

**Conceptions of the Quality of Teaching in  
Higher Education in Australia:  
An Investigation**

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## Declaration

I, Laval Michel Jean-Francois Bosquet, declare that this Doctor of Education dissertation entitled *Conceptions of the Quality of Teaching in Higher Education in Australia: An Investigation* is not more than 65,400 words in length, exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, references and footnotes. This dissertation contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this dissertation is my own work.

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the author's signature.

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Signature

Friday, 13 April 2018

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Date

## **Acknowledgement**

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I dedicate my thesis to the Grand Weaver and the Author of my life's story.

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<sup>1</sup> This is a pseudonym.

# Table of Contents

<b>Declaration</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Acknowledgement</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>List of Figures</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>List of Tables</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Abstract</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1 Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
Background of the study	1
Purpose of the study	3
Overview of the research design	4
Significance of the study	4
The choice of the research approach	15
Overview of the study	15
Structure of the thesis	16
Summary	17
<b>CHAPTER 2 Literature Review</b>	<b>18</b>
Conceptualisation of quality	18
Quality assurance	27
Quality standards	39
Quality of teaching and learning	46
Quality and casualisation of academics	49
Perceptions of quality teaching	54
Current gaps in the literature	58
Summary	59
<b>CHAPTER 3 Research Methodology</b>	<b>61</b>
Introduction	61
Methodology: Theoretical perspective	63
Methods	74
<b>CHAPTER 4 Individual Interviews: Permanent and Sessional Academics</b>	<b>92</b>
Presentation of the findings	92
Categories of description	94
Conclusion	124
<b>CHAPTER 5 Focus group Interviews: Analysis and Findings</b>	<b>126</b>
Focus Group 1: Sessional academics	128
Focus Group 2: Permanent academics	156
Conclusion	182

<b>Chapter 6</b>	<b>Interrelationship of Categories of Description and 'Emergent Metaphors'</b> .....	<b>184</b>
	Categories of Description: Relationships .....	185
	'Emergent metaphors' .....	201
	Relationships between categories of description and 'emergent metaphors' .....	213
	Higher education Quality of teaching pictogram .....	222
	Conclusion .....	222
<b>Chapter 7</b>	<b>Findings, Reflections and Recommendations</b> .....	<b>224</b>
	The research study .....	224
	Contributions to original knowledge: Findings .....	225
	Assumptions challenged .....	227
	Ways of experiencing quality of teaching: Relationships between the categories of description .....	227
	Ways of experiencing quality of teaching: Comparing the experiences of categories of academics in relation to the quality of teaching .....	228
	Recommendations for higher education educators and professionals .....	229
	Reflections on the phenomenographic research approach.....	232
	Reflections on the 'emergent metaphor' analysis research approach.....	233
	Limitations of the study.....	234
	Recommendations for further research.....	235
	Summary .....	236
<b>References</b>	.....	<b>237</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	.....	<b>263</b>
Appendix 1	List of semi-structured interview questions.....	263
Appendix 2	List of focus group interview questions.....	264
Appendix 3	Information to participants .....	265
Appendix 4	Consent form for semi-structured and focus-group interviews .....	268
Appendix 5	Focus-group interview .....	270
Appendix 6	Permanent academics semi-structured interview inductive data reduction (IDR): Sample data.....	272
Appendix 7	Sessional academics semi-structured interview inductive data reduction (IDR): Sample data.....	285
Appendix 8	Sessional academics Focus Group 1 inductive data reduction (IDR) sample data .....	294
Appendix 9	Permanent academics Focus Group 2 inductive data reduction (IDR) sample data .....	301
Appendix 10	Emergent quality themes: Sessional and permanent staff.....	336

## List of Figures

<b>Figure 3.1</b>	<b>Summary of methodology and methods .....</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>Figure 5.1</b>	<b>Analysis of focus group interview transcripts using metaphor .....</b>	<b>127</b>
<b>Figure 6.1</b>	<b>Higher Education ‘Quality of Teaching’ pictogram .....</b>	<b>222</b>

## List of Tables

<b>Table 1.1</b>	<b>Shifts in university teaching workplaces, 1960 to 2001 .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Table 2.1</b>	<b>Classifications of quality .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Table 4.1</b>	<b>Outcome space: Categories of Description .....</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>Table 4.2</b>	<b>Profile of participants.....</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>Table 5.1</b>	<b>Profile of sessional participants .....</b>	<b>128</b>
<b>Table 6.1</b>	<b>Focus Groups 1&amp;2: Metaphor analysis .....</b>	<b>200</b>
<b>Table 6.2</b>	<b>Connectivity chart: Categories of description and metaphor analysis .....</b>	<b>214</b>

## **Abstract**

In this study I have investigated the ways academics experience the quality of teaching in the higher education sector in Australia. Having an understanding of what quality of teaching means to different categories of academics is important for both university management and the academics. A literature review revealed that ‘quality’ is a contested concept and academics’ divergent opinions over its meaning; the scant attention that the research literature has paid to this notion led this research study to address the gap in this body of knowledge. The study used a phenomenographic approach and a metaphor analysis to elicit and describe the qualitatively different ways that academics experienced the quality of teaching.

A purposeful sample of nineteen teaching academics – nine permanent and ten sessional employees in the Business School of a prominent Australian University – participated in the study. The data, which were gathered through individual and focus group interviews, were subjected to both phenomenographic and metaphor analysis. Initially, the interview transcripts were analysed using an inductive data reduction procedure; a phenomenographic analysis resulted in an outcome space consisting of a finite set of categories of description which explained the different ways academics in the sample experienced quality phenomena in their world. As a result, nine ways of experiencing the quality of teaching were identified:

- quality as student satisfaction;
- quality as compliance with standards;
- quality as control and assurance;
- quality as blended learning and delivery modes;
- quality as scholarship and professional practice;
- quality as information and communication;

- quality perception and language games;
- quality as community of practice and peer-partnership;
- quality as students' academic success and job-readiness.

Subsequently, I subjected the data obtained from each of two separate focus group interviews of the permanent and the sessional academics were also subjected to inductive data reduction analysis; this resulted in establishing a set of 'emergent metaphors' associated with the quality of teaching that emerged from the experience of the two groups of academics. Finally, I paired the categories of description from the semi-structured interviews with the 'emergent metaphors' from the focus group interviews; similarities and differences arising between the two groups of academics were compared and contrasted. The findings highlighted the fact that academics experienced the quality of teaching in different ways, including individual interpretations and the understanding of the term 'quality'.

I found that the results of the study challenge a commonly-held assumption that the concept of 'quality' may only be communicated through the use of exact language and that it needs to be measured substantively, through a proper audit method. I also found that both similar and different 'emergent metaphors' were embedded within communication between the two groups of stakeholders; overall, the existence of these 'emergent metaphors' suggests that there are viable alternative ways of dealing with the notion of 'quality' in teaching within the higher education sector.

# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

My study is a qualitative investigation of the different ways higher education academics experience conceptions of the quality of teaching in the context of their academic roles and duties. In this chapter, I consider the background of the research and present the research questions; I outline the research design and briefly discuss the phenomenographic and metaphor analysis approaches which I employed in my research.

### Background of the study

My research study aimed to investigate the ways different categories of both permanent and sessional academics experience the quality of teaching.<sup>2</sup> My research sought to unveil the conceptions of the notion of ‘quality’ as they relate to the ways teaching academics confront them – both individually and in all areas of their lives, and in their academic roles and duties. The complexity of the word ‘quality’ still creates a ‘cultural divide’ between quality assurance professionals and academics; as a consequence, I address, compare, and contrast the personal views, opinions and perceptions of a sample of permanent and sessional academics. Furthermore, I explore the differences and commonalities of the conceptions of ‘quality’ held by both categories of academics.

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<sup>2</sup> In this thesis, the term ‘sessional academics’ or sessionals are used alternatively.

My research program was timely, as the quality debate had never been more important due to current changes in the higher education landscape. The promulgation and empowerment of regulatory bodies to police and review compliance with quality standards have reinforced the legitimacy of the notion of ‘quality of teaching’. Based on an interpretive paradigm, I addressed my research questions using both phenomenographic and metaphor analysis. During my investigation, it became apparent that significant variations exist regarding academics’ conceptions of ‘quality’. This variation in the personal views, opinions, perceptions, understanding, and experiences prompted me to add the analysis of metaphors to the research.

In an era of accountability and performativity,<sup>3</sup> higher education institutions are facing the double challenge of two irreconcilable issues: embracing massification and maintaining the ‘quality’ of education. Those conflicting discourses confuse teaching academics: they use terms such as ‘quality’, ‘efficiency’, ‘effectiveness’, ‘standard’, and ‘assurance’ synonymously. Educators cannot provide quality teaching if they are confused about the meaning of that notion. It was important for me to understand the importance of the concept of ‘quality’ for all categories of academics. It was also important to know and understand how academics relate to and experience ‘quality of teaching’; Marton & Booth (1997, 111) summarised this understanding as follows:

To make sense of how people handle problems, situations, the world, we have to understand the way in which they experience the problems, the situations, the world that they are handling or in relation to which they are acting.

My review of the literature revealed that, to date, there has been very little published research that focuses, specifically, on *permanent* and *sessional* academics’ experience of the conceptions of quality teaching within higher education institutions<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> See Chapter 2 for a detailed explanation of ‘performativity’ and ‘accountability’.

<sup>4</sup> There has, of course, been considerable focus on the issue of quality teaching, per se, within higher education (see, for example <https://scholar.google.com.au/scholar?q=quality+teaching+within+higher+education+institutions->

## Purpose of the study

The goal of my research was to contribute to the knowledge and understanding of how academics experience and conceive the ‘quality of teaching’. The review of the literature unveiled for me a gap surrounding academics’ experience of the conceptions of quality teaching that suggested a need for research in this area. I intended to address this gap in the Australian literature by allowing the voices and views of all academics, irrespective of the employment status, to be heard; consequently, I addressed four research questions:

1. What are the qualitatively different ways permanent and sessional academics experience the quality of teaching?
2. What are the variations that exist between these experiences?
3. What is the context of the current situation relating to quality issues in an Australian tertiary institution?
4. What are the current quality practices relating to teaching in an Australian tertiary institution?

Initially, as recorded in Appendices 3, 4 and 5, my thesis had been entitled: *Relying on Casual Academics: Maintaining a Quality of Teaching and Learning in the Higher Education Sector*. As I progressed with my data analysis using the method of inductive data reduction (IDR), a list of themes emerged. As a result, I decided to include permanent teaching academics as well as sessional academics. Subsequently, I supplemented the phenomenographic approach with a metaphor analysis, using the richness of the data collected to generate stronger findings.

## Overview of the research design

I employed a methodology that seeks to uncover the experiences of a given phenomenon. I selected a phenomenographic research approach complemented by metaphor analysis,<sup>5</sup> to direct my research study and enable me to view the way a group of *teaching academics*, working within a particular context – *Exray University* – to experience a given phenomenon, namely *conceptions of quality teaching*. Marton's (1986, 31) definition of phenomenography is consistent with these elements; it is:

a research method for mapping the qualitatively different ways in which people experience, conceptualise, perceive, and understand various aspects of, and phenomena in, the world around them.

I conducted my research with permanent and sessional academics drawn from the Business School at an Australian University. I used a purposive sample that ensured that there was considerable variability in the ways participants experience quality teaching. I used terms such as 'experience', 'conceptualise', 'perceive' and 'understand' interchangeably in my study.

## Significance of the study

My primary goal was to undertake an analysis of academics' experiences of the 'quality of teaching' (as opposed to 'quality assurance') specific to one Australian university; ultimately, I expected it to be generalisable both to Australian and overseas universities for some interrelated reasons:

1. There is a requirement for teaching academics to address the 'quality of teaching' within the Australian higher education context.
2. The teaching academics' conceptions of quality matter in the educational context.

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<sup>5</sup> This approach arose from the application of inductive data reduction as a technique in narrative analysis (see Ling, 2014; Ling, Heasley & Ling, 2014) that will be examined fully in Chapter 3. Metaphor analysis represents a new approach to making meaning using metaphors.

3. There are strong indications that teaching academics have qualitatively different conceptions of the 'quality of teaching'.
4. There is no serviceable or single definition of 'quality' that meets the current higher educational needs.
5. The lack of an explicit definition of the notion of 'quality' places the onus on teaching academics to address the quality of teaching according to their conceptions of quality of teaching. Significant differences and similarities could emerge regarding the teaching academics' understanding and experiences of the quality of teaching.
6. Teaching academics are required to interpret the meaning of quality when it arises in the context of their work. They will benefit from more information about the different meanings because they could convey the variety of ways in which the term 'quality' is used globally, including the scholarly interest in the interpretation of that notion.
7. My study is the first to investigate the ways permanent and sessional academics (from different professional and educational backgrounds) experience the quality of teaching using a phenomenographic approach and a metaphor analysis.
8. My study is the first to use, concurrently, individual and focus group interviews that generated a set of categories of description and 'emergent metaphors' about the term 'quality of teaching'.
9. My study will be beneficial to both higher education management and policy-makers in providing them with insights into the teaching academics' ways of understanding the 'quality of teaching'.
10. While existing studies suggest that academics conceptualise and experience the quality of teaching in different ways, further research is required to gain insights relevant to the Australian context and to understand what it is the Australian higher education academics are seeing as 'quality'.

I expected that my study should contribute to the knowledge and understanding of academics' experience of the 'quality of teaching'. My review of the literature contained in Chapter 2 reveals that scant attention has been paid to neither the *conceptions of quality of teaching* nor to a *research focus on the substantive aspect of the notion of quality*. A small number of studies have focused their attention on different aspects of quality management within the tertiary sector (see, for example, Martin et al., 2001; Robertson, 2002; Parpala & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2007; Kleijnen et al. 2011b; Bamwesiga, Fejes & Dahlgren, 2013). None has significantly addressed the conceptions of quality from the viewpoint of providing an opportunity for academics to share their views regarding their uniquely personal experiences; furthermore, the voices of sessional staff had been unheard until I embarked on my study.

My research examines how 'quality of teaching' directly influences academics' pedagogy; Marton (1986, 43) suggests that:

If we understand the relationship that exists between an individual and what he or she is trying to learn, we can expand our pedagogical opportunities.

Quality of teaching is an essential aspect of Australian higher education; policy-makers and management regularly emphasise its importance. 'Knowing about quality' is an element that should assist academics in improving their teaching practice; importantly, it will assist them in interpreting current quality expectations and policies. Despite the emphasis on 'quality' in education', very few studies have focused teaching academics' views of the 'quality of teaching'.

I conclude that there is limited knowledge of how teaching academics experience and conceptualise quality. As a consequence, the rationale of my research study is as follows:

- There is a specific need to address the 'quality of teaching' in Australian higher education.
- The notion of 'quality' per se is a poorly defined construct within higher education.

- Teaching academics' conceptions matter within the higher education landscape.
- Teaching academics experience 'quality' in a variety of ways.
- There is a need for in-depth studies of academics' conceptions of 'quality of teaching'.

I address specific elements of this rationale in the following subsections.

### **Personal Biography**

This study is important to me as a teaching academic and a former ISO 9000 lead quality auditor. I had been a qualified BSI (British Standards Institution) lead quality auditor and had the opportunity to audit both private and public organisations, and among others: a five-star resort hotel, a Police Station, an airline company, a government IT division. In that respect, I had experienced first-hand the importance of quality assurance. My role as an auditor had mostly been to deal with ISO 9000 series and assess quality compliance (or non-compliance) based on published standards. The audited organisations developed their quality standards and published them in a 'Quality Manual'. The auditors relied exclusively on the manual during the audit process.

I had more exposure to policies and procedures through my military and human resource backgrounds. My professional engagement enabled me to experience first-hand the importance of compliance with strict rules, regulations, discipline, and order.

During the past few years, I have worked as a sessional academic for both public and private higher education institutions. As both a sessional and a permanent academic, my exposure to the notion of quality has inspired me to explore different ways in which this notion could be perceived, expressed and experienced.

### **Quality of teaching in Australian higher education**

It is clear that the need for teaching academics to address the concept of 'quality' within Australian higher education provides sufficient justification

for my study. Universities are under enormous scrutiny to be accountable for their performances; teaching academics are not exempt from the ‘terrors of performativity’ and subsequently one important determinant of their effectiveness (Ball, 2003; Meng, 2009; Buchanan, 2011). Furthermore, government funding is contingent upon higher education institutions ability to provide clear evidence of the quality of teaching and students’ learning experiences. During the past few years, universities have struggled with a demand-driven industry and have been ‘massified’, without sparing the work of teaching academics.

External quality assurance audits, focusing on process rather than outcomes and using flawed quality measurement instruments, have left teaching academics confused over the meaning of quality. This confusion, in part created by the lack of a credible definition of ‘quality’, has resulted in personal interpretations that are dependent on the individual awareness and experiences of academics.

Teaching academics cannot practice something they do not comprehend. They cannot implement quality policies if there are multiple interpretations of the same term. An understanding of the different ways in which academics perceive the quality of teaching offers both administrative staff and academics a credible framework within which they might make more coherent and reliable interpretations as and when the need arises. As I will reveal in Chapter 2, my study allows for a variety of voices to be heard thus expanding conceptions of quality beyond those restricted to ‘quality assurance’. It is timely because if the Australian tertiary sector wishes to maintain its competitive edge, both permanent and sessional academics must have their say regarding the quality of teaching.

### **Quality as a construct in higher education**

Currently, in tertiary institutions, there is division between the substantive nature of quality assurance and the language games used by university management to foster a culture of accountability and control. Morley (2002)

posits that the introduction of quality in higher education reflects an ideological shift towards a new work order, resulting in the difficulty of reaching a universally acceptable definition of ‘quality’. Vidovich (2001, 393) believes the notion of quality is a ‘polysemic’ power-driven discourse with divergent views over its meaning. Derrida (1978) suggests that language has no fixed meaning and anything spoken or written is unstable, always eliciting multiple interpretations. Derrida believes that meaning always eludes us due to the contradictory nature of language and, any contextual change, affects its meaning. According to Gadamer (1989, 389), tradition is related to language, and since language is at the core of understanding, the ‘fusion of horizons that takes place in the understanding is the achievement of language’.

The issue, however, remains the dissemination of the ‘right’ and ‘consistent’ meaning of ‘quality’ to those who are responsible for ensuring quality teaching and learning within higher education institutions. The impact of quality of teaching and learning is also a matter of personal interpretation and the reason for much tension between actual and perceived quality. Barnett (1994, 68) rightly states:

What counts as quality is contested. The different views of quality generate different methods of assessing the quality and in particular sets of performance indicators (PI). However, PIs are highly limited in their informational content and have nothing to tell us about the quality of the educational process.

During the past five years, there has been a shift in quality discourses: there has been increased emphasis on outcomes, quantitative assessments, external scrutiny and the rhetoric of quality improvement. The promulgation of the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency as the external quality regulator now provides the yardstick for quality evaluation of Australian tertiary institutions (TEQSA, 2008, 2015.<sup>6</sup> The TEQSA Higher Education Standards (Threshold Framework) will apply for regular purposes from 1 January 2017.

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<sup>6</sup> Higher education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015 – TEQSA Contextual Overview, accessed 20 September 2017 at: <http://www.teqsa.gov.au/sites/default/files/HESF2015TEQSAContextualOverview1.1.pdf>

The Higher Education Council (1992b, 5) has pointed out some different viewpoints, as follows:

Quality seems to have been likened to almost everything that cannot be readily defined. To some, it (quality) means comparative standards. To others, it has a different value, a level of superiority that is high, a degree of excellence that is its distinguishing characteristic. The latter position is probably the most relevant to this reference, although it is harder to define.

In the absence of a concrete definition, tertiary institutions provide their interpretations of what is 'quality' or 'non-quality'. Harvey & Green (1993, 11) highlight the possible conceptions of quality to include 'quality as exceptional'; 'quality as perfection or consistency'; 'quality as fitness for purpose'; 'quality as transformation'.

Furthermore, there is no universal definition of 'quality', and its 'chameleon-like' nature makes it challenging to interpret even in a single context. The tension between interpretive and substantive quality creates a discomfort as the quality of learning and teaching may be viewed differently by the discipline leaders, course coordinators and lecturers/tutors. The erratic nature of sessional employment and constant change of course coordinators create a situation whereby the quality imperative may be implicitly rather than explicitly communicated. This common occurrence in the academic world represents a matter of serious concern; it requires further research. Bensimon (1995, 595) rejects the assumption that customer satisfaction defines quality but assumes that 'quality' has no fixed and intrinsic meaning, but rather 'its meaning is produced locally by the culture, history, mission, and power relations that mark the institution'.

All academics, irrespective of their status within the academe, are responsible for the 'quality' of teaching but, in reality, the interpretation of its meaning and its communication, appear to vary depending on who is the course coordinator. As it is customary for some sessional academics to teach different subjects and work simultaneously with multiple course coordinators,

finding a ‘standard’ definition of ‘quality’ is a tedious task that sessionals ignore; alternatively, they interpret the concept subjectively.

### Conceptions of quality in the higher education landscape

The significant developments that have taken place in Australian universities over the past few years have transformed the traditional university from a collegial-based independent organisation to a managerial, enterprise-based business where, as Robertson (2002) points out, maintenance of existing programs and staffing profiles relies on funds from the government (Robertson, 2002). Robertson has also outlined the paradigm shift that occurred in university workplaces from 1960-2001 (see Table 1.1).

**Table 1.1 Shifts in university teaching workplaces, 1960 to 2001**

1960s	2000s
Collegial decision-making, few funding restrictions	Centralised management systems, targeted and restricted funding
Limited accountability	Accountability at every level
Ad hoc standards	Quality assurance and audits
Ad hoc teaching evaluations	Standardised teaching and learning evaluation instruments
Teaching as a personal endeavour	Teaching and learning units
Full-time, top decile students	Massification and diversity of students’ population- free market
Focus on the experience of being a student	Focus on outcomes and products – benchmarked standards
Modest class size	Mass lecture and large tutorials
Limited student feedback	Transparent assessment and student feedback
Lecturer- and content-centred	Inclusivity and sensitivity to difference, student-centred teaching
Most academics permanent	Casualisation of staff
University as life experience	University as vocational training-lifelong learning
Student as ‘social experimenter’	Student as ‘client’

**Source:** Adapted from Robertson, M. 2002, Quality and University Teaching: Juggling competing agendas, *Quality in Higher Education*, Vol. 3, No. 3, pp. 273-286.

Furthermore, Zineldin et al. (2011) argue that students' feedback matters because it has emerged as a central pillar of the quality process. In that respect, Williams & Cappuccini-Ansfield (2007, 159) have elucidated the students' status as a driving force in higher education:

Students, so long taken for granted, have been recognized as the principal stakeholders in higher education and their voices on their experiences are now being heard more clearly by institutions and governments.

The aim and rationale of my research study focus is an exploration of academics' conceptions of teaching quality in higher education: it associates the quality of their work on students' learning. Pajares (1992) considers 'conceptions' as 'beliefs' whereas Marton & Pong (2005, 336) clarify the meaning of that term:

A "conception", the basic unit of description in phenomenographic research, has been called by various names, such as "ways of conceptualising", "ways of experiencing", "ways of seeing", "ways of seeing", "ways of apprehending", and so on.

Exploring teachers' conceptions of various phenomena are considered as important for educational research (Pajares, 1992; Richardson 1996; Brown, 2003). In my research, I endeavour to explore teachers' conceptions of quality of teaching that resonates with Borko & Putnam's claim (1996, 675):

The knowledge and beliefs that prospective and experienced teachers hold serve as filters through which their learning takes place. It is through these existing conceptions that teachers come to understand recommended new practices.

The premise of my research is the variation in academics' conceptions of quality of teaching; the richness of the data collected reflects their voices. Brown (2003) has argued that teachers' conceptions are multifaceted rather than uniform; contextual factors related to individual experiences influence their complexity.

This study focuses on the different ways the term 'quality' emerges so that, as 'interpreters' of that notion, different stakeholders interpret the university's quality policies and procedures. As contextual factors differ and sessional academics carry their personal stories of teaching experiences across

institutions, their capacity to understand and interpret the different conceptions of quality may assist in improving the quality of their craft.

### **Academics' conceptions of quality of teaching**

A myriad of studies has revealed 'quality' as a polysemous and slippery concept. Bensimon (1995, 595) has outlined that 'customer satisfaction defines quality'; it must be seen as 'contextual, contested and contingent'.

The multiple attempts at researching the notion of quality have left the body of knowledge with more rhetoric regarding the tension between substantive and interpretive characteristics of that concept, and, without a firm definition. In my study, I will use the term 'substantive' to denote 'hard' quality management: quality assurance or compliance to rigid quality standards. The term 'interpretive' will be used to denote 'soft' quality management: quality expressed through individual perceptions, interpretations, and experiences. Rules of intelligibility, embedded within the institutional context in which language is employed, give meaning to words. The lack of a universal definition of 'quality', together with its 'chameleon-like'<sup>77</sup> nature, makes it difficult to interpret 'quality' even in a single context (Vidovich, 2001). The association of the term 'quality' to higher education teaching is a risky endeavour. In taking the opportunity to explore the different ways quality is applied, I am hopeful that my study will result in an acceptable set of definitions.

Blackmore (2009, 860) considers that, for different stakeholders, 'quality' is a signifier of distinction that takes on 'different meanings as to the role of the university'. The conceptions of quality of teaching through the voices of permanent and sessional academics using a phenomenographic approach and a metaphor analysis have never been addressed and constitute a solid rationale for more in-depth studies.

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<sup>77</sup> 'Chameleon-like' means changing one's opinions, behaviour, or appearance according to the situation'. Accessed at <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/chameleon-like>, 17 October 2016

### **Academics' experience of quality in teaching**

As quality is a multi-faceted notion, it is more likely for teaching academics to have different experiences throughout their career. Parpala & Lindblom-Ylänne (2007) suggest that the quality of teaching is related to students' learning outcomes and Ramsden (2003) advocates that good teaching help students to achieve high-quality learning. Studies have shown different approaches to teaching: teacher-centred and student-centred (Kember, 1997; Entwistle & Walker, 2002). Furthermore, Kember & Kwan (2002) found a relationship between teaching academics' approaches to teaching and conceptions of 'good teaching'. Overall, these findings suggest that different teachers, using different approaches to teaching, have their conceptions of 'good teaching'. Whether 'good teaching' and 'quality teaching' are terms interchangeably is a matter of personal appreciation of each.

Universities hire academics based on their qualifications, experience and professional backgrounds. Some sessionals are industry professionals many of whom work simultaneously for different institutions. Due to the diversity of their professional, academic backgrounds and contractual employment obligations, sessional academics – particularly those working for more than one institution – are colonised by the respective institutional quality policies and the contextualised conceptualisation and interpretations of the notion of 'quality' teaching. Teaching styles and modes of delivery vary from academic to academic; variation in academics' conceptions of quality teaching and what they consider important in their teaching is expected to prevail in higher education institutions. The variation in the academics' professional background and teaching styles is related to the University's selection of academics; hence, the different categories of academics signals a tendency to experience teaching quality in different ways. There is a parallel to be drawn in Parpala & Lindblom-Ylänne's (2007) study; however, their focus was mainly on academics' teaching plans, their professional development, and students' learning.

## **The choice of the research approach**

In my study, I have implemented two qualitative research approaches: phenomenography and metaphor analysis. The adoption of the phenomenographic method was to illuminate the qualitative variation in teaching academics' conception of quality of teaching. The variation of conceptions of quality has been illustrated across a few studies but has been reflected differently (Samuelowicz & Bain, 1992; Bamwesiga, Fejes & Dahlgren, 2013; Kleijnen et al., 2013). The phenomenographic approach is well-suited for the researcher's objective of understanding how different teaching academics conceptualise quality and what makes quality such a controversial notion. In conjunction with the phenomenographic approach, the usefulness of metaphor analysis was necessary to demonstrate the consistency and variation of 'emergent metaphors' used by academics in describing their experiences of the quality of teaching (Munby, 1986).

In a later study, Martin et al. (2001) combined these two approaches to explore academics' understanding of subject matter and teaching. I chose two approaches: the first, to explore the concept of 'quality of teaching and learning'; the second, using two different data collection methods. For my data collection, I used semi-structured interviews to identify 'categories of description' and focus groups in identifying metaphors that emerged (hereafter referred to as 'emergent metaphors').

## **Overview of the study**

The purpose of my research was to address the rhetoric and reality of the term 'quality', the common language games, discourses, and tensions between stakeholders. I hoped to reconcile the need for academics and researchers to address the issue of quality while, at the same time, understanding that this concept might be perceived or interpreted differently. The research reported is an investigation of teaching academics' conceptions of teaching quality. I adopted phenomenographic and metaphor analysis approaches for this study:

I collected data through individual semi-structured and focus group interviews. I sought the participation of teaching academics from the Business School of a university in the State of Victoria; the group included permanent and sessional staff with a range of experience level and disciplinary background.

I analysed the semi-structured interview transcripts using a method of inductive data reduction; empirical analysis of these data led me to the development of an outcome space delimiting variation in teaching academics' conceptions of quality and uncovering a finite number of categories of description. Similarly, I analysed the focus group interview transcripts using a method of inductive data reduction and, through a metaphor analysis, created a list of 'emergent metaphors' from the participants' views of quality (see Appendix 7 for a data sample).

## **Structure of the thesis**

My thesis consists of seven chapters. In Chapter 1, I introduce the background to my study, outline its purpose, and present my research questions. I undertake a brief discussion of phenomenography and metaphor analysis research approaches and provide an outline of the research design.

In Chapter 2, I review the relevant research literature and provide a context for my study.

In Chapter 3, I present a detailed discussion of the methodology and research methods. Phenomenography and metaphor analysis are the two methodological approaches I employed to conduct my investigation. In particular, I describe the philosophical underpinnings of the research approach and present a thorough description of the data collection and analysis method using the Inductive Data Reduction and Metaphor Analysis methods. Finally, I discuss issues related to the reliability and validity of the study.

In Chapter 4, I present the findings of the individual interviews including an outcome space consisting of a list of nine categories that emerged from the in-depth data analysis. These categories represent the various ways in which the academics in this study have experienced the quality of teaching.

In Chapter 5, I present the findings from two focus group interviews, outlining the ways academics experience the quality of teaching through the use of 'emergent metaphors'. I detail, the fourteen 'emergent metaphors' from the in-depth metaphor analysis are presented in detail.

In Chapter 6, I undertake a full discussion of the research study based on my findings.

Finally, in Chapter 7, I report my conclusions, consider the implications, and make recommendations for future research.

## **Summary**

My research focused on the different ways academics experience the quality of teaching. This chapter has introduced the research questions, the background to my study, and a summary of the research design. I have established the significance of my research, and its potential contribution to knowledge. Finally, I have outlined the overall structure of the study. In the next chapter, I provide a detailed review of the literature, thus providing a basis for the conceptualisation of 'quality of teaching' in higher education.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **Literature Review**

In this chapter, I establish the theoretical grounding for the conceptualisation of quality of teaching in the contemporary higher education setting in Australia. To set the research in context, I address the following:

- A thorough review of the literature relating to the conceptualisation and different dimensions of quality.
- A review of casualisation of academics in Australia; the involvement of ‘sessional academics’ (‘sessionals’) in the quality of teaching process;
- A review of the theoretical framework relating to the use of metaphors.

I conclude the chapter by identifying the gaps in the current literature, regarding academics’ conceptions of the quality of teaching in higher education.

#### **Conceptualisation of quality**

Successive Australian governments have shown concerns about quality and standards including the reformation of higher education. Green (1994, 6) argues that interest in quality is also explained by ‘higher education’s response to the demand for greater efficiency’. Quality is an elusive concept and, like

beauty, ‘lies in the eyes of the beholder’<sup>8</sup>. Elassy (2015, 253) outlines the subjective aspects of the quality concepts because:

What is considered by one person to be of good quality could be considered by another to be of poor quality. However, a particular group of people could have similar views about what is meant by quality; these views are “similar” but not “identical” because everyone has his/her own perception.

### Concepts of quality

Robert Pirsig, in his novel *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* (Pirsig, 1974, 184) asked, somewhat in exasperation, the philosophical question: ‘What the hell is quality?’ That question still echoes through diverse sectors of activities, with a myriad number of definitions that management tries to adapt to its specific contexts. There is no single definition of the notion of quality. The word itself is often reflected through managerial discourses, rhetorical approaches to performance indicators and a strategic move to systematically introduce the notion of ‘accountability’ – either as proactive or punitive measures (see, for example, Newton, 2000; Ball, 2003; Shah & Richardson, 2016).

Poole (2010) argues that ‘quality’ is a polysemous<sup>9</sup> noun. As such, it leads to confusion and inadvertently is responsible for misleading statements about its meaning. Attributing the notion of ‘quality’ to ‘excellence’ is risky although, as Cartwright (2007, 290) points out, the concept of ‘quality as excellence’ has significantly contributed towards this widespread assumption. In the educational context, the ‘wicked’ issue of quality (see Krause, 2012) is more a matter of subjectivity than plain meaning (Doherty, 2008, 256):

There is no simple answer to that question since “quality” like “beauty” is subjective – a matter of personal judgement.

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<sup>8</sup> From the English proverb: ‘Beauty is in the eye of the beholder’.

<sup>9</sup> Polysemous from ‘polysemy’: The existence of many possible meanings for a word or phrases (Oxford Dictionaries, online).

Lindsay (1992) has argued that the term ‘quality’ relates to a list of other buzz-words such as ‘accountability,’ ‘performance,’ ‘effectiveness’ and ‘efficiency.’ Those four terms express disquiet about concerns of the ‘quality of graduates’ and the ‘quality of teaching’ within the higher education sector. According to Krause (2012, 285), the notion of quality is a multi-faceted notion with a variety of meanings’: she argues that quality in the Australian tertiary sector constitutes a ‘wicked’ problem. Previous studies (see, for example, Harvey & Williams, 2010) confirmed that the notion of quality in the tertiary sector as ‘contradictory’ and including discourses that reflect policy tensions between process and outcomes, and disagreement between qualitative and quantitative measures. Most of the current debate about the concept of quality, and how it can be assured and enhanced has mostly occurred in the commercial and business sector but not in education.

The notion of ‘quality’ can only be given meaning within the context of a particular purpose and ‘lies at the heart of the debate on the quality of higher education’ (Higher Education Council [HEC], 1992a). The HEC (1992a, 6) went on to argue:

no single workable discussion ‘definition’ of quality is possible; that quality in education is not a definable concept in the way that, for example, quality in a paper bag might be, where the simple test of usefulness is objective and universal because almost all consumers will have the same need for the product.

Barnett (1992, 3) points out that the definition of quality is contentious. Different interpretations lead to different ‘methods of assessing quality[that] generate alternative sets of performance indicators’; in that context, the questionable character of the notion of ‘quality’ permits ‘equal expression of legitimate voices’ of academics.

Harvey & Green (1993) provide a heuristic definition and propose a framework suggesting the notion of quality as excellence, transformation, fitness for purpose, value for money and perfection. Succumbing to

‘massification’<sup>10</sup> of higher education suggests that the perception of ‘quality’ now relates to ‘fitness for purpose’ in the tertiary sector. Newton (2000, 155) concurs with Harvey & Green, suggesting the following:

Established elite universities adopted the notion of “quality as excellence” while access-driven, newly-established universities opted for “quality” as “fitness for purpose”.

Poole (2010, 8) differentiates between ‘quality education’ and ‘quality in education’ and affirms that quality and excellence are fundamentally different; the association of ‘quality’ is a variable with ‘levels ranging from high/exceptional to satisfactory/acceptable to low/poor.’ As excellence may be a subjective opinion, both notions fit into the familiar rhetoric and interpretation of quality education. Morley (2003) outlines the correlation between quality and power, and, as that notion is a controversial concept, academics, and quality specialists do not always agree on the meaning of that notion. She maintains that quality is a ‘discourse’, ‘polysemic’ and ‘multi-dimensional’ and expresses her concern about the impact on academics; Morley (2003, 170) points out:

For some, quality assurance has provided new paradigms for thinking about academic work and new career opportunities. For others, it is about suspicion, mistrust and the management of processes, rather than standards, with considerable wastage and frustration involved.

Newton (2000, 156) has identified an underlying tension between the interpretations of quality at managerial and operational levels through the activities of the front-line staff; he associates the notion of ‘quality’ with other terms that are part of higher education discourses; he writes:

In other words, when led by management objectives, “quality” appears as “accountability” and “managerialism”, whereas, at the operational level, quality is

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<sup>10</sup> Massification’ first referred to the period of unprecedented increase in the number of students enrolling in tertiary education from 1950-1974 in the USA by Gumpert et al. (1997, 12) who reported ‘private purchase’ by elites being replaced by ‘widespread public opportunity’ due to ‘the “publicisation” of the higher education system itself’. The term is now accepted and applied in both developed and developing countries. This period reflects a move from education as a ‘rite of passage’ to it being a ‘consumer relationship’ independent of the age of the consumers.

understood relative to how actors construe and construct “quality” and the “quality system”.

Consequently, in many higher education institutions, quality is often associated with managerialism rather than emanating from the work of academics; based on that claim, Harvey & Knight (1996) critically expose the negative impact of quality assessment and accountability approaches on academics’ motivation. They also argue that too much accountability curtails innovative initiatives as academics have to face the burden of responding to external audit and being subjected to the manipulation, mistrust, and scrutiny of external quality assurance agencies.

### **Quality in tertiary education**

The term ‘quality’ has dominated the higher education sector for some years. Dawkins’s (1988) White Paper on higher education addressed the Australian government’s strategy for economic recovery and growth. From this position, the concept of quality related to how higher education directed its effort to support the country’s economic agenda; state intervention is a proxy associated with the ‘quality’ agenda. As a consequence of this policy, the state has been able to gain closer control of the development of the higher education system (Salter & Tapper, 1994; Tapper, 2007).

### **Dawkins and the quality agenda**

According to O’Brien (2015, 28), Dawkins saw the expansion of the higher education sector as instrumental to the restructuring of the economy; as a consequence, he encouraged academics to be more ‘entrepreneurial and market-oriented in their activities’. O’Brien also outlines the expected involvement of the industry in curriculum design and research funding. Dawkins’s Green Paper (1988) devoted a chapter to staffing within higher education policies; the document reported the importance of quality, productivity, and adaptability as central to staffing and the future development of the higher education system.

Both university management teams and politicians make extensive use of phrases such as ‘quality of graduates’ and ‘quality of teaching’; they use related terms – such as ‘performance’, ‘accountability’, ‘effectiveness’ and ‘efficiency’ – to express their disquiet regarding ‘poor quality’. Although the conceptualisation of ‘quality’ has been the focus of much attention, the lack of clarity regarding its meaning resonates with Lindsay (1992, 153) who had previously pointed out:

Its meaning is not always clear nor its usage consistent. Indeed, the notion of quality in higher education has no agreed technical meaning, and its use usually involves a heavy contextual overlay of some political or educational position.

In his analysis of the idea of quality in higher education, Barnett (1992, 6) had argued that:

The debate over ‘quality’ in higher education should be seen for what it is: a power struggle where the use of terms reflects a jockeying for position in the attempt to impose definitions of higher education.

Much of the literature associated with the concept of ‘quality in higher education’ in the post-Dawkins era (see, for example, Barnett, 1992; Hodson & Thomas, 2003; Morley, 2003; Milliken & Colohan, 2004; Hoecht, 2006) reflects a regime of control.

Academics’ perceptions: Quality is slippery

The confusion about the notion of quality has never been resolved and remains the cause of much strife within the tertiary sector; most academics share Pirsig’s claims that the more they think they know about this notion, the less they understand it (Pirsig 1974, 184, cited in Tan, 1986):

Quality: you know what it is, yet you don’t know what it is. But that’s self-contradictory. But when you try to say what the quality is, it all goes poof! If you can’t see what Quality is, how do you know what it is, or how do you know that it even exists?

Anderson (2006) argues that academics' resistance to quality *assurance* mechanisms is due to the perception that they undermine the notion of quality as excellence. Before this, academics' ambivalence about quality assurance processes in higher education also appeared in earlier studies (see, for example, Newton, 2000, 2002; Morley, 2003). Those studies highlight a range of reasons for the frequently hostile responses of academics to quality assurance processes. Issues relating to the exercise of power, differences in defining and understanding the notion of quality, concerns about the effectiveness of quality assurance processes, doubts about the reliance on quantification often associated with quality assurance mechanisms and the time spent complying with quality requirements.

Krause (2012, 285) contends that quality in higher education constitutes a 'wicked' and ill-defined entity; nevertheless, it 'plays for high stakes' at the national level. She also claims the widely absolute lack of clarity surrounding the concept of quality; it is an ill-defined problem in the higher education context. Regardless, the concept of quality is complex, multi-dimensional, and reveals multiple definitions of quality. Most recently, Harvey & Williams (2010), in a review of 15 years of research, reveal multiple definitions of quality and the challenge of defining this term. Overall, Tan's (1986, 223-4) 30-year old claim about the absence of a universal definition of quality is widely acknowledged and still resonates in the contemporary literature:

Since quality is multifaceted and varies with individual perception, it cannot be universally agreed upon. Why is quality as a concept so elusive? The major reason rests in the fact that we differ in our perception of quality. Quality, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder; it has a different meaning for different people.

There appears to be little justification for ranking anything by quality since there is no universally accepted concept of 'quality'. Harvey & Green (1993, 10) believe that quality is a relative concept: it means different things to different people; the same person 'may adopt different conceptualisations at different moments'; they argue that 'each [person] has a different perspective

on quality. [This] is not a different perspective on the same thing but different perspectives on different things with the same label’.

A majority of researchers consider quality to be ‘multifaceted’; for instance, Newton (2002, 47) maintains that there are ‘competing voices and discourses; front-line academics and managers view “quality” differently’. The ambiguity surrounding the concept of quality led Shore & Wright (2000) to demonstrate how the audit process has transformed the real meaning of quality; the whole teaching experience now requires standardisation so that it can be measured. Not only do van Kemenade, Pupuis & Hardjono (2008, 176) argue that quality is a ‘slippery concept’ that has bred controversy and confusion; they have also questioned ‘the “object” of quality’, as follows:

Quality needs first a clarification about the object. The quality of ‘what’ are we talking about? Are we talking about the quality of the lecture or the lecturer, the syllabus or the curriculum or the quality of the organisation of the curriculum or about the content of it? Are we talking about the quality of the students? Or even the quality of the university as a company?

Such a lack of clarity about the notion of quality leads to questionable assertions; for example, Giertz (2000) argues that academics may not be able to explain the meaning of quality in higher education to outsiders but that they still know it when they see it. Schindler et al. (2015, 3) concur with Giertz and outline the constant struggle for academics to provide a consistent definition of quality, asserting ‘that quality can neither be defined nor quantified’; they also believe that quality ‘is subjective and dependent upon individual perspectives’. There are significant challenges to defining quality because it is an elusive term with a variety of interpretations and depending upon the views of different stakeholders (see Cullen et al. 2003; van Kemenade, Pupius & Hardjono, 2008; Harvey & Williams, 2010).

A further obvious challenge is that quality is a multidimensional concept and can be problematic; in other cases, if the definition is one-dimensional, it often lacks meaning and specificity and is too broad to be operationalised (Eagle & Brennan, 2007). Schindler et al. (2015) outline the challenge of

interpreting the meaning of quality in the higher education sector. Following a host of definitions in the literature, some studies conclude that ‘quality’ is a dynamic concept that is ever-changing. It requires analysis within the context of the broader economic, social and political landscape (see, for example, Singh, 2010; Harvey and Williams, 2010; Schindler et al. 2015).

The literature reveals the many attempts made to define quality in higher education in the past 20 years; however, definitions remain standards-driven – focusing on specifications and requirements, meeting and exceeding pre-defined standards (Harvey & Green, 1993; Harvey & Knight, 1996; Amaral & Rosa, 2010). Interestingly, the meaning of quality in higher education has remained relatively stable. in Table 2.1. The emerging strategy for defining quality is to identify specific indicators that reflect desired inputs (active faculty and staff) and outputs (from employment of graduates – job-ready graduates) (Cheng & Tam, 1997; Scott, 2008; Tam 2010).

**Table 2.1** Classifications of quality

Classifications	Definitions
<b>Purposeful</b>	Institutional products and services conform to a stated mission/vision or a set of specifications, requirements or standards, including those defined by accrediting and/or regulatory bodies (Harvey & Green, 1993, Harvey & Knight, 1996; Cheng & Tam, 1997)
<b>Exceptional</b>	Institutional products and services achieve distinction and exclusively through the fulfilment of high standards (Harvey & Green, 1993, Harvey & Knight, 1996; Cheng & Tam, 1997)
<b>Transformational</b>	Institutional products and services affect positive change in student learning (affective, cognitive, and psychomotor domains) and personal and professional potential (Harvey & Green, 1993, Harvey & Knight, 1996; Cheng & Tam, 1997; Srikanthan & Dalrymple, 2007)
<b>Accountable</b>	Institutional are accountable to stakeholders for the optimal use of resources and the delivery of accurate educational products and services with zero defects (Harvey & Green, 1993, Harvey & Knight, 1996; Cheng & Tam, 1997)

**Source:** Schindler, L., Puls-Elvidge, S., Welzant, H. & Crawford, L. 2015, Definitions of quality in higher education: A synthesis of the literature, *Higher Learning Research Communications*, Vol. 5, No. 3, pp. 3-13.

In this subsection, I have focused on the conceptualisation of the notion of quality in the higher education sector, the elusive quality definitions and the contexts influencing the academics' perceptions. The literature reviews confirmed the lack of clarity, a myriad of meanings, and classifications of quality in higher education. A review of Dawkins' paper reveals the importance of higher education in laying the foundation for economic development. The Green Paper also addressed the need for quality, productivity, and adaptability as being instrumental to the to the elaboration of the higher education system. In the sub-section, many studies are in unison concerning the different stakeholders' perceptions of the quality of teaching.

### **Quality assurance**

In this section, I address the conception of quality assurance within the quality management discourse. Quality assurance is considered to be the standard mechanism related to the notion of 'quality' in higher education. University management tends to focus on the quantitative metrics through frequent auditing of the process and the measurement of outcomes by using the nationally established quality standards. Analysts of quality in higher education have identified different ways in which the notion of quality may be defined (Harvey & Knight, 1996). Anderson (2006, 166) contends that:

Ambiguities related to these different understandings of the term contribute to continuing discord between university management and staff around the issue of quality assurance.

According to Schindler et al. (2015), defining quality is an essential prerequisite of quality assurance; it would be challenging to assure quality if it were indefinable. There are significant challenges in determining quality assurance due to the wide range of existing definitions.

### **Quality assurance institutions**

The literature emphasises that quality assurance is related to policies and processes related to two possible sources:

- external quality agencies and accrediting bodies; or
- internal bodies within the institutions (see Borahan & Ziarati, 2002; Opre & Opre, 2006; AUQA<sup>11</sup>, 2009).

The Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA), was established in March 2000 as an independent agency jointly supported by Australian Federal, State and Territory Governments. Over the decade 2000-11 AUQA conducted 150 external quality audits of universities and other higher education providers. AUQA merged into the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) in 2011. In Australia, AUQA has engaged in ‘fitness for purpose’ audits since its formation in 2000 (Harris & Webb, 2010); the Audit Manual (AUQA, 2009, 4) describes the purpose and objective of this audit institution:

AUQA uses as its starting point for audit each organisation’s [individual] objectives and does not impose an externally prescribed set of standards upon auditees. AUQA considers the extent to which institutions are meeting these objectives, and how institutions monitor and improve its performance.

The traditional definitions of quality assurance have mainly focused on accountability whereas recent developments in that field included the notion continuous improvement as well (Srikanthan & Dalrymple, 2004; Singh, 2010; Nicholson, 2011). Opre & Opre (2006, 422) define quality assurance as ‘policies and processes directed to ensuring the maintenance and enhancing of quality’ while Martin & Stella (2007, 34) have proposed an extended definition:

Quality assurance is the policies and mechanisms implemented in an institution or programme to ensure that it is fulfilling its recognized purposes and meeting the standards that apply to higher education in general or to the profession or discipline in particular.

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<sup>11</sup> Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA), was established in March 2000 as an independent agency jointly supported by Australian Federal, State and territory Governments. Over the decade 2000-11 AUQA conducted 150 external quality audits of universities and other higher education providers. AUQA merged into the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) in 2011.<sup>29</sup>

The Australian higher education sector is a very significant export sector, and the primary concern for the government is to ensure that tertiary institutions are quality assured. The establishment of AUQA fits perfectly within the discourse of globalisation and commercialisation. AUQA (Glossary, 2010) defines ‘quality’ as ‘fitness for purpose’ and in that context, ‘purpose’ relates to mission, goals, objectives, and specifications. ‘Fitness for purpose’ requires organisations to have procedures that are in place for the achievement of specific uses.

The literature reveals confusion around the term ‘quality’ in the higher education sector; as well, there is disbelief and disagreement between the different stakeholders. Anderson (2006, 166) argues that:

The term ‘quality’ is employed to invoke quite different meanings. The ensuing confusion may heighten animosity and conflict between university management, quality agencies, and academic staff.

Anderson (2006, 167) cautions that academics have identified the issues related to the conflicting definitions of quality, as being overtly reflected in their critique of quality assurance mechanisms; they have found that ‘their notions of quality were mostly incompatible with the quality mechanisms currently in place’. The current debate around the multiple meanings associated with quality has shifted to quantitative forms of quality measurement through designated methods of evaluation. According to Birnbaum (2000), the quantification of ‘quality’ is necessary for higher education; he points out that it is hard to evaluate something that cannot be measured.

In the past few years, the introduction of performance indicators has prompted regular evaluation of different aspects of academic work to ‘replace substantive judgements of teaching with formulaic and algorithmic representations’ (Polster & Newson, 1998, 175). Newton (2000) metaphorically relates performance indicators to the ritualistic practices of using quality assurance instruments to feed the higher education institutions’

administrative ‘beast’<sup>12</sup>. Anderson (2006) had earlier referred to this as the move towards the ‘quantification of quality’ rather than ensuring genuine quality.

A study conducted by Anderson, Johnson & Saha (2002) confirmed Australian academics’ resentment of the time wasted on quality assurance mechanisms because they believed these practices failed to assure genuine quality. The additional ‘non-core’ duties due to compliance with the quality assurance requirements are a common source of academics’ frustration and dissatisfaction. The external forms of accountability imposed under the government funding system may negatively affect the quality of teaching as institutions spend more time on satisfying quantitative indicators (see, for example, Trow, 1994; McInnis, 1998, Anderson, 2006).

There is clear indication that the term ‘quality’ has become an adopted buzzword for the higher education pundits; it represents the audit culture of tertiary institutions that are driven by quality assurance audits. The extension of managerialism had paved the way for enhanced to a new approach to performance evaluation; this approach has been shunned by university employees who resent the need to comply with the demanding performance indicators (Hoecht, 2006; Shore, 2008; Cheng, 2010; Massaro, 2010; Ryan, 2012).

The *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011* established The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA)<sup>13</sup> as the independent, national regulatory and quality assurance agency for the higher education sector in Australia.

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<sup>12</sup> The term ‘beast’ is used metaphorically in this thesis to relate to quality assurance auditors. Based on Newton (2000), auditing requires constant administrative effort from those who are being audited and to demonstrate compliance by ‘feeding’ the auditors with evidence such as documents.

<sup>13</sup> **References:**

TEQSA website: <http://www.teqsa.gov.au/>

Australian Government, TEQSA, *TEQSA Annual Report 2012–2013*, p.8

Australian Government, TEQSA, *A Snapshot of TEQSA*: [http://www.teqsa.gov.au/sites/default/files/-TEQSAsnapshot\\_Eng.pdf](http://www.teqsa.gov.au/sites/default/files/-TEQSAsnapshot_Eng.pdf)

TEQSA's (2008, 2011) vision is to maintain and enhance quality, diversity, and innovation in the Australian higher education sector through streamlined and nationally consistent higher education regulatory arrangements: registration of providers; accreditation of courses; quality assurance; and dissemination of standards and performance indicators. Vlasceanu, Grunberg, & Parlea (2004, 37) define 'accreditation' as

a process by which a non-governmental or private body evaluates the quality of a higher education institution to formally recognize it as having met certain predetermined minimal criteria or standards.

### **Quality assurance, performativity, namely, relevant standards, measures and accountability**

The complex forces of globalisation have had a significant impact on western democratic nations; buzzwords such as 'neoliberalism', 'massification', and 'performativity' emerged and were added to the quality management and accountability discourses. For the higher education sector, greater numbers of students and decreased funding per student had intensified competition between universities and triggered the need for improved performance (Peters, 2007; Rowlands, 2012). In that respect, the state introduced 'relevant governance' as the key ways in which, through increased accountability requirements (mechanisms for measuring and monitoring institutional performance), an adequate return on state investment is guaranteed (Strathern, 2000a; Rowlands, 2012). The governance mechanism left universities free to manage their private affairs while, at the same time, operating under greater constraints. Universities' internal processes such as auditing, measuring and reporting have become the ultimate responses to 'complex and escalating external demands for accountability' (Shore & Wright, 2000; Singh, 2010, Rowlands, 2012, 98).

Before 2000, the term 'accountability' was taken to account for some authority for one's actions. From that date, on, accountability has dominated the academic territory; quality assurance is now one of the multiple methods used to measure compliance with standards. Academics are accountable to

different stakeholders; the quality of teaching is considered to be one of the metrics. Furthermore, notions of performativity are central to the audit and risk cultures of universities; these constitute mechanisms ‘that enable the measurement of performance, and the assessment of worth may produce “versions of an organisation” rendered to be accountable’ (Ball, 2003, 9).

There are different ways of undertaking academic quality assurance; examples are peer review, self-evaluation, student and employment surveys, and measurement regarding performance indicators. Universities rely on their internal quality assurance mechanism (unit, course, discipline) and external quality assurance driven by outside bodies according to government regulation or requirement. Although quality assurance appears to be a neutral concept, it has, in reality, become a form of governance and a powerful tool used to govern universities (Morley, 2002; Fillipakou & Tapper, 2008). Despite the importance of quality assurance in regulating and ensuring a sustainable higher education sector, some scholars have argued that it privileges both state and university management at the expense of teaching academics (Morley, 2002; Stensaker, 2008). As depicted in this subsection, quality assurance, performativity, and accountability are connected and constitute the substantive dimensions of quality management.

Quality assurance regimes have become a necessary and dominant regulatory tool in the management of higher education institutions. The rise of new evaluative approaches has led to an increasingly ubiquitous mode of governance for the state to exert control and to ensure that universities are accountable for compliance with quality standards. Although the external audit system provides consistency of quality standards, a university could, at the same time, be adequately equipped for self-evaluation because it can produce assurance of quality, namely, relevant standards, measures, and assessments. Whatever the formula adopted, universities are, to a certain degree, similar to other utility sectors (e.g., electricity, water, and telecommunications). They are subject to regulations by agencies that ‘undertake the classic regulatory functions of setting standards, monitoring activities, and apply enforcement to

secure behaviour modification' (King 2007, 413). Because familiar stakeholders are involved, quality assurance, performativity, and accountability are somehow connected and serve the purpose of ensuring compliance with standards.

### **Student feedback surveys**

Australian universities have a long history of taking responsibility for internal student experience surveys; the mechanisms adopted by AUQA engaged students in the audit process. As a result, student feedback surveys have become indicators of quality. Shah & Richardson (2016, 354) define student experience as:

the learning experience of students in an institution which enriches their learning irrespective of the mode of education delivery. The experience subsumes their transition to university from school to work, engagement with staff, teaching methods, curriculum content and learning resources, assessments, technology used in learning, peers, campus life and the value-add of their qualification after graduation.

This subsection addresses the role of students' feedback surveys and the controversies that characterise this quality measurement instrument as a mixed blessing for higher education institutions.

Shah & Richardson (2016, 352) accept that despite the development of accurate measurement tools, the assessment of quality has a narrowing purpose, namely, to use the outcomes to evaluate student experiences. They point out:

Such results are used by external quality agencies to assess the risk to the student experience. Universities are using the results of the student feedback in academic performance reviews, and rewards are linked to the outcomes.

Higher education institutions use the Course Experience Survey (CES) as an instrument to assess and reward universities. Shah & Richardson (2016) highlight a typical 'bone of contention': using the student feedback as a proxy for teaching quality and funding for higher education institutions. It is worth

noting that student feedback surveys are predominantly quantitative; evidence from the literature tends to suggest the growing preference for students' qualitative comments. Harvey (2011) believes that students' qualitative feedback is more valuable than the traditional questionnaires. Jones (2003, 225) makes a similar reflection about qualitative data:

There is often rich qualitative feedback (both formal and informal) collected at the decentralised educational delivery point that is not easy to summarise for use at a central level. Without this rich depth of feedback, centrally administered quantitative surveys often distort student feedback.

Shah & Richardson (2016, 353) have also outlined the positive impact of external quality audits on student experience indicators and highlight 'the student voice and its importance in the assessment of quality teaching and learning'. They also contend that the use of the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ)<sup>14</sup> has increased the value of student feedback as a reliable measurement instrument.

Davies et al. (2010, 87) outline the limitations of the CEQ and the difficulty for institutions to use this tool due to the 'lagging and aggregate nature of the data'. Lizzio, Wilson & Simons (2002) had previously suggested that the primary objective of the CEQ is to measure student perceptions of their courses of study and to assess differences between academic units. According to Ramsden (2003), the format of questions focuses on student experiences rather than on the characteristics of teachers or the curriculum. Davies et al. (2010) conclude that the CEQ was not designed to measure student perceptions of individual lecturers or unit of study.

A policy document entitled *Higher ambitions: The future of universities in a knowledge economy*, from the UK Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (2009, 70) outlines the importance and value of the students' feedback surveys:

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<sup>14</sup> The original CEQ (Ramsden, 1991) consisted of 30 items in five scales. Since 2002, Australian universities have been required to use the 'good teaching scale, the generic skills scale, and the overall satisfaction item in surveys of their graduates (Shah & Richardson, 2016).

As the most important clients of higher education, students' assessments of the service they receive at university should be central to our judgement of the success of our higher education system. Their choices and expectations should play an important part in shaping the courses universities provide and in encouraging universities to adapt and improve their service.

It is Lee's contention (2010, cited in Shah & Richardson, 2016) that the introduction of performance-based funding and external quality audits has increased the value of the students' voice. Staff development in targeted areas to improve the teaching quality supportive performance review process for academic staff, and an increased profile of learning and teaching in universities.

Watson (2003) contends that surveys collect students' views and report to university staff, to recommend possible improvements or investigations. She also believes that, providing this type of feedback also assist university management to identify shortcomings and take remedial actions. Powney & Hall (1998) believe that the students' feedback surveys are questionable and argue that a reflexive approach to learning and teaching is required: with both informal and formal methods of student feedback embedded in courses; teachers and learners should be involved. In this context, Powney & Hall were referring to a reflexive approach to learning and teaching that would lead to informal and formal student feedback indicating the efficacy of particular learning activities. They also pointed out that such a change in the teacher's role would require embedding feedback in a course. As a result, both teachers and students would understand that learning processes make a necessary and valid contribution to higher education. As a consequence, there is a need for both formal feedback surveys and informal methods of feedback.

### **Trends and initiatives in teaching and learning**

A pervasive pattern within the Australian tertiary education sector was the establishment of national systems of accreditation, quality processes and audit requirements to provide information on performance indicators.

Cheng & Tsui (2010) outline the importance of external quality assurance because different stakeholders are involved; they confess that, despite the apprehension and resistance related to external quality assurance systems, this practice has survived the test of time and remains the primary measurement tool used by higher education institutions. As resources are in short supply, there is a need for prioritisation of what should comprise the basis for the resourcing quality education. The government strategically supports and sponsors the creation of quality assurance agencies to ensure the appropriate investment of public funds.

The government supports the external quality assurance systems to ensure accountability. Despite the financial burden attached to the implementation of quality audit, it is undeniable that quality is the responsibility of higher education institutions. Cheng & Tsui (2010, 170) outline the inclusion of ‘the institution’s culture, mission, strategy, organisational structure, learning and teaching, student support and operational activities’. They concur with the definition provided by Vlasceanu, Grunberg & Parlea (2007, 48) that quality assurance is ‘an on-going, continuous process of evaluating (assessing, monitoring, guaranteeing, maintaining and improving) the quality of a higher education system’.

Singh (2010) argues that the national quality assurance is about maintaining the quality of teaching and learning and the necessity for higher education institutions to demonstrate accountability to diverse stakeholders. Expressions like ‘value for money’, ‘productivity’, ‘efficiency and effectiveness’ are part of the rhetoric used to justify continuing government investment. Singh (2010, 190) also provides the rationale for quality assurance within the higher education sector; he sees it as:

...the improvement of quality to add optimum value to educational systems, processes, and outputs; the protection of students from local and foreign ‘degree mills’; increasing the information base on higher education performance to facilitate ‘consumer’ choice.

Some research papers demonstrate the benefits of quality assurance: these attempt to diminish the coerciveness and threatening attributes of external quality assurance programs. Furthermore, quality assurance represents a subtle attempt at reinforcing the ‘academic logic’ that quality evaluation ‘deepens the self-understanding of academics rather than as a mechanism of ‘state surveillance’ (Singh, 2010, 191). The literature also acknowledges the questionable reputation of quality assurance for its label as a state regulation policy instruments, management-friendly, and market-friendly tools at the service of the New Public Management influence on tertiary education (Kogan et al. 2000).

Quality assurance focuses on its purpose, the definition of quality and the contexts where it is applied. According to Singh (2010, 193):

This goes to the heart of how one defines “quality” and to what larger social purposes one connects “quality” in higher education. Social accountability, academic improvement, institutional performance efficiency and effectiveness, “value for money” and “consumer” protection have become routine and predictable elements.

Shah’s study (2012a) on the effectiveness of external quality audits in Australia revealed that external audits using a ‘fitness-for-purpose’ approach have focused on input and quality assurance processes. The consequences are that, wherever poor outcomes exist, they have been hidden by the excessive concentration on ‘processes’ and by a complacency that arises because ‘good processes’ are more achievable than ‘good outcomes’.

Some critics suggest that AUQA has failed to achieve its objectives as stated in its constitution, particularly those related to compliance monitoring and against external reference points and controlling standards (Blackmur 2008; Massaro 2010). Further studies by Shah, Nair, & Wilson (2010) have outlined AUQA’s deficiencies. Some of these relate to the lack of quantifiable results; limited improvement in students’ experience; lack of comparable standards across the sector and limited power of the external auditing agency to reward or penalise institutions. The reality suggests there

is no alternative approach to the current auditing system in the Australian higher education.

### **Quality evaluation**

In higher education, the definition of ‘quality’ has been elusive; it has been described as a ‘challenging’, ‘vague’, ‘controversial’ and ‘notoriously ambiguous’ concept (Cheng & Tam, 1997, 23; Pounder, 1999, 156). According to Becket & Brookes (2006, 124), the difficulty in defining quality has arisen because the measurement of quality has proved to be contentious; despite providing ‘example of good practice’, they point out that:

there is little evidence that educators have taken a step back to critically evaluate their quality management practices more holistically in order to ensure that the various meanings and perceptions of quality are being adequately assessed.

The communication of evaluation of higher education is one of the steps taken to fulfil society’s expectations, and by which the assessment of universities’ performances are made. There is a need, however, to consider the lack of uniformity concerning stakeholder expectations. Udam & Heidmets (2013) point to the absence of uniform expectations from the stakeholders (state, employers, students and the community); further, they point out that these stakeholders – the diverse actors in the education industry – maintain their positions about different and distinctive expectations. Finally, they outline that state priorities, academic concerns, and market forces are unpredictable and vaguely defined, and should not be reduced to ‘measurable parameters’ because ‘it is difficult to take them into consideration’.

Other scholars have argued that higher education institutions, as well as external quality assurance schemes, should simultaneously meet the expectations of the state, the academia and market forces (Dill & Beerkens, 2010). The lack of clear interpretations and an understanding of the needs and wants of different parties may, at times, be contradictory; the vagueness of the various stakeholders’ expectations may place higher education quality assurance agencies in an awkward position.

In this section, I have indicated that the literature abundantly explores the role of quality assurance audit institutions and their importance in sustaining the notion of quality within the higher education sector. Some studies succinctly assume the close link between quality and quality assurance: a definition of ‘quality’ is a prerequisite for quality assurance. I have also explored current trends in the Australian national accreditation, quality systems and audit requirements.

I have also reviewed the controversies regarding the students’ feedback survey as a reliable and valid quality measurement instrument. The literature highlights its uncontested stature within the fabric of higher education quality assurance framework. Finally, the research literature shows deficiencies in quantifiable measures of quality: it highlights the paradox of focusing on processes rather than outcomes; it points out the lack of alternatives to the current quality assurance audit system.

## **Quality standards**

The Australian Government Department of Education and Training (2012) reported a 20 percent increase in university enrolments between 2008 and 2012. Hawkins & Neubauer (2011, 11) have outlined the ‘dumbing-down’ of academic scholarship, and the problem related to

bringing large numbers of students into higher education who are often manifestly unready for the level of instruction demanded [leading to the need] to water down curriculum and standards.

This section highlights the importance of quality standards within the Australian tertiary sector and the regulatory frameworks with which higher education institutions have to grapple. The literature abounds with research studies that advocate the need for universities to sustain their competitive advantage by maintaining high-quality standards.

## **Academic quality standards**

Pitman (2014, 349) highlights the impact of this unplanned ‘massification’ on academic standards and quality:

Academic standards are the cornerstone of any provider and, both in Australia and internationally, the expansion and diversification of higher education have resulted in growing concerns about their quality. Various higher education stakeholders have reframed their descriptions of higher education quality in response to new policies of mass education.

The political agenda has privileged the neo-liberalist stance and advanced the proliferation of mass higher education on ideals of higher education quality without a careful understanding of the broader definitions of ‘quality’; as a consequence, conflicting public discourses and rhetoric about expected quality standards have arisen. According to Udam & Heidmets (2013), and Pitman (2014, 349), the subjective nature of this notion coupled with ‘the vagueness of expectations of different stakeholder groups and different points at which quality is defined and assessed means that quality has different meanings for different audiences’.

Coates (2010, 4) states that universities are responsible for maintaining academic standards. He points out that higher education institutions use the term ‘standards’ in both substantive and descriptive ways; ‘standards’ is also the term used in higher education to refer to varying levels of quality or performance, as in high quality or teaching excellence. Higher education institutions consider ‘standards’ as an additional intrinsic factor, with a degree of autonomy which contributes to their status, despite the fact that:

The concept of academic standards lies at the heart of higher education quality. Perhaps, because of this, it has proved difficult and even elusive to define.

Coates (2010, 6) contends that the term ‘standards’ refers to varying levels of quality or performance, as in phrases such as low performance, high quality or teaching excellence. Previously, James (2003, 189) had pointed out that the

‘highly abstract nature of standards [in the] higher education sector has had little-sustained discussion and analysis of standards in recent years’.

In education, as in many other industries, the term ‘standards’ is used both in substantive and descriptive ways. In the substantive context of standards, Coates (2010) claims the following benefits: the validity of quality indicators; their stability across contexts; their transparent auditability; the simplicity and ease of collection; their quantifiability. Academic quality indicators Coates (2010, 6) outlines the arduous task of developing indicators to measure complex phenomena; the ‘quality’ of phenomena is not easy to define, measure and report. He also explains that some indicators may carry different meanings in different contexts, which can affect both policies and practices, depending on the different collection of the data. As a result, his definition of ‘academic standards’ requires an additional definition of ‘indicators of academic quality’:

A useful working definition of academic standards could be “agreed levels of academic quality” or, more fully, “agreed levels of performance on indicators of academic quality”. This implies the need to define indicators of academic quality.

### **Professional development**

Professional development (PD) is not a sporadic event in the career of an academic; it is a dynamic process that spans an entire career in a profession. PD has many aspects to its name and, within higher education, much of the discussion relates to the variation in high-quality student learning; it also relates to discipline-based learning, life-long learning, and organisational learning. Brancato (2003, 61) advocates that higher education should strive to stay abreast of teaching innovations and ‘discipline-specific knowledge’; nevertheless, some educators are ill-prepared to teach, because of current trends and diverse students’ needs and expectations.

Ingvarson, Meiers & Beavis (2003, 28) emphasise the importance of PD for quality teaching and learning:

Professional development for teachers is now recognised as a vital component of policies to enhance the quality of teaching and learning.

