	0.68

Table 42 **Facilities - Staff Responses**

Description	**Imp**	**Exp**	**Gap**
Computer labs have up to date equipment	4.63	3.17	1.46
There are sufficient computer labs to meet student needs	4.15	2.74	1.41
The bookshop has everything students need	3.70	3.04	0.66
Adequate car parking is provided	3.64	2.36	1.28
The library is well stocked to suit the study needs for all courses	4.19	2.42	1.77
The library staff are very helpful	4.59	4.36	0.23
The Copy Centre caters for all student copying needs	4.00	3.83	0.17
The Copy Centre charges are reasonable	4.00	2.95	1.05
The cafeterias meet the different food requirements of students	3.65	2.63	1.02
There are sufficient money machines on campus	3.15	2.48	0.67
Health and Counselling services are staffed with trained professionals	4..08	3.59	0.49
The Learning Centre provides adequate learning support for all student needs	3.85	3.26	0.59

The ranking of the facilities by both students and staff in Faculty B has produced some more significant gaps than the results in Faculty A. Seven out of the twelve issues have been given a gap of more than 1.0 by students, with three of those seven exceeding 2.0. 50% of the staff's responses also reveal an expectation gap exceeding 1.0. Facilities such as the number of computer laboratories to meet student needs, bookshop stock, car parking, library stock, cafeterias and even the availability of money machines all feature as very important and requiring improvement for these students to feel their expectations are being met. Most of these issues need further discussion as the rating given by students can depend on their perception of the service, and not necessarily their experience of it. However for some of these issues gaps exceeding 1.0 also appeared in the data from Faculty, A so it may be necessary for the institution to carry out some more investigation in an effort to improve the service delivery.

Students and staff were also asked to make some suggestions for additional facilities they would like to see provided, and Table 43 lists a random sample. Once again there are more suggestions about food and licensed outlets and swimming pools, but this group also indicated some new academic related items such as branch libraries, free Internet access and more photography laboratories. An interesting array of ideas!

Table 43 **Suggestions for Other Facilities**

The items in this table are not ranked according to frequency.

Student Responses	
after hours bar	more public telephones
bar/pool	more money machines
McDonalds	more copy centres
social club	library for every department
campus pub	better workshops
heated swimming pool	Marae complex for all students
student games room	more student interaction with other courses
BNZ	photo labs for appropriate courses
free Internet	more sports facilities
lockers available for hire	more sports teams of a wider range
bicycle sheds	TV for all students, not just hostel students
Staff Responses	
Saturday cafes	theatre complex
Kohanga Reo	more English assistance for Asian students
better childcare facilities	computers and e-mail facilities for all staff
video and slide library	

Overall Assessment:

For the final section of the questionnaire, students and staff were asked to indicate if they were aware of the different areas where provision is made for student input into the decision making process of the institution. Table 44 provides the responses from both groups in terms of their knowledge of student input into decision making and other feedback mechanisms. A higher percentage of students in this faculty seem to be aware of student representation on Council, but similar percentages in both faculties appear for the rest of the items. Staff also have a similar knowledge level. All this indicates that further publicity needs to be provided by the institution so that students know how and where student feedback and input is handled to assist the management processes.

Table 44 **Student Input**

Student Responses	Yes %	No %	No response %
Representation on Council	51	36	33
Representation on Academic Board	31	53	16
Representation on Faculty Programme Committees	35	49	16
Student satisfaction survey	49	38	13
Graduate destination survey	16	69	15
Specialist working parties	17	67	16
Total	100	100	100
Staff Responses			
Representation on Council	68	16	16
Representation on Academic Board	52	29	19
Representation on Faculty Programme Committees	61	23	16
Student satisfaction survey	35	10	55
Graduate destination survey	49	35	16
Special working parties	32	49	19
Total	100	100	100

Finally, both groups were asked to first rate their faculty in terms of meeting customer need and secondly their evaluation of the institution's commitment to customer service.

Faculty rating	**Institute rating**
Student responses - mean 3.28	Student responses - mean 3.24
Staff responses - mean 3.79	Staff responses - mean 3.45

The above can be quantified further by stating that for the faculty rating 80% of students rated in the 3 to 5 range on the Likert scale, while 78% rated in the 3 to 5 range for the institution. In both cases 90% of the staff ranked them in the 3-5 range on the Likert scale.

These results are a little lower than Faculty A's and it is interesting to note that for both faculties the staff rated their faculty's performance in terms of meeting customer need higher than the students did. In all cases the ratings are within the 3-4 range indicating that customer expectation is being met, but not being exceeded.

In terms of the 1996 student satisfaction survey Faculty B gave a satisfaction rating of 3.6 which is nearly 0.4 higher than the outcome of the expectation survey in this research. Perhaps this indicates that students are reasonably satisfied with the overall level of teaching and service provision but their expectation of the faculty and the institution in meeting customer need are higher, resulting in a lower rating on current performance by the institution.

The outcome from both faculties in respect to meeting customer expectation in terms of customer service, rates similar to the institute's 1996 student satisfaction survey, where the overall satisfaction rating by all students was 3.7 (UNITEC: 1996).

The customer service literature discussed in Chapter Three emphasises the need for businesses and organisations to set in place strategies in order to exceed customer expectation and thus attract new customers, and to maintain loyalty from existing customers who will come back time and time again and tell others about the organisation. Zeithaml *et al* (1990:9) is just one of those theorists who maintains that excellent service pays off because it creates true customers.

The data analysed in this chapter indicates that the institution is largely performing at a level which meets customer expectation, but there are specific issues which need addressing and strategies put in place to raise the service level to the extent that it exceeds customer expectation. In the next chapter four themes which emerge from the data will be identified and discussed in the context of interviews which were held with a group of students and staff plus three corporate managers.

CHAPTER SIX

THEMES AND DISCUSSION

Chapter Five has provided an analysis of the data which was gathered from the questionnaires completed by staff and students in two faculties. A series of interviews were held with eight students and six staff in the two faculties as well as three corporate managers. Four themes have emerged from the data gathering exercise and it is proposed to discuss those themes in this chapter by using the interview transcripts to illustrate and clarify the issues, and also by referring to results from the questionnaires as well as some of the literature reviewed in Chapters Two and Three.

6.1 The Influence of Cost Effectiveness on Polytechnic Teaching Strategies

Bulk Funding and Fees:

In Chapter Two the tertiary reforms, which were initiated by the fourth Labour Government and implemented by the National Government after it was elected in 1988, were identified and discussed. One of the significant reforms was the greater autonomy given to institutions to manage their own affairs which included such things as the planning and implementation of capital works programmes, determination and payment of salaries, full financial management and academic programme development. On the other side of the coin was the implementation of a bulk funding regime based on a formula known as EFTS. While bulk funding gave the institutions the flexibility they needed for good financial management, the funding was also capped by a yearly allocation of EFTS by the Ministry of Education. The dollar value of the funding allocation was further complicated by a series of levels which required most programmes to be identified by their individual component courses and grouped into specified disciplines. It was also revealed in Chapter Two that the government's free market philosophy was greatly influenced by Treasury economists and some politicians, who promoted New Right policies which regarded education as a commodity to be traded in the marketplace. A new contention arose between educationalists and economists and some of the pertinent literature was also discussed in that chapter and to some extent in Chapter Three. With the increasing debate about the public or private good of education, a review into the future funding of tertiary education was launched in 1994 resulting in what has become known as the Todd Report. One of the outcomes of this report was the decision that the government would fund institutions at the rate of 75% of the cost of course while the students would pay the remaining 25%. The only exception to this was the continuation of the Study Right scheme whereby the government funded institutions at the rate of 95% of course costs, provided the students met certain criteria.

One of the prime drivers behind the funding regime appears to be cost effectiveness. Institutions are permitted to charge students fees, but it is recognised such charges cannot be open-ended. Therefore other means need to be found for raising additional revenue to supplement student fees and government funding in order to provide suitable facilities for their students, develop new programmes of study, attract and employ suitable qualified teaching staff as well as provide appropriate support services. The various reports on tertiary education commissioned over the period from 1988 on, have all stated that tertiary institutions need to be efficient and stringent controls are imposed by the Ministry of Education if institutions need to borrow money to support capital development or ongoing operational costs. Student unions themselves are very vigilant over the fees charged by institutions and raise strong opposition each year when fee increases are announced.

Class Sizes:

It has been quite apparent from the interview discussions and also the survey results that the small classes which have been a traditional trait of polytechnics are under threat. Universities are well known for large lectures, particularly at the first and second year levels, but this has been virtually unknown in the polytechnic sector. Interestingly in the surveys no staff in either faculty favoured lectures of 80 plus students, and only 2% and 3% of students in Faculty A and B respectively were in favour of such class sizes. In Faculty A 65% of students and 71% of staff supported small classes of under 30 with a further 18% and 15% respectively supporting a combination of smaller and larger classes across the teaching programme. Similarly in Faculty B 37% of students and 42% of staff were in favour of small classes with a further 40% of students and 29% of staff favoured the combination of larger and smaller classes. The strongest preference for smaller classes is in Faculty A, but students in Faculty B still prefer smaller classes or a combination of smaller and larger classes with small group tutorials in preference over large classes *per se*. Some students even indicated that one of their reasons for choosing a polytechnic over a university, was the smaller classes. In the interviews resourcing was raised by several lecturers, particularly in terms of increasing class sizes.

One lecturer who shall be named Bob, expressed his thinking on this issue by saying:

> I would say that we have gone through quite a change, particularly growing and becoming a more market oriented institution with funding

> problems and so on.... I would say that we have changed very much from being a small class institution to a more medium class institution - that is a factor very much outside our control.

Another lecturer, Sally also discussed class sizes and the related consideration of cost effectiveness:

> The biggest change that's happened here is that it's very much more towards larger classes now, and you look at the range of subjects and the cost of resources to run them.....we have to almost choose from those subjects according to their cost effectiveness. For example, you try to get students out of the computer lab, which is more expensive if you like. You can only put 25 students in each computer lab. When you are choosing subjects to package into it you're saying, oh right, let's go for this one because we can put 40 or 50 of them together in a classroom, which is more cost-effective.........we've now got 72 in one of the lecture theatres.

University staff reading this will no doubt think that 72 is still a small class, but what is evidenced here is a change from the way polytechnics were able to resource their small classes, to a situation where the customer is being penalised to some extent. All this is in the name of cost effectiveness and efficiency and virtually under government direction. Efficiency is vital and any customer expects value for money, but on this occasion the customers who are using the service are saying there is a need not being met, and the staff feel much the same - they both prefer the smaller classes. A conflict appears to arise here between the government as the major funder of tertiary education and what the consumers are saying. This is contrary to the philosophies of customer service and meeting customer expectation which are extolled by theorists and practitioners, for example, Brooks (1995) and Zeithaml *et al* (1990), quoted in Chapter Three.

Value for Money:

The students who were interviewed have accepted to some degree that they must pay a contribution towards their tertiary education but they expect to receive value for money.

Here there is a further contention. Not only is the government expecting institutions to be efficient and cost effective, so for example: class sizes increase or in other words staff to student ratios decrease; but also the customer is expecting value for their money. For example, on the one hand respondents to the questionnaires indicated that students do not want larger classes, while on the other hand they expect a better quality of teaching from better qualified academic staff. In this regard the students interviewed were asked if they thought they were receiving value for money in this particular institution.

Rosie: ...some papers, well it depends on who's taking such a class. I mean like I've gone to some classes and the quality of tutoring has been very high, so I would have no grudge. But if there's some problem with the tutoring, like I thought something was wrong, then that's difficult to get around - so I feel that it's value for money sometimes.

Darlene: I think that as the fees have gone up, my personal opinion is that the standard of lecturing and tutoring has also gone up, which is great......I don't mind paying a share of my education costs as my education is important to me as an older student. I now realise the value of education, but generally speaking education should be subsidised by the government.

Mike: ..I've never been in an establishment before and the prices were quite astronomical for me in that situation..... I don't really have a problem with that because I'm getting very good value for money for what I'm doing. The tutors are fantastic, everything is just straight down the line and I'm really enjoying myself.

Dean: ..my fees are quite expensive and how much they have gone up in just the four years that I've been studying...it was over $1000 cheaper a year to study then than it is now...When you see the bill at the beginning of the year and you realise you are going to have to pay $3600 per year worth of study. If I was going to do this in the outside world it's going to cost me at least $4000 in materials alone, and all that sort of stuff, and workshops which you know cost hundreds of dollars...So you justify it that way, but you know obviously with a degree you are expecting more as well.

Jason: Well I think paying fees is always difficult...it's difficult to find the money but I think you know, as they say, you're only paying 25% of the actual real cost of the course, I don't think it's that bad.....I support on the one level that it does seem value for money, but it's hard to know because I can't compare it with other institutions. You know what I mean, I haven't got another experience to compare it with.

