Faculty Members’ Lived Experiences with Academic Quality in For-Profit On-Ground Gainful Employment Programs

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Agenda

- Introduction
  - Background
  - Problem
  - Purpose
  - Theoretical framework
  - Research questions
- Methodology
- Findings
- Limitations
- Conclusions
- Recommendations
Government investigations led to questions about the quality of education provided by for-profit career colleges

- Low student retention, job placement, and loan payback rates compared to public community colleges

Gainful Employment–Debt Measures Rule

- Sets standards for student retention, job placement, and loan payback rates
- Emphasizes performance outcomes
- Implies if students graduate, get jobs, and pay back their students loans, they received a quality education
Problem

- Academic quality in for-profit vocational education is...
  - Hard to define
  - Multidimensional

- Gainful Employment standards alone are not adequate to describe academic quality

- Students, parents, faculty, employers, and taxpayers care about academic quality
Purpose

- To expand understanding of academic quality in for-profit on-ground Gainful Employment programs by gathering the lived experiences of faculty who taught in on-ground Gainful Employment programs offered at two for-profit institutions in Portland, Oregon.
Theoretical framework

Systems thinking

INPUTS

PROCESSES

OUTCOMES

INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

11/21/2013

Carol M. Booton Oral Defense
Research questions

Q1. What are the lived experiences of faculty regarding academic quality in for-profit on-ground Gainful Employment programs?

Q2. What are faculty experiences of academic quality regarding inputs into the education system?

Q3. What are faculty experiences of academic quality regarding processes into the education system?

Q4. What are faculty experiences of academic quality regarding outcomes from the education system?

Q5. What are faculty experiences of academic quality regarding the institutional environment of the education system?
Methodology: Phenomenology

- Phenomenology is the study of lived experience
  - A qualitative approach using in-person in-depth interviews
  - Based on the interaction between interviewer and participant
  - Interpretive quest to understand the life-world of the participant
  - Problems of bias and preconceptions
10 faculty members who taught in Gainful Employment programs drew “rich pictures” of their experiences

Rich pictures
- A combination of symbols, icons, and text
- Often used in systems thinking to reveal hidden beliefs and experiences
- Served as a form of data triangulation
Systems thinking tool: Rich pictures

Rich pictures “CATWOERM” framework
- Customers (C)
- Actors (A)
- Transformation (T)
- Worldview (W)
- Owners (O)
- Environment (E)
- Relationships (R)
- Emotions (M)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<td>Adj.</td>
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<td>F2</td>
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Note: Status refers to employment status. Adj. = Adjunct; FT = Full-time
Data collection: Interview protocol

- Definition of academic quality
- Systems framework
  - Inputs
  - Processes
  - Outcomes
    - Gainful Employment Rule
  - Institutional environment

Rich picture (F7)
Data processing and analysis

- **Data processing**
  - Transcribe interviews
  - Scan rich pictures

- **Data analysis**
  - Read and code

- **Organize by**
  - Systems elements
    - Stakeholder groups
      - Themes

Rich picture (F8)
Findings: Inputs

Faculty Input themes (35)
- Innate
- Experience
- Attitude
- Behavior

Student Input themes (13)
- Innate
- Experience
- Attitude
- Support

Administrator/owner Input themes (6)
- No themes emerged

Institution Input themes (25)
- Facilities
- Resources
- Climate
- Policy
- Awareness

Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of attributes assigned to that category.
F9 said,
“It’s this really weird thing about college teachers... you throw a book at them and say here, go teach. There’s no preparation... I guess with college, they figure if you’ve got experience and a degree, anybody can teach. But that’s not true. There’s some people who are smart, smart, smart, and you put them in a classroom and it’s a disaster.”
Findings: Processes

- Faculty Process themes (71)
  - Teaching
  - Learning
  - Interacting
  - Motivating
  - Connecting

- Student Process themes (19)
  - Acquiring knowledge
  - Applying knowledge
  - Interacting with others

- Administrator/owner Process themes (42)
  - Teacher focus
  - Student focus
  - Administrative focus
  - Stewardship focus

- Institution Process themes (6)
  - No themes emerged

Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of attributes assigned to that category.
F5 said, “I tell my students I love them...And I do! I don’t do that as a tactic of manipulation. I do it because it’s true. But what I understand is that when that’s there, it also opens the possibility for the learning process. Because when there’s hostility and resistance, there’s blockage.”

Rich picture (F5)
Findings: Outcomes

- Faculty Outcome themes (9)
  - No themes emerged

- Student Outcome themes (44)
  - Employment
  - Performance
  - Attitude
  - Knowledge

- Administrator/owner Outcome themes (0)
  - No outcomes identified

- Institution Outcome themes (8)
  - No themes emerged

Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of attributes assigned to that category.

Rich picture (F4)
Findings: Outcomes

Student employment is important, but is not the only important outcome

- “One of the main reasons I like my job... is I like my students. I like to see that ah-ha moment. That ah-ha moment, even if it’s few and far between, it’s worth coming to school and waiting for.” (F8)

- “The only output that I can gauge the quality on is by the end of a class, a term or by the end of their program, do I have some sense that these people are going to be okay, and be better for having this education?” (F9)
Findings: Institutional environment

- 23 attributes were assigned to the institutional environment category
  - Accrediting agencies
  - Government agencies
  - Economy/Competition
  - Employers
  - Community
  - Media

Rich picture (F2)
Limitations

- Small sample
- Geographic area
- Researcher biases
- Phenomenological design
- Changes in institutions
- Changes in the institutional environment
Conclusions

- The systems framework revealed fertile areas for improvement
- The tool of rich pictures enhanced understanding
- Academic quality is multidimensional
- The main obstacle to improving academic quality is the conflict between the profit motive and the educational product
Recommendation

- A proposed model of academic quality
- Systems framework
- Dynamic, not static
- Areas for improvement were revealed at the stakeholder level
- Further testing of the model is recommended
Recommendation

- A composite rich picture
- The path to academic quality is a journey
- The journey ends with a professional, trained, worker (satisfied customer) and a happy employer
- The main obstacle is the conflict between profit and product
Questions

- All the rich pictures can be seen in their entirety in the Appendix of the dissertation manuscript
- Contact me: carolbooton@yahoo.com
- Thank you

Rich picture (F4)
Sources

- Percentages of for-profit students and loan defaults:
  MacQueen, G. (2012, Spring). Closing doors: The gainful employment rule as over-regulation of for-profit higher education that will restrict access to higher education for America’s poor. *Georgetown Journal on Poverty Law & Policy, 19*(2), 1-21.

- U.S. Government Gainful Employment Rule:

- Systems thinking tools, rich pictures, and the CATWOE framework:

- Photo credits: Carol Booton

- Dedicated to the memory of Karen, Meme, and Pop