

2015-09-21

A Grounded Theory Analysis of the Academic and Professional Roles in Assessing the University of Calgary's Application to Offer a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine Program

O'Neill, Kelly

O'Neill, K. (2015). A Grounded Theory Analysis of the Academic and Professional Roles in Assessing the University of Calgary's Application to Offer a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine Program (Doctoral thesis, University of Calgary, Calgary, Canada). Retrieved from <https://prism.ucalgary.ca>. doi:10.11575/PRISM/24751

<http://hdl.handle.net/11023/2475>

Downloaded from PRISM Repository, University of Calgary

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

A Grounded Theory Analysis of the Academic and Professional Roles in Assessing the
University of Calgary's Application to Offer a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine Program

by

Kelly A. L. O'Neill

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

GRADUATE DIVISION OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

CALGARY, ALBERTA

SEPTEMBER, 2015

© Kelly Anne Louise O'Neill 2015

Abstract

Before a postsecondary provider advertises or offers a for-credit credential in Alberta, it must obtain government approval to offer the program. In the professions, programs are also accredited by the regulating body's educational committee. This dual-assessment phenomenon was investigated by undertaking a thorough examination of a program assessment exercise in which one government regulatory agency (Campus Alberta Quality Council) and one professional accreditation body (American/Canadian Veterinary Medical Association Council on Education) concomitantly reviewed a proposal to offer a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Calgary. Based on data obtained from organizational documents and assessment reports, media accounts, informal conversations and nine interviews, the study inductively identified a basic social structural process in accordance with classic grounded theory methodology. This is one process that responds to the main concern of effectively assessing a program proposal. A highly iterative analysis identified seven themes which were most pronounced in the data. These categories: consistency, classification, interdependence and autonomy, new quality dimensions, culture, peers and personalities, and training were consolidated into four conceptual constructs: standardizing, relating, adapting, and socializing. From these, abstraction allowed for a constructed logic in which both replication and contextualization occur, to different degrees across a spectrum. The core variable, 'blueprinting', is enacted by the synergies resulting from replicating and contextualizing. Blueprinting allows for a relatively predictable experience while at the same time, accommodating differences as they arise as a result of the involvement of varying institutions and agencies, programs and participants.

Keywords: accreditation, regulation, regulated professions, higher education, quality assurance, program assessment, program development

Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank those teachers who inspired my interest post-secondary education, and kept my feet to the fire -- Elaine Foulon, Jaye Fredrickson, Dianne Conrad, Kelly Blenkin-Church, Margaret Haughey, and Cindy Ives.

My committee, which provided sound advice and endless patience, was led by Dr. James Kent Donlevy, who I believe would cross the desert for his students. Thank you.

A profound thank you to Mickey Graham for being my professional mentor and an absolute rock.

Heartfelt appreciation to Paul Wishart, for blowing on my sails when I was stuck out in the ocean, more than once.

And to acknowledge the gift of unconditional friendship from Lawris Ellefson, who ran alongside me, and wouldn't let me quit.

With untold thanks to my husband Gary Lathan, who's penchant for pursuing the impossible brought me here. You never blinked. And our daughter Greer – I will always remember the first time you counted to 100, sticking up the post-it notes! And supporters and stepdaughters extraordinaire, Lawra and Ellexis Lathan ... can you believe I finished first?

Dedication

To my grandparents, Doris and Bernie Meilleur, for whom family and education mattered most. And to my sister Kristie, a true academic, your persistence and conviction has been inspirational throughout my life, but especially through this. Merci et je t'aime.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iv
Dedication	v
Table of Contents	vi
List of Figures and Illustrations	viii
CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION	9
Dissertation Outline	9
Chapter Overview	10
Situational Overview	10
Genesis of the Study	13
Purpose	15
Significance of the Study	16
Parameters: Defining the Study	17
Research Questions	17
Assumptions	19
Delimitations	20
Limitations	21
Definitions and Acronyms	22
Changes to Protocol	24
Conflicts of Interest	26
Summary of Chapter 1	26
CHAPTER 2 – RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LITERATURE	28
Overview	28
External Academic Quality Assurance	28
Origins	32
Massification and Globalization	35
Massification	35
Globalization	37
Summary of Massification and Globalization	40
Educational Fraud	46
Controlling Quality	48
Academic/Professional Program Proposal Assessment	49
Veterinary Medicine: Regulation and Habitus	49
Academic Quality Assurance: Alberta	51
Chapter summary	52
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN	54
Conducting the Study	54
Qualitative Study	54
Methodology: Constructionism	58
Preconception and Description	60
Methods - Overview	62
Observations	63

Documents	64
Interviews	65
Summary of Chapter 3	67
CHAPTER 4 - ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION	68
Overview	68
Introduction to Presentation of the Data	68
Identifying the Main Concern	71
Overview of Analysis	74
Synthesis of Indicators	76
Adapting	78
New measures of quality	78
Culture	80
Changing profession	85
Summary: Adapting	85
Relating	86
Autonomy & Interdependencies	86
Summary: Relating	91
Standardizing	92
Classifying	92
Consistency	95
Summary: Standardization	97
Socializing	97
Peers and Personalities	97
Training	100
Summary of Socializing	101
Consolidating Incident Categories: Conceptualization	101
Subcore Concept: Replicating	102
Subcore Concept: Contextualizing	103
Core Concept: Blueprinting	104
Summary	107
CHAPTER 5 - CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER INVESTIGATION	108
Returning to the Research Questions	108
Summary of Findings	109
Implications for Current Theory and Practice	110
Recommendations for further research	111
REFERENCES	113
APPENDICES	126

List of Figures and Illustrations

Figure 1 Blueprinting.....	75
Figure 2 Incident Categories.....	77
Figure 3 Faculty Complement	93

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

Dissertation Outline

This thesis comprises five chapters. Chapter One provides context and background information about the study, including definitions and assumptions. It is intended to provide the reader with a clear indication of the nature and relevance of this work to the post-secondary environment.

Chapter Two describes aspects of post-secondary quality assurance and program regulation. It explores several interpretations of quality in higher education and describes the emergence of quality assurance into the management lexicon. Following that, the socio and geopolitical phenomena of increased access to higher learning and systemic globalization are explained as drivers for enhanced external program regulation. Credential harmonization as well as agency reciprocity and academic fraud are explained as ramifications of these trends. Some philosophical considerations regarding quality gatekeeping are also considered in light of the academic literature. The chapter concludes by describing some of the unique features of veterinary medicine as a regulated profession in Canada, and situating Alberta in terms of the academic quality assurance milieu.

In Chapter Three, the reasons for selecting a qualitative paradigm and more specifically, the grounded theory approach are provided. Various interpretations of grounded theory are presented in light of my own world view. The chapter illustrates some of the challenges inherent in conducting a classic grounded study project, as well as (mis)interpretations of this particular approach.

Chapter Four illustrates the progression of data gathering and analysis towards obtaining a grounded theory. The ensuing theory hypothesizes a main concern of effectively assessing program proposals and proposes the socio structural process of blueprinting as one means to resolve it.

Chapter Five concludes the study by returning to the original research questions, and presenting ideas for further investigation.

Chapter Overview

Five sections follow; an overview of the context in which this study occurred, the genesis for, and purpose of the study, its significance, and parameters. Parameters are located in the section ‘Defining the Study’ and include research questions, assumptions, delimitations, limitations, definitions and acronyms, changes to protocol and conflicts of interest pertaining to this thesis. Chapter One is intended to provide the reader with a clear indication of the nature and relevance of this study to the post-secondary regulatory environment.

Situational Overview

This research occurred in a context in which a new faculty, the University of Calgary’s Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, sought to offer a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine undergraduate degree. Veterinary medicine is a self-regulated profession in Alberta that is overseen by the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association. Through multiple agreements, the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association (ABVMA) recognizes accreditation of educational programs in veterinary medicine when approved by the American Veterinary Medical Association/Canadian Veterinary Medical Association’s Council on Education (COE) which is required to operate at arm’s length from the greater Association. It provides graduates with the assurance of a quality education and offers potential employers (who are also relied upon to provide clinical placements) with a measure of security as related to graduates’ skills. Accreditation when co-approved by the geographic authority in the school’s region facilitates access to student loans. Successful completion of COE-approved programs also offers graduates a straightforward path to licensure, which is essential for legitimate employment.

