

MAPPING CONCEPTUALIZATIONS AND INDICATORS OF QUALITY

Danielle Gabay, Abeer Siddiqui, Rebecca Lee, Melec Zeadin, Naseem Sherwani, Lori Goff
McMaster Institute of Innovation and Excellence in Teaching and Learning

How is quality defined in higher education? What is the relationship between institutional approach to, and the conceptualization of, quality and the indicators used to assess quality?

INTRODUCTION

Current Context

- Increased focus on quality teaching and enhancing institutional culture amongst various educational stakeholders.
- Lack of literature and research that documents and explains quality teaching and institutional culture – in relation to quality teaching – in the Canadian context.

Quality Teaching Survey (QTS)

- Multi-institutional project created to identify a set of indicators that would help define an institution's teaching culture, or the perceived value placed on teaching within Canadian institutions.

Conceptualizations of Quality

- QTS survey raised questions regarding the conceptualizations of quality within higher education.
- We conduct an extensive literature review in order to:

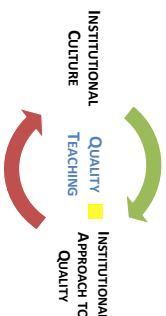
Map specific institutional indicators of quality (Gibbs, 2010) to institutional conceptualizations of quality (Harvey & Green, 1993)

- This link between institutional conceptualizations of quality and institutional emphasis on specific indicators of educational quality may have, as of yet, unexplored implications for teaching practices and attitudes.

BACKGROUND

Institutional Culture

- Institutional culture: The embedded patterns and behaviors, and the shared values, beliefs and ideologies that an educational institutions possess (Kezar and Eckel, 2002). It also provides a lens through which its members assign value to the various events and efforts of their institution (Bergquist and Pawlak, 2008).
- Institutional culture and institutional approach to quality cannot be considered in isolation:



- How an institution approaches and articulates quality stems from a broader cultural perspective (Harvey and Stensaker, 2008). Thus, institutional conceptualization of quality and institutional approaches to quality inform the institutional culture, and vice versa. In turn, institutional approaches to quality in conjunction with institutional culture, impacts the ways in which institutions define and assess quality teaching.

Institutional Conceptualizations of Quality

Lee Harvey and Diana Green (1993) describe five conceptualizations of quality in higher education:

- Exceptional: Quality is distinctive; elitist; achieved when high standards are surpassed
- Value for money: Quality achieved by return on investment and accountability
- Transformation: Quality achieved through the educational gain of students.
- Fitness for Purpose: Quality is achieved when the product/service meets stated purpose
- Perfection & Consistency: Quality is achieved when consistent and flawless outcomes are produced.

Institutional Indicators of Quality

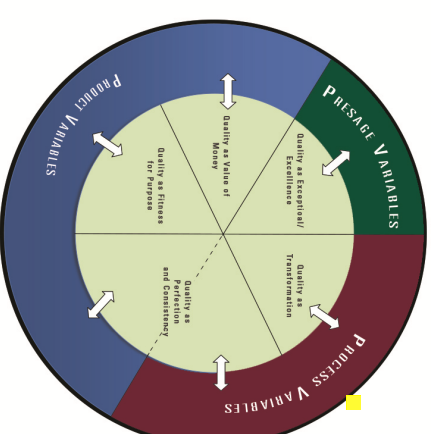
Graham Gibbs' Dimensions of Quality (2010) examines valid indicators to assess quality. These indicators are categorized as:

- Presage variables: describe institutional context before students begin learning.
- Process variables: describe institutional context as students progress through learning.
- Product variables: describe achieved educational outcomes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project was funded by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. We would like to acknowledge: Dr. Ernie Kustra, Dr. Ken Meadows, Ms. Paula Bunn, Dr. Debra Dawson, Mr. Peter Wolf, Dr. Donna Ellis

MAPPING CONCEPTUALIZATIONS AND INDICATORS OF QUALITY



Emphasis on specific indicators of quality manifests as specific conceptualizations of quality. Conversely, inherent conceptualizations of quality determine which indicators are used to assess institutional quality. Clear articulation of this relationship between conceptualizations and indicators will not only allow institutions to understand their approach to quality, but more significantly, give them the initial framework and means by which to shift their approach should they so desire. In order to streamline quality assessment, conceptualizations should have a greater influence on the indicators selected. Institutions should clearly articulate their conceptualization(s) of quality and select and indicators accordingly.

CONCEPTUALIZATIONS

INDICATORS

EXCELLENCE

- Presage
- Research Performance
- Degree of Selectivity
- Quality of Students
- Quality of Academic Staff
- Staff/Student Ratio

TRANSFORMATION

- Process
- Level of Engagement
- Quality of Teaching
- Quality and Quantity of Instructor Feedback
- Amount of Class Contact Hours
- Level of Intellectual Challenge
- Formative Assessment and Feedback
- Student Support
- Reputations
- Quality Enhancement Process
- Peer Ratings

PERFECTION AND CONSISTENCY

PRODUCT

- Student Performance
- Degree Classification
- Student Retention/ Persistence
- Employability

FITNESS FOR PURPOSE

VALUE FOR MONEY

REFERENCES

Bergquist, M. H., & Pawlak, K. (2008). Embracing the six cultures of the academy. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Gibbs, G. (2010). *Dimensions of quality* (pp. 1-40). United Kingdom: The Higher Education Academy.

Harvey, L., & Green, D. (1993). *Defining quality: Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*. J&H, 9-34.

Kezar, A. J., & Eckel, P. D. (2002). The effect of institutional culture on change strategies in higher education. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 73(4), 435-460.