Sophie: I do yes, I think the total amount of fees were about $3500 for the year which really, it you sort of break it down to a weekly basis, that isn't a lot of money....I did look at private institutions before I applied here but $3000 compared to $15000 is a big difference.

Carla: I disagree......with the $15000 course you are condensed in time so you're not spending so much time. I find the programme here is drawn out, where I feel I would rather pay a little bit more and get it over in say six months, instead of the whole year - and getting back in the workforce, and that is what the private ones do...... I would rather have hours condensed and pay that little bit more to get me back out there.

Rick: Value, yes I do. Value in terms of money is necessary, I think in the workforce, and to do a course compared to some other institutions...it is value for money.

Here the students are saying that by and large they consider they are receiving value for money, but issues such as the length of programmes, the quality of the lecturing, additional costs for materials, all emerge. These aspects need to be considered by institutions in order for them to be accountable to their principal customers - the students, and also to the government as the major funder. The question of the length of programmes has been the subject of some discussion by the Ministry of Education to the extent that they will limit funding for some programmes. In response this institution has reviewed the length of several programmes and made some major changes over the last two years. In terms of additional courses costs, students realise that materials for some courses cannot be costed into the basic fee and that they may be required to pay extra.

Teaching and Learning Styles:

The quality of the lecturing and the delivery style of courses was explored quite thoroughly in the questionnaires and some aspects discussed further in the interview situation. Students and staff alike in both faculties indicated a preference for a combination of lecture and group work or interactive style teaching with plenty of discussion between lecturers and students. Tables 5, 6, 27 and 28 in Chapter Five indicate the student and staff responses. However it will be noted that some students still prefer the direct lecture approach rather than the interactive style, and some of the lecturers interviewed agreed the latter approach was not favoured so strongly by students from non-English speaking backgrounds. In support of this notion another lecturer, who shall be named Jim explained:

> .....in one class of 32 I have over 20 who are from non-English speaking backgrounds......a very diverse group, and so we have quite a difficulty with that - where students are required to contribute in class, and to take in information and process it, and use it to contribute to discussion or to debate issues and things like that, or to come to some sort of analysis - non-English speaking background students are at a disadvantage. They need to be far more literate and capable of working with ideas than they have been used to .....

Bob also said that international students particularly do not like being asked to contribute to discussion and they do not like taking responsibility for their own learning. He explained that these students expect to sit and be lectured to in the old traditional format. However he indicated that he had been investigating this issue through the orientation process and felt that once students understand what is expected of them they respond much better in that environment. Sally and Mary, both lecturers, commented that they encountered some questioning of the more student directed style of learning, but as Sally said, "Student directed learning is probably the modern day term for homework." She added that many new immigrants are used to a lecture style and that here they are required to think for themselves which creates quite a big learning curve for them. Direct lecturing time seems to be minimal in most courses now and students are taking more and more responsibility for their own learning by actively participating in classroom discussion and researching more into the topic themselves. It is important to state that this is not confined to degree level courses but is right across the range of teaching programmes.

Many of these are international students who are paying the full cost of their tuition and the institution does not receive any government funding for them. This further exacerbates the contention over value for money expected by the customer and can create a dilemma for the institution. It is vital that these students are integrated into the main teaching programmes and much of the move to a more student directed approach for learning has been for sound academic reasons and not primarily for cost effectiveness, although it does have some impact.

The issue of the different learning styles was also discussed with the students: Rosie said she felt it was not possible to generalise for all courses. She said that some courses lend themselves to more direct teaching, even in a large lecture situation, while others are more suited to smaller interactive groups. She was quick to point out the importance of new information being discussed in class and that they do not just go over the work the students have learned themselves.

Dean felt that the delivery style for his courses had not altered very much mainly because of the discipline in which he is studying. He said there were some larger lectures for theoretical courses, but the workshop and studio classes needed to be smaller due to their very nature. Mike similarly, said that the programme he was undertaking was very interactive and students work in a very close relationship with their lecturers. Mike has been a new student to tertiary study in 1997 so has not experienced any other style of course delivery, while Dean has been at the institution for a number of years.

Finally, for this aspect of the discussion John, a senior manager, was asked for his comments about the move away from the traditional "talk and chalk" lecture style where students took lots of notes, then went away and virtually regurgitated it all in examinations, to more student involvement in the teaching and learning process. His response was:

> Well I think the delivery has certainly changed and the relationship with students has changed......It's a while since I've taught in an examination based class, but certainly the model of one of the lecturers working alongside the students because they were helping the students prepare for an external examination is disappearing. We used to pride ourselves in helping the students pick the questions that might be asked that year and prepare them, and there's quite a coaching element in it. That's all changed because the lecturer is now both part of the learning process and also part of the judge and jury as well, and I think that's altered the relationship. Delivery I think has become far more flexible than it ever used to be......people, even in some of the more theoretical subjects, are relying on group discussion methodologies, case studies and other techniques, rather than the straight talk and chalk. However, because of the large class sizes, I think there are more lectures being delivered than there ever used to be in terms of presenting information.

In asking John if he considered it was just part of the evolutionary process of education, or whether it has been part of the tertiary reforms, he replied that he thought it was a bit of both. He said that the reforms had resulted in a tightening up of resources, and now that polytechnics were teaching degree programmes it was essential for staff to spend less time in the class to free them up for research and their own professional development.

Here again the resource implications are mentioned which does highlight that institutions are almost required to perform a balancing act between sound academic practice and the funding or resource implications.

One other area in terms of the influence of cost effectiveness on teaching strategies is that of the quality of academic staff and their teaching. This is an issue raised by students and the gap analyses shown by Tables 10, 11, 32 and 33 indicate not only the student responses but also how the staff perceive students consider such issues.

The focus groups identified the need for lecturers to be very knowledgeable about their subject area and that the information they were taught needed to be directly related to how they would have to operate in the workforce. The latter comment is more associated with the skills students obtain through their studies. The results of this questionnaire indicated that students' expectations were largely met in this area, so Sally was asked how staff kept up to date with what was actually going on in the workplace, particularly in more skills based programmes. She replied:

> We probably rely a lot on people - new lecturers who are coming, particularly part-time lecturers, some of whom have got one foot in an industry and they're working with us as well, just to update us in case we are a little bit out on things like that. We always make sure we're very up to date on text books and models...........we rely a little bit on industry or advisory committees...

Both Sophie and Carla, who are students in another programme, expressed concern about some of the procedures being taught. They thought that either the staff were not as up to date as they should be, or they were restricted to having to teach to the requirements of unit standards on the National Qualifications Framework and the appropriate ITO prescribing the unit standards. Sophie said:

> ..it's a waste of time why they teach you things that aren't up to date. We are here to better our careers and why teach us things that aren't happening in the real world......I can understand a little why we are learning the manual system, I guess because we need to have an understanding of manual before we can be computerised, but most companies nowadays are not using manual systems, they're using computerised systems so why are we doing it?

Good question no doubt! It certainly reinforces the requirement that the teaching in skills based programmes must be relevant if students are going to be prepared for the workforce when they graduate.

National Qualifications Framework:

The National Qualifications Framework is a product of the tertiary reforms and as noted in Chapter Two, if an institution wants or needs to teach programmes which are registered on the Framework, significant compliance requirements must be met. Some of these requirements are a cost in dollar terms, such as accreditation costs, while others cost in terms of staff time. It is not just a question of piecing together the unit standards which form the national qualification, but also it is the time it takes to develop the associated curriculum. Contracts for the delivery of some programmes, particularly with ITOs, have come very much hand in hand with the development of the National Qualifications Framework. The two faculties which formed this case study do not have any contracts with ITOs at this point in time, although one is delivering some national programmes which have unit standards as components and the other is about to embark on a similar pathway. Sally pointed out that assessment forms a huge component of the workload where unit standards are involved, and this bites significantly into the time available to teach. Assessment methodology is one of the issues which academics like Codd (1990,1996) Irwin, Elley, and Hall (1995) express concerns about in their criticism of the National Qualifications Framework as discussed in Chapter Two.

Feedback to Students:

Furthermore, in relation to the teaching and learning process, the question of feedback to students has become evident as very important. This matter was raised in the focus groups and consequently signalled as very important to respondents of the student questionnaire, but with a significant gap in expectations met.

In the interview situation the students were asked if they received feedback in some form on their course progress, be it notes on assignments and examination papers or verbal feedback.

Rick's response was :

> ..possibly not as much as I would like.... In some cases they're afraid to say that you are doing well, or this is wrong - it seems like that anyway.....Grades are OK because we are made aware that they are not the 'be all and end all' as we do have formative as well as summative assessment.....A little more feedback on the summative assessments would be appreciated because the formative is good...

Mike said in his programme students themselves carry out some self assessment and there are also peer assessments which are very informal and nothing is recorded. He said that they receive regular verbal feedback from their lecturers but that is because a lot of the work is very practical. He said that in terms of the written work which has been assessed, the students receive grades and the staff are available for them to discuss any concerns, but again no comments are written down.

For Sophie and Carla, their work was mainly of a mastery nature and at the time of their interviews they had not had any formal written assignments or examinations, so could not comment on whether they had or had not received feedback.

Rosie explained that she thought constructive criticism was vital:

> The problem about assignments is that I didn't learn to write assignments until my final year and that is far too late. I could have learnt a lot earlier if I had some constructive criticism earlier.....Because if you have done an assignment and get a grade, but you don't get any feedback, you don't learn anything.

She was then asked if she found the lecturers supportive and available for private interviews if required, to which she replied:

> ...Yes I know they are available and their feedback in class is good and things like that, it's just the assignments....there are very few constructive comments coming from any of the lecturers on assignments.

Darlene backed up these comments by saying that she considered lecturers themselves felt they were not able to put remarks on assignments and that there was less feedback than in the past.

Feedback is possibly a very personal thing with some students preferring to receive advice informally while other prefer it in writing on their assignments and examination papers. In the light of the responses from those interviewed and from the questionnaires, it is an issue which needs further investigation by the faculties concerned to determine how best to meet their customers' expectations.

To summarise then, it has been clearly demonstrated that cost effectiveness is a big issue for this polytechnic in order, not only to survive financially and maximise their income, but also to meet customer expectation in terms of value for money and service delivery. On the one hand the government is insisting through the various reporting mechanisms, such as the Statement of Objectives and the Annual Report, that the institution demonstrate it is operating efficiently and effectively thus providing a good return on investment. On the other hand the customers, namely the students who are participating in the learning experience, are also insisting that they receive value for money through the delivery of quality teaching, given adequate feedback, and that all staff are fully up to date with industry and business requirements, yet expecting the institution to largely maintain the traditional small classes.

The influence of the drive for cost effectiveness on polytechnic teaching strategies may seem a tall order, and no doubt some institutions are finding the balance between quality provision and cost effectiveness too much and therefore are needing to seek other economies of scale through mergers and strategic alliances.

6.2 Autonomy for Programme Development: A Tension Here!

Programme Development:

The second theme which has emerged pertains to the increased ability of institutions to develop their own academic programmes, and raises the question as to how autonomous this is in the light of the pressures to meet industry requirements and satisfy customer need as well as the rigorous approval and accreditation processes of NZQA, let alone the impact of the National Qualifications Framework.

It was indicated in Chapter Two that one of the key outcomes of the tertiary reforms has been a greater autonomy for polytechnics and private training providers to develop their own academic programmes and to expand the range of programmes to include degrees. Traditionally polytechnics only offered programmes up to diploma level, but since 1990 most of these institutions have developed degrees, not only in disciplines they have previously taught, but also in new disciplines and even some which had only been offered by universities in the past. Now each institution has an Academic Board to develop approval processes for local programmes, but if polytechnics require government funding for their degrees a very detailed approval and accreditation process established by NZQA must be followed. One slightly negative connotation which has arisen over the last few years has been a hint of scepticism by some university academics concerning the quality of degrees taught by polytechnics and private training providers in relation to those offered by universities, despite the rigorous accreditation process in which representatives of the New Zealand Vice Chancellor's Committee participate. However this opinion appears to be waning as a joint publication by the New Zealand Vice Chancellor's Committee and NZQA (1997) has been printed for the first time which lists all the degrees to be offered in New Zealand in 1998, whereas in the past NZQA have produced a separate publication containing polytechnic and private provider degrees.

As stated the reforms permitted the development of degrees by polytechnics, but in addition there has also developed a greater focus on local or institution based programme development, rather than what seemed a reliance on national programmes in the past. If polytechnics are developing more of their own programmes, then the questions of which disciplines and what types of programmes should be developed, must arise. The manufacturing industry, for example, carries out needs analyses, horizon scanning and consumer research before developing new products; similarly this should be done by tertiary institutions.