Under Alberta’s Veterinary Profession Act (Alberta, 2000) only registered veterinarians (or permit holders) are allowed to practice veterinary medicine in the province. In accordance with the Act’s General Regulation, registration requires a Certificate of Qualification as issued by the National

Examining Board (3(1)).¹ For graduates of accredited schools, a Certificate of Qualification is issued upon successful completion of the North American Veterinary Licensing Examination (NAVLE). For graduates of non-accredited schools, Basic and Clinical Science Examinations, a Clinical Proficiency Examination, and the NAVLE must be successfully passed in order to obtain the Certificate of Qualification. This is at a cost of more than \$7,000 in addition to the registration fee (approximately \$500) and the program's tuition and learning resources requirements.

Alberta's system of postsecondary quality assurance does not assess educational programs leading to the professions differently from any other degree program offered in the province, but it is not an accreditation agency. Each new degree program (except in divinity) is required to undergo a system coordination review by the Ministry of Innovation and Advanced Education² and, if successful, subsequent evaluation by the Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC). Council is charged with providing its recommendations back to the Minister regarding provincial approval. The Campus Alberta Quality Council was established under the Post-Secondary Learning Act (Post Secondary Learning Act, 2003) and serves as the province's body for assuring quality in post-secondary degree programming.

As a newly proposed program, therefore, plans for the University of Calgary's Doctor of Veterinary Medicine were required to be scrutinized by both the province and the profession. While the two regulators approach the substance of quality and endorsement differently, it was ultimately agreed among the University of Calgary Faculty of Veterinary Medicine (UCVM), American/Canadian Veterinary Medical Association Council on Education (COE), and Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC) that during the initial stage regulators would share documentation and coordinate a site visit.

¹ There are provisions for evaluations in lieu of a Certificate (s3).

² At the time of this program proposal assessment, it was the Ministry of Advanced Education, subsequently Ministry of Advanced Education and Technology, followed by Ministry of Enterprise and Advanced Education, to the current Ministry of Innovation and Advanced Education.

This was an inaugural attempt in Alberta at negotiated relations between provincial and professional academic authorities and an applicant university (Bond & Patton, 2007) (Appendix C).

As originally conceived, the objective of this study was to identify the role of each of the two agencies in assessing the University of Calgary's Faculty of Veterinary Medicine's proposal to offer a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine. The evolution of this objective is described more thoroughly in Chapter Three and was adapted primarily to adhere to the emergent nature of grounded theory research methodology. I originally envisioned the study to reveal similarities and differences regarding the conceptual origins and parameters of program quality and the perceived value of these dimensions. Based on interviews with senior administrators from one accreditation and two regional approving bodies, two of whom participated in the joint site visit, others who were a part of subsequent (and multiple other) accreditation site visits, a university President, a Dean of Veterinary Medicine and a senior quality assurance manager, this unintentionally and disproportionately emphasized the role of quality assurance standards and processes in the role of assessment. It assumed a literal and linear view of the regulatory exercises. Importantly, it negated the social aspects of the program proposal assessment exercise that are ultimately the determinants of process and outcome. As well, it proved less material as the complexities of professional program accreditation and regional quality assurance reviews became more apparent.

By conducting a classic ("Glaserian") grounded theory study, rigorous data analysis and subsequent conceptualizations illuminated multiple constructions that indicate a process I have termed 'blueprinting'. Blueprinting occurred in the negotiated relations between the University of Calgary's Faculty of Veterinary Medicine (UCVM) and COE, the UCVM and CAQC, and the COE and CAQC. This process occurred at both the individual and institutional levels. Ironically for those who consider the Glaserian method to be positivist, the study's incidents and indicators have illuminated that social

constructions of the assessment experience, and not explicit representations, are crucial forces towards its validation.

Genesis of the Study

The study originated from my interest in the reification and critique of governmental and professional quality assurance processes in post-secondary education, contemporary interpretations of institutional autonomy, and corresponding cultural and policy implications. In my professional experience there has been an increasing scrutiny of expenditures, which have given rise to the invention of various measures for reporting. These measures are value-laden and tend to espouse post-secondary education as a public good, rather than a public responsibility (Altbach & Knight, 2007). As a good, education becomes a product that is traded in a consumer/producer relationship. As a responsibility, it represents a cultural value. “As the humanistic goals of Canadian post-secondary policy cede ground to more commercial and economic goals, it is necessary to scrutinize and debate the long term impact of this exchange on the organization, character and values of our colleges and universities.” (Kirby, 2007, p. 19).

As a public service, higher education is predominantly under governmental control and inherits the approaches and ideologies of its “parent”. Accountability and transparency are part of the current lexicon of public sector management which emphasize linear thinking (often for ease of reporting) and there is a low tolerance for risk. There is an emphasis on conspicuous returns on investment, measurable outcomes and quality guarantees. Societal benefits of student experiences (personal and social growth, receptivity to new ideas, self-discipline and self-sufficiency, cross-cultural and multidisciplinary understandings) and the long-term benefits of civic engagement, as well as better parenting and healthier lifestyles (Dill & Beerkins, 2013) are perhaps incidental, to a public that views education as a ticket and government which regards it as an economic engine.

I view regulators to be caretakers of sectors, professions, and important industries. They determine who sets the standards and what those standards should be; they select their approach to evaluation (eg advocate (cooperative) or indifferent (objective)); they determine the nature of punitive measures in the event of a breach. They choose who the stakeholders are, and how they participate. Their educational committees are bestowed with responsibility for setting and upholding their own standards in ways that respect the autonomy of the delivering institutions. Ideally this manifests so that program compliance is viewed in light of quality assurance as opposed to being reduced to an act of subservience.

As a university administrator for more than a decade, my primary responsibilities have been associated with initiatives that are facilitated at the institutional level (including the development of program proposals and coordination of program reviews). When ascribed a quality assurance label, these responsibilities, enigmatic as they are, are vulnerable to contempt and can be more prone to suspicion than regard – even as the genuine need for student protection via program integrity and fiscal management grows.

Thanks to the generous advice and patience of my Supervisory Committee, this study matured considerably from the original concept. By exploring what I thought to be a familiar phenomenon (program assessment) in unfamiliar ways, I have become more enlightened and sympathetic to regulatory complexities beyond the role of post-secondary providers, which has benefit my professional work. It is with a renewed sense of optimism in this aspect of higher education administration that I will pursue academic interests in attempting to understand and describe some of the complexities surrounding postsecondary regulation, accreditation and institutional autonomy.

Purpose

The primary purpose of this study is to investigate and analyze an instance of postsecondary program proposal assessment. By examining an approval process involving both professional and governmental regulators, I seek to identify latent phenomena that may be present across disciplines and geographies.

As a secondary purpose, this examination also intends to seek to understand how the term “quality” is constructed and thus understood in program assessment by both professional and governmental regulators in the higher education/veterinary medicine education context.

Some of the dimensions of program assessment that have not been systematically examined to date in the literature include:

1. Social constructions of quality – e.g. how the various elements and factors (documents such as guidelines, forms, and checklists, and principles and standards, etc.) contribute to the meaning-making of quality, as articulated by the Campus Alberta Quality Council and American Veterinary Medical Association/Canadian Veterinary Medical Association Council on Education;
2. The actions/processes that represent these interpretations;
3. The definitions and presentation of characteristics of program quality; how they compare, and how/if similarities and differences are addressed by participants;
4. What, if any stakes or tensions have arisen among or between the communities.

Expanding this research area has the potential to make a unique and positive impact on the higher education and policy discourse, and may make a contribution to the higher education quality dialogue. As well, since domestically regional quality bodies are required to contend with and respond to emerging complexities (for example, the demands of Europe’s Bologna process; increasing

regulations related to distance delivery) and voluntary accreditation opportunities expand (for example Simon Fraser University's pursuit of American regional accreditation; proliferation of business school accreditation), quality assurance and accreditation administrators may benefit from this study towards enhancing their own practice. Increasing the depth of this research area may inform discussions that aspire to innovations in quality assurance and program assessment methodologies and methods.

In sum, the purpose of this study is twofold: first, to examine, using grounded theory, the professional and governmental regulatory roles in postsecondary program proposal assessment in this one case, and secondly, to examine how each agency constructs and enacts the term 'quality' in their work.

