



Fostering Quality in Canada's Post-secondary Institutions

Presentation to CPRN Board of Directors by

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November 14, 2006



Outline

- CPRN's series on quality in PSE
- The importance of PSE
- Measuring quality:
 - conceptual framework
 - current approaches
- Other conceptual issues in fostering quality
- Recent trends in funding and regulation of PSE
- Innovation and differentiation
- Policy implications



CPRN's Series on Quality in PSE

Key question: How to foster excellence in our post secondary institutions without compromising access?

- Finnie, R. and A. Usher. 2005. *Measuring the Quality of Post-secondary Education: Concepts, Current Practices and a Strategic Plan.*
- Snowdon, K. 2005. *Without a Roadmap: Government Funding and Regulation of Canada's Universities and Colleges.*
- Crocker, R. and A. Usher. 2006. *Innovation and Differentiation in Canada's Post-Secondary Institutions.*
- Saunders, R. 2006. *Fostering Quality in Canada's Post-secondary Institutions.*

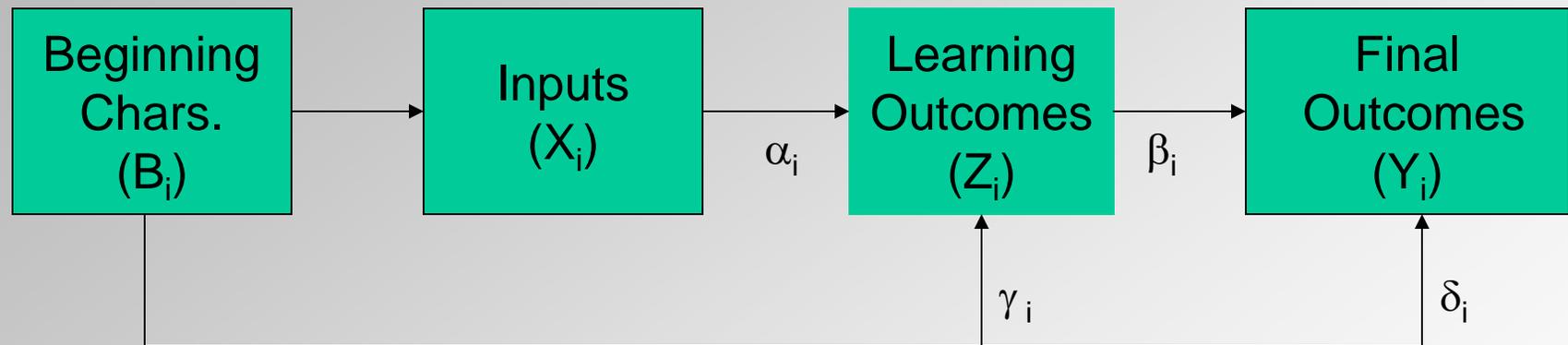


The importance of PSE

- OECD studies of effects of 1-year increase in average education:
 - raises output per capita in long-term by 3-6 percentage points; or
 - raises growth rate by 1 percentage point
- PSE associated with large earnings gains. (However, distribution of gains is uneven.)
- 'Social' returns (from more innovation, better health, reduced crime, more civic engagement) are also high.



The Finnie/Usher conceptual framework for measuring quality



Quality in PSE can be thought of as the improvement in learning outcomes and ultimately final outcomes (such as earnings, health, life satisfaction, civic engagement) associated with the PSE experience.



Other conceptual issues in fostering quality in PSE

How much to rely on 'the market'

- Markets as powerful forces for efficiency.
- Leads some to argue for more student-centred funding and no regulation of tuition.
- Relies on students, parents being well-informed.
- Relies on effective system of student aid.



Rationale for government intervention in PSE

- Imperfect information
- Externalities (gains to participation in PSE that go beyond the individual participant)
- Difficulties in private financing of PSE costs
- Equity concerns

There is little agreement on the magnitude of these considerations.



Institutional autonomy vs. central direction

- Universities view of how to achieve quality: we understand our world and are motivated to achieve (so leave us alone).
- Governments' view: if we provide funds, you are accountable to taxpayers for spending wisely.
- How best to balance these?



The experience of the last 15 yrs

(Snowdon)

- Funding cutbacks, then reinvestment. Funding per student 04-05 below 92-93 in 6 provinces. Some evidence of funding 'gap' relative to US.
- Rise in tuition.
- Federal \$ more targeted:
 - transfers to provinces cut;
 - increase in funds to institutions for research;
 - new student aid measures.

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- Provinces put more emphasis on earmarked funds and matching contributions. Some tied a small portion of funding to KPIs.
- Degree-granting powers of colleges expanded, partly in response to the growth in demand for degree programs.
- Numerous changes in reporting requirements in search of accountability.

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- Targeted funding, and changes in funding mechanisms, made funding less predictable, less stable.
- Multitude of changes made it difficult to plan.
- The fact the federal and provincial policies sometimes worked at cross-purposes exacerbated this difficulty.



Case studies of innovation (Crocker and Usher)

- Innovation arises principally from visionary leadership; external pressures also play a role.
- Innovations that transform an institution are not easy to export from one institution to another.
- Little effort at systematically evaluating innovations in teaching in PSE.



Policy implications

- Establish a transparent quality improvement process:
 - Provincial governments set broad system goals.
 - Individual universities and colleges develop and report on objectives, plans, and progress.
 - Universities and colleges provide public data on tuition rates, class sizes, faculty-student ratios, retention rates, and graduation rates, by program.
- Adopt a value-added orientation to quality measurement.

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- Balance predictability of funding/tuition policies with support for institutional diversity.
- Design student aid systems to be:
 - Easy to navigate
 - Coherent
 - A mix of widely accessible loans with income-contingent repayment and grants targeted to those from low-income families
- Develop linked provincial portals for information on PSE programs and labour markets.

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- Facilitate students' ability to transfer between programs.
- Promote international exchange.
- Support research on pedagogy in higher education.
- Rebuild trust between
 - the sector and governments
 - levels of governmentthrough consultation and collaboration.





For additional information:

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