Nicholls (2001) has argued that PD reflects teaching-research nexus caused by the increased need to improve the quality of teaching in higher education institutions. The dichotomy of research or teaching has taken centre stage as some institutions re-evaluate the importance of and scholarship due to increasing demand for the need to improve the quality teaching and learning. This statement resonates with Boyer's (1990, 16) claim to move beyond the same old dichotomy: teaching versus research:

The time has come to move beyond the tired old "teaching versus research" debate and give the familiar and honourable term "scholarship" a broader, more capacious meaning, one that brings legitimacy to the full scope of academic work.

Research evidence confirms the practical role of PD in the enhancement of student learning outcomes. Hutchings, Huber & Ciccone (2011, xix) outline the integration of PD within the scholarship of teaching and learning:

If higher education is to meet growing imperatives around student attainment, in regard to the quantity and quality of learning, the scholarship of teaching and learning must be better integrated into the fabric of campus life.

There has been extensive documentation of the difficulties sessional academics find in attending formal PD events (see, for example, Chalmers et al., 2003; Bryson, 2004; Choat, 2006). Anderson (2007) reveals that sessional academics frequently receive initial last-minute briefings about operational teaching arrangements just before they commenced their work. On the one hand, some researchers have expressed their concern regarding the overwhelming dependence of higher education institutions on sessional academics (Chitnis & Williams, 1998; Bryson, 2004). On the other hand, Coaldrake & Stedman (2013) have applauded the professional and real-world dimension to learning and teaching that sessional academics bring to higher education institutions.

A high reliance on sessional academics poses risks for the quality of student experience (TEQSA - Contextual Overview, 2015). Although TEQSA does not set a threshold for the ratio of ongoing academics and sessionals, contextual factors such as qualifications, experience, and depth of scholarship

require attention. In that respect, investing in both permanent and sessional academics' PD is worth considering. One study conducted by Reid (2002) demonstrated that the importance of continuous academic improvement enhances the quality of teaching; however, the study highlights that these academics faced the following obstacles: lack of payment for attending PD programs; poor communication about PD events; regular conflicts with other professional or research commitments.

### **Peer-partnership programs**

There have been mixed claims regarding the role of peer observation of teaching. Bell (2005) argues that peer observation is a fundamental element of higher education academic development; it offers tremendous benefits to both permanent and sessional academics' teaching practices. Bell (2005, 3) defines peer observation as:

collaborative, developmental activity in which professionals offer mutual support by observing each other teach; explaining and discussing what was observed; sharing ideas about teaching.

Lomas & Nicholls (2005), however, disagree; they perceive that 'peer observation' is intrusive and an obstacle to the practitioners' freedom. Both views translate the place of peer-partnership programs within the higher education sector. Whether they are intrusive or not, peer-partnership programs have the merit of providing an opportunity for teaching academics to receive valuable feedback from their peers and reflect on the quality of their teaching.

Reviews of the literature reveal that tutors have valued both the peer and expert observation components of the training of new tutors (Nicolettou & Flint, 2004; Hatzipanagos & Lygo-Baker, 2006). In a much earlier study, Williams (1991) concluded that peer mentoring and observation significantly lowered the academics' anxiety about teaching.

Peer observation has been an integral part of tutor development program and offers the opportunity to academics to learn about their teaching by observing another tutorial groups and their tutors; the ultimate objective was

seen to be the improvement of the quality of teaching and students' learning experience. Kift's (2003) study of the casualisation of higher education highlighted the increasing number of inexperienced sessional tutors in the faculty, and the need to provide training and development to sustain the high quality of students' learning experience.

### **Communities of practice**

This subsection addresses the concept of 'Communities of Practice' as an essential component of professional development. Wenger, Mc Dermott & Snyder (2002, 4) define a community of practice as a set of people who 'share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis'.

Lave & Wenger (1991), the initial proponents of this concept, maintain that the community of practice is an informal aggregation and assumes that people learn and become who they are through interaction with other human beings. Ng & Tan (2009, 38) also believe the community of practice is an informal aggregation 'not only by its members but also by the shared manner in which they do things and interpret events'. They argue that communities of practice are useful vehicles for creating shared narratives that can be used to transfer tacit knowledge; this claim resonates with Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998, 253), who believed that:

myths, stories, and metaphors also provide powerful means in communities for creating, exchanging and preserving rich sets of meanings.

Wenger (1998) claims that a community of practice guides the attention of their members through the negotiation of meaning that consistently take place within it. Laksov, Mann & Dahlgren (2008, 123) outline the importance of giving 'meaning' to teaching via professional development:

Members of a community could give a positive meaning to "teaching", so that it is something that is desirable to do, undertake enthusiastically, and should involve professional development.

Billett (2001, 2004) indicates that, in studies of workplace learning, expertise develops within the social context. As knowledge is relational to the institutional landscape or community of practice, the shaping of people occurs in these situations.

Viskovic (2006) states that higher education academics are often appointed on the basis of their knowledge, qualifications, an experience in their subject areas; however, they may lack pre-service teaching skills. Bailey & Robson (2002), observe that teachers in the TAFE (Tertiary and Further Education) sector are more likely to complete a teaching qualification than their higher education counterparts. A recent study (Murugaiah et al., 2012), outlines the massive transformation of communities of practice with the advent of web technologies; online interactive and reflective activities have boosted and enriched the platform for sharing of teaching experiences. The recent surge of the internet has also paved the way for the potentiality of online communities of practice to be considered as a valid instrument for the improvement of academics' professional development

In this section, I have addressed the importance of quality standards within the higher education sector in Australia. The literature reveals that higher education is highly-regulated, with government-led quality standards operating in the form of a strict quality framework. This section explores the quality academic standards, the state political agenda to tie the funding of this market-driven sector to a string of standardised regulations and institutional accountabilities. The studies reviewed revealed the importance of a pragmatic approach to quality standard although there is a lack of widely-accepted and agreed on quality indicators; the lack of a universal definition 'quality' also resurfaced.

Further review of the literature demonstrates the role of academic PD in maintaining the quality of teaching within higher education institutions. Although PD is not mandatory, tertiary institutions are divided on whether to consider continuous academic development as a cost or an investment. This

subsection also explores the investment in sessional academics' development; the literature outlines some current difficulties such as limited communication; lack of financial incentives, and missed opportunities due to sessional academics' professional engagement.

My review of peer-partnership observation programs has indicated that some institutions use this approach to PD of academics (Nicolettou & Flint, 2004; Hatzipanagos & Lygo-Baker, 2006). The literature outlines the benefits and flaws of this program: some studies found sustained benefits to academics' teaching practice through peers' reflection and constructive feedback; some researchers criticised this intrusive approach because it violates the freedom of academic teaching staff and the observers may not be objective in their judgement.

In conclusion, I have reviewed the role of communities of practice within the higher education landscape. Diverse studies have demonstrated the importance of informal communities of practice and the benefits to the academic community. Some studies revealed that sessional academics might miss this opportunity to be involved due to time constraints and professional obligations.

## **Quality of teaching and learning**

In this section, I explore the conceptions of teaching within higher education institutions. According to Martens & Prosser (1998), the issue of what constitutes quality teaching and learning is of prime importance in the development of quality assurance; unfortunately, what this entails is not explicitly addressed. High-quality teaching is not necessarily related to the presentation of content or teaching – rather, evidence from the literature leans more towards the quality of student learning (Ramsden, 1992). This section also addresses reviews and studies relating to the quality of teaching and learning.

## **Conceptions of quality of teaching**

The assurance of quality teaching has its basis in how and what students are learning, and how this might be improved (Trigwell & Prosser, 1991; Prosser, 1993). It is evident that quality is context-related and dependent on different variables; Martens & Prosser (1998, 29) outline the underpinning difficulties of assuring the quality of teaching and learning:

Student learning in higher education has shown that students develop qualitatively different understandings of the material they are studying and that this variation in understanding relates to the variation in the way they approach their studies.

Martens & Prosser (1998, 29) believe that a few key variables may affect the proper quality assurance; they consider teaching and learning as ‘context-related, uncertain and continuously improvable’; they contend that universities need to ensure that the system allows for variations if they wish to assure quality teaching and learning. Earlier, they had indicated that there is a correlation between quality teaching and quality learning; they conclude

We conceptualise high-quality teaching to be teaching which leads to high-quality student learning. The quality of learning is conceptualized in terms of a qualitative variation in the learning outcomes relating to a qualitative variation in approaches to study taken by the students relating to their perceptions of various aspects of a subject.

Martens & Prosser’s argument counters Tyler’s (1949) 69-year-old claim that learning takes place through the students’ dynamic behaviour rather than as a result of teacher-centred education. Both claims could be relevant in contemporary educational institutions.

## **Class size**

This subsection addresses the importance of class management in the tertiary sector: the impact of class size on student achievement and academic outcomes is one of the most contentious areas of scholarly debate. Different studies have surveyed and investigated this phenomenon, with quite paradoxical conclusions because of the myriad of variables the researchers had to take into

consideration. The Federal government has been expressing its concern regarding class size in higher education; Trounson (2012) reports that:

Tertiary Education Minister Chris Evans is concerned about large student: staff ratios, and is increasingly hearing complaints from students, parents and staff about increasing class sizes

Arias & Walker's (2004) study compared exam scores and found a negative correlation between class size and student performance; students in small classes performed better on the exams. Research undertaken by De Paola, Ponzio & Scoppa (2009) revealed that a reduction in class size appears to be more effective for students' performance. They also highlighted the fact that smaller classes were more beneficial for students with learning disabilities.

Cuseo's (2007) study found the following drawbacks of large class sizes:

1. increased reliance on the lecture method of instruction;
2. reduction of the students' level of active involvement in the learning process;
3. reduction of the frequency and quality of instructor interaction with and feedback to students;
4. reduction of the students' depth of thinking inside the classroom;
5. students' lower academic achievement (learning) and academic performance (grades);
6. unfavourable students' feedback for a course delivered in large-sized classes.

Kokkelenberg, Dillon, & Christy (2006) found the trade-off between institutional benefits from larger classes and the short and long-term costs associated with the resulting poorer student performance. Their paper suggested that class sizes could influence students' good grades and any economies of scale derived from the current massification of higher education could outweigh the effect class size has on student outcomes.

Toth & Mangana's (2002) review of a group of studies showed that they yielded mixed results. One finding on the effect of class size on student

learning demonstrated no consistent patterns; three found mixed results; two found greater learning in large classes; two found more significant learning in small classes; one study showed no effect of class size on learning.

In this section, I have reviewed the literature regarding the conceptions of the quality of teaching. Research demonstrates that students develop qualitatively different understandings of the exposure to academic materials and variation in the learning experience. Further review of the literature reveals a close relationship between quality teaching and quality learning. Overall, the different claims indicate that the determinants of students' learning rely more on student profiles than on academics' efforts.

I have concluded with a review of the literature regarding the effect of class sizes on the quality of teaching and learning in higher education. The studies provided mixed results on the consequences of class sizes on the quality of teaching and learning. One study addressed the current economies of scale due to the current massification of higher education and the dilemma to either fill in the classes or risk undermining the students' learning outcomes.

## **Quality and casualisation of academics**

Casualisation has been described differently across the spectrum of academic teaching and learning; the most common terms are 'adjunct', 'visiting fellow', 'teaching associate', 'teaching assistant', 'sessional' and 'visiting faculty'. Percy et al. (2008) use the term 'casuals' predominantly to describe non-tenured or permanent academic positions.

In this section, I explore the sessionalisation of academics and the association of this precarious<sup>15</sup> workforce with the notion of quality within the higher education sector. Some researchers, investigating trends in the casualisation of academics, have been critical of its development; they see it

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<sup>15</sup> The Oxford Dictionary of English defines precarious as: 'not securely held or in position; dependent on chance; uncertain'.

as a marginalised but necessary evil that poses a threat to the quality of teaching and learning. Others have viewed the realm from a more favourable perspective – both complements and supplements the higher education pedagogical landscape.

### **Casualisation of academics**

Crawford & Germov (2015, 534) conclude that the non-tenured category of academics includes:

part-time tutors or demonstrators, postgraduate students or research fellows involved in part-time teaching, external people from industry or professions, clinical tutors, casually employed lecturers or any other teachers employed on a course-by-course basis.

The literature demonstrates a growing tension between the outcomes-focused approach of university management, driven by external market priorities, and the traditional approach to academic work: the excessive teaching demands, the application of unreasonable research targets and performance expectations on individual academics (Kwok, 2013; Kenny & Fluck, 2014). The marked growth in both domestic and international students' enrolment may have been the cause for the proliferation of precarious academic workforce within universities. There is an estimated 20 to 25 per cent of academics employed in the higher education sector in Australia and categorised as 'casuals' (Bexley, Arkoudis & James, 2013; Norton & Cherastidtham, 2014). In 2012, Andrew Trounson reported in *The Australian* that:

The growth in enrolments in Australia's largest universities has largely been met with sessional academics, whose numbers now outstrip permanent staff. L.H Martin Institute, policy analyst [Frank Larkins] said that between 2000 and 2010, the nine universities increased their sessional academic staff by 43.8 per cent

A high percentage of higher education institutions are experiencing casualisation, with comparable trends in western countries. A recent report

outlines that one-fifth of university employees are on fixed-term contracts (Loussikian 2016).

O'Brien (2015, 277) outlines the versatility of sessional academics, who are a group of academics 'cobbled together' by a career in teaching in more than one institution. He also argues the lack of dedication to a single institution:

They had little permanent attachment to the academy as such. These categories of staff often undertook work that was not always recognised or paid.

The marginalisation and invisibility of sessional academics have been a dominant theme in the literature. Different authors describe this precarious academic labour in various ways, as follows:

- 'the invisible faculty' (Gappa & Leslie 1993);
- 'throwaway academics' (Kogan, Moses & El-Khawas 1994);
- 'gypsy scholars' and the 'academic underclass' (Banachowski 1996);
- the 'tenuous periphery' (Kimber 2003);
- 'career casuals' (Percy & Beaumont 2008),
- the 'frustrated careerists' (Gottschalk & McEachern 2010);
- 'treadmill academics' (Coates & Geodegebuure 2010).

These perceptions affect the effectiveness of sessional academics as they struggle to access the essential resources to fulfil their teaching duties, such as a computer, office space, a telephone and an e-mail account (Kimber 2003; Coates & Geodegebuure 2010).

With rare exceptions, sessional academics are usually excluded from meetings, decision-making processes or the evaluation and review of their teaching and the curricula (Percy et al. 2008). That situation impacted on sessionals' sense of belonging, motivation, and performance (Anderson 2007, 117). Roberts, Butcher & Brooker, (2011), when considering the existence of such exclusive practices, contend that it is the subject coordinators' duty and responsibility to bring sessional staff into university communities. The literature sustains the view that subject coordination is critical to the quality of

the student learning experience; it should be recognised as an academic leadership role (Cohen, Bunker & Ellis, 2007; Roberts, Butcher & Brooker, 2011).

### **Casualisation and the quality of teaching**

Evidence from the literature suggests that when sessional academics have access to a variety of supports, teaching and learning strategies, and when they are meaningfully connected to their faculties, they are likely to be useful both in creating an engaging learning environment and sustaining high levels of student achievement (Jordan, Schwartz & McGhie-Richmond 2009).

The growing casualisation of the academic workforce is identified as a significant risk in the quality of teaching and learning in Australian higher education (see Dearn, Fraser & Ryan, 2002; Kift 2003; Bradley et al. 2008; Brown, Goodman & Yasukawa 2008; Percy et al. 2008). It is also a fact that higher education institutions overlooked sessional academics for PD opportunities (Kift 2003; Brown, Goodman & Yasukawa 2008, 2010). Recently, risk-averse universities have introduced mandatory attendance to induction programs and some teaching-related workshops; Lefoe et al. (2013) believe that such training initiatives do not address the real quality issue. Those systemic problems require universities to grapple with not only the lack of recognition and support for the role of the subject coordinators who lead ‘casualised’ teaching teams but the exclusion, invisibility and lack of recognition afforded to the sessional academic workforce (Percy et al. 2008).

The literature provides different views on the issue of casualisation: Bexley, Arkoudis & James (2013, 398) contend that ‘a level of casualisation is both necessary and desirable for efficiencies and effectiveness’. Norton & Cherastidham (2013, 34) acknowledge the benefits of hiring sessionals to complement what universities are already lacking:

For students, sessional teaching staff can offer expertise – often from professional practice – that permanent academics lack.

According to Probert (2013), sessional academics regularly fill in and relieve permanent academics of teaching duties so that they can increase the time to undertake research. The teaching-research nexus is subject to ongoing enquiry and controversy (Malcolm, 2014). Performance evaluation in academia focuses, in the main, on research indicators, and universities striving for government funding, research grants, and high rankings have invariably favoured academics with top publications (Bogt & Scapens, 2012). Although most universities have a dual mission of teaching and research, academics' career advancement usually depend more on research performance than teaching quality (Cadez, Dimovski & Groff, 2017).

In academia, the focus in performance evaluation has been on research indicators and, universities striving for government funding, research grants, and high rankings have invariably favored academics with top publications (Bogt & Scapens, 2012). Although most universities have a dual mission of teaching and research, academics' career advancement usually depend more on research performance than teaching quality (Cadez, Dimovski & Groff, 2017).

An AUQA Audit Report<sup>16</sup> (AUQA, 2004, 19, cited in Harvey, 2013, 2) for higher education institutions reveals the disenfranchisement of sessional academics despite the implicit consideration they are an asset to the university:

Casual staff are not incorporated into many aspects of the University's overall system of quality assurance, yet these are the systems that the University places reliance upon to ensure teaching standards.

The Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research, and Tertiary Education (2011, 16) acknowledges that sessional academics play a role in ensuring that 'teaching and learning are of higher quality'. Harvey (2013, 3) expresses the need for sessional academics 'to understand their role in quality

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<sup>16</sup> Reports dated between October 2002 and August 2011 were undertaken and completed by AUQA (Australian Universities Quality Agency). Reports dated between December 2011 and July 2012 were initiated by AUQA and completed by TEQSA (Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency). Accessed at <https://www.teqsa.gov.au/national-register>, 12Sep2017.

learning and teaching and universities must assure adherence to these standards'; she considers it is essential for university management to 'proactively bridge quality-assurance processes and targeted sessional staff standards'.

In this section, I have explored the casualisation of academics in the higher education sector and the different terms used to identify this category of academics with the support of the relevant literature; in particular, I have considered the role sessionals play in contributing to quality teaching. The research demonstrates that, in the Australian context, there has been no investigation of the link between teaching quality and the casualisation of academic work.

I have also reviewed the controversies regarding the students' feedback survey as a reliable and valid quality measurement instrument. The literature highlights its uncontested stature within the fabric of the higher education quality assurance framework. Finally, the research literature shows deficiencies in quantifiable measures of quality: it highlights the paradox of focusing on processes rather than outcomes; it points out the lack of alternatives to the current quality assurance audit system.

## **Perceptions of quality teaching**

In this section, I address the different perceptions regarding quality teaching and review the various meanings relating the notion of quality within the academia that have paved the way for considerable debate. Harvey & Green (1993) associate terms such as 'slippery' and 'contested' to the concept of quality. The literature has widely explored the role and importance of quality of teaching and an impressive number of research papers exploring this controversial concept; however, the challenge and disagreement begin when university management tries to explain the meaning of quality to both tenured and non-tenured academics; as Giertz (2000, 296) points out:

As academics, we work within the same framework and share the same values and even though we might not be able to explain to outsiders what quality in higher education is, that constitutes no problem since we still know: we know it when we see it.

Giertz's explanation has the merit of exposing the ugly truth about the difficulty of interpreting quality in the demand-driven higher education sector; 'quality' is the driving force for universities to achieve a competitive advantage. Kalayci, Watty & Hayirsever (2012, 150) note that the lack of an 'explicit' understanding of the term quality may compromise its expected objectives:

Tacit understandings may not be sufficient if we are to discuss quality with a view to improvements. The importance of a shared understanding of how academics think about quality is critical to advancing this discussion with various stakeholders.

In a similar vein, Sallis (2002) believes it is better to understand quality through experience: trying to explain and describe that notion, because people usually take quality for granted, particularly when provided regularly. They also feel its absence when it is missing. The literature also confirms the 'wicked' and the thorny issue of quality management:

- How can something, so difficult to grasp, be subjected to so much publicity?
- How can we measure a concept that, according to the literature lacks specificity and is overly dependent on individual senses?

Academics have always been very sceptical about the meaning of quality; variations in academics' perceptions of the purposes of quality assurance, as depicted in the literature. According to Laughton (2003) and Newton (2000), academics tend to see quality assurance as accountability led, rather than improvement led. Although this perception appears negative, academics resent quality assurance mechanisms because of their intrusive nature. Lomas (2007) and Watty (2006) claim that academics see quality as mainly linked to the ideas of fitness for purpose and conformity with external standards (control purpose), rather than with enhancement and transformation (innovation

purpose). This approach resonates with the previously discussed difference between substantive and interpretive notions of quality; the idea of quality as ‘quality assurance’ links to the concept of ‘compliance’.

Papadimitriou et al. (2008) notice that, quality assurance is about consistency and compliance with (externally) given standards (control purpose) and much less about enabling institutions and academics to go beyond those standards (innovation purpose). Those scholars demonstrate the same pattern of thinking that quality is about compliance although, in reality, academics always experience variations in standards.

Laughton (2003) posits that academics see quality assessment procedures as incapable of grasping the essence of the educational process (motivation purpose); Harvey (2009), similarly, argues that academics are sceptical about quality assessment, because, fundamentally, it does not engage with the ‘heart of the academic endeavour’ (motivation purpose). Other scholars tend to agree that academics’ perceptions on internal quality management point to the fact that universities are confident regarding the effects of the management of quality improvement while they are far less so regarding its results of its control mechanism (Kleijnen et al. 2011a). Rosa, Saricco & Amaral (2012, 356) propose a similar reflection and concur with the existing literature; they argue that academics tend to support improvement-led purposes and innovation rather than supporting measures that focus on control.

The above literature tends to argue in favour of quality management as related to quality improvement rather than it being a tool used to measure and control. Despite the overwhelming support for the ‘softer’ dimension of quality, quality assurance nevertheless has its merit and will continue to be the dominant mechanism used by both the state and universities to determine compliance with established standards.

In a study aimed at understanding quality from the perceptions of students and academics, Cheng (2010) found that some academics interpreted ‘quality’ as relating to academic standards. Although different institutions set different quality standards, the primary challenge is to establish and measure those

standards in higher education. The reality may be different in the higher education sector. Elassy (2015) argues that the definition of quality as ‘fitness for purpose’ has been refuted by many scholars because there is no meaning of ‘quality’. An alternative approach: the ‘good-enough practice’ is similar to the ‘fitness for purpose’ and requires quality to fulfil the expectations of a reference group (Gibbs 2011). As stakeholders have different expectations and perceptions, whose expectations need to be satisfied?

Sadler (2000, 3) outlines the change in university teaching context and recognises the need to move away from ‘a focus on good teaching in the sense of good presentation and management of subject content towards good learning, that is learning that is significant, up-to-date, and enduring in both value and depth’. According to Hill, Lomas & MacGregor (2003, 17), students’ views on all aspects of their higher education experiences are vital for the effective monitoring of quality in higher education institutions; their research study revealed that students’ perception of quality is affected by the following:

1. The lecturer’s delivery in the classroom. Students appreciated lecturers who knew their subject, were well-organised and were good listeners.
2. Student engagement with learning. The students valued a curriculum that was related to their worlds but broadened their horizons.
3. Social/ emotional support systems. The students found support from college support systems, their peers, and families. They also valued a positive atmosphere that fosters learning.
4. Resources of library and IT. Very few students mentioned resources as being necessary for quality education.

This critical study sheds light on the multiple variables that affect students’ perceptions of quality; it also depends on the institutions and the context in which the students are experiencing exposure to different academic styles of teaching, physical teaching spaces and support services.

In this section, I have reviewed the literature on the perception of quality teaching and learning. Some studies have focused on the different and recurrent debates about the ‘slippery’ and ‘chameleon-like’ notions of quality. In particular, ‘tacit’ understanding has been overrated, despite it inherently fuelling the controversies regarding the concept of quality in the higher education sector. A small number of researchers concluded that the perception of ‘quality’ is *substantive* rather than *interpretive*. The literature also focused on the perceptive variations of quality within the tertiary landscape: academics, students, and university management viewed the notion of ‘quality’ differently. Finally, the review of contemporary research demonstrated the impact of aesthetic and esoteric variables, such as styles of teaching, physical teaching spaces and geographical locations on the perception of quality teaching and learning.

### **Current gaps in the literature**

The studies discussed in the preceding section informs the analysis of the current attributes of the quality of teaching and the failure of quality audits to measure ‘quality’ within the higher education sector. The literature, however, reveals a gap in empirical research that uses both quantitative and qualitative methods to address the different strategies deployed to communicate the notion of quality to the stakeholders in higher education, particularly to sessional academics. It is evident from the literature that the research undertaken on the casualisation focused mainly on the marginalisation of the precarious workforce within the higher education sector (see, for example, Junor, 2000; Brown, Goodman & Yasukawa, 2010). The literature confirms that casualisation is a growing phenomenon: a mixed blessing for tertiary organisations. Examples from the current literature confirm the viewpoint that divergence of opinion over the ‘notion of quality’ is the cause of controversy. External quality audits tend to focus only on ‘process’ rather than on ‘outcomes’ and do not discriminate between tenured and sessional academics.

My thesis addresses the current gap by using a qualitative phenomenographic method of semi-structured and focus group interviews, together with a metaphor analysis, to investigate the language games relating to the notion of quality and the ways of communicating that concept to permanent and sessional academics.

## Summary

My examination of the literature has focused, in the main, on the context in which I have set my research study. Inevitably, questions have arisen throughout my review; I have endeavoured to find answers to some of those questions, despite their having deviated from the core research questions articulated in the research proposal.

To conclude, in this chapter I have examined the literature relating to the definitions of quality and the different themes and dimensions of quality that emerged from the data collection. I have identified both the ‘blind spots’ and ‘blank spots’ in the contemporary literature relating to the need to ensure that the findings of the study have a significant impact on policy and practice.

The literature review reveals a dearth of research into the area of academics’ perceptions of the notion of quality of higher education, mainly when depending on sessional academics; there have been very few attempts at relating quality of teaching with the interpretation of the variation of metaphors used within the higher education sector.

In Chapter 3 I address the research methodology employed in this research study. I will use a phenomenographic and metaphor analysis research approaches to investigate the variety of ways which teaching academics, interpret and experience the notion of quality of teaching within a single higher education setting, including the language games relating to that concept through the use of metaphors. Based on Wagner’s (1993, 16) claim, I will explore materials that ‘ask new questions to illuminate *blind spots*, areas in which existing theories, methods, and perceptions keep us from seeing phenomena as clearly as we should’. In line with the principles of

phenomenographic research methodology, I will explore the emergent themes and concepts extensively as I collect and analyse the data; I will also consider some of the thoughts and questions as they arise during the discussion of the findings.

# CHAPTER 3

## Research Methodology

### Introduction

In this chapter, I explore the methodological choices and their philosophical underpinnings and address the design that supports the research method that I have chosen. Research methodologies comprise the theoretical frameworks and concepts in which approaches and methods are situated; Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2004, 44-5) suggest the following definition that links the terms ‘methods’ and ‘methodologies’:

By methods, we mean that range of approaches used in educational research to gather data which are to be used as a basis for inference and interpretation, for explanation and prediction...the aim of the methodology is to help us understand, in the broadest possible terms, not the products of scientific inquiry but the process itself.

The aim of my study was as follows:

- To investigate the conceptions of the quality of teaching using, as a case the Business Department of a large metropolitan university in Australia.

The objectives were as follows:

- To explore perceptions of sessional and permanent academics about the conceptions of quality of teaching in an Australian tertiary institution.

- To determine the diverse experiential interpretations of the concept of quality by different categories of academics and how that notion is ultimately communicated to both permanent and sessional academics.
- To contribute to potential change in policy and practice based on academics' perspectives on quality teaching.

In this chapter I examine the research methodology and then describes the particular research methods employed in the study; I also discuss the details of the investigation undertaken.

### **Research questions**

General research question

My general research question was as follows:

**How, in a situation where higher education institutions and course coordinators rely on both permanent and sessional academics for course delivery and assessments, do these academics experience the conceptions of quality of teaching at the case institution?**

Specific research questions

My specific research questions were as follows:

1. What are the qualitatively different ways permanent and sessional academics experience the quality of teaching?
2. What are the variations that exist between these experiences?
3. What is the context of the current situation relating to quality issues associated with teaching in tertiary institutions at an Australian tertiary institution?
4. What is the current quality practices associated with teaching at an Australian tertiary institution?

## **Methodology: Theoretical perspective**

Qualitative researchers seek answers to their questions in the real world. Their purpose is to learn about some aspect of the world and to generate new understandings that can then be used.

Qualitative and quantitative research methods are not in conflict: they meet different research needs; they use different methods. Quantitative methods are exploratory and require reasonable understanding of the phenomenon being investigated. Qualitative analysis is usually based on the assumption that the phenomenon under investigation is unknown and the research problem requires the exploration of a concept. Dall’Alba (1996) points out that ‘phenomenography’ is a research approach that fits within the interpretive research framework aiming to achieve understanding of experience and meanings within collective perspectives. After exploring both quantitative and qualitative research method options, I suggested a mixed (semi-structured interviews and survey questionnaires) for the thesis. However, during the confirmation of candidature presentation, the chair of the panel recommended that I should adopt only a qualitative method for my study. As a consequence, I adopted a modified phenomenographic approach in the first instance. Subsequently, following the completion of an inductive data response (IDR) analysis of the focus group interviews which enabled me to identify themes and key metaphors.

### **Overview of phenomenography**

Ference Marton (Marton, 1981) first used the term ‘phenomenography’ in Gothenburg in 1981. Since then, phenomenography has emerged as a research tool for studying learning and teaching in higher education. According to Marton (1994, 4424), phenomenography, is thus a methodology that elucidates both the diversity of subjective perceptions and identifies a limited number of perspectives that constitute collective understanding:

the empirical study of the limited number of qualitatively different ways in which various phenomena in, and aspects of, the world around us are experienced, conceptualised, understood, perceived and apprehended.

Bowden (2000) confirms that phenomenography originated in the studies of learning; since then, however, the approach has been extended beyond the field of education. Marton (1981, 31) describes the phenomenographic approach in the following manner:

Phenomenography is a research method adapted for mapping the qualitatively different ways in which people experience, conceptualise, perceive, and understand various aspects of, and phenomena in, the world around them.

#### Philosophical underpinnings of phenomenography

Within the context of my study, the philosophical assumptions underpinning phenomenography aimed at demonstrating the qualitatively different conceptions of quality of teaching and learning in higher education. My study required a research approach that enabled exploration of higher education academics' beliefs, experiences and perceptions regarding the concept of quality; in that respect, I chose phenomenography as the suitable research approach to achieve this objective. This choice was supported by Marton's (1988) argument that there is a limited number of qualitatively different ways of understanding a phenomenon; the ultimate intention is to explore the variations in the experiences or ways of experiencing the world. Codd (1988, 239) argues that:

There is no single reading of [policy] texts. Rather, for any text a plurality of readers must necessarily produce a plurality of readings

My study takes the perspective of the participants that there are variations in how the notion of quality of teaching is conceived by different categories of academics. The phenomenographic approach rests on the assumptions that individuals vary with regard to how they conceptualise, understand, perceive and experience this phenomenon – regardless of whether they are embedded

either in immediate experience of the phenomenon or in reflected thought about the same phenomenon.

Trigwell (2000) argues that a qualitative perspective exposed the key aspects of the variation of the collective experience of the phenomenon. The study adopted a second-order<sup>17</sup> perspective, and the data analysis was based on the conceptions of quality that were expressed by different categories of academics in the interviews. Furthermore, the collective experience of variation superseded the richness of individual experience and led to a limited number of qualitatively distinct categories of description (as presented in Chapter 4). Marton & Pang (1999, 4) describe the shift to a second order of variation:

To characterise the variation in ways people experience various phenomena, it is important to understand what it means to experience a phenomenon in a particular way.

In this step, the research paradigm has moved on to attempts at addressing questions such as ‘What is a way of experiencing something?’ or ‘What is the actual difference between two ways of experiencing the same thing?’

In the next subsection, I will discuss the differences between the ontological and epistemological assumptions.

### Ontological and epistemological perspectives

The research paradigm for this study reflects a general agreement on the nature of the world and how to investigate it; it informs the appropriate and acceptable research methods for collecting data. Bassey (1990, 41) defines a paradigm as:

a network of coherent ideas about the nature of the world and of the functions of researchers which, adhered to by a group of researchers, conditions the patterns of their thinking and underpins their research actions.

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<sup>17</sup> The distinction between first and second order perspectives is a distinction between a detached reality and an experienced phenomenon respectively. A first order perspective involves a researcher making statements about the world. A second order perspective, in contrast, involves a researcher making statements about other peoples’ experiences of the world (Tan, 2008, 101)

Ontology is a branch of philosophy that studies assumptions about the existence and definitions of reality. Hatch & Cunliffe (2013, 11) suggest that positivists embrace an objective ontology as they believe in ‘an unshakable reality existing outside human influence’. In that respect, all phenomena appear as if they were objects and preclude any biased, subjective feelings or preconceived notions or expectations. From a positivist paradigm, the objective reality is subjected to natural laws and universal truths that are unveiled through inquiry (Imel, Kerka & Wanacott, 2002). Glesne (2006, 4) states that, from the positivists’ perspective, the world is made up of ‘observable facts’. Based on this claim, the personal bias of the researchers needs to be discarded to establish the valid existence of the phenomenon. In contrast, Hatch & Cunliffe (2013, 11) state that subjective ontology upholds the belief that:

subjectivists deliberately focus on what is revealed in private thoughts, feelings, and by allowing oneself to be influenced by context.

Interpretivism challenges the view of universal truths, and humans use an interpretive device to process experience and make those experiences meaningful (Ireland et al., 2009). Glesne (2006) suggests that social reality is constructed through the actors’ perceptions of a particular social setting- Bowden (2000) states that phenomenography discerns the variations in the ways humans experience reality. More specifically, Burns (2000, 251) argues that interpretive research dimensions seek to establish:

the degree to which the research participants’ viewpoints, thoughts, feelings, intentions and experiences are accurately understood by the researcher and portrayed in the research report.

*Positivist* epistemology assumes that truth can be uncovered through the scientific method and implies that knowledge may be discovered and verified through direct observation of the phenomena. *Interpretive* epistemology, on the other hand, assumes that knowledge may be understood from the contexts that give meaning to experience. Hatch & Cunliffe (2013, 12) argue that an interpretive epistemology ‘implies that there may be many different

understandings and interpretations of reality co-existing at one place and time pending upon on who is involved’.

My neo-phenomenographic study, based on an interpretive approach, is focused ‘on the collective meaning or conceptions of knowledge generated by identifying a wide range of individual experiences’ (Ireland et al., 2009, 6). Maxwell (2013) argues that our understanding of the world is inevitably our construction, rather than a purely objective perception of reality: no such structure can claim absolute truth. Significantly, Maxwell (2013, 41) focuses on the impact of previous experiences on perception:

We recognise that what people perceive and believe is shaped by their assumptions and prior experiences as well as the reality with which they interact.

To conclude, I was guided in my study by this interpretivist paradigm.

Based on Marton & Booth’s (1997) claims, my neo-phenomenographic study is focused on the underlying relations between individual experiences and the phenomenon; describing and identifying the relational view of their experience with a given phenomenon. Marton & Booth (1997, 13) summarise the following non-dualistic claims:

There is not a real world ‘out there’ and a subjective world ‘in here’. The world is not constructed by the learner, nor is it imposed upon her; it is constituted as an internal relation between them. Åkerlind (2005a, 6-8) distinguishes phenomenography from other qualitative research traditions by its interest in the following: related, not independent meanings; awareness not beliefs; context-sensitive awareness, not stable constructs; interpretive, not explanatory focus; collective, not individual experience; and stripped, not rich descriptions.

### Conceptions, categories of description and awareness

Phenomenographical data collection is usually based on semi-structured interviews, and the number of interviewees is typically kept small. In such a study, the semi-structured interviews are supplemented by two series of focus group interviews. The process of phenomenographical data analysis is iterative and comparative; the data is continually sorted and resorted, with a comparison

between the data to develop the categories of description. These categories are the primary outcomes and logically related to one another. According to Åkerlind (2005a, 11), the analysis of the interview transcripts reveals the essential aspects of the variation in meanings and experience.

Sandberg (1995) defines conceptions ‘as people’s ways of going through a particular aspect of reality’; it is typically ‘presented in the form of categories of description’. Marton & Pong (2005, 336) suggest that the term ‘conception’ has different names, such as: ‘ways of conceptualising’, ‘ways of experiencing’, ‘ways of seeing’, ‘ways of apprehending’ and ‘ways of understanding’. Bowden (2000, 16) states that the analysis of the interview transcripts enables the researcher to differentiate between the different means of seeing the phenomenon. Subsequently, ‘a participant’s conception of a phenomenon may vary with time and context’.

### Outcome space

Åkerlind (2012, 116) argues that:

the researcher aims to constitute not just a set of different meanings, but a logically inclusive structure relating to different meanings.

The categories of description constituted by the researcher to represent different ways of experiencing a phenomenon are thus seen as representing a structured set, the ‘outcome space’. Through the outcome space, different categories of description are related to each other by way of hierarchically inclusive relationships. Hence, an outcome space provides an effective way of looking at a collective human experience although individually they may experience the same phenomena differently. Dahlin (2007) argued, earlier, that the exploration of conceptions produces categories of description, and the structural relations between them constitute the outcome space. Marton & Booth (1997) suggested that there are three different criteria for assessing the quality of the outcome space:

- Each category in the outcome space reveals something distinctive about the way of understanding the phenomenon;

- The categories are logically related – as a hierarchy of structurally inclusive relationships;
- The outcomes are parsimonious – critical variation in the experience observed in the data is represented by a set of only a few categories.

Both Richardson (1999) and Svensson (1997) view the categories of the outcome space as the researcher's construction rather than being derived from externally existing entities. Walsh (2000, 20) advocates that, in support of the non-dualistic ontology of the phenomenographic approach, the outcome space and categories of description must represent the evidence presented to the researcher by the data:

Those who see the data's categories as constructed hold that the categories emerge from the relationship between the data and the researcher. The raw data represent the relationships between the phenomenon and the interviewee as he or she describes their experience of the phenomenon

Walsh (2000, 21) also warns about the need to represent faithfully the data collected:

Attempting to get a set of categories that is logically related implies that the researcher should adjust and restructure the categories in order to represent the data faithfully and to produce a set that fits some preferred pattern.

In this subsection I have addressed the historical and philosophical foundations of phenomenography and have provided a thorough discussion of the epistemological and ontological perspectives. Furthermore, I have presented the contribution of a range of scholars to concepts such as: outcome space, conceptions and categories of description.

### **Metaphors in this study**

In this subsection I explore the concept of metaphor and its importance for this study. A metaphor is a significant tool in demystifying symbolic meanings and

is regularly used as an analytical tool to deconstruct meanings and as a medium to encode and convey meaning. Crick & Grushka (2009, 449) suggest that:

Like symbols, metaphors are integral to our communication systems and is equally shaped by its context. A metaphor carries concepts and is essential to language and the communication of abstract thoughts.

Boyle (1957, 257, cited in Black, 1977) contended that

among the mysteries of human speech metaphor has remained one of the most baffling because of its “odd predilection for asserting a thing to what it is not”.

Black (1993) acknowledges this claim and believes that a metaphorical statement states something to be what it is plainly known not to be. Yanow (2008, 1) defines a metaphor as:

the juxtaposition of two superficially unlike elements in a single context, where the separately understood meanings of both interacts to create a new perception of each and especially of the focus of the metaphor.

According to Gass (1995) words, pictures, experiences, and metaphors are interrelated and affect the lives of people, as eloquently illustrated by the following quote:

A single word  
can possess multiple meanings; yet as the common saying goes,  
one picture can be worth a thousand words.

And if a picture  
can be worth a thousand words,  
then one experience  
can be worth a thousand pictures.

And if an experience  
can be worth a thousand pictures  
then one metaphor  
can be worth a thousand experiences.

But in the end,  
A metaphor possesses value only when:  
it is able to interpret the right experience  
in a manner that provides the right picture  
that produces the right words  
that have deep meaning  
for that particular person.

Dickmeyer (1989, 151) suggests that a metaphor is ‘characterisation of a phenomenon in familiar terms’ and ‘to be effective in promoting understanding of the phenomenon in question; the ‘familiar terms’ must be graphic, visible and physical in our scale of the world’; he adds:

Metaphoric characterisations bear no real physical resemblance to the process being described, except in the most limited sense.

Lakoff & Johnson (1980, 6), have argued that ‘metaphors as linguistic expressions are possible precisely because they are conceptual metaphors in the system of a person’. Further evidence from the literature supports the qualitative attributes of ‘metaphors’. Dickmeyer (1989) supports the claim that metaphors are helpful because they are not measurable and at their root, are non-quantitative. In that respect, metaphoric analyses are less likely to be used in quantitative research. In defending the use of metaphors in research, Schmitt (2005, p. 360), says:

Qualitative research yields a multitude of heterogeneous pieces of information, which contain complex, meaningful structures. Metaphors can well be used to reduce this complexity in structured patterns.

Metaphors can well be used to reduce this complexity in structured patterns. that social researchers have developed a number of mixed methods strategies for metaphor analysis that involve human coding of metaphors in combination with statistical tests for both interrater reliability and differences in rates of metaphor use across multiple document collections (Schmitt, 2005). Schmitt (2005, p. 363) explains that:

A possible way to work with metaphors in qualitative research is to elicit them directly from the research participants themselves’

Furthermore, Schmitt believes that social researchers have developed a number of mixed methods strategies for metaphor analysis that involve human coding of metaphors in combination with statistical tests for both interrater reliability and differences in rates of metaphor use across multiple document collections (Schmitt, 2005).

Armstrong (2011) outlines the challenge of measuring or judging a phenomenon if there is no identification of the essential characteristic of that phenomenon; in that respect the metaphor as only a heuristic model helps more, regarding illuminating, supporting the understanding rather than explaining.

However, as shown in the literature, metaphor analysis has been established as a viable emergent qualitative research method. Although there is evidence that this method has been used in various research papers, none has been applied to demonstrate the variation in the quality of teaching in higher education in Australia. Furthermore, this research study using data collected from focus groups using metaphor analysis resonates with a previous educational research of Rees, Knight, and Wilkinson (2007) that analysed metaphors in strategically collected transcripts of patients', medical students', and doctors' discussions of doctor-patient interactions. The data for their qualitative and inductive study were from multiple document collections, including focus group discussions with patients, medical students and medical educators.

Kranenburg & Kelly (2012) argue that the missions and objectives of higher education institutions are to provide a high quality of teaching and learning. Academic staff play a significant role in achieving those goals; universities formulate a range of policies and processes to assist those academics through procedures and guidelines for monitoring and delivering a quality education. Rowley (1997) contends that the performance of academics and program managers has a significant impact on the quality of the programs and student learning.

Kranenburg & Kelly (2012, 250) investigated the 'potential and richness' of using a 'metaphor' as an instrument to effectively communicating, locating and navigating information in the higher education environment; they observed:

The expansion of quality assurance has coincided with other changes [in] the higher education environment that impact on the roles, priorities and attention of staff ...how

to manage and communicate a growing volume of diverse and complex information for academic staff, including information related to quality assurance and enhancement...with particular attention to communicating the developmental and transformational aspects of quality and addressing the issue of accessibility of dispersed information on quality.

They selected the ‘garden’ metaphor as a ‘navigational device’, a ‘visual artefact’ or ‘*aide memoire*’ for information related to program quality. Kranenburg & Kelly (2012, 257) concluded their research by arguing that the development of metaphors assisting in ‘shifting the discourse and perceptions of quality closer to its role in enhancement and improvement of program outcomes and the student learning experience’.

Ratcliff (2003) asserts that the nature of the communication shapes how academics interact and interpret quality processes. According to Harvey & Williams (2010, 84), staff quality assurance processes are regarded as a burden ‘to be responded to through ritualised compliance’. The literature provides evidence of perception and metaphor of the quality systems ‘insatiable appetite’ for information and action, popularised by Newton’s (2000, 153) metaphor of ‘feeding the beast’. Based on those metaphors, academics may interpret the different notions of quality as accountability, improvement, transformation or enhancement (Kleijnen *et al.* 2011a; Kranenburg & Kelly, 2012). Mouraz, Pereira & Monteiro (2013) advocate that education is a field where metaphors play a fundamental role in clarifying and classifying the functions of educational actors. Haggis’s (2004) research focused on the use of metaphor in students’ talk about teaching and learning, demonstrating an understanding of the different articulations of the nature and meaning of learning.

### **Metaphor analysis**

According to Todd & Harrison (2008), metaphor analysis can be conducted to analyse focus group interview transcripts. They also outline that this analysis is conducted to identify metaphors within a text. Because of the thin line between literal and metaphorical phrases ‘the researcher must make his or her

own judgement as to whether a phrase is literal or metaphorical' (483). For this reason, in this thesis, decisions about metaphor identification are taken in the context of the transcripts being analysed.

The first stage of metaphor analysis is to identify the metaphors in the transcript. This is done by underlining words or phrases that the student-researcher understands to be metaphorical. The continuous readings of the text lead to the emergence of metaphorical themes. Figure 5.1 provides further details of the process.

## Methods

Munhall (2011, 4) states that qualitative research is known 'for giving voice to people, to hearing people's personal narrative and using the language of our participants in research.' This definition matches Denzin & Lincoln's (2008) claim that qualitative research aims at understanding the meanings, interpretations and subjective experiences of individuals. Similarly, Kvale (1996, 4) explains that the original Greek meaning for 'method' means a 'route that leads to the goal' and the original Latin meaning of 'conversation' with the subjects means 'wandering together with'.

This section addresses the research methods adopted for this study including the rationale regarding the use of interviews, selection of participants, inductive data analysis, ethical considerations and a discussion regarding the reliability and validity of this study.

At the beginning of this study, I pondered on my biography, both as an academic and former quality auditor. I had decided to adopt an approach based on Gearing (2004, 1430) who outlines that 'a researcher suspends or holds in abeyance his or her presuppositions, biases, assumptions, theories, or previous experiences to see and describe the phenomenon'. I was the sole interviewer for the semi-structured interviews and acted as assistant moderator/note-taker during the focus group interviews.

The 'methods' that I utilised in my study were the practical ways of collecting the data. Bryman (2008, 160) defines 'methods' as 'instruments of

data collection like interviews or observation’ and refers to the ‘the tools used for analysing data or extracting themes from unstructured data’. In my study, the methods employed were semi-structured and focus group interviews. Before the formal phase of my collection of data I carried out a number of pilot interviews. Subsequently, I extracted themes using a process of inductive data reduction (IDR).

### **Data collection**

The qualitative research approach conceptualised the data collection process; data were collected via individual in-depth (semi-structured) interviews and focus group interviews.

### **Sample of participants**

Ritchie & Lewis (2003) argue that qualitative samples may be small in size and justify this claim, as follows:

- Very little evidence is obtained from additional fieldwork if the data are carefully analysed.
- Increasing the sample size may only lead to the point of diminishing return with no contribution to new evidence;
- Qualitative data yield a rich and detailed amount of information and need to remain manageable.

### **Study phases**

My research study was designed to follow three main phases involving a total number of 19 participants. The phases were as follows:

#### **Phase 1: Pilot interviews**

Teijlingen & Hundley (2001, 1) outline the benefits of conducting pilot interviews:

One of the advantages of conducting a pilot study is that it might give advance warning about where the main research project could fail, where research protocols may not be followed, or whether proposed methods or instruments are inappropriate or too complicated.

Phase one consisted of four pilot interviews undertaken to test and refine the interview questions before the data collection process. I attempted to improve the content validity and clarity of the questions; I found and removed some errors; I also addressed some omissions.

Due to the difficulty of predicting how the interviewees would interpret the questions in my interview guide, I tested the items with volunteers who shared the same characteristics as the actual participants. Based partly on Henninck, Hutter & Bailey's recommendations (2011, 120), I reflected on the following:

- Did the interviewees understand the questions immediately?
- Were concepts, sentences and words adapted to the context of the interviewee?
- Did the participants understand the question? Did some questions need to be rephrased?
- Was the sequencing of the questions logical to the interviewee?
- Can the research questions be answered with the information that is gathered?
- Was the interview guide too long/too short? Was there a need to reduce or add more questions?
- Was there a provision for probing questions?

The four pilot interviews gave me the opportunity to improve my interviewing skills and gauge the validity of the questions. The individual pilot interviews revealed some issues with the number and wording of some questions whereas, for the focus group interviews, the challenge was to test fifteen questions from the interview schedule.

## Phase 2: Semi-structured interviews

Individual interviews can provide very rich data for a qualitative research project. In this subsection I address the choice of individual interviews as a suitable research method for my study. Kvale (2007, xvii) outlines the semi-structured interview as:

a specific form of conversation where knowledge is produced through the interaction between an interviewer and an interviewee.

Byrne (2001) argues that the key objective of in-depth interviews is to extract valuable information on a selected topic under investigation from a particular sample of participants. Taylor (2005, 39) outlines the richness of this method of exploring a phenomenon, from an ‘insider perspective’, by capturing the participants’ words with ‘thoughts, perceptions, feelings and experiences’.

An in-depth interview is usually a face-to-face interaction between a researcher and a participant building on the intimacy that leads to mutual self-disclosure (Johnson & Rowlands, 2012; Liamputtong, 2013). Miller & Glassner (2011) argue that this method also allows the researcher to hear the participants’ views in their words, and, can make sense of the multiple meanings and interpretations of a particular phenomenon of interest.

Semi-structured interviews are one of the essential categories of qualitative research interviews. Morse (2012, 197) believes that semi-structured interviews consist:

of a question stem, to which the participant may respond freely. Probing questions, planned or arising from the participant’s response, may be asked.

Lee & Lings (2008, 218) state that an in-depth interview is a freewheeling and flexible approach and commonly go off-track to pursue different angles. Although the semi-structured approach would be guided by a ‘detailed topic which will contain some fairly specific questions to ask, and likely ways of probing, examples to ask for’.

The primary interest of the phenomenographic approach is how people conceptualise their reality; to identify those conceptions, the

phenomenographic researcher uses in-depth interviews to receive a variety of qualitatively different ways to conceptualise a phenomenon. The challenge of this method is to get the participants to reflect on previous issues and reveal them during the interviews.

Holstein & Gubrium (1995) suggest that the interviewer notes the details of how the interview operation. Based on Taylor & Bogdan's (1997) recommendations, I maintained a journal during the interviews and made notes of the emerging themes, interpretations, including non-verbal expressions that were essential to understanding the participants' words.

Phase 2 was the semi-structured interviews, involving nine participants, from two categories of academics: six permanent academics comprised of course coordinators and lecturers and three sessional lecturers/tutors. The nine participants in the study were recruited two months prior to the conduct of the interviews. All the participants worked for the Business School of Exray University and taught in different business disciplines. To elicit as much variation in experience and work orientations, the choice of the purposeful sample took into consideration:

- disciplines;
- levels of appointment;
- experiences as academics;
- gender and role descriptions;
- length of service

I did not encounter any difficulty in identifying the potential participants to the study as the case institution has diverse staffing profiles. I identified the participants from the following:

- The institution's staffing list – for identification of discipline areas.
- Personal contacts – as a former sessional academic, I was familiar with the administrative structure and the communication processes of the case institution. I also knew many academics either by reputation or through frequent interactions with them.

Nine participants took up the invitation to participate in the study. This process involved the following stages:

- Personal contact with the participants and an introductory email outlining the purpose of the study, its requirements regarding their time involvement and the measures taken to ensure strict confidentiality. I also emphasised the voluntary aspect of their participation during that initial contact.
- Upon the receipt of a favourable response to the invitation, an information pack was sent to the participants with a more extensive briefing of the nature of the study. The information was reinforced face-to-face at the beginning of the interview.
- The initial pre-interview briefings addressed the confidentiality procedures and the participants' ability to withdraw at any stage, including during data analysis. Other issues raised and discussed during the briefings were:
  - Provision for the safe storage of transcripts Participants could request to read the interview transcripts.
  - Interviews would be audio recorded.
  - The use of pseudonyms to protect the participants' identities – neither their immediate managers nor any third parties would be able to trace any comments they made during the interviews.

None of the participants interviewed indicated any wish to withdraw from the study. The high response rate (9/9) to my invitation to participate reflected the participants' interest in my research topic and demonstrated the willingness to add their voices to that research study.

I interviewed all participants during working hours: permanent academics in their respective offices; sessional academics in private interview rooms available on the campus. I met individual needs by making arrangements to meet all participants at the times and venues that were most convenient for them.

The interview questions were drawn from the interview schedule reviewed following the pilot interviews and left much scope for probing questions. For each of those nine interviews, I began by asking the respondents a common question: to provide and share their own definitions or interpretations of the notion of quality teaching; an example of my questioning sequence follows:

Q: What does quality in the field of higher education mean to you?

A: When you said it, the first word to come to me is 'employability'. So, for me, it's providing students the skills and knowledge, so the capabilities as well as the knowledge required to get them into the work environment in a role that they want to undertake and are capable of at least getting started. So, they are only ever going to a work environment with the starting tools, but good quality education should do that. Moreover, of course, those skills are, over time, you know, if we scaffolded the way that we are supposed to, to the graduate employability skills. The graduate employability skills are the least of what our students should leave university with if we have provided good quality education.

A second example of a different response to the same question was as follows:

Q: What does quality in the field of higher education mean to you?

A: Quality in higher education?

A: I mean, I think it's about scholarship; it's about leading and mentoring, undergraduate students in areas of study that people are passionate about and engaged with. And I think, hopefully, that the institution has a kind of culture of scholarship and seeking knowledge and research and sharing and dissemination and that becomes kind of the fabric of the place. And I think that in terms of delivery, you know, I like structure. I like a subject with clearly defined topics, with clearly defined lecture material related to the topic, supporting readings and then case studies, tutorial exercises that relate to that.

### Phase 3: Focus group interviews

In the third phase of my research, I undertook two separate focus group interviews. The first focus group interview consisted of five sessional academics and the second focus group interview consisted of four permanent academics. The use of focus group interviews for my research was justified as I consider the notion of quality of teaching in higher education to be a sensitive

issue: it involved the question of sustaining quality especially among sessional lecturers.

The focus group was constructed based on the research questions and the outcomes of the individual interviews. A considerable number of studies suggest that well-designed focus groups last between one and two hours (Vaughn et al. 1996; Morgan, 1997) and consist of between six and twelve participants (Langford, Schoenfeld & Izzo, 2002; Johnson & Christensen, 2004; Henninck, Hutter & Bailey, 2011). Marshall & Rossman (2011) suggest focus groups consisting of seven to ten participants, but possibly including groups as small as four participants and as large as 12 participants. Onwuegbuzie et al. (2009, 3) warn against too small or too large number of participants:

Focus group size is guided by the constraint that the group should include enough participants to yield diversity in the information provided yet should not include too many because large groups can create an environment where participants do not feel comfortable sharing their thoughts, opinions, beliefs, and experiences.

Krueger (1994, 17) has endorsed small 'mini-focus groups' consisting of three to four participants who bring specialised knowledge and experience to the group discussion. My focus groups comprised six sessional and four permanent participants, respectively.

I selected questions for the two focus group interviews following the transcription and analysis of responses obtained in the semi-structured interviews. Some 15 key themes emerged from these interviews; I chose to collect data from 'mini-focus groups' to avoid data saturation (Henninck, Hutter & Bailey, 2011). The sample size for my study resonates with Marton & Booth (1997, 125) who state that 'a phenomenographic study always derives its description from a smallish number of people chosen from a particular population'. The selection of participants for the focus group was purposive and non-random because this sampling was the most effective strategy to ensure more variability in the data collected. Maykut & Morehouse (1994, 45) claim that:

Purposive sampling increases the likelihood that variability common in any social phenomenon will be represented in the data, in contrast to random sampling which tries to achieve variation through the use of random selection and large sample size.

Morse & Richards (2007) state that the principle drives the scope of the sample; the setting and the sample are purposively selected. Yin (2011) suggests that researchers should select and deliberately interview participants that hold different views related to their topic and avoid any bias and choose sources that confirm their preconceptions.

This subsection addresses the sample size and sampling strategy based on previous studies and practical application to my research study. Tonkiss (2012, 228) defines a focus group as a ‘small group discussion focused on a particular topic and facilitated by a researcher’. Rubin & Rubin (1995, 140) have explained that focus groups are designed to use group dynamics to yield insights into the kind of interaction found in a group:

In focus groups, the goal is to let people spark off one another, suggesting dimensions and nuances of the original problem that any one individual might not have thought of. Sometimes a totally different understanding of a problem emerges from the group discussion.

The participants on a focus group interview gather together to discuss a specific issue; the help of a moderator is sought in a particular setting where the participants feel comfortable to engage in a lively discussion for one or two hours (Krueger & Casey, 2009; Liamputtong, 2011a; Bryman, 2012). I invited a doctoral colleague experienced in conducting such discussions in her university setting where she manages the education academy to be moderator of my two focus groups. Her research interest also lay in the area of ‘emergent metaphors’.

A focus group cannot be associated with a group interview because the emphasis is primarily on the interaction between the participants. As Morgan (1997, 2) states, the ‘hallmark of focus groups is their explicit use of group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group’. The respondents’ interactions within the focus groups supplement the parts untapped by other data collection methods,

such as a one-to-one interview. Kitzinger (1994, 107) advocates that focus group discussions should lead research in new and often exciting directions; they should:

encourage interactions between research participants as much as possible. When group dynamics work well, the co-participants act as co-researchers into new and often unexpected directions and engaging in the interaction that is both complementary (such as sharing experiences) and argumentative (questioning, challenging, and disagreeing with each other).

The choice of focus group interviews for this research study was based on Stewart's et al. (2007, 163) claim that they provide:

a rich and detailed set of data about perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and impressions [and] represent a remarkably flexible research tool in that they can be adapted to obtain information about almost any topic in a wide array of settings from very different types of individuals.

Furthermore, Wutich et al. (2010) argue in favour of the suitability of using this method in research, when addressing sensitive issues; it encourages participants to open up when they interact with people who have similar experiences and views. Lewis (2003, 61) proposes two options regarding the timing of data collection; focus group before in-depth interviews and the opposite. I decided to use the focus group interviews after the in-depth interviews, based on Lewis' claim that:

Focus groups could be used after in-depth interviews to discuss the issues at a more strategic level, perhaps focusing on underlying causes and possible solutions...with other members of the same population, or with people with expertise in the research subject who would be able to comment on what has or has not emerged.

Finch & Lewis (2003) outline the researcher's role actively to help the group of participants achieve greater depths and to encourage them to explore emergent areas. During both focus group interviews, the moderator probed for more detail and depth, principally relating to the use of metaphor, when interpreting conceptions of quality, based on the categories of description that emerged from the semi-structured interviews.

Phase 3 consisted of two focus group interviews, involving ten participants: five permanent academics and five sessional academics. The ten participants were recruited to the study following the completion of Phase Two of the study. All the participants recruited for the focus groups taught in different disciplines within the Business School of Exray University. The focus group questions were designed according to emergent themes that emerged during Phase One of the research. As for the individual interviews, I contacted a purposeful sample of participants, taking into consideration:

- disciplines;
- levels of appointment;
- experiences as academics;
- gender and role descriptions;
- length of service.

I encountered no difficulty in identifying the potential participants in the study.

I followed the same process as for the semi-structured interviews:

- Upon the receipt of a favourable response to the invitation, an information pack was sent to the participants with a more extensive briefing of the nature of the study. The information was reinforced face-to-face at the beginning of the interview.
- The moderator conducted a pre-interview briefing and outlined the confidentiality procedures and the participants' ability to withdraw at any stage, including during data analysis. Other issues raised and discussed during the briefings followed the same process as for the semi-structured interviews.

Out of the 12 participants contacted, two declined the invitation due to professional commitments or clashes with other events; none of those interviewed indicated any wish to withdraw from the study. The high response rate (10/12) provided extensive discussions and paved the way for interesting debates between the participants; the discussions were a rich source of data for my research.

Both focus groups were conveniently held on the case institution's premises after business hours in a meeting room that guaranteed absolute confidentiality. The interview questions were drawn from the interview schedule reviewed following the pilot interviews. Fifteen questions were designed, I asked the respondents a common question: to provide and share their own definitions or interpretations of the notion of quality teaching.

The interview questions (See Appendix 1 for a list of the questions) were trialled in two pilot sessions and refined to address the main objective of the focus group interviews with the two categories of academics.

### Phase 3: Metaphor analysis

In Phase 3, I adopted the metaphor analysis method as it draws on both qualitative and quantitative traditions. This method was also used because metaphor is a device used in the construction of meaning and represents a complement to another qualitative method (i.e., phenomenography) that is interpretive in its approach. For this reason, metaphor analysis was used to explore the consistency and variation of metaphors used by the participants during the focus group interviews (see Figure 5.1). Eco (1996, 90) states that 'one must know how to invent metaphors'. Schmitt (2005) advocates that for qualitative research methods language is at the same time subject and medium. He also praises Lakoff & Johnson's (1980) theory of metaphor for paving way to the analysis of metaphor as a qualitative research procedure. Shuell's (1990, 102) argument that 'a metaphor provides a conceptual framework for something' resonates with Yob's (2003, 134) comment relating to abstraction and speculation:

Metaphor is employed when one wants to explore and understand something esoteric, abstract, novel, or highly speculative. As a general rule, the more abstract or speculative it is, the greater the variety of metaphors needed to grapple with it.

Saban, Kocbeker & Saban (2007) suggest that the use of metaphor invites researchers to explore comparisons and to notice similarities. In my study, I grappled with the multiple ways academics experience the quality of teaching

in a higher education institution. Pitcher (2013) suggests that a researcher may use metaphor analysis to analyse the transcripts of focus group interviews. The inductive data reduction approach to data analysis (see Ling, 2014) strongly supported the identification of metaphors – the more so, because I was able to examine the data on many occasions to ensure identification of all of the metaphors. I have attached samples of data as Appendix 9 (permanent academics) and Appendix 10 (sessional academics).

In the first instance, the moderator asked the fifteen questions sequentially and asked each participant to answer the question in the following manner:

We have fifteen questions. I'll read the question twice and I'll go around and allow everyone to be the first person. So, I'll ask you Question One, and then I'll start with you Question One and go that way. There's a component that's the same in every single question: 'Quality could be a metaphor for teaching and learning issues currently faced by Exray University; or quality is a metaphor for teaching and learning issues currently faced by Exray University. So, if you say your name and then either of those that you believe in relation to the question.

I examined the focus group transcripts several times to identify the metaphors used by the academics to describe their experience with the quality of teaching. I also decided to adopt Ling's (1998, 3) inductive data reduction strategy by:

using the broad clusters that had emerged, began to personally 'interrogate the data': looking for common phrases, making meaning of the rich data I had collected; seeing, quite quickly, that there were phrases that created a set of metaphors that I could use to 'define' my respondents. These metaphors arose inductively.

Through the repetitive reading of the interview transcripts, and constructing the inductive data reduction table, the following emerged:

- metaphor fragments from the transcripts;
- variations between the 'emergent metaphors';
- the most prevalent and dominant metaphors;
- coherent contextual patterns of the 'emergent metaphors'

## Data analysis

### Qualitative data analysis

Modern qualitative data analysis had its origins in the work of Matthew Miles and Michael Huberman (see Miles & Huberman, 1994a; 1994b) and Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (see Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; 2008). Both pairs of authors have been predominant figures in the field of data management and analysis in qualitative research methodology. More recently, Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2011, 461) have shown that the purpose of qualitative data analysis is to allow the researcher ‘to make sense of data in terms of the participants’ definitions of situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities’. The common approach to deal with data is to present them as a text which can be reduced to codes and categories.

Software designed to assist in the large-scale analysis of qualitative data, e.g., *NVivo*, has been developed and successfully employed; however, a more convenient and easy to manage approach to small-scale inductive data reduction (IDR) has been developed by Ling (2014). Making use of a spreadsheet, Ling, Heasley & Ling (2014, 1) highlight the following steps relating to effective inductive data reduction:

- identifying, through analysis, the constructs contained in each comment;
- deconstructing and evaluating each construct, by using inductive analysis, in order to identify a set of recognisable concepts;
- constructing through synthesis, a set of concepts in order to produce an inductive synthesis representing a set of emergent themes.

A sample of the Inductive Data Reduction for the individual semi-structured and focus groups interviews in my research is contained in Appendices 6 (Dane Browne) and 7 (Rosie Dredd).

### **Ethics and health and safety**

O’Leary (2004) has pointed out that researchers are unconditionally responsible for the integrity of all aspects of the research process. As qualitative inquiry focuses mostly on individuals – their thoughts and beliefs – I was duty bound to take into account appropriate human research ethical issues.

The ethical concerns associated with my research were identified well-before the commencement of data collection; they were minimal and, as such, were considered to be low risk. At the very beginning of the research programme, ethics approval was sought from the Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee (VUHREC) as my research involved the use of humans as participants. An application was submitted to the VUHREC on 8 April 2014, and the approval was granted on 26 June 2014. According to the committee’s recommendations, I took the following steps:

- I ensured that all participants received information, in writing, about the nature, objectives and duration of the research (see Appendix 3 for this information to participants).
- I obtained the written consent (see Appendix 4 for this consent form sent to participants) from those who volunteered, but under the proviso that any participant could withdraw at any time (Fowler Jr, 2009).
- I gave assurances to all participants that the data collected during the research would be confidentially handled. The participants were assigned a pseudonym and all data were stored against that pseudonym rather than by their real names.

There were no issues of personal safety associated with my research program. The sample participants were interviewed in familiar settings at a mutually convenient and safe location. The focus group interviews also took place on the premises of the case institution; these premises were considered to be risk-free and safe. Of central concern was the issue of ‘anonymity’: this was of prime importance in the protection of the integrity of participants; it

included their right to be anonymous in all public presentations of the research. In my research, the pseudonyms and the elimination of all markers in data sets were used – these are the typical ways of protecting the identities of research subjects.

Kamberilis & Dimitriadis (2013, 87) have expressed their concern regarding the safeguarding of ‘anonymity’ in focus group interviews; issues of confidentiality and consent go beyond those that arise in individual interviews:

The very nature of focus groups problematizes the issue of anonymity, as well as the theories of self upon which the very idea of anonymity is grounded. By their nature, focus groups generate data that are more public than one-to-one interviews.

Some actions were taken to address the risks associated with focus group data collection method, based on the following suggestions (Guest, Namey & Mitchell, 2013, 337):

- Mention the risk during the informed consent process.
- Emphasise the need to respect the privacy of others during the moderator’s introductory remarks.
- Permit no observers to be present in order to eliminate a potential breach of confidentiality.

#### Validity and reliability

Winter (2000) argues that in qualitative research, validity is achieved through the honesty, depth, richness and the scope of the data produced, the participants approached and the disinterestedness of the researcher. Lincoln & Guba (1985) have suggested the following principles of validity:

- The principal source of data is the natural setting.
- The key instrument of the research is the researcher rather than the research tool.
- The data are descriptive.
- The data are analysed inductively rather than using previous categories.

- Seeing and reporting the situation through the eyes of the participants.

Maxwell (1992) suggests the term ‘understanding’ as a more suitable word than ‘validity’ in qualitative research; Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2004) outline the ‘world’ the researchers are investigating and the challenge to remain completely objective. They believe that the participants’ perspectives are equally valid and need to be unearthed (2004, 181):

Validity, then, attaches to accounts, not to data or methods; it is the meaning that subjects give to data and inferences drawn from the data that are important.