Student Involvement in Programme Development:

In Chapter Three, some of the literature discussed suggested that for businesses to be successful it is essential for them to provide what customers want. Theorists such as Brooks (1995), Gober (1993) and Zeithaml *et al* (1990) all expound that customers should be consulted as to their needs both in terms of products and services. That may be very well for products such as cars and television sets but how do students know what they really want in terms of academic programmes? It is quite possible that many students know the career they wish to pursue or the job they want, but may not know which is the best or most suitable programme of study to undertake, let alone the curriculum content. It is therefore difficult to accept the notion that students as the principal customers or consumers of the service could provide any input into programme development. On the other hand, consideration can also be given that industry is a customer or stakeholder of the institution, and this was mentioned briefly in Chapter Three. However even if industry is accepted as a customer, a tension still exists as to how much consultation should be directed towards the student as the principal customer.

John was asked how the institution gauges customer need when planning and developing new programmes and his response indicated that consultation was directed more towards industry rather than the individual student. His response was:

> If you take the place that the customer is the student we tend not to have extensively consulted the customer in the development of programmes. We've tended to consult at a level beyond that, it's tended to be the industry that the student is going to be employed in, and assumed that if we can produce a programme that satisfies the needs of industry and the student takes those programmes, therefore they will be meeting industry requirements. So we've tended to use a sort of advisory mechanism, consulting with industry as providing the sort of framework for developing new programmes, and the students themselves have not been consulted in my experience very much at all in that development process.

When asked if the institution had always adopted this approach he said:

> I think we probably have always done that but in the past we tended to offer a table of national qualifications so that it was less relevant. Now that we've moved to far more emphasis on local programmes, therefore, we've been directly involved with consulting with industry so I think it has changed. We've always done it but the mix between local programmes and national programmes has altered dramatically since the reforms.

He added:

> I think students should actually be more involved, particularly recent graduates, but if you are talking about a new programme and a whole new discipline that is quite a different situation.......... I think you should have your students involved through evaluation of courses and lecturers and so

> on, in terms of modifying what you do in that first run through of a particular course within a programme, so that it is different, no doubt, by the time you get to the second run through it.

One lecturer, Bob, endorsed John's comments by saying that in the 'old days' the institution tended to teach national qualifications and that there was not much input into the development or into the implementation of those qualifications. He said that now the majority of the programmes offered are local, and it is necessary to go through an academic justification process in order to offer them, therefore part of that process is looking at market and student needs. He also said that it is more usual to obtain student feedback and interest in terms of the structure of the programmes and the way they are delivered and the times they are delivered, while the content is more focused on professional and industry requirements and ensuring students are equipped to meet those needs.

Jim, another lecturer, also supported the previous interviewees' comments by adding that in his department, consultation for the degree programmes was very much linked to their advisory committee which is made up of industry or professional representatives plus academics. He said that for the national programmes considerable needs analysis is usually carried out under the auspices of NZQA, so together with the institutional advisory committees, NZQA, and faculty programme committees "we have quite a wide web of consultation with industry formally set up and, some of course, informally."

Charles, a lecturer who has been involved in diploma level study for a number of years, sees it as a great advantage for polytechnics to be able to develop their programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate degree levels. Charles said he found that diploma students tended to be more focused on obtaining the skills to create something, whereas the degree level student wanted to know why it is made, not only in the context of New

Zealand but also in the whole world - a much greater degree of enquiry. This reinforces the university academics' comments discussed in Chapter Two about degree level study and the importance of the acquisition of knowledge.

Betty, a head of department for a range of disciplines, said she felt it was appropriate for students to be involved to a limited extent in curriculum development, but "there are examples in the current tertiary environment where students are being asked to do far too much, and that's not what they are there for." She said she felt students had paid their dollars for an educational experience and whilst their input into curriculum development was valued, it would be more appropriate to seek feedback from recent graduates who are putting their study into action in a work environment and can begin to see where some changes to programmes may be required. She said she felt graduates "have a perspective on their education process which actually is a bit broader, and can say 'now we understand why you did this the way you did,' whereas at the time they didn't necessarily understand."

Two other lecturers were mainly involved in national programmes where most of the consultation and development was by NZQA or other professional organisations.

In the light of the interview outcomes it is apparent that the institution does have some mechanism in place to involve students in programme development. The course and lecturer evaluations take place each semester and Tables 7, 8, 29 and 30 in Chapter Five set out the staff and student responses. It is apparent that this method of feedback, although part of the institute's policies, is being generally adhered to by both faculties surveyed, but the results would indicate that some improvement is still needed.

It is interesting that three of the staff interviewed make the observation that input from recent graduates could be profitable for programme development, therefore it is hoped they are taking their own advice and actually carrying out this type of consultation. The graduate destination survey is not entirely suitable for this type of input.

The student focus groups also indicated that it was their expectation that academic programmes met industry and business requirements. This was covered in the surveys and the responses shown in Tables 10 and 32 in Chapter Five indicate that student expectation is to some degree being met with gaps of 0.92 and 1.07 respectively. The ratings are marginal in terms of needing some attention by the institution but as the importance rankings are 4.50 and 4.55 respectively, this does indicate that students regard consultation with industry and business as important for programme development.

This matter was not explored any further with the students' interviewed although Darlene did raise it, particularly in regard to major changes to programmes. She realised that students are eligible to graduate under the regulations applicable at the time they entered the programme. However she expressed concern that, while recognising a programme of continuous evaluation and improvement was necessary, good communication with students is vital where major changes are occurring, especially if they affect the length of the programme, and to ensure that current students are not disadvantaged in any way. This appears to also come back to cost effectiveness mentioned in the previous section, that the government will only fund programmes for the minimum amount of time it should take to study for the qualification and that institutions need to be influenced by that edict, while trying to ensure that their customers needs are met in terms of the programme content as discussed in this section.

In summarising, it is clear that institutions have benefited from the ability to be able to develop their own programmes through to degree level. It has given them a broader "product base" as well as raising the academic standard to which they can teach. However the question remains as to how real is the autonomy for programme development when the accreditation requirements together with the need to consult with the customers and stakeholders must be met. The future development of the National Qualifications Framework and the outcome of the 1997-8 tertiary review may see more pressure on institutional autonomy, if they are required to have their qualifications registered on the framework in order to receive government funding. At this stage the best solution for institutions in ensuring they have customer input into programme development appears to be the continued, and possibly increased, involvement of advisory committees with business and industry representation, as well as developing feedback mechanisms, such as course evaluations and graduate destination surveys, to provide input from their principal customers, the students.

6.3 Facilities and Services: Balancing Customer Needs and Expectations with Financial Resources

The third theme which has emerged is the pressure on institutions to provide very efficient support services and facilities as well as other facilities which the customer would like to see provided, while maintaining the "lid" on expenditure to avoid large fee increases.

Support Services:

In section 6.1 of this chapter, the influence of the drive for cost effectiveness on teaching strategies was discussed. The matter of student fees came into the equation because students also expected value for money and student unions are very vigilant over fee increases every year. Support services are an essential part of the student's learning experience and must be paid for out of the institution's income which includes student fees. These support services range from course information, enrolment, book and stationery supplies, photocopying services, food outlets, learning support, medical facilities and many others. It is proposed to deal with course information further, in terms of promotional material, with the fourth theme. However course information covers more than promotional material. It includes such things as course descriptors, cross credits, the selection procedure for entry to programmes, and job and career prospects. Tables 3, 4, 25 and 26 in Chapter Five set out student responses in this area. Many of the results produced a gap exceeding 1.0 and therefore needs to be looked at further by the institution. Similarly there are tables relating to the admission and enrolment process, the way students prefer to enrol, the preferred times for enrolment, the efficiency of the student management system, the loans and allowances schemes and the ID card system. All the students' responses indicated a reasonable level of efficiency and customer focus but pointing to improvement required in some areas. The staff responses were more negative, but it should be remembered that these are staff perceptions only as they are not necessarily directly involved in the process.

Enrolment System:

Although a clear expectation was emerging from the students, that their service encounters, particularly for enrolment, were reasonably efficient it was decided to pursue this further in the interview situation. While the students who were interviewed did not have any great problems with the enrolment system *per se* two were particularly critical of the lack of response from their faculty office and of the nonchalance of the staff over the whole situation. Sophie explained:

> ....when I did book onto the course I heard nothing, and then it was a week before the course was due to start, or two weeks, and I phoned and I said 'look what's happening, I don't even know if I've been accepted, you know I sort of know nothing, I've been left in the dark.' They said - 'Oh you're supposed to be here today on your orientation course,' and I said 'Well I've had no confirmation of that, I can't come today you know, I can't make it I have another appointment.' They replied 'Oh well come tomorrow then - okay fine!' ....I was a bit concerned then....I did feel that was pretty unprofessional.

An interesting response of course which certainly does not display a real customer care attitude. In terms of the enrolment process Sophie said she found the staff friendly and efficient. However Carla said she was a bit bewildered about the two stage process and all the correspondence she received which was quite the opposite to Sophie. Carla said:

> What I found is that you enrol, and then if you got accepted you had to fill in another form which I wondered why did I do that, why not just one, once you were accepted?.....you had the application form, then you got accepted, then you filled out an enrolment form.....

It appears the admission process for new students is being reviewed by the institution for 1998 and there would only be one application form which could flow through to provide all enrolment information required. Carla replied:

> Well it would save them money. I just sort of thought well it's a 40 cent stamp - I started to wonder every day - what am I going to get in the mail today? And I've got all these 40 cent stamps they're sending out, and I thought well.. and all the admin work collating it all.

Jason was a second year student in 1997 so he received an enrolment pack in the mail but was required to attend an enrolment day where course selection could be discussed with the lecturers. He explained how the process worked for him:

> ... it was fairly sort of straight forward for me and I didn't really need to spend a lot of time working out options with a tutor... maybe that is where a lot of the time is spent....

In terms of enrolment being a customer focused process he said,

> It's a double edged sword I think.....to a certain degree it was sort of like a process. I didn't think well I'm a customer here and I've got to pay the bill, it was just a necessary thing I had to do. I thought if the institution paid so much attention to sort of making it nice and easy...we're here because we want to learn and there's got to be a degree of effort and motivation from our end.....

Both Darlene and Rosie found the process reasonably customer focused, while Mike expressed concern about the queues and suggested that more staff were needed. Dean apparently found the enrolment process from the faculty end very disorganised and students had difficulty finalising course electives, which delayed the rest of the enrolment process including their ability to apply for loans and allowances or to obtain an ID card. Rick did not appear at all impressed with the enrolment process organised by his department particularly relating to course counselling, and the fact that all students were asked to come in for an enrolment day. He described it as extremely messy and time consuming especially when returning students were called in on the same day as the new students. Apparently the returning students had been given an opportunity to make some course selection at the end of the previous year but no confirmations could be given that they had been allocated a place in the chosen courses. These problems appear to be planning related and vital if there is to be effective customer service.

The third manager who was interviewed, named Jackie, said she felt that the enrolment process was far more cumbersome nowadays with computers. However she recognised that with the large amount of statistical data required by the Ministry of Education, together with 17,000 or so students, 120 programmes and an array of associated courses, a computerised enrolment system was essential. Jackie was asked how the enrolment staff felt about the customer service commitment:

> .. I think the staff are very committed to give the customers good service and are frustrated probably by our system that we have, which doesn't give the customer the best service. But yes, they do feedback ways of improving and I think the staff that are the users of the system should be the ones that are listened to.........there is starting to be a commitment from the top down, and I think they are involving a lot more people now than they have before to try and come to a better service for the students.

The interview ranged across the various methods, both current and planned, for enrolment such as postal, Internet, telephone and other technological methods but she said that a number of students still seem to prefer to attend enrolment days and the questionnaire results reinforce that opinion. She proceeded to explain why she thought this way:

> Well I have spoken to one of the student representatives of the students' association. Apparently students expect to do that sort of thing, especially university students. Some would quite like it, it's a social event - they spend a day standing around 'yakking' and then they have everything done in one day and that's it - they don't have to do it again. So it depends on who you talk to........I think a lot of students probably will want to use the Internet, and that will probably steer more towards the business type of student that will have access...others would rather get it done in person and know that everything was completed.

One of the other issues which emerged from the questionnaires and which was raised with Jackie, was the limited options for paying fees and whether there was a need to offer instalments as a further option, recognising that there would be an impact on the institution's cash flow and debt collection policies. She replied:

> Yes it probably would, but I think if we're looking at customer service it is very good customer service to allow students to pay by instalments. It would take a lot of administration work, so therefore you are looking

> again at resources, but as a customer I think it is an important point to have the option not to have to take a loan.

Once again the issue of resources has been raised. As already stated, to some degree all the responses have indicated that overall the enrolment system is efficient with certain areas needing improvement. However the institution, indeed all tertiary institutions, are faced with the dilemma of how to improve these processes without increasing student fees. Some students said that more staff should be provided at peak times in order to reduce queues, but that costs money. The researcher is aware that the institution undertook a major review after the 1997 enrolment period and some significant changes have been made for 1998. Many of the changes will improve the process without adding to the cost but some have required a financial outlay, such as programming changes to the student management system as well as upgrading computers.