Significance of the Study

Provincial academic program approval is an aspect of Canadian post-secondary regulation that, perhaps because of its idiosyncratic nature, has not developed much in the way of a body of work. Given the nature of the EdD credential, it would be highly desirable for any knowledge derived from this study to be of practical value to practitioners, disciplinary scholars, policy makers and regulatory bodies.

There are few studies in higher education administration which indicate the way problems are defined and constructed, how solutions are developed and the ways in which narratives are attached to them (Andresani, Ferlie, & Musselin, 2008). Despite the popularity of the EdD credential, King, 2007 has suggested there is a limited discourse between higher education research and regulatory scholarship, and there is a "...rich seam for the further development of higher education research and increased prospect for greater subtlety in understanding state-higher education relationships" (p. 427-428). This study may contribute by examining a regulator-to-regulator relationship, in light of proposed program assessment, as well as the profession-government-post-secondary provider triad.

Parameters: Defining the Study

Research Questions

This study's questions were originally proposed as:

- What processes and factors contributed to the meaning-making of quality, as articulated by an institutional and program review for the Campus Alberta Quality Council, American Veterinary Medical Association Council on Education and the University of Calgary Doctor of Veterinary Medicine program participants?
- How were those definitions of quality represented by actions/processes?
- Did stakes or tensions present among or between the communities of discourse? If so, how?
- Were there points of similarity in these reviews? If so, what were they?

As I read more thoroughly about the classic grounded theory method selected for this study, I was confronted with Glaser's contentions that one should avoid a literature review and not enter the study with preconceived questions. Preconceptions, Glaser suggests, contaminate the study by forcing predetermined paradigms³ (Glaser, 2012). Since Barney Glaser is one half of the partnership that founded grounded theory, and it was his specific approach to which I had committed, it was difficult to reconcile addressing the questions approved by my Supervisory Committee and the Conjoint Research Ethics Board *and* conducting authentic classic grounded theory research. In a comment on a draft proposal for this study, a Committee member noted, "...you must be prepared to change your research direction and questions if the themes and data that emerge don't fit with your original intentions" (R. Heyman, 2013). This was an accurate prediction.

According to Corbin & Strauss (1998) there are four general 'types' of questions which help to advance a study. *Sensitizing questions* familiarize the researcher with the broadest concepts, identifying

³ Preconception was a serious concern that caused much consternation throughout this process, pre-empting several attempts. This is discussed in Chapter 3, Preconception and Description.

issues and meanings ascribed to the language that is used. *Guiding questions* begin as open-ended and become more specific as the research is conducted and the theory begins to emerge. *Theoretical questions* are more relational, conceptual, and may deal with larger structural issues, and involve more comparison at the property and/or dimensional levels and help to formulate connections among concepts. Theoretical questions emerge later in the study as the categories become saturated. Finally, *structural/practical questions* are posed in order to support direction in making sampling choices and theory-building. The investigator must determine if a topic has been saturated, and which concepts are sufficiently developed to warrant further investigation.

The development of a literature review offered some sensitization, and I re-interpreted the research questions as guiding questions to allow authentic theoretical questions to emerge. This occurred as data was interpreted and analyzed, coded and sorted. The analysis was guided by the questions Glaser (2004) suggests researchers ask:

- What is this a study of?
- What category or property of a category of what part of the emerging theory does this incident indicate?
- What is actually happening in the data? (What is the basic social psychological problem(s) faced by the participants in the action scene?)
- What is the basic social psychological process or social structural process that processes the problem to make life viable in the action scene?

Although the specific concerns are emergent, and processes transcend units, the point of view must still be given due consideration. Given that interviewees made several references to actions of specific people in the process, it was difficult to reconcile an organizational viewpoint with the

individual perspective. As it was original intent to determine each agency's role, this complication was compounded by another of Glaser's observations:

“We have also discovered that the notion of role-set is more a logical elaboration than relevant for grounded research. It is too gross a concept to handle behavioral patterns as we see them. If a teacher is talking to all his students in a few different patterns that is not enough to talk of as a role, and it is not a role set, and it is trite to say his role set is his students, colleagues and administration. The real action takes place in the person-set of the student-teacher role....[T]his unit has fit and relevance and it works” (Glaser, 1978, p.80).

Although I trusted that patterns would emerge from the data to be analyzed from the appropriate perspective, it was challenging in that both had important implications for the study. Glaser continues, “If on reduction the person-set resolves to a role-set fine. But do not start with role set...to start there means missing a lot of the action” (ibid.).

With this in mind I carried forward.

Assumptions

In collecting and analyzing the data I made the following assumptions:

- 1) AVMA/CVMA Council on Education accreditation and Campus Alberta Quality Council program review are quality assurance activities; quality assurance is a phenomenon that is relevant in postsecondary education to those with geographical authority and those in the regulated professions.

- 2) Quality is a phenomenon created through social interaction and shared reasoning by community participants. Information interpreted as “fact” is created in this context with common language and mutual understanding of extant knowledge.
- 3) The AVMA/CVMA Council on Education and Campus Alberta Quality Council and their representatives are members of at least one post-secondary education regulatory community.
- 4) Techniques such as coding and abstraction are data treatments which assist in articulating a construction that embodies meaning in my personal context, as related to the purpose of the study.
- 5) There is no objective reality to which any claims made by this research can be verified.

Delimitations

Following are the boundaries I established when defining how the research would be undertaken.

- 1) Although other approvals were required (internal academic bodies, Board of Governors, Ministerial), the scope of the study is limited to the evaluation processes of the Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC) and the American Veterinary Medicine Association/Canadian Veterinary Medical Association Council on Education (COE) with respect to the University of Calgary’s Doctorate of Veterinary Medical (DVM) program.
- 2) This study does not judge the content of the regulators’ requirements and/or the responses provided by the UCVM. The object of the paper is to identify process through behavioural examination. The author is in no way qualified, nor do I attempt, to evaluate the merit of the regulators’ requirements, the proposal, self-studies, or external reviewers’ reports.
- 3) The documentation used in the analysis reflected the timeframe in which the program evaluation occurred. Some of the contents and criteria have changed since this 2005-2012 snapshot. Therefore constructs from the documents may be time-limited.

- 4) While other methods may have increased the sample size (eg focus groups or surveys), data gathered from documents published by each of the regulators, confidential interviews with review participants, media reports, and information gleaned from informal conversations and theoretical sampling provided sufficient narratives to saturate the categories identified in this study.
- 5) Formal interviews were held for one hour each (some a few minutes longer).
- 6) This study was limited by time and resource restrictions commensurate with the obligations of completing the research in a time frame and to a standard acceptable to the University of Calgary.
- 7) The research undertaken focuses on the substantive area of (regulated) post-secondary program assessment, not the more formal area of regulated quality assurance.
- 8) The intention is not to describe either of the organizations entirely, nor the complete process of program assessment. Per Glaser (2002a), only a core process within it is meant to be identified.

Limitations

The following are influences that I could not control for in the study.

- 1) It is a limited representation based on reconstructions of the experiences of those who agreed to be interviewed, and by my interpretation of the same, and my interpretation of the documents.
- 2) Interview data was informed by the perceptions of the interviewees based on retrospection and may be open to post-hoc inferences (Nilsson, 2010).
- 3) I am unable to make explicit all of the processes, filters and factors involved in the reinterpretation and analysis of data for this exercise. While every effort has been made to fully describe the decision making that culminated in these depictions, the treatment ultimately occurred within my personal constructions, which may be unconscious.

Definitions and Acronyms

The following indicates the meaning I ascribed to terms found in the data and referenced in the narrative.

1) Accreditation

Accreditation is conferred to a Faculty, College or School of veterinary medicine by the COE and occurs in several stages, over a period of time that exceeds the scope of this study.

2) Blueprinting

Blueprinting as it is defined in this study is a basic social structural process that occurs in response to a problematized quality assurance exercise.

3) Participants

References to participants in this study represent an aggregate of agency representatives. In this case the COE, UCVM, and CAQC are participants in the program proposal assessment process. As organizations are not themselves living entities, references to action by the bodies are understood to represent decisions of the members charged with such actions.