Agar (cited in Silverman, 1993) has claimed that the participants’ intensive personal involvement in qualitative research, through in-depth interviews, secures sufficient level of validity and reliability. Silverman (1993, 153) challenges the insufficient grounds for validity and reliability on the argument that participants have no privileged position on interpretation. This study is based on a constructivist paradigm; Denzin & Lincoln (2005, 24) suggest that such a paradigm:

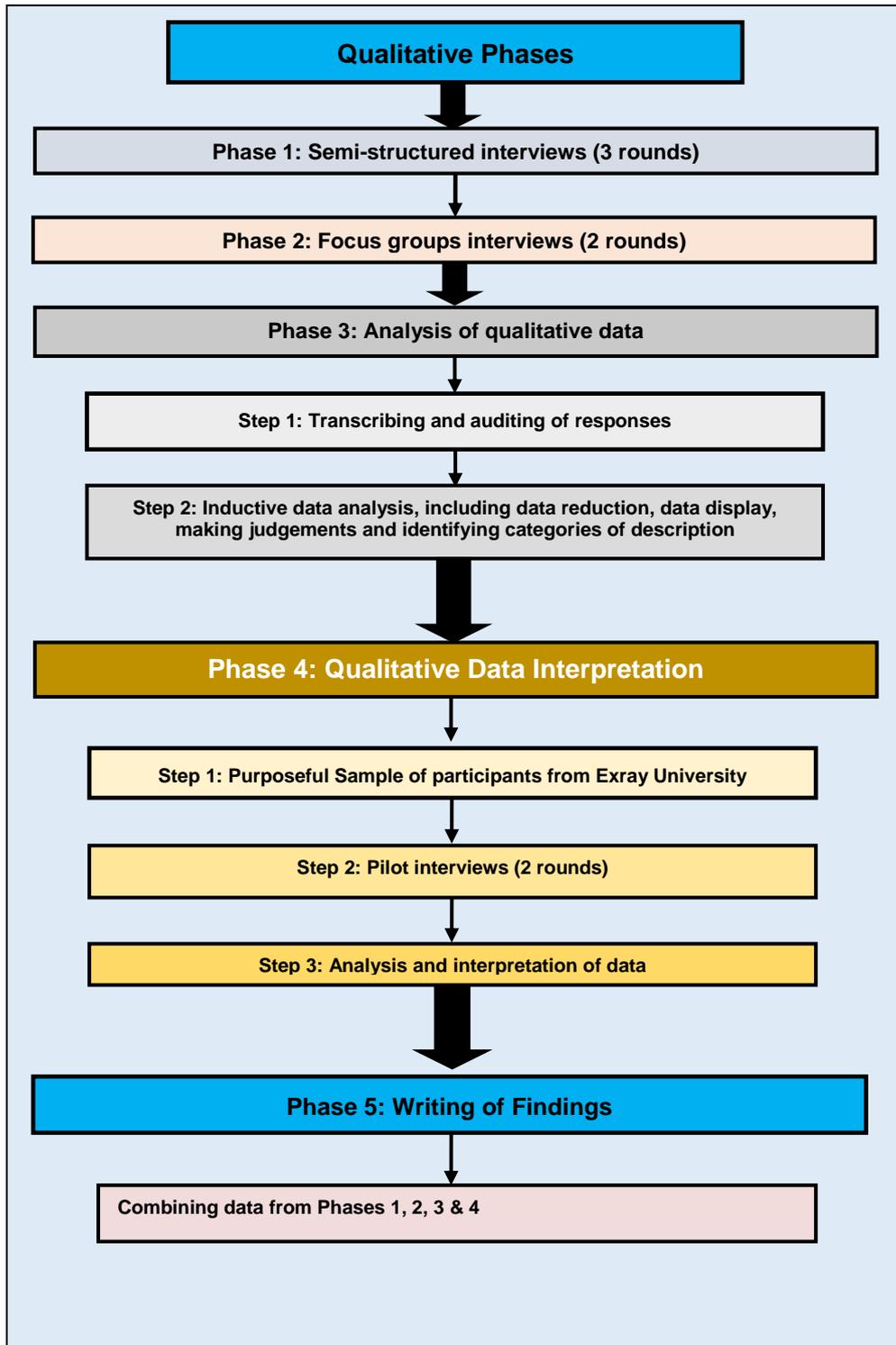
assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities) and a subjectivist epistemology (knower and respondent co-create understandings), and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures.

A summary of the methodology and the methods that I employed is contained in Figure 3.1.

In this chapter I have presented a comprehensive discussion of the methodology adopted and the methods selected for my research study. I have provided a detailed description of the phenomenographic and metaphor analysis research approaches employed in this study; I have represented a final synthesis of the use of metaphor in Figure 5.1. This chapter concludes by addressing the issues of validity and reliability of the research.

In Chapter 4, I address the findings that emerged from the individual interviews.

Figure 3.1 Summary of methodology and methods



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **Individual Interviews: Permanent and Sessional Academics**

This chapter addresses the different ways academics who took part in this study experience the conceptions of quality teaching. The outcome of the phenomenographic analysis is the outcome space that has a set of categories of description which explains how individuals experience a phenomenon in the world. Collectively the descriptions outlined in the categories represent the phenomenon of quality teaching in this research study. In the case of this study, the categories of description relate to the different ways the group of academics participating in this research are aware of the phenomenon of teaching quality. This chapter will provide the findings from Phase Two – the semi-structured interviews.

#### **Presentation of the findings**

This subsection addresses the ‘outcome space’ that contains the categories of description that emerged from my data analysis. Each category is explicitly described, based on Entwistle’s (1997, 132) claims that categories of description should give a reflection of the participants’ responses with the support of interview extracts:

The meaning resides in the essence of the comments from which the category has been constituted.

**Table 4.1 Outcome space: Categories of Description**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Category label</b>
<b>Category 1</b>	Quality of teaching as student satisfaction
<b>Category 2</b>	Quality of teaching as compliance with standard
<b>Category 3</b>	Quality of teaching as control and assurance
<b>Category 4</b>	Quality of teaching as blended learning and delivery modes
<b>Category 5</b>	Quality of teaching as scholarship and professional practice
<b>Category 6</b>	Quality of teaching as information and communication
<b>Category 7</b>	Quality of teaching as perception and language games
<b>Category 8</b>	Quality of teaching as community of practice and peer-partnership
<b>Category 9</b>	Quality of teaching as students' academic success and job-readiness

The outcome space was developed based on the 15 themes that emerged from the inductive data reduction process (see Appendices 6 and 7 for sample results from the sessional and permanent staffs). The following themes were related to the concept of quality of teaching: standards, control, evaluation, professional development, measures, information, communication, perception, engagement, training, learning, performance indicators, student feedback, accountability and blended learning (see Appendix 10 for a summary of the emergent quality themes for both sessional and permanent staff).

The analysis process was iterative and involved continually sorting and resorting the data, comparing the data with the developing categories of description. Furthermore, the definitions of the categories were tested and adjusted several times. Through this process, the 'categories of description' were discovered. The outcome space represents the primary outcome of the research and constitutes the categories of description including the qualitative similarities and differences between the categories.

**Table 4.2 Profile of participants**

<b>Serial</b>	<b>Names of Participants</b>	<b>Profile</b>
1	Jeffrey	Permanent Lecturer
2	Dane	Permanent Lecturer
3	Emmyloo	Permanent Lecturer
4	Daniel	Permanent Course Coordinator
5	Franco	Permanent Course Coordinator
6	Jaylene	Permanent Course Coordinator
7	Richard	Sessional Lecturer/Tutor
8	Rosie	Sessional Lecturer/Tutor
9	Joe	Sessional Lecturer/Tutor

Following the data analysis, a total of nine different ways of experiencing the quality of teaching were identified; these were reported as the categories of description described in Table 4.1.

As depicted in Table 4.2, three groups of academics (permanent lecturers, permanent course coordinators, and sessional lecturers/tutors) from different academic and professional backgrounds participated in this study and their responses to the interview questions are explored through the nine categories of description that emerged from the data collected, using a process of inductive data reduction. This chapter reports both individual experiences and consensual agreement related to the issues raised in this research study

### **Categories of description**

Each category of the description describes one way of experiencing teaching quality. The name of the categories of description is essential as they are named according to the key features the academics have experienced quality at Exray University.

### **Category One: Quality of teaching as student satisfaction**

In Category One, the variation of academics' experiences with student satisfaction feedback and the relationship with quality of teaching were expressed. Student satisfaction was experienced as an indicator of the quality of teaching; challenges and inherent flaws were identified. Both permanent and sessional academics shared their experiences and opinions.

Rosie outlined an essential paradox concerning quality evaluation: inverse or mismatched perceptions about the real notion of quality. She acknowledged the relationship teacher/student and described the students' feedback survey as one of a range of sources to determine the quality of teaching; there is a breakdown in student perception of what constitutes good teaching (Rosie 37.2):

I think it's breaking down the requirements of good learning and teaching and looking at how you gather a range of sources and information, part of which is the student experience, to look at what good teaching outcomes look like.

Rosie outlined her views concerning the erroneous thinking that quality correlates with students' pass rates. Consequently, she advocated the divide between perception and implementation of quality; some academics understood the meaning of 'quality' but decided to focus more on the substantive and institutional quality requirements by prioritising pass rates over quality education (Rosie 62):

I think some of them know what good quality is, but they're caught regarding what they're trying to deliver, you know, good pass rates. They're under an immense amount of pressure, so I think they know that they're producing poor quality, but I believe that they do it anyway

Paradoxically, an important stakeholder in higher education, the student, sometimes has a shallow knowledge of 'quality', which explained the different interpretations of that notion. She suspected that some students could have a basic understanding of quality education, but the vast majority just wanted to pass the subject with the least pain possible; quality education meant only the compass leading to a degree (Rosie 135):

I don't think some of them think about quality. I believe that they think about what they want from education, and I think that can be different to quality. So, I think that some students are very astute; they understand what good quality looks like, and they demand it. Most students, I think, are after the degree, and I don't think they're that fussed about whether they get quality or not. They want to pass, and they want to do it with the least pain possible.

Franco outlined what he believed to be the 'correct process of evaluation': through observation; he found that he was competent to judge the quality of an educator by using this method. He said: 'If I'm in a classroom, again I think I can fairly accurately sum up a person's ability to deliver'; furthermore, he placed his trust in face-to-face observation before making any judgement (Franco 90):

If I'm to perceive the quality of somebody else's work, I can only do that if I'm in the classroom and can interact with them.

According to Jeffrey, the notion of quality was subjectively evaluated and individually interpreted; however, he believed the concept of quality had been highly politicised and dictated by the deregulated higher education sector. The students would paradoxically explain 'quality' based on the lowest cost rather than the education provided by the institution, thus reinforcing the commodification of education and students treated as 'customers' (Jeffrey 87):

It'll be influenced, increasingly, by the market as we see the higher education sector being deregulated; it's all going to be about quality being determined by the consumer.

Daniel outlined a two-pronged aspect of quality within the higher education sector; firstly, the importance of student feedback reports; secondly, academic research and the articles published in top-ranking journals. He also noted that those extreme opinions were over-represented in current student surveys: Australian students who are jubilant and those who are miserable. A student voice 'from the middle' is missing (Daniel, 58):

I think there isn't much more than it, and it's easily collected. But it gets a poor response rate. You know, the two camps of students who are motivated to respond

are the unhappiest; then, the happiest: the more dissatisfied students are the more strongly motivated. I think you probably lack student voice in the middle.

Daniel also raised the issue of ‘moral agency’: he believed that accused students found guilty of plagiarism should not have a voice in the survey; he said (Daniel, 59):

They can respond very negatively because you’ve accused them, perhaps correctly, of cheating. And my view is that if you’ve cheated, you’ve lost your right to have a voice in the process.

Jaylene reflected on the questionable reliability of the current students’ feedback survey and found that the standard questions in the questionnaires distributed to students online did not address the notion of quality. She had tried to incorporate some new questions concerning the learning experience and expected different responses from the students. Jaylene concluded that course evaluation surveys were not a reliable tool to evaluate the concept of ‘quality’ (Jaylene 40):

I think you’ve got to be careful about taking the course evaluation surveys as a measure of quality. A lot of the time the questions aren’t about quality. They [should not be] asking the students to evaluate the quality of their buildings and their environment and other facilities.

Dane pointed out the superficiality of the students’ feedback survey, observing that the courses achieving low CES (Course Experience Survey) scores from the survey are considered to be poor quality courses. Dane thought that the CES instruments failed to capture elements of complexity in courses; he felt that they provided superficial information (Dane 38.2):

Poor quality courses are given low scores by students; my opinion is that the instrument captures an awful lot of that. A course might score highly; however, it is likely to be poorly designed.

Dane also argued that the student feedback survey was unreliable; paradoxically, he believed a demanding course that requires lots of effort from

students might be unpopular and that a negative response to the CES might be the outcome (Dane 40):

On the other hand, you might have a very rigorous course that requires the students to work hard and think hard, and they might not find that very popular and so the CES might reflect that.

Franco outlined the institution's student feedback methods. He questioned the validity of this feedback as a viable quality indicator; he considered the CES to be controversial, with its known limitations and imperfections; he saw the CES as a tool that provided students with a critical voice regarding the quality of teachers' delivery (Franco 126):

We understand constraints and shortcomings [of the CES survey], but we're using that more to understand whether students think that we're delivering a quality service.

Emmylou had a mixed opinion about the real interpretation of the notion of quality and doubted the validity of the course evaluation surveys. The evaluation of teaching was also questioned: at present, the chosen indicator was to associate low CES scores with poor teaching. Emmylou lamented the fact that serious quality issues were being identified by correlating course experience surveys with quality teaching; she reflected (Rosie 40):

It says that if you're an academic, and your students fail or they give you a poor course evaluation survey result, then it's your fault – you've been a poor teacher.

According to Emmylou, the notion of 'quality' could be related to at least three elements: rigorous and demanding courses; students' learning experience; the influence they would have in the world that reflect positively on both themselves and society. She said (Emmylou 76):

Students can reflect on the course; they can think about themselves, and they can reflect on society and feel confident that when they go out into the real world, that they can make the world a better place

Daniel acknowledged the importance of the students' feedback and raised the issue that students were treated as 'auditors'. He praised the students' reliable evaluation of the course materials, staff engagement, and interest. Students are 'valued customers'; they should not be taken for granted. He

suggested a second use of the feedback survey: for confirming the further employment of sessional academics. Daniel recruited the academics in his discipline and outlined the importance of formal and informal communication with them throughout the semester. The high calibre of academics employed in his program, including the understanding regarding the notion of ‘quality’, was considered to be a strength. (Daniel 112):

We meet before and during the semester. I try and catch up with them informally. And I think I’m lucky that they know the material and like the material. I’m very open to feedback and suggestions on what we should do and what they think we could do better.

Some of the determinants of quality were, however, considered to be unreliable. Richard stated that the university had two determinants of quality: CES scores and pass rates. Both of these metrics had proven to be unreliable. Casual staffs were the first casualties: low pass rates and low survey scores meant no employment; he decried the situation (Richard 66.2):

where poor student feedback meant you didn’t get a job next year, is a ridiculous use of that particular feedback score. So, they’re what I see as perceived – pass rates and good CES feedback are seen as quality; it isn’t.

Daniel believed that, whereas qualitative data provided positive student feedback, quantitative metrics did not match. Daniel felt there was a missed opportunity to collect more information from students about the benefits of the course (Daniel 78):

The comments were very positive, and the score was either 70 or just under. And I thought, “Oh, the comments probably looked like it might have translated into a slightly better score”. My feeling was that maybe I’d missed an opportunity to encourage more of that cohort to respond. So, I guess I felt like the perceived quality was reasonable but perhaps not as high as the commentary reflected.

Jaylene deplored the superficiality of the students’ feedback survey! She pointed out that the current evaluation survey questionnaires did not ask students to make a judgement about quality; rather, they asked students to judge whether their lecturers were considerate or not. Furthermore, Jaylene

considered the reliance on this survey as ‘problematic’ due to an apparent lack of reliability of survey instruments; she commented (Jaylene 44):

But [the survey] doesn’t ask about the quality of their lecturers. It asks them about whether the lecturers are considerate or whether they’re supportive; it doesn’t ask them to make a judgement about quality. Relying on surveys as a source of information is problematic.

Jaylene suspected that neither the exam results nor course evaluation tools reflected the quality of teaching in the classroom. She argued there were better ways to assess ‘quality’ than relying on just two parameters: examination results and course evaluation surveys. She concluded that the institution could find better means to measure quality other than relying on judgements made about examination results and successful classroom teaching (Jaylene 90):

It would be useful actually to think of better ways of assessing the quality and not relying on just those sorts of two parameters. I think there also needs to be recognition that there’s a lot more that goes into thinking about quality than just the classroom teaching.

In the first category of description, the academics expressed personal feelings and shared personal experiences related to student feedback surveys. Although there was a consensus about the importance of the surveys, all participants were very critical about their effectiveness and believed the flaws exceeded the merits of the survey as a reliable tool to measure the quality of teaching.

### **Category Two: Quality of teaching as compliance with standards**

In Category Two, academics related their experiences with quality standards and their relationship with the quality of teaching. Both permanents and casuals cited standards compliance as an indicator of the quality of teaching; this presented them with challenges; each identified inherent flaws.

Rosie addressed the issue of ‘marketisation’ as a substitute for quality education. Rosie assessed the present pedagogical approach and pointed out

the course coordinators' strategy to 'dumb down' the standard to increase the pass rates; she deplored the practice of sacrificing the quality of education for business-like financial imperatives: she commented (Rosie 32.2):

Course coordinators are changing the standard of their program, 'dumbing it down' so that the pass rate goes up because there's such a keen interest in moving students through. It's a shoddy business: just to get the students in and the fees paid, as opposed to [providing] a quality education program.

A different method of evaluating quality, supported and followed by Franco, was direct observation and frequent interaction with sessional academics. He explained that he would ensure that tutors were complying with the quality standards by regular visits in class to judge quality standards; he would also help the tutor, if necessary (Franco 99):

If someone's running "old-fashioned" tutorials for me and I'm not there, I would pop in and sit in on a couple. I'd say, upfront, "I'm doing this [but] not because I'm judging you".

Another method of assessing the effectiveness of the quality system was through the robust moderation process. Richard outlined another strategy to reinforce the notion of quality: improved moderation processes including a random sample of essays to ensure consistency of marking and, more importantly, evaluating the course outcomes and achievement of the planned quality goals. He believed this process was a more reliable tool than the 'quick' feedback from students. Richard felt that quality measures drove universities; these did not always reflect the actual quality. He was concerned that sessionals were exposed to quality frameworks that were put in place by management. He thought that the focus had been on these measures rather than on the notion of quality; he reflected (Richard 10.1):

Quality is crucial, and universities have to sustain it in the classes. The difficulty lies with sessionals, and I guess you want me to relate this principally back to the quality framework. The [sessional] measures create the problem; those measures don't always reflect quality.

Rosie believed the national quality frameworks had to apply to all the institutions without discrimination. Sessional academics had the responsibility to apply rigidly the same quality of teaching irrespective of the ranking of those institutions; in reality, the quality standards fluctuate, depending on the contexts; she emphasised this point (Rosie 107.1):

They're all supposed to be equivalent. So, this idea that when you change institutions, you have to move up and down depending on what the quality of learning and teaching is concerning, and yet we all know it exists.

According to Rosie, to achieve consistency of quality standards, frequent discussions between team members were required. As a consequence, meetings between the course coordinators and their teams were the key to avoiding variations in quality standards. She elaborated (Rosie 107.2):

So, I move around from institution to institution, and I'm very much looking at the discussion around the deliverables, and the conversation with course coordinators. And that will tell me or should readjust me up and down. I'm pleased to say that in my experiences there are not a lot of variabilities.

The quality standard is always fluctuating within the higher education sector, and a sessional should be free to accept or decline an inferior quality of teaching standard. As a sessional academic, Rosie raised the quality standard issues with the course coordinators; she pointed out that should the institution's standard be lower than her expectations she would decline the job offer (Rosie 107.3):

So, I tend to teach at the same sort of institutions. Most of the time the quality and the discussion around quality, is very consistent, and if it turns out the institution's quality is much lower than what I'm comfortable with, I just won't teach there.

Emmylou suggested that quality standard compliance was part of the institution's 'managerialist' approach to running its operations; she argued that this was the university's strategy for ensuring compliance with the quality standards and use of technology to improve the quality of teaching. As quality was a complex notion, the difficulty was in formulating a uniform definition for the different categories of academics (Emmylou 143):

And, I mean, I'm talking about years probably, rather than months, as you gradually, incrementally, move towards a more uniform, more about an agreed-on idea of what quality is.

Emmylou was aware that there were three dimensions of a quality standard within the institution. First, that quality is related to the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF); second, the internal processes profess 'quality'; third, the decision made by the institution ensures compliance with the AQF standard (Emmylou 20.1):

I suppose, one where they did it at a more superficial level and complied, which is what [happens at] Exray University. I think the decision is that would be the way they did it. So, that consisted of my undertaking a paper exercise to ensure that our documentation complied with the AQF.

For Emmylou, 'quality' associates with compliance to an imposed framework – that of the AQF; thus, it refers to a quality assurance process and not one related to quality standards.

Jeffrey considered that a stable group of teaching academics contributed to the quality standard in the higher education sector; currently, there was a high degree of mobility amongst sessionals. Jeffrey was proud of the stability of his team, arguing that different course coordinators had personal quality expectations and demands that encouraged balance. The alignment of assessment tasks and the institution's quality standards 'with regards to content and assessment within the parameters of those overall AQF (Australian Qualification Framework) mattered' (Jeffrey 26) and helped ensure that the school with which he was involved provided a degree of autonomy to sessional academics. Jeffrey considered that the notion of quality was a multifaceted concept. He argued that, on the one hand, the concept of quality would vary from student to student; on the other hand, the academics would uphold their views and interpretation of the required standard of quality for their respective courses (Jeffrey 76.1):

Well, that's always going to be there, and one student's notion of what is a quality teacher is going to be different from another. One lecturer is going to have a different interpretation from another.

Jaylene argued that a course quality standard required consistency in course expectations. She explained that there was a specific process relating to the development of courses; this process established the standard expectations for both students and academics (Jaylene 79):

We have the guidelines for what our expectations are for a pass, credit, a distinction or an HD, a fail or an awful fail. Those are all delineated in each course guide, and both staff and students have access to that information about what our expectations are.

The institution had to ensure that, to maintain the quality standard, it addressed the cultural sensitivities and that it needed to invest in the sessional academics' professional development. In that respect, Jaylene believed the organisation should improve the treatment of sessional academics by regarding them as members of the faculty. This approach, according to Jaylene, would improve the quality of teaching within the organisation. Ultimately, however, she suspected that adequate training of all academics would be the right motivator for sessional academics as some of them would have had similar training from other institutions. There was a need, she believed, to focus more on inducting sessional academics into the school's quality culture, its course structures and standards (Jaylene 105):

Jeffrey referred to course coordinators' approaches to micro-managing sessional academics, namely: that course coordinators established quality standards. The performance indicators relating to the course outcomes, such as failure rates; course coordinators expectations on a variety of teaching styles; different levels of engagement with the students; subsequently, trust the teaching staff was also outlined. Subsequently, trust in the teaching staff was also outlined (Jeffrey 85.2):

I think there should always be a lot of freedom for different styles and teaching, trust about different teaching methods, the skills, and the knowledge that members of staff – whether sessional or tenure – have to do the job.

In this second category of description, emphasis was on compliance with quality standards. There was a consensus concerning the importance to comply with institutional policies and maintaining consistent standards. The participants' conceptions concerning standards revolved around the Australian Quality Framework and the institutional internal quality standards at Exray University. From the academics' viewpoint, the quality of teaching should involve an understanding of the prevailing quality standards and the application of these to their respective design and delivery of the teaching materials.

### **Category Three: Quality of teaching as control and assurance**

In Category Three, quality assurance and control, and the relationship with quality of teaching remained linked to the variation of academics' experiences. In this category of description, the quality of teaching meant quality assurance and the notion of power and control. Both permanent and sessional academics shared their experiences and opinions.

Rosie questioned the quality of teaching at Exray University; there had been a failure to provide proper quality assurance direction and governance due to the rigidly siloed structure within departments.

Joe suggested that the institution needed to give more consideration to the notion of quality; there was also a need to question whether [or not] the actual quality control was delivering what it was intended to do: to critically assess the validity and reliability of the real measurement tool (Joe 31.2):

I mean, the institution probably needs to give much more consideration to the issue of quality in a meaningful way. There is the need to think about whether or not teaching scores are, in fact, genuine or are they something else?

Richard explained that the perception of quality depends on flawed measures that include, for instance, anecdotal feedback relating to complaints to the course coordinators which he considered to be more valid than the other measures (Richard 81):

So, I think the perception of quality is that we've got two measures (pass rates and CES scores) that are flawed. As well, there is anecdotal feedback, given when people contact the course coordinator and complain or say something. That's probably more valid than any of the others.

Emmylou demonstrated a link between the moderation process and the quality of teaching. She rejected the idea of an association between moderation and quality (Emmylou 120):

So, I don't think that's about quality; I think it is in some ways about managing risk.

Emmylou suggested that the institution must maintain the quality of its product and processes and reinforce the quality standards through the use of rigorous rubrics. She pointed out that, as 'a community of scholars', the teaching academics could agree on a uniform definition of quality – yet they continued in being 'balkanised' within their classrooms (Emmylou 114.2):

Probably if we had some conversation amongst ourselves, as this idea of a community of scholars, we might at least get some notion of what is "quality". Even if, in a forum discussion, they agreed, I don't know whether it would be possible for them to implement that.

Jaylene suggested that cost-cutting and managerial control measures were, in fact, quality measures. She indicated, from her previous experiences in three Australian tertiary institutions, that there was a recurrent pattern of justification across tertiary institutions in Australia: a link between both accountability and proper management, and budgeting and cost-cutting (Jaylene 18):

So, I have only worked across those three universities. I certainly think there's a focus on universities being efficient with their funds.

Joe outlined the correlation between the notion of quality and power; quality control issues were disciplinary and punitive tools rather than being related to quality within the higher education sector (Joe 45.2):

The big problem with quality is it's often more about the disciplining staff, and it's more about control of staff and power over staff than it is about actual concerns of quality itself.

Joe claimed that the cost-saving argument for getting the job done at the least possible cost prevailed over the real essence of the quality imperative for the organisation (Joe, 94.1):

In some ways, Management doesn't give a bugger about quality. They just want the job done, and they just want it as cheaply as possible. There is a sense in which you can be beaten up for being a poor-quality teacher or whatever, so quality can be a stick to beat you with.

The course coordinators always demonstrated their power in controlling the performance of sessional academics. Franco outlined that failure to improve the quality of teaching might result in drastic measure against the designated sessional academic, (e.g., not receiving a contract of employment for the next semester). Course coordinators were empowered to take such action if necessary after subsequent warnings; he reported that casuals were mere 'commodities' (Franco 45.2):

But if it's a persistent issue, I have an obligation to say to that person, "Things aren't working out and here's what I think is the problem", give them a chance to respond. If it is an issue that they're not prepared to address or change, then we are fortunate – we have the option of saying, "Well, we won't use you next semester".

Dane believed that balancing the staff allocation in a required but narrow field of business management is complex and challenging; it centres around the standards of individual academic staff. Dane's concern was that while the majority of academics (including tutors) in his course area are well-qualified, only a small number are expert in a particular discipline. (Dane 47):

Our department here has a large number of academics, only two of whom you would say are probably experts in [my discipline] – either that's their research area, or that's their practice area. The other permanent staff members that teach the course are well-qualified academic lecturers, but it is not their particular discipline.

Dane has virtually no control over the appointment of local sessionals. Dane believed that this organisational model has impacted on the course quality standard (Dane 45):

I think we do have some control over who they appoint but generally speaking, the recruitment and the administration of their employment happens at the offshore rather than the onshore end.

Dane's prime concerns when designing an offshore course were the context, the quality of the teaching and the off-shore delegation of responsibility for the outcomes. To a lesser extent, a similar situation arose with the domestic team of academics – whom he rarely saw and who mostly operated alone (Dane 45, 46):

I need to think about who is doing the teaching, what their particular context is and whether or not they are likely to care as much about the outcomes. I have chosen an offshore campus as the example, but that's also the case here in Melbourne. I think I've got five staff who teaches as part of a team but they mostly operate by themselves and I very rarely get to see them in action.

The third category demonstrated the relationship between the quality of teaching and quality assurance and control. In this category assurance and control were experienced by the academics as residing in and affecting the quality of teaching. This subsection highlighted some exciting variations, ranging from the notion of power, managerialism, accountability and performativity as the capstone of institutional quality assurance. There was an emergence of two new elements: participants' experience of quality assurance and association with the concept of power.

#### **Category Four: Quality of teaching as blended learning and delivery modes**

In Category Four, academics, talking about the 'quality of teaching', expressed variation in their experiences with blended learning and delivery modes. . In this category of description, blended learning and delivery modes of academic materials impacted on the quality of teaching. Both permanent and sessional academics shared their experiences and opinions.

The blended learning approach was a cost-saving device (i.e., reduced face-to-face teaching hours, increased on-line assessments) as part of a

management strategy, nominally to improve the students' learning experience. In fact, blended learning led to the reduction of costs relating to the marking of assignment and employment of sessionals. Although Rosie acknowledged the benefits of blending learning, she pointed out the possibility of higher education institutions having a double agenda: (Rosie 24):

I think blended learning's fantastic as a concept. I believe that the problem is we don't have any data to say, to demonstrate what works and what doesn't work. And it's been muddled by the drive for cost saving.

Joe believed the notion of quality was more closely related to teacher attributes than to the quality of the material (Joe 16.3):

Regarding "quality", you are dependent, to a high degree, on the person doing the work, more so than anything else.

The student cohort is another variable to be considered when evaluating the notion of quality within the higher education sector. Joe believed that taking into account the different degrees of interest and motivation might impact on the teaching scores obtained (Joe, 19.2):

It doesn't take into account the variabilities regarding the student cohort where some years you get students that are very open to learning and very keen to learn, whereas other times you get a group of students who seem to be unmotivated, and not interested.

Franco argued that team teaching was an additional tool for evaluating teaching academics. He considered the team delivery to be very efficient and benefited the community of educators: team teaching in pairs – one permanent and one sessional – encourages a supportive environment and a two-way evaluation of worth (Franco 97):

With team teaching, I get a real-time sense of what that person is doing and I can then judge, and I can support them if they're not – and often the other way around.

Emmylou outlined the correlation between academics' employment status and the interpretation of quality. She saw little incentive for academics to pursue the concept of quality as they linked it only to teaching as distinct from their research pursuits (Emmylou 145.1):

Well, there must be significant amounts of research out there that I'm sure could be used to assist probably, regarding quality, but most academics aren't going to go out there and search through all that unless they're interested in teaching.

Emmylou identified the different strategies deployed by the university to improve the quality of teaching: recorded lectures and change in the assessment structure; she believed it would make no difference in improving students' satisfaction.

Jaylene argued in favour of the positive contribution that blended learning had made to the quality of teaching. The adoption of this pedagogical style had attracted considerable student interest, had increased class attendance, and had a more positive quality of learning outcomes; for one lecturer (Jaylene 27), this had resulted in:

his stopping the traditional style lecture; [it was] chopped up into small, ten- to 20-minute podcasts. He used that as a way to "get students in". Then, in face-to-face tutorials, he achieved much better attendance: the students found it interesting; they were engaged.

Rosie outlined the university's effort to improve the quality of the course structure despite the failure of the one-to-one model due to the poor students' response to online self-directed learning; the course academics also had to face the pressure of additional workloads and more focus on research (Rosie 21):

So, the students provided feedback, indicating that they were dissatisfied with the [poor] quality. Furthermore, some course coordinators told me that, because their load was so heavy, they had shifted in their work plans to emphasise research.

Rosie believed the lack of clear communication about the notion of quality during, rather than, at the end of the semester, impacted negatively on the sessional academics' delivery of materials; the students would experience variations in the quality of teaching (Rosie 92):

I think it's imperative that we should have quite a lot of discussion, and clear understanding, and reviewing of that through a semester, not waiting until the end, or not, as you're saying, relying on teaching with them for a couple of semesters.

Jeffrey outlined the organisation's concerns relating to the sensitive issue of quality: how to overcome the divide between the classroom pedagogies and administrative quality assurance decisions. Due to the fast development and integration of technology within higher education institutions, the erosion of face-to-face lectures and students' engagement had paved the way for blended learning strategies (Jeffrey 18):

The policy issues go up and down within the university regarding what they're concerned about – and the federal government as well – based on a form of auditing. What's happening in the classroom is a wholly different thing. You see lots of policy decisions regarding online ways of teaching. And I think that's unquestionably reshaped the level of face-to-face engagement with students.

Daniel suggested that the importance of scholarship and communication between academics and students were contributing factors to the quality of teaching within the tertiary sector (Daniel 71):

So, quality in higher education: I think that it is a culture of scholarship, and then I believe it is the structure in the material, because you're trying to help people who don't know anything about it make sense of it. You've got to be able to structure the ideas. If you structure them in a way, and you communicate them, then the audience can make sense of them.

Jaylene argued for reduced reliance on sessionals; simultaneously, she proposed improved support and consideration for all teaching academics irrespective of their status within the academy. She outlined the importance of team cohesion and felt lucky to have one of the best teaching team in the school. The sessional academics were not metaphorically considered as 'disposable' but had been adopted as part of the teaching team and given the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process (Jaylene 104):

We have encouraged sessionals to think about their needs and ours rather than just treating them as disposable staff that we can do away with at the end of the semester. We think of them as part of the team and part of the process that makes this course a good one.

Rosie believed in the concerted effort from all categories of academics to establish one definition of 'quality'. She recommended a debate between both

permanents and sessionals to develop a standard definition of quality; it would be an occasion for course coordinators to demonstrate how the notion of ‘quality’ was embedded within the teaching materials and classroom experience (Rosie 58.2):

I would have thought that would be about the time to sit with your colleagues and debate. Or discuss, “What does good quality education look like?”

Emmylou outlined the leniency some academics showed towards students and suggested that it was up to the teachers to improve the standard. She highlighted that the need for conformity had transformed academic quality into two performance indicators: efficiency and effectiveness (Emmylou 24):

As managerialism creeps through universities and creeps through the public sector, there’s more focus on metrics, there’s more focus on compliance, and so that if you can measure things, then you can get compliance because, theoretically, you can determine teaching quality outcomes

In the fourth category of description, I describe multiple variations of the participants’ experience with the delivery of materials. Delivery of course materials was a contributing factor to the quality of teaching for the majority of the academics interviewed. A second issue, relating to advanced pedagogical tools, was the merit of blended learning in both ‘quality of teaching’ and in ‘quality of learning experiences’.

### **Category Five: Quality of teaching as scholarship and professional practice**

In Category Five, I highlight the discussion of the relationship between ‘quality of teaching’ as permanent and sessional staff reflected on scholarship and professional practice in the department.

Emmylou advocated a different approach to ensure conformity with the quality standard: formal and informal professional development (PD) of academics. She expressed her concern concerning the formal compulsory teaching training programs (such as Graduate Certificate in Teaching – GCT)

had created a divide between sessional and permanent academics. Emmylou was critical of the handling of PD programs for staff; she saw teaching qualifications as being of considerable importance to permanents; however, due to budgetary constraints, sessional academics were not offered this training opportunity. Subsequently, the GCT program was deemed inadequate and has undergone modification (Emmylou 142):

Yes, it was a shocking course – just dreadful, absolutely dreadful! My understanding is that they've ditched that now and are doing something which is aimed at just getting people to be more effective in the classroom, which I suspect is giving them some skills to survive. I don't think there's anything to assist [sessional academics]; indeed, no formal course!

In addition to the contribution of the sessional academics, Jeffrey believed that, if tertiary institutions wished to improve and maintain the quality of teaching, they needed to invest in PD and to provide better support and recognition for sessional academics (Jeffrey 72.1):

If we want to improve quality, then we have to make it a profession which is desirable and demonstrates to people that their skills are necessary. If we [are] to improve quality, it needs, to begin with, the better treatment of sessional staff.

Daniel believed that scholarship within well-structured courses was part of the notion of quality (Daniel, 70):

And I think, hopefully, that the institution [develops] a kind of culture of scholarship and seeking knowledge and research and sharing and dissemination that becomes the fabric of the place. Regarding delivery, I like a subject with clearly defined topics, with clearly defined lecture materials related to the topic, supporting readings, and then case studies and tutorial exercises.

Jaylene suggested universal training for all teaching academics to maintain the institution's quality standard; she outlined the need to train and educate sessionals for a better awareness of the organisation's processes. Sessionals also needed to understand students' cultural sensitivities and should be given the same opportunity to complete a tertiary teaching certificate (Jaylene 106):

You need to train your sessional staff to be aware of what are the processes in your school, and you need to make sure they're aware of cultural sensitivities. There is a

[case] to be made for actually incorporating a tertiary teaching certificate for sessional staff as well – or at least giving them access to that program.

Jaylene believed the sessional academics' sense of belonging and commitment to the organisational culture would contribute to the institution's quality standard. She would prefer to work with permanent staff; however, should the sessional academics be offered the security of employment, the organisation would be the principal beneficiary (Jaylene 124):

I know from experience that sessionals can be very good, strong teachers, and if you've got a good team together, they can enhance the quality of the experience. It very much depends on that experience and knowledge and how you incorporate and treat your sessionals. If you want to get quality results, you need to put the time into them.

Jaylene also believed in the effectiveness of the current teaching practicum and would sometimes drop in to observe the new teaching academics' performance (Jaylene 83):

to see how new staff are coping with the processes and the delivery; so, I have monitored, if you like, new staff to make sure that they're delivering the right messages and that their classes are flowing and to offer them advice and support if they need it.

Furthermore, she argued that the course coordinators' responsibility was to establish and control the quality standard in both home and offshore programs. To ensure consistency of quality of teaching standards, she encouraged new academics to attend the lectures (Jaylene 82):

I encourage new staff also to come to the lectures so that they hear what we're saying first-hand, and that happens in the offshore program as well. We have several of the staff come to the lectures and check in what we're saying and that we're then coherent and getting the message across.

Finally, Jaylene outlined her preference for tenure; she believed there must be less reliance on sessional and more on permanent academics. The focus needed to be on training to improve quality within the organisation. Furthermore, she addressed the issue of innovation as the driver of quality of teaching; she

emphasised constancy of innovation, improvement in the delivery of courses, and research to improve the quality of courses (Jaylene 20.3):

We innovate quite regularly regarding producing a better-quality outcome because we're looking for new examples, drawing on new research, looking at having different case studies for each semester.

Rosie pointed out the 'dumbing down' of the quality indicators, indicating that some teaching academics devalued the system by influencing the course outcomes. She questioned the validity of the students' feedback and stressed that the teaching scores might not reflect the reality if the teaching academics were influencing the survey outcomes by downgrading the quality standards (Rosie 38):

I don't think you can tell one way or the other: whether that had any link to good teaching; whether it's about a popular lecturer whose scores are getting elevated because he or she is handing over the results of the test; whether students have to learn anything.

Franco argued that the PD of sessional academics could improve the quality of teaching. He suggested more time and assistance to sessionals to develop their teaching skills: (Franco 127):

We should give them a lot of paid time to read, assimilate, absorb, and understand the material they're presenting.

Richard quoted the case of an off-shore partner university, where good teachers were denied employment because of their low teaching scores. Academic profiles provide further quality indication: a full or partial doctoral qualification means a 'good' resource for the university (Richard 71.1):

Good teachers may not get the jobs if they don't get good scores. I can understand instances where there is criticism of a tutor: "I can't understand this tutor because their English language is poor".

In the fifth category of description, respondents stressed the importance of scholarship in teaching and learning about improving the quality of teaching; they highlighted the deficiency of continuous professional development

initiatives for sessional academics; they drew parallels between the need for scholarship and the maintenance of quality standards.

### **Category Six: Quality of teaching as information and communication**

In Category Six, the effectiveness of information sharing and interactions between full-timers and sessionals were significant.

An emerging theme from the data analysis related to interactive quality evaluation. Joe believed that the organisation needed to introduce formal procedures concerning regular meetings: before and end of semester meetings, together with a mid-semester meeting took place. These should include clarifying quality standards; reviewing strengths and weaknesses of the process; evaluating the teaching scores. He stressed the importance of continuous communication about quality issues (Joe 74):

I think there should be an open, upfront discussion of quality and I think there should be some consideration given to what are the strengths and weaknesses, say, of the good teaching score.

Franco believed that teaching quality could be related to the degree of interaction and engagement with students and the students' response to the lecturers' inputs including the extent of regular two-way communication (Franco 100):

What I'm looking for regarding their quality is the way the students respond to them – that connection I talked about earlier that if a lecturer in a classroom can't connect with a student, cannot get them to talk back, then there's not much quality [teaching] going on.

The course coordinators must ensure they communicate among themselves to ensure consistency of the quality standard across programs and courses. According to Richard, the issue of uniformity of information could be resolved by formal communication between the course coordinators in the first instance, together with forums addressing course guidelines and quality issues. He lamented the lack of resources (time and money) to implement any action plan.

Richard outlined the importance of regular meetings rather than only very few occasions during the semester; he reflected (Richard 100):

Well, the course coordinators have got to talk to each other. You've got to be able to have time to bring the tutors together and have them sit down and talk about the program with the course coordinator and with each other.

Jaylene considered the role of the course coordinator was to ensure coherent and consistent communication regarding quality processes (Jaylene 49):

We put out the course guide at the beginning of the semester that has a consistent, coherent message to the students, as well as asking our sessionals to advise how students might develop their essays.

Jaylene outlined the communication mechanism in place to ensure a consistent message to sessionals; she confirmed that she had no such issues with her team. Overall, she suggested that the solution was to have regular and experienced sessional academics who were encouraged to be part of the teaching team and offering resources that assisted 'quality teaching in class' (Jaylene 119):

Again, I think it comes down to trying to have a consistent group of sessionals that you draw on regularly, and you use, and you bring into your team, and you make them feel part of the team and ensure that their opinions are heard and valued.

According to Jaylene, meeting with both permanent and sessional academics to review each semester's work, using two-way communication, was crucial in maintaining a quality standard. This involved, for example, meeting with both permanent and sessional academics to review each semester's work (Jaylene 78):

We meet with the sessional members of the team – both here and off-shore – at the beginning of each semester. We speak to them about the pedagogical changes there are going to be over the course of the year.

Jaylene argued that the communication of course materials, including the information communicated to students, together with a requisite level of engagement, provided suitable quality indicators (Jaylene 48):

What does quality in the field of higher education mean to me? One is the quality of the learning experience of the students: the communication, the level of engagement, how they engage, and what they learn. The second aspect, I guess, is the quality of outcomes, which is getting to the idea of what they learn.

As a measure of control, Emmylou advocated the importance of formal and informal meetings to communicate the course guidelines and quality objectives to sessional academics (Emmylou 82):

At the beginning of the semester, we hopefully should have a meeting with our sessional staff and talk to them about what the course is designed to do; how we see it going; how it is being run. Ultimately, we hope that we have set up the assessment and the readings and the tutorial exercises to achieve those ends.

In the sixth category of description, the findings provided an outline of the quality issues relating to communication and information within participants' teaching practice. The interaction between course managers and both full-time and sessional academics highlighted the benefits of disseminating relevant information regarding quality standards, course outcomes, and availability of quality course materials.

### **Category Seven: Quality of teaching as perception and language games**

In Category Seven, the varying experiences of both permanents and sessionals with rhetoric and language highlighted the quality elements of perceptions and language games.

Emmyloo (146.3) believed there are presumptions and assumptions made in the name of quality during the design phase of the course, yet it is a concept that remains hidden and undisclosed:

And you make assumptions that they too will want to see good outcomes and will do things to do best of their ability and therefore quality will happen that way. You make a lot of assumptions. You certainly never talk about it: you never mention the word 'quality'.

Jeffrey outlined the tension between the rhetoric and reality of quality within the higher education sector. He critically exposed the ‘language games’ and half-truths about the notion of quality; he believed that academics should be allowed to critique the measurement tools that conveyed a flawed picture of reality (Jeffrey 62.2):

The tools and devices used to make these subjective decisions appear as if it’s objective and factual. [We should] point out the limitations of these.

Jaylene noted the paradoxical situation of reconciling quality with the cost-cutting; the rhetoric of the institution was focused on ‘the improvement of quality’ but, ironically the dictum was ‘improve programs; reduce costs’ (Jaylene 16.2):

The rhetoric of the college and those teaching quality courses was all around “How do we improve quality?” But then the policies that were handed down seemed to be very much focused on “How do we cut costs?”

Jeffrey considered that the second source of tension was the interpretation of quality of teaching: teaching quality versus publications/research grants (Jeffrey 47.3):

The pressure to, you know, publish more, apply for grants, all these other pressures that we’re under often sends mixed messages about what universities value; often, ‘teaching and quality’ is seen as less important.

Daniel stressed the students’ lack of understanding concerning the expected standard: he pointed out that there was a significant difference between their perceived and actual notion of quality (Daniel 82.2). As well, he noted some discrepancies between the official students’ verbal comments and personal feedback obtained in tutorial groups (Daniel 76):

I looked through my CES returns, and I think the comments were very positive, but I think that the overall score perhaps didn’t reflect how positive the comments were.

Joe suggested that the power metaphor deeply embedded within the quality rhetoric is used to promote a ‘blame game’ culture within the organisation. In that respect, Joe outlined the lack of precise definition of quality and the expected requirements; the actual practice proposed only an assumption and

precluded a clear explanation of the ‘quality’ notion. In the case of failure, the teacher is the one to be blamed (Joe 94.2):

There’s never any discussion about what quality is or how you can achieve quality outcomes. It’s just assumed, and if it doesn’t work, we all you’re [the teacher] the problem.

In the seventh category of description, the academics shared their personal experiences with the complexity of the notion of quality, the prevalent rhetoric and language games associated with this concept. The findings demonstrated many controversies regarding ‘quality’ as a concept: multiple perceptions regarding quality of teaching, and the ‘language’ used by university management to communicate a consistent definition of this notion to the employees.

### **Category Eight: Quality of teaching as community of practice and peer-partnership**

In Category Eight, the variation between the teaching experience of permanent and part-time academics became apparent. This variation impacted on the various perceptions of ‘quality of teaching’ within the department.

Generally, Rosie saw the ‘course outcomes’ as measures of quality; specifically, she believed that there were other quality indicators, including students’ academic performances, feedback from the industry, and peer-review reports about teachers’ performance.

According to Rosie, a sessional/tutor, the course outcomes could be considered as measures of quality. Rosie believed there were other quality indicators: students’ academic performances, feedback from the industry and the peer-review reports about the teachers’ performance.

I think getting industry involved in setting expectations is critical. I think you should be looking at the student. I think you should be looking at the academic performance. I think you should be looking at peer review of teaching performance, and also looking at industry input.

Jeffrey, a permanent lecturer, argued that the institution took the importance of sessional academics for granted until they noticed that their high mobility was due to job insecurity. Although Jeffrey valued the sessional academics' comments and feedback they were often forced to miss meetings because of other professional commitments; lack of remuneration for attending informal meetings was a serious disincentive (Jeffrey 64.2):

So, we take sessional staff very much for granted in many ways. And you realise how much you take them for granted when suddenly they find work elsewhere or they get a permanent job.

There is a correlation between the quality teaching and the selection of academics.

Dane, also a permanent lecturer, acknowledged that there were difficulties associated with the choice of appropriate staff to ensure quality results (Dane 46):

I need to be aware of which team I'm putting in front of my students [and] to be able to evidence the outcomes that I need.

Dane also believed that quality results depended on team stability; however, there was no guarantee of securing the same teaching staff every semester because 'anyone of them could pack their bags and disappear over the summer or between semesters and not come back' (Dane 52).

In the eighth category of description, a limited sample of three respondents spoke about their experience within a community of practice that engaged in peer-partnership. The respondents in this category described the importance to the quality of teaching of peer-partnership with a community of practice. They also highlighted the fact that some academics benefited from those initiatives whereas sessionals, due to professional obligations and clashes with their rosters, were often deprived of those opportunities.

**Category Nine: Quality of teaching as students' academic success and job-readiness**

In Category Nine, two academics spoke of their experiences with students' academic success and employability, and about its relationship with the quality of teaching. In this category of description students' pass rates and post-university job-readiness were experienced as impacting on the quality of teaching.

According to Richard (a sessional lecturer/tutor), an alternative method of quality evaluation was the matching of students' performance and grades; his approach was to collect information about the students' profile and progress throughout the semester. He would be compassionate to students who attended the tutorials but who had failed but would not worry about those students who vacated his tutorials without proper justification (Richard 114.2):

That's why I also mark the roll every tutorial, because if I find a student who hasn't come to the tutorials, I don't care whether they pass or fail.

Richard believed that one of the determinants of quality was the employer's assessment of graduates. Although he foresaw the practical difficulties, Richard argued that the best measure would be the employer's evaluation of a former student's performance at work. He conceded it would not be feasible to collect such data for ethical reasons but considered this model to be the most reliable. Overall, Richard saw the need to consider a combination of variables. Most importantly, employers, as recipients of those students, would be the best judges of quality education through the students' practical skills at work (Richard 53.1, 53.3):

Well for me, it would be employer feedback. For a Business degree, it would be employer feedback about the quality of the students that they have hired and the only people who can judge that for a Business degree are the individuals who employ the graduates at the end of the time. So, universities need to focus on, "How do we get that sort of feedback from employers?"

Richard argued that the use of multiple variables involved in the marking of assignments, together with students' pass rates, were unsuitable as indicators of quality; he said (Richard 53.2):

Pass rates: again, not a good measure. I think we pass far too many students who should fail.

Richard suggested that a complex number of attributes contribute to the quality of teaching; he outlined the different issues to consider when assessing this particular quality:

- Students' ability to transfer knowledge across disciplines and the workplace;
- The possession of a solid academic foundation;
- To be independent learners and able to learn new concepts and techniques in the workplace;
- Creative and innovative and contribute to new ideas at work.

Another paradox in quality indicators that Richard saw was the false attribution of the pass and failure rates to the quality of the teaching: there was a perception of quality that was often related to rates of pass and fail; failure rates were often attributed to teachers rather than to the students. The perception of quality was always a teaching issue (Richard 66.1)

Sadly, I think pass rates are perceived as the quality of teaching. The course coordinators are concerned about the high failure rates; they receive criticism from others within the school: you know, "You've got a high failure rate". The implication is that it is a teaching issue rather than a student issue, you know?"

Jaylene (a permanent course coordinator) argued that accurate quality measures should reflect feedback processes. She related the current moderation processes that included different approaches for experienced and inexperienced academics. She wanted to ensure that the marking process of assignments was fair and that constructive feedback was available for all students. The quality feedback provided helped students to improve their writing and reasoning skills (Jaylene 80):

Then throughout the course, we have processes of moderation where we go through how others are marking and check that the marking levels are about the same.

Jaylene also proposed other methods to measure the quality of teaching; for example, the quality of teaching should reflect the students' ability to undertake complex assignments. Consequently, different pedagogical instruments were used to improve those skills and improve the standard of students' assessments (Jaylene 20.2):

In this course, we should focus on teaching students how to design and build an argument, and how to write a structured essay. In summary, to focus on some of the more traditional elements, I guess, of a university education.

In the ninth category of description, I have outlined two participants' experience with student academic success and employability. They supported the need to consider the post-university professional career of the students. These two academics (one part-time, one permanent) believed that the students' academic success and job-readiness were reliable indicators of quality teaching.

## **Conclusion**

The outcome of a phenomenographic study is an outcome space consisting of a finite set of categories of description, which, with their relationships, explain the different ways people experience a phenomenon of interest in the real world.

I have presented the findings of the semi-structured interviews and the themes that emerged from the inductive data reduction (IDR). A majority of the participants consider the notion of quality to be complex and its measurement mechanisms inadequate or simply inappropriate within the higher education landscape.

Although both permanent and sessional academics were very vocal regarding the methods used by university management or the state to evaluate

the quality of teaching, they also noted the absence of alternative methods to replace, for example, the student feedback surveys. None of the participants commented on the external quality assurance audit. The external quality assurance mechanism is essential for the maintenance of quality standards within the higher education sector. Any disregard for this method of evaluation can only occur due to the lack of information, understanding, and involvement in the process. The interviewees resented the fact that quality assurance audits remain an uncharted and sacrosanct territory for the layperson.

University management would benefit enormously from improved communication regarding the measurement of quality; such initiative would have the merit of mitigating academics' negative attitude towards this poor communication. Overall, the viewpoints that I have presented here indicate that there are both convergent and divergent views regarding the concept of quality.

In Chapter 4 I have presented the findings of the investigation into the different ways academics experience the quality of teaching in a higher education setting. I have developed an outcome space from the 15 themes that emerged from the inductive data reduction process (see Appendices 6 and 7 for sample results). I presented the outcome space in Table 4.1; this is a mapping of the different ways academics experienced the quality of teaching. I have identified nine categories of description from the analysis of the data, and have described each category has been described in detail; these descriptions include quotes from the participants, as well as extracts from the interviews.

In Chapter 5 I present the findings of the focus-group interviews together with a metaphor analysis of the data emerging from the interview transcripts.

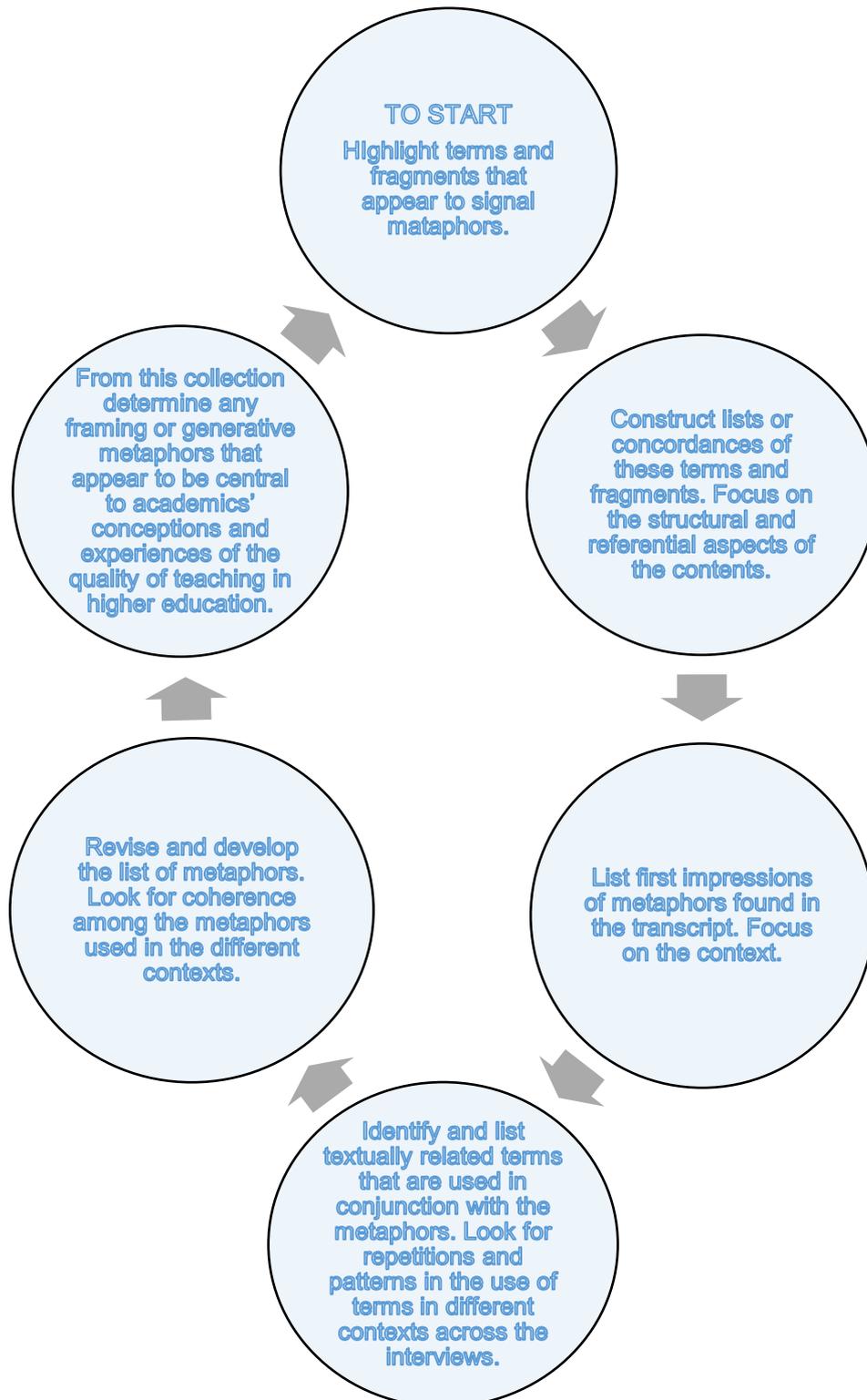
## CHAPTER 5

### **Focus group Interviews: Analysis and Findings**

In this chapter I relate the analysis and findings of the metaphors used by academics to describe their experience with the quality of teaching; the metaphors emerged as a result of a detailed inductive data reduction as outlined in the Methodology and Methods Chapter. The chapter consists of two parts: my analysis and findings from a focus group interview involving permanent ('permanents') academics; analysis and findings from a focus group interview involving sessional ('sessionals') academics. The academics involved in the two focus groups were new to the study.

It was evident from this analysis that there was coherence between the 'emergent metaphors' used by the two groups of academics: a picture developed in the ways both permanents and sessionals conceive of and deliver quality teaching in a higher education institution. Inductive data reduction (see Ling, 2014) was used to analyse the constructs, themes and the 'emergent metaphors'. Figure 5.1 demonstrates the six-step process used in the identification of 'emergent metaphors' as a result of the analysis of the semi-structured interview transcripts.

Figure 5.1 Analysis of focus group interview transcripts using metaphor



**Source:** Adapted from Martin, E., Prosser, M., Trigwell, K., Lueckenhausen, G. & Ramsden, P. 2001, *Using phenomenography and metaphor to explore academics' understanding of subject matter and teaching* (pp. 325-336). Paper presented at the International Improving Student Learning Symposium, Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development, Oxford Brookes University, Headington Oxford, Great Britain

## Focus Group 1: Sessional academics

The items, derived from 15 themes that emerged from the inductive data reduction of the semi-structured interview data referred to in Chapter 4, gave rise to 15 of the 16 items mentioned in this chapter; subsequently, these 15 items were used to frame generalised 'emergent metaphors' for each item. The final item requested an individual statement on 'quality' that focused on whether or not it is possible to formulate a 'grand metaphor' for quality in tertiary teaching.

In introducing the first item for discussion amongst the permanent participants in the first focus group, the moderator carefully spelled out a question that encouraged the group to consider teaching as either a possibility or an actuality in measuring 'quality'. She asked as she did for the second focus group:

So, there's a component that's the same on every single question: that is, 'Quality *could be* a metaphor for teaching and learning issues currently faced by Exray University, or quality *is* a metaphor for teaching and learning issues currently faced by Exray University'. So, please give your name and then respond either *could* or *is* about the question.

As depicted in Table 5.1, sessional academics from different academic and professional backgrounds participated in Focus Group 1, and their responses to the interview questions (see Appendix 2 for a list of these questions) are

**Table 5.1 Profile of sessional participants**

Serial	Names of Participants	Profile
1	Brigitte	Sessional Lecturer/Tutor
2	Denise	Sessional Lecturer/Tutor
3	Fred	Sessional Lecturer/Tutor
4	Camille	Sessional Lecturer/Tutor
5	Lucille	Sessional Lecturer/Tutor

explored through the metaphors that emerged from the data collected. This chapter also demonstrates the findings the individual experiences as well as the consensual agreement related to the issues raised in this research study.

**Item 1 – Teaching as a metaphor for quality: ‘Standards and economic imperatives drive quality’ or the ‘university’ is a metaphor for ‘quality’**

As the opening item, the moderator encouraged the group to consider teaching and to learn as either a possibility or an actuality in measuring ‘quality’, as follows:

What do you perceive as teaching and learning issues facing your institution? Quality could be a metaphor for teaching and learning issues currently faced by Exray University; or quality is a metaphor for teaching and learning issues currently faced by Exray University. So ‘could be’ or ‘is’ is the real question.

The first respondent, Denise, saw teaching and learning as a metaphor for quality. The crucial consideration for Denise (Denise 1.2) was maintaining high teaching standards at Exray University where ‘we have a lot of committed and hard-working staff who put in a lot of effort to help maintain standards in teaching’ despite the varied ability of the student cohort. Maintaining standards in teaching was also a critical quality element for Brigitte. Because the student quality is variable sessional staff, in particular, must accept this different ability (Brigitte 1.3):

I concur with the comment of varied ability, and I experience firsthand and see around me the forces that impact on what could be high quality but you accept the status quo because of circumstances, particularly in sessional work.

Brigitte’s experience of quality was tempered by a perception of her having lower status in the department – a perception that she must conform to the quality standards of Exray university; thus, she agreed (Brigitte, 1.3) that ‘quality *could* be a metaphor for Exray University’.

Fred and Camille thought that teaching could be a metaphor for quality; it was, however, tempered by economic pragmatism. Fred (Fred 1.4) sensed there was ‘an economic balance between enough student numbers and teacher

rankings'. Camille (Camille 1.5) felt that 'economic pragmatism surrounds our vision and sometimes blurs the vision to the wonderful efforts of sessional staff'.

My conclusion, for these sessional academics facing the constant dilemma of sustaining economic numbers of students in their classes, is that 'standards and economic imperatives drive quality'; this is a statement of fact rather than a metaphor.

### **Item 2 – Substantive and perceptive notions of quality standards: quality 'lone rangers'**

From the outset, focus group members established that there were no absolute standards – neither substantive nor perceptive. Lucille (Lucille, 2.1) believed the notion of quality was hard to measure; she noticed a high degree of variability relating to the standards.

Fred agreed with Lucille, pointing out that there were variability and inconsistency in standards; nevertheless, they might be a metaphor for quality. He (Fred 2.3) recognised that quality is graded 'from higher education down to Vocational Education level' in a process that he referred to as 'dilution of quality'. Quality, Fred suggested, was used to 'badge' students: differentiation was required at multiple levels; hence no absolute standards of quality exist. Camille (Camille, 2.4) outlined the instructive role of course guides in setting the proper standards for the course. She maintained the notion of quality associated with this document remained highly interpretive: it requires 'that we interpret that course guide' to determine the performance that was needed.

Denise (2.5) suggested that substantive and interpretive clashes of judgements are inevitable; academics and students are likely to have differing perspectives on the notion of quality. She recognised that the course coordinator was responsible for setting the quality standards; she argued that despite the disagreement with the quality standards, as a sessional academic she had to comply with the 'vision of quality' set by the person in charge of the course which:

has his or her view of what quality is – view that I may not agree with; but, at the end of the day, that’s what is on top of the pyramid. As a sessional, you are required to comply with the vision of quality and the understanding of the quality of the person who is in charge of the course.

Ultimately, however, Brigitte (Brigitte, 2.2) pointed out that quality depends on staff making judgements alone, as they undertake assessments. Often, she suggests, this was done without any clear direction:

The institute has not said this is the measure of quality be it by an industry standard or a similar standard to other universities or whatever it might be. So, it’s a mostly privately interpreted standard. There’s a perception of what quality is; it’s conveyed by people or translated by people, individually.

My conclusion is that sessional staffs are required to act as *quality lone rangers* with course coordinators acting as *the sheriff*.

**Item 3 – Contribution of sessional academics to the quality of teaching: ‘time poor/money poor’ scenario! Long stayers: high quality; short stayers: low quality!**

Item 3 focused on the contribution of sessional academics to the quality of teaching. The respondents agreed that sessional academics contributed to the quality of teaching. The first respondent, Brigitte saw sessionals’ contribution as a metaphor for ‘quality’: for them, it was a question of ‘personal survival and quality factors’. Brigitte addressed the impact of conflicting professional obligations: she believed that while the contribution of sessionals was considerable, the time factor tempered the effort (Brigitte 3.1):

I have to be in a few places in order to earn my living and therefore, not dedicated to one place; my time is split.

Fred stated that highly professional sessional academics were faced with massive time constraints. He suggested that a ‘time poor/money poor’ metaphor impacted negatively on the work of sessional academics. According to Fred, sessional academics were highly qualified and experienced; they had to be very efficient to secure their jobs as ‘we’ve put a lot of effort in and we feared for our job; we wanted to show our proficiency’ (Fred 3.2).

The third respondent, Camille, agreed with the tension between theory and practice: she felt that this metaphor was appropriate to the role of sessionals in fostering the quality of teaching discourse. Camille (3.3) outlined the impact of practitioner-based sessional academics at Exray University who brought a ‘practice wisdom in their classes with a diversity of experiences that contributed to leveraging the capabilities of the institution’.

Denise agreed that the contribution of sessional academics to the notion of quality was a matter of perception because of the difference of opinion about the following metaphor: ‘the university as both academia and workplace’. Denise outlined the multiple biographies of sessional academics including personal ambitions and career aspirations. The sessional’ length of service was a determinant in their professional contribution to the quality of teaching; some long-term casuals had been very committed and devoted to the faculty compared to those (Denise 3.4):

So, there are some who are long-term sessionals, who are committed. Devoted teaching is all that they do or what they mostly do; in general, they are more committed.

Here, the metaphor ‘long stayers: high quality; short stayers: low quality’ was associated with the stability of employment of sessionals within the institution.

Lucille (Lucille, 3.7) saw that there was a link between sessionals’ commitment and the hope of re-employability:

The sessionals that I know are very committed to their work and they will put in as much effort as they possibly can, perhaps out of the fear of not having their contract renewed, because the work is uncertain.

She agreed with the metaphor that *quality and anxiety have an inverse impact on commitment*. As a means of maintaining a quality standard, Lucille believed that sessional academics’ extraordinary commitment translates into timely feedback on assignments; metaphorically speaking, *quality and time are enemies for sessional academics*. The contribution of sessional academics was often in jeopardy due to their divided commitment to other institutions. She described the diversity of experience sessional brought to the faculty,

regretting, however, that their efforts were, of necessity, diluted because of time-splitting between different institutions (Lucille 3.9):

A lot of the sessionals that I know, even if they're giving 80 percent, it's still so high. It might well be a greater contribution than permanent staff, just because of that diversity of experience that they're bringing to the table.

For Lucille, sessionals being 'diverse and dispersed' was an emergent metaphor; by comparison, permanents are 'similar and tightly bonded'.

To improve the quality of teaching sessional academics needed academic support; according to Lucille (Lucille, 3.10):

If the sessional staff were better supported in their roles, and given clearer instructions, guidance, and professional development, the quality could be further enhanced.

Overall, Lucille believed the quality of teaching would improve if sessional academics had clear instructions, appropriate professional development and higher equity regarding remuneration. Metaphorically, the lack of support, guidance and professional development are the enemies of sessionals, and hence of quality.

Metaphorically, for sessional academics, a set of related issues emerged:

- personal survival and quality factors – with those who survived being representatives of a group for whom *teaching was a measure of quality*;
- time constraints that impacted negatively on quality – casuals were time poor and money poor; quality and time are enemies for sessional academics;
- fostering the quality of teaching – practice wisdom enhances the quality of the institution;
- stability of employment – long stayers: high quality: short stayers: low quality;
- commitment – poor quality and high anxiety have an inverse impact.

I concluded that the most appropriate metaphor for the continuity of sessional staff to be as follows: ‘If casuals are *long stayers* they are *high quality*; if they are *short stayers* they are *low quality*. In any decisions about continuity, course coordinators must act as *the sheriff*’.

**Item 4 – Modes of communication to clarify the quality expectations: Quality and leadership as disparate bedfellows for sessional academics**

Fred believed that ‘quality’ could be a metaphor; he (Fred 4.1) maintained that ‘management should have greater communication frequency and should provide uniform instruction to casuals’. Fred emphasised the need for consistency in disseminating information: the institution needed to provide clear and ‘disciplined’ instruction to the highly qualified and experienced sessionals. Camille agreed with Fred that quality could be a metaphor and outlined the contextual and personalised style; she pointed out (Camille 4.3) that ‘it all hinges on the coordinator of each course. The variability is vast’. A more consistent communication style between coordinators and from semester to semester is desirable. Thus, an excellent communication style is more likely to result in a quality outcome.

Denise shared the views of Camille regarding the communication strategies of different course coordinators; she also agreed with Fred about the frequency and consistency of communication. Denise critically argued (Denise 4.4):

There should be some clear guidelines communicated to all the sessional staff who teach in a subject well in advance of the start of the semester – not the day before or during the first teaching week.

Denise also stressed the need for clear guidelines for sessional academics that accommodated a range of personalities and teaching styles. Overall, her response was ‘clear guidelines’ provide consistency and sustain standards.

Lucille’s response to this question was that quality could be a metaphor; she agreed with the previous respondents about the high degree of variability between the course coordinators’ communication styles. She also drew the

attention to the value of retaining long-term sessionals; she pointed out (Lucille 4.6):

The variability isn't entirely relevant in the case of long-term sessionals who get to know and understand their coordinator – particularly if they have been coordinator of that subject for some time.