Quality of Services:

Students and staff were asked to rate a number of other services and facilities, the results of which are indicated in Tables 19, 20, 41 and 42 in Chapter Five. The perennials of the library, car parking and cafeteria facilities appear along with others in the analysis of the student questionnaires, which produced gaps between importance and expectation met exceeding 1.0 and in some cases 2.0. On the other hand, staff did not perceive that customer expectation was not being met and generally rated each item higher than the students, thus reducing the gaps. In the survey respondents were also asked to indicate any other facilities they would like to see provided by the institute and tables 21 and 43 give random lists which are not ranked in order of occurrence.

In the interview setting, there was no attempt to elicit suggestions for additional facilities, but rather to obtain feedback about the types of facilities students were accessing. Interestingly these were very few by this group, indeed most of the facilities listed in the questionnaire were never used by these eight students. In the discussion each student realised that funds were also used to provide facilities but Darlene, in particular, pointed out that communication between the institution and the customer about what funds are used for is important:

> I thing we don't know how the funds are being put to use really, we know that they pay the lecturers and there's obviously a certain amount of money that goes to the library and things like that.......I think there's very little communication between the institute and the users with regard to how the money is spent......

Most students made some comment about the library but some were unaware of some of the support services available to students, such as the Health Centre and the Learning Support Centre. Rosie suggested that signage for these centres was not large enough and that "perhaps banners should fly from such centres." It was explained to her that the student handbook contained details of all services plus orientation days which were used to acquaint students with the services available plus a tour of the campus. Rosie did say that she had probably received a student handbook but had not read it, however her response about orientation was interesting:

> I think the point about those orientation programmes is like when you're new you don't take it all on board....maybe you need orientation about three months after that, I mean its okay at the beginning, but something also later on.

Darlene said that the services she had used were excellent except that she found access to some library material difficult and decided to go elsewhere. Mike also appeared to be unaware of some of the services available but felt that the location of his classes on the campus meant it was easier for him to go to nearby shops, especially because he found cafeteria prices high.

Dean has been a student at the institution for four years and has seen a number of changes. His main concern was the library and the fact that for his discipline the library is split into two branches. He commented:

> .....the only thing with the library is because it's split you have this thing where, for me, half the task books are down at the main library and everything else to do with the discipline are in the other library....if you are looking for periodicals - the same problem.....so that's a little bit strange.....it makes more sense to have everything in the branch library which has only been open about a year now. So I guess eventually when they get feedback it will change....

As for other services he said that he did not use them so could not comment.

Jason had a lot more to say about services such as carparking, transport around the campus, the lack of a real centre to the campus and that student groups tended to stay together, particularly those whose classes were held in buildings away from the main part of the campus. He expressed concern about Internet charges:

> I think the Internet charges are too expensive. I haven't investigated it thoroughly but from the investigations I have made I know you can be a customer on the Internet for a fixed fee per month with unlimited usage......I wouldn't believe they had another system here - I could be wrong, but if that's the case I think we're just being milked.....You know it's costing something to provide that service for us with terminals and printers, but I think they need to be realistic about the costs they charge, and don't take advantage of us...

He also had other comments to make about the style of lighting at a particular part of the campus and that he did not think they were especially attractive. He said he had made comments to the appropriate people and had received some response, which to him indicated that even if the institute did not make a change he appreciated that the staff concerned had taken the time to respond to him as a customer of the organisation.

Sophie and Carla were first year students and at that stage had not had much interaction with other facilities or services on the campus. Finally Rick said that he felt he had been treated like a customer by the people of the institute but not the system, particularly the enrolment system.

Limitation on Financial Resources:

In summing up, the students have all made some comments about the delivery of the various services or facilities they encounter. Some of the comments are positive and some are negative, indicating that improvement is required. The institution is constantly evaluating the need for new facilities, for example a new student centre is being developed at the time of writing this thesis. The centre not only contains extended library space with more computer access, but also provides new accommodation for the learning support centre, the centre for learning technologies, two lecture theatres and food outlets. Refurbishment is taking place in another area to provide a better bookshop facility.

As stated at the beginning of this section, this institution is constantly faced with the need to consider what services and facilities it can provide within the resources it has available to it. The members of the Council along with senior management are very conscious of the growing student debt and the loans scheme has been discussed on a number of occasions throughout this thesis. The Council of this institution is also aware of the implications of external borrowing. The various theorists on customer service already mentioned in this chapter, and identified more explicitly in Chapter Three, all point to the need to identify customer need and provide quality service. At the end of the day the institution is constantly faced with the tension between providing the best services and facilities to meet customer need, and the financial resources available to it. Any consideration for gaining additional financial resources through fee increases has to be balanced with competitive pricing within the marketplace philosophy of the previous National Government and the current Coalition Government and providing customers with value for money.

6.4 Institutional Competitiveness and Marketing Strategies: Student Choice is the Real Issue!

A very clear theme which has emerged concerns the tension between perceived competitiveness amongst institutions and the need to market themselves aggressively, whilst student choice is the ultimate decider and it is really their oral "marketing" of the institution which can be the best marketing tool.

Institutional Competitiveness:

The ability for polytechnics to develop a wider range of institution based programmes appears to have had some effect in generating far greater competition between tertiary institutions. This competition is not just between providers of the same group, for example polytechnics, but has also expanded into competition between universities and private providers as well as polytechnics. In analysing the tertiary reforms in Chapter Two it was signalled that competition was one of the outcomes of the tertiary reforms, and that is certainly the case for the institutions themselves as well as in the minds of officials of the Ministry of Education when the allocation of funding occurs each year. The process has already been described in Chapter Two but to reiterate briefly, institutions make a funding "bid" each years through their statement of objectives. Institutions are required to at least meet their funding allocations each year, but aggressive marketing campaigns are often put in place to attract students to an institution in an effort to maximise enrolments and thus exceed the funding allocation. Over the last few years it has been apparent that those institutions which have exceeded their targets have often been rewarded by larger EFTS allocations the following year.

However the question must be asked - "Just how real is the competition in terms of student choice?" The results from the questionnaire referred to in Chapter Five indicated that 61% of students in Faculty A and 59% in Faculty B are in their first year of study. Further analysis of the data has revealed that 85% of those first year students in Faculty A and 65% in Faculty B did not apply to any other institution in 1997; they applied to one polytechnic only and were accepted. Their reasons for choosing the one institution were wide ranging from "reputation" through "offering the course I wanted" to "close to home" with the latter two as singly the most common reasons. Tables 1 and 23 in Chapter Five provide a list of reasons but these are not sorted according to occurrence. Most of the reasons given would not constitute competitiveness in a marketing sense; they could perhaps be seen as those factors which create differentiators between one institution and another. To investigate this a little further, the students interviewed were asked why they chose this particular institution and two of the replies were:

Rosie: ....as I moved my work out there it was actually more convenient for me to come here. I mean I had heard through some of my friends that they enjoyed this campus, so I feel I have swapped over to a better quality environment.

> Darlene: ...I think the main reason for coming to polytech was because of the smaller classes...

These two answers reflect different perspectives: one considered the location but qualified it further by saying she had heard from friends about the institute, while the other made a choice based on a more generic knowledge about polytechnics, in that they had smaller classes. Only one of the two had been influenced by the quality of the particular institution but the decision was based more on personal need. In some ways this is what it is really all about - a customer has a need or a problem, they look for a solution and if one organisation provides all or most of the criteria to meet that need or solve that problem then that organisation gains a customer. This is along the lines of what Brook (1995) talks about as described in Chapter Three. A simplistic approach? That is possibly so in an academic sense, but it is a reality in this world of consumerism and the "New Right" philosophy of education reform discussed in both Chapters Two and Three, where the student is the purchaser of the learning experience or the service to put it in a business context. Whether this is right or not will remain open for debate for some time to come.

Branding:

To continue this investigation into the question of competition between institutions, there appears to be a close connection with positioning in the market-place and that marketing an institution is critical today, whereas in the past a few advertisements about courses and enrolment days was all that was needed to bring in the students.

Another senior manager, named Charlotte, was interviewed about the changes which had occurred and why. She made these comments:

> Advertising is a part of marketing so what we were doing before was a component, but not looking at the whole thing. I think it's very simple - we take our customers, our potential customers, in one corner of the page

> and we put the institution in the other. Now the things that prevent us making contact or coming together or meeting the needs of each other are barriers, they fit in the middle. ...Now some of those barriers we can break down - not all of them, but most of them - a lot of them. Now the sorts of barriers I am talking about are ones of awareness - lack of knowledge that in fact we even offer this opportunity - so awareness is a classic one. It may be distance - so we can solve that perhaps by offering distance education courses........There is a concept in marketing which branding picks up on - awareness, liking, usage. That you won't like something until you know it exists, and you won't use it until you feel comfortable about it, so it's a process of narrowing the field down. So a lot of the branding thrust is based on those three principles. (Awareness, liking, usage.)

While it may be possible to eliminate all or most of the barriers to the customer and institution coming together, the seemingly new concept of "branding" seemed very important to Charlotte, so it was vital to seek an explanation as to what she meant by that term and its significance for attracting customers to the institution.

> We are in services marketing in fact education which is a three pronged thing. Think of it as a triangle. On the one side you've got your physical things - your environment, your buildings and so forth. On the other side you've got your qualifications, your exam results, your academic components if you like. On the third side you've got image and reputation. Now when people make a decision about education they're influenced by all those three. ...Programmes seem to be the most important thing driving decision making, closely followed behind by image and reputation. Now, image and reputation become absolutely crucial when there are equal offerings in the market place. When the customer can't differentiate, then their perceptions or their feelings about one institution or another become crucial in their decision making, and that's where the concept of branding comes.

The outcomes of the student questionnaire would appear to provide some validation of this argument. The evidence is there that students base their decision on which institution to attend on some of the physical attributes, like being near to home or parking being available, and most definitely on the programme that is offered. However not many students in either faculty indicated that image and reputation contributed in any significant way to their decision to enrol in this particular institution. Possibly upon further research such an outcome may be more apparent. The three components of the services marketing triangle in the sphere of education - physical, qualifications and reputation - are an excellent way of expressing or demonstrating the critical factors involved in the decision making process about which tertiary institution to enrol in.

Promotional Material:

As mentioned above, one aspect of promoting an institution is through advertising and another is through the use of printed material such as the Prospectus, course handbooks and brochures. In terms of obtaining course information, respondents to the questionnaire indicated they had used a variety of sources. However most students indicated they had had some contact with the institution's Course Information Centre. It is more than likely that those students had seen a newspaper advertisement, heard a radio advertisement, or received information about the institution from another person. This could have been from a friend or a school career's counsellor, but to obtain written information about the courses of interest the students needed to approach the Course Information Centre. The way in which participants respond in a questionnaire can be influenced by their own perceptions and understanding of the questions. However when this question was posed to the eight students interviewed, not one of them had joined their chosen programme because of advertising or related promotions.

Rosie and Darlene had each enrolled in a degree programme because it was the natural follow-on from the diploma they had completed earlier, so they just obtained the course guides and enrolled. Jason said he wanted to do a degree in a specific discipline and as he was overseas at the time he got a relative to obtain all the information from the Course Information Centre. Sophie said she wanted a qualification related to the industry she had worked in previously and a colleague told her about this institution so she enquired direct to the Faculty. Carla was in a job she did not like and wanted to change direction, and as she had been to the institution a number of years before, she also applied direct. Mike said he wanted to follow a particular career path and was given information about the programme by a lecturer. So armed with the associated information brochure he submitted his application for admission. Rick explained that he wanted a job in a particular industry so he looked around for the institution offering the most suitable course. Finally Dean said that he had returned from overseas and looked at all the polytechnics offering programmes in his chosen discipline and found that he was too late to apply for most programmes. He had almost decided he would have to spend a year to earn money and put together a portfolio of work when he discovered that this institution did not start the first year students until a month later, and as he met the entry requirements he decided to "go straight in and do it than wait another year." This may be a minority sample but linked with the questionnaire results in Tables 2 and 24 in Chapter Five it does raise the question as to whether large sums of money spent on advertising are warranted, although other ways of promoting the institution are vital.

As stated, the majority of students obtained programme information guides and brochures from the Course Information Centre or the faculty office teaching the particular discipline they were interested in. Printed material is therefore a critical element in assisting students make their final decisions, so Charlotte was asked whether she thought a range of print material was necessary, or whether one large publication like a university calendar was all that potential customers required. She said that she considered there were three components involved in the way people make decisions about education:

> ...Information on hand, in other words 'what can I get my hands on? what are my individual goals and needs?' ..... and the third, the whole idea of image and brand. In other words 'what's going to be cool for me to do?' That is quite significant so those three things rotate all the time. We've found in the work that we've done that there are three stages that people go through in that process as well - browsing, searching and applying.