4) Program approval

This term represents a favourable decision by the Minister with respect to a proposed program or major. Among the responsibilities prescribed to Campus Alberta Quality Council is a quality assessment of the proposed program in question, and subsequent report/recommendation to the Minister for decision. In this document, where program approval is used in conjunction with the CAQC evaluation, it would be more accurately interpreted as being a favourable recommendation to the Minister. In the COE case, it makes the final decision, but this occurs over time, with several judgments as schools pass through multiple stages of program accreditation. Unless otherwise specified, approval in the professional case

refers to the UCVM's attempt to obtain a Letter of Reasonable Assurance, the first stage of the process and the one in which the concomitant reviews occurred.

5) Program assessment

While a definition is required for this activity there are discrepancies between the two regulators. The CAQC assesses at the organizational and program levels; however in this case, a new faculty had been created, which sits between the two. Given the history of the University of Calgary, the CAQC opted to conduct a program evaluation with the provision of some faculty-level information. The COE reviews exclusively in relation to the faculty unit, and accredits a faculty, school or college of veterinary medicine. The terms 'proposed program assessment' and 'program assessment' are meant to be representative of this specific assessment exercise, where in the COE case college/school/faculty may be more concise.

6) Quality assurance

Quality assurance represents processes used in order to evaluate, substantiate, and ultimately reward an evaluand (with approval or accreditation) and confer legitimacy (Singh, 2010) to the program or institution, as having met or exceeded prescribed standards. This study is limited to external program assessment of an untested, proposed program and is recognized to be only one element of broader quality assurance program enacted by both CAQC and COE.

7) Review cycle

A major emphasis of contemporary quality assurance practice is continuous improvement; regulators often employ monitoring for this reason. The UCVM review cycle in this study refers to the time period between consulting with the Province and the COE about the proposed program and receiving program approval from the Province and full accreditation from the COE several years later.

Acronyms:

ABVMA: Alberta Veterinary Medical Association

AVMA: American Veterinary Medical Association

CAQC: Campus Alberta Quality Council

COE: Council on Education

CMEC: Council of Ministers of Education, Canada

CVMA: Canadian Veterinary Medical Association

DVM: Doctor of Veterinary Medicine

GT: Grounded Theory

IAE: (Ministry of) Innovation and Advanced Education

NAVLE: North American Veterinary Licensing Examination

UofC: University of Calgary

UCVM: University of Calgary Faculty of Veterinary Medicine

Changes to Protocol

To the extent of the procedures used to gather and store data, manage confidentiality, and provide full disclosure to interviewees, I adhered to the protocol as approved by the Conjoint Research Ethics Board.

In two cases the interviews were not recorded; in one the recording service did not function and another interview occurred spontaneously in person where I had access to the release forms, but not to a recording device. In both of these cases I took careful handwritten notes and memoed extensively when the information was fresh in my mind. Ten interviews were scheduled in all, with one participant opting out for reasons unrelated to the study.

There were changes to the methodological interpretation and analysis insofar as considerable effort was taken reconciling the use of Charmaz' constructivist interpretation and Glaser's method for treating the data. This is elaborated in the 'Methodology' section. As described in 'Research Questions', the original approach would have threatened the study's methodological integrity by preconceiving that questions of quality were at the core.

The original proposal suggested the following parameter to the proposed research:

“Although the system coordination review process falls outside of the scope of the proposed research, it is worthwhile to note that the University of Calgary's proposal to offer a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine was favourably reviewed in the Ministry of Advanced Education and Technology in order to have been referred to the Campus Alberta Quality Council. The CAQC in turn determined that a full review was required. A full review includes an organizational assessment, which determines institutional capacity, and program evaluation to examine the quality of the proposed program (CAQC, 2009).”

These early interpretations of a discrete approval route were presumptuous and overly simplistic, as determined by further investigation.

The research, analysis and writing of this study did not progress at the rate I had anticipated. Having obtained approval to conduct the interviews in February 2013 from the Conjoint Research Ethics Board (CREB), I had estimated that the analysis would be completed by summer, a draft completed by fall of 2013, for a spring 2014 defense. This goal proved unattainable. I was granted an extension from CREB to May 31, 2014 and subsequently obtained program extensions.

Conflicts of Interest

A conflict of interest generally suggests that an individual has a stake in an outcome, be it monetary or based on personal relationships. A conflict must be “carefully managed” (American Council on Education, 2008) when an employee’s relationships or outside activities “...entail that the actuality or appearance that the quality or objectivity of judgment could be impaired; or that an individual is placing personal interest before the institutional interest” (p. 2). For this reason, given my employer was undergoing an institutional audit by the CAQC of its program review process, and that I had a prominent role in the audit, I opted to defer interviews pertinent to the study.

A conflict of interest may have been perceived with respect to the composition of my Supervisory Committee. One member also sat on the Campus Alberta Quality Council, with expert experience pertaining to this field of inquiry. It is felt that by disclosing this relationship, noting that our professional encounters were negligible, and stating that I have been in no way influenced by concern for ramifications of my conclusions, readers will appreciate that the expertise provided by this Member far outweighed the risk that I might compromise my professional role. The Member did not unduly influence the substance or outcome of this work.

Summary of Chapter 1

Chapter one provided an overview of the study, and addressed the nature and relevance of the study in five sections: situational overview, genesis of the study, purpose, significance and parameters.

The primary purpose of this study is to investigate and analyze postsecondary program proposal assessment. A dual-assessment scenario is investigated by examining a program assessment exercise in which one government regulatory agency (Campus Alberta Quality Council) and one professional accreditation body (American/Canadian Veterinary Medical Association Council on Education) concomitantly reviewed a proposal to offer a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine at the University of

Calgary. By examining a scenario that involved two regulators, I intend to identify latent phenomena that may be present across disciplines and geographies.

The origins of the research stem from professional practice from an applicant perspective of the impacts of program evaluation as a form of post-secondary regulation. Provincial academic program approval is an aspect of Canadian post-secondary regulation that, perhaps because of its idiosyncratic nature, has not developed much in the way of a body of work. Given the nature of the desired EdD credential, it would be desirable for any knowledge informing or derived from this study to be of practical value to practitioners and academic scholars, policy makers and regulatory bodies.

By explaining the evolution of the research questions, I illustrated progression of the study's approach as originally approved by the Supervisory Committee and Conjoint Research Ethics Board. Assumptions described some considerations that might have otherwise been taken for granted. Delimitations and limitations were provided to depict the scope and boundaries of the study, both imposed and voluntary. Definitions provided clarification on the interpretation and use of key phrases throughout the work. Finally, what may have been perceived as conflicts of interest were fully disclosed.

CHAPTER 2 – RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LITERATURE

Overview

This chapter describes the nature of post-secondary quality assurance and program regulation. It begins by exploring several interpretations of quality in higher education and describes the emergence of quality assurance into the management lexicon. Following that, the socio and geopolitical phenomena of increased access to higher learning and systemic globalization are explained as drivers for enhanced external program regulation. Credential harmonization, agency reciprocity and academic fraud are explained to be ramifications of these trends. Some philosophical considerations regarding quality gatekeeping are considered in light of the literature.

The chapter concludes by situating Alberta in the international arena of higher education quality assurance, and describing some of the unique features of veterinary medicine as a regulated profession in Canada.

External Academic Quality Assurance

Academic quality assurance comprises internal and external processes. Regional and specialized regulators represent external forms. External agents verify the integrity of program providers' proposed programs and services, including their potential capacity to deliver all that is promised. The purposes of external quality assurance in post-secondary education tend to be a mixture of similar functions, namely: quality improvement, making information on quality and standards publicly available, accreditation, public accountability in terms of meeting standards and use of public funds, and a contribution to higher education planning at the sector level (Dill, 2007). External quality assurance tools include accreditation, organizational and program reviews organized from outside of the institution, legislated program regulations, regulation of the establishment and operations of public and private providers, and regulation that determines which are considered legitimate providers within a particular jurisdiction

(Singh, 2010). As well, public reporting is a form of external quality assurance. In contrast, a few examples of internal mechanisms of quality assurance are course and faculty evaluations, content development processes, self-assessment, the documentation and internal audit of workflows and business processes, and benchmarking.