Brigitte agreed with the previous respondents that quality could be a metaphor; however, she pointed out that, amongst colleagues, the notion of 'quality' was rarely discussed: it must be 'part of the conversation'. Furthermore, she believed (Brigitte 4.7): 'If you aspire to quality, then it's got to be part of the talk and that's not evident'; hence, the metaphor could be: 'Quality needs to be part of the coordination vernacular'.

I concluded that course coordinators must ensure timely and consistent dissemination of information; strong leadership, with appropriate lines of communication, is needed to ensure quality expectations. If this is not provided then, for sessional academics, *quality and leadership are disparate bedfellows*.

### **Item 5 – The reflection of quality of teaching and learning through the student experience surveys: surveys as 'popularity contest'**

In response to question 5, Fred asserted that quality could be a metaphor and advocated his suspicion about the CES survey as a good measure of quality; students used the survey as a retribution tool to demonstrate their dissatisfaction with the course. In that respect, the metaphor was about the tension between good faith and retribution. Fred also outlined the paradox of the survey outcomes; the students' in-class comments were never 'reflected in the official feedback'. According to Fred, some students expressed their satisfaction verbally but never filled in the online surveys unless they were encouraged by their teachers. In any case the participation rate remained very low; he said (Fred 5.1):

My experience is that students, normally, tend to say "That's okay", but once they experience something where they're not happy with one class, they wait for their time

to show their reaction to the course. They don't participate in the whole thing unless you really talk to them about whether or not they really like you.

Camille observed that quality could be a metaphor particularly when it related to the student feedback survey. She saw the process as a '*popularity contest*' during which academics could '*buy*' more favourable outcomes by exchanging the tough course challenges for a '*milder*' class experience; it was a fact that university management relied on this criterion for employment selection; she commented (Camille 5.3):

There are staff who "hand feed" how to get ahead of the course and discard any sense of challenge dialogue and diversity of opinion in the classroom for the favour of gaining that successful feedback score. And that's a sad reality, pending our on-going employment in this establishment

The popularity contest metaphor conveys the determination of academics to influence the outcome of the students' feedback: a more favourable report secures future sessional work.

Denise agreed with the previous respondents about the flaws of the student feedback survey: she was 'appalled' by the lack of determination to use alternative measures. She dismissed, as a consequence, the current instrument; she (Denise 5.4) saw it as 'a poor measure of quality. I believe it's used as a measure of quality when everybody is aware it is not'.

Lucille agreed with the other respondents that there could be a metaphor suggesting (Lucille 5.5) that the 'objective of teaching becomes to get a high score on the survey rather than to focus on the learning and the best way to do that for the students'. Lucille also agreed with Camille's argument that the students' surveys have become a 'popularity contest'. She reminisced that previous surveys from ten years' ago had been a better reflection of quality and suggested that the current model merely provided a retributive tool for disgruntled students who responded without carefully having read the survey questions; she (Lucille 5.6) said:

I've noticed that, if they get an issue with something that happened in the subject or dislike the teacher, students might tick the lowest score for every box regardless of

what the question is. So, in fact, a lot of students are not reading individual questions when they're voicing their opinions.

Denise concurred with the previous respondents regarding the disgruntled attitude of students towards the feedback survey. She also noticed a change in students' expectations: the availability of their course tutors beyond working hours and asking for information and asking for information already available to them online.

Lucille agreed with Denise's comments and outlined that students' perceptions could be flawed, therefore impacting negatively on the 'quality' of education unless they realised the requested information from their tutors was already available to them online; she responded (Lucille 5.8):

Whose quality are we talking about? And then what is the expectation? The university should manage student expectations, making sure that they know that first, before sending an email to the tutor, they should check on Blackboard .

I concluded that there had been a paradigm shift – away from the quality of learning, and towards measuring teaching scores. Consequently, the most appropriate metaphor emerging from this sample related to the conversion of the student feedback surveys into a 'popularity contest' that could be influenced and manipulated by teaching academics.

### **Item 6 – The reliability and validity of student experience surveys: timing and subjectivity**

The respondents unanimously believe the reliability and validity of the students' feedback survey could be a metaphor regarding the quality of teaching. Denise suggested that the survey was unreliable because of its subjectivity and the low response rates; the survey was statistically not viable; she pointed out (Denise 6.1):

There's plenty of evidence showing that those who do respond to these [surveys] are those who are very happy; but, more than [the] very happy, are those who are very *unhappy*.

Furthermore, Denise believed it would be challenging to determine whom the students were actually assessing: ‘a cheerful, entertaining academic or a suitable one?’ A tension remained, namely, that the ‘quality of teaching versus the quality of entertainment’ about the reliability and validity of students’ feedback surveys. She also questioned the students’ credential as reliable evaluators (Denise 6.2):

What are they really measuring? Are they qualified to measure? Are they just giving feedback on how entertaining and pleasant it was? These are relevant: the class could also be pleasant and entertaining, but it’s not all that it should be.

Lucille agreed with Denise’s response, highlighting the shortcomings and flaws of the surveys; she also pointed out the influence of ‘group think’ in that process and the effect of collective impact on the positive or negative outcomes of the survey; she said (Lucille 6.3):

I think surveys *could* be a metaphor, for quality; [however] there are reliability issues – not everyone fills them in; students may be influenced by what their friends think.

Lucille argued that students’ situational perception of the class experiences could affect the survey outcomes; short-term perceptions and feelings influenced students’ responses. A longer-term view might well reveal a different outcome of the same events; she saw a conflict between the survey timing and the results. Denise (6.5) agreed with Lucille’s argument about the survey timing:

Students don’t take the survey once they’ve already received all the marks for their assessments. They do not have the opportunity to submit the survey after the exam.

Brigitte outlined the flaws of the student feedback surveys as a reliable measurement instrument of quality; she believed she could rely on the qualitative data provided by personal comments; to seek students’ responses to the quality of teaching, however, did not occur until the end of the survey. Denise (6.6) agreed with the other respondents about the adverse impact of the timing of the survey:

The time that the student is learning something and struggling they do not see the validity of it until perhaps at the end of the course.

Fred focused on the variability of the student feedback results; he drew on his personal experience that the reliability of the survey could be a metaphor for quality as his own personal ratings had hit him like a ‘tidal wave’. He also agreed with the previous respondents about the questionable reliability and validity of the students’ surveys: individual ratings were likely to vary from semester to semester without any rational explanation; he said (Fred 6.7):

I just couldn’t work it out, having gone through a CES so many times now: sometimes my quality rating was so high; sometimes it was low.

Lucille agreed with Fred about the survey ratings and found the students’ feedback entirely inconsistent; some students would agree with the high quality of her teaching while others would not. She also agreed with the fact that a few academics would experience different ratings for the same course from various classes, and, that could also vary from semester to semester.

Denise pointed out that in elective courses there was a mix of first-year to third-year students from different faculties; the degree of variability relating to the survey outcomes could be quite high within those classes. She concluded (Denise 6.9) that ‘a mixed student cohort produces a variable mix of responses’. She also found it

very challenging to find a way to teach that caters to the needs of all: It’s tough, and you run the risks that some of them are unhappy if you provide more to one particular group.

All respondents agreed that the students’ feedback surveys could be a metaphor for quality; however, they questioned the validity of this evaluation instrument and firmly believed that students were not qualified evaluators of the quality of teaching. The reduced response rates, inconsistent ratings, the effects of ‘group think’ added to the current degree of variation concerning feedback surveys. Different ways of measuring the quality of teaching in the higher education sector produced a ‘bag of mixed instruments’.

Denise highlighted the multiple evaluation tools that might also be used to measure the quality of teaching; she recalled her own experience from a different institution: the students’ survey was complemented by peer

evaluation. She also firmly believed that all stakeholders should be involved in the process of assessment.

Lucille agreed with Denise and felt that the combination of measures and evaluators; she said (Lucille 7.2): ‘including a learning and development neutral third-party evaluator in the room’ provided useful measurement strategies; she also saw self-evaluation and direct reporting to the course coordinators as being potentially effective tools.

Brigitte welcomed Lucille’s comments relating to using alternative tools to measure the quality of teaching; nevertheless, she valued students’ qualitative comments; she also believed that neutral parties with appropriate expertise would contribute further to the validity of the students’ feedback survey (Brigitte 7.3).

Fred agreed with all the respondents that ‘a handful of measurement tools’ would be more useful; he advocated the effectiveness of peer-review programs with mutual exchange of feedback between colleagues ‘with supervisor and teacher of peer review’ (Fred 7.4). The last respondent to the question, Camille, offered a more extensive view of the peer-review programs, preferring a two-pronged use of peer-reviewers: from course supervisor to course deliverers.

I concluded that there was agreement that a range of measurement tools had been identified. Metaphorically, and overall, it had been argued that in any ‘bag of measurement tools’ all stakeholders should have the opportunity to evaluate the quality of teaching; thus, I chose the metaphor that quality required a ‘*bag*’ of *mixed measurement instruments*.

### **Item 7– Different ways of measuring the quality of teaching in the higher education sector: A mixed-bag of instruments**

The first respondent, Denise, answered the above question by highlighting the *multiple* evaluation tools that could be used to measure the quality of teaching:

students' surveys and peer evaluation were complementary. She also firmly believed that all the stakeholders should be involved in this evaluation process.

Lucille agreed with Denise, believing that the combination of measurement tools including 'a learning and development neutral third party, evaluator in the room' provided a useful evaluation strategy. Lucille (7.2) had also found that the use of self-evaluation and direct reports sent to course coordinators were effective evaluation tools

Brigitte welcomed and concurred with the previous respondents' argument of finding *alternative* tools to measure the quality of teaching; (Brigitte 7.3). Metaphorically, in that *bag* of measurement tools, all the stakeholders have the opportunity to evaluate the quality of teaching.

Fred agreed with all the respondents that a *handful* of measurement tools would be more effective; he advocated the effectiveness of peer-review programs with mutual exchange of feedback between colleagues 'with supervisor and teacher of peer review' (Fred 7.4).

Camille, the final respondent to the question, offered an extensive view of the peer-review programs; she found the *two-pronged use of peer-reviews* – course supervisor to teacher; teacher to teacher – together with the feedback of colleagues teaching the same course, to be invaluable (Camille 7.5).

I concluded that a useful metaphor to ensure quality outcomes was the development of a *mixed bag of measurement instruments*.

### **Item 8 – Assessment criteria for measuring the quality of teaching: a multiplicity of variables**

The first respondent, Brigitte, to the Item 8 stated that *assessment criteria* could 'be a metaphor, there's a lot of variability between measures, from subject to subject, co-ordinator to co-ordinator' impacting on the quality of teaching (Brigitte 8.1). She also agreed with Lucille about the institution's strategy to dumb-down the standard to increase the pass rates. They both

agreed that sessional academics would regularly face such delicate issues (Brigitte 8.1):

In the case of sessional teaching there is a discourse that I'm now hearing: Are there, or are there not higher numbers who are failing in particular classes? If higher numbers are failing in particular classes, is there a push downwards to artificially raise the pass rate?

Fred (8.2) outlined the high degree of variability between the different markers. He voiced a need for the course coordinators to communicate the marking guides to all the tutors to avoid any potential misinterpretation. He maintained that, while tutors and markers received the marking criteria, 'each of us interprets very differently – subjectively I guess – rather than objectively; therefore, when we mark, we do think differently'.

In response to the question, Camille believed it could be a metaphor. She reflected on her experience as a sessional course coordinator and revealed that course coordinators would trust the markers who were familiar with each other's style. As far as she could remember, the marking process had seldom been questioned in an open moderation meeting because it would be considered to be too 'problematic' that she considered as an on-going issue (Camille 8.3):

Problems with marking remained, nor was there any time given for us to learn from each other in a more open-moderation process.

Denise agreed with Camille that the assessment criteria could be a metaphor for quality. In her response, she outlined the variability of marking guides and the lack of consistency across the markers including the teachers' ability to properly communicate the assessment grades to the students (Denise 8.4):

I have seen variable types of marking guides. Some are quite constructive; others, from a pedagogical position, are not sufficiently well constructed to ensure there is consistency across all the markers. Marking guides should prescribe what is required.

I concluded, from the respondents' collective responses, that the *assessment criteria* might be a metaphor for quality. Once again, the degree of variability was highlighted: the assessment markers have their own individual styles; there is a need for better communication of the marking guides. I concluded, therefore, that there was no single metaphor that applied in this case.

### **Item 9 – The impact of professional development on the performance of sessional academics: time is money versus voluntarism**

Denise, the first respondent, considered professional development could be a metaphor for quality but was sceptical of any positive impact; she said (Denise 9.1) 'because most sessionals (sessional academics) just haven't got the time to attend professional development due to time constraints and other professional obligations'. Fred concurred with Denise's claims regarding the benefits of PD and the impending time constraints.

Camille also believed that PD could be a metaphor for quality; she argued that the institution provided opportunities for PD, but the participation of sessional academics was mostly voluntary (Camille 9.3):

Because it's never asked of sessionals, nor expected of us, it's always seen as an optional extra. So, there's a lot on offer here, but there is no expectation of any action, nor is it even required.

Denise agreed with Camille that professional development could be a metaphor for quality because she was personally suspect about the worth of attending training sessions; as a sessional academic, she welcomed this practice with 'mixed feelings'. Although Denise saw merit in running PD programs, she did not consider the one or two-hour PD sessions to be beneficial for the sessionals.

Lucille agreed with the others; furthermore, she commented on the lack of adequate PD programs for sessional academics. She (Lucille 9.7) agreed with the other respondents on the issue of irregular attendance due to time constraints and clashes with other lectures or tutorials; she referred to the lack

of monetary incentives to improve the rate of participation; she reflected on timetable clashes with other subjects.

The responses indicated the limited impact of professional development programs on the academic development of sessional academics: the metaphor referred to the time that sessional academics could not ‘buy’ due to professional constraints and ‘the race against time’ associated with sessional work; however, voluntarism was not a realistic solution. I concluded an appropriate metaphor applying to this situation was that *time is money; that voluntarism was unacceptable*.

#### **Item 10 – The impact of the selection of sessional academics on the quality of teaching: tension lies between informality and transparency**

Fred believed that the selection of sessional academics could be a metaphor for the quality of teaching. He outlined the inconsistent selection practices; important criteria such as the candidates’ academic credentials were not the only specification for the job. He suggested that the reliance on the ‘unreliable’ student feedback survey would undermine the whole selection exercise whole selection exercise, particularly if the previous semesters’ survey scores of casuals were to influence their chances of re-employment; he concluded (Fred 10.1) that the process was *informal, sessional and inconsistent*:

I see there is an inconsistency in a way. Some casuals they know; others have only their qualifications and experience. On top of that, everything depends on the CES. Then, they may not call you back.

Camille agreed with Fred on the use of this metaphor; furthermore, she addressed a second sensitive issue related to the selection of employees, adding (Camille 10.2) that ‘there aren’t [sufficient] applications or expressions of interest; it is a singularly random process that isn’t transparent’.

Denise agreed with Camille, pointing out that, based on her long experience, she (Denise 10.3) had noticed the selection procedure could range ‘from something very structured to something very casual’. She confirmed the

lack of transparency in the selection of sessional academics; cited cases of nepotism and cronyism relating to the selection process; reported that candidates remained in employment despite evident inadequacies. She believed (Denise 10.4) that ‘a more structured and more transparent and more serious hiring process would eradicate potential cases of nepotism’.

Lucille agreed that the selection of sessionals could be a metaphor for quality. She outlined the high degree of variability, contextual factors and social capital involved in the recruitment of sessionals. Successful selection of candidates, she said (Lucille 10.5), was ‘based more on the personal relationship that you have with the coordinator of a subject and in some instances, no interview occurs and decisions are made by email’. Lucille suggested there would be a far less negative impact on the quality of teaching if the teaching academics were adequately qualified for the job. She saw benefit in a diversity of teaching personnel but believed that negative impacts would be avoided; she added ‘better decision-making and improved processes would avoid this’ (Lucille 10.6).

Brigitte agreed with the significance of the metaphor. She considered that the hiring process should be the same for all the potential candidates; the applicants needed to demonstrate their worth for the job as a qualification – the issue, she said (Brigitte 10.7), was that hirers should ‘agree on their criteria and that the process is equal for everybody’.

The focus group revealed the paradoxical issues concerning the recruitment and selection of sessional academics. The respondents unanimously agreed on the shortcomings and flaws of the selection process. They pointed that reducing the tension between ‘informality’ and improving the ‘transparency’ of the process of appointment of sessionals could be a metaphor for quality in higher education.

I concluded that the most appropriate metaphor applying to the hiring of sessional academics was the *opacity of the process regarding the hiring of sessionals*.

**Item 11 – The impact of quality course materials and delivery as a contributing factor to the improvement of teaching when relying on sessional academics: a compendium of delivery modes**

Fred agreed that the course materials and ‘delivery’ could be a metaphor for the quality of teaching. He outlined the impact of changing course materials on the quality of delivery and advocated that the course materials regularly varied from semester to semester; as a consequence, he said (Fred 11.1) ‘a sessional like me sometimes gets confused, and this impacts adversely on the quality of delivery’.

Camille agreed. She pointed out that a large number of academics were delivering lectures for the same course; this practice resulted in inconsistencies that caused major confused students – sessional tutors would sometimes offer different interpretations of the course materials; she (Camille 11.2) clarified this:

When you rely on sessional staff, I presume it is about interpreting the lecture slides and the course content. There tends to be an increasing trend to have various lecturers rather than a consistent lecturer throughout in many of the subjects.

Camille referred to a second concern relating to gaps occurring between the lecture and the related tutorials; she commented (Camille 11.2):

Students will frequently come into tutorials completely confused about the lecture that they’ve just experienced; I’m at a loss because I’m not there at the lecture.

Her conclusion was that tutors’ absence from lectures delivered by other academics was likely to have a negative effect on the quality of teaching.

Denise agreed that the different delivery modes suggested in prepared course materials could be a metaphor for quality. There was a lack of clarity in course materials that impacted negatively on the quality of delivery; the course materials also contained ambiguities: this was probably the main reason that students sought clarification from their respective tutors. Denise concluded that consistency in the delivery of course materials was needed to improve the quality of teaching. Fortunately, she acknowledged, sessional

academics frequently were able to clarify misconceptions; she said (Denise 11.3):

You get all your students asking for clarification and that's where the role of the sessional will often compensate for some issues that may be affecting the clarity of the material available for the course.

Lucille believed the course delivery of materials could be a metaphor for quality; it would be possible, also, to enhance the quality of delivery by providing supplementary personal materials. Lucille cited instances where sessional academics had to present their course slides prepared personally to supplement the ones provided by the course coordinators. The quality of teaching could eventually improve due to that extra effort; however, sessional academics remained unpaid for this level of quality improvement. Although she considered this practice to be quite risky, sessional academics might well customise their own course materials delivered to students; she said (Lucille 11.4):

It may end up in the case where the quality is improved at the end of the day even though its development was not due to improvements made by the subject coordinator. Although haphazard, this might spontaneously happen to work out on the day.

Brigitte agreed with Lucille on the problem of sessional academics personalising, thus 'making it their course'. Brigitte considered the metaphor was two-sided: one side was 'owning a course'; the other 'making a course your own'. She acknowledged that most sessional academics were employed in multiple organisations and would be less inclined to invest their own time on course materials without the corresponding remuneration; there was a lack of motivation to 'own' the course materials; she said (Brigitte 11.5):

I really cannot spend any more time on this, because that's going to be to the detriment of my other teaching job or working position, or whatever it might be.

I concluded, as a result of the responses provided by these respondents, that there is a myriad of course delivery modes and materials in existence at

Exray University. The respondents unanimously agreed that the course delivery and material could be a metaphor for the quality of teaching. The question of sessional academics' additional effort to 'make the course their own' or to 'own the course' was problematic due to time constraints, conflicting professional obligations, and lack of monetary incentives: these elements contribute substantially to any metaphor relating to quality course materials. Regarding an appropriate metaphor, I concluded that there should be at least *a handful of delivery modes* that contribute to the quality of course materials.

### **Item 12 – The impact of class sizes on the performance of both permanent and sessional academics: Size matters!**

Camille believed class sizes could be a metaphor for quality in the higher education sector. She saw that there was a challenge in providing a range of times ('spots') for students particularly as some classes were too small to create a dynamic learning environment; as well, in some instances, students did not benefit from peer learning; she commented (Camille 12.1):

There's a challenge about providing such a range of time spots and allocations for students to select into, overly smaller classes could also impact on students' engagement and commitment as students don't get the rigour or the dynamic of a group environment.

Denise disagreed with Camille; she concluded that class size – involving the application of group teaching and a choice of tutorials – runs the risk of confusion and misunderstanding for students leading, ultimately, to a reduction in the quality of teaching. Denise outlined aspects of these adverse effects; she said (Denise 12.2):

Large classes are much more challenging to teach, for all the issues which could arise from poor consistency across the board when there were many people involved in the tutorials as sometimes even in the delivery of the lectures.

Denise also cautioned against the drawbacks of team teaching and the typical students' 'shopping around' for the most convenient classroom; students'

inter-class mobility remains a major challenge for all teaching academics; she said (Denise 12.2):

Sometimes they go some weeks to one tutorial, some weeks to another; the problems can escalate to a very high level, so they are much more challenging to teach.

She noted that she always had more than 30 students in her lecture classes; regularly tutorials were moved to different lecture venues with up to 60 students in the room. These issues presented a challenge; Denise (12.3) suggested that, under these conditions, ‘group teaching and quality’ was an oxymoron.

Lucille agreed with Camille that class sizes could be a metaphor for quality and suggested that the variations in the size of classes (from too large to too small) adversely affected the quality of teaching. Based on her experience, Lucille found it challenging when the class sizes were either too small or too large; the teacher’s attention shifted from quality teaching to class management. She considered the ideal number of students to range from 12 to 20. Lucille agreed with Denise’s claim about ‘supersize’ classes; she claimed (Lucille 12.4): ‘Well over 20, perhaps 30 and over, and the quality is impaired’.

According to Brigitte (21.5), the impact of class size impacted equally on permanents and sessionals; she claimed that class sizes could be a metaphor for the quality of teaching. She pointed out one significant difference: the availability of permanents for consultation with the students was not in question; the unavailability of sessionals, due to their professional obligations, meant that they could only arrange a consultation time via the internet – for which they were denied any additional remuneration.

Fred agreed that class sizes could be a metaphor for quality: he argued that group size, and overcrowded tutorial classes, have a deleterious effect on quality of teaching. Fred was also concerned about the lack of student engagement in classes/tutorials containing as few as 15 to 20 students. Overall, however, he agreed with the perception of effectiveness when teaching smaller classes. Fred pointed to class dynamics being a determinant of the quality of

the teaching; in particular, he pointed out that ‘oversize’ classes affected class management and control, as follows (Fred 12.6):

But 30 plus, back-to-back classes, is enormous pressure on us and the dynamic of the classes can sometimes put you off because you just cannot manage a group of 30 in an ordinary room like this. If sometimes you have 33 in the class, it’s impossible to give effective teaching of that many.

The responses to Item 12 mostly focused on the deleterious impact of large class sizes on the quality of teaching, followed by discussions about class dynamics and students’ engagement. These sessional staff shared their experiences about teaching ‘oversize’ classes without additional financial incentives. Furthermore, this distinguished between the favourable positions of availability to students of permanents compared with the difficulty faced by sessional academics being able to consult with students. The group indicated the chaotic but inevitable situation of dealing with both ‘undersized’ and ‘oversized’ cohorts of students. I concluded that the metaphor for this item unequivocally confirmed that *‘size matters’ in the higher education sector* with mixed opinions regarding the impact on the quality of teaching.

**Item 13 – The relationship between the notion of quality teaching and cost-saving devices within the higher education sector: the paradox of doing ‘more with less’**

Denise outlined the gradual reduction of classroom contact hours and the number of assessments that had been used, in the first instance, as cost-saving devices; *the negative impact on the quality of teaching is evident* and may well be a metaphor for decreasing quality. Denise reported the decision taken by the institution to reduce the contact hours with the student to one-hour lectures and tutorials; the reduction to a maximum of only two assignments per semester was also another attempt at cutting the marking costs (Denise 13.1):

The decision was made to deliver two hours per course, which was unheard of in any universities in which I have taught; the split consisted of a one-hour lecture and a one-hour tutorial to cut costs. A second instance was a requirement to have two pieces

of assessment in a unit because any more would have meant too much money spent on marking on sessional.

Lucille added to Denise's comment that *the tension between cost and quality* together with *cost saving devices* could be a metaphor for the quality of teaching. She deplored the unrealistic marking time frame and turnaround of assignments to students (Lucille 13.2):

This means that some sessionals receive no extra pay for the work that they do. Alternatively, they are not fully reading responses by students and might be cutting corners, in the marking process.

She also regretted the reduction of contact hours every semester; she judged the shortened exposure impacted on the quality of teaching. Lucille unequivocally believed that cost-saving devices impacted negatively on quality (Lucille 13.2):

The number of weeks which a semester run has gradually reduced over time and the number of hours per week and so all that impacts on the quality.

Brigitte supported Lucille's claims that cost-saving devices could be a metaphor for the quality of teaching. She argued that any attempt at reducing costs could also affect negatively essential professional and pedagogical development; she reflected on 'training as investment or cost' (Brigitte 13.3):

[It is] cost-cutting in terms of not offering training and development – [if offered] often it not paid for. Training and development are what improves quality; so, that is not an area that you should be cutting. It's an *investment*; it's not a cost.

Denise pointed out that the reduction of the word limit for most assignments was introduced as a cost-saving device; this was a paradox as ninety per cent of assignments were above the word limit without any penalties being applied. She pointed out that introducing tighter word limits in order to reduce marking costs had a negative effect on sessional staff morale due to the loss of income.

Fred agreed with the others that *cost-saving devices could be a metaphor that impacted negatively on the quality of teaching*. His response focused on the paradox of efficiency versus effectiveness: reduction of the means does not

improve the ends. Fred referred to the story of the fly that was asked to travel despite having been deprived of its wings (Fred 13.5):

Consider this fly: you take the first leg off; it's lighter, it flies faster. Pull off the second leg; it flies faster still. Third, the fourth leg – they all become faster, everyone agreed. Now, take the fly and cut off its wings: it will fly faster because it's lighter; but now, since you have cut off its wings, it cannot fly at all.

Camille indicated that cost-saving devices had changed the course management during the past few years, ultimately having a negative effect on quality and conditions; she reflected (Camille 13.7):

But then again, the purpose was the more students in a group, the fewer pieces of assessment to mark, [and hence] the less to pay.

This item provided an opportunity for the respondents (who are all employed as sessional academics) to debate a highly contentious issue. Most of the respondents argued that cost-saving devices could be a metaphor for the quality of teaching. The cost-saving devices revealed drew attention to outcomes that had a negative effect on quality and the metaphor for this item reflected on three paradoxical situations: being lean and mean meant doing more with less; ultimately, the outcome was the story of the fly that was asked to fly without wings. I concluded that the most striking paradox was the assumption of retention of quality while having to do *more with less*.

#### **Item 14 – The impact of peer partnerships on the quality of teaching: from staff pairings to logistical nightmares**

Lucille, believed that *peer partnerships could be a metaphor for the quality of teaching*. She reported, however, that no time incentives went to sessional academics who had to sacrifice their own preparation time, resulting in increased demands on the time of sessional teachers. According to Lucille, the institution should provide financial incentives if they expected better benefits from the peer partnerships programs (Lucille 14.1): ‘So I think it *could*

improve the quality if attending another person's class – provided there was an offer to pay for that time and being paid for that time'.

Brigitte agreed that peer partnerships could be a metaphor for quality but disagreed with Lucille about its quantifiable benefits; she outlined the logistical nightmares when sessional staff were required to manage peer partnership through economic necessity. Although she did not dispute the benefits of peer partnerships, Brigitte believed that sessional academics were less inclined to participate in those programs because they had other professional obligations; hence, that situation resulted in a mixed blessing of peer-partnerships for sessionals. She (Brigitte 14.2) pointed to the dilemma created by:

the economic necessity when you have to be somewhere else: the sheer logistics of it could be impactful. I think it's a way of supporting sessionals (sessional academics). I'm not of the opinion that it can work!

Fred agreed that peer partnerships could be a metaphor for quality and believed in team interdependence in the higher education sector as it would happen in a factory assembly line. Although he expressed that peer partnerships might contribute to the quality of education, he (Fred 14.3) was 'still suspicious about the practical outcome'.

Camille felt that while peer partnerships could be a metaphor for 'quality' it requires financial and infrastructural support. Currently, the informal approach was neither recognized nor rewarded; she pointed out (Camille 14.4): 'It does happen, many of us have coffees and talk about our work but it's not mandated, nor is it recognized or rewarded accordingly'. She stressed that success was dependent on the institution's finance and logistics linked to more formal management support instead of sessional ad hoc conversations between colleagues.

Denise outlined that team teaching required skills in team building, and that mismatched pairings would result in reduced outcomes, leaving both teachers and students scarred by the experience. She reminisced about her experience with team teaching (Denise 14.5):

I've been involved in team teaching; unfortunately, it didn't work. It was a time when I had the worst score ever because I was paired up with another academic who was very different from me. As a result, the students and we two teachers suffered.

Denise suggested, however, that peer partnerships programs might benefit new teaching academics that could then learn from more experienced teachers.

The respondents mostly agreed that peer partnership could be a metaphor for the quality of teaching: the exception was the single respondent who had not experienced peer partnership; consequently, she had shared her experience of team teaching. The respondents shared a mix of experiences: (time constraints, lack of financial incentives, the informality of the programs and logistical 'nightmares') – all of which adversely affected the quality of teaching. I concluded that the most appropriate metaphor was that *staff pairings create logistical nightmares*.

### **Item 15 – The meaning of the notion of quality of teaching: seed-planting and job-readiness**

Brigitte argued that 'quality', in this sense, was interpretive: it was about long-term success and employability of students. It also related to the time and support offered within courses, particularly concerning staff professional development and internships; ultimately, she (Brigitte 15.1) believed it was closely related to creating a 'culture where the passion can be kept alive'.

According to Fred, 'quality' was about teachers' ability to ensure the job-readiness of students beyond graduation'; he also believed academics should be part of a community of practice and should motivate each other to improve their craft. He explored the two-tiered aspect of the notion of quality – the perspectives of both teachers and students; he pointed out (Fred 15.2):

The first aspect is to be happy to see the student learn and can apply themselves when they graduate. The other aspect is about us: I feel we belong to the community. I belong to be a part of something I can continue. I feel great and I gain motivation to do things better.

Camille believed that quality was about creating an energised, innovative and exciting learning environment that resulted in engaging students in meaningful learning exchanges within the learning environment. She also celebrated the ‘applied wisdom’ that sessional academics were able to bring to the classroom (Camille 15.3):

We can walk into that classroom and engage with our students and learn from them but also give them that applied wisdom that we casuals can bring into the learning environment.

Denise agreed with the importance of creating a healthy learning environment by ensuring that

the students and the teacher have enjoyable learning experiences, seeing the whole as a shared learning journey. In particular, she stressed the importance of being a class leader/manager concerned with individuals’ needs, creating a pleasurable environment, finally leaving them with unanswered and unasked questions that provided ‘some food for thought, for studies for further research, for further thinking’ (Denise 15.5).

Lucille summed up the previous responses by agreeing that ‘quality’ was linked to lifelong learning, having employability skills, and having a sound knowledge base of content. It was the encouragement of independent thinking, creating future leaders and innovators beyond what we teach in the classroom. Furthermore, two-way communication between teachers and students develops the notion of ‘quality’. She concluded that another ‘important aspect and quality also includes the consideration given to continual improvement and development, reflecting on our teaching practice’ (Lucille 15.7).

I concluded from the wisdom displayed in these reflections, that a suitable metaphor for the notion of quality in higher education involved both *seed-planting* and preparing for *job-readiness*.

**Item 16 - A personal meaning of 'quality'**

The last item of the first focus group interview was for each respondent to provide a personal meaning of 'quality'. There was a consensus that the notion of quality was interpretive and related:

- to both students' and teachers' experience throughout the semester;
- to the preparation of students to be job-ready;
- to upholding the culture of the institution;
- to leaving scope for further readings and research;
- to building a 'community of learners';
- to embracing the notion of life-long and continuous learning.

I concluded that, metaphorically, the university was like a garden: the educators were the seed-planters; the students learned to prepare for the harvest; the world was the consumer.

**Focus Group 2: Permanent academics**

Permanent academics from different academic and professional backgrounds participated in Focus Group 2; Table 5.3 contains a profile of the participants. I report the participant's responses to the interview questions through the 'emergent metaphors' and the interactions that resulted: as a consequence, this chapter reflects individual experiences as well as the consensual agreement related to the issues raised. The moderator for this group, and the procedures followed, were the same as for Group 1.

**Item 1 – Quality of teaching as student satisfaction: The reliance on sessional academics**

Nathalie (1.1) saw the reliance on sessional academics as a significant issue for teaching. She posited that the high dependence on sessional academics caused enormous challenges for the university management; the unpredictability of the sessionals and the number to be hired were dependent

on so many variables that eventually affected the teaching outcomes (Nathalie 1.1):

The university relies far too heavily on sessionals. So, there's no consistency from year to year, from semester to semester: we have no idea who is going to be teaching, how and who they are, what they are.

**Table 5.3 Profile of participants**

Serial	Names of Participants	Profile
1	John	Lecturer
2	Christine	Lecturer
3	Matthew	Lecturer
4	Nathalie	Course coordinator/Lecturer
5	Anthony	Course coordinator/Lecturer

Anthony's focused on the 'contested' definition of quality and believed the term quality was 'a sort of metaphor'. He (Anthony 1.2) argued that the notion of quality needed more 'substantive' guidelines to avoid different perceptions regarding that notion.

Christine, too, believed that teaching was a metaphor for quality and related to the pride taken by academics in 'good work'.

Matthew contended that some of the salient issues underpinning the higher education sector and related to the following 'emergent metaphors': 'massification' of education, students' academic profiles and post-graduation employability. He (Matthew 1.5) attributed those changes to shifting paradigms and argued that the 'quality' of students had transformed the higher education sector:

That's probably the big thing: the quality of students. The sort of students that you are getting in is likely to be different from those of a traditional university.

John submitted that learning and teaching could be a metaphor for quality in the higher education sector. He also believed that the notion of quality within the higher education sector was associated with the preparation of

students to connect the learnt theories to workplace practices. John expressed his concern about the real definition of ‘quality’ in the higher education; he suggested that the quality discourse remains a hotly debated and ‘loaded’ issue (John 1.9):

I don’t believe the current measures of quality reflect that quality carries a responsibility on both sides, in other words, the people who deliver quality and the students who perceive quality. So, it’s quite a complex issue.

Most of the respondents agreed that the higher education sector had undergone considerable transformation due to new business models, ‘massification’ of education, the notion of quality and the different perceptions and interpretations associated with this concept. I concluded that no definitive metaphor emerged from this interchange.

### **Item 2 – The substantive and perceptive notions of quality standards: Two sides of the same coin?**

Anthony argued that both notions could be a metaphor for the quality of teaching. He also claimed that the tension between substantive and perceptive quality drove the students’ feedback outcomes. Anthony (2.1) strongly advocated for the retention of both substantive and perceptive notions of quality because a feedback survey could ‘determine if a particular teacher on whatever program or a particular course was acceptable to the students’. He summed up that both substantive and interpretive were metaphors for the quality of teaching.

A different viewpoint was proposed by Christine (Christine 2.3) who rejected the substantive and perceptive notions of quality. She pointed out that ‘quality’ was subject to multiple interpretations. She suggested that it was possible to manipulate both *substantive and perceptive metaphors* associated with quality. She pointed out that some students would believe in teaching quality if they appreciated the teacher’s instruction style. Contrary to the other participants, she rejected that there were more than two different ways of

measuring the quality of teaching; in particular, there was a need to take students' appreciation of 'teaching style' into consideration.

Matthew considered the notion of quality, metaphorically, to be '*a tale of paradigms*'. He outlined the marked variation of students, academics and public views of the substantive versus interpretive paradigms of 'quality'. Matthew indicated the marginal difference between substantive and perceptive 'quality'. He dismissed any firm assertions regarding the general public's interpretation of 'quality'; he summarised (Matthew, 2.4):

I think most people's perception probably within the profession would be fairly accurate about the quality of the education they receive. So, I don't think there would be a large disparity amongst academics about quality. As for the general public, I don't know what their perception would be.

John's response related to the presence of a significant divide between substantive and interpretive notion of quality in higher education. Metaphorically, he argued, the 'substantive' paradigm of quality was linked to a 'norm' that implied adherence to a standard. He alluded to the multi-layered feature of 'quality' in teaching, metaphorically comparing the notion of 'quality' to the 'different layers of an onion'.

Nathalie focused on the institution's business model: the commercialisation of higher education. She believed in a clear understanding of the expectations of quality of teaching but, had to bow down to the pressure of 'dumbing down' the standard for purely commercial reasons; she argued (Nathalie 2.7):

We often have our hands tied because superiors tell us that we 'have to pass' or 'we have to hold' this result – because, to provide our income, the students need to pass.

I concluded that a majority of respondents believed that both *substantive and interpretive paradigms* are '*two sides of the same coin*'; these created a *tale of two paradigms*.

**Item 3 – Contribution of sessional academics to the quality of teaching: Sessionalisation as the ‘cog in the wheel’ of higher education**

Matthew considered that sessional academics’ contribution could be a metaphor for the quality of teaching; he (Matthew 3.1) referred to ‘the war on talent’ that makes sessional academics one of the favourite players within ‘the higher education playground’. Matthew appraised the academic stature of sessional academics on three elements: business currency, acumen and personal enthusiasm. He regarded many of them to be on par with, if not better than, their tenured counterparts. He had no doubts about the contribution of sessional staff within the higher education sector: he conceded (Matthew 3.2):

They are as qualified and sometimes more up to date; they’re more enthusiastic, more adaptable than some of the existing staff.

John agreed that the contribution of sessional academics could be a metaphor for quality and outlined the gradual consolidation of the university’s external environmental factors: commodification and branding of the education system. He (John 3.3) praised the high quality of sessionals, agreeing with Matthew on the high quality of many sessional academics. Metaphorically, he considered sessionals to be an essential ‘cog in the wheel’ of the university’s organisational structure. Furthermore, he (John 3.4) referred to the many experienced sessional academics who were ex-lecturers, subject experts, and curriculum developers. Though often being marginalized within the system, the sessional academics made a vital contribution to the quality of teaching. John deplored the unreliability of the students’ survey. He concluded that X-Ray should focus on good teaching scores and regular sessional work (John, 3.5): Finally, he believed that any extra effort could be associated with good teaching scores and regular sessional work; he concluded (John, 3.5):

I think it will be accurate for me to say that if your sessional academics’ incomes depend on good feedback – that is one of the criteria for continued employment.

Nathalie’s response to the question was entirely different from the previous two respondents: she offered a controversial evaluation of sessional

academics' worth for the institution. While recognising that they were talented and highly experienced educators – often research-active with strong industry experience; she believed there was a 'blank spot' in their contribution to the quality of teaching; she (Nathalie 3.7) considered sessional academics as 'popularity testers' arguing that 'what I don't like is, them working weekends and, you know, all this kind of additional extras stuff that they do'. This was a bitter-sweet response, perhaps tinged with envy.

Anthony answered the question indirectly by saying that he still struggled with a plausible definition of 'quality'. He agreed that casuals encouraged cross-pollination of ideas despite sometimes being a nuisance; metaphorically, they were like 'killer bees' that, nevertheless, made 'the most delicious honey': he expanded (Anthony 3.10):

I don't have neither any doubts, nor any qualms that they [sessional academics] are bringing in a lot of experience they are either working for the industry, they are academic, [engaged in] research. They might have employment in a number of different institutions; they can do some cross pollination. These are positive aspects of having sessional academics.

Anthony further argued that despite their skills and experiences gathered from different institutions, sessional academics were compelled to conform to Exray's quality assurance systems and standards. Referring to the metaphor in Item 2, above, he saw them as similar to Dicken's citizens in *A Tale of Two Cities* – forced to subscribe to *a tale of two paradigms* in which, according to him, there was a shift from a the perceptive model of quality to a hardcore substantive quality management system:

They may sometimes have to compromise their perceptive method of quality, when being in a situation in which the measures or the instrument of the measurement of their performance of their quality are adjusted to substantive definitions of quality.

Christine (3.12) believed that the contribution of sessional academics was a metaphor for quality in which the mantra of 'time poor/money poor' was reflected through their performances. If they 'don't do that extra bit, go the extra mile, [they] might not get another contract the following semester'.

I concluded that the respondents, with one exception, were positive about sessional academics' contribution to the quality of teaching. They agreed that sessional academics brought with them qualifications and experience within the business industry. In terms of their contribution, there were mixed feelings; one respondent argued that this zealous approach was undertaken in order to lure students to provide better survey feedback ratings thus ensuring a promise of re-employment. Metaphorically, sessional academics were the cogs in the wheel, an octopus with many tentacles, killer bees, mercenaries and a tale of two paradigms. The dominant metaphor for the subsection identified sessional academics as *cogs in the wheel* of higher education; as with Item 2, above, often they had to contend with the *tale of two paradigms*.

**Item 4 – Modes of communication to clarify the quality expectations: 'different arrows; one target'.**

John's response to the question suggested that the modes of communication were a metaphor for the quality of teaching. He also expressed the view that there were two paradigmatic views of communication: literal and metaphoric; he (John, 4.1) strongly believed that:

We have more than one mode of communication we've got to be very careful in the sense that the university communicates "quality": it does communicate; it does use it as a metaphor.

As a metaphor, the university would be using two communication arrows to hit one target: the notion of quality.

John further argues that the message was clouded by a harsh reality undisclosed to students, pointing to the distortion of communication within the university's communication system. He suggests that scholarship and research 'outgunned' teaching duties within the faculty (John 4.3):

Miscommunication occurs when that message is not being communicated to students – in the sense that you are actually walking into a research environment.

He argued (John 4.4) for a more ‘holistic measure of quality’, observing that quality could be measured substantively and that ‘quality could be a metaphor’.

Nathalie agreed with John that communication was a metaphor for quality; she noted that there was a degree of ambiguity surrounding the term ‘quality’. She observed that there had been a marked erosion of ‘intimate relationship’ between teachers and students during the past few years, as evidenced by this harsh reality. She commented (Nathalie 4.6): ‘Ask any of our students who the name of your lecturer is: most of them wouldn’t have a clue’. Nathalie agreed with Anthony about the divide between actual and perceived quality and how to communicate these notions to different stakeholders.

Anthony agreed that communication was a metaphor for the quality of teaching. As with Nathalie and John, Anthony saw that the alignment of the communication strategies with the ‘managerialist’ business models reduced the measurement of quality to a single variable; he decried this corporate practice in dealing with such a complex issue as a measure of quality. He also expressed his discomfort that the communication system was simplified to offer a single view about the notion of quality; he explained (Anthony 4.8):

That is something about which I don’t feel very comfortable. We try to measure quality [but] because of its complexity and holistic approach it is reduced to only one variable, it is easier to communicate, [than to] collate and measure it.

Anthony outlined the ‘reductionist’ communication philosophy and the institution’s mandate to collapse the essence of measurement variables to only one variable. He vindicated his claims by demonstrating that teaching academics were assessed on one variable while other variables such as class engagement, providing feedback on assignments, lecturing styles were sidelined or simply discarded from the actual measurement tool. To conclude, Anthony expressed his utter disdain for the use of a reductionist approach to communicating: a variety of modes to be communicated; the measurement of quality – ‘the metrics’ – being restricted to a single variable.

Christine agreed that communication was a metaphor for quality and outlined that ‘quality’ and leadership were disparate bed-fellows for sessionals - as evidenced by the course coordinators’ leadership styles. In particular, course coordinators adopted either a participative or directive leadership approach depending on the size of the student cohort; consequently, the communication strategies are affected by the size of those groups. For the ‘enormous sessional pool’, she (Christine 4.12) accepted the need for consistency via formal structured communication to sessional academics:

So, in terms of the communication needed, it [needs to be] more structured, less layered and very consistent, so you look at [its] contribution to quality. And for me then, quality *is* a metaphor to measure that.

Matthew referred to the tension between official communication and personal understanding of the notion of quality. Metaphorically that *face-off* was the primary cause of confusion between ‘the original’ and ‘the copy’: official versus unofficial versions of ‘quality’ as evidenced by the different modes of communication used by the university and the mean by which it promoted the notion of quality. On the one hand, there is the official communication about quality and, on the other hand, the informal understanding of that concept by the different stakeholders; he said (Matthew 4.13):

You need to define what these modes of communication are, and then ask “What do I think about the advertising that the university does, the official communication channels, the unofficial [informal] understandings that we have about quality?”

Matthew maintained that there were multiple communication strategies to different audiences; for example, communicating the boost in research would be one way to convey the ‘sense of quality’ to an audience. Metaphorically, it was like spraying multiple communication ‘bullets’ towards different audiences as ‘everybody at every university necessarily uses all of those modes to communicate to various audiences’ (Matthew 4.14). In summary, he believed that, as a range of communication methods were used to reach

different audiences, the recipients ‘will all pick up different signals from various channels’ (Matthew 4.15).

I concluded that there was a consensus amongst the respondents that communication was a metaphor for the quality of teaching. The responses were, however, different in types and their causes and effects at many levels. These included the following:

- the alignment of leadership styles with the size of students’ cohort;
- the tension between the official and unofficial communication strategies;
- different communication strategies to target different audiences;
- the strategic manipulation of information when communicating issues related to performance and quality;
- the university’s literal and metaphorical approaches to describe the notion of quality’; and
- the controversial themes such as ‘managerialism’ and ‘reductionist approach’.

I summed up these communication modes as consisting of *different arrows* with *one target*.

### **Item 5 – The reflection of quality of teaching through the student experience surveys: double-edged weapon or the maddening clash between legitimacy and purpose**

Nathalie believed that the students’ feedback survey was an unreliable instrument to judge the quality of teaching; she noted (Nathalie 5.1) that the survey was ‘a tool that is poorly designed, poorly executed and it does not reflect anything much’.

Anthony disagreed with parts of these claims; he acknowledged the merits of the students’ feedback surveys and its importance to Exray University; however, he believed the organisation needed to review the current model; he said (Anthony 5.2):

[The] student experience survey is an important instrument and should be in place. Maybe it can be reworded a little bit better, maybe be more user-friendly. Its structure could be a bit easier.

He commented that while the current survey was a 'valid instrument and has to be in place', the question is, 'For what purpose is it used?' (Anthony 5.2); metaphorically the survey was the 'right weapon utilised for an evil purpose'. He questioned the negative impact of the current survey, commenting (Anthony 5.3):

We are talking about the quality of teaching [when], for the purposes that particular instrument is being used, [it] is negatively affecting the quality of teaching.

According to Anthony, the current survey instrument actively portrayed a 'maddening clash of legitimacy and intention' that, according to him (Anthony 5.3), could potentially affect the institution's strategic mission concerning the quality of teaching.

Christine agreed that the students' feedback survey could be a metaphor for 'quality'; however, she had a mixed opinion about the students' survey being a credible instrument for measuring quality. Her evaluation of the student survey was (Christine 5.4): s

It is credible in some aspects, but there are serious flaws with it, making it a feeble instrument because we find it difficult to be objective at the best of times.

She firmly questioned the credibility of the administrators, as well as that of the students who filled in the questionnaires; this, in fact, confirmed her doubts that the students' feedback survey could be a viable measurement tool for quality; she clarified (Christine 5.4):

We are expecting students to be objective, to tell us the quality of our work, of our programme and so forth. I also think that we are setting up ourselves to fail in measuring quality here.

Matthew agreed, suggesting that the student feedback survey was a double-edged weapon; there was, however, the belief (Matthew 5.5) that 'It measures something; that something is probably a worthwhile thing to measure'. He outlined the merits of the students' feedback survey and described its

importance in reflecting the quality of teaching; however, he recognised its limitations and his own personal doubts relating to the quality of teaching; he concluded (Matthew 5.6):

It probably does, to some extent, reflect the quality of teaching, [but] to a limited extent.

John agreed that the student feedback survey was a metaphor for quality but that it had its limitations. As previously argued by Anthony, John questioned the reliability of the management of the current students' feedback surveys and that the current uses to which the tool was put were highly questionable; he asked (John 5.6):

Could it be a metaphor? Yes of course it could be; currently, it's currently utilised terribly.

John saw limitations in the students' feedback survey; he believed this tool could be improved to measure, more effectively, the quality of teaching; he summed up (John 5.8): 'It could be a better indication of quality'.

I concluded that there was a collective view of *the student feedback survey as a double-edged sword*: its merits were outweighed by its flaws, and its use in evaluating the quality of teaching was questionable. Most of the respondents agreed that it could be the right 'weapon', currently used for the wrong purpose. The respondents also indicated the need for a complete reform of the current tool: that it should convey the precise objectives of the survey to all parties concerned. For this reason, I have added a further additional metaphor: that it creates *a maddening clash between legitimacy and purpose*.

### **Item 6 – The reliability and validity of student experience surveys; the students' twin and controversial roles: judge or jury**

Anthony suggested that there was a clash between the legitimacy of measurement criteria and purpose of the student experience surveys; his response challenged the reliability of the survey; he questioned (Anthony 6.1): 'Does it measure what it is supposed to measure? So, what is this meant to

measure? Is it supposed to gauge the quality of teaching?’ Anthony again outlined the merits of the students’ feedback survey but still doubted the accuracy of this tool to measure the teachers’ performance; he concluded that the ‘happy sheets’ could be affected by the respondents’ subjective impulses; he said (Anthony 6.2):

As we call it, happy sheets can be affected by impulse, by personal liking. So, I’ve got some doubts that it is a valid instrument – if it measures quality.

Anthony believed some issues such as the teachers’ workload, teaching different subjects, and interacting with various cohorts of students could deliver inconsistent outcomes; he argued that so many variables could affect the results of the survey: the impact of course/class dynamics on survey results. Metaphorically, the ‘voice’ of the survey should ‘echo’ the same patterns of results as a reliable tool.

Christine agreed that the student experience surveys could be a metaphor for quality; in particular, she highlighted the high emotion and subjectivity involved in the process of rating the quality of teaching. She also outlined the timing of the students’ survey and raised the emotional issues that could impact on the survey outcomes. She believed the feedback instrument was neither valid nor reliable for the above reasons including the students’ power to drive the outcomes and shift the blame to both teachers and coordinators; she commented (Christine 6.5):

I do question its validity and reliability for all the reasons that have been put up there because the responses are just too subjective and too emotive.

Matthew accepted that the survey instrument was valid; however, he expressed doubts about the students’ ability and their impartiality to judge the quality of teaching. He believed that the double role of students as ‘judge and jury’ could not be trusted in a context influenced by variables beyond the control of both permanents and sessionals. Matthew struggled with the students’ ability to make survey responses that consistently were valid; he elaborated (Matthew 6.7):

Whether [students] are in a position to measure or to judge other aspects of [the survey], they can indeed accurately express what their experience was; I don't think there's much doubt about that. But beyond that, I don't know there's a lot of validity to it.

About the surveys' reliability, Matthew (Matthew 6.8) commented that 'the big thing that sort of worries me is the tiny proportion of students who engage in them'. With only ten per cent of students expressing a viewpoint about the course experience, it resonated with Covey's claim to give priority to things that matter most rather than those that matter least. Furthermore, Furthermore, it appears to eclipse the inactive silent voices of the low percentage of students who ticked the boxes.

John outlined the tricky nature of the feedback survey: whether or not it was a reflection of the students' personal learning experiences. Metaphorically, the students' maturity would be the lynchpin to obtaining trusted survey results, in terms of reliability and validity. John questioned the students' role in the validation of the survey instruments and lamented about the process; he (John 6.11) expressed his strong disapproval: 'It's a terrible instrument because it does not measure the sense of responsibility which is on both sides'. John argued that academics and students have their respective roles and responsibilities and both have a stake in the course experience surveys; students appear to have absolute power to influence the outcomes.

Nathalie, in part, agreed with John's claims and argued that the survey could be a punitive tool in the hands of students. As with the previous respondents, she (Nathalie 6.12) also questioned the validity of this instrument and upheld that 'there're other ways of measuring the quality of the academic teaching'. There were so many variables impacting on the survey outcomes; thus, a possible metaphor emerged: *Is it a journey leading to many destinations or are there many routes leading to one goal?*

There was an outcry concerning the lack of reliability and validity of the current students' feedback survey as an instrument for determining the quality of teaching. All respondents agreed that the survey might be a metaphor for quality; however, they were cautious on the following: the empowerment of

students to wield a retributive tool against teaching academics; the need to make students and academics accountable for the survey outcomes; the low participation rates; the reliance placed on minority voices. I concluded that, metaphorically, it led to construing the students' role as one of *being both judge and jury*.

### **Item 7 – Different ways of measuring the quality of teaching in the higher education sector: a 'potpourri' of quality measurement tools**

Christine proposed alternative methods to measure quality: peer reviews provided the opportunity for her colleagues to provide constructive feedback and validate other aspects of the course: materials, pedagogy and delivery; the academics volunteering for this program to be subjected to both discomforts as well as a powerful learning experience. She (Christine 7.1) reflected:

It can be scary because you don't know what's coming back from someone's observations; it is a huge learning curve and helps me to have affirmation of what I'm doing that's good and what I can change.

Matthew offered, similarly, a 'potpourri' of measures of the quality of teaching: the academics' self-evaluation; the perception of both students and management; the post-university performance of students.

Anthony argued there were different ways of measuring if that notion had been properly defined; then, it would be possible to construe metaphor as one of the overwhelming criteria. He also quoted Dewey: 'We do not learn from experience; we learn from reflecting on that experience'. Anthony said that clear and precise questions were essential to the valid measurement of quality; he also argued for alternative methods of evaluating the quality of teaching. He affirmed the use of students' progressive acquisition of knowledge scaffolded from semester to semester rather than to use, exclusively, instruments such as feedback surveys; he supported gauging the impact of assessment tasks as a viable tool; he concluded (Anthony 7.11):

It seems to me that to ask how we measure that experience – either through the survey and the assessment task – is the primary question.

According to Anthony, a longitudinal follow-up of students' progress could be considered as a reliable measurement of quality. This claim appears very ambitious and would be quite difficult to undertake.

The institutions would need to consider the length of the survey and find an alternative method of measuring student satisfaction in the meantime (currently, surveys take place each semester to semester). Although this suggestion appears to be interesting, a longitudinal quantitative follow-up survey would constitute a challenging alternative method of measuring the quality of teaching within higher education sector.

### **Item 8 – Assessment criteria for measuring the quality of teaching: multiplicity of variables**

John argued that students should receive assessment criteria, together with well-structured and defined quality-based questions at the beginning of courses; he argued for 'clarity' to ensure 'quality feedback' (John 8.1):

I think it does ask the right questions because it loads the responsibility of clarity of teaching providing good quality feedback

John outlined the importance of a possible correlation between students' performance, and the assessment criteria and the course management.

Anthony used the metaphor of 'industrialisation' to illustrate the essence of clearly stipulated assessment criteria and objectives integral to the university's current business strategy. He also outlined the alignment of the assessment tasks with the concepts of 'mass production' and 'productivity', adding (Anthony 8.3):

Whatever assessment tasks we are talking about, we need to embed them into a business model based on mass production.

He (Anthony 8.4) expressed 'strong doubts about assessment tasks, whatever they were: they now proliferate with exams; now even more online; with some essay type items'. Anthony blamed the neo-liberal stance embraced by the university, together with its associated 'mass production' culture, for

being responsible for students' attitudes towards education: it created a flawed perception about knowledge acquisition and learning; he added (Anthony 8.5):

All of that cheating which is present, and part of our discourse, is evidence that students don't perceive assessment tasks as a learning opportunity.

Christine considered that the assessment criteria could be a metaphor for the notion of quality. She found the marking guides and rubrics useful documents to ensure the consistency of the assessment and explained (Christine 8.9): 'We know what we want from students and, based on that, we brief the students on what we are looking for', thus providing precise information about the requirements of the assignments.

All respondents agreed that *assessment criteria* could be a metaphor for quality. The responses focused on the use of the following: marking guides and rubrics; the impact of the neo-liberal business model on the university management of assessment tasks; the students' flawed perception of knowledge and learning; the impact of the 'massification' of education. I concluded that quality of teaching involved *a multiplicity of variables*.

### **Item 9 – The impact of professional development on the performance of sessional academics: the 'cog in the wheel' of continuous learning**

Nathalie outlined the benefits of professional development for all categories of academics – using 'newly acquired knowledge' to reflect the quality of the teaching; she urged the substantive use of PD. She concluded (Nathalie 9.1):

It will eventually or immediately translate to the way the person teaches and then have the ability to translate the quality of the program, and hopefully, by default, to the better experience for students.

Nathalie pointed out that PD programs were considered to be a cost rather than an investment in the organisation. She believed that the impact of the financial constraints on professional development was a serious consideration; she said (Nathalie 9.2, 9.3):

There should be a lot more PD, and it should be associated with the quality of the delivery of the program and in turn the quality of [the] person teaching that program.

Anthony agreed that it was desirable to consider PD as ‘the cog in the wheel’ within the higher education sector (Anthony 9.4); he also acknowledged PD as the essential ingredient for ongoing academics because ‘the pace of change is accelerating’. Anthony outlined the complexity of PD relating to sessional academics as follows (Anthony 9.5). There is a trend to consider sessional academics as ‘mercenaries on a mission’: they are expected to bring in their own portfolio of knowledge and expertise. It is rational to argue that the ‘marketability’ of their services – ‘which they sell on the education market’ – depends on the currency of their skills; however, it is clear that the university business model would preclude any investment in professional development without justification. Anthony (9.5) pointed out that Exray’s business model dictates ‘the supremacy of the economic bottom line’.

Christine made it clear that, despite the time constraints, newly employed sessional academics should ‘optimise the opportunities for professional development in order to improve what they’re doing’ (Christine 9.7).

Matthew’s pragmatic response to the item was that sessional academics should be offered generic PD within initial induction training. He agreed that sessionals be responsible for ‘their education and reading and keeping up with their own discipline’ (Matthew 9.8). Matthew advocated that sessional academics should upgrade and keep up with the currency of their expertise through ‘*self-up skilling*’ and ‘*self-directed learning*’.

The respondents unanimously agreed that PD could be a metaphor for ‘quality’. One respondent explained that business model based on economic rationalism had been the driving force of tagging PD as a cost. There were claims that sessional academics should ‘market’ themselves as the ‘best fit’ for the job, in terms of skills, expertise and knowledge; they should take care of their own PD. Metaphorically, all the respondents, with the exception of John, believed that professional development was ‘a cog in the wheel’ of continuous

learning for sessional academics; as a dissenting voice, John claimed that PD was mere narrative and mostly rhetorical.

I concluded that the most appropriate metaphor relating to professional development was that *sessional academics are the cog in the wheel*.

**Item 10 – The impact of the selection of sessional academics on the quality of teaching: good selection – good quality; poor selection – poor quality**

Anthony believed that the selection of sessional academics was a metaphor because, as he said (Anthony 10.1): ‘It can affect the quality of teaching – probably in a number of different ways’. According to Anthony, the recruitment and selection of sessional academics were no different from hiring a product or service: the university stuck with its business model; the preferred selection criteria would aim at choosing candidates who were academically and professionally fit for the positions. Anthony then raised a sensitive issue – communication of standards to sessional academics. He examined the process of ensuring that the newly employed academics understand the quality requirement and standard of the institution; he commented (Anthony 10.4):

When the [university] recruits academics, how are they going to communicate the quality standards and quality expectations of that institution that might significantly differ from quality standards, and expectations [of the recruit]?

Anthony summed up his response by advocating that the selection of sessional academics has a considerable impact on the quality of teaching.

Christine (Christine 10.6) believed that the ‘pool of talent’ certainly could contribute to quality in the teaching. She suggested the establishment of firm selection criteria for hiring sessional academics other than relying on student feedback scores.

Matthew believed that the scientific selection of sessional academics would enhance the quality of teaching within the organisation. He also stated, parenthetically, that selecting the wrong candidates would not necessarily affect the course experience provided a skilled course coordinator was available.

John's response raised the transparency issue relating to the selection of academics: he regretted the absence of clear selection criteria on the institution's website. He also noted that students would be unable to differentiate or be bothered if instructed by either sessional or permanent staff. Based on the above arguments; he (John 10.8) summarised: 'Neither the selection nor the narrative behind the selection is transparent; therefore, the answer is that it is not a metaphor at the moment.'

I concluded from this discussion that careful, meticulous selection of sessional academics had an impact on quality; the metaphor most appropriate was this: *If there was good selection, there was good quality; if there was poor selection there was poor quality.* A heavy onus falls on the selectors.

**Item 11 – The impact of quality course materials and delivery as a contributing factor to the improvement of teaching when relying on sessional academics: adding one's own 'flavour' together with 'surfing the wave'.**

Matthew (11.11) pleaded for course material standardisation; he emphasised the importance of 'the quality of teaching materials, whether it's for casuals or permanent staff'.

John agreed with Matthew and argued in favour of consistent quality teaching materials; he added that the quality standard of the course materials supported the strong brand image of the institution. Finally, he pointed out that the right course material should be designed to be delivered by academics regardless of whether they worked at onshore and offshore campuses; he said (John 11.2):

Once your elements are there, then technically, anybody can deliver the course in a very consistent way. It's a form of "business as usual"; you can teach it in Singapore, in Vietnam, in Indonesia, in Melbourne.

John further pointed out that, on the one hand, the current business model related to Exray University being a global university consisting of campuses without boundaries. On the other hand, due to globalisation, the course materials

had to be customised and contextualised to adapt to different student cohorts and campuses; he said (John 11.3):

It's got to be of very high quality, taking into account globalisation because cultural differences dictate the delivery.

Nathalie argued that most sessional would not have any input in the development of course materials: only permanent course coordinators and academics were responsible for updating or changing these. She agreed that course materials should be standardised to ensure consistency in quality mainly when they were to be delivered by sessional academics on different onshore and offshore campuses; she pointed out (Nathalie 11.5):

[Course materials] have to be somewhat standardised if we're relying on a lot of sessional staff. So, anyone can pick them up and, and just do it; they can be delivered very efficiently from different parts of the world.

Nathalie added that academics should feel free to improve their teaching by supplementing provided materials with personal artefacts.

Anthony maintained that a neo-liberalist business model had impacted on the higher education sector. His opinion about standardisation differed from that of Nathalie and John; he (Anthony 11.8) argued:

I have no doubts about that: it is essential to maintain the standardisation of the content, and probably the brightest minds should be involved.

Although he was a firm advocate of the standardisation of course materials, Anthony agreed that academics should be offered some leeway to contextualise with a personal touch; metaphorically, he believed the individual 'flavour' of academics within the overall-standardised course materials would enhance the quality of teaching and learning; he commented (Anthony 11.9):

To an extent, discretion should be given to the person who is delivering the course material. Each of us is different: different personalities; different styles; different experience; divergent views on the same content, as well as a different interpretation of the same content.

Christine agreed with the respondents that the course materials could be a metaphor for quality, arguing that there is a correlation between the quality of

materials and delivery performance. It was necessary to adapt the materials to meet the needs of different students in different cohorts; she argued that the role of sessional academics' role was to ensure they adapt to the changing contextual factors such as:

If a sessional is confident enough and struggles to work with you on your material, they will look at ways and means to make it work, to be able to read your different cohorts of students and different individuals within one group and try to tailor what you do to meet their needs.

Individually, it was possible to record different responses relating to the following:

- standardisation and customisation of course materials;
- the impact of globalisation on course management;
- sessional academics' personal adaptation of the materials and delivery; and
- course coordinators' own expectations of their course standards.

I concluded that dealing with the course materials was a question of *adding one's 'own flavour'* together with *'surfing the wave'*.

### **Item 12 – The impact of class sizes on the performance of both permanent and sessional academics: Size matters!**

John argued that class size was a metaphor for quality and affected both permanents and sessionals; he (John 12.1) believed that smaller class sizes were the 'best for delivery'. Nathalie (Nathalie 12.2) followed the mantra: 'small classes, smaller groups: – better delivery, better quality, better input, and better output'.

Anthony pointed out that smaller groups of students would generate better synergy; he pointed out (Anthony 12.4): 'Each would have the opportunity to contribute and to be involved in the building and creation of knowledge'.

Christine believed that class sizes were a metaphor for quality; she outlined the impact of class sizes on the quality of teaching. She recalled her personal

experience: managing back-to-back tutorials; allocating time for struggling students was more challenging than class sizes; she (Christine 12.5) was:

letting the students down. Dealing with the dynamics basically detracts from the core business of doing something good and solid, in an hour.

Matthew (Matthew 12.6) felt that ‘an average of 30 students is less than ideal. Small groups would be better, beneficial’.

There appeared to be benefits of having smaller class sizes; the discussions covered a variety: improved communication, students’ engagement, improved discussions. One respondent addressed the difficulty of providing assistance to individuals when tutoring a large group. Another respondent believed large class sizes would not affect the quality of teaching but, would prefer to deal with smaller groups.

I concluded that, metaphorically, in the case of class size: *size matters*.

### **Item 13 – The relationship between the notion of quality teaching and cost-saving devices within the higher education sector: ‘the fable of wanting more with less’.**

Nathalie argued that education should be free and that investment in education was vital to the advancement of a knowledge society, leading in research and providing quality education. She (Nathalie 13.2) believed that the government should: ‘Stop promoting big business and start investing in education, I think we have a long way to go’.

Anthony (Anthony 13.3) refuted the argument that education should be free and concluded that:

Even if there is a perception that education is free, education cannot be free, because, ultimately, there is someone who will have to pay.

Metaphorically, Anthony argued that education could not be a profit centre; instead, it should be a cost centre; philosophically, he believed it would make a difference in the approach to quality education if this approach were to be taken; he commented (Anthony 13.4):

And when education is a cost centre, in that case, it's going to take a different approach to quality and everything else.

According to Anthony, university management presented education as a product profit centre, with a price to pay for quality service; he also argued (13.5) that customers would be willing to pay a high price for perceived high quality of the product or service. Anthony saw a negative impact associated with cost-cutting devices: *increased profits, lower quality*. He further argued (Anthony 13.5) that cost-cutting strategies (downsizing, reduction of salary bills and other variable costs) were management tools designed to improve the bottom line; those strategic decisions were 'something that can negatively affect the quality of teaching'.

Christine argued that cost-saving devices could be a metaphor for quality and maintained that raising output while reducing the resources available presents a paradoxical situation: she spoke of (Christine 13.6) 'the fable of wanting more with less', adding that she also lamented the institutional pressure to deliver the same output with less input:

I think we are asked to work with an impossible model – where you reduce the finances, and you're saying your output remains the same; alternatively, you've got to raise your output.

Matthew questioned the legitimacy of publicly-funded institutions to manage their costs and pleaded for a better administration of those public funds; he proposed (Matthew 13.7) a reasonable control and management of costs.

There were claims about free education that many needed to challenge, as follows:

- there is 'no such thing as a free lunch';
- the 'fable of doing more with less';
- the mistaken perception that 'high price is equal to high quality';
- the contrast between 'a profit centre' and a 'cost centre'; and

- the perception that, while cost-cutting was inevitable, there was a plea for ‘moderate cuts in the publicly-funded higher education sector.

I concluded that the most appropriate metaphor referred to *the fable of expecting more from less*.

#### **Item 14 – The impact of peer partnerships on the quality of teaching: from ‘staff pairings’ to ‘logistical nightmares’**

Anthony was a firm supporter of peer-partnership programs, pointing out that they overcame the current problem of students’ feedback constituting ‘one-way traffic’. Peer-partnerships, he argued, offered an alternative way of evaluating teaching academics’ performance using direct observation in class. He pointed out (Anthony 14.2) that peer partnerships were implicitly effective professional development for academics as ‘we learn from each other, because just a morsel of different practices can significantly contribute to my own practice’. He supported the view (Anthony 14.3) that the community of academics should be encouraged to share their experiences through peer partnership programs, and those approaches ‘can contribute to the quality of teaching’.

Christine argued that peer partnerships could be a metaphor for quality by providing feedback and developing trust. These were vital elements in peer partnerships but could become ‘tough parts for casuals to manage’; she further added (Christine, 14.5):

I do believe in the value of peer partnerships to raise quality, but there must be certain things in place. Such as, the way that we give the feedback is essential. There should be an element of trust between these two partners as well.