Charlotte indicated that in the browsing stage people are just looking around to see what is on offer by the various institutions, and quite often it is the image material like photographs, a visit to the campus, and the layout of brochures that all give a message about the place. She says that once they move into the searching and applying stages that the promotional literature is really important, and they want to know the detailed information of course content rather than every programme that is on offer. Obviously in her view one publication is not sufficient to meet these various stages in decision making about education.

It is this detailed information which the focus groups talked about and the respondents to the questionnaire indicated there were some gaps in the meeting of their expectations in this area, especially those relating to cross credits and job/career prospects for each qualification. It is understood the institution has addressed the job/career prospects issue in the most recent promotional material, but information about cross credits may only be available on a case by case consideration in the majority of instances. These issues were also mentioned briefly in section 6.3. The overall ratings of course material by students as meeting customer need was 3.50 for Faculty A and 3.27 for Faculty B and, while this could be construed as meeting need, there must be room for improvement if the institution's course material is to exceed customer expectations.

Overall Customer Focus:

Finally within this theme of institutional competition and marketing it is also necessary to include the overall evaluation of the institution in terms of customer focus. If the assertions made by Charlotte about services marketing are correct, and image and reputation are one of the aspects which potential customers consider, then all the attributes which combine to make excellent customer service and which customers will tell others about become very important. Interviewees were asked for their opinions about the overall customer focus of the institution:

Darlene said she felt that the institution was making every effort to be customer focused whilst Mike said he thought the institution was very business oriented, "It is fantastic" he said. Dean felt that overall the institution was trying to provide reasonable customer service but some areas needed improvement. Sophie and Carla were first year students and were happy with the attention they had received as customers of the institute. Rick said that he felt he has been treated like a customer by the people of the institute but not the system, particularly the enrolment system. He also thought more external interaction between the business community and the institute for course development would improve customer service and referred once again to value for money:

> ....ensuring the customer is getting good value, and the way to do it would be to show us that the product is actually working. That is by getting business people to talk to us and evaluate our work, and also get ex-students to come back and make suggestions on the courses and also talk to the students.

Staff similarly were asked how they thought the institution was moving to be more customer oriented.

Bob's response was:

> I'm very much in favour of the institute being more customer focused because the student is the person who is paying the fee. I recognise there

> is a lot of debate as to whether the student is the customer. Sometimes I sort of feel that in our market driven desire we see industry as the customer and the student is really the object.......I sort of feel the students cease to be the customer when they become a little bit the tool or the raw materials that you try to shape.......In our department we try to recognise that we are here for the students and I think it would be good if we maybe really recognised that sometimes more in our processes.
>
> I think we have been through a fairly interesting shift over the last nine or ten years and I feel very comfortable with the direction in which things have gone and I really hope that we are going to continue to develop our customer focus more. It seems to me that it is the one thing that has come out of these educational reforms which I think has been very helpful.

Charles said he felt that one of the key features of customer service for his department was a virtual "open all hours" philosophy. He said that students in his discipline want to be able to access rooms to carry out their projects. He said that there are safety measures in place to ensure that some equipment is not used without the appropriate supervision but other than that the students can work on into the evening with the external doors locked and the security staff checking periodically. He pointed out that this was a service that, as far as he was aware of, was not offered by any other tertiary institution in the city.

In talking to Sally she described her department as providing very flexible options within each programme, and that students do get support and every assistance to complete their programme:

> I think individual lecturers in our centre are very caring people and that we are doing everything we can to try and plan or organise it so that the student is always thought of first.

Mary teaches at degree level as well as a national programme. She said that one time a lecturer would have stood up and told students what they should do and they would do it. She considered that now they were flexible enough to recognise the need to offer students more options. She explained that previously the course prescription was set and that is what had to be taught, and you didn't deviate from it. She said, "I think we are much more realistic now, you've got to be flexible....I'm very comfortable with this philosophy and you know it fits the students - if it doesn't fit the students, then we change."

Jim had a similar experience. He said that the old New Zealand certificate programmes were very prescriptive, with little room for latitude, but in his view both local degree programmes and the new framework qualifications have given the student more autonomy. In his personal opinion he said that he had always treated his students like customers, even those that were only paying a few hundred dollars for course materials, and also now when they pay several thousand dollars to include part of their tuition costs, - and that most of his colleagues felt the same.

When discussing the philosophy of students as customers with Betty, it was obvious that her department and its programmes were very customer focused and it was an integral part of its success. She explained:

> ..Unless we deliver the best to these students, they are not going to receive the best and I believe that competition in this field is very healthy because our best marketers and promoters for this school are our graduates. We know that, and they know that, so yes, I think we are very customer focused. Partly because they make such a huge commitment, financial commitment, but also hours and personal and emotional...They must make a personal and emotional journey as well as an intellectual journey in order to succeed. And therefore their commitment is total; it is a holistic approach that we are trying to get.

Linking these interviews all together is the final assessment given by staff and students via the questionnaires. They were asked firstly to rank their own faculty in terms of meeting customer need and secondly the institution as a whole in terms of its commitment to customer service. Faculty A students gave their faculty a rating of 3.53 while staff rated it 3.87 and both groups rated the institution as 3.50. In Faculty B, the students rated it 3.28 and staff 3.79 while they rated the institution as 3.24 and 3.45 respectively.

Finally the last word on customer service was given to Charlotte. Her strong belief is that:

> If we can imbibe this institute with the view that the student is our customer, we will win, no matter what happens in the environment or on what is going to happen on the outside. The barriers that are the biggest problem with people are this word of mouth thing. This is the most powerful promotional tool, and the little things that we do about, for example, ID cards, about queues, about the processes, the delays - all those things are customer cost. If we are going to increase the price, we have to reduce the customer costs. If we can get people, and some of them are academic staff, thinking that these people are precious to us, then we owe them the right of service, and we will be far ahead of others. I mean, academic staff have not traditionally seen those views. I think allied staff, because that's the environment from which they work, have seen it more readily. That is I think the biggest stumbling block to our future success. We are better at it than some, but we've got an awful long way to go.

Importance of Students as Customers:

This fourth theme has encompassed the full gamut of marketing an institution from advertising, the use of promotional material, the concept of branding and the overall philosophy of customer service. Charlotte makes a highly significant point, that customers are precious to the institution. This is what Albrecht and Bradford (1990) talk about - seeing the customer as an asset. Competition between tertiary institutions is an inevitable outcome of the tertiary reforms, particularly where there is more than one such institution in a centre. However no matter how fierce the competition or how aggressive the marketing, it is the students' interaction with the institution, how they are treated and the quality of their learning experience which creates the lasting impression. They key issue surrounding this theme is that the customer or student is the one who makes the final choice as to which institution they will attend. It will be what they tell others about the quality of their learning experience, how they were treated, and the attitude of the staff towards them which will bring the most benefits to an institution over any marketing strategy, and provide the best competitive advantage.

In conclusion, the purpose of this chapter has been to consider four key themes which emerged from the survey results together with interviews with a number of students and staff from the two faculties involved in the case study plus three corporate managers. The themes have been explored further and discussed with the interviews as supporting evidence whilst establishing some links back to some of the literature reviewed in Chapters Two and Three. The next chapter identifies the implications of these themes for the rest of the polytechnic sector and provides some recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER SEVEN

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This final chapter brings to a culmination all the discussion of the previous six chapters and suggests some implications which the findings of the research may have for various groups and includes several recommendations for further research.

7.1 Research Aims and Objective

The objective of this thesis was stated at the beginning of Chapter One and that is to understand the concept of students as customers of tertiary institutions in the context of the tertiary reforms which have taken place in New Zealand using a case study design within one polytechnic. Chapter One also explained the New Zealand education context and the background to the tertiary reforms of the late 1980's and 1990's and proposed four specific aims of the thesis:

- To identify and outline the tertiary reforms promulgated through the Education Act 1989 and the Education Amendment Act 1990 as they relate to polytechnics;

- To investigate the philosophy of students as customers, studying the attitudes and perceptions of polytechnic staff, both administrative and academic, in considering their students as customers;

- To identify the changes or new services, study options, and teaching delivery modes available to students in terms of meeting customer needs;

- To study and document student expectation of service provision.

Chapter Two fulfils the first aim with the major reforms discussed in some detail. Seven key outcomes of those reforms were identified as relating to polytechnics and also having an impact directly on students who are their major customer. To reiterate they are:

- The autonomy of polytechnics
- The funding polices of government and student fees
- Competition between tertiary institutions
- The student loan scheme
- The development of the National Qualifications Framework
- The freedom institutions have to develop their own programmes
- The development of contract education through agencies like ETSA and ITOs

The remaining three aims of the research are achieved through Chapters Three, Five and Six. Various practitioners' and theorists' views of customer service and customer expectation were discussed from a business perspective in Chapter Three along with the views of several educationalists, from New Zealand and overseas. There is no doubt that some educationalists, for example Ball (1990) and Grace (1994) oppose the free market philosophies of the government and do not accept that education is a commodity which can be traded in the marketplace and therefore that educational institutions have customers. However the discussion with staff in the interview setting and their survey responses support the notion that students should be regarded as customers of tertiary institutions. It would seem that it is no longer possible for institutions in New Zealand to "bury their heads in the sand" and pretend this philosophy does not exist. Tertiary education is now in a "user pays" environment and this research has demonstrated that institutions must provide a quality learning environment for their customers and be extremely cost effective in order to survive.

The outcomes of the case study using two faculties in a large urban polytechnic are detailed in Chapter Five. These results identify various study options, course delivery methodology, support services along with rankings given by students and clearly indicate that they expect to be treated like customers. The chapter also documents their expectations of service provision. To further support the institution's commitment to customer service it is worth noting that the Chief Executive established a task force in 1997, which he chaired, to revise the current quality systems including a clear strategy which recognises students as key customers. The literature reviewed in Chapter Three strongly commends that everyone in the organisation needs to be involved and committed to a customer service strategy from the top down and this is obviously happening within this institute. Several new innovations to improve customer feedback and customer service in 1998 were announced just prior to this thesis going to final print.

Four major themes emerged from the research and these were expounded in Chapter Six and supported with a series of interviews with a group of students and staff. To recapitulate the four themes are:

- The influence of cost effectiveness on polytechnic teaching strategies
- Autonomy for programme development: a tension here!
- Facilities and services: balancing customer needs and expectations with financial resources
- Institutional competitiveness and marketing strategies: student choice is the real issue!

These have been discussed thoroughly in Chapter Six but there are some implications for various groups which may be considered as an extension of those themes.

7.2 Implications of Research Findings

Implications for Government:

The findings of this research show that reducing government funding is impacting on the operation of tertiary institutions. There is constant pressure on institutions to limit fee increases and the responsible managers of these institutions are also concerned about rising student debt. In some quarters higher fees will preclude participation in tertiary education with the resultant danger that higher education will become elitist. It has already been identified that the tertiary reforms have given greater autonomy for institutions and this has been well received. Most, if not all institutions have made every effort to operate as efficiently as possible without compromising the quality of the education delivered. However this autonomy is under threat from increasing intervention by the Ministry of Education through policy decisions which are impacting on the day to day operations of each institution. Compliance costs associated with the statistical data retrieval, financial reporting, alongside the implementation of programmes in association with the National Qualifications Framework, and institutional accreditation, have been identified as examples placing financial pressures on institutions. These pressures are then reflected in cutbacks in staffing, services and resources, increased class sizes and possibly in the cancellation of some courses in order to balance budgets. Such cutbacks cannot be sustained if the quality of education is not to be jeopardised and if New Zealand is to be a country with an educated and skilled workforce to compete in world markets. These are serious implications for the government and it is vital sufficient funding is provided and the earlier commitment which was made to fund at least 75% of course costs should not be eroded any further. Funding additional places is necessary but funding all places at an acceptable level is critical. The delivery of quality tertiary education in New Zealand should be a paramount consideration.

Implications for the Tertiary Sector:

Decreasing government funding has important implications for the tertiary sector as a whole. As stated in the previous section, institutions are under constant pressure to increase fees but they do endeavour to be responsible in this regard. It has already been demonstrated that increasing class sizes, alternative methods of delivery of programmes, limitation on new resources and even staff cuts are all ways of rationalising diminishing resources which tertiary institutions have had to adopt. Institutions are endeavouring to find alternative sources of income, such as through international student recruitment drives and other entrepreneurial activities, but financial viability will continue to be an issue unless the government changes its stance.