Public post-secondary sector external regulation is often conducted by a government-appointed or non-governmental organization. While the regulator attempts to influence institutional behavior by creating rules and requirements, the institutions hold ultimate responsibility for their own program quality. For this reason professional and government-mandated processes to assure quality and compliance with external regulations are conducted in cooperation with the institution. Such cooperation is an important feature to assuage concerns that quality assurance agencies may have become too dominant in their prerogative to fulfill the quality assurance mandate (Okafor, 2011), at the expense of academic freedoms (Brennan & Shah, 2000; Harvey, 2004a; Henkel, 2005; Loukkola & Zhang, 2010). “When compliance is a result of an agreement, it is close to consent. When compliance is a result of an explicit or implicit threat it is close to domination” (Burbules in Bótas & Huisman, 2012, p.374).

“Quality” can be demonstrated through a variety of measures and processes for evaluation, largely dependent on how it is constructed in a given scenario. Prevailing definitions of quality include terms and phrases such as exceptional, perfection or consistency, fitness for purpose, value for money, and transformation (Harvey, May 27-29, 2008).

“Quality means different things in different contexts. It can signify excellence (achieving something exceptional and distinctive), or consistency and flawlessness in outcomes, or fitness for purpose (fulfilling customers’ requirements, needs or desires), or value for money (achieving the same

outcomes at lower cost or better outcomes at the same cost), or transformation, improvement and enhancement...

QA in higher education can also seek evidence of different kinds of outcomes: learning effectiveness (improved learning, retention rates, graduation rates, employability, commitment to lifelong learning, etc.); stakeholder satisfaction (the value of students' experience, qualifications, knowledge, attitudes and skills to themselves, their employers, the wider community and the national economy); educational and economic competitive advantage (institutional, national, and international); value-for-money, and the long-term reputation and viability of institutions, programmes/courses" (Latchem, 2011, p. 8).

Given the number of understandings of quality, readers are encouraged to consider broad interpretations for the purpose of this study. Clark similarly used a "relaxed approach" with his use of the term 'system' in his work:

"It is an idea we can hardly do without even when plagued by its ambiguity and shifting meanings. When we use the term, we construct boundaries, arbitrary definitions of relevant actors and structures that fashion insiders and outsiders... boundaries expand and contract, zig and zag, across time and space" (1986, p. 4-5).

Program approval and accreditation are social compacts in the form of a promise by institutions to deliver in accordance with agency-approved plans and by quality agencies which may have consumer protection mandates. These assurances instill confidence in the system. As Harvey (2008) has stated,

“*Quality is to quality assurance what intelligence is to IQ tests. Quality, in higher education is, for example, about the nature of learning. Quality assurance is about convincing others about the adequacy of the processes of learning*” (p. 13, emphasis original).

Accreditation is a specific form of external evaluation that has ongoing requirements, as opposed to being a one-time approval which may be the case with a regional body. In many professions (for example law, medicine, veterinary medicine, nursing, engineering) graduation from an accredited program is a requirement for direct eligibility to candidacy for licensure, a subsequent process of quality assurance. And although the specifics of accreditation will vary with each profession, their overarching goals are generally to: (a) protect public safety, (b) ensure an acceptable level of quality among providers, (c) stimulate ongoing improvements, (d) create a mechanism between government and programs that provides measures of performance, (e) reduce variations in quality, (f) facilitate portability, and (g) help people make informed choices (Lewis, 2007).

Canada has no accreditation system for academic programs, as education is a provincial responsibility. Across sectors and regions, however, regulators are similar in their key characteristics and responsibilities. Authority is prescribed by law. Features include:

- rulemaking: the establishment of the rules that will guide behaviour;
- communication of rules: making regulatees aware of the behaviour expected or required;
- monitoring: oversight to ensure compliance with the rules;
- enforcement: taking action when noncompliance is identified;
- adjudication: official decision making about the consequences of noncompliance or settlement of disputes;
- sanctions: negative consequences for noncompliance; and
- evaluation: the assessment and adjustment of the regulatory system (Priest, 1998; Gilad, 2010).

In the case of post-secondary education, which itself is regulated by way of government oversight, the management, financial, professional, instructional, curricular and learning domains are permeated with accountability policies (Anderson & Jaafar, 2007). These may be reviewed and audited for compliance. The examination of academic programs, student services, staffing and institutional resources, characteristics and policies allows higher education accreditation bodies and regulatory agencies to assess specific aspects of institutional, faculty or program robustness.

As indicated in this section, external evaluation is intended as a means of quality assurance to provide responsible oversight to academic programming. Its emergence as a general expectation for developed educational systems is elaborated in the following section.

Origins

One narrative that could be inferred by the literature is that, given the evolution of quality management frameworks in Canada and the USA, accreditation and quality assurance are to some degree a reflection of the times. That is to say, the current emphasis is in some respect the maintenance of convention. For example, Campbell & Middlehurst, (2003) have observed that it is considered a “badge of maturity” (p. 14) for a post-secondary system to have a national quality assurance agency. Ramírez (2014) acknowledges this notion with the concern of a single model emerging as a manifestation of colonialism. In Asia for example, institutions are encouraged to seek international accreditation (particularly American); here arise questions about western curricular ethnocentricity (Chan, Chen et al., 2015).

In as early as the thirteenth century two models of quality assessment in European higher education could be identified: the French model which vested control in an external authority, and the English model which utilized peer review (Van Vught as cited by Felbinger, 2011). It was in the late

1800s that higher education accreditation first occurred in the US, established for protection against fraudulent providers (Brittingham, 2009).

The industrial revolution ushered quality control into the workplace. Inspection became part of the systematized industrial process, and rather than craftspeople, quality control by foremen (1900-1920) and then, inspection (1920-1940) (Sallis as cited by Mishra, 2007) centralized many functions to ensure compliance with standards. In 1924, Western Electric's Bell Telephone Laboratories established an Inspection Engineering Department, which developed quality control practices that included management responsibility and statistical process control. George Edwards, a member of this group, coined the term "quality assurance" in this context (Logan, 2003).

Total quality management came about as Japanese models of quality moved into America. Small groups tasked with solving departmental problems were supported by problem solving and statistical method training. This model evolved into concepts familiar to North Americans, known here as TQM and continuous quality improvement. Such approaches flourished from the 1960s onward in the context of consumerism and growing global competition (Logan, 2003).

During the 1980s fundamental economic global restructuring began. At the same time in the US, state boards and legislatures began to connect assessment and accountability in higher education. Pressures emerged to compete in a global economic market (Shanahan, 2009), and socioeconomic policies in the USA became driven by market forces (Gürüz, 2008). In Canada, the federal government's response was also to free the market and many provincial governments followed suit (Shanahan, 2009); actions that signaled a transition from the welfare state to global capitalism. In his review of post-secondary education systems in Newfoundland and Labrador, Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario, Kirby (2007) described the emergent culture as having a "...pervasive influence of

economic globalization which is accompanied by an increasingly utilitarian, market-oriented outlook on post-secondary education's raison d'être" (p. 1).

By the 1990s, strategic quality management had a foothold. Industry recognized that quality improvement gleaned advantages in a competitive environment (Logan, 2003). At the same time the American Congress heard testimony of considerable student financial aid fraud and abuse. Consequently, reauthorization of the Higher Education Act in 1992 included new, stringent requirements for accreditors. Within the following ten years, the provinces of British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario would establish arm's length quality agencies to regulate quality assurance in degree programming.

Over the last fifteen years, public pressures have mounted for transparency in the post-secondary sector. Authors point to increased calls for accountability on account of increased public funding for higher education in a rise to make PSE more accessible (Nicholson, 2011), and the visibility of these actions (De Boer, Enders, & Weyer, 2013). "Increased access to education has led to the demystification of the academy and has resulted in challenges to the authority and legitimacy of higher education" (Shanahan, 2009, p. 4). These challenges, reflected in distrust, may impact accountability expectations. The level of trust between higher education institutions and the state and society seems to play a role in determining the characteristics of evaluation systems (Cardoso, Rosa, Sarrico & Teixeira, 2010).

"Social confidence in higher education demands giving priority to defining the roles and responsibilities of all players involved in quality assurance – including individual institutions and providers, national quality assurance systems, nongovernmental and independent accreditation bodies,

professional associations, and regional or international organizations.” (Altbach & Knight, 2007, p. 302).

This section outlined the evolution of quality into the management lexicon and indicated present pressures for accountability and transparency in the post-secondary environment. This culture provides the backdrop against which two phenomena, mass education and globalization, have exacerbated the need to carefully consider higher education quality assurance systems. A discussion of the two trends follows.