Nathalie acknowledged the merits of observation and feedback from colleagues to improve the quality of teaching. She had found that this method benefited both teachers and students, pointing out (Nathalie 14.8):

We often do it in a major revision where we have three or four lecturers [in an] interjectory delivery of the program.

In this discussion there were attempts to tie peer partnership programs to types of professional development. There were discussions about the trust factor and quality of feedback; the impact of cost-cutting on this program; similarity with the team teaching and the benefits to both students and academics. Although all the participants acknowledged the merits of peer-partnership programs, the dominant metaphor that emerged was about the logistical nightmares associated with them.

I concluded that while they did have some benefits *peer partnerships/staff pairings led to logistical nightmares*.

### **Item 15 – The meaning of the notion of quality of teaching: seed-planting and job-readiness**

Matthew confessed his confusion about the concept of quality of teaching. According to him, the quality of learning is of prime importance; the question is, he responded (Matthew 15.1):

whether [or not] the students have developed, whether they've acquired the skills and knowledge irrespective of their expectations?

According to Nathalie, the metaphor of quality was about enabling students to deal with the challenges related to their studies; she argued there was a correlation between the quality of teaching and the success of students at risk, saying (Nathalie 15.2):

The relationship between quality of teaching and learning and the success of students at risk – it's a tough job to bring them to the level that they will have acquired essential qualifications at the end and that they will have learned something.

Anthony queried the metaphor of quality related to students' improved pass rates and the marked change in educators' teaching behaviour. He conceded that it was impossible to measure 'quality' by considering pass rates;

it was false to construe that a sharp change in the learning process as educators was an achievement of quality of learning. He affirmed (Anthony 15.3):

For me, the quality of learning and teaching is if there is a change in both the teacher and learner. Whatever the change is after the learning process, it is I, as a teacher, who has changed; it can be anything, maybe I have acquired something; maybe I have changed my attitude.

Christine believed that the metaphor of quality is about one's preparedness to be an active practitioner: ultimately, setting an example to students about education as being part of lifelong learning. According to her (Christine 15.5), the quality of education does not stop with the graduation:

That leads on to the academic setting an example before the students about education as lifelong learning. It's looking beyond this semester and your graduation.

I was pleased to receive different responses from the focus group respondents about the metaphor of quality; these included:

- equipping the students to deal with abnormal issues;
- preparedness beyond graduation;
- the academics' development and change in behaviour; and
- students' acquired skills.

I concluded that the metaphor identified by the focus group of sessional academics remained appropriate to permanents: quality teaching is associated with *seed-planting and job-readiness*.

## Conclusion

The outcome of the metaphor analysis was a set of 'emergent metaphors' that relate to the different ways academics at Exray University view the quality of teaching – and, to a lesser extent, of learning. The 'emergent metaphors' emerged from an in-depth analysis of the focus group transcripts. In the first instance, the inductive data reduction revealed the participants' experiences with quality of teaching (as presented in Chapter 4). This chapter addressed

the participants' descriptions including quotes and extracts from the interviews.

In the next chapter (Chapter 6) I provide a discussion of the findings; this will comprise of the following:

- Discussion arising of the phenomenographic analysis and what is learnt from the categories of description and the relationships between them.
- Discussion arising of the metaphor analysis and what is learnt from the different categories of academics.
- Discussion arising of the relationship between the phenomenographic analysis and metaphor analysis – relationships between emergent categories of description and 'emergent metaphors'.

## Chapter 6

### Interrelationship of Categories of Description and 'Emergent Metaphors'

The purpose of this research study was to contribute to the knowledge and understanding of the ways permanents and sessionals experience the quality of teaching in higher education. The aim of this study was to investigate the variety of ways, in which different categories of academics', experience quality within their workplace landscape. The following research questions were addressed:

1. What are the qualitatively different ways academics experience the quality of teaching?
2. What are the variations that exist between these experiences?
3. What is the context of the current situation relating to quality issues associated with teaching in tertiary institutions at an Australian tertiary institution?
4. What is the current quality practices associated with teaching at an Australian tertiary institution?

In my study, I used a phenomenographic research approach and a metaphor analysis, which allowed the themes and metaphors to emerge from both semi-structured and focus group interviews. The phenomenographic approach allowed for variations in the experiences and the ways the experiences were related to each other. In Chapter 4, I reported the outcome space from the individual semi-structured interviews in which *nine* 'categories of description'

emerged from a thorough analysis of the transcripts. These categories of description addressed the first research question. In Chapter 5, I analysed the findings arising from the two focus group interviews; this resulted in the identification of a set of 'emergent metaphors' (see Appendices 6 and 7). Next, I discussed the categories of description and metaphors that I identified: the 'emergent metaphors'. The outcome space presented by the different categories of description related to each experience of teaching quality and outlined the relationships with each other, providing the response to the second, third and fourth research questions.

In this chapter, I focus on what the findings reveal academics' experience of quality teaching in higher education; I relate these experiences to the issues raised and discussed in Chapter 2. As a consequence, Chapter 6 comprises the following discussion elements:

- the phenomenographic analysis and what I have learned from the categories of description and the relationships between them;
- the metaphor analysis and what I have learned from the different categories of academics – permanents and sessionals;
- the relationships between emergent categories of description and 'emergent metaphors' and what I have learned from these.

## **Categories of Description: Relationships**

Nine categories of description emerged in my study:

- Category 1 Quality of teaching as student satisfaction
- Category 2 Quality of teaching as compliance with standards
- Category 3 Quality of teaching as control and assurance
- Category 4 Quality of teaching as blended learning and delivery modes
- Category 5 Quality of teaching as scholarship and professional practice

- Category 6 Quality of teaching as information and communication
- Category 7 Quality of teaching as perception and language games
- Category 8 Quality of teaching as community of practice and peer-partnership
- Category 9 Quality of teaching as students' academic success and job-readiness

The participants described in detail how they had experienced the 'quality of teaching'; therefore, in this section of Chapter 6, I have taken into consideration what each category of description contributes to a broader understanding of the meaning of the 'quality of teaching' at Exray University.

### **Category One – Quality of teaching as 'student satisfaction'**

Over the last few decades, the rise of higher education quality assurance agenda has prompted the Australian government to seek ways to assess and monitor the quality of teaching. The claims of the academics in this study parallel Coates' (2010) suggestion that the most pervasive quality assurance mechanism has been the development of survey systems to capture student feedback. In the context of this study, student satisfaction is considered as a reliable indicator of teaching quality and emerged from the data analysis.

The students' evaluation of the quality of teaching is a direct measure of consumer satisfaction. Although survey data are easy to collect, there are still serious doubts regarding the reliability and validity of Student Feedback Survey as one of the valid measures of quality of teaching. In this line of reasoning, Marsh (2007) has argued that well-designed surveys are multidimensional, reliable and stable and can be useful in improving the quality of teaching. Other researchers (e.g., Kanji, Malek, & Wallace, 1999; Harvey, 2003; Williams & Cappuccini-Ansfield, 2007; Bayraktar et al., 2008;

Houston et al., 2008) have argued that students' surveys, student feedback, and measurement are also essential elements in quality improvement.

My study has demonstrated that, for academics, student feedback has emerged as one of the central pillars of the quality process. Previously, Williams & Cappucini-Ansfield (2007, 159) had acknowledged the unique position of students, from learners to strategic customers:

Students, so long taken for granted, have been recognised as the principal stakeholders in higher education, and their voice on their experiences is now being heard more clearly by institutions and governments.

Although research studies have shown that online responses elicit lower response rates than in-class administration of feedback surveys (Dommeyer et al., 2004; Porter, 2004), online surveys provide more qualitative information than paper-based surveys (Layne et al., 1999; Dommeyer et al., 2004). Some of the participants in this study experienced situations where quantitative and qualitative feedback did not corroborate; good qualitative students' feedback sent via emails to academics unmatched by the quantitative data collected.

The emergent 'category of description' associated with the measuring of student satisfaction revealed that students are important *customers* at Exray University. The data generated from those surveys will be validated, only if their use is appropriate, the outcomes are adequately communicated to the students, and if these outcomes are for the benefit of students.

### **Category Two – Quality of teaching as 'compliance with standards'**

Academic standards have been a much-debated topic in higher education in recent years. Category Two addresses the academics' conceptions and experiences with quality standard. There was a consensus among the participants that a correlation exists between the quality of teaching and compliance with standards –despite there being a lack of understanding regarding the significance of a 'quality standard'. The academic standard is a multi-dimensional concept, used and interpreted in a variety of ways by

different stakeholders (Brennan et al., 1996; Aelterman, 2006; Coates, 2010). Thompson-Whiteside (2012) suggests that the settings and judgments of a 'good' standard are mostly bound in the context of what judge and who is judging it.

The respondents have indicated the need to give increasing attention to the definition, measurement, monitoring, and reporting of higher education standards. Quality standards for teaching standards to associate with the best practices in the higher education sector; universities are held accountable for the services they provide. This study reveals that academics experience quality standards in the context of their profession and have to comply with the quality standards.

The use of standards provides a means for the quality and scope of services to be documented and monitored against stated objectives. Oliver (2003) has claimed that there had been little attention paid to any formal approaches to the specification of standards or benchmarks against which to measure standards. Thompson-Whiteside (2012) outlines that terms like quality and standards are without precise meaning. It is also worth paying attention to Sadler's (1987, 1994) definition of standard as 'a definite level of excellence or attainment or the recognised measure of what is adequate for some purpose, established by authority, custom or consensus'. One of the crucial challenges of Exray University is consistently to communicate the quality standards to the teaching academics although the reliability of judging is to base these standards on the abilities and expertise of the people judging, and the processes by which to judge them.

Academics are often left to interpret and set their quality standards; the compliance with those standards-based teaching can be challenging due to the degree of differentiation in the teaching and learning styles. Teaching academics may choose different delivery modes because of students' different learning styles. Exray University has the mechanism to ensure standards-based teaching despite the fact that sessional academics were regularly hired only a

few days before the beginning of the semester and the induction process did not necessarily address the standards-based teaching issue.

As mentioned previously, the conceptualisation of quality standards has been elusive to teaching academics. Despite recurrent discourses about standards in higher education, there is little consensus about what they are. James (2003) has argued that standards become even more opaque when dealing specifically with academic standards and a considerable number of activities concerning standards in the academic landscape are based on implicit and tacit practices. The findings of my study indicate the challenge for those outside of teaching practice to understand academic standards. Morley & Aynsley (2007) argue that employers' understanding of quality and standards differ considerably to the applied standards within the university.

Another bone of contention is the fact that standards are set implicitly rather than explicitly within the curriculum. That explained the reason why the inherent nature of academic standards, particularly around teaching and learning activities, has prompted greater demands for transparency and accountability as the standard setting is a subjective, tacit and opaque process.

Academics expect university management to be consistent with the dissemination of information regarding standards. The opacity and subjective characteristics of quality standards justify consistent communication to academics. Although the notion of associating a quality standard with accountability and control is common, there is a need for more transparency and an explicit explanation of that concept to teaching academics.

### **Category Three – Quality of teaching as ‘control and assurance’**

Category Three addresses the academics' conceptions and experiences with quality assurance and control. Most of the participants in the study experienced quality assurance as ‘quality control’: for academics, the quality assurance instrument was used as a disciplinary or punitive tool. Similarly, this applied to the rigorous rubrics embedded within the courses, together with the subsequent moderation processes; again, they were a focus of quality

assurance and control. This claim resonates with Cheung & Tsui (2010) that educational communities choose quality assurance mechanisms because they carry strong inspectorial or control connotations. My study also revealed that course coordinators experienced quality assurance as power; for example, the course coordinators' unquestioned prerogative and authority to control academics' performance.

The divides between classroom pedagogies and administrative quality assurance decisions remain a significant challenge for higher education institutions. Cheung & Tsui (2010) argue that external quality assurance within the institution's culture, mission, strategy, organisational structure, learning and teaching, student support and operational activities is desirable. More importantly, an efficient external quality assurance system reflects the different stakeholder interests, ensuring interplay between them. Baldwin (1997) concurs with the participants experiencing quality assurance, acknowledging that tensions emerge in the quality exercise because of the competing concepts of 'quality' that higher education institutions try to accommodate.

University academics are still experiencing the massification of education and the necessity for higher education institutions to demonstrate its accountability to both internal and external stakeholders; the move is unquestionably a matter of efficiency and effectiveness to justify continuing public investment. It is difficult to establish a correlation between quality assurance and quality of teaching: the system has its ostensible losers and beneficiaries, compliant and non-compliant subjects, and varied contextual elements. The published literature shows a strong strand towards the consequences of quality assurance; the critics focused on the coerciveness of the quality assurance system rather than the educational benefits of this measurement instrument. Newton's (2000, 285) *'feeding the beast'* metaphor portrays the current higher education context: an accountability-driven quality assurance system vividly.

My study revealed that academics experienced quality assurance as an expression of managerial power, and a control mechanism aligned with audit cultures. The participants mainly linked quality of teaching to compliance with various administrative tasks rather than to a transparent process to communicate to all categories of academics professionally audited outcomes.

#### **Category Four – Quality of teaching as ‘blended learning and delivery modes’**

Category Four reveals the academics’ conceptions and experiences of blended learning and course delivery modes. The academics interviewed for the study experienced blended learning as an instrument to improve the students’ learning experience. Blended learning modes of delivery have contributed to the overall students’ learning experience and subsequently reflected through the feedback surveys. Procter (2003) concurs that blended learning is the effective combination of different modes of delivery, models of teaching and styles of learning.

The participants’ experiences were quite divided regarding the contribution of blended learning to the quality of teaching; some believed that the university’s online delivery of teaching materials: recorded lectures, online tests and tutorial materials had no impact on students’ satisfaction, with no evident impact on teaching quality. Other academics lauded the positive contribution of blended learning to teaching quality and its contribution to students’ interest and engagement. Salmon’s (2002) argument contradicts some of the claims previously outlined because the lack of social interaction is taken as given in traditional settings and creates a particular need to motivate the less independent student.

Blended learning is a repackaged mode of delivery enhanced by modern technology; higher education academics experienced the impact on their pedagogical techniques. Efforts to improve the quality of higher education course structure through blended learning have faltered due to the students’ inadequate response to online self-directed learning. Brew’s (2008) research

study offers a different argument on the ground that blended learning courses may provide a sense of community, similar to that experienced in wholly face-to-face environments, mitigating adverse conduct such as destructive criticism and personal attacks.

There is a shortage of literature regarding the detail of how particular students work with technology and manage their home space studies. Holley & Oliver (2010), argue that despite the typical rhetoric about preparing students to become autonomous and self-directed learners, teaching academics still question the students' ability to learn best on their own. This claim parallels the findings of that study to a certain extent but expresses the sentiment of the majority of the participants.

Category Four was organised to discuss the experience with blended learning as current modes of delivery and the contribution to the quality of teaching, as reflected through the feedback surveys. Although blended learning had improved the methods of delivery, paradoxically, the students' inadequate response to the online materials have had mixed impact on the quality of teaching. Consequently, it is tough to assess the effectiveness of blended learning based on student feedback surveys due to low response rates.

#### **Category Five – Quality of teaching as 'scholarship and professional practice'**

Category Five reveals the academics' conceptions and experiences with the scholarship of teaching and learning. Teaching academics experienced professional development as a tool for enhancing their teaching skills; however, the data collected revealed uneven consideration regarding the development of permanents and sessionals. The participants in my study believed that the pursuit of efficiency through cost-saving devices impacted on PD and affected the development of sessionals. Glassick (2000) has argued that the precise wording to describe the scholarship of teaching was elusive and difficult to interpret and implement. Despite those difficulties, there was a

consensus that tertiary institutions should invest in the necessary PD for sessional academics to improve the quality of teaching.

Furthermore, as there are multiple approaches to the notion of quality, the ‘emergent metaphors’ associated the concept of ‘quality’ with scholarship. Most Australian tertiary institutions provide postgraduate teaching qualifications to permanents, but the same opportunities are not given to their sessional counterparts. Students do not discriminate between the different categories of academics when they evaluate the quality of teaching. As sessionals normally work for a number of different organisations, they would not be able to avail themselves of such opportunities, even if offered. Boshier (2009) outlines that academics grumble about how research allegedly obscures the merits of excellent teaching at universities.

My research reveals that lack of pedagogical support from the university compromises the quality of teaching. Some sessional academics had inadequate notice to prepare for the new semester; they had an insufficient briefing about the teaching materials; often they were oblivious to the university’s core values, standard policies, and procedures. Precarious academics are subjected to a diversity of organisational cultures and experience recurrent culture shock as they move from one campus to another; it is necessary for them to carry their biographies and details of experience at all times . The temporary nature of their employment contract does not preclude the necessity for a fully-fledged induction program and continuous professional development initiatives. The course managers are responsible for the maintenance of teaching quality standards. In that respect, compulsory professional development for all academics would prevent personal customisation and delivery of educational materials. Boshier (2009) points out that the scholarship of teaching and learning is often associated with the politics of publishing; the lack of recognition of scholarship also occurs in non-formal settings.

My research study revealed a consensus about the necessity for professional development and the promotion of scholarship within tertiary

institutions; nevertheless, there remains a disparity between the professional respect shown to permanents and sessionals: all respondents agreed on this point. While participants linked quality of teaching as an outcome of professional development and scholarship, some noted the lack of willingness to provide institutional support to sessional academics on account of cost-saving.

### **Category Six – Quality of teaching as ‘information and communication’.**

Category Six outlined the necessity for course coordinators to hold regular meetings, preferably throughout the semester, to facilitate clear communication of quality standards. The participants unanimously suggested that a continuous interaction between academics raise existing quality issues and provide potential areas for improvement. The consistency of the communication process should leave no space for individual interpretation; it was essential to amend any misinterpretation or misunderstanding regarding the required quality standards. The participants in my study regretted the lack of regular meetings or similar forums to address issues such as course guidelines and teaching quality standards. Different course coordinators adopted different communication strategies to communicate with their respective teams. It is a standard practice for sessionals to work for a range of course coordinators: often, they taught different courses during the same semester; they had to adapt to different management styles and different quality standard expectations. Trigwell et al. (2000) agree with the need for an orderly communication strategy to improve the quality of teaching:

University teachers must be informed of the theoretical perspectives and literature of teaching and learning in their discipline and be able to collect and present rigorous evidence of their effectiveness, from these perspectives, as teachers. In turn, this involves reflection, inquiry, evaluation, documentation, and communication.

There were convergent views expressed regarding the necessity for regular formal and informal meetings between course coordinators and teaching

academics to review quality-related and non-compliance issues and assess students' performance outcomes. Such practices reflected 'internal quality control. Furthermore, the major challenge had been the maintenance of the consistent quality of teaching between onshore and offshore programs.

The overall impact of the quality of teaching became evident only at the end of an academic semester. In turn, this reflected on having constant two-way communication between academics and students: students' positive engagement with the course materials depends on the intimacy and proximity of their educators. Media technology has triggered new modes of communication between academics and students (see Mazer, Murphy and Simonds, 2007). Regular sessionals working with the same course coordinators for some years and teaching the same subjects may experience a smooth adaptation with different course management styles and delivery of course materials. The academics' experience and a better understanding of the intricacies of their respective disciplines are a crucial determinant of the quality of teaching and learning experience for the students. The contextual factors and the occasional occurrences of those meetings were contingent on the discipline course coordinators.

This subsection discussed the importance of both formal and informal communication between course coordinators and academics. There was a convergence of view regarding the necessity to avoid erratic encounters between subject course coordinators and their team of teaching academics. The quality of teaching is contingent upon multiple variables; the uniformity of information disseminated to the teaching academics was an essential component of the successful delivery of the materials. Course coordinators faced a significant challenge to maintain the consistency of quality of teaching between onshore and offshore programs.

**Category Seven – Quality of teaching as ‘perception and language games.’**

This category was organised based on the premise that the perception of quality and language games used in higher education institutions may affect the understanding of the quality of teaching in that sector. Academics conceptualise the quality of teaching as being exposed to different interpretations; the participants in my research referred to the tension between the rhetoric and reality of quality teaching within higher education institutions.

This study revealed the half-truths of the validity and reliability of quality measurement tools that had painted a flawed picture of reality; quality of teaching is what the university management say it is. Greenhalgh (2015) advocates that, based on the Wittgensteinian doctrine - there is no formal system of the rules of language that accounts for every use of a word or phrase; words and phrases acquire particular meaning in particular situations, and language evolves as the use of it changes.

The complex feature of human language is its ability to convey information efficiently in context. The listeners to the message infer that the speakers’ intended meanings carry only the relevant information and the communicative inferences rely on the shared assumption that speakers are informative given the speakers’ knowledge.

The paradox of ‘more with less’ only conveys an image that quality correlates with the notion of efficiency, when, in reality, it is a managerial strategy to promote ‘the language game’ as a masquerade for the constant improvement mantra based on the orthodox institutional internal control. Such actions have stifled the academics’ research productivity and affected the quality of teaching. Paradoxically, the notion of quality often relates to university rankings and academics’ research productivity; the tension remains the confusion regarding the quality of teaching: is it about improving the learning experience of students or increasing the number of publication and grants?

The participants shared their experiences and agreed the students' inability to reconcile their perceived understanding of the quality of teaching and the way that notion emerges in the student feedback survey. The verbal feedback comments the students provide to individual academics differed from the CES feedback. The language game has since turned into a 'blame game' scenario due to the lack of an explicit definition of the notion of quality; hence, the negative feedback from the student survey shifted the blame on the teaching academics.

Government policy decisions have always been introduced with the implicit agenda to link performance indicators to a reward system. However, the quality assurance mechanisms are left at the mercy of university to manage them strategically; the lack of communication regarding the practical application of the quality control mechanisms is responsible for the confusion, leaving academics to guess or depend on the language games used to convey that message. Conflicting language games conveyed to recipients in different contexts may distort the intended purpose of the message when interpreted differently by the teaching academics.

This category revealed the difficulty for the teaching academics to grapple with the complexity of the notion of quality and the tension that exists between the reality and the rhetoric associated with this concept. My study also revealed various perceptions regarding quality of teaching and the 'language game' used by university management to control the quality standards within a higher education institution. This category also highlighted the difficulty for academics to interpret the different signs used by university management to convey its expectations regarding the quality of teaching.

### **Category Eight – Quality of teaching as community of practice and peer-partnership**

Category Eight addresses the academics' conceptions and experiences of peer-partnership and communities of practice. The convergent opinions emerging from this category led to the deduction that formal peer-partnership programs

and open communities of practice impact positively on the quality of teaching. Peer review feedback was an alternative to the student feedback surveys; disparate comments emerged from the findings regarding the effectiveness of peer-partnerships. Lomas & Nicholls (2005) argue that although most academics acknowledge that peer review is a means of improving teaching quality, some academics will not appreciate the value of peer review if it leads only to quality enhancement.

As peer-partnership is part of professional development programs, only a small number of sessionals are the beneficiaries; the majority of them missed out because of work roster clashes and other professional obligations. Furthermore, the lack of financial incentives affects sessional academics' extrinsic motivation to participate in such programs.

The socialisation of new academics through informal communities of practice may positively affect the quality of teaching. A major stumbling block to peer-partnership programs has been the permanents' reluctance to be involved due to the belief that such programs were time-wasters; hence, they would substitute any attempts at teaching excellence for the more excellent benefits suggested by academic research.

This section outlined the variations of the participants' experiences with communities of practice and peer-partnership programs. Whether peer-partnership programs or communities of practice contribute towards the improvement of quality teaching is still a debatable issue, and no empirical evidence has been provided to substantiate this claim. The reality experienced by the participants of this study suggested that both were professional development initiatives; the positive impact on the quality of teaching has not been established yet.

### **Category Nine – Quality of teaching as student academic success and job-readiness**

Category Nine accommodated the premise and findings that students' job readiness and employability skills were indicators of the quality of teaching.

The participants witnessed the steady progress and development of the students from semesters to semesters. Some studies confirm the expectation from both the government and industry representatives that higher education institutions will produce graduates that are job-ready (Guimarães & de Oliveira 2010; Coorey and Firth, 2013).

The participants argued that employers were the best judges of quality education and students' critical skills. Higher education institutions measure the quality of teaching using pass rates as indicators; some academics challenged this claim because so many variables were involved in the marking of assignments and exam papers. Paradoxically, the relevant authorities have been very slow in embedding the acquisition of employability skills within the course outcomes (Oliver et al., 2007).

Ironically, both students' pass and failure rates depended on the quality of teaching and academics, rather than on the students and their efforts for the good or bad results. Based on academics' experiences, the quality of teaching depended on the students' ability to undertake complex assignments such as writing critical essays and demonstrating reflective thinking.

Most academics attributed academic success to the quality of work submitted by the students and the pass rates. Job-readiness is a far cry and may take years to come to fruition; the variation of the contextual factors such as the discipline undertaken or the nature of the job, and the employers' expectations held often determine the required quality standard. Teaching academics are responsible for providing students with the exposure to simulated workplace roles regarding communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.

The last category revealed job readiness as a reliable indicator of the quality of teaching in higher education. The academics interviewed for that study, outlined the difficulty encountered for collecting data from the graduates' future employers. It was also discussed that it might take years to assess post-university graduates' critical thinking skills properly. The pass or failure rates depend on multiple contextual factors and may not reflect the

graduates' acquired academic skills. The findings of the study have demonstrated that teaching academics experienced the interactions with their students differently and pass rates were only a partial indicator of the quality of teaching. In concluding this section, Table 6.1 presents a comparative analysis of the 'emergent metaphors' from the in-depth metaphor analysis of both the permanents and the sessionals who were involved in my study.

**Table 6.1 Focus Groups 1&2: Metaphor analysis**

Focus Group Item	Focus Group 1 Metaphors for Sessional Academics	Focus Group 2 Metaphors for Full-Time Academics
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality 'lone rangers'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Substantive/perceptive: two sides of the same coin</li> <li>• A tale of two paradigms</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long stayers: high quality/ short stayers: low quality (with course coordinators as the sheriff)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Casualisation as a 'cog in the wheel' of higher education</li> <li>• A tale of two paradigms, confirmed</li> </ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality and leadership are disparate bedfellows</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication modes: 'different arrows – one target'</li> </ul>
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surveys are a 'popularity contest'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surveys as double-edged weapons</li> <li>• Maddening clash between legitimacy and purpose</li> </ul>
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality teaching as entertainment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students having a controversial role: being both judge and jury</li> </ul>
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'A 'bag' of mixed measurement instruments'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A potpourri of quality measurement tools</li> </ul>
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A multiplicity of variables</li> </ul>
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time is money; voluntarism is unacceptable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sessional academics 'as a cog in the wheel.'</li> </ul>
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The opacity of the process regarding the hiring of sessional academics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good selection – good quality; poor selection – poor quality</li> </ul>

Focus Group Item	Focus Group 1 Metaphors for Sessional Academics	Focus Group 2 Metaphors for Full-Time Academics
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Handful’ of delivery modes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sessional academics adding their ‘own flavour’ to delivery modes</li> <li>• Sessional academics ‘surfing’ the wave</li> </ul>
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Size matters in the higher education sector</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Size matters in academia</li> </ul>
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More with less</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The fable of expecting more from less</li> </ul>
14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff pairings create logistical nightmares</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From peer partnerships/staff pairings to logistical nightmares</li> </ul>
15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seed-planting and job-readiness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seed-planting and job-readiness</li> </ul>

## ‘Emergent metaphors’

### Metaphor 1 – ‘Two sides of the same coin.’

The first metaphor of my study revealed the notion of quality as *two sides of the same coin*<sup>18</sup>. Both permanent and sessional academics experienced quality as a concept that was measured quantitatively; as previously discussed, ‘quality’ was seen as an elusive and interpretative concept, experienced in different ways. The ‘emergent metaphors’ used by the academics have indicated some of the literal and the figurative words associated with the concept of ‘quality’ (see Chapter 2). These different meanings are likely to result in multiple judgements and interpretations being made by those responsible for setting and communicating the quality standards to teaching academics.

Managers regard ‘quality’ as a method of control and surveillance; those more acquainted with the quantitative paradigm. The prevailing confusion presents a dilemma for academics to choose from: between *substantive and perceptive* elements of the quality of teaching. Sessional academics’ exposure

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<sup>18</sup> ‘If two things are two sides of the same coin, they are very closely related although they seem different’: Accessed at <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/be-two-sides-of-the-same-coin>, 10 October 2016.

to different conceptions of substantive and perceptive (because they work concurrently for various institutions) ‘quality’ may eventually affect the way they experience the quality of teaching at Exray University. Hence, the ‘*two sides of the same coin*’ metaphor relate to the higher education academics’ understanding of ‘quality’ – whether experienced as a substantive or a perceptive concept.

### **Metaphor 2 – Cog in the wheel**

The second metaphor to emerge from the focus group transcripts relates to sessional academics as an essential part of the higher education staffing regime. The literature on casualisation concurs with the view of permanents at Exray University: that sessionals are the institution’s *cog in the wheel*<sup>19</sup>.

There is a correlation between the lengths of service with Exray University while teaching the same subject and the quality of teaching. This study revealed that the academics’ long-term experience and expertise in the subject was also associated with favourable student satisfaction – hence, the metaphor *Long stayers: high quality/ short stayers: low quality* applies to the academics’ experience within the higher education landscape. Those two metaphors intertwine as a *long stayer* tends to be the better *cog in the wheel*.

### **Metaphor 3 – Different arrows; one target**

Higher education institutions are criticised for their lack of leadership. All the participants tended to believe that effective leadership is a necessary prerequisite for quality outcomes. This study unfolds the commonalities and contrasting views that permanents and sessionals hold regarding leadership within the higher education sector. On the one hand, the casuals argue that

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<sup>19</sup> A cog in the machine/wheel: Someone or something that is functionally necessary but of small significance or importance within a larger operation or organisation. *I’m tired of working in this thankless IT support job. I don’t want to be just a cog in the machine anymore!* Accessed at <http://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/a+cog+in+the+wheel>, 20 October 2016

different communication strategies are necessary to clarify the quality expectations for teaching academics and boldly claim that *quality and leadership are disparate bedfellows*.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, permanents consider that university management uses different modes to communicate one message about ‘quality’ to all categories of academics. The dominant metaphor used in this section demonstrates different *arrows (communication strategies)* that are used to hit one *target (teaching academics)*.

Communication methods vary from institutions to institutions. The dissemination of information may be subjected to distortion or contextually misconstrued by the receivers. Harvey & Williams (2011) have pointed out that ‘quality’ is a highly contested, ‘polysemous’<sup>21</sup> and subjective concept. They have also outlined that any variation in the interpretation of that term might invariably affect the literal meaning and aim of the message. Disparate biographies, diverse professional backgrounds and experiences, and prior exposure to quality assurance and standards could affect teaching academics’ own ability to differentiate between literal and metaphorical meanings of the notion of quality. Furthermore, the length of service, familiarity with the business model, the understanding of institutional values and exposure to *‘the smell of the place’*<sup>22</sup> may prove to be essential attributes for a clearer comprehension of the difference between the substantive and the interpretative qualities of teaching. Academia is swamped by academics who would have been influenced and subjected to a variety of management philosophies, business models, schools of thought, and leadership and communication styles. Different communication strategies may reach different audiences; they run the risk of being understood differently by higher education audiences. This

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<sup>20</sup> Referring to linking of ‘disparate and often hostile constituencies in organisations’ referred to in unpublished manuscripts from The Synergos Institute’s Website at <http://www.synergos.org>. Accessed at <http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/leaders/>, 20 October 2016

<sup>21</sup> ‘A polysemous word has more than one meaning ... “play” is a highly polysemous word’. Accessed at <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/polysemous>, 17 October 2016

<sup>22</sup> Title of a paper delivered in 2004 by the late professor Sumantra Ghoshal from the London Business School called ‘The Smell of the Place’, referring to detecting the ‘context’ or ‘tone’ of an organisation (with video extract). Accessed at <http://thesoulpurpose.com/what-does-your-organization-smell-like/451/> 17 October 2016

section established the academics' consensus regarding the effectiveness of leadership, and the use of different communication strategies.

#### **Metaphor 4 – Double-edged weapons**

The dominant metaphor that emerged from sessionals' focus group portrayed student feedback surveys as a '*popularity contest*'<sup>23</sup> whereas permanents described this measurement instrument as a '*double-edged weapon*'<sup>24</sup>.

The participants used the 'emergent metaphors' related to the student feedback survey with much cynicism: sessionals used '*popularity contest*' as the metaphor to denote a hard race to *get first to the finish line* by luring students with lenient assessment markings and the *dumbing down* of the course standard. Such manipulative tactics have turned this survey into an unhealthy race for academics who value the student feedback surveys as a passport to continuous employment. Full-time academics considered the student feedback surveys more as a monitoring and retributive instrument than a performance measurement tool. The *double-edged weapon* metaphor, on the other hand, pertains to the legitimacy and purpose of the student feedback survey. The legitimacy of this instrument is challenged because of the tactic of using this *weapon for the wrong purpose*.

In spite of its evident flaws, the student feedback survey has survived frequent acerbic criticism, and has been unchallenged within the higher education landscape. The 'emergent metaphors' used to denote the student feedback unquestionably reflect in the *bitter experiences* of some teaching academics. Finally, the dominant metaphor that emerged was one of *competition* that is *woven into the fabric* of higher education institutions.

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<sup>23</sup> In this sense, the term 'popularity contest' is being used as a 'weak process metaphor'. Accessed at <http://www.shsu.edu/dotAsset/50201153-2f48-46e2-9139-0fcea35a5e8a.pdf>, 17 October 2016

<sup>24</sup> The term 'double-edged sword/weapon' is a metaphor used for something that can be both favourable and unfavourable. Accessed at <http://english.stackexchange.com/questions/60728/why-is-the-term-double-edged-sword-used-for-something-that-can-be-favorable-an>, 17 October 2016; hence, student feedback surveys may be seen to have both advantages and disadvantages.

### Metaphor 5 – Judge and jury

This section addressed the competence and dual role of students as qualified assessors of the quality of teaching. The dominant metaphor referred to the students' roles as being both *judge and jury*<sup>25</sup>. Full-time academics believed it was too risky that such a *weapon* (i.e., 'the survey') should remain in the hands of those students. Although the students' *voices* are an essential barometer, metaphorically, students may only qualify as a *member of the jury* – not as both *judge and jury*. The students' dual role is a most criticised paradox within the academia.

The 'emergent metaphors' of '*judgement*', '*power*', '*playing god*' or '*punishment*' were attributed to students' undeniable subjective judgements that affect positively or negatively both policy decisions and teaching academics' professional careers. The student feedback scores now embed as pivotal performance indicators which are regularly reviewed by university management. Sessionals experienced negative student feedback surveys more as a '*guillotine*' or a '*Sword of Damocles*'; in particular, these 'emergent metaphors' related to the use of manipulative tactics to influence the students' evaluations. The other related 'emergent metaphors', such as: '*seduction*', '*timing*' and '*tidal waves*' were used to express the different attempts at *winning the contest*. Although both permanent and sessional academics resented the fact that the student feedback surveys have legitimised university managerial power with a '*double-edged*' *performance measurement instrument*, they settled for the lack of substitutes rather than replacing the current students' feedback surveys.

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<sup>25</sup> This metaphor suggests that a student may act as both an individual (a judge, with special competence in the area) and as a member of a group (as a member of a jury, who reach agreement on the basis of evidence produced). Accessed at <http://www.differencebetween.com/difference-between-judge-and-vs-jury/>, 17 October 2016

### Metaphor 6 – Pot-pourri of instruments

This section highlighted the university management's choice of tools to measure the quality of teaching. The transcripts established a *potpourri*<sup>26</sup> of instruments including the much-maligned student feedback surveys. The other devices include peer-partnership programs, self-evaluation and performance reviews; both permanents and sessionals were in favour of finding an alternative for student feedback surveys. Higher education institutions determine their respective ways of measuring the quality of teaching and the dominant metaphor relating to a possible *bag of instruments* conveys the complexity of the matter: a single tool is insufficient to deliver a reliable outcome.

The teaching academics were subject to a myriad of measurement tools; they had also experienced those performative initiatives differently. The notion of accountability presupposes that a superior entity, with legitimate power, determines the performance indicators and quality standards. In reality, a potpourri of measures litters the higher education landscape; however, none stands out as the most useful tool; hence, there is a dilemma over which is the best choice.

### Metaphor 7 – The writings on the wall

As with Ghosal's (2004) '*smell of the place*', '*the writings on the wall*'<sup>27</sup> depicts the current context of higher education and the *sensorial* and *subjective* experiences of those whose work involves dealing with notions of quality. The constant debate of substance versus perception gives way to never-ending discourses. Most people tend to profess that they recognise 'quality' when they

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<sup>26</sup> The suggestion here is that the 'quality' metaphor 'can convey a pot-pourri of feelings' regarding the types of instruments that might be used. Accessed at <http://www.herald.co.zw/metaphors-symbols-images-and-artistes/>, 17 October 2016

<sup>27</sup> Metaphor 7 The 'writings on the wall' is proposed with Ghosal's 'smell of the place' to express a situation that people coming into contact with an organisation will understand, through individual deduction and/or perception the organisational culture and values. The 'writings on the wall' is also expressed as a metaphorical writing on a wall that hides a deeper meaning. The closer a person experience this organisation, the easier it is to decrypt the writing on the wall.

see it (see Chapter 2); that claim confirms that sometimes the notion of quality may be *evident* from sheer observation or be seen through *expert eyes* or simply a *layman's* personal understanding of that concept.

The *writings on the wall* are read and decoded by both non-specialists and experts; the unquestioned managerial prerogative sometimes allows for substantive feedback, but the *writings* are, most of the time, unnoticed even by those politically connected with them. The *writings on the wall* are unspoken signals which, if ignored or noticed too late, may affect the academia. Sessionals normally missed out on those *signals* due to the nature of their work: due to the short time they spend on different campuses they may easily become beguiled by different signs. The way academics decode and *absorb* those signs determines the way they interpret the notion of quality and, by default, the quality of teaching.

### **Metaphor 8 – Time is money**

The academics contended that demand-driven higher education institutions have impacted on the commitment of the academe to continuous professional development (PD). Sessionals raised the challenges they face to meet the PD because *time is money*<sup>28</sup>. The time metaphor is connected to the assertion that sessionals were the *cog in the wheel* of higher education. Both claims conveyed the paradox that although sessionals *wrestled with time*, they were *the 'cog in the wheel'*; their professional development contributes to the quality of teaching. Exray University, currently, provides more professional development for academics due to the scholarship associated with teaching and learning.

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<sup>28</sup> This proverb, attributed to Benjamin Franklin, suggests that 'time is a valuable resource; therefore, it's better to do things as quickly as possible'. Accessed at <https://www.bing.com/search?q=time+is+money+meaning&FORM=HDRSC1>, 17 October 2016. With respect to student surveys of quality, the allusion is to 'an opportunity cost' (accessed at <https://www.quora.com/What-is-the-idea-behind-the-quote-time-is-money>, 17 October 2016

Academics are always fighting for an invaluable resource: time. My study has suggested that the timing of professional development initiatives regularly clash with the teaching academics' teaching schedules.

A different viewpoint makes academics responsible for the up-skilling and upgrading of their skills, no matter when and what professional development initiatives are made available to them. Research reported by Gruskey (2002) supports the academics' views that professional development has the merit of expanding knowledge and skills, contributes to teachers' personal growth, and improves student learning. Gruskey (2002) also questioned the motivation of academics to participate in professional development and the process by which any change in academics' learning had occurred. The impact on the quality of teaching and figures matched against the number of sessionals missing out on professional development activities is still awaiting research.

Despite the lack of empirical evidence to demonstrate any correlation between professional development and the quality of teaching, the consensus of the participants in my research was this: sessionals were the *cog in the wheel* of the academe, and all categories of academics considered *time as a [scarce] resource*. More importantly, students appreciated their teachers for who they were and not for their employment status; based on that premise, all academics are *cogs in the wheel* and, at one point or another will *starve* for time: the essential resource.

### **Metaphor 9 – Opacity of the hiring process**

The quality of teaching has been of constant concern for university administrators and course managers. The quality of teaching depends on its outcomes: positive student feedback surveys, pass rates, and post-graduation employability figures. Quality assurance measurement focuses more on the 'process' rather than on 'the outcome of the process'. In reality, the process-oriented and outcome-oriented approaches have different policy and strategic purposes.

The participants in my study raised the question of ‘*opacity* of the selection process<sup>29</sup> when hiring teaching academics’ are based on the following: Poor selection of academics may result in student dissatisfaction and poor academic results. The causes of *opacity* of the selection process depend upon the following elements: nepotism; candidates’ lack of expertise in the respective discipline; last-minute hiring of sessionals; skipping established selection processes. This metaphor sheds light on the fact that the efficient acquisition of human resources for the academe determines the quality of teaching; regard it with respect.

### **Metaphor 10 – Surfing with the wave/Riding on a wave?**

The metaphor: *ride with (on) a/the wave*<sup>30</sup> associates with the way in which sessionals adapt to the environment in order to comply with institutional policies and procedures. Paradoxically, the promotion of standardisation of the delivery course materials advances as a means of improving the quality of teaching. Theoretically, academics are expected to *surf the wave* to comply with the course guidelines and standards; in reality, courses have been regularly customised to fit teaching academics’ style.

Teaching academics, at times, customise their course materials to fit a /2018quality of teaching. In this way, global and borderless universities have triggered variations in course delivery in order to address different geographical and cultural expectations. It also happens that within the four walls and intimacy of their classrooms, teaching academics are at liberty to add a personal *touch and flavour* to the content and delivery of course materials instead of *surfing the wave*. The impact of personalisation and standardisation

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<sup>29</sup> Opacity is ‘the quality of lacking transparency or translucence; the quality of being obscure in meaning’. Accessed at <https://www.bing.com/search?q=opacity+of+process&q&form=QBRE&pq=opacity+of+pro&sc=0-14&sp=1&sk=&cvid=380BE8B4E529440A991AEF6BAECFECDA>, 20 October 2016

<sup>30</sup> An idiom, meaning ‘to become involved with and get advantages from opinions or activities which have become very common or popular (often + *of*)’. Accessed at <http://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/Ride+the+Wave>, 20 October 2016

of course delivery on the quality of teaching has been under-researched; as a consequence, there was no research to which I could refer.

### Metaphor 11 – Size matters

The issue of class sizes – mostly the impact of large-class sizes on students' performance, have been widely researched (see, for example, Johnson, 2010; De Paola, Ponzio & Scoppa, 2013; Bosworth, 2014).

In the context of my research, the metaphor: *size matters*<sup>31</sup> referred to the academics' experience with both small and large class sizes and their views regarding the effect on the quality of teaching. The notion of size is also associated with *economies of scale*<sup>32</sup> because the demand-driven higher education sector has contributed to different class dynamics: massive student enrolments and marked shifts in teacher/student ratios. The introduction of new logistics within the higher education landscape has led to larger class sizes in order to accommodate more students. The impact of large classes or team teaching on the quality of teaching remains unresearched.

The metaphor that *size matters* has been a preoccupation for both policy-makers and educators; paradoxically, the demand-driven higher education sector focuses on economies of scale whereas educators are much more concerned that the size of classes could have a detrimental effect on the performance of teachers' teaching and students' learning. The findings of my study offer divergent views regarding the impact of class sizes on the quality of teaching, finding a parallel with earlier research papers that have struggled with the issue of class sizes (see for, example, Boozer & Rouse, 2001; Lazear, 2001; Dobbelsteen et al., 2002).

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<sup>31</sup> 'We find that both class size and student load negatively impact student assessments of courses and instructors. Large classes and heavy student loads appear to prompt faculty to alter their courses in ways deleterious to students'. Monks, J. & Schmidt, R. (2010), The impact of class size and number of students on outcomes in higher education. Accessed 10/31/2016 5:51, from Cornell University, School of Industrial and Labor Relations site: <http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/workingpapers/114/>, 20 October 2016

<sup>32</sup> 'Economies of scale are a term that refers to the reduction of per-unit costs through an increase in production volume. This idea is also referred to as diminishing marginal cost' Accessed at <http://www.investinganswers.com/financial-dictionary/economics/economies-scale-1008>.

### Metaphor 12 – More with less

Universities have embraced the business-oriented mantra that affects an obsession with notions of efficiency and effectiveness. Theoretically and metaphorically, the notion of efficiency is attributed to *doing more with less*<sup>33</sup>. In the academe, the metaphor construes to using fewer inputs to produce more outputs/outcomes. My study's participants discussed strategies that had been initiated to '*lean*' the organisation; paradoxically, the irony of divergent views was highlighted by the following fallacious claim: doing *more with less* must be substituted for by the metaphor of doing *less with less*.

Although the traditional university harbours fundamental flaws, the new 'academic business model' triggered by the dominance of a buoyant marketplace, has redefined the significance of productivity and confused academics with higher demands on personal inputs. Massy (2016) indicates that some of these flaws embed within the 'academic business model' and the overreliance on market forces and financial margins may affect the quality of teaching and students' learning experience. My study has revealed that cost-saving may be a tricky and double-edged device; its impact is most likely to depend on contextual factors.

### Metaphor 13 – Logistical nightmares

Logistical nightmares refer to the difficulties that academics encounter when reconciling their teaching schedules with their professional obligations. The need to maintain the scholarship of teaching and learning is just another challenge that academics have to face on a daily basis. Whether they wish to join in peer-partnerships and attend professional development programs or be part of a community of practice, academics have to face the inevitable *logistical nightmare*<sup>34</sup>. The participants in my study have had their personal

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<sup>33</sup> In a productive sense, 'the only reliable way to produce more food is to use better technology'. Accessed at <http://www.economist.com/node/18200606>, 21 October 2016

<sup>34</sup> 'Any situation or event that requires considerable coordination of many people, beyond the original organiser's expectations. Accessed at <http://www.definitions.net/definition/logistical%20nightmare>, 17 October 2016

experience with *logistical nightmares* at one point or another; usually, the first casualties are the sessionals.

Despite the difficulties related to staff pairings, academics applaud the merits of peer partnerships as such programs could offer an alternative measurement pathway providing a deserved alternative to the students' feedback surveys.

### Metaphor 14 – Seed-planting

The last metaphor to emerge from my data analysis was *seed planting*<sup>35</sup>. Metaphorically academe has always been compared to a *garden* with the educators as experienced *gardeners*; the students *are the seeds* sown in the ground from kindergarten to university. Teacher-centred or student-centred pedagogies are the techniques used by academics to convert the *seeds* into a *tree*.

From the moment of sowing, students will experience either a steady or a bumpy progression and encounter an array of educators providing them with a *compass* for their academic and professional careers. My study has attempted to explore the conceptions of teaching quality, with a focus on teachers' inputs; metaphorically, *we reap what we sow*, and the *primary harvesters* are the *gardeners* (educational institutions, teachers, classmates, etc.) in the first instance; the *secondary harvesters* are other stakeholders (employers, work colleagues, customers, etc.) in the second instance.

The idea of sowing and harvesting conveys the essential metaphor of investment (time, effort, patience and resilience) and the return on investment (graduates' academic success – learning experience and job-readiness). The marketisation of higher education empowers the market (customers, end-users,

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<sup>35</sup> 'You reap what you sow' is a metaphor for the actions you take and their results. If you do good things, you'll get good results or payback; if you do bad things, payback will not be pleasant.

'In a figurative sense, the seed of something is the beginning of an idea, feeling or process. They can be positive (seeds of hope, seeds of happiness) or negative (seeds of jealousy, seeds of distrust)'.  
Accessed at <http://writewithtaste.com/blog/metaphors-connected-with.html>, 17 October 2016

etc.) to judge which *product* has a better or longer *shelf life* than another. An appropriate method of tracking students from kindergarten to the workplace requires the interplay of a host of variables that determine the quality of the *fruits* from the *seeds*. The production of quality fruit may prove to be particularly challenging for policy-makers and higher education decision-makers.

In the next section of this chapter, I have examined what the 'emergent metaphors' reveal about the academics' conceptions of the quality of teaching. I gave consideration to the relationship between the ways both groups of academics in my study experienced the quality of teaching through an interplay of 'emergent metaphors'. In this section I address, specifically, the relationship between the emergent categories of description and the 'emergent metaphors'.

### **Relationships between categories of description and 'emergent metaphors'**

In this section, I address the relationship between the categories of description and the 'emergent metaphors'. The findings of both individual and focus group interviews have enlightened this study with a particular truth: the quality of teaching could be experienced in different ways – through categories of description, 'emergent metaphors' or simultaneously through both of them. I have listed, in Table 6.2, the relationships between the categories of description and 'emergent metaphors'.

Firstly, I aim to demonstrate through the connectivity chart (see Table 6.2) that the participants of this research study had both similar and different experiences with the notion of quality of teaching.

Secondly, although I collected the data from different categories of academics (permanents and sessionals), the findings demonstrate similar experiences.

**Table 6.2**      **Connectivity chart: Categories of description and metaphor analysis**

Focus Group Items	Categories of Description	Categories of Description Semi-structured interviews	Metaphors Focus Group 1	Metaphors Focus Group 2
1	None	None	None	None
2	7	Quality of teaching as perception and language games	Quality 'lone rangers.'	Substantive/perceptive: two sides of the same coin A tale of two paradigms
3	3	Quality of teaching as control and assurance	Long stayers: high quality/ short stayers: low-quality	Casualisation as a 'cog in the wheel' of higher education
			Sessional academics as 'survivors.'	
			The university as a 'knowledge factory.'	
4	6	Quality of teaching as information and communication	Quality and leadership as disparate bedfellows	Communication modes: 'different arrows' - one target
	9	Quality of teaching as students' academic success and job-readiness	'Dissemination' of information: seeds-planting	
5	1	Quality of teaching as student satisfaction	Surveys as 'popularity contest': Pageantry and the art of manipulation	Surveys as double-edged weapons: a maddening clash between legitimacy and purpose
			'Stardom' cult	
			'Retributive' force of feedback: guillotine for teaching academics	
6	1	Quality of teaching as student satisfaction	Quality teaching as entertainment	Students' controversial roles: judge and jury

Focus Group Items	Categories of Description	Categories of Description Semi-structured interviews	Metaphors Focus Group 1	Metaphors Focus Group 2
7	3	Quality of teaching as control and assurance	'A 'bag' of mixed measurement instruments	'Potpourri' of quality measurement tools
8	2	Quality of teaching as compliance with standards	None	'Writings on the Wall' 'Smell' of the place
9	3	Quality of teaching as control and assurance	'Time is money' versus voluntarism	Sessional academics 'as a cog in the wheel.'
10	2	Quality of teaching as compliance with standards	Opacity' regarding the hiring of academics	Good selection: good quality/Bad selection: bad quality
11	4	Quality of teaching as blended learning and delivery modes	'Handful' of delivery modes	Sessional academics 'own flavour' to delivery modes Sessional academics 'surfing' with the wave
12	2	Quality of teaching as compliance with standards	Size matters in the academia	Size matters in the academia Students' on a 'shopping' spree around classes
13	3	Quality of teaching as control and assurance	More with less	The fable of expecting 'more from less.'
14	8	Quality of teaching as community of practice and peer-partnership	Staff pairings and 'logistical nightmares.'	Staff pairings and 'logistical nightmares.'
15	9	Quality of teaching as students' academic success and job-readiness	Seed-planting and job-readiness	Seed-planting and job-readiness

Thirdly, I collected data from individual and group interviews using a different set of questions for each (see Appendices 4 and 5). I analysed the data using different methods (phenomenography and metaphor analysis).

Fourthly, the chart demonstrates that despite the fact that different approaches were adopted in this thesis to investigate the quality of teaching, that notion is expressed, experienced and perceived in different ways.

Fifthly, the inclusion of the pairings categories of description and 'emergent metaphors' in the connectivity chart establishes that, no matter how and from whom there is data collection, there is a possibility for both 'soft' and 'hard' dimensions of quality (see Chapter 1, page 15) to collide within an organisation.

#### **Item 2 – Category 7: Quality as a two-faced beast**

Quality of teaching as perception and language games parallels the metaphor of *two sides of the same coin*. As previously highlighted, the 'polysemous' nature of the notion of quality makes it possible to compare it with a *two-faced beast* (Newton, 2000) that can be *illusory* for some academics and *substantively* clear for others. In my study, I have argued that 'quality' could be either substantive or perceptive or both, depending on the different ways academics experience that notion at different times and in different contexts.

Regarding connectivity, I conclude that *quality is a two-faced beast*.

#### **Item 4 – Category 6: Quality as a myriad of communications**

Quality of teaching as information and communication matches the 'emergent metaphors' '*different arrows: one target*' and unequivocally denotes the multiplicity of communication techniques used to provide the relevant information regarding the notion of quality to the various stakeholders in the higher education sector. It is not feasible to ignore the importance of communication because of association with the seed-planting 'emergent metaphors'.

Regarding connectivity, I conclude that *quality is a myriad of communications*.

### **Item 5 – Category 1: Quality as a double-edged weapon**

Quality of teaching as student satisfaction fits the following ‘emergent metaphors’: *surveys as a popularity contest; stardom cult; pageantry; the art of manipulation; double-edged weapons*. Both individual and group participants highlight the importance of the student feedback survey, but its flaws overshadow it as a quality measurement tool. Very harsh terms were used for this tool; respondents referred to it as the *guillotine* for academics.

In terms of connectivity, I conclude that *quality is a double-edged weapon*.

### **Item 6 – Category 1: Quality as student satisfaction**

The Item 6 ‘emergent metaphor’ associates two sets of metaphors: teaching as *entertainment*, and students as *judge and jury*. The relationship between these demonstrates the university’s empowerment of students to assess the quality of teaching – both the power to consider the *merits of the case [academics’ teaching]* and to *pronounce judgement*.

Regarding connectivity of the two, I conclude that *quality is student satisfaction*.

### **Item 7 – Category 3: Quality as control and assurance**

Quality of teaching as control and assurance is a fit for the ‘emergent metaphors’ relating to measurement instruments: the *potpourri* of the quality measurement tools. The host of state external quality control mechanisms including university’s internal control systems (mostly substantive) to assess quality. The business-oriented key performance indicators compare with a *Pandora’s Box of mixed measurement instruments* finding their *raison d’être* in attaching funding to deliverables.

Regarding connectivity, I conclude that *quality is control and assurance*.

**Item 8 – Category 2: Quality as compliance with standards**

The 'emergent metaphor' *writings on the wall* fits Category 2 – Quality of teaching as compliance with standards. Academics have to deal with the idea of a substantive quality system on a regular basis. There are various ways of asserting whether an institution is providing quality education. Compliance to standards evokes a substantive approach to measuring quality teaching. However, McMaster (2014, 432) argues that academics struggle with the confusion that arises:

Universities can be very confusing places to work if your experience has been in other kinds of organisations.

In that respect, the most efficient way to understand the *quality standard* is to bracket previous *experiences*, read the *writings on the wall* and delve into the reality of the *place*.

Regarding connectivity, I conclude that *quality is compliance with standards*.

**Item 9 – Category 3: Quality and time as a resource**

The dominant 'emergent metaphor' is of time as a resource that academics need to tame so that their teaching judged fit for purpose. This 'emergent metaphor' is related to Category 3 – Quality of teaching as control and assurance; terms such as control and assurance commonly carries the negative connotation of surveillance or self-surveillance. Similarly, the whole idea of surveillance and monitoring relates to Bentham's<sup>36</sup> Panopticon or big brother management style. The argument is that while sessionals are the 'cog in the

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<sup>36</sup> Jeremy Bentham was an English philosopher and political radical. He is primarily known today for his moral philosophy, especially his principle of utilitarianism, which evaluates actions based upon their consequences. Accessed at: <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2015/jul/23/panopticon-digital-surveillance-jeremy-bentham>, 17 October 2016

wheel', they were not immune from the *war for time*; winning that war could be the key to improved teaching quality.

Regarding connectivity, I conclude that *quality and time are essential resources*.

### **Item 10 – Category 2: Quality as compliance with standards**

The *opaqueness* of the selection process has links with Category 2 – Quality of teaching as *compliance with standards* and *a stumbling block* to quality of teaching. The labour-intensive higher education's talent management is crucial; otherwise, the ramifications for both the institutions and the students' learning experience can be disastrous. Although it is difficult to predict accurately whether good recruitment will lead to teaching quality, the mishandling of that process constitutes too high a risk for the academe.

In terms of connectivity, I conclude that *quality is compliance with standards*.

### **Item 11 – Category 4 – Quality and blended delivery modes**

Quality of teaching as blended learning and delivery modes is concomitant with the dominant 'emergent metaphors' such as a *handful* of delivery modes, academics' *flavour* to delivery modes and *surfing the wave*. Sessionals have to comply with the quality standards and to *surf the wave* or pay the price for non-compliance. Paradoxically, the metaphor depicts a different reality because academics add their *flavour* to the course and the disparate teaching styles could easily outweigh the benefits of customisation and foster a *sweet and sour* learning experience for students.

Regarding connectivity, I conclude that quality is *a handful of delivery modes*.

**Item 12 – Category 2: Quality and class size**

The 'emergent metaphor' *size matters* align with Category 2 – Quality of teaching as compliance and standards. The findings (see Chapter 5) demonstrated that any variation in class sizes could impact on the academics' teaching experience. The similarities of Item 12 metaphors with Category 2 dealt with identical claims such as:

- Variations in students' profile
- An overflow of students – exceeding the maximum physical space capacity
- Team teaching for a large cohort of students

The above scenarios parallel the research literature (see Chapter 2). New evidence from my study conveys the 'emergent metaphor' of academic *musical chair game* or students going on a *shopping spree* for classes; a desperate *treasure hunt* for the *star teacher or the most entertaining class*.

Students' movement across classes has been a cause for concern although the reasons for the move vary between individuals. The impact of this practice on the quality of teaching is unknown and has not been seriously researched. Item 12 demonstrates that the notion of size is experienced individually and previous studies either reinforce or negate the ways academics experience the size of their classes.

In terms of connectivity, I conclude that *quality is a question of class size*.

**Item 13 – Category 3: Quality, and accountability and performativity**

The 'emergent metaphor' *more with less* resonates with the gamut of quality assurance tools and cost-saving devices. It also aligns with Category 3 – Quality of teaching as control and assurance. This parallel is not challengeable as the entire premise of higher education institutions is the never-ending outcry about improving the competitiveness of the Australian tertiary education and suggests enhanced productivity (more outcomes with less inputs) as a *sine qua non* condition for better 'quality'.

Although the academics' concerted views that achieving *more with less* is too idealistic, acclaimed business metaphors (such as *lean and mean* or *more with less*) to teaching academics are introduced within managerial language games as a prerequisite for quality outcomes.

In terms of connectivity, I conclude that *quality comprises both accountability and performativity*.

#### **Item 14 – Category 8 and logistical nightmares**

The 'emergent metaphor' organised as *logistical nightmares* parallels Category 8-Quality of teaching as a community of practice and peer-partnership. Sessionals have complex professional obligations and conflicting work schedules that constitute a real *logistical* inconvenience that deprived them of much needed professional development opportunities and the regular interactions with their peers.

University management expresses concern regarding the continuous learning of academics. Paradoxically, the absence of bold actions to deal with logistical nightmares cripples any attempts at promoting a more collegial and cohesive academic team.

Regarding connectivity, I conclude that *quality is a source of logistical nightmares*.

#### **Item 15 – Category 9: Quality and growth**

Quality of teaching, as students' academic success and job-readiness, find a parallel with the *seed-planting* 'emergent metaphor'. The concept of *sowing seeds in fertile soil* relates unequivocally to students' academic experience. The metaphorical experience fits within the academic world; the farmer prepares the soil to sow the seeds but, is subjected to the vagaries of nature and the degree of unpredictability and high risk. Furthermore, they also perceive the academic success (an outcome) as an indicator of quality teaching.

In terms of connectivity, I conclude that *quality, seed-planting and growth are closely interrelated*.

## Higher education Quality of teaching pictogram

As depicted in Figure 6.1 the graphic picture of the findings vividly conveys the two dimensions of quality of teaching that emerged from the data. The categories of description represent the ‘hard’ (substantive) dimension. The metaphors represents the ‘soft’ (interpretive) dimension.

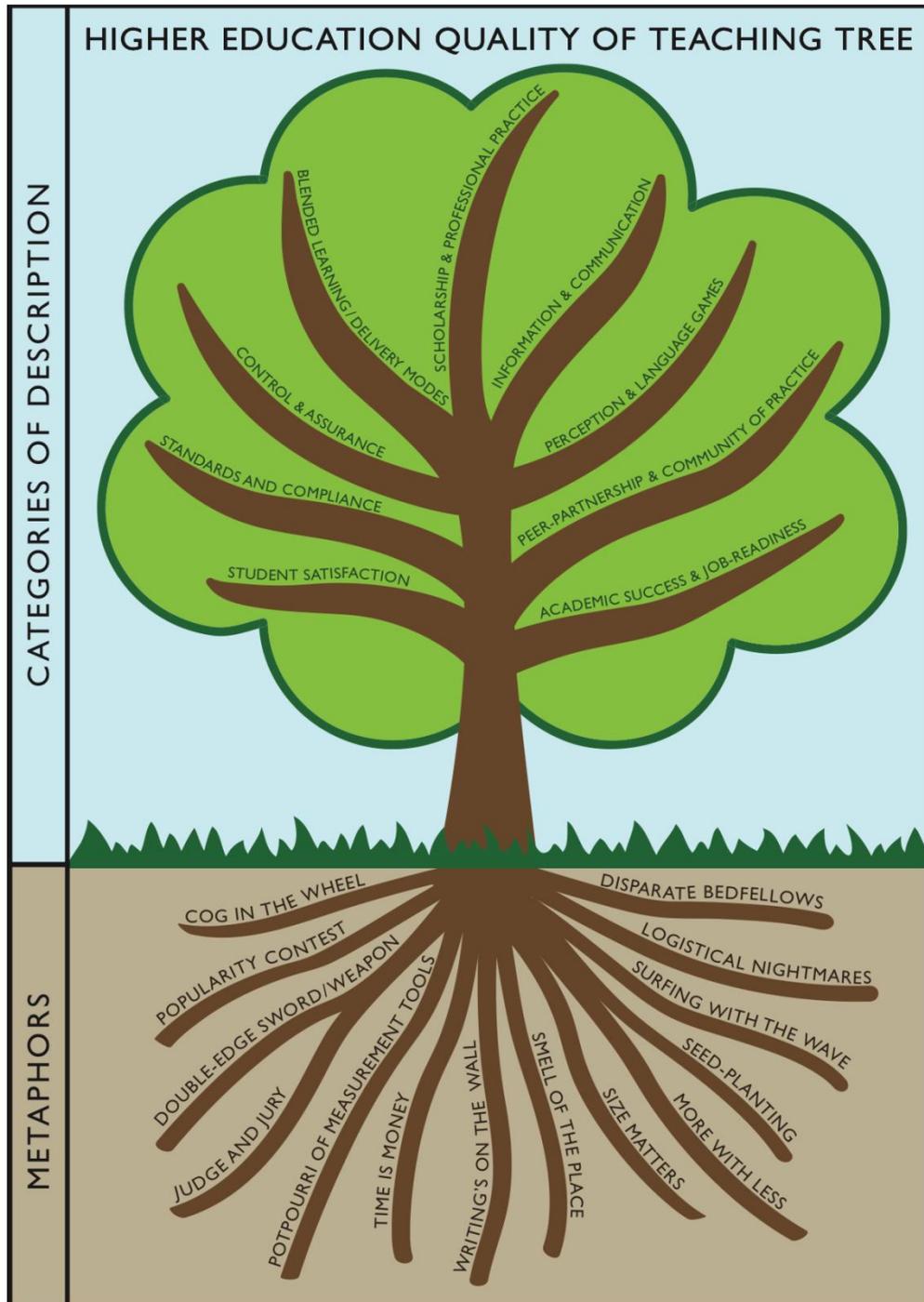
The tree *branches* represent the different ways of experiencing *quality*; the metaphorical *roots* of the tree illustrate the alternative way of experiencing quality. Finally, the quality of teaching can be experienced individually through the simultaneous selection of *branches* (categories of description) and *roots* (metaphors). Although historically, the notion of quality assumes quality assurance, the findings of my research establish that academics may experience that notion differently. The pictogram shows that both the *roots* and the *branches* are equally important to the *tree*.

## Conclusion

In Chapter 6 I have presented a discussion of the findings of this research study: an examination of what the categories of description and the metaphors revealed about the academics’ different ways of experiencing the quality of teaching. I have also given consideration to the relationship between the metaphors and the categories of description.

In Chapter 7 I draw the thesis to a conclusion: I consider key findings; I reflect on issues associated with this research; finally, I make a number of recommendations related to further research on this topic.

Figure 6.1 Higher Education 'Quality of Teaching' pictogram



## **Chapter 7**

### **Findings, Reflections and Recommendations**

In this final chapter of the thesis, I consider how the findings addressed the research questions; I reflect on the findings, overall. In the light of the findings, I make a number of recommendations for higher education academics and professionals. I also consider the value of the phenomenographic research approach; I reflect on the 'emergent metaphor' analysis; I address the limitations of the study. Finally, I make recommendations for further research.

#### **The research study**

The purpose of my research study was to contribute to the knowledge and understanding of the ways higher education academics experience the quality of teaching. Four research questions, as spelled out in Chapter 1, were addressed.

I undertook a phenomenographic research approach to investigate the ways higher education academics experience the notion of quality of teaching; I have discussed details of these investigations in Chapters 5 and 6. A variety of experiences emerged from the data; these consolidated the fact that each was logically related to the other; similarly, a metaphor analysis revealed a set of 'emergent metaphors'. In summary, participants in the study experienced the notion of 'quality of teaching' in nine qualitatively different ways. I reported these in an 'outcome space' defined as 'categories of description'; I compared and contrasted these categories of description with the 'emergent metaphors'.

I have reported these two sets of findings in Tables 6.1 and 6.2; I reflect on these findings in the following section.

### **Contributions to original knowledge: Findings**

My investigation into the qualitatively different ways academics experienced the quality of teaching has enabled me to identify a set of original contributions to understand better the concept of ‘quality’; these are as follows:

- **Methodological:** The mixed methods of phenomenography and ‘emergent metaphor’ analysis reported in this study is the first research study to investigate the perceptions of quality that higher education academics experience and cover an area previously unresearched.
- **Empirical:** The use of both individual and focus group interviews to collect data from academics with different employment status and disciplinary experience provided two sets of data:
  - I undertook individual interviews, and subjected the resultant data to rigorous qualitative analysis via inductive data reduction; an outcome space with a finite list of categories of description emerged; I analysed the findings of the individual interviews and a set of nine categories, arranged in a hierarchical order, emerged.
  - Separately, I undertook two focus groups with both permanents and sessionals; as a result of inductive data reduction, I identified two sets of ‘emergent metaphors’, associated with the quality of teaching arising from the sessionals’ and the permanents’ experience.
  - A Metaphor Analysis Chart (see Table 6.1) revealed the sets of metaphors that emerged from each focus group.
  - A Connectivity Chart (see Table 6.2) revealed relationships between the categories of description and metaphors. I was able to identify differences and commonalities that emerged; these

further consolidated my opinion regarding the ways academics experience ‘quality of teaching’.

These empirical approaches were novel; I was unable to find any reference to such a plan in phenomenography; because of a limitation on scope and space, I was unable to attempt any convergence of the two separate findings.

- **Theoretical:** The findings of my study offer new insights into teaching academics’ relationship with the concept of ‘quality’. My investigation establishes the complexity of this concept; an outcome of my approach is the challenging of commonly held assumptions about the concept of quality. I have represented, in a new light, a conceptual framework regarding the notion of quality in the Higher Education Quality of Teaching Pictogram displayed in Figure 6.1. I present the concept of quality as a combination of ‘hard’ (substantive) dimensions (*categories of description*) and ‘soft’ (interpretive) dimensions (*metaphors*); it is possible to alter the combinations according to the variation in each academic’s experience. My study offers a new and different way of looking at the quality of teaching in higher education, by offering the following:
  - new insights into the comparison of sessional (‘sessionals’) academics’ understanding of quality with that of permanent (‘permanents’) academics;
  - a set of recommendations for educators and higher education professionals into ways they might better address quality issues;
  - a baseline for researchers who wish to investigate the different ways individuals experience the quality of teaching in primary and secondary education; in tertiary and vocational educational institutions.

In summary, the contribution that my study makes to knowledge is to combine

- the methodology of phenomenography, in which nine ‘categories of description’ (the hard, substantive dimensions that emerged from interviews); and
- the 14 ‘emergent metaphors’ (the soft, interpretive dimensions derived from focus group interviews)

to create a Higher Education ‘Quality of Teaching’ Pictogram.