Another implication of the findings of this research relates to customer service and institutional competition. The results reveal that there are some factors of differentiation between institutions which can be construed as a competitive edge, but questions whether there is really serious competition. Students appear to choose a particular institution because of the programmes offered, the location and features of the campus, and to a limited degree the reputation of the institution. For tertiary institutions to build their reputation and thus continue to attract students it will be vital for them to acknowledge that students are their customers and that it is the way that the students are treated and the quality of the students' learning experience that will count the most in the long term.

Implications for Polytechnics:

As already indicated the implications of financial viability, customer service and institutional competition apply to the whole tertiary sector. In addition, the issue of autonomy for programme development raised by theme two in Chapter Six has an implication for polytechnics. Whilst polytechnics are able to develop degrees under strict accreditation criteria specified by NZQA, they are also under pressure from industry and students to deliver programmes on the National Qualifications Framework and this can place some threat on their autonomy to develop their own programmes. This is possibly more relevant to smaller regional polytechnics rather than the larger urban ones.

The results of the research reveal that compliance costs associated with the framework are a major consideration for polytechnics and this includes staff time in meeting assessment criteria. The review of the framework and tertiary education in general which is taking place at the time of completing this thesis may well have more significant implications for polytechnics especially if local as well as national programmes must be registered on the framework in order to receive government funding.

7.3 Recommendations for Further Research

This research has been focused on the polytechnics sector but the tertiary reforms and "user pays" environment has affected the whole tertiary sector. It was also signalled in Chapter Two that the new coalition government planned another review of tertiary education and a second "green paper" discussion document was released in the latter quarter of 1997, alongside the discussion paper on the National Qualifications Framework. No doubt in the ensuing twelve or eighteen months there will be some more significant changes to the way tertiary education is funded and administered in New Zealand. Five suggestions arise for further research:

Recommendation One:

It is recommended that research be conducted in universities to ascertain student expectation in terms of their education experience and service delivery, and to determine the customer service paradigm is acknowledged and accepted in that sector.

Universities are also under the same pressures as polytechnics to be efficient and run cost effective programmes of study. Some universities are also finding that the government's funding cuts are making it more difficult for them to operate and reductions in expenditure must be found. However the students are paying a similar proportion towards their education as polytechnics students, and a study of their perceptions of customer service as well as that of the university staff would provide valuable information to those parties interested in the effects of the market economy on tertiary education.

Recommendation Two:

It is recommended that some further research be conducted to analyse the impact of the next round of reforms once they are implemented, possibly in the next twelve to eighteen months.

As stated above the coalition government proposes another round of tertiary reforms. There have been many suggestions about new mechanisms for funding, such as a voucher system, and ways to encourage more participation in tertiary education. The outcomes of the government's decisions will provide a further source of research as to the impact on students and tertiary institutions.

Recommendation Three:

It is recommended that further research take place using groups of students from a number of institutions to determine the major factors which influence their decision to study at a particular tertiary institution.

The fourth theme which emerged from the findings in the research related to institutional competition and marketing. The senior manager interviewed talked about a "marketing triangle" in the sphere of education and stated that the three components - physical, qualifications and reputation were important when students are deciding which institution to attend. In the results from the case study in this research very few students indicated that the image and reputation of the institution played any part in their decision to attend that particular institution. Additional research in this area would prove useful to institutions as they plan their marketing strategies.

Recommendation Four:

It is recommended that the institution conduct further research on those issues where the gap analysis exceeded 1.0 and make the appropriate changes in an effort to at least meet, if not exceed customer expectation.

The results of this case study have revealed a number of gaps between what students considered important and whether their expectations are being met or not. The interview transcripts also revealed some areas of service delivery, both academic and support services, which needed further attention. It is recognised that each individual student's perceptions or interpretation of the questions in a survey do influence their responses and therefore a closer examination of some issues may be warranted. It is also important to reiterate that only a sample of issues could be covered in the questionnaires and no doubt, given the opportunity, other students would have raised more issues.

Recommendation Five:

A final recommendation for additional research to take place is to determine how the Ministry of Education as principal funding provider, as well as other stakeholders in tertiary education perceive tertiary institutions as their customers.

The concept of customer service has been discussed in the context of students as the principal customers of tertiary institutions with a major focus on the polytechnic sector. However there are other customers of these institutions, for example: ITOs; professional and industrial organisations; and other government departments, all of whom have varying levels of interaction with those institutions. Information about their expectations of service provision would provide valuable data for tertiary institutions in assessing service quality within their organisation.

7.4 Conclusion

While it is not appropriate to make generalisations in case study research, it is fair to say that this institution is in no way unique within the polytechnic sector, and that it is very likely that the issues raised by the students in this study will occur in other polytechnics. It is therefore possible that those institutions will be recognising the students as customers and will have in place strategies to ensure quality service is delivered and that their customers' needs are being met.

This thesis has focused on the concept of students as customers, although it has been acknowledged during the discussion that there are other customers, or stakeholders of tertiary institutions. It is a vital factor, though, to accept that students are the ones attending the institution, participating in the learning experience, and at the end of their time of study, graduating with a qualification which equips them for the profession or career they have chosen and make a valuable contribution to society.

In more general terms, the impact of the tertiary reforms has definitely enabled polytechnics to develop a more businesslike approach to conducting their core business, that of delivery of quality tertiary education. However many institutions are finding that the pressures of funding cuts, compliance costs associated with the National Qualifications Framework, competition from other institutions, together with the provision of adequate resources and support services to meet customer need, are causing their financial viability to be threatened. At the time of completing this thesis several mergers and strategic alliances between institutions are taking place or being negotiated, and this appears to be an outcome of the reforms.

Finally, the results of this case study indicate that a paradigm shift has taken place in this particular institution, and that students are being recognised as customers. The strategic plans and resultant policies of the organisation focus on providing the best quality education supported with the associated services for those customers.

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MASSEY UNIVERSITY

A L B A N Y

FACULTY OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF POLICY STUDIES

"STUDENTS AS OUR CUSTOMERS: A PARADIGM SHIFT"

INFORMATION SHEET

1. **Researcher:** My name is Terry Fulljames and I am currently preparing my thesis to complete the requirements for the Masters degree in Educational Administration (Massey). I am employed by UNITEC Institute of Technology as Academic Registrar and wish to declare that I will not use my position to influence any part of the research methodology, data collection and findings.

   Supervisors: The supervisors appointed by the University to oversee this research are: Associate Professor John Codd who is Head of the Education Faculty at Palmerston North and Dr Mollie Neville who is Senior Lecturer is Education at Albany campus.

2. **Contact Details:**

Researcher: c/- Academic Registry, UNITEC Institute of Technology Private Bag 92025,Auckland.
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Dr Mollie Neville, Faculty of Education
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3. **Nature and Purpose of the study:**

The purpose of this research is to ascertain what changes or shift has and is being made within the Polytechnic sector by way of services provided, study options and teaching delivery modes available to students in terms of meeting customer needs. The procedure for gathering data will be largely in two forms - (i) a detailed questionnaire to all students and staff in the two faculties which are the subject of the case study, and (ii) taped interviews with a sample of students and staff in both faculties plus other key administrators within UNITEC.

4. **Participants in the Research:**

Focus Groups - Four focus groups will be held - each with up to 10 volunteers of which two groups will be students and two will be staff from each of the two faculties which are the subjects of the case study. Each focus group will meet for a maximum of two hours and will simply brainstorm the issues pertaining to the customer service paradigm. The points made will be itemised on a whiteboard and then transcribed onto paper. This data will then be used for the researcher to develop the major questionnaire. The focus group meetings will not be taped nor will any personal comments be recorded.

Questionnaire - copies of the questionnaire will be made available to all students and staff in both faculties and will clearly indicate that participation is voluntary. It will also indicate that completion of the questionnaire is voluntary, that it is independent of any course in which the student may be enrolled or any assessment procedure associated with that course of study. Questionnaires will be numbered simply to monitor the number taken and numbers returned but no personal identification will be made or required.

It is envisaged that the questionnaire will take about half an hour to complete as some questions will require qualitative comments. A coding system will be used in the analysis of the questionnaires, no personal comments will be quoted and only broad classifications will be used for the qualitative areas. No completed questionnaires will be included with the thesis document and they will be destroyed after the thesis is marked and published.

Completed questionnaires will be returned via a locked box in each faculty office. No separate consent form will be required as it is assumed that filling in the questionnaire implies consent.

Interviews - Any interviews will be voluntary with participants chosen on a random basis. No identification will be made in the text of the thesis unless specifically agreed to, in writing, by the participant(s). The consent form will clearly indicate the participants right to withdraw at any time. Interviews will be taped and transcribed either by the researcher or an independent secretary. She/he will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement. Participants may view the transcript before inclusion in the thesis. Tapes and the transcriptions will be destroyed once the thesis is marked and published.

5. **Anonymity and Confidentiality:**

There is no risk to any participant in this research project as the information given will be kept strictly anonymous unless the participant wishes to be acknowledged. All data collected in either taped or written form will be kept in locked filing cabinets throughout the period of the study and destroyed once the thesis has been marked and published.

6. **Participant's rights:** The following are the participants rights, which are also detailed on the consent form:

- Participation in this research project is voluntary.

- Participants may ask questions before participation and have then answered and have the right to ask any further questions at any time.

- Participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.
- Participants may decline to answer any particular questions either at interview or in the printed questionnaire.
- Participants names will not be used without permission and they have the right to decline permission.
- Where an interview is being audiotaped, the participant has the right to ask for the audiotape to be turned off at any time during the interview.
- Participants will have right of access to the findings of the study when it is concluded.

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
ALBANY

FACULTY OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF POLICY STUDIES

"STUDENTS AS OUR CUSTOMERS: A PARADIGM SHIFT"

CONSENT FORM

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree to participate and I understand I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and to decline to answer any particular questions.

I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that my name will not be used without my permission. The information will be used only for this research and publications which may arise from this research project.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being audiotaped.

I also understand that I have the right to ask for the audiotape to be turned off at any time during the interview.

I understand I will have right of access to the findings of the study when it is concluded.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signed: ....

Name: ....

Date: ....

APPENDIX THREE

LIST OF FOCUS GROUP ISSUES

FOCUS GROUP 1

Academic

Satisfaction - smooth running
Learning: styles - depends on course, find it yourself, direction, ground rules., technology -up today, available in Dept not just Library.
Achieving } Feedback, peer and tutor
Progressing } assessment and results.
Issues addressed
Tutors available - set time, office location, not to have to hunt for tutors.
Class numbers
Staff - trained, up to date, also in technology and subject area/matter.
Expectation - Department runs on a business like model - efficient; no waste of resources;
Timing of information - not everything at beginning of year, spread as required or with reminders.
Communication -
Course structure } before beginning of year
Who's who in Dept }
Planning & thinking from a student perspective; putting self in place of a student.
Possibility of translation of basic information - e.g. Chinese (mandarin?)
Course Information - Concise, up to date, readily available, relevant.
Marketed with job prospects and job satisfaction at end.
Availability of right person to talk to.

Enrolment

Where to go, what to do, information on electives; know what's available before student is in queue to enrol.
Telephone touch phone }
Internet }
Fax } choices available
Mail }
In person }
Speed a key }
Loans/Allowances - fast tracking; queries separate queue; separate place for new students or different ones.
Highly trained staff for problem cases
Appointments vs names on board - time limit interview before referred on.
Being able to do everything by mail as long as accurate and reliable.
Fee paying - more options e.g. instalments. Everything charged at one time and correct.

Facilities

Computer labs - more; resources to fairly match numbers in courses - especially hi-tech courses where wouldn't expect students to have one. Control/monitor booking systems. Equipment operational, serviced, up to date, sage. Safety procedures/safety gear and information; adequate training to use.

FOCUS GROUP 2

Academic

Flexibility - course selection but qualify by some 'selectivity' e.g. what done before, grades, relevant experience. This area needs to grow.
Timeliness of offering courses - p/t vs f/t students. e.g. one year offer an elective during day and next year or semester in the evening.
Make sure class size enough or plan for number likely in class - e.g. supply and demand.
Planning important; Polytechnic a bit impersonal now.
Course information - timely, adequate, suggest course structure be available on a database for students to access.
Changes - to many too fast. Agree some changes needed. Not enough information about changes. (e.g. to degree)
Institute trying to be competitive in marketplace, but are we asking students what they want?
Resource competition - with other institutions, and within Institute.
Library not big enough - needs to have more computers for virtual library.
Changes can compromise quality of degree or existing qualification. e.g. BBS changing from 4 yr to 3 yr plus honours year - current students can't get honours.
Staircasing vs nesting can disadvantage.
Lecturers - standard has improved & knowledge. Need to give constructive comments on assignments (used to happen - not now).
Feedback wanted. Students need help available - can be a pitfall of student directed learning.
Moderation of assignments - what is done especially with assignments - can be related to lecturer's style or opinion/philosophy.
Change in style of learning in some areas - tutor style. Can depend on subject.
Generally more interactive. Should be optional tutorials in some subjects.
Limited use of technology in business subjects. Given copies of OHT's and notes excellent - should be at the beginning of class.
Need to drum into students to set readings before class.
Exams - notification of places/rooms needs to be earlier and student not having to make special trip to try and find out.
Very good teaching plans/assessment dates and specified learning outcomes provided at beginning of semester.
Content of some subjects not practically enough based (e.g. Fin Acctg BBS)

Enrolment

Can take too long to sort out problems of course selection.
Paper flow between faculties and registry messy.
Queues at faculty reception.
Need cut offs for returning students.
Delays in getting out result notices can result in delay in enrolment.
Computer system not user friendly
Student allowances very complicated by MoE; information sheet this year helpful.
Make sure relevant forms are given at counter - ie staff ask appropriate questions.
Things change from year to year.
Invoice should state classroom etc

Resources

Volume of students - resources stretched.
Parking - should be able to use good sense where to park e.g. on grass when dry.
Need more exits to neighbouring streets
Few study rooms.
Not enough cafeterias and existing not big enough.
Phoning in - leave message on voice mail in faculties and long delay in responding at peak times
Prefer people contact not voicemail.
Backdoor number and extensions not given.
Textbooks not always available in bookshop - numbers not enough to cope with numbers in courses.