Massification and Globalization

The following provides an explanation for massification, and examines some of the prominent effects of globalization on the post-secondary landscape. Following a discussion of these phenomena, specific circumstances which have arisen (or been exacerbated) by these mega-trends (credential harmonization and agency reciprocity, and academic fraud) are outlined. Massification and globalization have been used elsewhere in conceptual frameworks to theorize other trends (see Shin & Harman, 2009). Also, citing the World Bank, Dill (2007) wrote,

“The combined impacts of globalization and massification have radically altered the traditional relationship between the state and institutions of higher education and motivated policy makers to seek new means for assuring academic quality in higher education” (p. 2).

Massification

It was groundbreaking when Martin Trow (1970) articulated massification by describing a fundamental transformation from elite-to-mass-to-universal access to higher education. Trow’s landmark work contemplated the impacts of this unprecedented phenomenon on faculty and student

composition and the diversity of the post-secondary system, as well as institutional governance and quality standards.

In 1970 (when the study was written), there were 28.2 million students in post-secondary studies worldwide. By 1990 this figure was 70.8 million, and in 2004 it reached 132 million (Hallak & Poisson, 2007).⁴ The number of students enrolled in post-secondary studies is now forecast to rise to 414.2 million in 2030; by 2035, student enrolments in North America and Western Europe alone are projected to be 52 million (Calderon, 2012). “Where once the quality of an educational programme was defined by the number of students it turned away, in today’s lifelong learning climate, equality of access and extension of access to the traditionally disenfranchised are much more highly regarded attributes than exclusivity” (Mason, 1998, p. 38). The skills which are needed are changing, as new occupations emerge. It appears to be ‘good business’ to open the doors wide-open.

Within the 30 member countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Canada is among the strongest for post-secondary educational attainment. Almost half of the population aged 25 to 64 has completed either college or university (Kirby, 2007). 56% of 25-34 year old Canadians have completed some form of higher education (OECD, 2012). For all its opportunities, improved access has also introduced tension to established systems. With public institutions having reached or exceeded their funded enrolment capacities, massification has opened the doors for new providers – and with that, the call to reaffirm and strengthen principles and processes of quality assurance. Indeed massification is among the most often-cited linkages to renewed attention to quality assurance (Shanahan, 2009; van Damme, 2001; Loukkola & Zhang, 2010).

Important questions are being asked. Is it feasible to consider developing common principles of transparency and accountability for all post-secondary providers? To what degree would that threaten

⁴ The authors indicate these figures to be conservative, as not all country data was available for their study.

institutional autonomy? There are deep structural implications for educational policy directions based on this changing system. Some of these, elaborated from Palfreyman & Tapper (2009) follow:

- Greater numbers – how to accommodate the physical requirements? Do existing providers maintain their mandates? Are new providers permitted to operate?
- Can distance education ameliorate infrastructure demands? At a lower cost?
- Does everything (programs, individual institutions, systems) grow proportionately, or should particular sectors be emphasized?
- If new providers are to be accommodated to address demand, how should their regulation be handled?
- Are government resources sufficient to support the required expansion, or should private providers be engaged in provision? How can the integrity new providers' offerings be established? What regulations should apply?
- How do governments indicate to the public that institutions have been effectively accountable? What are appropriate ways for public providers to demonstrate responsibility for expenditures?

The following section will show that the complexity of these questions is magnified in light of trends that move higher education from the local into a much broader context.

Globalization

In this section globalization is presented as a further disruption to established systems. With massification occurring around the world, quality assurance and accreditation systems are pressed to become legitimized outside of their traditional boundaries; local notions of regulations and procedures can be considerable impediments to international mobility. Institutions are increasingly being called upon to recognize credit not obtained locally.

Cross-border provision comprises international branch campuses, partnerships where external providers share teaching and support services with local partners, and distance education (Latchem, 2011). There is also the importation of international students who study away from home. Globally the international education sector is estimated to be worth 2.2 trillion dollars (Gürüz, 2008). Transnational education in 2004 accounted for about 2.5 million students (Hallak & Poisson, 2007); internationally mobile students are projected to reach 7.5 million by 2025 (Lasanowski & Verbik, 2007).

Institutions based in the USA, UK, Australia, Canada and New Zealand dominate the offshore higher education market (Gürüz, 2008). As for visiting students, Canada has 4% of the world's market share of international learners (CMEC, 2011). In 2004, 153,638 international students contributed \$4 billion to the Canadian economy (Gürüz, 2008). In 2008, this rose to 178,227, generating more than \$6.5 billion (CMEC, 2011). By 2010, 218,200 international students were estimated to have spent in excess of \$6.9 billion on tuition, accommodation and discretionary spending (Kunin, 2012). With continued growth of unmet demand in places like China and India, where the middle class finds higher education affordable, by all accounts it will continue to grow.

Of course, mobility is no longer a requirement to enroll as an international student, but online education has posed challenges to traditional regulation. Some have commented that the problems of quality assurance in transnational provision of education are compounded in the case of e-learning (Gnanam & Stella, 2004; van Damme, 2001), where at the level of policy-making the link between information and communications technologies and distance education on one hand and internationalization on the other is often lacking (van der Wende, Beerkens, & Teichler, 1999). In other cases it has called attention to the enhanced scrutiny of distance provision as opposed to face to face offerings; the situation is such that there are diverse approaches and agencies (Campbell & Middlehurst, 2003).

As a result, a new disconnect has emerged with the traditional labels of private and public providers. Once they engage in transnational activities elsewhere, institutions are most often treated as private, regardless of their funding model (van Damme, 2001). Thus a historically clear-cut distinction becomes rather ambiguous at the same time that regulation of transnational credentials (including professional accreditation) is becoming required. Local distinctions no longer suffice. In reference to the professional education of architects, (Lavrow, n.d.,) wrote,

“[N]ational quality standards always remain at the heart of quality assurance/assessment, [but] they are simply not taking into account the rapid pace of competitive pressures. Globalization brings about high mobility of professional and expectations presenting a formidable challenge for all involved...” (p. 5)

The Chair of Engineers Canada’s International Committee has stated, “[the] engineering profession recognizes that international borders mean very little to the flow of information and expertise...” (Roney, n.d.)

How local providers should assess and evaluate the authenticity and merits of international credentials (including professional accreditation) obtained in person or online generates significant quandaries for policy makers connected to quality assurance. And perhaps acting as an incentive is the economic contribution made by these various forms of post-secondary provision. If there is a lack of direction regarding the cross-border governance of quality assurance import and export, then further measures are warranted to protect credential integrity (Latchem, 2011). Whether importing or exporting education services, the importance of frameworks for accreditation and licensing and recognition of qualifications, as well as for quality assurance, are universally important.

Summary of Massification and Globalization

Socio and geopolitical shifts towards massification and globalization indicate the need for systems of quality assurance and accreditation that can be understood beyond the local context. These systems also need to appropriately account for quality in the programming offered by new types of providers, in new types of ways. As van Damme described over a decade ago, “We have come to a point where internationalization policies and practices face the limits of their development unless the quality challenge is addressed in all its consequences” (2001a, p. 417-418). It appears that it is at this point, that we remain.

Agency reciprocity and credential harmonization

While a coordinated and organized supranational post-secondary system may be too aspirational for some, Kettunen (2008) calls for a flexible framework for evaluating quality and institutional performance, addressing concerns that quality assurance agencies may be intending to harmonize according to a singular predetermined model. Jarvis described the existing configuration as a “...cascading, multi-level governance regime” (2014, p. 161) that has come about; a “...self-reinforcing, complex polycentric regulatory systems (sic) which may in fact be usurping national regulatory autonomy – or at least limiting national level policy choices in governance approaches to the regulation of higher education” (ibid.). This has been termed the “glonacal”⁵ phenomenon of this era, where, “...higher education systems, the institutions that comprise them, and educational policy makers are all supposed to interact simultaneously in the global, national, and local contexts” (Chan, Chen et al, 2015, p. 85).

A feasible alternative to a supranational system is agency reciprocity, such as the Worldwide Quality Register which at one time had been promoted by a working group of the International

⁵ The term appears to originate with Marginson and Rhoades in 2002 in *Higher Education* 43(3).