This pictogram provides a new, unique representation of the complexity of quality issues that might assist in a better understanding of this contested area of the determining of ‘quality’ in education.

### **Assumptions challenged**

The findings of my research study challenge some commonly held assumptions. The research has highlighted that the widely-varied experiences of ‘quality’ by academics are not adequately acknowledged in the literature. The findings of Chapters 4 and 5 have challenged the assumptions made about how teaching academics relate to the quality of teaching.

One of the main challenges revealed in this study relates to the commonly held view that the notion of quality is associated exclusively with substantive quality assurance. My research demonstrates that ‘quality’ can be experienced in different ways by different people operating in different contexts. The findings in Chapter 5, reveal the academics’ experiences through a variety of metaphors (see Table 6.2) – a possibility hitherto not encountered in the literature.

### **Ways of experiencing quality of teaching: Relationships between the categories of description.**

The study provides new insight into how the phenomenon of quality is understood in different ways by teaching academics. The findings from the data indicate that the academics in this study had a broad understanding of

quality within the higher education domain. They reflect the commonalities and differences of people, as individual entities; as well, however, they experience the same phenomena differently within the same context.

The nine categories of description (See Chapter 4) reflect the different ways academics experience the quality of teaching; separately, however, each demonstrates a different way in which academics may understand and experience the notion of quality. There are interesting similarities as well as differences between the ways academics experience quality within the same Category of Description; what is more, within the similarities, there are recognisable variations (see Inductive Data Reduction – Appendices 6 and 7).

### **Ways of experiencing quality of teaching: Comparing the experiences of categories of academics in relation to the quality of teaching**

This study has contributed to the body of knowledge on academics' experiences of quality. The connectivity chart (Categories of Description/Metaphor analysis) in Table 6.2 depicts the relationship between the categories of description (emerging from different categories of permanents and sessionals) and metaphors (emerging from permanents and sessionals). As described in the previous chapters, there are interesting commonalities and differences between the experiences of the participants that participated in this study. First, there were very close similarities between the academics' experiences in response to Item 15. Second, Item 15 correlated with Category of Description 9 and, interestingly, suggested the prevailing consensus among all the participants that quality of teaching was related to academic success, seed-planting, and job-readiness. The relationship between metaphorical language and categories of description conveyed one single message: quality is 'slippery'; the uniqueness of teaching academics' experience of this concept may occur in unpredictable ways but will always provide a hint about its meaning.

## **Recommendations for higher education educators and professionals**

My research study has unfailingly revealed new knowledge about the ways in which teaching academics experience quality. Consequently, I am presenting the following recommendations to higher education educators and professionals:

### **Recommendation 1: The understanding of quality**

I recommend that both educators and professionals should not fixate on measuring quality based on a process associated solely with a quality assurance mechanism. My study has demonstrated that, in addition to compliance with the institutional assessment of the quality of teaching through external quality audit, the personal views of academics should matter. In any endeavour to measure such an important and slippery concept as the quality of teaching, academics should view it through the lenses of the categories of description.

### **Recommendation 2: Communication between quality professionals and teaching academics**

Improved communication between quality professionals and teaching academics should assist in mitigating the tension between the perceptive and substantive conceptualisation of quality teaching (see Category Six). As revealed in the findings, Exray University uses a predominantly process-oriented approach in measuring quality especially when it applies to teaching. Dealing with that issue should be a requirement for university management; it should be beneficial for both ‘quality professionals’ and teaching academics. A *University Quality Manual* should be made available for all employees and be incorporated in a compulsory module for the induction of all new employees. Course coordinators should take on the responsibility of educating the new academics; they should ensure that any misunderstandings or

misconceptions regarding the quality concept are addressed and regularly reinforced for all categories of academics.

### **Recommendation 3: Promote both formal communities of practice and peer-partnership programs**

As described in Category 5, the scholarship of teaching and learning has been a matter of great concern for university management and all academic staff. Full-time academics have access to a more favourable work plan that enables them to attend conferences and publish academic papers, join peer-partnership and professional development programs. The precarious employment status and professional obligations of many sessionals may debar them from being included in such programs. The findings of my study suggest that constant up-skilling of academics' teaching skills is most likely to impact positively on the quality of their teaching. I therefore recommend that compulsory professional development programs should be available to all academics and that financial incentives all sessionals should receive financial support should they participate. Irrespective of previous experiences and participation in PD programs, it should not be taken for granted that all academics define, interpret and understand the term 'quality' in the same way, regardless of the different context in which they might be working.

### **Recommendation 4: Undertake post-university surveys of graduates**

The findings of this study suggest that *seed-planting* and *harvesting* are the primary objective of teaching academics (see Table 6.1, Item 15). Except for a few disciplines, it may be very challenging to measure the job-readiness of university graduates. The post-university work performances are even more difficult to track and measure; students follow multiple careers and move from organisations to organisations. I therefore recommend that there should be a more systematic approach to collecting accurate data about the students' performances from their respective organisations; the performance data should

then be used to inform university policy-makers and academics' strategies on ways of improving undergraduate students' job-readiness.

**Recommendation 5: Consider alternative measurement tools for the quality of teaching**

My study has revealed the predominance of a single student feedback survey as the primary tool for measuring the quality of teaching. It has also been argued that, despite its evident flaws, the student feedback survey has been so institutionalised within the higher education landscape that it cannot be uprooted and replaced by an alternative measurement tool. I therefore recommend that the following procedures should be implemented:

- Data should be collected from teaching academics in relation to absenteeism rate, student engagement and participation.
- Students who are found guilty of plagiarism or other academics misconduct should be prohibited from completing any online feedback surveys.
- Peer-partnership program reviews should be accepted as appropriate tools in the measuring of the quality of teaching of all staff.
- Class visits by all internal university quality professionals should be scheduled and implemented.
- Students with more than 75 per cent absenteeism rate should be excluded from the feedback survey. Universities should introduce electronic devices such as swipe cards to record students' class attendance.

Despite its flaws, the student feedback surveys should be maintained but students should be provided with a *Feedback Survey Information Pack* outlining the following:

- A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section covering the aspects of the survey such as (this list is not exhaustive):
- An outline of what is being measured.

- A glossary of terms.
- What is being observed and assessed.
- What is understood by the phrase ‘quality of teaching’?
- An explanation of each question and how students are expected to respond.
- What the expected outcomes of the survey, and how these outcomes will be used.

### **Reflections on the phenomenographic research approach**

The design of my research study emerged from my interest in investigating the different ways teaching academics experience the concept of quality. At the outset of the research I examined different research methods that could examine and generate a theoretical model which could identify the variety of ways of experiencing a phenomenon. After careful consultation and examination of research design options, the research study selected to investigate the ways academics experience teaching quality was phenomenography; this research approach was seen to contribute to the following:

- explaining academics’ experiences of quality teaching and the relationships between them;
- explaining the involved relationship teaching academics have with the notion of quality.

My study was informed by phenomenographic principles; these were paired-up with the inductive data reduction phase of the research. Furthermore, I was able, as the researcher, to deal with one particular challenge of phenomenographic research, namely, the primary objective of this research tradition to see the world from the participant’s perspective. This objective required that I maintain an open mind to set aside any personal biases and presuppositions during the data analysis and to focus, at all times, on the participants’ own words.

The data analysis process involved multiple reading, re-reading of and re-listening to the interview transcripts and recordings. From the dimensions of variation in the participants' description of the phenomenon nine different categories of description emerged.

### **Reflections on the 'emergent metaphor' analysis research approach**

Denshire (2002, 36) suggests that 'emergent metaphor' analysis may be used as 'a means of configuring the relationship between personal and professional domains' that unearth the metaphors from the academics' voices. Academics experience quality, both personally and professionally, and their personal biographies affect the way they see the world around them. Firstly, as a result of the rigorous 'emergent metaphor' search, a large number of metaphors has emerged enabling me to search for more profound academics' experiences in order to highlight the slippery notion of quality. Secondly, I was able to compare and contrast the metaphors from the two focus groups. Thirdly, my connectivity chart (see Table 6.2) enabled me to further demonstrate the complexity of the academics' experience with quality of teaching through the pairing up of the Categories of Description and a number of metaphors.

Finally, metaphors have a massive influence on the construction of reality; the intrinsic components of my interview transcripts were analysed and deconstructed, as Danziger (2000, 331) has suggested:

Metaphors are used pervasively over relatively long periods, and typically their users do not seem to regard them as 'mere' metaphors but as expressing a literal truth.

The reading and re-reading of the transcripts were necessary to ensure that the absolute authenticity and the relevance of the 'emergent metaphors' to this study provided a faithful reflection of the academics' personal experiences with the notion of quality. Schmitt (2005) argues that the use of metaphors in

research assume that researchers search for specific metaphors in the material and consciously form metaphors to assist the research process.

### **Limitations of the study**

My study focused on one higher education institution in Australia; it involved a sample of 19 participants from one department. In that respect, it is not possible to claim generalisability of the findings; however, they do provide a basis for further research studies.

The scheduling of the focus group interviews was made difficult due to the challenging task of getting all the participants to be present on the same day and time. As explained in Chapter 3, I deemed a purposeful sample preferable because the alternative would have made the management of the recruitment process very difficult. As phenomenography exposes the variety of qualitatively different ways a collective group of participants understands a phenomenon, the recruitment process was very challenging: I had to take the precaution not to connect individual participants with specific experiences and not to ascertain the prevalence of these within the sample size. These difficulties, however, were overcome; ultimately, they did present as a limitation of the study.

As an exploratory investigation, I expected that limitations might arise due to lack of knowledge regarding this research territory. The amount of data produced in this present qualitative study certainly resonated with the points raised by Fryer (2012, 24):

The sheer quantity of data generated means that such methods are suitable for small-scale studies and so it is difficult to extrapolate from the results to a larger population. At the same time, qualitative studies are invaluable at the exploratory stage of an investigation, to highlight the key areas that might merit further investigation or the methodological problems that might occur.

In retrospect, I realise that there were some shortcomings that arose due - to the results of the interviews: a possible limitation of the study findings may be linked to the lack of variation within and between my research populations;

some conceptions were expressed by very few participants leaving very little data for some categories. Consistent with my view, Bruce (2003) warns against the difficulty of predicting any outcome in a phenomenographic study. As this study appears to be the first of its kind, I am determined to continue working in this research field so that I might assess including different participants and more diverse types of questions in the interview schedule. Now that I have developed greater proficiency in interviewing skills I have the confidence to probe for more clarity from the interviewees and to engage more confidently in the process of semi-structured and focus-group interviews, as well as that of inductive data reduction and the methodology of phenomenography.

### **Recommendations for further research**

My research has revealed a comprehensive picture of the teaching academics' experiences of quality that hitherto have not been subject to qualitative research. My study has also revealed opportunities to extend the scope of this research; as a consequence, I am recommending the following research directions:

- Based on the foundation laid by the present study, phenomenographic research into quality should be extended within different contexts: primary and secondary education; TAFE institutions.
- I should extend the scope of this study to include the perceptions of quality of teaching held by quality professionals and educational policy-makers. The commonalities and differences will then be established between the different categories of participants, represented by an extended connectivity chart derived from that displayed in Table 6.2
- Because of space restrictions, I found it necessary to present only a selection of the categories of description and metaphors that emerged in my study. It would be useful to consider what were left

unexplored to add to the richness of the material discussed in this thesis.

- There are indications (see, for example, Cope, 2014) that there may be more variations regarding the conceptions of teaching quality held by academics than I have been able to identify in this study involving a relatively small cohort. This suggests that the involvement of a larger population of academics should be included in a follow-up study to address the consistency of my current findings.
- Finally, the ‘referential and structural components classification’ (see Marton & Booth, 1997) were not addressed and it would be useful to consider what were left unexplored in an extended study on the conceptions of teaching quality.

## **Summary**

My research study reported in this doctoral thesis has contributed to the knowledge and understanding of the concept of teaching quality of two groups of academics – permanents and sessionals– in a tertiary institution in Australia. By using phenomenography and ‘emergent metaphor’ analysis, the study has described the qualitatively different ways academics experience the notion of quality in the context of their daily professional duties and the variation that exists between these experiences. Finally, the findings of this study have provided an insight into the understanding of teaching academics’ experience with the notion of quality. A pictogram, the ‘Higher Education Quality of Teaching Tree’ presented in Figure 6.1, has proposed a new conceptual framework modelling the variation in the conceptions of quality teaching illustrated through literal words, verbal signs and metaphors.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1 List of semi-structured interview questions

The following questions were asked of all participants:

- What do you perceive as teaching and learning issues facing your institution?
- What is your opinion about the divide between the substantive and the perceptive notion of quality standards?
- What do you think of the sessional academics' contribution to the quality of teaching and learning within the organisation?
- What are your views about the different modes of communication to clarify the quality expectations?
- How far do you think the students' experience surveys reflect the quality of teaching and learning?
- In your opinion, what are the different ways of measuring the quality of teaching and learning within the higher education sector?
- How far do you think the selection of sessional academics could impact on the quality of teaching and learning?
- What is your opinion about the impact of class sizes on the performance of both permanent and sessional academics?
- What does the notion of quality of teaching and learning mean to you?

The above questions were trialled with two volunteer colleagues and refined to address the main objective of the individual semi-structured group interviews undertaken with the two categories of academics.

## Appendix 2 List of focus group interview questions

The following questions were asked of both focus groups participants

- What do you perceive as teaching and/or learning issues facing your institution?
- What is your opinion about the divide between the substantive and the perceptive notion of quality standards?
- What do you think of the sessional academics' contribution to the quality of teaching and learning within the organisation?
- What are your views about the different modes of communication to clarify the quality expectations?
- How far do you think the students' experience surveys reflect the quality of teaching and learning?
- What is your opinion about the reliability and the validity of the student feedback surveys?
- In your opinion, what are the different ways of measuring the quality of teaching and learning within the higher education sector
- What are your views about the different assessment criteria for measuring the quality of teaching and learning?
- What do you think of the impact of professional development on the performance of sessional academics?
- How far do you think the selection of sessional academics could impact on the quality of teaching and learning?
- What do you think of the impact of quality of course materials and delivery as a contributing factor to the improvement of teaching and learning when relying on sessional academics?
- What is your opinion about the impact of class sizes of the performance of both permanent and sessional academics?

The above questions were trialled in two pilot sessions and refined to address the main objective of the focus group interviews with the two categories of academics

## Appendix 3 Information to participants

### **INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH**

#### **You are invited to participate**

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You are invited to participate in a research project entitled:

#### **Conceptions of the Quality of Teaching in Higher Education in Australia: An Investigation**

(Originally: Relying on Casual Academics: Maintaining a Quality of Teaching and Learning in the Higher Education Sector)

This project is being conducted by a student researcher Laval Michel Jean-Francois Bosquet as part of the Doctorate of Education at Victoria University under the supervision of Dr Ian Ling from College of Education.

#### **Project explanation**

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This study is designed to explore the impact of a large sessional workforce using as a case the Business Department of a large metropolitan dual sector university in the city of Melbourne. The first aim is to explore perceptions of sessional and on-going staff in relation to the quality of learning in an Australian tertiary institution. The second aim is to determine what actions are required to ensure that the findings of the study have a significant impact on policy and practice. By adopting a needs analysis approach, the study will identify any discrepancy between perceptions and actions. Subsequent investigation will then determine a range of mechanisms to bridge any of the gaps that emerge.

#### **What will I be asked to do?**

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You have been selected from the employees who work in the School of Management, and, subject to your willingness and freely showing your interest in participating in the project; you will be interviewed regarding your opinions, views and experience with the quality of teaching and learning. You will be participating and contributing to interviews on your experience working with higher education institutions, your perception and views about casualisation of academics and the contribution to the quality of teaching and learning. The semi-structured and focus group interviews will be digitally recorded with the consent of the participants and I would encourage you to answer the research questions as much as possible. The interviews should last for between 60 to 90 minutes and will be conducted at XRay University at a time and place that is mutually acceptable.

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**What will I gain from participating?**

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By participating in the research, you will be able to offer valuable insight about your experiences in working within the higher education community. You will also be able to share your personal views about the notion of 'quality' of teaching and learning and within the context of a higher education institution. My study will provide a body of knowledge that contributes to an understanding of the perception and interpretation of quality of teaching and learning of different categories of academics. This will lead to a better appreciation of the quality discourse within higher education when relying on sessional academics.

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**How will the information I give be used?**

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Information gained from the survey will be used to form the basis of a research thesis for the Doctorate of Education degree. All survey results, including comment, will be coded to ensure anonymity. Access to the data is restricted to researchers directly involved in the project and subject to rules for information storage as per university requirement. The data will be used for articles and conference presentations.

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**What are the potential risks of participating in this project?**

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There is a low probability risk associated with this research

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**How will this project be conducted?**

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The case study will involve participants from the university, including permanent and sessional academics, from the School of Management, XRay University.

My role will be the facilitator, interviewer and a participant observer. All participants will be aware that I am the researcher. The purposive selection criteria will be applied and the participants will be selected by the student researcher from the School of Management and identify a willingness to be interviewed. The interviews will be structured to gain insight into the perception and interpretation of quality of teaching and learning when relying on sessional academics.

The research methodology will be a qualitative research and will be undertaken with an emphasis on a grounded theory using an interpretive research paradigm. This study is uniquely placed to generate theory, grounded in data collected from an Australian tertiary institution about this phenomenon. The investigation will focus on perceptions and accounts of actions taken by administrators and academic lecturers related to the quality of the teaching and learning at an Australian tertiary institution. The research will involve data collected through semi-structured and focus group interviews and a case study approach to reporting the findings.

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**Who is conducting the study?**

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The study is conducted by L Michel J.F Bosquet and Dr Ian Ling from the College of Education, Victoria University

The student researcher, L Michel J.F Bosquet, may be contacted by email at [laval.bosquet@live.vu.edu.au](mailto:laval.bosquet@live.vu.edu.au). The other member of the team is the Chief Investigator, Dr Ian Ling ([Ian.Ling@vu.edu.au](mailto:Ian.Ling@vu.edu.au)).

## *Appendices*

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the Chief Investigator listed above.

If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ethics Secretary, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Office for Research, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001, email [researchethics@vu.edu.au](mailto:researchethics@vu.edu.au) or phone (03) 9919 4781 or 4461.

## Appendix 4 Consent form for semi-structured and focus-group interviews

# CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH

### INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS:

We would like to invite you to be a part of a study entitled:

### **Conceptions of the Quality of Teaching in Higher Education in Australia: An Investigation**

(Originally: Relying on Casual Academics: Maintaining a Quality of Teaching and Learning in the Higher Education Sector)

The first aim is to explore perceptions of sessional and on-going staff in relation to the quality of learning in an Australian tertiary institution. The second aim is to determine what actions are required to ensure that the findings of the study have a significant impact on policy and practice. By adopting a needs analysis approach, the study will identify any discrepancy between perceptions and actions. Subsequent investigation will then determine a range of mechanisms to bridge any of the gaps that emerge.

### CERTIFICATION BY SUBJECT

I,  
of

certify that I am at least 18 years old\* and that I am voluntarily giving my consent to participate in the study:

### **Conceptions of the Quality of Teaching in Higher Education in Australia: An Investigation**

(Originally: Relying on Casual Academics: Maintaining a Quality of Teaching and Learning in the Higher Education Sector)

This research project is being conducted by Michel Bosquet and Dr Ian Ling from the College of Education, Victoria University Melbourne Victoria.

The Student Researcher, Michel Bosquet, may be contacted by email at [lavalmichel.bosquet@live.vu.edu.au](mailto:lavalmichel.bosquet@live.vu.edu.au). The other member of the team is the Principal Investigator, Dr Ian Ling ([Ian.Ling@vu.edu.au](mailto:Ian.Ling@vu.edu.au)).

I certify that the objectives of the study, together with any risks and safeguards associated with the procedures listed hereunder to be carried out in the research, have been fully

## *Appendices*

explained to me by Michel Bosquet and that I freely consent to participation involving the below mentioned procedures:

- participating in a one-to-one semi-structured interview;
- the digital recording of this semi-structured interview.

I certify that the objectives of the study, together with any risks and safeguards associated with the procedures listed hereunder to be carried out in the research, have been fully explained to me and I fully consent to participation involving the following procedures:

- participating in a one-to-one semi-structured interview;
- the digital recording of this semi-structured interview.

Please check this tick box to indicate your consent:

I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and that I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way.

I have been informed that the information I provide will be kept confidential.

Signed:

Date:

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the Chief Investigator listed above.

If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ethics Secretary, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Office for Research, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001, email [Researchethics@vu.edu.au](mailto:Researchethics@vu.edu.au) or phone (03) 9919 4781 or 4461.

## Appendix 5 Focus-group interview

# CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH

### INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS:

We would like to invite you to be a part of a study entitled:

### **Conceptions of the Quality of Teaching in Higher Education in Australia: An Investigation**

(Originally: Relying on Casual Academics: Maintaining a Quality of Teaching  
and Learning in the Higher Education Sector)

This study explores the impact of a large sessional workforce using as a case the Business Department of a large metropolitan dual sector university in the city of Melbourne. The first aim is to explore perceptions of sessional and on-going staff in relation to the quality of learning in an Australian tertiary institution. The second aim is to determine what actions are required to ensure that the findings of the study have a significant impact on policy and practice. By adopting a needs analysis approach, the study will identify any discrepancy between perceptions and actions. Subsequent investigation will then determine a range of mechanisms to bridge any of the gaps that emerge.

### CERTIFICATION BY SUBJECT

I,  
of

certify that I am at least 18 years old\* and that I am voluntarily giving my consent to participate in the study:

### **Conceptions of the Quality of Teaching in Higher Education in Australia: An Investigation**

(Originally: Relying on Casual Academics: Maintaining a Quality of Teaching  
and Learning in the Higher Education Sector)

This research project is being conducted by Michel Bosquet and Dr Ian Ling from the College of Education, Victoria University Melbourne Victoria.

The Student Researcher, Michel Bosquet, may be contacted by email at [lavalmichel.bosquet@live.vu.edu.au](mailto:lavalmichel.bosquet@live.vu.edu.au). The other member of the team is the Principal Investigator, Dr Ian Ling ([Ian.Ling@vu.edu.au](mailto:Ian.Ling@vu.edu.au)).

## *Appendices*

I certify that the objectives of the study, together with any risks and safeguards associated with the procedures listed hereunder to be carried out in the research, have been fully explained to me by Michel Bosquet and that I freely consent to participation involving the below mentioned procedures:

- participating in a one-to-one semi-structured interview;
- the digital recording of this semi-structured interview.

I certify that the objectives of the study, together with any risks and safeguards associated with the procedures listed hereunder to be carried out in the research, have been fully explained to me and I fully consent to participation involving the following procedures:

- participating in a one-to-one semi-structured interview;
- the digital recording of this semi-structured interview.

Please check this tick box to indicate your consent:

I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and that I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way.

I have been informed that the information I provide will be kept confidential.

Signed:

Date:

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the Chief Investigator listed above.

If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ethics Secretary, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Office for Research, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001, email [Researchethics@vu.edu.au](mailto:Researchethics@vu.edu.au) or phone (03) 9919 4781 or 4461.

## Appendix 6 Permanent academics semi-structured interview inductive data reduction (IDR): Sample data

Dane Browne	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme
	<i>The literal transcript of an interview sequence (with some room for interpretation)</i>	<i>My analysis of what is being said</i>	<i>My evaluation of the concept being addressed here</i>	<i>My synthesis of the theme represented by the concept</i>	<i>My synthesis of the issues that suggest a need for change</i>
	The sessionals are employed on a semester-to-semester basis; their contracts run for twelve or thirteen weeks plus whatever marking we give them. And then at the end of that thirteen-week period, they're no longer employed by us again. I'm very conscious of the fact that they have no...uh...there's no reason for them to express any specific loyalty to my course or my institution above any other course or any other institution in Melbourne, or for that matter around the world. And so, from semester to semester, I can't...I can't guarantee who I'm going to have on my team.	Sessional staff are employed on a semester-to-semester basis; their contracts run for twelve or thirteen weeks plus marking time. At the conclusion of their time they are no longer employed by the university; thus, there is no reason for them to express any specific loyalty to the course or the institution, be it local or global. From semester to semester, Dean cannot guarantee whom he will have on his team.	Lack of continuity and control of the sessional team	Creating a quality-aware academic team	
119	I actually spend a fair bit of time with my sessional academics. I...I spend a lot of time talking about what quality is generally to all of the stakeholders in my course, so that's students, that's other staff members, that's sessional academics, it's anyone who'll listen to me for more than about five minutes. And I do that in a variety of ways – anything from communicating with students via Blackboard, spending time talking about it in workshops or lectures. We spend a fair bit of time saying, 'This is what quality looks like in this particular course.' I do that with our sessional academics through pre-semester workshops.	Dane uses different methods to share his personal views about the notion of quality. He also ensured the pre-semester workshops addressed and clarified the quality expectations; sessional academics are formally briefed about the quality imperatives of the course	Dissemination of information about the notion of quality to a range of stakeholders	Information about quality	Communication Strategies
137.3	Um. As a result of that, we'll see more sessional academics being employed to be able to manage the volumes that we need to manage. There's only so much teaching I can do as a person anyway, so it makes sense for me to be moved to a more if you like, academic leadership role, rather than a teaching and learning, 'boots-on-the-ground' kind of role. And yeah...I think that's problematic. If you take out that academic leadership role then you lose touch with the students. That means that your ability to be able to design well thought-through, nuanced, educational experience is reduced...	Dane believed there had been a major shift in the employment of academics; an increase in the number of sessional academics to manage the volume of work leaving the course design and leadership roles to permanent. Without the leadership role and teaching duties, the permanent will lose direct involvement with the educational experience of students.	Changes in permanents' work load and teaching experience	Changed role of academics in teaching and learning Impact of academics' workload on the quality of teaching and learning	Competition between full-time and sessional academics

Appendices

Dane Browne	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme
131	I think what you'll see is people like me will spend more time administering courses all around the world, rather than teaching into courses all around the world. Even if we think about Singapore this semester, there are 1000 students – 900 students or something – over in Singapore. And I didn't go. I haven't seen any of them. And they'll all go through the course without ever meeting me. It's all done remotely through other sessionals.	According to Dane, the course coordinators manage courses in different onshore and overseas location without any teaching duties. The offshore courses are essentially run by sessionals without much interaction with their onshore counterparts.	Delegation of the course coordinators' control on both onshore and offshore courses.	Devaluation of quality control in academia Students' career objectives	Course management Evaluation of onshore and offshore programmes
96.2	Other people may use completely different metrics for quality. So, they may think that quality teaching involves producing lots and lots of feedback on the students' assignments and the more feedback, right down to the correcting grammar and spelling that they can provide on a student's assignment, indicates good quality of teaching.	According to Dane, a different method of measuring the notion of quality could be the amount of feedback provided on students' assignments, ranging from general comments to grammar and spelling	Feedback on assignments as a measure of quality of learning over time	Quality of teaching and learning Outcomes over time	Feedback and quality of teaching
81	Yeah, I...I...genuinely believe that education can transform individuals, groups of individuals and including...including whole societies. That can only be achieved if the...if there is buy-in in the education project from a range of stakeholders. I think you need passionate, committed teachers who are helping to prepare students to be active members of the society within which they're about to enter. I believe you need universities that are more than just...What shall I say?...more than a place where qualifications can be obtained on a mass scale, but they need to be places of enquiry and challenge.	Dane believed that education could transform individuals, groups of individuals and the whole society. That could only be achieved if there was buy-in in the education project from a range of stakeholders. In addition to preparing students to become active members of society, teachers must be committed and passionate about their work.	The role of education in society. The transformation of individuals, groups and the whole of society	Transformational role of education	Passion and commitment to education
113	Well, I can talk about what I do! [LAUGHING] I'm...some people...Some people hire staff because they need to hire some staff and they get them on, and they do the work, and the staff don't... do anything, there are no dramas, it all happens, and it's all just...it's all nice and easy. On the other hand, I look for quality in my staff. And what that means is that I...I call it 'weed and feed'. If I've got a staff member who's not...doing the job, then I'm unlikely to ask them to come back and teach for me again. If on the other hand, I've got a staff member who might be new and inexperienced in our particular pedagogy of this course but they're committed, and they're doing a good job, then I'll put extra resources – mostly my own time – into making sure that they can develop their teaching abilities. Um. But yeah, it's impossible to do that equally across the whole school without resources implications.	Dane believed he was the sole person to hire and evaluate the quality of his staffs. If they did not perform according to the required standards, future employment is jeopardised. He provided professional development to new staffs to ensure they develop their teaching abilities.	Quality of staff	Quality of staff and employability	Professional development for new incumbents

Appendices

Dane Browne	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme
82	There needs to be, I think, a tighter link between teaching and scholarship. At the moment it very much seems to be scholarship is one thing and teaching is another thing. If you're lucky, you get to teach into the area that you do research, but that's not always the case. Certainly in my case, I've taught subjects that I don't research into or I only, you know, barely touch on in my reading, my general reading. And I think that there's an opportunity that's been missed there.	Dane expressed the need for a tighter relationship between teaching and scholarship; he has taught subjects that he has 'barely' researched and considers this to be a missed opportunity	Need for a tighter relationship between teaching and scholarship	Teaching and scholarship	Professional development of academics
96.1	Particularly if we've seen the progression over the course of the semester. So typically, what we see is at the start, the first piece of assessment, the students are not as good as what they think they are. The second piece of assessment they've come along quite some way and they've progressed, and they can evidence that progression. But that's me in my course, and that's how I do it.	Dane thought that quality might better be measured by the progression over the course of the semester - the progression from a piece of assessment to another was a determinant of quality of teaching and learning.	Quality is measured by the students' progress throughout the semester	Evaluation of students' progress and teachers' ability Outcomes over time	Quality of teaching and students' academic progress Student assessment
96.3	Other people might think that it's more about making sure that the students can commit the concepts and the theories that we're learning in the classroom with that particular teacher's own experience.	Dane believed that a different way to measure quality was the students' ability to apply the concepts and theories as reflected through the teacher's own experience.	Application of theories and concepts as indicators of quality of learning	Quality measurement	Teacher's experience and quality of teaching
94	Yeah, so this comes back to...and this is where I was saying earlier about how you're going to choose to measure quality. So...so, for example, the way in which I choose to measure quality is as is it evidenced by the students' ability to be able to undertake a complex piece of assessment at the end of a degree. If they are able to do that and they can do it well, um, then it probably goes to show that our teaching ability helped them to be able to get there.	Dane believed that one way to measure 'quality' could be to provide evidence of the students' progress and ability to undertake a complex piece of assessment at the end of their academic degree. The quality of teaching would be reflected through the students' academic progress	The quality of teaching might better be reflected in the students' ability to undertake complex assignments	Quality measurement method Alternative assessment methods	The academics' teaching ability Student assessment
71	A few things are going on here, and I don't have any evidence for this. What we are seeing is a growth in the market. More people are entering into the higher education system. That's partly due to previous governments' policy. They're coming in from different angles now as well. RMIT is part of a dual sector...is a dual-sector university, which means that we have the old TAFE system. We sit, I guess, if you like, on top of the old TAFE system. The students who come through that TAFE system can articulate into higher education degrees.	Dane assessed the changes in higher education sector due to recent educational public policy; the number of students' enrolling from secondary institutions soared as well as students using the dual-sector institution as pathway to undergraduate studies	Growth in students' enrolment from vocational institutions Dual-sector articulation	Students' academic pathways	Articulation
86.3	Um. And I think most people would say, 'Well I can probably take a hit of one average CES score from an area that I don't teach into, and I'm probably prepared to wear that, as long as I don't drop my output in the other areas.'	Dane was prepared to have a low CES score for a course in which he was not a specialist as long as he did not drop his output in other discipline areas.	The focus on CES score on teaching academics Pedagogy versus content knowledge	Performance evaluation Versatility	Breadth and depth

Appendices

Dane Browne	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme
12.1	<p>So, we bring them together before the semester starts and I run them through what my particular expectations are for the course for the following semester. I involve my sessional staff in the major decisions in that. So that usually...usually, the content of the course doesn't change very much, but the organisation does change. I will provide my sessionals with materials that they can begin to prepare for the students. So, this semester was probably the one where I provided the most extensive materials upfront. You know, PDFs, research on the company that we were undertaking, that when they came together in that pre-workshop, I said, 'Look, you need to read this stuff so that we're up above...we're on top of this, but now we need to make some decisions about what appropriate assessment looks like in this course.' And so, we had a discussion about what needed to be in the assessment and what could be changed or what could be taken out of the assessment, 'cause it wasn't appropriate for the organisation that we were studying.</p>	<p>Dane considered the pre-semester preparation was very intensive mainly for sessional academics; he clarified the course outcomes, the assessment requirements and provided a lot of reading materials. The whole team was involved in the preparation of the course with a discussion about the marking guidelines, assessment criteria. The assignment requirements were clarified, and the notion of quality explained to all parties concerned.</p>	<p>Course preparation</p>	<p>Communication and consultation</p>	<p>Communities of practice</p>
47	<p>That's tricky. With the numbers that we've got, with the student numbers that we've got here in Melbourne (we've got about 250 students this semester; about the same last semester), it means I'm running ten different tutorials. Our department here has about 50 academics...um...two of which you would say are probably experts in [my discipline] – either that's their research area or that's their practice area. The others...the other full-time staff members that teach the course, are well-qualified academic lecturers but [my course] is not their specific discipline.</p>	<p>Dane's concern was that while the majority of academics - including tutors - in his course area are well-qualified, only a small number are expert in the specific discipline.</p>	<p>Academic standards. Balancing staff allocation in a required but narrow field of business management is complex and difficult.</p>	<p>Creating a quality-aware academic team</p>	<p>Course expertise. Quality control and standards</p>
107	<p>They're not paid for that, and I can't expect them to. So as a result, I suspect that my personal idea of what a good-quality course is would vary dramatically from what theirs is. Yeah. For me, this is a...for me, this particular course, I think about in the shower in the mornings, I think about it, you know, often late at night, and I think about it when I'm walking down the street. But I suspect for some of my...some of the people who do some teaching for me, they're concerned more about how they fit that particular teaching into all of the other teachings that they've got on, or how they can organise their life in such a way so that they don't have to spend so much time on the road just to be able to get to a two-hour teaching slot every two weeks. You know? And that's not to say that they don't care for the course or that they don't care for the pedagogy. It's just that they're not paid to care for it and so, um, so I suspect that they're not looking for the same quality markers, if you like, as what I'm looking for.</p>	<p>Dane believed the tutors have a different agenda as they also teach in other programmes; they would not have the same concern for quality as a course coordinator as their roles differ. In that respect, they might have a different perception of the notion of quality.</p>	<p>Variation in the definition of quality</p>	<p>Difference of roles and duties</p>	<p>Determinants of quality</p>

Appendices

Dane Browne	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme
69	Um. We need... For that very much hands-on, interactive kind of teaching, we need people in the room, and I don't think online... I don't think online can even come close to being able to do that.	Dane considered the interactive and face-to-face mode of teaching in a classroom environment could not be matched by online delivery	Comparison between face-to-face and online lectures Face-to-face versus online interactions	Mode of teaching Authenticity of delivery	Face-to-face vs online teaching Pedagogy
122	The other way that we do that is through... I have a very robust moderation process, assignment moderation process, where the... assessment is marked, and I moderate to check for internal consistency across all of the markers. And where there seems to be... if there's... And it goes both ways. If there's a deficiency in, say, the quality of the marking or the quality of the feedback, then I try and raise that with the appropriate assessor so that they have the opportunity to adjust and correct that. But on the other hand, if they're doing what I call 'over-marking', they're providing far too much detail as feedback, then... um, I try and address that as well. What are you after? A pen? And so that's about making sure that the sessionals know that they're not being exploited at all. It's very easy... We set large... We set large pieces of assessment, group work...	Dane adopted another technique to ensure consistency within his team: robust moderation process to address variation in the marking of assessments. He made sure the papers are assessed according to the rubrics provided and any non-compliance is raised with the respective markers and corrective actions taken. This moderation process ensured more consistency and fairness without 'exploiting' the sessionals.	The moderation process and quality of marking and feedback	Quality control	Feedback and consistency
64	Each has different purposes. So pedagogically the online stuff is good if we're thinking about a... a delivery model of knowledge. So, from me to you. So online can do that well on an individual basis. Or, in fact, out to a mass basis. So, I stand in front of a lecture theatre, they record me for an hour as I prattle on about something, and we then upload that to the internet and people can watch it whenever they want. In the situation where there's nothing more that's expected other than the people who are watching the lecture or watching that particular resource, receiving information...	Dane spoke about the merit of online materials such as recorded lectures. Both modes of delivery (online and face-to-face) need to be valuable to students.	Comparison between face-to-face and online lectures. Alternative modes need to be equal in value	Course evaluation Delivery modes	Flexible learning mode
66	...then that work perfectly fine. And I can see, you know, professionally recorded lectures about content and content only, where you're explaining concepts, I think we should probably only ever have to record them once and then you don't me to go and stand in front of that lecture theatre again and do it next semester and then do it the semester after that. I think online's great for that stuff. You can slow it down; you can speed it up, you can pause it, you can think about what was said, you can go and do some other research, come back to it... So there are lots of affordances there where online's great.	Dane highlighted the merits of the institution's technology such as availability of online materials and recorded lectures, particularly when dealing only with content elements. Students have the possibility of reviewing the lectures they attending and access lectures they've missed	The impact of state-of-the-art technology for transmission of content	Online materials Content transmission	Flexible teaching environment

Appendices

Dane Browne	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme
88	And that makes it very, very difficult. That means you know...essentially the academic says, 'I don't care about this, and I have to make choices.' And that's not a good way to set up a quality education system, I think! [LAUGHING] There are perverse incentives involved in this.	Dane found this situation very difficult to deal with, essentially when academics gave up with the system by saying that, they didn't care, but they had to make the right choices; this was not the proper way to improve quality education	Academics' personal goals may conflict with those of the institution actions are not necessarily conducive to quality education	The institution's system and quality of education Personal versus institutional goals	Incentives and quality education Breadth and depth
124.2	And so, we need to have a conversation about that too. And wherever there's an opportunity to...to have that conversation about what I expect or what I think quality is, I'm happy to do that. And so that means I'm...you know, often, coffee.	Dane believed there was a need to have informal discussions about the notion of quality and that could take place over coffee.	Informal interaction and conversation about the notion of quality	Informal discussion about quality	Informal communication channels
126	You know, 'Let's go and have a cup of coffee and talk about what's been going on.' I'll take the opportunity to drop in on their...into their workshops where my timetable allows for that to occur. If I'm not teaching at the same time as they are, for example. Uh, and there are often many informal discussions that happen in the middle of a corridor as we bump into each other as we're walking around, where we might take five, ten or fifteen minutes to talk about what's happening in the course. But again, that never get recorded anywhere. You know, the sessional doesn't get paid for that. You know, quality happens as a result of those kinds of conversations but, you know, that's another example of when that particular sessionals spending fifteen minutes talking to me or they go and have a cup of coffee with me for half an hour, and we're talking about our course and they're not being paid for that, they could theoretically say, 'Well no, I've got all this other stuff to do, this other stuff that's more important to me.' And, you know, there's not a lot I can do about that.	Dane explained clearly that, in the real academic world, discussions took place very informally as academics (including sessionals) meet for coffee or bumped against each other in the corridor to have 15 minutes to half a hour chat about the course and quality was one of the theme discussed. However, this is a non-remunerated time that sessional academics might not entertain and this type of informal meeting could not be forced upon them.	Informal interaction and conversation about the notion of quality	Informal discussion about quality	Informal communication channels
98.2	And there doesn't appear to be any really clear, well-defined measure of quality that is universally accepted, even within a department or within a school or across the university. Or indeed between universities.	Dane stated there was no universally accepted measure of quality; Different schools within the same institution or different institutions would propose that own definition of quality	Universal definition of quality	Quality measurement	Interpretation of Quality
100	So, I guess my point about this is, you know, is that I don't know what quality is, but I know it when I see it. And I think lots of different people are going to have lots of different perspectives...about what good quality is and without a...a well-accepted definition of what quality education is...	Dane highlighted the subjective evaluation of quality; it is more a matter of personal perception	Definition of quality and perception	Quality measurement	Interpretation of Quality
61	We see it in other ways too. We see it in recent changes to the course delivery model. So, the course delivery model now has us delivering a certain percentage of our course in an online format, and then the face-to-face component of that is two hours every	Dane believed there is a shift in the mode of course delivery; the delivery format includes a blend of face-to-face one-hour lecture and two-hour tutorials	Mix mode of Lecture/tutorial delivery	Blended learning	Learning modes

Appendices

Dane Browne	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme
	fortnight in a workshop face-to-face plus one hour every week. And that one hour every week is in a large lecture format.				
121.2	And that was a...that was a discussion that we held as a team and then I took the recommendations of the team back and made the adjustments in the assessment guidelines. Holding those kinds of conversations and making sure that you listen carefully to what your teaching team tells you is an important part, I think, of being able to get a group understanding of what quality looks like.	Dane adopted a participative management approach and adopted some of the recommendations proposed by the teaching team. The meeting was the platform for the group's conversation about how quality should look like for this course	Group's interpretation of quality	Participation and consultation	Participative management
62.2	And we can't develop the kinds of support resources that probably need...If we're going to take humans out of the classroom, we need to replace them with something as good or better in an online way, and if we haven't got the resources to be able to do that, or if it's not possible because of, say, course design and our particular pedagogy would prevent that, then I feel the quality necessarily suffers. Yeah.	Dave considered there is no substitute for the face-to-face classroom experience; any alternative pedagogy/teaching modes would be costly. The lack of resources would restrict the course redesign and impact negatively on quality.	The impact of budgetary constraint on the quality of teaching Alternative teaching modes require adequate support resources	Budgetary constraint	Pedagogy
36	<i>Uh, it depends on how...it depends on how you're going to frame up some of those key terms in there. And I guess it depends on how you go about measuring this idea of quality.</i> So, my personal opinion on this is that certainly within this institution, it appears that teaching and learning takes a back seat or is considered secondary to research outputs.	Dane considered that within his institution teaching and learning is considered to be less important than research	Importance of research. Research is given precedence at his university. Research is in a pre-eminent position	...The status of teaching? Or something like that. Status of teaching and learning	Performance Evaluation Pedagogy v. Research
38	The metrics that we use to determine whether or not a course is well-taught or is of high quality are pretty dull metrics, so institutionally we use a course experience survey (CES) that the students fill out and that pretty much is the only piece of data that we've got to work with.	Dane considered the metrics used to measure the quality of the courses offered to be <i>not reliable</i> uninformative and dull metrics; the only informative data is provided by a course experience survey completed by students.	<i>Reliability and validity of students' survey.</i> A student course survey is the only measure of the quality of teaching and learning.	Superficiality of student-based CSE	Performance measures
38	Courses that invariably get a low score from the students are regarded as poor-quality courses, but my personal opinion is that I don't think the instrument captures an awful lot of that. You could have a...you could have a very popular course that scores highly that is poorly designed.	The courses that achieve low CES score <i>from student survey scores</i> are considered to be poor quality courses. Dane thought that the CES instruments failed to capture elements of complexity in courses: they only provided superficial information. <i>A valid, reliable evaluation of courses.</i>	Lack of reliability and validity of current course evaluation instruments <i>students' survey. Superficial judgements are made</i>	Superficiality of student-based CSE	Performance measures
40	On the other hand, you might have a very rigorous course that requires the students to work hard and think hard, and they might not find that very popular and so the CES might reflect that.	Dane believed a demanding course that requires a great deal of effort from students might be unpopular and that a negative response to the CES might be the outcome.	Demanding courses might have a negative impact on CES responses	Unreliability of student-based CSE	Performance measures

Appendices

Dane Browne	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme
84.1	Yeah, it's hard. If I put my very early...I'll put my hat on when I was a sessional, when I was first starting out as a sessional teacher here. And pretty much any subject that I taught then I hadn't done any research into and didn't know anything about. So, what that meant was I had done all of the readings, I had to read the textbook, I had to be ahead of where the students were at beforehand. And of course, if you're doing all of that work, but you're only being paid piecemeal on a per-hour basis, all of that preparation you don't get...you certainly don't get properly remunerated for. You end up working incredibly long hours trying to wrap your head around a particular discipline to be able to try and engage students so that they can learn.	There is a great divide between the subjects taught and research interests of sessional academics. Dane expressed his concern about the long hours of preparation and the inadequate remuneration related to the task; sessional academics must put in additional effort to achieve better teaching and learning outcomes.	The divide between teaching and research interests of sessional academics	Teaching and learning outcomes	Preparation of sessional academics
77	Yeah, so...if the students are ill-prepared for university before they get to us – either straight from school or they come through the TAFE sector where they have different kinds of teaching pedagogies and assessment regimes or they come from a different national education system where they may have learnt in a completely different way – then that's challenging, 'cause you have to be able to evidence the fact that these students are achieving what the AQ says that they need to achieve.	Dane questioned the readiness of some students for a university degree. The selected students have either high school or vocational training backgrounds. The high school and vocational teaching pedagogies, assessment regimes and qualification frameworks are different from a university education; exposure to this new learning environment may be challenging.	The challenge for students to adapt to different teaching and learning environment Increased variability in student backgrounds	Adaptation to tertiary learning environment Student variation	Pre-tertiary vs tertiary education Student selection
124.1	...and it's very easy for you to spend some hours going through those assignments and providing feedback on those assignments. But the...the...the sessional academic staff only get paid for, over the course of a semester, one hour's worth of marking. And if they're spending hours and hours and hours marking assessments, then that's the equivalent of one hour's of marking per students. So, if they're spending hours and hours and hours marking an assessment and they're over-marking, then effectively what's happening is they're providing more marking effort than they're being paid for.	Dane believed the course budget made provision for a specific time frame to complete the markings throughout the semester; sessional should, in no respect, 'overmark' the papers as there is no additional payment for the extra effort.	Strict time frame for marking of assignments	Marking and remuneration Quality control	Quality and control (!) Marking and remuneration
45	The challenge that I have is that this course is taught in Shanghai, it's also taught in Singapore, it's also taught in Vietnam, as well as being taught here in Melbourne. We have very large student enrolment numbers. In Singapore, it's bumping up to kind of 900 students per semester. We set the course, if you like, here in Melbourne but ...we teaches it to <i>do some teaching in Singapore, but it's</i> mostly delivered by local lecturers, and they are appointed by our partner over there, not by us. Um. I think we do have some control over who they appoint but generally speaking, the recruitment and...and the administration of their employment happens at the Singapore end, not at the Melbourne end.	The challenge for Dane is that this course is offered in Shanghai and Singapore every semester. The course was set in Melbourne, but most of the teaching is carried out by local academics and administered offshore. As the course coordinator, Dene has limited or no control over the local academics.	Courses designed in Melbourne but delivered and administered offshore by local academics in partnership.	Partnerships offshore and controlling quality	Quality control and standards

Appendices

Dane Browne	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme
45	This means that when I'm designing a course, I need to think about who's doing the teaching, what their particular context is and whether or not they are likely to care as much about the outcomes that I'm trying to achieve as what I do.	Dane's prime concerns when designing an offshore course are the context, the quality of the teaching and the offshore delegation of responsibility for the outcomes. <i>The interviewee's concern about finding the right academic to deliver the course lectures, with a clear understanding of the desired outcomes</i>	An offshore delegation of responsibility for course outcomes.	Delegation of responsibility for quality	Quality control and standards
	Um. And that's not to say...you know, I choose Singapore as the example, but that's also here in Melbourne. I think I've got five staff who teach... We teach as part of a team but, um, but those staff largely operate by themselves, and I very rarely get to see them in action.	To a lesser extent, a similar situation arose with his team of staff who teach the course in Melbourne, whom he rarely saw and who largely operated by themselves.	An onshore delegation of responsibility for course outcomes.	Delegation of responsibility for quality	Quality control and standards
46	You know, we occasionally meet to talk about any problems or anything like that, but it means that I need to be aware of which staff I'm putting in front of my students to be able to evidence the outcomes that I need.	Occasional meetings with academics Because they only have occasional meetings relating to the course that he coordinates, Dene needs to carefully select the staff he chooses to ensure quality outcomes.	Staff selection is a critical element in ensuring quality outcomes in onshore courses	Team selection	Quality control and standards
52	Um. But any one of them could pack their bags and disappear over the summer or between semesters and not come back.	Dane believed there was no guarantee of securing the same teaching staff every semester	Stability of the academic team	Team stability	Quality control and standards
44	I teach [a course] which comes at the end of the degree. [It involves] the kinds of skills that the students need to have just before they pop out of my course and go into the real world. I'm quite concerned that the course can evince development of those kinds of skills and competencies that the Australian Qualifications Framework says these students need to have upon graduation.	<i>Dane taught a course that addresses the skills that the students ultimately need just before graduation.</i> Dane was concerned that the course evinces development of the skills and competencies that the Australian Qualifications Framework requires a program conclusion.	Impact of AQF criteria on program design Need to meet AQF skills and competencies	Summative AQF criteria	<i>Quality Framework</i> AQF measures
60	I would have to say probably budgeting and resourcing. Um. There is downward pressure on the amount of money that I can spend in my course, to resource my particular course. And that translates into lots of different areas and means that I have to apply for money if I want money to develop, say, course resources that are, you know, can be delivered online, for example. Videos, that sort of stuff. I either develop them myself, repurpose ones that...Are licensed to be repurposed, or I have to try and find money somewhere to...to build these resources myself.	Dane experienced pressure from top management to control the course budget; the funds are mostly utilised to develop new resources aiming at improving the quality of the course.	Power and control over course budgets by top management	Budgetary constraint	Resource allocation
	And what that means is, um, our own...my staff are only teaching on every even week for two hours. Where that's an advantage to the school is that means that they're not teaching as much face-to-face and so because normally sessionals get paid – or sessional academics get paid – on a per-hour basis, we're not spending as much money. Um...we're saving, if you like...by saving the	Dane stated that the timetable was designed according to the approved budget for this course; sessional academics are employed and remunerated on an hourly basis as dictated by top management and used as a cost-saving device	Cost-saving and design of timetable Employment of sessional academics as a cost-saving device	Casual academics and Budgetary Control Budgetary constraint	Resource allocation

Appendices

Dane Browne	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme
	money and protecting the resources because of the downward pressure on our budget				
50	And even...I'm lucky in that I've got a fairly stable team. I've been able to identify some good teachers, and I've been able to encourage them to continue to work with me! [LAUGHING] As best as you can achieve that without paying them anymore or giving them any other incentives!	The correlation between the stability of the team and the course positive outcomes	Stability of the academic team	Creating a quality-aware academic team	Selection and Incentives
55.2	And in our course, we...The people that I put in front of our students need good facilitation skills. They're deep...They need experience in industry (they need to know how the theory translates into industry terms), they need excellent facilitation and group processes skills, and they need to understand the theory very well, the discipline of Strategic Management very, very well.	According to Dane, the academics need to possess excellent facilitation skills and industry experience for his course supported by a good knowledge of group processes and theoretical frameworks.	Academics require excellent facilitation skills, industry experience, good knowledge of group processes and theoretical frameworks.	Deep experience	Selection criteria
56	And it's always...it's a nerve-wracking exercise when you've got someone new on, someone who's not been part of your team for a while.	The challenge of managing first-timer recruits (academics)	Qualifications and experience	Deep experience	Selection criteria
48	So, from that point of view, whomever I employ I have to think about what it is that those people are going to do in the classroom on a day-to-day basis to get the outcomes that we need to get. And that's hard. Of the five team members that I've got, not including me, only one of them is a full-time staff member – the other four are sessionals.	Dane was concerned about the recruitment of academics and the ratio of permanent to sessionals (1:4) to maintain required outcomes. <i>He claimed he had no control on the effectiveness of those academics in their respective classes.</i>	Academic standards Recruiting full-time and sessional staff that guarantees desired outcomes	Recruitment and evaluation of staff	Selection process
62.1	I think that has a direct flow-on effect to the quality of the teaching that we're able to deliver. We can't put as many experts in front of our students as we would like to – that's regarding teaching staff – for when the students would like them to be there.	Dane believes the budgetary constraints affect the hiring of experienced staff and have a negative impact on the quality of teaching.	Quality of teaching Fewer expert staff hired affecting quality of teaching	Cost-saving and quality Loss of expertise	Staffing policy
73	Students can apply for direct entrance from all around the world. We do our best to be able to figure out where they're coming from and what their previous academic experience has been like and whether or not that's a good match for what we try and do here. Sometimes we get that right; sometimes we get that wrong. I don't know whether or not these students are any smarter or less smart than any other bunch of students that have gone through before. I do think, though, that they recognise the university more now as a place of attaining a recognised qualification that will help them to get a job.	Dane believed that more students are enrolling from overseas and it would be difficult to assess their academic credentials; he found it difficult to compare the quality of the new cohort of students with the previous ones. More students consider a tertiary education and qualification as the vehicle for future employment.	Difficulties in comparing different cohorts of students	Categorisation of students Variations in the student cohort	Student goals

Appendices

Dane Browne	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme
96.4	I can't tell you the number of times I've stood in a room and heard a teacher tell a story from twenty years ago about how that particular theory connected to their particular life experience from twenty years ago. And that particular teacher will think that that's good teaching. And I'm not so sure that that is, you know! If I was a student and someone at the front of the room was telling me...	Dane did not believe the instructor's use of experience was a good measurement of good teaching	Experience shared in the classroom could not be considered as quality indicators	Experience sharing as quality indicators	Teaching and life experience
98.1	...a story about their life from twenty years ago before I was even born, how is that good teaching? So, I guess the point around this for me is how we measure quality and what are the measures that we're going to put into place.	Dane did not believe the instructor's use of experience is a good measurement of good teaching; proper metrics have to be put in place	Experience shared in the classroom could not be considered as quality indicators	Experience sharing as quality indicators	Teaching and life experience
130	I think that what will happen is...look, I think what will happen is...um...we will see a deskilling of academics. And what I mean by that is that I anticipate that more and more of our, um, more and more of our teaching, of our face-to-face teaching (and indeed maybe even some of our online delivery), will be, if you like, outsourced to sessional academics. The course coordinators or the academic coordinators for those particular subjects will spend a little bit of time teaching but most of the time administering. And so, the skills involved in teaching will probably decline because there's not the active practice of teaching if you like. But their ability to be able to administer a teaching team will probably increase.	Dane predicted the constant deskilling of academic work; face-to-face and online teaching would be outsourced to sessional academics. The workload of full-time course coordinators would be including minor teaching hours, with more focus on course design and administration. The drop-in teaching meant less teaching skills required and compensated by administration skills	A shift from teaching to course design and administration for permanent	The role of full-time and sessional academics	Teaching vs administrative skills
86.2	And if I'm spending an awful lot of time trying to become the expert in the room in, say, Human Resources or, um, I don't know, Industrial Relations or one of those areas that I don't have a great deal of experience in, it means that it's taking time away from me either developing the course that I...my discipline area is in and developing that as well as I can, or undertaking research in my discipline area.	According to Dane, the time spent on preparing and teaching courses that were outside his area of expertise could have been dedicated to improving courses and extend the research in his discipline area	Focus of teaching and research in the academics' discipline area Conflict between depth and breadth	Performance evaluation and time management Breadth <i>as well as</i> depth	Teaching work load. Breadth and depth
86.1	But, um...in the case now, whereas as a full-time staff member I can be expected to teach across a wide range of courses, yeah, that's difficult. I get assessed on my ability to deliver my courses, so my CES comes through. I get assessed on my ability to deliver research outcomes – publications, conferences, those sorts of things.	Dane stated that, as a full-time staff member, he was expected to teach across a wide range of courses which can be difficult. He was assessed on the ability to deliver his courses and research outcomes – publications, conferences etc	The impact of teaching across wide range of courses and research outcomes on the performance evaluation of permanent Expectation of a broad range of interests	Staff evaluation based on breadth of teaching and research outcomes	Teaching-research balance Breadth and depth
67	However, in our course, where we're working in real-time with industry partners, and the students have to grapple with the concepts, and the theories and the models of a particular course and they have to figure out how to apply them, you can't do that	Dane stated that a course that involved a 'real-time' case study and the involvement of industry partners could not be delivered online; students need to	Specific course requirements Grappling with complex	Course evaluation Higher order thinking skills	The course context Pedagogy

Appendices

Dane Browne	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme
	in an online space. Even if I was to sit down at one end of the computer pipe and take questions, the sheer scale at which we teach prevents me from being able to answer every question appropriately.	grapple with the theories, models and concepts and learn how to apply them in their assignment	theories, models and concepts online		
84.2	It's a bit easier when you research the field, and then you can teach into that because you can just build on what you already know as part of your research.	Dane believed in the synergy between teaching and research interests; the subsequent benefits were for both the researcher/lecturer and the students	The benefits of researching into the teaching area Need for overlap between teaching and research interests	Teaching and research	Workload of academics. Professional development of academics
51	[LAUGHING] And that's about...I think that's about being able to identify people who have the same, similar kinds of philosophy towards teaching as what I've got.	Recruitment of academics who shared the same teaching philosophy			
54	And that's challenge when you have...if you design a course that requires deep experience.				
57	Yep. Thank you very much. Sounds good to me. Yep. The next question is similar to the ones you've already answered, but you might have a different take on it.				
85	Absolutely.				
104	Yeah, I think so. And I pretty much...I can almost guarantee it. My job is different to that of my sessionals, and I worry about this all the time...is that of the course that I design, it's well thought-through from my point of view. It's well thought-through from a pedagogical point of view, it's well thought-through from a resource point of view. I think this course through very, very carefully. Assessment is targeted, the readings that the students do...it all supports what it is that they're trying to do in the classroom. All of these things all have to come together. There are lots of moving pieces. And I guess they all have to line up in a way for there to be a good experience for this course. And I worry about all of it extensively.				
	I can't expect them to worry about it the same way I worry about it. They don't need to, you know? They don't need to know the intricacies of how, in my reading around, say, Learning by Design, has been influenced by my more recent readings about Connectivism. And then how I am going to use that or find a way within which to express that in the design of my course. The sessionals or sessional staff, all they want to know is, 'Okay, cool, we're going to use this particular digital tool – how do I do it?'				

Appendices

Dane Browne	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme
	What do I have to do? Which buttons do I press? And I can't expect them to...I can't expect them to worry about the rest of it, how it all fits together...				
109	Yeah, I think there is. And I feel that this comes back to...comes back to what I was saying before about there's downward pressure on the budget. If we take the Melbourne example where I've got five staff, and I take those five staff, and I can pay them appropriately, and I can train them with professional development, and we can work together as a team designing the course, understanding all the nuances of what we're trying to get done and then...having...coming back after a couple of weeks, reviewing what's going, seeing what we need to change, doing it all the way through...if I can do that and I can pay them appropriately for that, then all of a sudden I can start to expect them to do some outstanding teaching. Um. I can do that to some extent with our full-time staff member here in Melbourne at the moment because she has a similar idea as to what good-quality teaching looks like as what mine is, and she's also quite prepared to have that kind of drop-in conversations. But every time she's spending an hour with me talking about what we're doing in Strategy, that's an hour she's not spending on her research or her courses. And so, there are costs in doing that, which is just not rewarding to her. They've not resourced appropriately.	Although there is still a budget constraint, professional development or available for academics			
111	And it's unfair, I think, that the burden of finding the extra time or the extra care or the extra quality falls to the staff member, but it's not recognised appropriately.				
115	Um...we can't afford to pay people to do that. And so in some of the other courses where, you know, it's a brand new team of teachers coming in every semester because they can, then it doesn't seem to have any impact on their overall, you know, quality of the course, then in some ways that's an easier model to work with. But I don't...I don't subscribe to that particular model.				