FOCUS GROUP 3.

Academic

Brochures give general information - good
Additional information - difficult to get hold of people, prefer interviews - in some cases interview offered. Seems to vary from year to year.
Brochures can be complicated. Flow charts hard to follow - some multi-directional
Some suggested better to remove them.
Need subject descriptors to help make decisions. Differ from department to department.
No information given on cross credits.
Information can be non-user-friendly - those who know can understand (e.g.lecturers). Not easy for students to understand.
Good information about course when started course - course outlines, timetable, exams, assignments, learning outcomes given.
Improving each year (can be influenced by being here 1 year or so already so familiar with the place.
Some conflicting information about what to expect in tests/exams. (One tutor says one thing and another something else about the same exam.)
Results back in reasonable time. Exam room organisation not good - poor communication first years found.
Tutorial staff - must know curriculum.
Must be courteous - respect students. (some cultural problems with tutors from overseas not used to the NZ scene)
Need to listen to what students are saying.
Not lectured at - interactive
Real world stuff - relative to what is going on in the workplace - relate theory to real practice.
Students realised content can be influenced by external bodies such as ATTTO.
Lecturers need to be accessible and approachable.
Happy with student directed learning but feedback is vital.
Would be helpful if tutors had an idea where students want to go career-wise within travel/tourism industry - would help the way they teach.

Enrolment

Time it takes. Paper flow between Faculties and Registry.
Delay in invoicing - this delays loan and allowances.
Some prefer to come in that post enrolments etc.
Advertise early - well before start date.
Returning students - opportunity to enrol previous year and get 1st option to courses.

Keep same ID number.
Returning students - phone enrol, internet.
Timetables should be set earlier - before end previous year and don't change.
Study an investment but keep fees reasonable - want value for money.
Loans/allowances - forms complicated. special place for those who need help filling in forms.
1 hr max wait.
People generally friendly and helpful.

Facilities

E-mail facility for students.
Library not used much by tourism students - also use local libraries.
UNITEC library does not cater enough for tourism students.
Library staff very helpful.
Computer labs - not enough information i.e. where, how to access, pin numbers/logons not explained. (can depend on course)
Need bigger bookshop.
More money machines - e.g. A block
Quality of cafes varies - more, better service, staff not friendly in some cafes
Health Centre - where, times, - acknowledged some get all this information at orientations.
Maps helpful.
Study rooms - need more spread around campus - e.g. none in A block.

FOCUS GROUP 4

Academic

Information in lectures - quality of information.
Language appropriate - intellectual level needs watching
Length of lectures - can be slow - varies from subject to subject
Delivery - Straight lecture vs interaction.
Lecturer needs some passion about topic
Sometimes "woolly" content not great. Often information is in text book. Needs to be set in context.
Balance of student directed learning and straight lecturing
Guest lecturers good.
Acknowledging/recognising competence of students
Course descriptors, aims, learning outcomes, times of assessment all given.
Timetables - not set early enough and should not be changed - some students have family/work responsibilities.
Advice of admission to programme given too late.
Information on electives, course map not helpful and not detailed enough.
Need communication about changes to degree content, courses, credits etc - and students should be involved - an element of negotiation as purchaser of service.
Evaluation system good - course and lecturer
Lecturers - good generally and treat students as people. Focused on student as customer.
Reading lists could be provided before course starts.

Enrolment

Queuing - for enrolment and loans and allowances and having to change queues.
Should take maximum 2 hours for live enrolment.
Split full time and part time enrolment days.

Returning students should be give priority to courses.
Postal enrolment and other technologies for enrolment would be good - but would need good course information first (to be able to make correct selections)
Cross crediting needs to be more clearly defined but with some flexibility available
People in Faculties need to be available in January so as not to just get voice-mail
Computer system not good enough. More terminals at enrolment. More staff required.
Processing of fees especially where other agencies involved e.g. NZISS can be confusing.
Staff need to be helpful and well informed on everything (Faculties as well as Registry)

Facilities

Library - needs more books and up to date journals on subject area (e.g. Architecture)
Need more staff but present staff very helpful
Orientation of library good.
Suggest seek donations of old books on topic and also some sponsorship for new ones.
Opening hours - include Sunday
More quiet working places. - Library not quiet enough for study.
More clocks on campus - and time kept correct.
More water coolers
Cafes OK
Student Common Rooms required
More phones
More money machines
Internet access.
More computer labs for personal use/access.
Furniture needs to be better suited to needs and use - e.g. classroom/lecture theatres not sloping tops.
More equipment to cater for more students (growing roll)
No secure place to store things - e.g. lockers
More interaction with other departments
Orientation activities must involve north campus.
Carparking - bordering on enough. No towaways. No paying
Free carparking an attraction to this institute.

APPENDIX FOUR

CUSTOMER SERVICE QUESTIONNAIRE

Information Sheet

This questionnaire forms a major source of data for a thesis entitled "Students as Our Customers: A Paradigm Shift." being undertaken by Terry Fulljames, Academic Registrar, UNITEC Institute of Technology. This thesis completes the requirements for the degree of Master in Educational Administration (Massey). Supervisors of the research are Dr Mollie Neville, Massey University, Albany campus and Professor John Codd, Faculty of Education, Massey University, Palmerston North.

You are invited to participate in this research, the results of which will assist UNITEC's management is determining progress made in providing a more customer oriented approach to the delivery of education and services and for planning for the future to meet the expectations of its major customers - its students.

The questionnaire will take approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete and you are under no obligation to answer every question.

Completion of the questionnaire implies consent, is entirely anonymous and has no impact whatsoever on your programme of study.

Thank you for your assistance in completing this questionnaire.

Terry Fulljames

Section One - General:
Please tick the boxes that apply to you (✓)

1. Are you studying Fulltime ☐
   Part time ☐

2. Do you have a paid job?
   Full time ☐
   Part time ☐
   No job ☐

3. Are you Female ☐
   Male ☐

4. How long have you studied at UNITEC?
   1 year or less ☐
   1-2 years ☐
   2-3 years ☐
   Over 3 years ☐

5. Which age are you?
   under 20 ☐
   20-24 ☐
   25-29 ☐
   30-34 ☐
   35-39 ☐
   40 & over ☐

6. Which ethnic group do you most strongly identify with?
   NZ Eurpoean/Pakeha ☐
   Maori ☐
   Chinese ☐
   Indian ☐
   Korean ☐
   Other Asian ☐
   Pacific Islander ☐
   Other ☐

7. Did you take a student loan to pay your fees?
   Yes ☐
   No ☐

   Or other purpose (*please state here)*

   ____

8. Do you live at home or away from home?
   At home (i.e. parent(s) home) ☐
   Away from home ☐

9. What is your combined household income?
   (self & partner/spouse or parent(s)/caregiver(s)
   Under $20000 ☐
   $20000-$35000 ☐
   $35000-$60000 ☐
   Over $60000 ☐

Section Two - Academic

Course Information

1. What programme are you enrolled in?

____

2. Why did you come to UNITEC? Please state briefly

____

____

3. Did you enrol at any other Institution(s) this year beside UNITEC? ***(tick box ✓)***
   Yes ☐
   No ☐

If yes, which Institution(s) ______________

____

4(a) Which of the following services did you use to obtain information about your programme? - (tick box ✓)

School Careers Adviser, ☐
UNITEC's Course Information Centre ☐
A UNITEC Faculty Office ☐
Advertisement
(e.g. TV, Radio, Newspaper) ☐
A current or ex student of UNITEC ☐

4(b) Please rate how that service met your expectations in enabling you to make a decision about your programme?

1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

did not meet expectatons — exceeded my expectations

5. ***For each of the following items please rank their importance to you and to what extent your expectations have been met on the two scales of 1-5:***

	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Course information is presented in a simple clear manner	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	not important				very important	did not meet expectations				exceeded my expectations
Information is given about the content of programmes (e.g. course descriptors, core and electives where appropriate)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Information is given about cross credits	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The selection process for entry to programmes is stated	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Advice of acceptance on to the programmes is given within a reasonable amount of time	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Progression from programme to programme is shown by flowcharts in the Prospectus	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Job/career prospects are indicated for each qualification	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
6. Do you consider that course information literature is user friendly and centred on customer needs ***(grade 1-5 on the two scales as appropriate)***	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	not user friendly				very user friendly	does not meet customer needs				meets customer needs

---

Section Three - Course Delivery:
Please tick (✓)the appropriate box(es).

1. What method of course delivery is used
   - Lecture only ☐
   - Combination of lecture and group work ☐
   - Interactive style teaching (i.e. plenty of discussion between lecturer and students) ☐
   - A combination of all three ☐

   What is your preference?

   ____

2. How is the teaching carried out
   - By direct teaching with plenty of notes ☐
   - Mainly student directed learning with lecturer as facilitator ☐
   - A combination of the above ☐

3. Have the lecturers conducted an evaluation of the course(s) at any stage during the first semester
   - Yes ☐
   - No ☐
   - Some courses only ☐

4. Has an evaluation been carried out for each lecturer during the first semester
   - Yes ☐
   - No ☐
   - Some lecturers only ☐

5. Which class sizes do you prefer
   - Large lectures (e.g. 80 plus) ☐
   - Large lectures with small group tutorials ☐ ☐
   - Small classes for lectures (under 30) ☐
   - A combination ☐

6. For each of the following items please rank their importance to you and how your expectations have been met on the two scales of 1 - 5:

	Importance 1	2	3	4	5	Expectations 1	2	3	4	5
The timetable of courses is published before couses begin	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	not important				very important	did not meet my expectations				exceeded my expectations
The flexibility of the timetable	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Information about course content, plan of topics to be covered each week, timetable for tests and assignments is given at the first class	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The lecturers are very knowledgeable about their subject areas	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The teaching meets the stated course content and learning objectives	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The course content meets industry and business requirements	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Lecturers use the latest technology to assist with teaching as appropriate	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Lecturers are sensitive to my needs and treat me as a customer	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Lecturers are available for appointments to discuss matters related to my courses	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Feedback is given on assignments and exam papers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Advice of final results is received within a reasonable time frame after final exams/ assignments	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section Four - Admission and Enrolment Process:
Please tick (✓)the appropriate box(es)

1. What selection process was used for your admission to UNITEC:
   - Interview ☐
   - Aptitude test ☐
   - Audition/Portfolio ☐
   - Direct enrolment ☐

2. How did you find the process of completing the application and enrolment forms?
   - Difficult ☐
   - Moderately difficult ☐
   - Easy ☐
   - Simple and user friendly ☐

3. How would you prefer to enrol - ***(tick as many boxes as you wish)***

- In person ☐
- By mail ☐
- By telephone (using numbers - like Ticketek) ☐
- By Internet ☐
- By computer direct within UNITEC ☐

4. How would you prefer to pay fees

- (i) By student loan ☐
- (ii) By cash in one lump sum ☐
- (iii) In instalments ☐
- A combination of (ii) & (iii) ☐

5. If enrolling in person what hours would best suit you to enrol -

- Before 8.00am ☐
- Normal business hours ☐
- Between 5 and 8pm ☐

6. Did the staff who helped you through the enrolment process focus on your needs

Yes ☐ No ☐

7. Does the computerised enrolment system meet your expectations in terms of efficiency ***(please rank on scale of 1-5)***

1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
did not meet expectations			exceeded my expectations	

8. Did you find the system for issuing ID cards through the Academic Registry efficient

Yes ☐ No ☐

If no, what would make it more efficient ***(tick box(es) applicable)***

- Registry open longer hours ☐
- More than one camera in Registry ☐
- System located in Library ☐
- Other ____________________

9. The Loans and Allowances process is laid down by the Ministry of Education. How did you find the application forms to complete?