**Appendix 7 Sessional academics semi-structured interview inductive data reduction (IDR): Sample data**

<b>Rosie Dredd</b>	<b>Comment</b>	<b>Construct</b>	<b>Concept</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Organising Theme</b>
	<i>The literal transcript of an interview sequence (with some room for interpretation)</i>	<i>Your analysis of what you believe is being said</i>	<i>Your evaluation of the concept</i>	<i>Your synthesis of the themes represented</i>	<i>Your synthesis of the big picture issues</i>
129.1	I think it totally comes to the PhD student. I think some Ph students...PhD students can be fantastic, but the problem is that, again, it's...it's what's the driver, and the driver isn't because that PhD student's a fantastic teacher. It's because they don't want to pay the scholarships to have the PhD students in the university, so they provide them teaching opportunities, so that they can pay their bills. So again, it all comes down to this corporate-sized model of education. So, if we got back to the core drivers and said...how...we run a...an institution that is providing quality education, decisions need to be made based on that. Then you work backwards from that.	Rosie maintained the valuable input of PhD students/teachers. To compensate for the non-allocation of scholarships, those teachers were employed as sessional academics to fit in the corporatised model of the higher education sector. Rosie believed decisions should be made based on the institutions' quality objectives.	The relationship between a corporatised staffing decision and quality of teaching	Corporatised education quality	Corporatised education system
42	Uh, I think it's a really good question again. I think the overall course outcomes...so...it's got to be, the whole thing has to be...put together, structured and integrated. So, if you've got a good set of practices around what pedagogy should look like, and you've got a good learning and teaching committee, that means it will go into the classroom, use a good quality, then you should be able to look at the performance of those students in that subject, and relative to other subjects, to be able to see if there's a problem within that course or not.	Rosie believed an alternative measure of quality would be to assess the course outcomes, supported by the learning and teaching committee's recommendations, the use of the proper pedagogy in class, including an evaluation of the students' overall academic performances; she also suggested the comparison with other course and identifying areas for improvement	Evaluation ought to be based on course outcomes	Outcomes as measures of quality	Course management
45.1	Uh...uh...I think any survey that you put online, people are, are loathe to participate. I think the...um...the take-up rate's about what you'd expect for just an open survey that's sent out to anybody, asking for their input. So, I don't think it's disproportionately low, but I think again, that's uh...a really...that's reflective of the overall problem, where it used to be done in class, and so you get all the students' feedback. And then that cost too much, so it was put online, and of course you've got very, very low...numbers of students participating. And again, that's going to be very skewed because it's got, you know, technology-wise it's another level of noise, where students actually have to go to the survey.	Rosie argued the online survey had been very low compared to the old in-class pen-and-pencil students' feedback surveys. The old method was costly, paving way to the voluntary online data collection.	The current method of data collection is not effective	Collection of feedback	Feedback methods
45.2	You're going to find students that either badly want to tell you the lecture was fantastic, or badly want to tell you how frustrated they are. Uh...and so I think you're getting very polarized perspectives coming through in the survey. And depending on what the class experience is, then you can get a really strong skewing. So, if you've got very low numbers, and you've got a couple of disgruntled students, that's going to...have a huge disproportionate impact on the overall...um, readout for that class. And so that's where I think it becomes really dicey. But, do I... I just think it's a reflection of online, and...and the limitations of a survey tool like that.	Rosie outlined the unpredictable and polarised outcomes of the online surveys: very satisfied or unsatisfied students that could cause a disproportionate impact on the overall readout for that particular class. The dicey results could be a reflection of the online survey limitations	Quality distorted by inadequate methods of collecting feedback data	Collection of feedback	Feedback methods

Appendices

Rosie Dredd	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme
76	No. I don't think so. I think what they're leaving it to is, if they set the course materials, we get the one hour...everyone sits around. So that's...I probably shouldn't say no. There is a short session where the course coordinator gets to hear what they're looking for...um, or what the materials is, and what you have to do in terms of...uh, this is a tutorial, here are your lectures, et cetera. But in terms of that...discussion around quality, it's just non-existent.	Rosie outlined the lack of discussions around the notion of quality before the beginning of the semester; the course coordinators held a short session with the academics mainly to provide the lecture/tutorial materials...lack of meaningful discussion about quality...	Meaningful discussion about quality	Collaboration and communication	Learning organisation
84	Absolutely. So, I think quality only comes up if you assess...your students' assessments, and your marking to those assessments, is very different to someone else's, or to the course coordinator's expectations. I think that's when quality gets...uh, a look in. But as I said, I tend to go and sit down and have a coffee with someone and talk to them, so I want to know what it is that they're looking for. But as...in terms of the school and the college, and what they set as a process to ensure that happens, I just think it's non-existent...especially for sessionals.	Rosie believed the quality of teaching would prevail if sessionals who experienced marked differentials in the marking of assignment decided to raised and addressed the issue with course coordinators; she also outlined non-existence of such a process, enabling sessionals to clearly discuss the expected quality standards. ...to raise and address the issue...	Meaningful discussion about quality	Collaboration and communication	Learning organisation
56	Uh...when you said it, the first word to come to me is 'employability'. So, for me, it's...providing students...uh, with the skills and knowledge, so the capabilities as well as the knowledge required to get them into the work environment in a role that they want to undertake and are capable of at least getting started. So, they're only ever going to a work environment with the starting tools, but good quality education should do that. And of course, those skills are, over time, you know, if we scaffolded the way that we're supposed to, to the graduate employability skills. The graduate employability skills are the least of what our students should leave university with, if we've provided good quality education.	Rosie stated the notion of 'quality' was related to the students' acquired knowledge and employability skills; quality education should equip students with the relevant job competencies and foster the job-readiness of graduates	Quality related to competencies and job-readiness	Old-fashioned 'modern' measures of quality	Lifelong learning values
58.1	Uh...these are really good questions. Um...the subjectivity of it, I...um...that's part of what you're weaving in there. I think what's been really helpful, if you look at the national standards, is there's been an effort to try and create some...some framework that...that avoids that problem, because there is going to be some notion of...uh, the...of...in some way, it's free to individual interpretation of what things are. But if you look at some of the frameworks, they're trying really hard to create a coherent... Uh, and again, that comes down to...good discussions and good...uh, debate.	Rosie posited the notion of quality was very subjective and subjected to individual interpretations; the substantive attributes of 'quality' were woven within the national quality standards. She maintained the difficulty of establishing a coherent collective interpretation of quality; more discussions and debates about this topic were required. a need to take a postmodern view of work readiness?	Postmodern view of quality	Paradigm shift on learning and teaching	Postmodernity view
58.3	So, you really go, and you get your materials, they tell you what they want you to do, and you go away. So, I think...what that means, in terms of how that can be interpreted by a range of different...um, staff is, is huge. It's a risk. Uh, and I feel for the students then who are probably coming out at all sorts of levels. I don't know, the...the way we work, there's a bit of moderation to try and create a consistency, but I don't...you know, that's...that's...uh, an end product, creating consistency around an end product, and how it's assessed. But it doesn't really tell you about how everyone's teaching across...um, for consistency.	Rosie stressed out the importance of a consistent message from the course coordinators about the quality standards and requirements, considering the students' different academic backgrounds; although the moderation process was an attempt at reinforcing the consistency in assessing assignment, the teachers' consistent delivery of materials was not addressed. ...focus on 'end-product' when there is no 'clear end'?	Review of processes required?	Paradigm shift on learning and teaching?	Postmodernity view?
124	So, for me, being able to be sessional has allowed me to go in and work constructively with the students, have a lovely time with the course coordinators, and just stay out of all of the stuck-ness that is the power and	Rosie stressed out the benefits of sessional work; she enjoyed the constructive relationship with the students and course coordinators	The free will of sessional academics not to be associated with	Employee involvement	Power and politics

Appendices

Rosie Dredd	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme
	politics. So, I think that's why we find more and more people wanting to become sessionals as well, because the places they're working are so...toxic, and so difficult to work in. So, I think the whole issue of sessional is multifactorial, what's cause and effect, how we deal with that, but I think we could well, go. Your research, looking at how do we create, um...good quality, if you're relying heavily on sessionals, is certainly a...uh, a really important piece to study...and it's long overdue. The issues have been sitting there for...for as long as I've been a sessional, so that's what, now eight years, seven years.	without any involvement in organisational politics, related to toxicity of the higher education environment. She posited that this interviewer's research was long overdue as this sector relied heavily on the sessional academics.	organisational power and politics		
113	Um...I don't know that it can increase a lot more than it has. I think what they tend to do is, instead of increasing casualization, they come and teaching out of the classroom so that they don't have to have the academics. So, I don't think you're going to see an increase in casualization. Um...I think there might be an increase in teach...of um...permanent staff wanting to casualise, if anything, because the work plans at most institutions are becoming so horrendous that I am getting more and more...uh, requests from...what were permanent university staff, wanting to go sessional because they just want to go back to that teaching only model of doing their job. So interesting, I think. Yeah, if anything...the casualization is going to be pushed more from the teaching staff than it is from the institution. But...the ones I work at are...the teaching staff are predominantly sessional anyway, so there's a lot of scope increasing it.	Rosie believed there would be no further increase in the casualization of academics; she predicted more permanent academics would revert to sessional jobs because the teaching-only model, evading the current toxic environment of higher education	Currently, there is a...preference for sessional teaching only model...	Sessional teaching as a preference	Quality choice
24	I think blended learning's fantastic. It's...as a concept. I think the problem is we don't have any data to say, to demonstrate what works and what doesn't work. And it's been muddled by the uh...drive for cost saving. So blended learning should be about how we use a range of tools to support the...um, the student-teacher experience. Uh, and...uh, I think more of it's about how do we lessen, lessen the...um, continue to lessen the amount of contact time teachers have with students, because teachers are costing us too much. And that's not just ah...you know, something I'm surmising. It's actually been articulated.	Rosie expressed the positive and negative impacts of blended learning although this approach had been muddled by the cost-saving concept: the use of a range of tools to support the student-teacher experience and the reduction of face-to-face contacts with students.	Blended learning approach as a cost-saving device and management hidden agenda	Blended Learning	Quality evaluation
28	Oh, probably...uh...I don't know that it's one, because there are two very different. One is the philosophy of the purpose, or the purpose of education, and understanding its purpose, and coming back to that as the driver for what we're doing. Alongside of that is this lack of resourcing, so the lack of time and availability for all of those that are in the...the learning and teaching space to actually, um...put the time and effort into good materials and good experience. So, I think those...I know you only wanted one, but those two-sit side my side to me, because they're two quite different...	Rosie believed the most pressing teaching and learning quality was related to the purpose of education and teaching philosophy. Unfortunately, the lack of resources and time adversely affected the opportunity for proposing better course materials and improving the quality of teaching and students' learning experiences.	The quality of teaching and learning linked to the institution's education philosophy and the use of resources	Goals and values	Quality evaluation
32.1	No, significantly less. There's limited...I mean, in my time I've never seen a strong focus on that at ABC anyway. It's a self-accrediting university, uh...so it...uh, self-references a lot. It's an incredibly divided, and I don't think ABC is any different, but in that, certainly in the college I work at and the school I work at, it's a very divided, very siloed organisation. So, no one has a lot of oversight of anyone else, and even though there are learning and teaching committees, they're not acting as learning and teaching committees who provide any sort of governance.	Rosie critiqued the implementation of quality assurance at ABC; she believed this organisation had a siloed structure and failure of learning and learning committees to initiate actions or provide any governance of the system.	The failure to provide proper quality assurance direction and governance due to the rigid siloed structure	Quality of teaching and learning	Quality evaluation

Appendices

Rosie Dredd	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme
32.2	So, I just think it's really terrible approaches to pedagogy being implemented with, uh...out any oversight, of saying, um...very directly, um...course coordinators, um...changing the standard of their program, 'dumbing it down' is the expression I would use, so that the pass rate goes up because there's such a...a keen interest on moving students through. All the practices that uh...you know, it's almost shod...for me, shoddy business just to get the students in and, and the fees paid, uh...as opposed to a quality education program.	Rosie critiqued the actual pedagogical approach and pointed out the course coordinators' strategy to 'dumb down' the standard to increase the pass rates; she deplored the practice of substituting quality of education with the financial imperatives of the business	The marketisation of education as a substitute for quality education	Marketisation	Quality evaluation
35	And it came up last week, week before last. I was at a national peer assessment forum, and there was real concern about this from everyone in the room, that this, these practices are coming in to try and shore up student numbers. And with that, a real concern about quality reduction.	Rosie expressed the national trend towards increasing the student numbers than improving the quality of teaching and learning ... enrolments over quality	University's quality objectives sacrificed for economic reasons	Marketisation	Quality evaluation
37.1	[LAUGHING] Ah, that's a good question. I look at it extremely limited...facet. So, I'm not saying the student experience isn't important, but I think it's one of a range of indicators you should look at to work out the quality of a teacher. There was a recent article um...that looked at research that showed that it was actually inversely proportional, that the students' feedback on a lecturer often...uh...in, was inversely uh, proportional to the quality of the education the students got. So, it's basically saying that students don't really know what good learning and teaching looks like.	Rosie considered the CES survey as one of the indicators of quality teaching. She cited an article that argued against the ability for students to assess and differentiate between good and bad quality of teaching and learning; research demonstrated the students' feedback on a teacher was inversely proportional to the quality education they received. An inverse relationship between student feedback and quality of learning and teaching: good/bad; bad/good	An inverse relationship between good learning and teaching and perceived quality	Inverse perceptions	Quality evaluation
37.2	I've certainly said that of the, the students I've worked with...uh, but I think how they find the experience of working with you as a teacher is extremely important. So, I think it's breaking down what good learning and teaching requires and looking at how you gather a range of sources and information, part of which is the student experience, to look at what good teaching outcomes looks like.	Rosie acknowledged the relationship teacher/student and outlined the students' feedback survey as one of a range of range of sources to determine the quality of teaching.... there is a breakdown in student perception of what constitutes good teaching and learning...	Mismatch of perceptions	Inverse perceptions	Quality evaluation
62	I can't tell you if it's about how they...perceive it, or how they're choosing to implement it, because I think a number of them know what good quality is, but they're caught in terms of what they're trying to deliver, you know, good pass rates. They're under a huge amount of pressure, so I think they...they know that they're producing poor quality, but I think they do it anyway. So...	Rosie outlined the divide between perception and implementation of quality; some academics understood the meaning of 'quality' but decided to focus more on the substantive and institutional quality requirements by prioritising pass rates over quality education.	Currently, quality is being related to pass rates	Quality standard	Quality evaluation
135	I don't...I think each student has, has...uh... [PAUSE] Uh, no. I don't think some of them think about quality. I think they think about what they want from education, and I think that can be different to quality. So, I think that there are some students who are very astute, and understand what good quality looks like, and they demand it. Most students, I think, are after the degree, and I don't think they're that fussed about whether they get quality or not. They want to be passed, and they want to do it with the least pain possible.	Rosie didn't believe that students think about the notion of quality; they mostly focused on the outcomes of education in terms of job opportunities. She averred some students would have a basic understanding of quality education but the vast majority just wanted to pass the subject with the least pain possible; quality education means obtaining a degree	Students have a shallow understanding of the notion of quality	Quality interpretation	Quality evaluation
136	So, I think that quality to them...is a bit...most of them, I think they worry. Um, by the time they get into third year, they start to worry because they know that they're going to go out into the workplace, and someone's going to ask them some questions about, you know, what...or they're going to have to apply what	Rosie pointed out that students were more conscious about the expected quality imperatives as they pondered employability issues and favourable feedback from the future	Towards the end of a course, mature students became more conscious	Quality education	Quality evaluation

Appendices

Rosie Dredd	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme
	they've learned. And so, by third year subjects, you're getting a bit more insight into what they're looking for in terms of quality, because they've got some way to see a benefit to quality education. Before then it's just...yeah, the least pain possible please.	employers; although their ultimate objective was to complete their degrees with the least pain, that category of students were more insightful about the benefits of quality education	of the importance of quality education		
66	I thought there was.... uh, up until...uh, I taught Subject A would have said no. I thought there was quite a consistency of expectation, and I think that flows through Subject B and what to expect at the... It was really the Subject A that caused me huge concern, to a point where I actually couldn't teach into it anymore. I felt conflicted. So 'yes' would be the answer, um, but not as much as I see, uh, reflected through some of the other courses that I don't take into, so that where I think...an example would be, um...a math-based subject that assesses you're using effective journals.	Rosie outlined the lack of consistency across the different disciplines; she was also challenged by the quality expectation for one of the subjects she was teaching. Are current assessment methods appropriate, 'authentic'...?	Authentic assessment methods	Standards and their determination	Quality expectations
18.1	Yeah. Uh...um...I think it's actually a very complex question. It's a great question, and it's probably one we could talk about for hours. Um, across the board I'd say that there's a...a continual reduction in quality, um...across the higher ed space. And I think the term 'massification of education' has always rung bells with me, in terms of, you know, moving from um...more quality to mass produced. And with that there's, uh...a reduction in...from my perspective, at the level I work, a lack of investment.	Rosie believe the issue of quality was a complex one and outlined the 'massification of education' experienced by the tertiary sector. She also outlined the paradigm shift from quality to mass education; resulting in the continual reduction in quality	The shift from quality to 'massification' of education	Loss of quality	Quality impacts (-)
18.2	I think just in the classroom experience, but also in the development side of it. Um...and...uh...not quite sure how...you know, it doesn't have to be the consequence of massification, but it is. You know, it's much more a sausage factory, and with that I have seen in the research I've done, a, a paralleling level of disgruntle from employees about the decreasing quality of the graduates that they're receiving. So overall, really um...significant decline in quality, would be my experience, just in, since 2008.	Rosie outlined the marked decline of quality of teaching and learning since 2008; she also compared the tertiary education sector to a 'sausage factory' with an inferior cohort of students.	The decline of teaching and learning and quality in tertiary education	Loss of quality	Quality impacts (-)
20	So that's a mixed bag, depending on who the course coordinator is, because some of them have stuck very strongly to trying to provide quality. Uh...for those that are really pushing to maintain standards, it's slightly about the in-class access. So, they've been moved to um...at, at ABC, in the Faculty, they moved from a one-hour lecture to a tutorial, to what was called one to one to one model, which is one-hour lecture, one-hour tutorial, and one-hour self-directed learning.	According to Rosie, the course coordinators determined the implementation of quality standards; she also highlighted the major changes in the course structure to the one-to-one model	Negative impacts of the course structure on quality standards	Loss of quality	Quality impacts (-)
38	So, the, the overall...so yes, I think there's...they're very gross. So, I think if you're a lecturer, in a, in a course that's getting single digits, then there's no doubt there's a major issue there. Uh, but if you're sitting, sort of hovering around 50%, I don't think you can tell one way or the other, whether that got any ah...link to good teaching and learning, or whether it's about, you know, a popular lecturer whose scores are getting elevated because he's handing over, or she's handing over the results of the test, and...and students don't have to learn anything. So very, very um...need to be used with caution, and needs to be used in concert with other measures.	Rosie highlighted the validity of the students' feedback and stressed out the multiple variables to take into consideration: the teaching scores might not reflect the reality if the teaching academics were influencing the survey outcomes by dumbing down the quality standards	Quality being devalued to ensure favourable feedback	Validity of measures of quality	Quality indicators
43	So, I think you can use other indicators to get a sense. It's still only going to be gross, but you can certainly, should be able to pick patterns across time that should give you an indicator of whether there's an issue with learning and teaching. I think getting industry involved in setting expectations is really	Rosie proposed other quality indicators: 1. Students' academic performances 2. feedback from the industry 3. peer-review reports about the teachers' performance	Evaluation ought to be based on course outcomes	Outcomes as measures of quality	Quality indicators

Appendices

Rosie Dredd	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme
	important. Uh, so I think you should be looking at the student. I think you should be looking at...uh, the academic performance. I think you should be looking at peer...uh, review of, of teaching performance, and also looking at industry input.				
58.2	So, you know, coming back to your...your research, which is about sessionals, I would have thought that would be about the time to sit with your colleagues and actually debate. Well, what does...? Or discuss, what does good quality education look like? To hear from the course coordinator what their views is, how they're trying to weave it through the teaching material, how they're trying to bring that into the classroom experience. But again, the time allocation for that's very, very limited.	Rosie recommended a debate between both full-time and sessional academics to establish a common definition of quality; it would be an occasion for course coordinators to demonstrate how the notion of 'quality' was embedded within the teaching materials and classroom experience.	The need for a concerted debate about the definition of quality	Quality evaluation	Quality interpretation
70	Yeah, yeah, yeah. No, I'm trying to...to, um...it's yes for me because I'm someone who gets in and talks. Like I like to talk to the course coordinators, and I need to understand. But I think that that's not necessarily that everyone has the time or capacity to do that. Uh, so...I would have said...yes. But because I choose to make sure.	Rosie would make sure she understood the quality expectations by meeting the course coordinators and talk about the course; she also conceded the time factor might impede this interaction	Communication between sessional academics and course coordinators	Quality evaluation	Quality interpretation
117	Uh...again, I guess it comes back to the...my, in my experience, they always have done. So...it's not that they're going to rely on more and more of...on it. So, I think the issue's already there. The issues of quality are...with sessionals, is already and it's already playing out, and it's already a major problem. I don't think we're waiting for a problem to happen. It's sitting there, which is why there's more and more research being done around the impact of sessionals. Because the casualization has a psychological impact on the...though it's decisional, but it's also had an impact on our ability to create good quality education. So, I don't think anything's going to change it a lot except there's a bit more pushback. Uh, I think the challenges are already sitting there.	According to Rosie the issue of quality and the link with casualisation has already been recognised as a problem. Due to high demands for full-time tenured positions, some academics were more inclined to revert to sessional teaching-only jobs. Rosie also outlined the psychological impact sessional work and the ability to create quality education	Academics' preference for sessional teaching-only model in higher education	Sessional employment as a work choice	Quality lifestyle
123	Yeah. Probably the only thing I'd add is that the, um...a lot of the, the literature on casualization and, and the work of sessionals often talks from the perspective of the...the sessional...uh, assuming the sessional doesn't want to be a sessional. So, the problems of casualization, and I'm...being a Rosie, as someone who's chosen to be a sessional, to be a casual, because I don't want to be in the bureaucracy of an...of the higher ed institutions. I don't want to be part of a sausage factory. I don't want any of that.	According to Rosie, casualisation has focused on the problems. Many sessional academics would prefer these work conditions rather than be caught up in the bureaucracy of a higher education institution.	Academics' preference for sessional teaching-only model in higher education	Sessional employment as a work choice	Quality lifestyle
125	Uh, so it's not about looking forward. It's about we're in it now, and how we go to change it, but there's plenty... It's not...in some way it's not rocket science. I think it...most people know what quality is, and the frameworks we're given certainly tell us that. It's why we're not adhering to it, looking at the causes of that, and most of that's around...um...education becoming much more of a corporate model, rather than seeing it as part of the fabric of society...creating the fabric of society.	Rosie believed that, despite all staff thinking they know what quality - as established in the quality frameworks - is about, they prefer education not to be adhering to a corporate model but rather being seen as an important part of the fabric of society.	A corporate model of higher education that demands adherence to externally imposed quality standards is no longer preferred by many academics.	Sessional employment as a work choice	Quality lifestyle
129.2	So, I'm not...not saying that any of that's right or wrong. I'm saying that...that the drivers behind these decisions are the things that concern me the most around how we use sessionals. Um...it's certainly frustrating as, as a more mature educator, to see that, um...that there's um...priority being given to PhD students, because what they're doing is they make it untenable for people to be able to manage a work life. So financially you can't be a sessional at most places	Rosie was concerned about the use of sessionals in the academia; sessional jobs were primarily offered to PhD students, much to the angst of the mature educators. She highlighted the difficulty for sessionals to have a decent work-life balance	Academics' preference for sessional teaching-only model in higher education	Sessional employment as a work choice	Quality lifestyle

Appendices

Rosie Dredd	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme
	because you...you're running 17 subjects just to get 17 hours of work a week, enough to pay your bills.				
131	So, it's a...become a very complex work life, to try and be a sessional. Um...and I think that that is making sessionals exhausted and...and less able to provide the quality that they're looking for. So, the, the issues around being a sessional are, are many – many, many, many. And it's quite complex. Um...um...but yeah, I don't have a problem with PhD candidates doing sessional work. I had someone such as yourself, who's an exceptionally good educator, um...and is a candidate. I think that's great, but again, I just think the nicen...the driver for it's wrong.	According to Rosie the allocation of sessional work impacted on the quality of teaching and learning provided by sessionals; she acknowledged some PhD candidates were good educators but could not comprehend the main drivers for the allocation of sessional jobs.	Despite some academics' preference for sessional teaching-only model in higher education, the allocation of sessional jobs remained a mysterious process	Sessional employment and its drawbacks	Quality lifestyle
121	Any time. Uh...I think at the top of the institution there has to be an agreement on what that means for the institution. And that needs to then filter down, and it needs to be embedded, and it needs to be adhered to, and it needs to be reflected not only through the course materials, but also through the teaching staff that, uh, need to deliver it. There needs to be evaluation to ensure that there's...uh...co...alignment with that, and there needs to be proper performance management...uh, if that alignment isn't there.	Rosie believed the notion of quality should cascade from top to bottom and must be embedded within the course materials, the teaching staff and aligned with the organisation's performance management system	Holistic approach to quality as reflected through both the academics and the materials delivered	Holistic approach	Quality management system
127	Uh...well they're in the, uh...uh...they're insisting on, for a start off, that most...that sessionals come with some sort of education training, and if not, they...some places provide that opportunity. Uh...they talk about it a lot, [LAUGHING] but just generically, about this idea of quality, et cetera. Um...I think they put it in the work plan of the course coordinators. And...then...that's about it. I don't think...I don't see a lot of evidence of anything above and beyond that.	Rosie argued the organisations offered training opportunities to sessional academics; the training initiatives have been imbedded within academics' work plan, but little else has taken place.	Training opportunities embedded in fulltime academics' workload.	Bureaucracy and evaluation	Quality managerialism
22	So, they're feeling very squeezed. They're feeling they don't have the time to commit to the students individually, and that flows through to what we see in the classroom, in terms of experience. Um...and I think alongside of that there's a, a lack of focus on the lecture as a way to teach students. So, I think uh...and I'm not sure that this is linked just to the massification mind-set, but we've got lecturers who are doing very much a...very didactic approach to teaching, uh, and that's not working as well in terms of overall quality.	Rosie believed the excessive workload and research commitment had a negative impact on the quality of teaching and learning; she posited the didactic teaching approach did not contribute to the quality learning.	The negative impact of the workload and teaching styles on quality of teaching and learning	Course evaluation	Quality of teaching and learning
21	Um...and despite the uh, understanding that the students would never do that one hour of learning, it was still pushed, and...uh, subsequently recent, very recently there's been a lot of um, kickback. So, the students have feedback that they're very unhappy about the quality, particularly in my Faculty, but across the College. Um...so, in terms of the content I've received, it's gone from very tailored, um...and a lot of thought put into resources, into um...less effort, I think. Uh, and I understand from a number of course coordinators, it's because their load is so huge, because they've shifted in their work plans to a very strong focus on research.	Rosie outlined university's effort to improve the quality of the course structure despite the failure of the one-to-one model due to the poor students' response to online self-directed learning; the course academics also had to face the pressure of additional workloads and more focus on research.	The dispersion of roles and loss of control of academics and the impact on quality of teaching and learning	Course Management	Quality Standard
92	Uh...I think it's imperative. I think it's absolutely imperative that we should have...uh, quite a lot of discussion, and clear understanding, and...and a...and reviewing of that through a semester, not waiting till the end, or not, as you're saying, relying on teaching with them for a couple of semesters and then eventually you find your...your, your level with them. Because at the end of	Rosie believed the lack of clear communication about the notion of quality during, rather than, at the end of the semester, impacted negatively on the sessionals' delivery of materials; the students would experience variations in the quality of teaching	Consistency of quality standards irrespective of the movement of academics	Consistency of standards	Quality standards

Appendices

Rosie Dredd	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme
	that, the students...the students getting variable quality of education. So, yeah, I think it's really distressing that it doesn't happen				
96.1	Oh, I think it's about conversations. I think it's about the time and space...uh...to bring that into the teaching team expectation. I think a course coordinator should, a...and you've really neatly divided these, it's about the discussion around quality, and the discussion about delivery.	Rosie confirmed again the importance of constant communication between academics and more discussions around the theme of quality and delivery of course materials ...consider time and space for deeper discussions about...	Communication within teams	Collaboration and communication	Quality teaming
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Appendices

Rosie Dredd	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme
107.1	Yeah. It's really interesting. It's again at the national forum, what became clear to me – and I'm embarrassed to say it because I thought I was reasonably up to speed with what the expectations were – was that, you know, in terms of the, the government's frameworks, is a degree. You don't have a quality of a University A that drops down to University B, that drops down to a...something else. They're all supposed to be equivalent. So, this idea that when you change institutions, you have to move up and down depending on what the quality of learning and teaching is, is really concerning, and yet we all know it exists.	Rosie believed the national quality frameworks had to apply for all the institutions without discrimination. Casual academics had the responsibility to rigidly apply the same quality of teaching and learning irrespective of the ranking of those institutions; in reality, the quality standards fluctuate, depending on the contexts.	A quality framework, ideally, should apply for all institutions	Quality standard fluctuations	Quality variations
107.2	Um, in terms of moving from institution to institution, it's for me, it's a little bit the same in that... So, I move around from institution to institution, and I'm very much looking at the deliverables, the discussion around the deliverables, and the conversation with course coordinators. And that will tell me, or should readjust me up and down. Um...I'm pleased to say that in my experiences there's not a lot of variability.	Rosie argued that, for a consistent quality standard...frequent discussions with course coordinators and teams could be the key... could be the key to avoid the variations in quality standards	Frequent discussions between team members required for consistency of quality standards	Quality standard fluctuations	Quality variations
107.3	So, I tend to teach at the same sort of tier institutions. So, most of the time the quality...um, and the discussion around quality, is very consistent. Um...I probably, if anything, find that sometimes it's about pushing the course coordinators to lift their quality. So now I go in with what I think a student should be at a certain level, and then I have the conversation. Um, and if it turns out the institution's quality is much lower than what I'm comfortable with, I just won't teach there.	Rosie would raise the quality standard issues with the course coordinators and, should the institution's standard be lower than her own expectations, she would decline the job offer.	A sessional should be free to accept or decline an inferior quality of teaching and learning standard	Quality standard fluctuations	Quality variations
65	...and you see a huge variation between the way they manage their, you know...their courses? And is there any variation in their interpretation of what quality teaching should be?				
71	Mm. So...what is being done to make sure that this is clarified...before the semester starts?				
		...with the sessionals in particular			
128	So, filling in some, uh, sessional positions with, um, um...PhD students. Is it a good...a good idea?				

## Appendix 8 Sessional academics Focus Group 1 inductive data reduction (IDR) sample data

	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
		<i>Literal transcript of an interview sequence (with some room for interpretation)</i>	<i>Analysis of what researcher believes is being said</i>	<i>Evaluation of the concept researcher believes is being addressed here</i>	<i>Synthesis of what the researcher believes is the theme that is represented by the concept</i>	<i>Synthesis of the 'big picture issues' that the researcher believes suggest a need for change or action in the organisation</i>	<i>The emergent metaphor(s)</i>
	<b>Moderator:</b>	<p>So, what we want is your personal response, what, what works for you. We just want you to be brief and to the point so that we're not here forever. trying to read it out. So, if you could explain your position in no more than three or four sentences and then we're not, [clattering] we've got time.</p> <p>So, as Michael said, if you could introduce yourself and answer the question and we'll go through, fairly succinctly I think.</p> <p>So, question number one, we'll start with Denise.</p> <p>Quality is a metaphor for teaching and learning issues currently faced by Exray University.</p> <p>So, I suppose, I'll start again so that it's fair, everyone's had a think about it. And I might ask a question generally and I might, so – DENISE starts first but then someone else might afterwards so that you get the chance to have a think.</p>					
1.	<b>Qn. 1</b>	<b>What do you perceive to be the teaching and learning issues facing your institution? So, you've got your two options – quality could be a metaphor for teaching and learning issues currently faced by Exray University; or quality is a metaphor for teaching and learning issues currently faced by Exray University. So 'could be' or 'is' is the real question</b>					
1.1	<b>Denise:</b>	Yes, I think it <i>is</i> , in terms of, as I said, there is a wide spectrum of quality as I perceive it from, from poor to very good. And, and various options in between.				A spectrum of quality exists	Learning and teaching can be a metaphor for quality
1.2	<b>Denise</b>	I'd say that overall, quality, is a metaphor for Exray University. We have a lot of committed and hard-working staff who put in a lot of effort to help maintain standards in teaching.	Denise believed 'quality' is a metaphor and outlined the large number of dedicated and hard-working who were maintaining the teaching standards at Exray university.			The university itself is the metaphor for quality; it relies on the staff to ensure this	Maintaining standards in teaching
1.3	<b>Brigitte:</b>	I would say that quality could be a metaphor for Exray University. I concur with the comment of varied ability. I experience firsthand and see around me the forces that impact on what could be high quality but you accept the status quo because of circumstances, particularly in sessional work.	Brigitte believed the notion of quality was related to experience but sessionals had only a few options due their status in the academia.	Experience of sessionals	Status of sessional academics	The university is a metaphor for quality; the student quality is variable; sessionals must accept this reality.	Maintaining standards in teaching

Appendices

	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
1.4	<b>Fred:</b>	It <i>could</i> be a metaphor. I think that we try to achieve academic performance [with] the students, but sometimes there's a compromise somewhere along the line there, because the status quo, because of economic I guess on balance between enough student numbers and us ranked and that sort of thing.	According to Fred, the status quo prevailed because of economic imperatives and student numbers.	The influence of student's numbers on academic performance	Economic pragmatism	Quality is an economic compromise between cost and quality	Economic imperatives drive quality
1.5	<b>Camille</b>	And I concur, I think it <i>could</i> be a metaphor, given the economic pragmatism that surrounds our vision and sometimes blurs the vision to the wonderful efforts of formal time and sessional staff.	Camille outlined the influence economic pragmatism that superseded any effort by both tenured and sessional academics	The impact of economic imperatives on academics	Economic pragmatism	Quality is an economic compromise between cost and quality	Economic imperatives drive quality
2.	<b>Qn. 2</b>	<b>What is your opinion about the divide between the substantive and the perceptive notion of quality standards?</b>					
2.1	<b>Lucille:</b>	Yes, they <i>could</i> be a metaphor for quality standards. Quality is very difficult to measure. The nature of quality is going to make it, very difficult to measure. And there is variability between standards and inconsistency ...which adds to that.	Lucille believed the notion of quality was very difficult to measure; she noticed a high degree of variability relating to the standards	Variability in the notion of quality	Variability in standards and consistency of measures	Quality and the variability in standards and measures; no absolute standards	Variability in standards and measures impacts on quality: 'quality lone rangers'
2.2	<b>Brigitte:</b>	I'm not sure that there is a substantive version of quality if there it's not articulated. It's somehow interpreted by us individually. The institute has not said this is the measure of quality be it by an industry standard or a comparative standard to other universities or whatever it might be. So, it's a largely privately interpreted measure. There is a perception of what quality is and it's conveyed by people, or translated by people individually.	For Brigitte, substantive measures of quality are very difficult to determine; if they indeed do exist, there had been no clear communication between institution and industry. She sees that there is a selective interpretation of quality that is expressed personally.	Substantiation versus interpretation in determining quality	Establishing and containing quantitative and qualitative measures of quality	There are no absolute standards: quality depends on staff making judgements, alone, as they undertake assessments.	All staff, both permanent and casual, are required to act as 'quality lone rangers'
2.3	<b>Fred:</b>	I concur with LUCILLE's statement. that it could be a metaphor. I'm still [unclear – 0:09:08.5] something because the cause [unclear – 0:09:12.5] from higher ed down to VE level and I can see there's some dilution perhaps, of quality we use to badge student and therefore let's just say the integrity of the quality has been observed by different teacher and sessionals with [the student].	There is a dilution of quality between higher and lower levels of programs at RMIT. Different quality badges are worn and observed by teachers and their students.	Quality is graded; different badges are worn and observed by different groups.	Differentiation is required between and within staff and students	Quality is used to badge students: differentiation is required at multiple levels. No absolute standards exist.	Many levels and many standards of quality exist. Quality lone rangers.
2.4	<b>Camille:</b>	And I would agree that it <i>could</i> be a metaphor. I believe that the course guides that I've experienced have got more instructive and more particular in what to look for, but I don't experience the general training in any servicing of staff as a group so that we are all on the same page when we interpret that course guide. So, as you	Camille outlined the instructive role of course guides to set the proper standards for the course. However, she maintained the notion of quality associated with this	Course guides require interpretation of the standards enunciated: quality becomes	Course guides and their interpretation	Quality determination of performance is based on an interpretation the performance that is	Different deliverers; different interpretations of standards. Quality lone rangers.

Appendices

	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
		were saying Brigitte, it is highly interpretive as to the outcomes.	document remained highly interpretive	highly interpretive.		required. Used in 'badging students'.	
2.5	Denise:	I agree, I think it's very difficult to define what quality is in a substantive way. I think I've got my own view which doesn't necessarily mean it's the view which has been developed with establishing learning and teaching so.... it's what I was feeling supported by early research groups. Studies are done and that work makes me feel proud of delivering the class and feeling that I've done it, according to my standards, a good job. However, I experience that there are standards which belong to the students, which not necessarily coincide with mine...and also the standards which are the most important of the three. Those are their co-ordinator of the course, which too, may have his own or her own view of what quality is, which I may not agree with, but at the end of the day, that's what is on top of the pyramid, because as a sessional, you are required to comply with the vision of quality and the understanding of quality of the person who is [in] charge of the course.	Denise outlined the difficulty of measuring quality in a substantive way and firmly believed that her views about quality standards might differ from those of her students. The course coordinator was responsible for setting the quality standards; she posited that, despite the disagreement, with the quality standards, as a sessional academic, she had to comply with the 'vision of quality' set by the person in charge of the course.	Academics' and students are likely to have differing perspectives on the notion of quality	Substantive and interpretive clashes of judgements of quality are inevitable	Quality judgements depend on individual interpretations. Compliance may have to be forced. No absolute standards exist.	Quality is likely to involve challenging and/or accepting perceptions of power. Quality lone rangers exist.
3.	Qn. 3	<b>What do you think of the sessional academics' contribution to the quality of teaching and learning within the organisation?</b>					
3.1	Brigitte:	I think it's considerable. I think it's because the sessional at least my experience of being with the casuals are met and the sessional hope to be somebody who is professional in her approach. But it is tempered with things like time restraints and the hours that you actually put into developing and putting into the works. So, it's somehow, restrained and it can be very, very challenging in so much as you want to be able to give more but you can't. I can't speak for others when I say that, I have to be in a few places in order to earn my living and therefore, not dedicated to one place and my time has to be split. And I don't feel I'm giving 100% in any case.	Brigitte believed the contribution of sessional academics was considerable but the effort was tempered by the time factor; she had to split their time between different institutions and would find it challenging to give 100% in one place.	The impact of conflicting professional obligations on the contribution of sessional academics	Conflicting professional demands	Staff engagement/Quality is diluted because of conflicting professional obligations	Personal survival and quality factors conflict for casuals
3.2	Fred:	Quality is a metaphor. Looking around for casuals – myself a casual, I can see highly qualified people around; a lot of teaching experience – I am one of the experienced teachers. We've put a lot of effort in and we really feared for our job; we wanted to show our proficiency. But sometime the	According to Fred, sessional academics were highly qualified and experienced; they had to be very effective to secure their jobs. He also believed	Sessional academics' experience and qualifications and employability	Employee specification	Staff selection/High quality, highly professional casuals meet massive time constraints	Time poor/money poor is a formula that deters casuals

Appendices

	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
		time remit and also the pay involved so we may have not exercised fantastically the ability to do – what I mean, most of our sessional is [pause] ah, who perform.	the time constraint had been a deterrent to the performance of sessionals.				
3.3	Fred:			Conflicting professional obligations	Conflicting professional demands	Staff engagement	Conflicting obligations
3.4	Camille:	Yes, it is a metaphor, for the reasons that have gone before me. I think that, the challenge is between Exray University having a great history of practitioner-based sessional staff who have brought a practice wisdom into the class setting versus at times the [theoretical PhD experience – there’s not enough opportunity to network or to co-ordinate those various experiences in order to leverage off that mutual capability.	Camille outlined the impact of practitioner-based sessional academics at Exray University that brought a ‘practice ’wisdom in the classes. The diversity of experiences contributed to leverage the capabilities within the faculty.	The pedagogical approach of sessional academics	Experience diversity	Pedagogical mode	A clash between the practitioner and the theoretician exists
3.5	Denise:	I think it <i>could</i> be. Again, kind of repeating what I said at the beginning I see various types of sessional academics who have come from different backgrounds and have different life situations and according to that, the type of commitment and effort and also career aspirations could be different. So, there are some who are long-term sessionals, who are committed. Devoted teaching is all that they do or what they mostly do. They are more committed in general; but there are also some who do it for a very short period of time for various other reasons and their commitment and focus can be uh, elsewhere.	According to Denise there were different categories of sessional academics, with different profiles and backgrounds; they have different ambitions and career aspirations.	Sessional academics’ profiles and backgrounds	Person specification	Academic profile	Academia versus workplace divides perceptions of quality
3.6	Denise:		Some long-term sessionals had been very committed and devoted to the faculty whereas others were in employment for a short period of time	Variability of sessional academics’ length of service	Staff commitment	Academic engagement	Long stayers, high quality; short stayers, low quality
3.7	Denise:	I see it in large classes when you have the need to co-ordinate the large number of sessionals. And if these different types of sessionals exist alongside each other then it’s a bit of a challenge to ensure there are standards across.	Denise also highlighted the diversity of sessionals working side by side in large cohorts and the challenge posed to	Diversity of academics working towards the same objective	Staff commitment	Academic engagement	Quality has too many uncontrollable variables

Appendices

	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
			coordinators to establish a common standard				
3.8	Lucille:	I would say that quality <i>is</i> a metaphor. The sessionals that I know are very committed to their work and they will put in as much effort as they possibly can, perhaps out of the fear of not having their contract renewed, because the work is uncertain.	Lucille outlined the dedication, commitment and effort of some sessionals; the trigger could be the degree of uncertainty associated with future employment.	Correlation between sessionals' commitment and re-employability	Staff commitment	Job opportunities	Quality and fear have an inverse impact upon commitment
3.9	Lucille:	And it's also because of the obligation they feel towards to students. You can't simply pack up at five o'clock if you haven't finished marking all of the assignments that need to be delivered to students the next day. So, it is that feeling that you have to.	Lucille also stated the commitment of sessionals to their students and ensured they provided timely feedback to them; extra hours were often required.	Sessional academics' extra commitment and timely feedback on assignments	Staff commitment	Academic standard	Quality and time are enemies for casuals
3.10	Lucille:	and it maybe that at times you can't put in 100 per cent because the time is split, but a lot of the sessionals that I know, even if they're giving 80 per cent, it's still so high and in fact may be a higher contribution than permanent staff, just because of that diversity of experience that they're bringing to the table.	Lucille acknowledged the high contribution of sessionals; sometimes better than tenured academics. She outlined the diversity of experience sessional brought to the faculty. However, she deplored the fact that the effort was diluted because sessionals' time was split between different institutions.	Sessionals' diversity of professional experience and multi-institutional engagement	Sessional academics versus tenured academics	Academic profile	Casuals are diverse but dispersed; tenured are similar and tightly bonded
3.11	Lucille:	I would say that the quality could be improved further, particularly if the sessional staff were better supported in their roles, and if they were given maybe more and clear instructions of guidance and professional development. And there is an issue of, of fairness and equity here as well. In terms of the effort that staff are putting in and the quality that they're maintaining and their remuneration.	Lucille believed the quality of teaching could be improved if sessional academics were supported by the faculty, through clearer instructions, professional development and more equity in terms of remuneration	Academic and development support to sessional academics	Instructional support	Academic support	Lack of support, guidance and PD are the enemies of sessional staff and hence of quality
4.	Qn. 4	<b>What are your views about the different modes of communication to clarify the quality expectations?</b>					
4.1	Fred:	Quality <i>could</i> be metaphor. I believe that the management should have more communication frequency. More frequency of communication	Fred believed the frequency of communication should be improved and more uniform instruction	Consistency of communication to	Uniformity of instruction	Mode of communication	Quality demands consistent communication to

Appendices

	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
		with communication in development training and uniform instruction to casuals.	provided to sessional academics	sessional academics			achieve high learning outcomes
4.2	<b>Fred:</b>	As I said before, casuals we have here, is high quality, experienced, need to get them, to give them some instructions some but disciplined instruction, enough for them to run with it. Nothing else.	According to Fred, the institution just needed to provide clear and 'disciplined' instruction to the highly qualified and experienced sessionals.	Consistency of communication to sessional academics	Disciplined instruction	Mode of communication	Quality demands consistent communication to achieve high learning outcomes
4.3	<b>Camille:</b>	Quality <i>could</i> be a metaphor. For me it all hinges on the co-ordinator of each course. The variability is vast. Course by course, year by year, whoever is the co-ordinator and the communication can be absolutely excellent and timely, which is the most critical thing if you are in a pickle, whether you are full time or casual. The alternative to that. Depending on the interest and I guess whether they've chosen to take that mantle of course coordinator or it's been put on them.	According to Camille, the communication style would vary from coordinator to coordinator and semester to semester; it could be excellent and timely or simply the opposite.	Variation in communication styles	Communication differentiation	Mode of communication	An excellent communication style is more likely to result in a quality outcome
4.4	<b>Denise:</b>	Could be...Yes, I, agree with...CAMILLE. It varies according to the coordinator. I believe that my views are that there should be some clear guidelines communicated to all the sessional staff who taught in a subject, well in advance before the start of the semester not the day before or during the first teaching week, as I've seen happening sometimes. Especially large courses, to ensure that there are clear, rules of the guidance, which are what the consistency is about and what is required to maintain consistency across.	According to Denise, the communication depended on the course coordinator. She believed there should be clear guidelines to sessional academics before the beginning of the semester and not after the semester had begun; she expressed the need for more consistency of information and guidelines	The impact of the course coordinators' communication styles	Timing and consistency of communication	Mode of communication	Guidelines that provide consistency and standards
4.5	<b>Denise:</b>	Of course, there are some opportunities for each sessional academic to put his or her own personality into the way he or she delivers, but to ensure consistency I think some clear guidelines are communicated early, clarified and ensured that during the semester everybody's on the same page. I think that's what it should be, it can be, it is, or in some cases, it may not. But I think it should be.	Although sessional academics had their own personalities and teaching styles, Denise insisted on the clear guidelines to ensure better consistency and standardisation for those involved in the delivery of the course	The importance of consistent and standard instructions	Uniformisation of communication versus teaching styles	Mode of communication	Guidelines that are regularly clarified
4.6	<b>Lucille:</b>	I think it could be a metaphor. Again, I agree that there is a lot of variability between co-ordinator to co-ordinator. Perhaps, the variability isn't totally relevant in the case of long-term sessionals who	Lucille expressed the high variability of communication between coordinators and sessionals;	Alignment of communication styles to	Communication variability	Mode of communication	Allows for some variability

Appendices

	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
		get to know and understand their coordinator if they have been co-ordinator of that subject for some time. And there a common understanding of form and so it may not be as relevant.	long-term sessionals may be offered a different treatment as they are more conversant with the materials and might even have previous coordination experience.	sessionals' academic profile			
4.7	Brigitte:	I think quality <i>could</i> be a metaphor. As previously stated it depends who is the co-ordinator, so there's variability in there. The word quality is not part of the vernacular in the communication. So, I think if you if you aspire to quality, then it's got to be part of the talk and that's not evident.	Brigitte believed the communication depended on the coordinator and outlined the notion of quality had not been clearly expressed even in a conversation.	Uniqueness of course coordinators' communication styles	Communication variability	Mode of communication	Quality is not in the vernacular of coordination
5.	Qn. 5	<b>How far do you think the student experience surveys reflect the quality of teaching and learning?</b>					
5.1	Fred:	<i>Could</i> be a metaphor. I still don't believe it, the CES [Customer Experience Survey] is saying that absolute measure of our teaching and learning my experience is student tend to normally say that's okay, but once they experience something where they're not happy with one class or one instant, they wait for their time to show their reaction to the course.	Fred did not believe the CES survey was a good measure of quality; students used the survey as a retribution tool to demonstrate their dissatisfaction with the course	The objective of students' surveys	Surveys versus retribution	Course evaluation	CES an unreliable instrument on which to judge quality of teaching and learning
5.2	Fred:	So, sometime the majority may be happy with the teacher, the lecturer, but they tend to be inactive. They don't participate into the whole thing unless you really talk to them about whether they really like you or not; or they really hate you or not. But they can do that. Therefore, I think it really could be better.	According to Fred, some students expressed their satisfaction verbally but never filled in the online surveys unless they were encouraged by their teachers. In any case the participation rate remained very low.	Students' dissatisfaction not expressed online because of low participation rate.	Qualitative versus quantitative survey	Course evaluation	It could be better

## Appendix 9 Permanent academics Focus Group 2 inductive data reduction (IDR) sample data

	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
	<b>Moderator</b>	Okay. We have fifteen questions. Um, what I'll do is, I'll read the question twice and I'll go around and allow everyone to be the first person. So, I'll ask you Question One, and then I'll start with you Question One, you know, go, go that way. So, um, there's a component that's the same in every single question. And um, that is, um, 'Quality could be a metaphor for teaching and learning issues currently faced by Abbey U; or quality is a metaphor for teaching and learning issues currently faced by Abbey Up's if you, um, say your name and then either of those that you believe, uh, in relation to the question.					
<b>1</b>	<b>Qn.1</b>	<b>What do you perceive to be the teaching and learning issues facing your institution?</b>					
<b>1.1</b>	<b>Nathalie</b>	Um, the university relies far too heavily on the um [pause] sessional academics or sessional academics. There is no consistency for students and uh, students find it very difficult to contact sessional, part-time sessional kind-of person. And um, they are told that the sessional people often are drop out and someone else needs to pick up the pieces. So, there's no consistency basically from year to year, from semester to semester, we have no idea who is going to be teaching and how they are, who they are, what they are.	Nathalie believed there was a high reliance on sessional academics; the profile and number of sessional academics to be hired would be unpredictable from semester to semester	Unpredictable employment of sessional academics from semester to semester	Academics' profile	Staff Recruitment	Unpredictability of staffing opportunities and high reliance on sessional academics
<b>1.2</b>	<b>Anthony</b>	Uh, first of all I'm not quite sure what we mean, what we mean by, by uh quality. And there's the reason I think it is, it is some sort of metaphor um, which everybody probably can interpret in their way they deem appropriate.	Anthony expressed suspicion about the definition of quality and believed the term quality was 'a sort of metaphor'				Quality as a sort of metaphor
<b>1.3</b>	<b>Anthony</b>	Um, I think, um, to become something more tangible there should be plainly clear guidelines what we're going to mean by, by uh, uh, quality, so that we do not go too much astray, heading out different perception what actually is meant by that.	Anthony believed that the notion of quality needed more substantive guidelines to avoid disparate perceptions about its meaning.				Disparate perceptions of 'quality'
<b>1.4</b>	<b>Christine</b>	Someone came yesterday; I also had another metaphor, which is taking pride in good work. [pause]				Taking pride in 'good work'	Good work
<b>1.5</b>	<b>Matthew</b>	And I suppose some of the issues are you know, the, the um, [pause] the, the mass kind of scale of education that we have, I think is probably the main prevailing issue that we have. That is, it's, it's, it's a different um, paradigm or teaching to the one that I, that I work, you know, had. So, I think that's probably the big thing. But, and, and probably the	Matthew upheld the fact that some of the salient issues underpinning the higher education sector were: massification of education, students'	Major changes in the higher education sector			The massification of higher education

Appendices

	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
		quality of students. So, the sort of students that you are getting in, um, is, is probably different to, you know, to a traditional university.	academic profiles, post-graduation employability.				
1.6	Matthew	So, I think they're, they're the issues. But I, but I – as far as the metaphors, you know, I'm just not quite sure where you're going with that, to be honest.	Matthew could still not connect the 'metaphor' concept with the question				
1.7	John	Yes, I think it could be a metaphor, it could be a very good metaphor if we unpack it properly in the context of higher education. Um, and it is a very loaded issue. Um, and at the moment it's issues that's a metaphor but I'm not convinced that it's used uh, in the correct sense.					Quality as a metaphor for higher education
1.8	John	Um, because for me, quality in higher education means a few things that MATTHEW will refer to and as for me, higher education – quality is delivering people who can think to the work force. People who are mature, um, who are grounded in both theory..and practice. Prepared, um, for the long term.	John believed the notion of quality within the higher education sector was associated to the preparation of students to connect the learnt theories to workplace practices	The connection between 'theory' and 'practice'	Students' preparation		
1.9	John	Um, and I think that it's said but the current measures of quality – if I take a more cynical perspective, I don't believe the current measures of quality reflect that quality carries a responsibility on, on both sides, in other words, the people who deliver quality and the students who perceive quality. So, it's quite a loaded issue.	John advocated the divide between teaching quality and students' perception of the notion of quality	Divide between university's and students' interpretation and perception of 'quality'	Substantive vs interpretive 'quality'	Quality Measures	
<b>2</b>	<b>Qn.2</b>	<b>What is your opinion about the divide between the substantive and the perceptive notion of quality standards?</b>					
2.1	Anthony	Um, [pause] I think it's a pretty big divide, because uh, what is probably set to be quality – and I can be very specific and it can just be simple – I don't know, a students' experience survey to determine if particular teacher on whatever programme or a particular course was um, excepted um, by students.	Anthony firmly advocated the divide between substantive and perceptive notion of quality; the reference could be as simple as the outcomes of the students' feedback	The tension between substantive and perceptive tied to the student's feedback outcomes	Substantive vs perceptive quality	Quality evaluation	Quality like the two sides of a coin
2.2	Anthony	And the other one is a, a perception of particular academics as well. And uh, I strongly believe that uh, that perception of academic, academics is uh, very important because we uh, have our own professional integrity and sometimes to meet maybe those standards, which are prescriptive to us, is asking us that we deviate from our	Anthony stressed out the prescriptive nature of quality standards and the impact of any deviation on academics. He also professed the gap between substantive and interpretive	The impact of the divide between substantive and interpretive 'quality' on teaching academics	Substantive vs interpretive 'quality'	Quality evaluation	The great divide of quality: substantive and interpretive

Appendices

	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
		professional integrity. And therefore, that the [unclear – 0:08:12.5] to me – I don't know how it can be reconciled but uh, uh, obviously, what we can do in the environment, we can either deft, we can change or leave the environment. So, if uh, that is the solution for it, I think [pause] it probably, uh, there are better ways that that particular gap has to be somehow um, not widened but, but, but narrowed. Uh, otherwise uh, it's, it can be very frustrating in operating something what you perceive and something what you basically have to deliver.	quality should be narrowed to discard potential frustration from academics				
2.3	Christine	I generally <i>reject</i> quality as a metaphor in this instance, because [pause] one can manipulate the perception of quality. I have come across a lot of [unclear – 0:08:42.4] evidence where the less mature students would think that you are delivering quality work um, because they like you.	Christine rejected any substantive measurement of quality and outlined the easy manipulation of 'perceptive' notion of quality. She believed some students would believe quality teaching was provided only because they like the teacher.	The challenge of quality measurement	Substantive vs interpretive quality	Quality evaluation/ <b>Perceptions can be manipulated</b>	Quality is leaky!
2.4	Matthew	Well I, well I would say what, uh yeah. Okay. So, the substantive is uh, okay. Uh, well I think they're probably, I, I, I think most people's perception probably within the, within the, the [pause] the uh, profession would be fairly accurate about the quality of the education they receive. I think we probably know what the quality of, of the education is. Um, fairly accurately I suspect. Um, so I don't think there'd be a huge disparity amongst academics about the quality. Uh, but in terms of the, the general public, I, I don't know what their perception would be.	Matthew outlined the slim margin between substantive and perceptive 'quality' for the recipient of quality education within the faculty; he also professed no disparity existed concerning the academics' evaluation of those two paradigms. However, Matthew dismissed any firm assertions from the general public.	Variation between the students, academics and public views of the following paradigms: substantive vs interpretive 'quality'.	Substantive vs interpretive 'quality'	Quality evaluation	Quality as a tale of paradigms
2.5	John	Um, [pause] I think I'll refer back to my original answer and say if you want to relate to the substantive, um, then quality standards, then if you try and frame that in the higher education context that we are in, then I think there's a major divide, because it seems like a misnomer. We're trying to measure adherence to a standard, [pause] which sort of implies conformance to a standard, [pause] but if you want to think of it substantively, then the	John remarked the major divide between substantive and interpretive notion of quality in HE; the substantive paradigm of quality was linked to conformance to a standard.	Substantive paradigm: Conformity to quality standards	Substantive quality	Quality standard	Misnomer

Appendices

	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
		higher education environment you're actually trying to encourage people to reframe or to develop the ability to reframe, to develop the ability for people to see things in totally new ways, um, and that's substantive.					
2.6	John	And if you think about that, then it seems a little bit out of place that you are trying to teach that and then tell students that you're going to measure quality in a very conformance compliant way. It, it almost questions it. Um, so unless you build that into the education, the expectation um, then that divide is going to be quite big. So, you, you've got the – it's always a conflict between trying to cater to the lowest common denominator then trying to measure the quality of the education base level's common denominator but in a class of 200, then you're trying to measure substantive development in terms of the ability to reframe, to think, at a [unclear – 0:12:22.0] level, for example. Um, that divide is, is a conflict.	John suggested to build in the substantive compliance to quality standard within the course structure to avoid a greater divide with the interpretive paradigm; he also considered the challenge to measure quality with a large cohort of students	The importance of conformance to the substantive notion of quality	Quality conformance	Quality standard	Quality as an onion with many layers
2.7	Nathalie	Um, I think I might be the wrong person to ask about the quality of Australian higher education because I have actually a very low perceived – a very low um, [pause] um, measure of the quality. I think we're all going in the commercial rather than the um, learning – among academics I think, among all of us here I think we know what we want from our, um, students. We know what we would like to um, [pause] we would like to achieve. But we often have our hands tied because we were told we have to pass or we have to hold this result because the students need to pass, because they are our income and so on and so forth.	Nathalie contended the commercialisation of higher education is rampant; experienced academics had clear expectations about quality of teaching and learning. She also claimed the pressure to 'dumb down' the standard for purely commercial reasons.	Academics' clear expectations about the quality imperatives and the imposed downgrading of quality standards	Quality conformance	Quality standard	Dumbing down' the standard
2.8	Nathalie	So, we're going in, I think we're commercialising our higher education far too far. So, my sort of view on [pause] – a lot of us would probably disagree with what's happening, with the commercialisation of the universities and things, but at the end of the day, I think I'm probably the wrong person to ask because we all have very strong views about it. [laughing] Yeah. [coughing]	Nathalie would not voice her dissent with the commercialisation of higher education but remarked the general repudiation of this movement.	General dissent against the commercialisation of education			
3	Qn.3	What do you think of the sessional academics' contribution to the quality of teaching and learning within the organisation?					

Appendices

	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
3.1	Matthew	Um, [pause] I, I think uh, probably it's as uh, it's [pause] equivalent to the quality of teaching and learning of the, of the permanent, uh, full-time staff. I, I don't think there's any – you know, I, I, I would have as much confidence in, in the uh, sessional staff, the sessional staff as the uh, permanent staff. Um, [pause] for various reasons I've - often there, um, [pause] you know, they're as qualified, they're, they're newer, they're uh, more up to date sometimes, they're more enthusiastic, they're more adaptable than some of the existing staff. So, I, I don't have any problems from that point of view in terms of the quality of the, of the uh, sessional staff.	Matthew advocated the academic stature of sessional academics in terms of: business currency, acumen and personal enthusiasm. He also appraised some sessionals were at par with their tenured counterparts.	The contribution of sessional academics to quality of teaching and learning at par with the full-time counterparts	Sessionals' characteristics	Quality of teaching and learning	The war of talent; sessional academics' playground in higher education sector
3.2	John	Uh, um, [pause] in the context of the environment we're in, which is the com – commoditisation of the [pause] the university, the higher education, commoditisation of the brand, um, it's not a cynical perspective, it's the reality.					Commodification and branding of higher education
3.3	John	Um, it's, it's a fault of the system because I've seen students where the trick is you fail often enough and the system will find a way to pass you by offering you equivalence subjects etc., because you're closing on your graduation. Um, and [pause] it's a fault of the system [pause] but, as, as a metaphor, uh, a very high quality of the casualisation is very high, but is variable, it's subjective.					Variability of casualisation and university' 'dirty tricks' to help students at risk
3.4	John	Um [pause] we, we do look at the quality and I think the quality is very high because frequently, many of the sessional members of staff are ex-lecturers who know the subject. Um, I've seen in cases where sessional members of staff have been brought back in to develop curriculum. Um, so I, I don't have issue with the quality. Um [pause] but if you think in terms of, of [pause] um, can it be, or is it – again it's both.	John argued that many sessionals were ex-lecturers, subject experts and brought in to develop curriculum; they also made an immense contribution to the quality of teaching and learning	The support of sessional academics to the development of curriculum and quality of teaching and learning.	Casual academic support	Quality of Teaching and Learning	Casualisation as the 'cog in the wheel'
3.5	John	Um, where quality can be a metaphor, then there are negative sides, because if a sessional academic [pause] depends on teaching as a wage, as, as a source of income [pause] then [pause] I think you, you've got an issue there, because when you leave that casualisation to students' responses, then [pause] I do see sessional academics answer emails	John contended that, as sessional academics depended on sessional work as the main source of income, they would go the extra mile by giving their personal phone numbers	Casual academics' additional engagement with students to secure good students' feedback	Quality measurement	Staff engagement	Casual academics 'expendability' to buy students' favour

Appendices

	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
		on weekends, giving out their mobile numbers, etc. Um, whereas I think [pause] a full-time member of staff, well again subjective – some do, some don't, but I think it will be fairly [pause] good for me to say that if your income depends on good feedback, then I think it's going to impact on your willingness to give up your [pause] your mobile number to answer emails, because you want the good feedback, um, if that is one of the criteria for continued employment.	and answering emails during weekends although most tenured academics would not; sessional academics needed the positive students 'feedback for continued employment.				
3.6	Nathalie	Um, look I, I, I don't think very highly of, of the um, sessional staff. Um, a lot of them are highly qualified. Um, desperate to get a job, um, a lot of them depend very much on their, uh, on the money they get from um, whether it's this university or any other university. Often, they work three or four different jobs to get their meaningful salary.	Nathalie pointed out most sessionals were highly qualified and, hence, earned their living from different institutions.	The versatility of sessionals employment	Employee profile	Staff engagement	Casuals as the octopus 'tentacles driven by the dollar notes
3.7	Nathalie	Um, often they do have, um, [pause] not only skills but research and, and, and [pause] work, sort of industry work um, and, and all that combined so I think they can offer the student quite a lot in terms of quality of their um, teaching, but I, um, so, from that perspective I think they uh, really good, but what I don't like is um, them working weekends and, you know, all this kind of additional extras stuff that, that they do.	Nathalie contended the sessionals were skilful teachers and some were research-active with strong industry experience. She outlined the mixed blessing to the faculty and applauded their contributions; she also deplored any after-hours interaction with the students	Mixed evaluation of the worth of sessional work	Employee profile	Staff engagement	Casuals' double agenda: the 'cog in the wheel' and 'popularity contesters'
3.7	Nathalie	I used to be a sessional academic and I know how much work goes in, in to um, in to get that job, because you are relying very much on the, on the survey from the students and, and, you know, you're basically you have no life. So, I think on one hand it's, it's great, because they offer a lot and they really conscious about getting that job and they want that job. But on the other hand, that's sort of somewhat um, exploitation as well. So, I, I, yeah, I'm sort of in two minds.	Nathalie recalled her experience as a sessional academic; she had mixed feelings about the sessional academics 'additional effort to improve feedback scores. This precarious workforce category had often been unduly exploited.	Mixed evaluation of the worth of sessional work	Employee profile	Staff engagement	Casuals' double agenda: the 'cog in the wheel' and 'popularity contest'
3.8	Nathalie	Um, did the students get the best quality? Um, [pause] well, it's often questionable as well. I don't know. [laughing] No one ever, I think mentioned this.	Nathalie could not settle for a definite argument in favour of the contribution of sessional academics	Blank spot about the sessionals; contribution to quality	Quality evaluation	Quality of teaching and learning	Blank spot
3.9	John	But um, the, the only problem is that often people do leave and then they, someone else has to take on	John held the view of a current issue with sessional	Movement of sessional academics	Labour turnover	Labour mobility	

Appendices

	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
		because um, because they get offered a permanent job somewhere else and therefore they will go for that permanent job so, yeah.	academics: they would often leave for a tenured position.				
3.1	Anthony	Uh, as I previously mentioned, um, I still have a problem with definition of quality. And if, he, as we mentioned, it's substantive and also perceptive. Um, a metaphor of uh, of quality uh, obviously sessional teachers – I don't have any, any doubts, and any qualms that they are bringing in a lot of experience. Uh, um, [pause] they are either working the industry, they are academic, uh research, and uh everything else because they might have employment in a number of different institutions they can do some cross pollination. As a [unclear – 0:21:06.0] those, positive aspects of having uh, casual, uh sessional academics.	Anthony never had any doubt about the sessional academics' qualifications, professional and industry experience, research-active, with a vast portfolio of job postings. He claimed sessional academics brought in the cross-pollination of ideas and experience that would contribute to the quality of teaching and learning within the faculty	Contribution of sessional academics to the quality of teaching and learning	Multi-skilling	Quality of teaching and learning	Cross-pollination' Killer bees make the most delicious honey
3.9	Anthony	Um, but on the other side, if you have certain uh, quality standards, regardless coming from government or internally set up by institutions, which agreement by business model, uh, that case, and because of commercialisation, which was mentioned so many times, so far, then they maybe sometimes have to compromise their perceptive method for, of that quality, and being uh, in that situation, that the measures or the instrument of the measurement of their performance of their quality is adjusted uh, to the, those substantive um, definitions of metaphors of, of the quality.	Anthony contended that, despite the skills and experience gathered from different institutions, sessional academics had to conform to the quality assurance systems and standards of the institutions; the perceptive paradigm of quality had been replaced by the institution's substantive quality standard	Casual academics' compromise to substitute perceptive quality with substantive quality	Substantive vs interpretive 'quality'	Quality Assurance systems	A tale of two quality paradigms: substantive and perceptive
3.11	Christine	For me it is a metaphor. And my expectation, um, is actually sessionals can do it much more than [pause] what they're paid for. And sometimes it's a case of a certainty in employment. If you don't do that extra bit, go the extra mile, you may not get, you know, another contract the following semester. So, I'm a firm believer the sessionals [pause] um, actually tend to do much more.	Christine believed sessionals did much more than they got paid for; they often went the extra mile to secure continuous employment.	The sessionals' contribution and opportunities for continuous employment			Time poor/money poor is a formula that deters casuals
4	Qn.4	<b>What are your views about the different modes of communication to clarify the quality expectations?</b>					
4.1	John	Um, that's making the assumption that the university does actually have more than one mode of communication. Um, and we've got to be very careful in the sense that the university communicates quality. [pause] Um, it does, uh, it does communicate, or it does use it as a metaphor.	John outlined the multiple modes of communication about the notion of quality; he also alleged the institution could provide either a literal or a	Multiple modes of communication	Literal meaning vs metaphors	Quality of teaching and learning	University communication; a tale of two modes: literal and metaphorical

Appendices

	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
			metaphoric meaning to 'quality'.				
4.2	John	Um, because it says that all – both sessional staff as well as permanent, are measured very objectively through, CES scores. So, it is a metaphor um, but then if you go back, it can be used as a better metaphor. [pause] Um, [pause] so substantively it is because empirically it is measured. [pause] But I think that's a, a very interesting [pause] choice. If you want to take a look at the deeper substantive meaning then we've got to [pause] show where it can be a quality issue because [pause] um, there are always better ways of measuring quality.	John upheld both sessional and tenured academics were evaluated through students' feedback survey; he outlined the merits of substantive and empirical measurement of quality but maintained there were better techniques of measurement.	Substantive measurement of quality	Quality evaluation	Quality of teaching and learning	Myriad of arrows and one target: Quality
4.3	John	And we have to look beyond organisational boundaries in the sense that – the communication at the moment puts the responsibility on the university in delivering a quality product. [pause] But, that miscommunication occurs when, [pause] the message is not being communicated to students in the sense that you are, you are actually walking into a research environment. [pause]. And that research environment [pause] the, the message is not being communicated. [pause]	John argued the communication focused on the university's responsibility to deliver a quality product; however, the message was distorted to students as scholarship and research had precedence on the teaching duties within the faculty.	Distortion of communication about the university's real objectives and mission	Research vs teaching	Quality product	The illusion of university's communication system
4.4	John	When I went to university [pause] we went to university following professors. I can still name the professors I followed. So, the link to [pause] a degree that wasn't just there, I knew there were PhD's and I knew that there was a world beyond just studying. There's a research environment, we saw the professor as, as leaders for example. So, there was a more holistic measure of quality, which could be used, but, and I think there again, it's highlighting the divide between quality is and quality could be a metaphor. And I think we're still reaching for the quality could be.	John advocated that universities used to be much more than teaching and the teaching academics were also role models even in this research environment; he also outlined the holistic measurement of quality.	The dual mission of universities and the role of academics	Research vs teaching	Quality of teaching and learning	Holistic measure of quality; multi-faceted mission of the university
4.5	Nathalie	NATHALIE. Um, I think, um, that there's, that the interesting thing in this question for me is the actual communication of quality. Um, [pause] and I see there's a little bit like [unclear – 0:26:23.1] commercialisation of, of the [unclear – 0:26:26.8]. In the sense that, this word quality university, what does it actually mean? [pause] I, I think I have to agree with [pause] JOHN?	Nathalie believed the actual communication was mostly aligned with the commercialisation of education; the meaning of the word 'quality' was very ambiguous.	Ambiguity about the notion of quality	Quality standard	Quality of teaching and learning	

Appendices

	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
4.6	Nathalie	Here, in saying that when I went to university I still remember to this day, the name of my professors and I knew exactly um, what they'd done and that kind of thing. So, I was looking up to [pause] – ask any of our students who the name of your lecturer is, most of them wouldn't have clue.	Nathalie remarked there was a better intimate relationship between teachers and students than it was now	Nature of relationship between academics and students	Class cohesion	Quality of teaching and learning	The lost bond between students and educators
4.7	Nathalie	So [pause] I'm not sure casualisation is something that I would look at first, and the kind of questions around that and, and what does it all mean? And what are the, what are they looking for? What is the quality? What is the – I mean I'm going back to ANTHONY's notion of quality and how we define that and how we communicate to the outside world to our stakeholders what we are doing, the quality and the perceived quality. Um, as I said, commercialisation is probably [pause] something that is clouded in my, my perceptions of [unclear – 0:27:46.5].	Nathalie asserted the divide between actual and perceptive quality and how this notion was communicated to the different stakeholders.	The multiple approaches to the notion of quality	Substantive vs interpretive 'quality'	Quality of teaching and learning	
4.8	Anthony	Um, [coughing] [pause] communication is a very definitely extremely important, and as you know, there can be like a number of different ways of sending – the quality as well. But, uh what I see is the problem, that there's such complex issue as quality is uh, that because of managerialist approach to managing particular business model, it is [pause] effectively being reduced to only one variable. And that is something what I don't feel very comfortable. So, if we are measured in, if we try to measure quality [mobile phone alert] and because its complexity and uh, holistic approach that has previously mentioned, and being reduced to only one variable, just because it is easier to communicate it, and not only to collate it but also to measure, to capture.	Anthony outlined the alignment of the communication strategies with the managerialist business models that framed and reduced the measurement of quality to a single variable; he disclaimed this corporate practice for such a complex issue as measurement of quality.	The institution's communication strategies about quality evaluation	Quality measurement	Quality management	Managerialism
4.9	Anthony	That it is reducing academics' ability to probably uh, deliver themselves and also to [pause] to uh, [pause] give the maximum they can do because if they are measured only on that one variable, they will probably stream every activity they are doing. And it can be the way how they lecture, the way they are, they are, how they mark assignments or exams. The way how they are establishing contact between and when they establish contact with the, with the students to please them, to entertain them,	Anthony outlined the academics were assessed on one variable but maintained other variables could have been taken into consideration such as: class engagement, providing feedback on assignments, lecturing styles.	The institution's communication strategies about quality evaluation	Quality evaluation	Quality management	The compendium of measurement variables eclipsed by one variable

Appendices

	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
		uh, etc., because in that case they will probably get better, better reward.					
4.10	Anthony	So, my problem – if we turn back to communication, is reductionism. So, it's not, it's not, okay let's put it to communicate everything on the staff website and intranet or whatever it is. And then measure through [unclear – 0:29:45.7] one variable. And communicate the feedback back only with that one variable. [pause]	Anthony demonstrated his disdain for the reductionist approach of communicating the measurement of quality whilst focusing on one variable	The institution's communication strategies about quality evaluation	Quality evaluation	Quality management	Reductionist communication philosophy
4.11	Christine	[pause] I feel it depends on the person that you are working with as a sessional. I've come across who sort of given a lot of latitude and you can run things up to an extent of as you see fit. Um, but others are more directive and more structured, which I think helps when you're dealing with a large cohort of students.	Christine believed the course coordinators' leadership style would affect the management of sessionals; some course coordinators empowered the sessionals to be more autonomous whereas others adopted a more directive and structured approach mainly in large cohort of students	The course management style of course coordinators	Leadership styles	Course management	Quality and leadership are disparate bedfellows for casuals
4.12	Christine	I think in courses whereby in one semester 1600 students so there was an <i>enormous</i> sessional pool. So, in terms of the communication needed is more structured, less layered and very consistent, but until you know, look at um, contributing to quality. And for me then, quality <i>is</i> a metaphor to measure that.	Christine outlined the case of large cohorts of students and the need for structured and consistent communication between the course coordinator and the sessionals	The need for consistency of communication for large cohort of students	Students' cohort	Mode of communication	Large student cohort's equals = large numbers of sessional staff to teach = best communication and leadership from coordinators
4.11	Matthew	Well, there's a, there's a thing in, in each of these questions that I, I'm just sort of thinking, well, what are first of all you need to define what are these modes of communication? And then what do I think about them? But also, um, what are the modes? I suppose, [pause] yeah, the advertising that the university does, the uh, performance management that we put under the sort of, methods of promotion and [pause] permanence or whatever. So, what does the university reward? Is a method of communication I suppose? The official communication channels, the unofficial understandings that we have about quality. So, all of those sorts of things.	Matthew outlined the different modes of communication used by the university and the ways of promoting the notion of quality; on one hand, the official communication about quality and, on the other hand, the unofficial understanding of that notion.	Tension between official communication and unofficial understanding of the notion of quality	Official vs unofficial definition of quality	Communication strategies	Face-off between original and copy: official versus unofficial versions of 'quality'

Appendices

	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
4.13	Matthew	Um, don't know, [pause] so, so what, what are my views about the different modes? Well I suppose it, everybody at every university necessarily uses all of those modes to communicate to different audiences. So, you know, you [pause] you know, you try and – universities try to boost their research, that's partly to improve their profile and communicate a sense of quality.	Matthew maintained there were multiple communication strategies to different audiences; for example, communicate the boost in research would be one way to convey the 'sense of quality' to an audience.	Ways of communication to different audiences	Communication modes	Communication strategies	Different communication 'bullets' sprayed to different audiences.
4.14	Matthew	Um, so, yeah there are a lot of different ones, I suppose all universities use a similar [pause] uh, range of methods of communication. I suppose they're all fairly necessary and will all pick up different signals from different channels. [pause]	Matthew believed a range of communication methods were used to reach different audiences; they would certainly have picked up different signals from those channels.	Ways of communication to different audiences	Communication modes	Communication strategies	Different communication 'bullets' sprayed to different audiences.
5	Qn.5	<b>How far do you think the students' experience surveys reflect the quality of teaching and learning?</b>					
5.1	Nathalie	Um, I [pause] I don't think it reflects anything really. [pause] I think it's, it's, it's, it's a tool that is poorly designed [pause] uh, poorly executed and it really does not reflect anything much. It's like to me that is that.	According to Nathalie, the students' experience survey was poorly designed and executed; the ultimate outcomes were doubtful and unreliable.	Questionable tool for measuring quality	Quality evaluation	Quality of teaching and learning	Unreliable instrument to judge quality of teaching and learning
5.2	Anthony	I think it, it is uh, student experience survey is [unclear – 0:32:16.8]. I think that uh, uh student experience survey is important instrument in and should be in place. Okay, maybe can be reworded a little bit better, maybe is more user friendly etc., etc., its structure supposed to be a bit easier could be improved. There's the other question. But they've, they've basically – it is varied instrument and has to be in place. But the problem is, for what purpose is it being used?	Anthony advocated the merits of the students' feedback surveys and its importance to the institution; he believed the current model needed some improvements. However, he questioned the objective and purpose of this tool.	Legitimacy and purpose of the students' experience survey as a matter of interest	Quality evaluation	Quality of teaching and learning	The right weapon used for the wrong purpose
5.3	Anthony	And there is, there is something what really has to become part of our discourse when we are talking about the quality of teaching, because for the purposes that particular instrument is being used is negatively affecting quality of teaching.	Anthony contended the ultimate purpose and use of the student feedback could impact adversely on the quality of teaching	Legitimacy and purpose of the students' experience survey as a matter of interest	Quality evaluation	Quality of teaching and learning	The maddening clash between legitimacy and intention
5.4	Christine	It could be a metaphor. Um, just picking up on two things that come out here. It certainly, for me, it's credible in some ways, in some aspects but there's serious flaws with it, making it a very poor instrument because um, ah, to be at the adults, so to	Christine believed there were mixed feelings about the students' survey being a credible instrument for measuring quality. This	Mixed opinion about the credibility of the students' survey	Survey validity	Course evaluation	Students are customers and sessional teachers are 'junior partners'

Appendices

	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
		<p>speak and we find it difficult to be objective at the best of times. And now we expecting students to be objective, to tell us the quality of our work, of our programme and so Fortum, and I also think that we are setting up ourselves to fail in making quality here. Look at the latest terminology: uh, who are our students and now to be regarded as our junior partners. You've read about chateau. Creatively it was customers they still are, but now we have to regard them as our junior partners. So how do you treat junior partners?</p>	<p>instrument expected students to objectively assess the work of teachers; the students were not only considered as customers but also as the teachers' 'junior partners'</p>				
5.5	Matthew	<p>Yes, I think it does have value I think, to, to, to a, to a limited extent. Um, it is measuring something, you know, that something is probably a worthwhile thing to measure. Uh, students' perceptions and um, how much that they, the, the uh, [pause] staff engage with them and, so, you know give the impression that they care and so on. So, I think it's a worthwhile thing to study. And there's probably an element of, you know, it probably does to some extent reflect the quality of [pause] um [pause] the teaching and learning, um [pause] yeah to a limited extent I suppose – to some extent.</p>	<p>Matthew acknowledged the merits of the students' feedback survey and outlined its importance in reflecting the quality of teaching and learning; he still believed the system had its limitations</p>	<p>The importance of the students' feedback surveys</p>	<p>Quality evaluation</p>	<p>Quality of teaching and learning</p>	<p>The students' feedback survey as a double-edged weapon</p>
5.6	John	<p>Um, let's go back to is it a metaphor. Certainly, it is. Um, I think the university can be any case, [pause] that the importance of the CES – who uses it, who [pause] communicates to students that it's very important for you to fill in because we listen to you. Um, could it be a metaphor? Yes of course it could be because it's certainly currently being used in a very bad way. [pause] Um, because if you go back to is it a metaphor, I think it's the wrong metaphor.</p>	<p>John highlighted the importance of the proper management of the students' feedback surveys: the current use of this tool was questionable</p>	<p>The questionable use of the students' feedback surveys</p>	<p>Survey management</p>	<p>Quality of teaching and learning</p>	<p>Unreliable instrument to judge quality of teaching and learning</p>
5.7	John	<p>Um, most of the professors we [pause] that attracted us to go to into a particular university were some of the worst teachers I ever came across in my life. Um, so you had the [pause] the, the metaphor, the absent-minded professor, the disorganised professor, um, the professor who taught the wrong class. These are the narratives that students talked about, the narratives of the mad professor. One of my professors asked me to look after his dogs because you know, he was doing something at home.</p>					

Appendices

	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
5.8	John	Um, there are limits to, to that, but yeah, you, you still looked forward to working [pause] and studying and reading for the degree and this was the best thing cos, in the world. [pause] Globally, which attracted you to a university. Where, and, and indeed when the professor left a university you followed. Um, so again it's a very interesting divide: it could be a metaphor, it is being used, um and it could be a better indication of quality.	John upheld the limitations of the students' feedback survey and believed this tool could convey a better measure of quality.	Limitation of the students' feedback survey	Quality evaluation	Quality of teaching and learning	Unreliable instrument to judge quality of teaching and learning
6	Qn.6	<b>What is your opinion about the reliability and the validity of the student feedback surveys?</b>					
6.1	Anthony	Again, it depends what we are going to use that, as well. And in that context, then we can measure and raise validity. Is it really measuring what is supposed to measure? So, what is this supposed to measure? If it supposed to measure quality of teaching and whatever that quality of teaching is, either the language you use, the assessment task, is it the content – is whatever, whatever it is. Is it really measuring that what it is supposed to measure?	Anthony challenged the reliability of the student feedback survey. He questioned the legitimacy of the main purpose of this measurement tool and what it was destined to measure? could the student-teacher relationship, the course content and assessment tasks be considered additional measurement criteria.	Validity of student's survey feedback	Quality evaluation	Quality of teaching and learning	The maddening clash between legitimacy of measurement criteria and purpose
6.2	Anthony	I doubt. Why doubt? Because I think it is um, as we call it, happy sheets. And that happy sheet can be affected by impulse, by personal liking and who knows what else can. So, I've got some doubts that it is, it is valid instrument if it's measuring quality. As well to certain extent, if it's measuring teachers' performance as well. I got some doubts. There are some, yeah, definitely certain, certain merits in that as well.	Although he concurred with the merits of the students' feedback survey, Anthony doubted the accuracy of this tool to measure the teachers' performance; he concluded the 'happy sheets' could be affected by the respondents' subjective impulses.	Mixed evaluation of students' feedback surveys	Quality evaluation	Quality of teaching	Happy sheets to record subjective outbursts
6.3	Anthony	If you're talking about reliability, okay, um, probably yeah, you can repeat it. Um [pause] might be probably, let's say, reliable, especially if it is I don't know repeated at different times or whatever. So, if you have certain pattern, if a particular teacher is, I don't know, teaching three, four, five classes and who knows what else, different, different subjects or courses. In that case if you can see mega – some pattern may, maybe, maybe yes.	Anthony believed some issues such as the teachers' workload, teaching different subjects and interacting with different cohorts of students could deliver inconsistent outcomes	The impact of course/class dynamics on survey outcomes	Quality evaluation	Quality of teaching	The voice of the survey individual repeating patterns of results

Appendices

	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
6.4	Anthony	But I'm coming back to my first statement. The first thing for me is, what is the purpose of that? Because, if the purpose of that is to measure quality and to purely measure this performance, I think it is not valid and uh, uh, it's questionable if it is reliable.	Based on the ambiguous purpose of the survey, Anthony concluded this quality measuring tool was unreliable	Correlation between surveys' ambiguous purpose and unreliable outcomes	Quality evaluation	Quality of teaching	The maddening clash between legitimacy of measurement criteria and purpose
6.5	Christine	Could be a metaphor for me. But although I do question its validity, reliability for all the reasons that have been put up there, because the responses are just too subjective and too emotive. I remember one time a colleague came to help me, um, 'CHRISTINE I'm sunk because as I have just given back the grades, the course co-ordinator came in and encouraged my students to fill in the CES right now...' And he felt so not confident about what the students would view him as, because he's just handed out the grades and they were not performing very well.	Christine also outlined the timing of the students' survey and highlighted the emotions related to poor students' performance and the impact on the CES scores; she believed it was a source of immense stress for the course coordinators to have good scores for their respective courses	Timing of survey on the outcomes	Survey outcomes	Survey management	Too subjective; too emotive; bad timing; stressed course coordinators
6.7	Matthew	Um [pause] well I think it's a, a, it's obviously a valid um, measure of students' um, experience, because that's what they're, that's what the students are indicating what their experience was and it's – whether it's, whether it goes beyond that I'm not sure, so whether – you know, whether they are in a position [pause] to measure [pause] uh, or to judge other aspects of it, but you, they can certainly value, they can certainly accurately [pause] uh, express what their experience was, I don't think there's much doubt about that. But beyond that I don't, I don't know there's really a lot of uh, um, validity to it.	Matthew believed the students feedback survey was valid as it depicted clearly the students' experience; he also advocated this is the tool that was available although he doubted the ability for students to judge the quality of teaching.	The students' feedback survey as the main measurement tool for quality	Quality evaluation	Quality of teaching and learning	The twin roles of students: judge and party; which one can be trusted?
6.8	Matthew	Reliability – the big thing that sort of worries me about them is often very small perc –proportion of students who engage in the uh, surveys and uh, you know, it's almost um, [pause] you know I wonder about sometimes about the other 80% or 90% of students who don't, who don't fill them in and, uh, what are they thinking?	Matthew alleged the low sample size of respondents to the survey; he also wondered about those who decided not to provide any feedback	From low responses to non-participation to the feedback survey	Student Feedback	Survey validity	Invalid due to low participation rate
6.9	Matthew	[pause] So, yeah but I'll say that the size of the, of the responded group is, is the big one, sort of worries me. And I do see the people getting uh, very high scores off a low percentage of students. And uh, you know I think there's, the majority of	According to Matthew, the sample size and low participation was a cause for concern; some academics received high feedback scores from low	The distortion of the feedback scores without the majority of students' voices	Student Feedback	Survey validity	Unpredictable survey participation rates suggest distorted students' voices

Appendices

	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
		the students who haven't responded are probably saying as much as the few, as the minority who do.	percentage of students. He believed the non-participants would probably be saying as much as those who did the survey.				
6.10	John	Uh, look, if I get good feedback, then of course it is a metaphor. Um, if I get bad feedback, then I say it could be a metaphor. But that illustrates the subjectivity, you know, of the issue. Um, it, it reliability is a, a problem because of sample. Um, so you have to [pause] weigh it up versus [pause] uh, the, the thing you cannot count true is the, the issue in a sense that sometimes if I have to discipline a student, then that's a good education because you're disciplining, preparing somebody for what it could be like when you go out to work.	John posited the tricky nature of the feedback survey based on the student experience and highly dependent on the students' personal experience with the class dynamics and management.	The impact of multiple variables on the survey outcomes	Student Feedback	Survey validity	Students' maturity: the 'linking pin' to trusted survey results
6.11	John	But personally, they've had a bad experience because of that discipline. Um, and in a university context thing, you'll not like it and you see it as a bad experience because of I've been disciplined. I can't use a mobile phone in class, for example. Um, so if we've got, you know, the issues of [pause] reliability if you – if the student has had a bad experience because they, they were late in submitting, an essay, um, then it's a very bad instrument because [pause] it's not measuring [pause] the sense of responsibility which is on both sides. It's – coming to a university carries responsibility on both sides. We, we have to do a good job. [pause] And the students also need to do a good job.	John questioned the validity of the survey instrument to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning; the onus was placed on only one party: the students. Furthermore, the teachers' application of discipline would often be misconstrued and impacted negatively on the feedback scores.	The one-sided influence on students' feedback outcomes	Student Feedback	Survey validity	The students' playing gods' role in the feedback survey
6.12	Nathalie	Um, I, I sort of partially agree with the, agree, very similar to the person before me. Um, but uh, I think that I have to say that um, [pause] if, um, students oft – often use uh, the surveys to punish the teacher, uh, a lecturer. They often um, uh, regard giving much thought, they just fill it up so just um done it, done and over with. They don't really put much effort into it very often. Um [pause] I, I really don't have much of a good view in terms of what they're used for and how they – I mean how can they take – they don't know, what I know. Um, I'm sorry but, for me, this is just a nonsense kind of stuff, so, there's other ways of measuring quality of	Nathalie outlined the survey could be punitive measurement tool in the hands of students, she also questioned the validity of this instrument and upheld there are other ways to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning	The impact of multiple variable on the survey outcomes	Student Feedback	Survey validity	Which one is better? a journey with many destinations or many journeys to one destination

Appendices

	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
		the academic, uh, um, uh teaching and uh, and uh, and a good way of this other, other possibilities. Other ways you can do it.					
6.13	Nathalie	But students are dysfunction so what are you actually measure with it. They satisfied with the environment? It takes, it takes, I don't know. I don't know. To me it's someone else's, really.					
7	Qn.7	<b>In your opinion, what are the different ways of measuring the quality of teaching and learning within the higher education sector?</b>					
7.1	Christine	Um, most of [unclear – 0:44:29.6] a combination of is – my preference I would say. So, they talk about peer reviews and I got involved in two semesters in peer reviews. It can be scary because you don't know what's coming back someone's observations but it is a huge learning curve and helps me to have affirmation of what I'm doing that's good and what I can change.	Christine expressed her opinion about peer reviews and valued the feedback of colleagues to validate the course pedagogy and delivery.	The impact of peer-review feedback	Peer-review Feedback	Evaluation methods	Peer reviews
7.2	Matthew	Well, probably the ideal, the ideal way would be to have some sort of um, exit um, you know [pause] uh, uh, examinations I think. Um, you know, across the, across the board, across disciplines, um, you know, uh, whether that, whether that really occurs. I suppose we're self-accrediting, we [pause] um, the way we measure it is whether, I suppose it's almost a self-defining measure. Um, yeah, so [pause] I suppose you, you could do it by the quality, the, the perceptions of the students or the employers, or um [pause] you compare our stud – you know, how well our students adapt when they move internationally. You know, turned out pretty well.	Matthew outlined some of the probable methods of measuring quality would include: the academics' self-evaluation, the perception of both students and management and the post-university performance of students.	Multiple ways to measure quality	Quality evaluation	Performance Management	Pot-pourri of quality measurement tools
7.3	John	Um, I think it, it's a, it – in my opinion it's a case of whether the students will become your evangelists. Um, so students will evangelise, and they'll say they've had a good experience.					Students as 'evangelists'
7.4	John	Um, drawing back to my own experience again [pause] um, [pause] students will tell other people that they've had a good or bad experience [pause] and, and that's okay, you know, I don't mind the overall uh, um, that measure, and I still think, you know, the exit point is a good measure. Um, because I don't think students are [pause] they are not going to be [pause] that naive as to say that the					Students' Good dad/bad dad experience

Appendices

	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
		university is without challenges. And I think it's that point of communication.					
7.5	John	Um, if the point of communication matches what the students say, then it's a very good measure because if a student, if you communicate and if you set the expectation high, then a student who says they've had a very bad time, could actually be a good thing. And if it's, 'I've had a really difficult time because [pause] I was meant to think.' And that's a very [pause] different form of communication to [pause] – the university standard was low enough, I was exploited as a student.	John believed that, sometimes students' bad university experience, would not be construed as a deficiency in the quality standard.	Tension between the 'bad experience' rhetoric and the reality of quality education	Quality evaluation	Quality of teaching	Trade-off between high standard and high expectations. High expectations inversely affect quality
7.6	John	And I think it's that, the match up of, of the, the, the initial expectation versus the narrative that comes out. [pause] So that the standard is high and the narrative is, 'I've had a difficult time, but I've learnt a lot.' [pause] Then that's a good measure.					Trade-off between standard, expectations and narratives. The paradox of students' learning experience
7.7	Nathalie	Um, [pause] ah, well I have a privilege of studying in various universities around the world and um, everywhere I went their [pause] student satisfaction surveys were in the form of not how much your teacher – how well you teacher performed or how well university performed, it's about how well you performed in that course. So, how you rank yourself, um, and how much effort did you put in to the course and the course of study. And, um, how much you think you could contribute to the, the study. And then they end with – the resolve is focused on the student and their work and their performance and their – they thing rather than focus on the actual uh, teaching staff, but in the end, you know, a lot of those places I went to didn't need self-assurances.	Nathalie recalled her university experience and the different ways of measuring the quality of teaching and learning such as: the students' experience, the teacher's scholarship, engagement and contribution to the course of study.	Multiple ways to measure quality	Quality evaluation	Performance Management	'Pot-pourri' of quality measurement tools
7.8	Anthony	Um, [pause] obviously there are a number of different ways that quality can be measured if you defined it properly. Um, [pause] we already mentioned that there is probably one of the, of the measures as a metaphor used this experience survey. I would like to little bit, um, [pause] break it down, into subs, and de – deconstruct that experience, because this a big word, because as Dewey would say, 'We do not learn from experience. We learn from reflecting on that experience.'	Anthony argued there were different ways of measuring if that notion had been properly defined; one of the overwhelming criteria would be construed as a metaphor.	Well-defined and clear questions essential to the effective measurement of quality	Quality tool effectiveness	Students' feedback survey	'Pot-pourri' of quality measurement tools

Appendices

	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
7.9	Anthony	And I'm asking myself, 'Do we really give, give opportunity to our students that they reflect whatever they, they do. Is this survey that we give them, opportunity to reflect?' I have doubt.	Anthony wondered if students were afforded the opportunity through the feedback survey to reflect on their experiences	Opportunity for reflection missed	Quality tool effectiveness	Students' feedback survey	Opportunity to reflect
7.10	Anthony	Um, real experience, a number of speakers mentioned their own experience in, in learning through university and some other forms of, of education. Uh, I believe that it is much, much holistic, um, uh, holistic, uh, uh, uh, I think when you talk about experience, and it pleased the university I take a look into uh, creation of knowledge, whatever perception of knowledge is.	Anthony believed the discourses about university education led to more holistic approach to institutional creation of knowledge through individual experiences	The discourses about institutional creation of knowledge through experience	Knowledge Creation	University's mission	Holistic measure of quality; multi-faceted mission of the university
7.11	Anthony	It is probably acquiring of some set of skills that previously our students didn't have. And most importantly, what sort of attitudes are we developing and creating and what sort of values as well we are sharing. Uh, if those maybe four components – that is probably not exhaustive, we've got those four components, are not part of that university experience and uh, it seems to me the way how we measure that experience, either through the survey or through the assessment task, which are the major instruments, probably, that we measure what may be their creation of knowledge and maybe skills.	Anthony outlined the students' progressive acquisition of knowledge scaffolded from semester to semester; the measurement of the scaffolded knowledge acquisition could be measured by a limited number of components via the following instruments: Feedback surveys, assessment tasks	The progressive acquisition of students' knowledge and experience measured by a limited number of instruments	Scaffolded knowledge	Measurement Instruments	Students' survey versus measurement of scaffolded knowledge
7.12	Anthony	But the other very two important components ingredients of that experience, which are particular aedicules, in certain system of variables – untouched.					
8	Qn.8	<b>What are your views about the different assessment criteria for measuring the quality of teaching and learning?</b>					
8.1	John	Um, I think the assessment criteria is currently used as a metaphor. Um, and I think it does ask the right questions because it, it loads the responsibility of clarity of teaching providing good quality feedback [pause] um, [pause] timely feedback, um, you know, possibly – and these are actually very valid measures. Um, though what it doesn't do is, is capture the context. Um, so, [pause] can it be used as a rightly, in the right context? It could be, but at the moment it is used as a metaphor, but again I think the metaphor's is wrong.	John concurred the assessment criteria were plausible metaphors as well-structured and clearly defined questions preceding quality of feedback to students could be related to the notion of quality.	Well-defined criteria and proper feedback on assessment essential for quality experience.	Assessment criteria	Quality of teaching	Marking guides and system criteria assist as quality measuring instruments

Appendices

	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
8.2	John	Um, in my mind I think you're doing it to link it to the students' performance. And, in other words, um, [pause] if you want to use it and, and it could be used as a metaphor sense, I think you need to juxtaposition the feedback the student is giving against correct criteria versus um, the [pause] the context, the inputs that they put in. And I think if you put it, if you join the two, it provides you with a very good metaphor.	John upheld the correlation between the students' performance and the feedback they were providing against the following: the correct criteria, their effort and the context.	Correlation between students' performance and assessment criteria and management	Assessment criteria	Course management	
8.3	Anthony	Um, [pause] my starting point in when, where – starting point when we are talking about the assessment and assessment criteria, or whatever it is that they already tell me every single assessment task; every single assessment experience should be learning opportunity. And, I'm a little bit afraid that it is not the case, whatever assessment task we are talking about, because it is um, embedded into one business model of this, which is uh, based on mass production. And if it's based on the mass production it is uh, obviously dictated by um, um, productivity.	Anthony argued about the essence of clearly stipulated assessment criteria and its objective within the university's current business model; ha also outlined the alignment of the assessment tasks with the concepts of 'mass production' and productivity.	Assessment tasks and criteria dictated by the 'massification' business models	Assessment criteria	Course management	mass production
8.4	Anthony	And uh, if the productivity becomes essential, of that business model, uh, I have very ah, strong doubts that assessment tasks, regardless what it is – we know that we um, proliferate with exams and now even more online and uh, um, with some, uh, ass, essay type, either group or individual and all of that cheating which is, which is present and, and, and part of our discourse ...	According to Anthony, the current business model precluded any move towards the improvement of quality of teaching and learning; the structural changes in assessment tasks: the proliferation of online tests, group assignments and shortened exam duration were a few examples of institutionalised alignment;	Alignment of the assessment tasks and course management with the neo-liberalist business models	Assessment tasks	Course management	Neo-liberal business model
8.5	Anthony	... um, just simply are probably evidence that, that students don't perceive assessment task as a learning opportunity. They perceive it as an um, measure, not to acquire, to obtain knowledge but [pause] some sort of credentials. And if objective of education is getting credentials, not to develop knowledge, so obviously [pause] assessment tasks are not going to be designed to provide learning experience but just are going to be one maybe	Anthony also argued that students did not perceive as a learning opportunity; he outlined the tension between the acquisition of knowledge and credentials. If the assessment tasks purported to gain credentials rather the acquiring knowledge, then,	The tension between the students' perceived objectives of assessment tasks and the real purpose of completing them	Credentials vs knowledge	Course management	

Appendices

	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
		another hurdle towards [pause] acquiring that credential.	the structure of assessments would only be scaffolded hurdles.				
8.9	Christine	Could be a metaphor for mecum [pause] I – my sense is that, the marking guides the system criteria, what we expect to find in students’ assessments. For me they tend to be really quite clear and quite consistent. We know what we want from students and based on that we brief the students on what we are looking for. So, I think from that perspective [pause] I can expect that it is – it <i>could</i> be, a metaphor.	Christine found the marking guides and rubrics very useful documents to ensure the consistency of the assessment; she used those documents to brief the students about the requirements of those assignments	Importance and consistency of marking guides	Communication strategies	Course management	Marking guides and system criteria assist as quality measuring instruments
9	Qn.9	<b>What do you think of the impact of professional development on the performance of sessional academics?</b>					
9.1	Nathalie	...side of it. Um [pause] whether, whether they’re um, that the person is a sessional or permanent staff I think um, having, having um, opportunity to have a good professional development and given the time to do it and, and um, focus on their professional development will certainly have, uh, immense impact on the development of the, of that academic, of that person. Um, and then, somehow, it will eventually or immediately translate to um, the way the person teaches and then oh, then have the ability to translate to um, the person’s – the quality of the, of the programme that is being delivered, and hopefully by [pause] by default to the better experience [pause] for the student.	Nathalie outlined the benefits of professional development for all categories of academics - the newly acquired knowledge would be reflected through the quality of the teaching and overall programme leading to better students’ learning experience	The benefits of PD on the quality of teaching and learning and the course standard.	Quality evaluation	Quality of teaching and learning	PD important for sessional academics
9.2	Nathalie	Um, [pause] but again we’re looking at issues of uh, often professional development is tied with the financial restrictions. And, only very few people can do professional development or it’s often not backed if you’re applying for something it’s often knocked back because um, the management might not necessarily see uh, obviously this has a, uh, something that needs to be a priority or something that needs to happen.	Nathalie argued that PD programs were considered as increased cost to the organisation and often slashed; The PD programs were often slashed due to lack of justification foot the implementation and expected outcomes.	Financial restrictions on PD programs due to unsatisfactory justifications	PD costs vs quality outcomes	Quality of teaching and learning	Economic rationalism: financial constraints for professional development
9.3	Nathalie	Um, [pause] I personally believe that professional development – there should be a lot more of it. Uh, and it should a lot, it, it, it, should, should be um, somewhat [pause] should be some kind of [pause] something there that, that would be associated with the quality of the delivery of the programme and in	Nathalie advocated in favour of professional development programs that would contribute to both the quality of the teaching academics and the course standard	PD benefits	Quality standard	Professional Development	More PD to improve quality of teaching and learning

Appendices

	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
		turn the quality of you as a person teaching that programme.					
9.4	Anthony	Uh, definitely professional development is uh, one of the very important ingredients of um, academic uh, growth, as such, because in the environment and it's all very framed and everything is changing, changing and the face of change, is, is accelerating etc.	Anthony acknowledged PD as essential ingredients for continuous academic growth due to keep pace with accelerating change	PD essential for academic growth	Continuous change	Professional Development	PD as an essential 'cog in the wheel' of quality teaching and learning
9.5	Anthony	So, the [pause] question is with sessional teachers, who's responsibility that, that particular development is. Is it institutional responsibility and to what extent? What is the responsibility of the sessional academic? Because if the business model is, is uh, designed that way and probably in the cost structure is considered that uh, casual, sessional academics are mercenaries, they are enterprises by themselves. They got, I don't know, portfolio of careers, portfolio of expertise, or whatever, which they sell on that education market, let's call it that way. If institution perceive that it is responsibility of such in the medium which for, for who the metaphor is, that he is the enterprise, in that case they probably might not budget that or put into, into their, uh, uh, cost structure to [pause] uh, contribute to that development because otherwise, uh, why wouldn't they come anyway on the board in the, and the invest into them as part, as part of the institution?	Anthony outlined the complexity of professional development relating to sessional academics; institutional or individual responsibility for the PD. As sessional academics were mere 'mercenaries' or self-employed contractors with their own portfolio of expertise in their respective fields, it would be their responsibility to upgrade their skills to enhance the 'marketability' of their services. The university business model precluded any investment without rustication	The rationalisation of policies for upgrading sessional academics' skills\	Skills upgrade	Professional Development	Upskilling dilemma: the institutions' or sessional academics' responsibility
9.6	Anthony	So, again we are going back to, to the model and uh, to the, to the bottom line. And uh, I assume, I don't have evidence for it, but I assume that the business model is built on that way, that those expenses are being transferred too, for their development to casuals. And other, then uh, being uh, [pause] in the system, in the entire structure, designed that way to contribute to their, their professional development.					Supremacy of the business models: dictates the bottom line and professional development
9.7	Christine	Could be a metaphor. I fancy that for perhaps the newer sessionals, despite the fact that they be time poor, they may want to optimise the opportunities in PD's in order to improve what they're doing.	Christine believed the new sessionals would benefit from professional development despite the time constraints.	Impact of time constraint on professional development	Professional development	Training & development	Important for new sessionals

Appendices

	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
9.8	Matthew	Well, that's obviously, um, it's important, very important uh, professional development, undertaken by themselves off their own initiative or, you know, provided by, you know, induction and that sort of thing, uh, familiarising [pause] new staff and pre – inducting them into the process of each institution's important, but obviously most of it occurs uh, by themselves, then, it terms of their own education and reading and keeping up with their, their own discipline. It's, it's important.	Matthew outlined the importance of the university's generic professional development for sessional academics such as induction training; the sessional academics should be responsible for the upgrading their education and keeping up with their respective disciplines.	The dual responsibility of the institution and the sessional academics for professional development	Staff development	Professional development	Casual academics' self-directed learning and 'self-upskilling'
9.9	John	Uh, [pause] if, if I look at the, the narrative that's around me, yes, it is used as a metaphor. Um, but I think, you know, it, it's more of a trick. [pause] Um, it is extremely important, but I think it's more rhetorical. Um, so therefore I think it could be used as a better metaphor.					
10	Qn.10	<b>How far do you think the selection of sessional academics could impact on the quality of teaching and learning?</b>					
10.1	Anthony	I think it is a metaphor. And uh, definitely, definitely it can affect uh, quality of teaching and learning. Probably a number of different ways.					
10.2	Anthony	The first one is, because they have got exposure, probably for the broader, uh, area of education. Especially if they operate in two, three, four universities, and some of them do that. So, they can bring either some of uh, um [pause] that uh, equity from the other universities uh, to, to Abbey U.					multi-institutional' experience; a plus factor for sessional academics
10.3	Anthony	Yes. So therefore, in the selection process – in selection process, probably certain criteria are set anyway, why would you employ someone as a sessional and what sort of credential that particular person is supposed to bring? So, I believe that again, going back to my favourite expression, The Business Model, uh, you would like to find on the market as um, uh, best, uh, goods or, or a service that you, you can get at the time. And uh, um, then there is another question and there is a, a, development of longer term relationship among uh, institution and also casual, sessional academics. So, that they basically have some sort of security even though it is maybe fictitious security, that they are going to be recalled again and called again and	According to Anthony, the recruitment and selection of sessional academics were no different from hiring a product or service; as the university stuck with its business model the preferred selection criteria would be choosing candidates that had the credentials for the jobs, establishing long term relationships and offering the opportunities for repeated engagement	The correlation between the business model and the selection of sessional academics	Selection criteria	Staff Selection	The business model dictates the recruitment and selection of sessional academics

Appendices

	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
		called again. Even though their employment status uh, doesn't guarantee, doesn't guarantee that.					
10.4	Anthony	So, uh, on the other side, when we mention communication, uh, it is also critical, uh, when you, when they recruit and have academics, how are they going to communicate the quality standards and quality expectations of that institution that might significantly differ from quality standards, expectation? It may be some institutions that, that they operate in.					Communication about quality standards not in sync with actual quality standards
10.5	Anthony	So, [pause] the, the communication in that case, is absolutely critical and there was one question, one question about that, but I've no doubts, about uh, the quality of learning and teaching associated with uh, employment of sessional academics.					Selection of academics = quality of learning and teaching
10.6	Christine	Could be a metaphoreme, I do believe with a very strong relevant selection criterion in employ of sessional This pool of talent certainly could contribute to quality in the teaching and learning environment. Um, one of the things that I was told and I'm not sure whether this, this practice is still being maintained, is that uh, a particular head of school, being new to the school, told people [unclear – 0:58:35.1], 'I want to have a l, I want to have a say. I want to approve who you employ as your sessionals.' And one of the criteria was this one – the CES.	Christine believed the proper selection of sessional academics would contribute to the quality of teaching and learning; the institution needed to establish strong selection criteria. In some cases, the selection procedure would require the approval of the head of school for the appointment of sessionals. She added that one of the criteria for employability was the CES scores.	Importance of coherent criteria for the selection of sessional academics	Employee specification	Staff Selection	Need for strong selection criteria - other than CES scores
10.7	Matthew	Uh, well, I suppose it's somewhat important. It's fairly important, it's one of a number of factors that affects the quality of um, [pause] the teaching and learning. So obviously the uh, you know, the other academic staff associated with the course, the quality of the course, the senior academics, the nature of the students, the institute as a whole. So, you know, sessional academics are, you know, one of the ingredients. Uh, but you know, you can imagine that probably, [pause] you know, even a terrible sessional academic – some students, if they're terrific students and the course leader's a good one, they can probably still get a good quality	Matthew believed the proper selection of sessional academics would certainly contribute towards the quality of teaching and learning within the organisation. He also posited that, the wrong selection of sessionals would not impact negatively on the course experience if the gap was filled by a good course coordinator.	The selection criteria and other variables responsible for the quality of teaching and learning	Selection criteria	Staff Selection	Casual academics: right selection =good quality; wrong selection = bad quality

Appendices

	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
		experience out of the, of the learning, out of the course and, vice versa.					
10.8	John	Um, I'm just going through the key of the question and this is relating to, relating to the selection of sessional staff – is it a quality metaphor or is it, could it be a quality metaphor? My answer's no. It, it's not a part of the [pause] from what I have seen, the selection of sessional staff is not being transparent [pause] uh, because, you know, for example, on the university website, [pause] uh, do we [pause] have a profile of the sessional staff? No. So we don't even, there's no profile. The students don't even know that they are casual, sessional or whatever. So, the selection, the narrative behind the selection is not transparent at all. So, the answer is it is not a metaphor at the moment.	John deplored the lack of transparency concerning the selection of sessional academics: the selection criteria could not be found on the institution's website. It was also noteworthy that students would not differentiate between those two categories (sessional and tenured) of academics.	Lack of transparency concerning the selection of sessional academics	Selection criteria	Staff selection	No structured recruitment and selection criteria for sessional academics
11	Qn.11	<b>What do you think of the impact of quality of course materials and delivery as a contributing factor to the improvement of teaching and learning when relying on sessional academics?</b>					
11.1	Matthew	Uh, probably about the same as for any other academic. You know, it's a, um, [pause] yeah, it's a, uh, it's important. It is important, the quality of [pause] teaching materials. Yeah. Whether it's for, [pause] casuals or permanent staff. It is important.	Matthew believed the quality of the course material was vital for of the quality of teaching and learning for both tenured and sessional academics	Importance of quality of course materials	Quality Standard	Course Management	Course materials need to be the same for both sessional and permanent
11.2	John	Yes, it's, it's highly important. Um, because [pause] we're talking about, you know, branding, we're talking about, um, [pause] consistency of the image. Um, we're talking about [pause] removing the person um, so you, you know, once your materials are there, [pause] then technically, uh, um, anybody can deliver the course in a very consistent way. So even if the person leaves, then it's a form of business continuity um, [pause] business as usual, part of the globalisation, you can teach it [pause] in uh, um, in any, in Singapore, in Vietnam, in Indonesia, in Melbourne.	John upheld the argument in favour of consistent quality teaching materials; the quality standard of the course materials conveyed the solid brand image the institution. He also believed that good course material could be delivered by any academics on both onshore and offshore campuses	The correlation between the course materials and the brand image of the institution	Quality standard	Course Management	Branding the university image: consistency of the course materials and delivery
11.3	John	So, I see that it is a little bit of a double-edged sword. Um, the quality is exceptionally high, or it needs to be exceptionally high, particularly, you know, this one-time assessment for everything, but it's got to be of a very high quality, taking into account globalisation because cultural differences	John highlighted the standardisation of the course materials could be a double-edged weapon because of the globalisation of higher education, boundary less institutions	The impact of globalisation of HE on both standardisation and customisation of course materials	Course standard	Course Management	Business model = global university = boundary less campuses = standardisation of course materials

Appendices

	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
		be delivered. So, you know, I'm almost saying that standardisation isn't the answer.	and cultural differences aiming at customising the materials for different students' cohorts and campuses.				
11.4	Nathalie	Um, I, phew, I think that um, sessional teachers have little input into the, uh, into the development of uh, the programme. Sometimes maybe they be part of the focus group of some sort, but usually they, the permanent staff member or co-ordinator have the, the, most of the, of the people involved. The most say to, as to what changes will happen to the programme or, how, assessments will be done, or whatever.	Nathalie stated the course material were developed by full-time course coordinators and other permanent academics; they were also responsible for any subsequent changes.	The course materials exclusively developed by full-time course coordinators	Quality standard	Course management	I have a different opinion: as a sessional academic, I developed course materials and coordinated courses.
11.5	Nathalie	Um, obviously it has to be somewhat standardised if we're relying on a lot of um, sessional staff. So, anyone can pick it up and, and just do it. Uh, about, um [pause] and it can be delivered very easily from different parts of the world.	Nathalie believed the course materials should be standardised to ensure consistency in quality and they were also delivered by sessional academics on different onshore and offshore campuses	Standardisation of course materials essential	Quality standard	Course management	'All for one: one for all' motto for the course materials: uniformity and standardisation
11.6	Nathalie	[pause] Uh, but again, uh, or going back to the quality of the role? Um, [pause] uh, obviously different person, different, different lecturer will deliver it differently, um, bring their own experiences to it. They also, um, bring their own personalities. Um, [pause] I don't really like standardising things very much, [laughing] you know, it's um, I don't, I understand it for very specific qualifications that is needs to be at that level and it needs to be standardised and fantastic, but I just don't like um, everyone stamped with the same rubber stamp.	Nathalie also concurred with the personal touch that every academic brought to the materials; she did not subscribe to strict standard course materials but noticed that policy was essential in some contexts.	Tension between customisation and standardisation of course materials	Quality Standard	Course Management	The quality of delivery may be enhanced by supplementing provided materials with personal artefacts
11.7	Anthony	Um, [pause] it, yeah definitely, the um, uh, the content and delivery are uh, absolutely critical, so I will just leave them and talk about them separately, even though they are interconnected.	Although they were interconnected, Antony chose to address the course content and delivery separately				
11.8	Anthony	Firstly, regarding the content and the – as we know from marketing and from every single business model, or whatever, that standardisation is contributing to the, to the quality. The best	Concerning the course contents, Anthony outlined the influence of the contemporary business	Arguments in favour of the standardisation of the course materials	Quality Standard	Course Management	Business model = global university = boundary less campuses =

Appendices

	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
		examples I know – McDonald’s and all, all the others. So, no doubts about that, that the standard, the standardisation of the content has to be maintained and probably the brightest minds should be involved with that. Specifically, when you are globalised, when it, uh, as universities you spreading through number of different cultures or whatever. So, no doubts about that. And to keep, uh, that level of uh, content, which is supposed to be, which is supposed to be delivered.	models and globalisation of higher education; he concurred with the standardisation of course materials to maintain the quality standard when they were delivered to different venues and cultures				standardisation of course materials
11.9	Anthony	But when we are talking about delivery, then even if you have standardised, let’s say, session plans – let’s call it that way, that every tutorial or every lecture has to be according to the session plan, even be timing or whatever. Uh, it is something what uh, is intentional or unintentionally to a certain extent discretion of the person, persons who is delivered it. And I think it should stay like that, because each of us are different. Different personalities, different styles, uh, different experience, different views on the same, same content as well; different interpretation of the same content. Different examples that, that uh, academics are going to use.	According to Anthony, the standardised delivery of materials highly depended on well-structured session plans to ensure consistency; however, the classes were run by academics with different styles, personalities, professional experiences that would influence the delivery of those materials.	The delivery of standard course materials influenced by different categories of academics	Quality Standard	Course Management	The quality of delivery may be enhanced by supplementing provided materials with personal artefacts
11.10	Anthony	So therefore, there should be some sort of flexibility in built, intentionally to contribute to the quality of uh, standardised, standardised content so that academics have that um, uh, discretion to inject their own flavour to it. And I think that this is not uh, um diminishing but it is enhancing the quality of learning and, and, and teaching.	Anthony believed the individual ‘flavour’ of academics to the standardised course materials would enhance the quality of teaching and learning	The contribution of the contextualisation of course materials to the quality of teaching and learning.	Standardisation vs customisation	Quality of teaching and learning	The quality of delivery may be enhanced by supplementing provided materials with personal artefacts
11.11	Christine	Could be a metaphor for me. I do see a direct correlation between quality and the materials used and the delivery more, uh, sorry, delivery performance on the part of the academic. Um, I suppose some of the things that have emerged, which is about if a sessional is confident enough and struggles to work with you on your own material, they will look at ways and means to make it work. There’s also the requirement to be able to read your different cohorts of students and different individuals within one cohort and try to tailor what you do to meet their needs.	According to Christine, there was a direct correlation between quality and the academics’ delivery performances; she believed some sessionals would do their utmost best to make the course work. It was up to the sessionals to identify the needs of different cohort of students and act accordingly.	Correlation between academics’ delivery performances and the notion of quality	Quality of delivery	Quality of teaching	There is a correlation between the quality of materials and delivery performance. What is more, it is necessary to adapt materials to meet the needs of different students in different cohorts.

Appendices

	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
11.12	Christine	I once taught in a cause where the course co-ordinator, ah, finished his PhD in a particular discipline and when he took over the course co-ordinator in running the programme he designed it in such a way that everyone agreed it was made for course graduate level. So how could we actually make it work? It became a most difficult time. And we couldn't be too obvious about not doing what he wanted us to do because as sessionals we may not be called, called back again, entire thing – the contents, the approach. [pause] The things that he expects the degree students to actually accomplish, it really wasn't real. Um, because I had done my post-graduate and some of the things that you were required to deliver in the programme – we did it in our post-graduate years. So, I truly felt sorry for the cohort of students.	Christine outlined the case of a course coordinator who was completing his doctoral studies and design his undergraduate course for a post-graduate audience; although the sessional tutors had to cope with this difficult situation, they had to comply with the instructions to avoid any reprisals	Academics' imprint on the course design and delivery of materials	Course standard	Course Design	The expectations of course coordinators for undergraduate courses are excessive: there is a danger of aiming at too high a level.
12	Qn.12	<b>What is your opinion about the impact of class sizes of the performance of both full-time and sessional academics?</b>					
12.1	John	Um, it's, it's very hard. It, it affects both full-time and part-time academics, sessional academics in both the same way. Smaller class size is best for delivery.	John believed the class sizes affected both full-time and sessional academics and smaller sizes preferred for quality delivery.	The effectiveness of smaller class sizes	Class design	Quality of teaching and learning	Size matters: smaller classes = better quality education
12.2	Nathalie	Same. Absolutely, absolutely agree. Small classes, smaller groups – better delivery, better quality, better input, better output.	Nathalie believed the class sizes affected both full-time and sessional academics and smaller sizes preferred for better quality outcomes.	The effectiveness of smaller class sizes	Class design	Quality of teaching and learning	Size matters: smaller classes = better quality education
12.3	Anthony	Yeah, during the speaking it's, it is the smaller group – because, the best way probably to study, to learn, to have some sort of dialogue. And if you haven't got a dialogue, uh, uh, it is that the, the, the learning uh, and teaching, um, really, um, is disadvantaged in that, in that sense. So, therefore, but, we also can say, it's horses for courses as we're sometimes, if you really have to, I don't know, disseminate some piece of information or whatever, it doesn't really matter if it's a small, or it is a large group. We know that the best uh, why we using radio and television when sometimes you have to deliver that message.	Anthony upheld the argument in favour of smaller groups of students to promote quality discussions and the preferred mode of communication with the students	The impact of class sizes on the quality of communication and delivery	Class design	Quality of teaching and learning	Size matters: smaller classes = better communication = student engagement = quality education
12.4	Anthony	But if we are talking about specifically a learning obviously, uh, smaller groups where each	Anthony argued that smaller class sizes fostered	The effectiveness of smaller class sizes	Class design	Quality of teaching and learning	Size matters: smaller classes = better

Appendices

	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
		individual have opportunity to contribute and to be involved in a building and creation of, of that knowledge is going to definitely enhance – enhance. Enhance contribution and, and the knowledge.	students’ engagement and contribution to the quality of learning				communication = student engagement = quality education
12.5	Christine	It is a metaphor for me. Certainly, the impact on the class size has a lot to do with what we are able to achieve and whether I could actually walk away taking pride in good work. There was a time when I had two tutorials back-to-back, so students after the first tote wanted me to stay to help. I was willing to, but because I had to run to the next tutorial I couldn’t, and the fact the matter remains, we’re fifty minutes or one-hour tutorial and there’s this much we can do if the numbers are too huge. Letting the students down. Dealing with the dynamics, basically um, detracts from the core business of doing something good and solid, in an hour.	Christine outlined the impact of class sizes on the quality of teaching. She recalled having back-to-back 50-minutes tutorials and the difficulty to devote more consultation time with needy students; the situation was more challenging for large class sizes.	Impact of class sizes on the quality of teaching and teacher engagement with students	Class sizes vs teacher engagement	Quality of teaching	Back to back tutorials wedge the time available; this diminishes the quality of teaching and learning.
12.6	Matthew	Um, yeah, I suppose it is, it is fairly important in some respects. As you say, some teaching can occur in a large group it doesn’t really affect it much but uh, yeah, it is, it is probably – and I think tutorials, you know, the size we have here, which is an average of 30 students, it’s a, not really in a [pause] a uh, [pause] it’s less than ideal. Small groups would be better, beneficial.	Matthew concurred with the effectiveness of smaller class sizes but found the quality of teaching not affected in larger class sizes. However, tutorial classes of 30 students would impact negatively on the quality of teaching and learning	The effectiveness of smaller class sizes	Class design	Quality of teaching and learning	Size matters: smaller classes = effectiveness; larger classes = ineffectiveness
13	Qn.13	<b>What are your views about the relationship between the notion of quality of teaching and cost-saving devices?</b>					
13.1	Nathalie	I hate cost-saving devices. I think it should not exist. Education should be free to everyone. It’s where I come from – education was free. From prep to PhD. And gosh, I really turned up to that didn’t I?	Nathalie abhorred the notion of cost-saving in higher education; she thought education should be totally free.				
13.2	Nathalie	Yeah. [laughing] No, I, I, I strongly believe me, my views are that um, if you want um, a really um, [pause] high quality education and research and, and uh, the country to move forward and be a leader and have really a knowledge society, you need to invest in education. It’s simple. You need to invest in education. Until our government um, learnt that uh, education is the future, um, until they	Nathalie believed that investment in education was vital for the advancement towards a knowledge society, leading in research and providing quality education	Education as an investment for the future	Quality Standard	Education Policy	

Appendices

	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
		get their heads around that, uh and, and until they see, well stop promoting um, big business and start investing in education, I think, um, we have a long way to go. But, seriously, education should be free.					
13.3	Anthony	[laughing] It's very interesting. I'm probably going to disagree with that, in the following sense. At the end of the day there is no such thing as free lunch. And cost has very – somebody has to pay that. It's only the question, who is going to pay and when is going to pay. So therefore, even though if there is perception that education is free and education is not free, because at the end of the day there is someone who is going to pay.	Anthony refuted the argument that education should be free; the perception of free education was flawed as the costs were incurred by a different party	Perception and reality about education as cost or investment	Cost vs investment	Education Policy	The cost of free service; who is paying?
13.4	Anthony	But, what is critical, what is critical? How philosophically, practically and also regarding policies as well is education treated? My major concern is – and what I vehemently disagree is that education can't and shouldn't be profit centre. Education should be cost centre. And when education is cost centre, in that case, it's going to be different approach to quality and to everything else.	Anthony outlined the education policies viewing education a profit centre although there was a cost factor attached to any investment in quality	The debate between education as a cost or an investment	Cost vs investment	Education Policy	Education: Profit or cost centre?
13.5	Anthony	On the other side, the other side of the argument is, if it is a business model and if it is profit centre, in that case, let's use also some merits of um, motivation, perception and psychological moments. There is a strong perception, in consumer mind that if it's a high price, that it is high quality. Okay? So, if we really want to deliver [pause] high quality, in that case there is no problem to set a high price. And uh, whatever it is going to cost, consumer is going to pay for that because why someone is buying I don't know, Mercedes Benz, is really Mercedes Benz so good comparing to, I don't know, Toyota Camry and stuff? Probably not, marginally it is. But there is a perception of quality, and because of that perception of quality bring image or whatever, people are ready to pay for that.	Anthony stated the contemporary business model for HE presented education as a product profit centre, with a price to pay for quality service; he also argued the customers would be willing to pay a high price for perceived high quality of the product or service. As soon as the brand image of quality was crested the price of education would not be questioned.	The impact of the brand image on the positioning of education as a profit centre	Quality standard	Marketisation of education	High price = high quality: myth or reality?
13.5	Anthony	So, on the other side – it's probably third thing, third point to, to, to mention. Uh, the problem is, by uh, approach to cutting cost, cutting cost, cutting cost and everything considering that it is some sort of saving to contribute to the bottom line, and it could be how much the academics are going to be	Anthony established the cost-cutting strategies (downsizing, reduction a salary bills and other variable costs) were management tools to	The impact of cost-saving devices on bottom line and quality	Bottom line vs quality	Quality of teaching and learning	The costs of cost-cutting; increased returns and lower quality

Appendices

	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
		paid, how many of them going to be employed and which status they want to feed their employment regarding the resources they are going to have, including stationary or whatever, and things like that. That is something what can negatively affect, affect quality.	improve the bottom line; in some cases, those decisions would affect the quality of teaching and learning				
13.6	Christine	Could be a metaphor. I think um, we are asked to work with a rather impossible model, when you reduce the finances and you're saying your output either remains the same or you've got to raise your output, but then, um, the input, the resources are reduced. Not an enviable position to be in. Not enviable at all. There's not even the right word to describe this enough.	Christine outlined the constant demand on academics to deliver more with less resources				Raising output while reducing the resources available presents a paradoxical situation.
13.7	Matthew	Um, [pause] yeah there's obviously a connection I suppose, and whatever sort of method of funding you have, you want to be, you know, careful with the way you spend your money and [pause] uh, I don't know – you know, why's that expenditure does creep in to any sort of organisation, any bureaucracy so I suppose inevitably you're looking for ways to save money and make sure you're not wasting it. I suppose if it's in moderation or it's done sensibly it's just a matter of judgment as it is to uh, you know, on a case by case basis, but whether it's publicly funded or privately, you know, the administrator doesn't need to keep an eye on expenditure and look for ways to spend sensibly.	Matthew found nothing wrong with the different methods of funding and the management of those funds; however, it was inevitable for sensible and regular control on publicly-funded institutions. He maintained those cuts should be moderately administered.	Management control on publicly-funded institutions	Cost vs investment	Management control	Aiming at moderate cost-cutting devices
14	Qn.14	<b>What do you think of peer partnerships on the quality of teaching and learning when relying on sessional academics?</b>					
14.1	Anthony	Oh definitely. I, I'm great supporter of uh, peer reviews, partnerships, whatever you want to call that, because uh, we have to understand one thing: when you are academic, when you are lecturer, tutor or whatever, when you get into the lecture theatre or when you get into the uh, tutorial room, you are very lonely. Okay, you are on your own. There is no one who is going to tell you, 'Yeah, it's good what you are doing/it's what you should improve.' There is uh, um, no observer except students. And that observation is then, I don't know, uh, out of that is going to be students' – students' experience survey.	Anthony confessed he supported peer-partnership programs; in lectures and tutorials, academics only faced the students who were the sole critiques of their performances as reflected through the students' feedback surveys. Thorough observation and honest from a colleague would definitely enable academics to improve.	Arguments in favour of the observation and evaluation of both students' and peers of academics' performances in class	Quality evaluation	Peer-partnership	Peer-partnership programs as complementary to student surveys

Appendices

	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
14.2	Anthony	So, if we – that should be part of our professional, professional uh, development, uh, and, and an enhancement. That we learn from each other, because just a morsel of different practice can significantly contribute to my own practice.	According to Anthony, peer-partnership programs should be an essential component of all academics' professional development	Peer evaluation as a significant component of PD	Staff evaluation	Professional development	Peer partnership = professional development
14.3	Anthony	So, having partnership, peer review, attending some other's lecture, some other's tutorials, uh, having some seminars even where the group of five, six, ten people would sit down and share those experience which they have observed in some others. All that can contribute to the quality of teaching. And also, to some sort of – I wouldn't call it standardisation because it cannot, it can uh, be in the, and probably understood in derogative way, but it can lift all boats, as we say. Okay?	Anthony found the community of academics should be encouraged to share their experiences through peer partnership programs, group discussions in seminars and providing feedback based on observation in class; those approaches would contribute to the quality of teaching	The impact of different interaction between academics on the quality of teaching	Quality evaluation	Quality of teaching	All forms of peer partnerships are recipes for better quality of teaching.
14.4	Anthony	So, the other problem is, if we are talking about this profit-centres, how you going fund that? Who is going pay for that? Because at the end of the day, there is no such thing as free lunch. So, if, if institution is driven (from our previous question) with cutting costs, then obviously it can contribute that such good practice from experience can maybe be switched.	Anthony argued about the costs attached to the implementation of peer-partnership programs; if the institutions were driven by cost-cutting, the promotion of such programs would be obviously discarded	The impact of cost-cutting policy on peer-partnership programs	Cost vs investment	Management policy	Peer partnership programs slashed by the business model
14.5	Christine	Could be a metaphor for me. I do believe in the value of peer partnerships to raise quality but there must be certain things in place. Such as, the way that we give the feedback really is important. To treat the peer with respect and give it in a manner that is actually helpful. And, uh, ideally there should be an element of trust between these two partners as well. So that whatever be here that could be deflating we anchor back to this is honesty back for my good, I'm not being torn down, I'm being helped. I think that will form an understanding, seriously must be in place for it to work.	Christine believed that peer partnership program improved quality but the trust factor between colleagues and the honest feedback provided would be important ingredient for its success.	The trust factor relating to peer-partnership programs	Peer-partnership vs trust	Communities of Practice	Providing feedback, developing trust - as key elements in peer partnerships - become very difficult elements for casuals to manage.
14.6	Matthew	Look I just haven't had enough experience. I've engaged in my first ever peer partnership this semester. I just don't know enough about them to	Matthew had no exposure to peer-partnership but found the project was a good initiative				

Appendices

	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
		know whether they are worthwhile or not. They sound like a good idea.					
14.7	Nathalie	Um, [coughing] I don't have any problem with, um, with peer, um, partnerships. I, um, I actually enjoy it. Uh, it's fun, uh, having someone observing me or I observe someone else and then I can see quite clearly what I'm doing wrong or what they doing wrong, and I think often communication about it, it's great.	Nathalie acknowledged the merits of observation and feedback from colleagues to improve the quality of teaching	Merits of peer-partnership programs	Quality evaluation	Quality of teaching	Peer partnership = quality of teaching
14.8	Nathalie	Um, I actually find it, when there is more than two, um, lecturers, that they bring the programme in...whether it's a tutorial or in the lecture theatre and or, we often do it in a major revision where we have three or four lecturers uh, sort of, uh, interjectorily delivering the programme over the whole semester, we're just doing mass revision. I think the students enjoy it most, because they don't get to hear only one person all the time and they focus a lot more. They really do and if, if you do have students uh, if you do have a, a group of 30 or 35 people and you have two other lecturers, tutors doing tutorial, it often is, um, the best uh, tutorial that students have experienced and you come out as a lecturer or tutor from that tutorial feeling like you accomplished something...	Nathalie demonstrated a similar approach to peer-partnership: team teaching. She provided examples from the mass revision at the end of the semester; the interaction between colleagues was Benefield for both teachers and students.	Benefits of team teaching	Team teaching	Quality of teaching and learning	Team teaching as a substitute for peer partnership
15	Qn.15	<b>What does the notion of quality of teaching and learning mean to you?</b>					
15.1	Matthew	What does it mean to me? [pause] Well, it, it's [pause] uh, I must admit, the whole, the whole notion of teaching and learning is, is one that I have a bit of difficulty getting around, getting my head around. Uh, uh, it's quality teaching, as part – you know, I, I probably do tend to break them down a bit and I suppose ultimately it is the quality of learning is that, uh, [pause] yeah, whether the students have developed, whether they've, uh, they've acquired the skills and knowledge of – that, that you, that you hope to impart to them, or whether they've got what they intended to get out of it. That's, that's what matters.	Matthew confessed his confusion about the notion of quality of teaching and learning. According to Matthew, quality of learning would refer to the students' development, acquisition of new skills and knowledge irrespective of their expectations	The correlation between the notion of quality and students' development	Students' development	Quality of teaching and learning	Quality = acquisition of new skills and knowledge
15.2	Nathalie	Um, so I, I happened to look at the, the quality of teaching and learning from totally different perspective because I deal with the students who want to do things but they not necessarily are able	According to Nathalie, the quality of teaching and learning were to be able to help the students at risk to	The correlation between quality of teaching and learning	Quality interpretation	Quality of teaching and learning	Quality = equip students to deal with demotivation's and

Appendices

	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
		to do it, or I do deal with students who are, who are not really fantastically motivated and able to have them, still have them here and give them the opportunity of studying. So, my perspective – I, I [pause] I do it with all my heart because I think I was born to teach but, [laughing] but I, I, it's a tough job to, to bring them to the level that they would con – I could say that they will have a meaningful qualification at the end and they've learnt something and – it's often also about maturity as well. A lot of our students are simply not mature enough to actually, um, to actually study. [laughing] I think they um, they should go to army all of them first.	overcome their anxieties and demotivation's to be able to graduate.	and the success of students at risk			anxieties related to their studies
15.3	Anthony	Um, for me it's very simple to define that – I do not measure quality personally of learning, either with pass, credit, distinction or high distinction. For me, the quality of learning and teaching is if there is a change in a teacher and learner, whatever the change is. If after the learning process, I as a teacher have changed, and it can be anything, maybe I have acquired something that you know, maybe I change my attitude. Or maybe I change my behaviour towards students, or something else.	According to Anthony, the notion quality could not be measured by the pass rates; the marked change in the learning process of educators could be the achievement of quality of learning	Correlation between the educator	Quality interpretation	Quality of teaching and learning	Quality = better pass rates; change in educators' learning behaviour
15.5	Christine	For me, could be a metaphor, the notion of quality in teaching and learning – one big thing for me is about one's preparedness to be an effective practitioner. And that leads on to the academic actually setting an example before the students about education is lifelong learning. It's looking beyond this semester and your graduation.	Christine believed the notion of quality was related to the teachers' preparedness to be an effective PR actioner; to prepare students to be lifelong learners beyond graduation.			Lifelong learning	One's preparedness to be an effective practitioner: ultimately, setting an example to students about education as being part of lifelong learning.
15.6	Christine	So, some of the important things, which are important to pull together, to bring this about, um, quality into our teaching and learning on the part of the academic is, my learning attitude and also how prepared I am to look at the shared insight of, you know, of what I'm doing. Um, to be courageous and do something about it. But just to finish up, recently I had uh, a conflict with a colleague who told me, 'Christine just because you taught this course for two years doesn't mean that you're doing a good job. You need re-training. 'He was really quite confrontational. Um, and when I	Christine also believed the notion of quality was about the teachers' dedication to continuous learning, review their teaching practices through occasional professional training and development.	The relation between the notion of quality and teachers' continuous learning	Continuous learning	Professional development	Attitudes to learning: being courageous, taking advice, accepting critique.

Appendices

	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
		calmed down, I thought, 'Yeah, she has some good points.' I didn't know too much about certain aspects of it. I could do with some re-training					

Code	Respondent	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme	Organising Theme	Metaphor
2.1	Anthony:	I think it's a pretty big gap, because what is probably set to be quality – and I can be very specific and it can just be simple – I don't know: a students' experience survey to determine if a particular teacher on whatever program or a particular course was accepted by students.	Anthony firmly advocated the divide between substantive and perceptive notion of quality; the reference could be as simple as the outcomes of the students' feedback	The tension between substantive and perceptive tied to the students' feedback outcomes	Substantive versus perceptive quality	Quality evaluation	Quality like the two sides of a coin
2.6	John:	And if you think about that, then it seems a little bit out of place that you are trying to teach that and then tell students that you're going to measure quality in a very - compliant way. It- almost questions it. So, unless you build that into the education, the expectation, then that divide is going to be quite big. -- It's always a conflict between trying to cater to the lowest common denominator than trying to measure the quality of the education base level's common denominator but in a class of 200, you're working to measure substantive development in terms of the ability to reframe, to think, at a - level, for example; that divide is a conflict.	John suggested to build in the substantive compliance to quality standard within the course structure to avoid a greater divide with the interpretive paradigm; he also considered the challenge to measure quality with a large cohort of students	The importance of conformance to the substantive notion of quality	Quality conformance	Quality standard	Quality as an onion with many layers
2.3	Christine:	I generally <i>reject</i> quality as a metaphor in this instance, because - one can manipulate the perception of quality. I have come across a lot of - evidence where the less mature students would think that you are delivering quality work because they like you.	Christine rejected any substantive measurement of quality and outlined the easy manipulation of 'perceptive' notion of quality. She believed some students would believe that quality teaching was provided because they like the teacher.	The challenge of quality measurement	Substantive versus interpretive quality	Quality evaluation/Perceptions can be manipulated	Quality is leaky!

Appendices

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2.4	Matthew:	- I think most people's perception probably within the- the profession would be fairly accurate about the quality of the education they receive. I think we probably know what the quality of the education is. - - I don't think there'd be a huge disparity amongst academics about the quality but in terms of the, the general public, I don't know what their perception would be.	Matthew outlined the slim margin between substantive and perceptive 'quality' for the recipient of quality education within the faculty; he also professed no disparity existed concerning the academics' evaluation of those two paradigms. However, Matthew dismissed any firm assertions from the general public.	Variation between the students, academics and public views of the following paradigms: substantive versus interpretive 'quality'.	Substantive versus interpretive 'quality'	Quality evaluation	Quality as a tale of paradigms

## Appendix 10 Emergent quality themes: Sessional and permanent staff

Sessional Staff					Permanent Staff			
Daniel Wood	Emyloo Stewart	Franco Ward	Rosie Dredd	Joe Brusky	Dane Browne	Richard Lyon	Jaylene Woo	Jeffrey Majors
Academics as 'marketers'	Appropriate compensation packages	Action research?	Corporatised education system	Communication effectiveness	Communication Strategies	Deskilling of academic teaching	Accountability and managerialism	Teaching evaluation
Academics as 'marketers'	Big-picture outcomes	Alternative students' evaluation	Course management	Face-to-face vs blended learning	Competition between full-time and sessional academics	Quality management	Class size vs quality of teaching and learning	Commodification of education
Actual vs perceived quality	Metrics the focus	Change forces	Feedback methods	Quality and power	Course management	Quality conditions	Cohesiveness of the teaching team	Cost vs quality
Actual vs perceived quality	Mixed opinion about quality	Course evaluation	Feedback methods	Quality and power	Feedback and quality of teaching	Quality conditions	Communication and consistency	Course feedback
Actual vs perceived quality	Paradigm gaps and quality	Course evaluation	Learning organisation	Quality and power	Passion and commitment to education	Quality conditions	Communication and learning experience	Course feedback
Blended learning	Quality and cynicism	Course/Program management	Learning organisation	Quality and reflection	Professional development for new incumbents	Quality conditions	Communication and quality	English language proficiency
Continuing pursuit of quality?	Quality and success	Customer service	Lifelong learning values	Quality and sharing	Professional development of academics	Quality conditions	Communication and quality	Feedback from sessional academics
Course and staff evaluation	Quality communication	Exray university 'way'	Postmodernity view	Quality and sharing	Quality of teaching and students' academic progress Student assessment	Quality evaluation	Constructivist vs modernist	Forms of blended learning
Course quality	Quality course guidelines	Good teachers and quality	Postmodernity view?	Quality and the greater good	Teacher's experience and quality of teaching	Quality evaluation	Cost-saving and quality	From session alto tenured position

Appendices

Sessional Staff					Permanent Staff			
Daniel Wood	Emyloo Stewart	Franco Ward	Rosie Dredd	Joe Brusky	Dane Browne	Richard Lyon	Jaylene Woo	Jeffrey Majors
Course rating	Quality definition	Good teachers and quality	Power and politics	Quality assessment procedures	The academics' teaching ability Student assessment	Quality evaluation	Course evaluation	Government-driven policy
Dilemmas in quality evaluation	Quality divide	Individualised definition of quality	Quality choice	Quality assessment procedures	Articulation	Quality evaluation	Course evaluation	Individual quality expectations
Evaluation: courses V. Evaluation: sessional lecturers	Quality implicit and presumed	Learning Organisation	Quality evaluation	Quality assessment procedures	Breadth and depth	Quality evaluation	Course standards	Marketisation of education
Feedback	Quality learning	Physical environment	Quality evaluation	Quality attributes	Communities of practice	Quality evaluation	Dealing with paradox	Perception of quality standard
Interactions with students	Quality managerialism	Qualification vs experience	Quality evaluation	Quality control	Course expertise. Quality control and standards	Quality evaluation	Evaluation of onshore and offshore programmes	Perception of quality standard
Malcolm Baldrige Excellence Framework (Education)	Quality outcomes	Qualitative evaluation	Quality evaluation	Quality criteria	Determinants of quality	Quality evaluation	Experience and quality of teaching	Quality discourse
Organising Theme	Quality PD	Qualitative feedback and action	Quality evaluation	Quality dilemma	Face-to-face vs online teaching Pedagogy	Quality evaluation	Feedback and consistency	Quality evaluation
Perception of quality standard	Quality pedagogy	Quality and Action Research	Quality evaluation	Quality evaluation	Feedback and consistency	Quality evaluation	Feedback and consistency	Quality evaluation
Performance assessment	Quality product and processes	Quality and differences	Quality evaluation	Quality evaluation	Flexible learning mode	Quality evaluation	Financial control	Quality indicators
Performance evaluation	Quality roles	Quality and differences	Quality evaluation	Quality evaluation	Flexible teaching environment	Quality indicators	Flexible teaching environment	Quality indicators
Performance measures	Quality roles	Quality and differences	Quality evaluation	Quality evaluation	Incentives and quality education Breadth and depth	Quality indicators	Full-time vs sessional employees	Quality interpretation
Philosophical purpose of education	Quality vs performance metrics	Quality and expectations	Quality evaluation	Quality evaluation	Informal communication channels	Quality indicators	Interpretation of quality: Administration vs students	Quality interpretation
Quality Indicators	Quality, status and position	Quality and ongoing education	Quality expectations	Quality evaluation	Informal communication channels	Quality indicators	Organisational culture and quality of staff	Quality of teaching

Appendices

Sessional Staff					Permanent Staff			
Daniel Wood	Emyloo Stewart	Franco Ward	Rosie Dredd	Joe Brusky	Dane Browne	Richard Lyon	Jaylene Woo	Jeffrey Majors
Quality indicators for tenured and pre-tenured academics?	Risk management	Quality and Positioning Theory	Quality impacts (-)	Quality evaluation	Interpretation of Quality	Quality indicators	Organisational culture, training and quality of staff	Quality of teaching
Quality measures	Teaching evaluation	Quality and power	Quality impacts (-)	Quality evaluation	Interpretation of Quality	Quality management	Performance measures	Quality of teaching
Quality of teaching	Teaching quality v matching societal trends	Quality and Semantics	Quality impacts (-)	Quality in interpersonal relationships	Learning modes	Quality management	Performance measures	Quality of teaching
Quality pedagogy		Quality and teams	Quality indicators	Quality indicators	Participative management	Quality management	Performance measures	Quality of teaching
Quality standards		Quality balance	Quality indicators	Quality of measures	Pedagogy	Quality management	Qualifying for quality delivery	Quality of teaching
Scaffolding principles		Quality control	Quality interpretation	Quality of program	Performance Evaluation Pedagogy v. Research	Quality management	Quality and conditions of employment	Student engagement
Staff selection criteria		Quality control	Quality interpretation	Quality outcomes	Performance measures	Quality measures	Quality control and standards	Substantive quality policy vs teaching style
Teaching and learning		Quality definition	Quality lifestyle	Quality patronage	Performance measures	Quality measures	Quality control and standards	Substantive vs rhetorical interpretation of quality
		Quality evaluation	Quality lifestyle	Quality PD	Performance measures	Quality measures	Quality control and standards	Training and development
		Quality evaluation	Quality lifestyle	Quality pedagogy	Preparation of sessional academics	Quality outcomes	Quality control and standards	Validity and reliability of student feedback
		Quality evaluation	Quality lifestyle	Quality pedagogy	Pre-tertiary vs tertiary education Student selection	Quality outcomes	Quality control and standards	Versatility of career
		Quality evaluation	Quality lifestyle	Quality purposes	Quality and control (!) Marking and remuneration	Quality outcomes	Quality control and standards	
		Quality evaluation	Quality management system	Quality reflection	Quality control and standards	Quality outcomes	Quality of teaching vs training	
		Quality evaluation	Quality managerialism	Quality resources	Quality control and standards	Quality pedagogy	The academics' teaching ability	

Appendices

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		Quality evaluation	Quality of teaching and learning	Quality standard	Quality control and standards	Quality recruitment		
		Quality focus	Quality Standard	Quality standards	Quality control and standards	Quality recruitment		
		Quality focus	Quality standards	Quality support	Quality control and standards	Quality recruitment		
		Quality focus	Quality teaming	Quality teaching	<i>Quality Framework</i> AQF measures	Quality recruitment		
		Quality framework	Quality teaming	Quality v, disciplinary measure	Resource allocation	Quality staffing policy		
		Quality guarantee	Quality teaming	Teachers' attributes	Resource allocation	Quality standards		
		Quality guarantee	Quality teaming	Teaching evaluation	Selection and Incentives	Teaching vs research		
		Quality guarantee	Quality teaming	Teaching Scores	Selection criteria			
		Quality indicators	Quality teaming		Selection criteria			
		Quality indicators	Quality teaming		Selection process			
		Quality of delivery	Quality variations		Staffing policy			
		Quality of resources?	Quality variations		Student goals			
		Selection criteria	Quality variations		Teaching and life experience			
		Staff and quality control			Teaching and life experience			
		Staff development			Teaching vs administrative skills			
		Staff selection			Teaching work load Breadth and depth			
		Student engagement			Teaching-research balance Breadth and depth			
		Student engagement			The course context Pedagogy			

*Appendices*

Sessional Staff					Permanent Staff			
Daniel Wood	Emyloo Stewart	Franco Ward	Rosie Dredd	Joe Brusky	Dane Browne	Richard Lyon	Jaylene Woo	Jeffrey Majors
		Two-way communication			Workload and professional development of academics			