- Difficult ☐
- Moderately difficult ☐
- Easy ☐
- Simple and user friendly ☐

10. If you were a student at UNITEC prior to 1997 please rate on the following scale whether you think the enrolment and loans/allowances process has become more customer focussed over recent years:

1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
no change			major change	

Section Five - Facilities:

There are a number of facilities at UNITEC which you may or may not use. For the facilities listed below please rank their importance to you and how your expectations have been met on the two scales of 1-5.

	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Computer labs have up to date equipment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	not important			very important		did not meet my expectations		exceeded my expectations		
There are sufficient computer labs to meet student needs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The bookshop has everything I need	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Adequate car parking is provided	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
	not important				very important	did not meet my expectations				exceeded my expectations
The library is well stocked to suit the study needs for all courses	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The library staff are very helpful	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Copy Centre caters for all studentı printing and binding needs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Copy Centre charges are reasonable	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The cafeterias meet the different food requirements of students	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
There are sufficient money machines on campus	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Health and Counselling services are staffed with trained professionals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Learning Centre (Te Tari Awhina) provides adequate learning support for to students needs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Are there other Facilities you would like to see at UNITEC? Please state

---

Section Six - Overall Assessment:

1. Are you aware of the following areas of student input into decision making at UNITEC? ***(tick ✓ as many boxes as applicable)***

	Yes	No
Representation on Council	☐	☐
Representation on Academic Board	☐	☐
Representation on Faculty Programme Committees	☐	☐
Student satisfaction survey	☐	☐
Graduate destination survey	☐	☐
Specialist working parties	☐	☐

(Please rank on the scales of 1-5 as appropriate)

2. Do you consider your faculty is meeting customer need?

1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
not meeting customer need				meeting customer need

3. Do you consider UNITEC is demonstrating commitment to customer service?

1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
not committed				very committed

APPENDIX FIVE

CUSTOMER SERVICE QUESTIONNAIRE

Information Sheet

This questionnaire forms a major source of data for a thesis entitled "Students as Our Customers: A Paradigm Shift." being undertaken by Terry Fulljames, Academic Registrar, UNITEC Institute of Technology. This thesis completes the requirements for the degree of Master in Educational Administration (Massey). Supervisors of the research are Dr Mollie Neville, Massey University, Albany campus and Professor John Codd, Faculty of Education, Massey University, Palmerston North.

You are invited to participate in this research, the results of which will assist UNITEC's management is determining progress made in providing a more customer oriented approach to the delivery of education and services and for planning for the future to meet the expectations of its major customers - its students.

The questionnaire, which has been adapted from the student questionnaire, will take approximately 10 minutes to complete and you are under no obligation to answer every question.

Completion of the questionnaire implies consent and is entirely anonymous.

Thank you for your assistance in completing this questionnaire.

Terry Fulljames

Section One - General:
Please tick the boxes that apply to you (✓)

1. What is your status as a staff member

Fulltime	□
Part time	□

2. Are you a member of the Academic staff or Allied staff

Academic	□
Allied	□

3. Are you

Female	□
Male	□

4. How long have you been on the UNITEC staff?

1 year or less	□
1-2 years	□
2-3 years	□
Over 3 years	□

SectionTwo - Academic

Course Information

1. What programme(s) do you teach on?____

2. ***For each of the following items please rank what you consider to be important to students and how you consider their expectations would be met by UNITEC's current course information literature, on the two scales of 1-5:***

	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Course information is presented in a simple clear manner.	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□
	not important			very important		did not meet expectations			exceeded expectations	
Information is given about the content of programmes (e.g. course descriptors, core and electives where appropriate).	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□
Information is given about cross credits.	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□
The selection process for entry to programmes is stated.	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□
Advice of acceptance on to the programmes is given within a reasonable amount of time.	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□
Progression from programme to programme is given if appropriate.	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□
Job/career prospects are indicated for each qualification.	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□

3. Do you consider that course information literature is user friendly and centred on customer needs ***(grade 1-5 on the two scales as appropriate)***

1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□
not user friendly			very user friendly		does not meet customerneeds			meets customer needs	

Course Delivery -
Please tick (✓) the box to the following questions.

1. What method of course delivery is used?

- Lecture only ☐
- Combination of lecture and group work ☐
- Interactive style teaching (i.e. plenty of discussion between lecturer and students) ☐

What do you think students prefer?

____

2. How is the teaching carried out?

- By direct teaching with plenty of notes ☐
- Mainly student directed learning with lecturer as facilitator ☐
- A combination of the above ☐

What do you think students prefer?

____

3. Have you conducted an evaluation of the course(s) at any stage during the first semester

- Yes ☐
- No ☐
- Some courses only ☐

4. Has an evaluation been carried out for each lecturer during the first semester

- Yes ☐
- No ☐
- Some lecturers only ☐

5. Which class sizes do you prefer

- Large lectures (e.g. 80 plus) ☐
- Large lectures with small group tutorials ☐
- Small classes for lectures (under 30) ☐
- A combination ☐

6. *For each of the following items please rank what you consider to be important to students and how you consider their expectations would be met, on the two scales of 1 - 5:*

	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
The timetable of courses is published before courses begin	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	not important			very important		did not meet my expectations			exceeded my expectations	
The flexibility of the timetable	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Information about course content, plan of topics to be covered each week, timetable for tests and assignments is given at the first class	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The lecturers are very knowledgeable about their subject areas	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The teaching meets the stated course content and learning objectives	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The course content meets industry and business requirements	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Lecturers use the latest technology to assist with teaching as appropriate	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Lecturers are sensitive to student needs and treat them as a customer	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Lecturers are available for appointments to discuss matters related to their courses	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Feedback is given on assigments and exam papers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Advice of final results are received within a reasonable time frame after final exams/ assignments	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section 3 - Admission and Enrolment Process *(tick ✓ appropriate box)*

1. What is your opinion of the process for students completing the application and enrolment forms?

Difficult ☐
Moderately difficult ☐
Easy ☐
Simple and user friendly ☐

2. Which ways do you consider would be more preferential for students to enrol - ***(tick as many boxes as you wish)***

In person ☐
By mail ☐
By telephone ☐
(using numbers - like Ticketek)
A combination of 2 & 3 ☐

3. What is your opinion about preferences for the payment of fees?

(i) By student loans ☐
(ii) In cash in one lump sum ☐
(iii) In instalments ☐
A combination of (ii) & (iii) ☐

4. Do you think the computerised enrolment system meet student expectations in terms of efficiency ***(please rank on scale of 1-5)***

1 2 3 4 5
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
does not meet expectations — exceeded expectations

5. The Loans and Allowances process is laid down by the Ministry of Education. How did you think students find the application forms to complete?

Difficult ☐
Moderately difficult ☐
Easy ☐
Simple and user friendly ☐

6. Please rate on the following scale whether you think the enrolment and loans/allowance process has become more customer focussed over recent years

1 2 3 4 5
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
no change — major change

7. Do you consider the system for issuing
ID cards through the Academic Registry efficient?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If no, what would make it more efficient (***tick box(es) applicable)***

Registry open longer hours ☐
More than one camera in Registry ☐
System located in Library ☐
Other suggestion________________

____

Section Four - Facilities

There are a number of facilities at UNITEC which students may or may not use. For the facilities listed below please rank what you consider is important to students and how you consider their expectations would be met on the two scales of 1-5.

	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Computer labs have up to date equipment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
There are sufficient computer labs to meet student needs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The bookshop has everything students need	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Adequate car parking is provided	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The library is well stocked to suit the study needs for all courses	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The library staff are very helpful	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Copy Centre caters for all student copying needs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Copy Centre charges are reasonable	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The cafeterias meet the different food requirements of students	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
There are sufficient money machines on campus	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Health and Counselling services are staffed with trained professionals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Learning Centre provides adequate learning support for all students needs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Are there other Facilities you would like to see at UNITEC? Please state

____

Section Five - Overall Assessment

Are you aware of the following areas of student input into decision making at UNITEC? ***(tick ✓ as many boxes as applicable)***

	Yes	No
Representation on Council	☐	☐
Representation on Academic Board	☐	☐
Representation on Faculty Programme Committees	☐	☐
Student satisfaction survey		
Graduate destination survey	☐	☐
Specialist working parties	☐	☐

(Please rank on the scales of 1-5 as appropriate)

Do you consider your faculty is meeting customer need?

1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
not meeting customer need				meeting customer need

Do you consider UNITEC is demonstrating commitment to customer service?

1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
not committed				very committed

APPENDIX SIX

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Student Interviews - The style of interview was semi-structured so the questioning largely hinged on the answers given by interviewees. The following questions were a guide for the 8 students from the two faculties who volunteered to be interviewed.

1. **Cost of study:**

   What do you think about the fees you had to pay for your programme of study and do you consider students are receiving value for money for their contribution to the cost of their education?

   Alternative question for students who have been studying for longer than 1 year:

   You have been around this Institute for a number of years and fees have increased each year. How have these increases impacted on you as well as how you see those funds being put to around the Institute.

2. **Programme and course selection:**

   How did you decide which programme to study?

   How did the prospectus, handbooks, brochures and other publications help you with information about the programmes?

   What help did you get when it came to choosing specific courses, sorting out your timetable etc?

   How do you consider programme development and course changes affect you during your time of study - for example: changes to course content, course options, changing industry and professional requirements, NZQA etc.

3. **Enrolment and fee payment:**

   How did you find the enrolment process this year?

   How customer focussed do you consider it is?

   Are there any changes/improvements you would suggest could be made to the process?

4. **Teaching and learning:**

   What teaching styles do you encounter in your courses and how do you prefer to learn?

5. **Teaching staff:**

How do you find the teaching staff in terms of ability, knowledge, support for students, and what are your expectations of them?

Would you like to comment on feedback or lack of it within your programmes, both orally and on assignments etc.

What do you expect the relationship between lecturer and student should be in today's tertiary environment? (for students who have been at the institute longer than a year -(You have been studying here for a number of year's has this relationship changed in any way?

6. **Overall Customer Service/Satisfaction/Expectation**

How do you feel you have been treated as a customer of this Institute. How do you expect to be treated?

What suggestions do you have for the Institute to improve customer service?

Staff Interviews - Once again the interview style was semi-structured with the following questions as a guide only.

Senior Manager 1

1. What is your area of responsibility in the Institution?

2. How does the Institution gauge customer need in programme development and design? Has this changed since the tertiary reforms or are things just the same?

3. How much should the student as customer influence this in relation to Industry and Professional requirements.

4. With regard to assessment, what involvement should the student as customer have in this process.

5. With regard to course delivery - can you comment on the changes over the years and the need to be responsive to students as customers - the relationship of lecturers to students - has this changed and if so, how? Use of technology, virtual university etc.

6 How do you view, personally, the concept of education as a commodity and students as our customers?

Senior Manager 2

1. What is your area of responsibility within the Institute?

2. Marketing the Institution - why do we need to do this today, when we just advertised enrolment days and a list of courses in the past.

3. You have often talked about branding - why do we need to introduce such a concept which seems more associated with a product like toothpaste, rather than education.

4. Would you like to comment on publications like the use of specific programme guides versus a total calendar like a university would use. What about the student who doesn't know what they want to do.

5. What comments would you like to make about the cost of tertiary education today versus what it was like when you did your first degree

6. Are there any other comments you would like to make concerning the philosophy of student as customer from a marketing and public relations point of view?

Manager 3 -

1. What is your area of responsibility in the Institution?

2. What do you think about enrolling today as opposed to pre-computer days.
- What about all the statistics everyone keeps asking for. How could we cope with those without our computerised system; What about all the Ministry of Education requirements - don't these actually get in the way of what we are really here for.

3. What about the future of the enrolment process - computers systems and other methodologies for enrolment - Are we constantly looking to improve our customer service. Do you think students realise this or even care?

4. How flexible should the Institution be in the ways students can pay their fees - With rising debt levels many are asking about paying by instalments. If the Institute was to provide that option it would save the students interest but what would be the implications for the Institute's cash flow and operational costs?

5. Are there any other comments you would like to make concerning customer service and the enrolment process?

ACADEMIC STAFF

1. What is your area of responsibility in your Faculty?

2. How do you perceive the relationship between student and lecturer in terms of seeing the student as a customer?

3. Students say they expect lecturers to be fully knowledgeable about their subject and aware of what is actually happening in the workplace, i.e. not just the theory. Can you comment on this?

4. How do you perceive the delivery of tertiary education has changed over the last few years. We say that there is more student directed learning compared with the traditional "talk and chalk" approach to lecturing with lots of notes etc. Which approach do you think best meets our target market. Are there any groups which the student directed learning approach does not meet?

5. As a lecturer what is your opinion about the size of classes?

6. How do you perceive your department is performing in terms of delivering quality customer service?