Association of University Presidents (IAUP), proposed as an international ‘clearinghouse of clearinghouses’ in partnership with INQAAHE and UNESCO. Although the group submitted a related paper to the IAUP WISE awards in 2009, no more recent public activity has been made by the group towards this end. One might speculate that agencies may be willing to coordinate some activities or expectations, but that true reciprocity invites credibility risks for the regulator. By allowing the consent of one regulator to stand in for another, it could call into question the legitimate need for both agencies.

Although the public sector may be infamous for the time it takes to make impactful change, the professions are less burdened in this regard. Cross-border credential integrity is paramount for professional educational programs, where confidence in professional designations could be undermined if low-quality qualifications are obtained and recognized (UNESCO, 2005). Indeed there is increasingly academic literature about international differences in professional regulation, which “...has documented substantial variation...” (Adams, 2009, p. 195). The implications here are significant; in these occupations there are issues of health and safety in addition to public trust.

The Alliance of Sector Council (n.d.) recommends,

- “Accreditation programs should be harmonized (to the extent possible) with existing relevant international, regional, or national programs;
- Adopting internationally accepted policies and procedures may help to ensure the consistency and quality of accreditation programs” (p. 26).

It suggests that adopting these measures for accreditation/quality assurance will facilitate greater labour mobility across pan-Canadian markets and the recognition of foreign credentials. While this seems a logical conclusion, it evokes reflection of Ramírez (2014) and others’ warnings of the potential for homogenization.

“The homogenization of accreditation is more to do with facilitating the desire to transfer knowledge assets and very little to do with the “advancement” of learning for all. In a global knowledge economy, higher education is too precious to be left to particular institutions of accreditation pursuing their particular interests”

(Lowrie, 2008, p. 362).

Serious concerns have already been noted where there are international forms of authority. For example, The Competition Bureau of Canada (2007) was critical of the program accreditation process for Doctor of Optometry programs after an analysis revealed that accreditation authority rests with the US-based Accreditation Council on Optometric Education. Because the group’s membership is predominantly American, the Competition Bureau warned that decisions were likely void of due consideration to the local, Canadian context.

In the wake of increased mobility spawned by globalization and a more educated workforce due to massification, credential recognition has moved out from the periphery to centre stage in terms of higher education policy concerns (Bergan, 2009). In this regard, The Canadian Architectural Certification Board might well be representative of the future position of other professions:

“Professionals expect their credentials to be recognized without much effort. Experience and knowledge of over 300 schools in 71 countries convinces that individual assessments, however necessary, are perhaps not the way of the future” (Lavrow, n.d., p. 5). In fact, architects, psychologists, accountants and several other regulated professions are trying to develop international standards, thus having a harmonising influence on expectations and curricula in view of the professional accreditation of programs and the recognition of degrees in many countries. Some inter-agency and multi-regional

initiatives include the Accreditation Board of Engineering Technology (ABET), which has enacted the Western Hemisphere Initiative, a regional agreement with Canada and Mexico that is intended to build regional capacity that allows for mutual recognition of quality assurance systems.⁶ The Washington Accord on engineering recognizes the equivalency of national accreditation procedures in countries that include Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, the UK, USA, South Africa, Singapore, Germany and more; similar to others, this agreement recognizes program accreditation, not licensure. Another is the 2008 Seoul Accord which recognizes credentials for IT-related programs among member countries of Australia, Canada, Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Chirofed.ca describes mutual recognition between the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada and the European Union of Medical Specialists as it pertains to chiropractic professional developmental education. A broad and recent agreement, the 2014 EUR-ACE is the quality framework for European engineering at both the undergraduate and masters-levels.

Domestically the public policy focus appears to be on acknowledging competencies of internationally-trained professionals as indicated, for example, by Bologna's Working Group on Recognition, and Ontario's 2013 publication, *A Fair Way to Go: Access to Ontario's Regulated Professions and the Need to Embrace Newcomers in the Global Economy*. One method to evaluate prior learning emphasizes student learning outcomes. This also presents an opportunity for mutual recognition if not complete credential harmonization. Other initiatives to establish common course numbering are said to attempt to combat degree mills⁷.

⁶ This is a fine but significant point. Recognizing the integrity of quality assurance systems, rather than evaluating the particular inputs of individual programs, potentially allows for maximum input of local-context features, and helps to preserve institutional decision making.

⁷ Some point to claims that a lack of standardization of academic requirements allows 10-page doctoral dissertations to be acceptable by nefarious providers (Piña, 2010).

Outcome expectations, evident to different degrees in professional and regional regulations, can be mapped from course to program and then to institutional-level outcomes. Evidence that the assessment activities are aligned to measure specific outcomes are similarly mapped. This linear approach simplifies course comparisons for credit granting exercises. Having been adopted across disciplines, this approach to assessment is growing at a considerable rate, and is being promoted by powerful groups. For example, the OECD's Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO) project began in 2006. In a report concerning preliminary outcomes, it conceded,

“Any such study should be better located and integrated with the international scholarly community examining student learning outcomes and the policies and practices that support better learning. ...As pointed out in the rationale for AHELO, the past decade has seen a sharp increase in policy and scholarly interest in improved academic performance in higher education. Evidence of this can be seen in the Bologna Process and Tuning in Europe, the Spellings Commission and interest in accreditation in the United States, the rise of qualifications frameworks in many nations, and the emergence of multinational mapping and ranking initiatives like U-map and U-Multirank. AHELO represents an opportunity to better align the emerging scholarly and policy dialogue about quality” (OECD, 2013, p. 25).

It is a reasonable inference from this comment that participants may have been more concerned with efficiencies than pedagogy; that the complexities are vast and nuanced. It is a strong warning against imposing a bureaucratic agenda on what is fundamentally, an academic activity.

Given its breadth and visibility, Europe's Bologna process is likely to set the tone for future initiatives concerning reciprocity (CMEC Quality Assurance Subcommittee, 2008; Jarvis, 2014).

Bologna is an agreement by 46 European countries,

“...to undertake a series of reforms to achieve greater consistency and portability across their higher education systems without impacting upon their sovereignty in matters related to higher education...so that student, teacher, researcher and staff mobility, and recognition of qualifications will be greatly enhanced” (CMEC, 2008).

There are legal provocations to this framework; the 1997 Lisbon Convention decreed it a student's right to receive fair credential recognition within Europe.

Some inter-regional cooperation has been demonstrated domestically in Canada with the establishment of the Trade, Investment, and Labour Mobility Agreement (TILMA) between British Columbia and Alberta, extended under the 2013 New West Partnership Trade Agreement (NWPTA) to include Saskatchewan, and by the common standards of the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission. Given the substantial differences in credit transfer systems and post-secondary structures among provinces and territories, strengthening trans-provincial and territorial transfer systems will take time, but a pan-Canadian framework “should be encouraged” (CMEC, 2015).

Although there are risks associated with over-prescribing expectations, enhanced inter-regional collaboration may be viewed as a defense mechanism against educational fraud. In addition to facilitating degree recognition, agency reciprocity may help to stave off those who would exploit the vulnerabilities of an independent degree-granting sector.

Educational Fraud

There are four major factors responsible for the rise in academic and professional accreditation fraud: (1) increased stakes by way of a pay raise, promotion or fame – increasing the likelihood of unethical practices; (2) weak management of examinations and controls; (3) corrupt faculty members and test managers, and (4) the development of electronic technologies (Hallak & Poisson, 2007). The two major victims of harm in these cases are unknowing students who invest substantially in worthless credentials (CHEA & UNESCO, 2009; Altbach & Knight, 2007), and to society at large when fraudulent credentials put public safety at risk (CHEA & UNESCO, 2009).

Illegitimate accreditation agencies that have been identified include the Association for Innovation in Distance Education, the American Bureau of Higher Education and the Higher Education and Standards Association (Ezell, 2009). These were all intended to provide the appearance of legitimacy to illegitimate diploma mills or to poorly informed, legitimate providers. Other fraudulent activities are tracked by Boston College's Center for International Higher Education which maintains a Higher Education Corruption Monitor. The Monitor provides information about degree fraud and academic corruption, by country.

Diploma Mills are a billion dollar industry (Piña, 2010). While all regions have them, North America and Europe have the highest presence. Worldwide, an increase of 839 in total mills was reported between January 2010 and January 2011 and the highest numbers of illegitimate institutions tended to be in jurisdictions which are the most popular among international students (Cohen & Winch, 2011).

Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer is the largest survey that tracks worldwide public opinion on corruption. In its 2013 report more than 114,000 respondents were surveyed in 107 countries. Responses indicated that corruption is affecting public opinion; 41% of

respondents regarded the education system in their country to be corrupt or extremely corrupt, representing a 6% increase between 2010/2011 and 2013. Although these data are not disaggregated by level of the education system, and represent a range of geographies, the indications are serious (Chapman & Lindner, 2014).

Given the calibre of Canada's provincial post-secondary systems it may be tempting to consider this phenomenon as a concern for elsewhere. Unfortunately however the globalized context may literally bring these matters home. Despite the relative modesty in the number of Canadian institutions, it is not immune from domestic fraud. In 2009 for example Hawkesbury University in Ontario claimed to be accredited by the WAUC accreditation agency – itself an unrecognized authority (Cohen & Winch, 2011). After a restraining order was issued and an article published in the Ottawa Sun, the web site disappeared. As a second example, in 2006 student complaints provoked an investigation into Kingston College which was found to be importing foreign students to Canada to study for degrees which were awarded from unaccredited American universities. The college in Vancouver was ultimately ordered closed. Lansbridge University, one of Canada's first online, for-profit institutions opened in British Columbia in 2005, under the same ownership as Kingston College. It was also closed for non-compliance discovered through independent investigations in British Columbia in 2007 and in New Brunswick in 2010 (Parker, 2012).

While fraud by way of buying and selling illegitimate credentials is the extreme, knowledge production as an end in itself substantiates the commodification of education phenomenon. In post-secondary settings, instruments like distance and online learning are vulnerable to less vetting, and to being used solely as a means to obtaining, not achieving, higher education credentials. Regional and professional bodies are gatekeepers against fraudulent providers; however, this work occurs in the

background. Despite the noble intentions for continuous improvement and accountability, legitimate operators may perceive some regulatory requirements to be meddlesome.

Controlling Quality

The neoliberal perspective on regulated quality assurance holds accreditation and approval as highly political. It represents a shift incited by new public management that centralizes power away from academics and into administration. Brennan & Shah (2000) suggest that quality acts as a mask for power and values, that the appearance of withdrawing state regulation in favour of assessment and improvement is nevertheless a power play. In Harvey's study where academics from UK, Canada and Australia were interviewed he notes, "...only one respondent, an administrator, actually directly talked about accrediting bodies and academics struggling for power. It is almost as though it is a taboo subject. Even the different political agendas embedded in the accreditation process rarely seem to get publicly aired" (2004, p. 216). He describes tension as occurring mainly in the areas of program content, delivery and bureaucratic requirements, where delivery in particular sparks issues about external controls inhibiting innovation. Others speak to tensions between internal and external assessment over the authority of the final say (Brennan and Shah, 2000).

In addition to power, reducing conflict between market and scholarly values seems incredibly challenging, if not impossible. Two of the seemingly irreconcilable value contradictions are:

- The market incentive to behave competitively, foiled against cooperation and collegiality, which are required to engage in successful teaching and research (Stilwell, 2003);
- Budget-led prioritization, performance management, competitive bidding and output measures "...all point academic agents towards decisions on the basis of known categories and predictable products rather than creating space of the novel and unknown" (Marginson, 2007, p. 8).

Professional education is even more complicated by potential conflicts. While regulatory bodies are legitimized through their role to safeguard the public interest, they also represent the interests of the professional members. And as the professional bodies represent their own institutional self-interest (they act to retain their status as self-regulating), criticism centres on a public perception that the monopoly of occupational titles is a tool to leverage increased wealth, and not a mechanism for consumer protection (Randall, 2000). This is where control legitimated by public interest is vulnerable to becoming confounded by control based on self-interest (Baldwin, Cave, & Lodge, 2012; Harvey, Mason, & Ward, 1995). Although the suggested safeguards against political interference are normally, generally met, agency independence must still be assured, as must accountability and transparency of regulatory institutions (Boehm, 2007).

Academic/Professional Program Proposal Assessment

This section completes the environmental scan relating to the study. While the previous sections have emphasized general contexts, the following are more specific to the UCVM scenario.

Veterinary Medicine: Regulation and Habitus

Regulatory bodies must establish a separate agency for educational accrediting; while the parent organization may address fiscal requirements, the agency must operate as a completely separate function (Prier, 2009). For the Canadian professions, accreditation by professional bodies occurs at provincial, national or international levels. Regulated programs in health and education, for example, are maintained by provincial bodies. Other professions such as real estate, are handled differently across the country. The veterinarians are accredited by a joint US-Canadian entity.

In Canada, veterinary medicine began as one of the earliest restricted-title occupations⁸ and earned the right of self-regulation in the following years (Adams, 2009), but professionals were trained in the United States and Europe. Canadian veterinarians were not able to access local education until 1866 when the Montreal Veterinary School (later affiliated with Université de Montréal) opened. Subsequently, Toronto's Ontario Veterinary College facilitated training until 1908 when the Ontario government assumed control over the College and relocated it to Guelph, Ontario (Barker & Crowley, 1989). The College of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan (Western College of Veterinary Medicine) was established in 1964 and following that, the Atlantic Veterinary College at the University of PEI in 1986, on Prince Edward Island.

Beck and Young (2005) describe particular characteristics that link regulated professions and their respective knowledge base:

- They have achieved collective *collegiate* (emphasis original) autonomy over their professional training certification, and work and practice conditions (Friedson in Beck & Young, 2005). Faulconbridge & Hall (2009) describe this as jurisdiction over their operations.
- They to a great extent define the boundaries of their own knowledge base, which is often formalized at a higher education 'professional school'.
- In order to maintain trust of the client and the state, they have developed and implemented codes of ethics through which individuals may be subjected to sanctions.
- More than simply professional training, they have "...involved intensive socialization into the values of a professional community and its standards of professional integrity, judgment, and loyalty – in other words, *the creation of a professional habitus*" (emphasis original, p. 188).

⁸ Legislation establishes a title that practitioners who belong to a professional body are allowed to use, but the practice is not closed.

Academic Quality Assurance: Alberta

In Weinrib & Jones' discussion of pan-Canadian academic quality assurance, they comment that what all jurisdictions have in common is “forceful and important” (2014, p.6) as it represents a “relatively consistent narrative” (ibid.). Provincial agencies do subscribe to the same general framework in some aspects of quality assurance. The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) developed and agreed on a matrix for expectations of degree qualifications, , and established standards and procedures for quality assurance reviews (CMEC, 2007). These efforts support a diffused, but still somewhat coordinated system. Such efforts have been, “...accomplished without massive reform of the governance of post-secondary education in Canada” (Jones & Shanahan, 2007).

Alberta has been a front runner of Canadian post-secondary regulation. The Private Colleges Accreditation Board for example, was established in 1983 by the Universities Amendment Act to provide oversight to degree applications submitted by private providers. The Framework for Organizational Evaluation used at the time was “freely adapted from the Malcolm Baldrige Award for Quality, established as a world standard in the United States for practices intended to produce excellence” (CAQC 2009, p. 21). In 2004 the Private Colleges Accreditation Board (PCAB) was closed in anticipation of a new body with a broader mandate. The subsequent Campus Alberta Quality Council was established to evaluate all degree applications regardless of the type of provider.

Internationally, in 1991 an initial gathering of about ten organizations that came to be known as INQAAHE - the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education - established the first conference of regional quality assurance agencies. The group agreed to share information about degree mills, government pressure on agencies, and capacity building for members. Notably, professional accreditors were initially restricted to Associate Membership because of a fear that INQAAHE would be overtaken, given that most countries only had one general accreditor but

many professional accreditors (INQAAHE, 2011). It took about fifteen years for the Global Initiative on Quality Assurance Capacity (GIQAC) to be established. This is a World Bank initiative to provide grants to support regional quality assurance networks within the global framework. It has helped to form closer ties between the United Nations Education, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and INQAAHE (INQAAHE, 2011), elevating academic quality assurance's profile.

Interestingly, the Quality Council has indicated it may pursue INQAAHE membership (CAQC, 2005) and take a leadership position to increase information sharing among Canadian quality agencies (CAQC, 2006).

Chapter summary

This chapter described the literature that relates to the study by investigating the nature of post-secondary quality assurance and program regulation. The many interpretations of quality and the emergence of quality assurance into the management lexicon rationalize the expectation for regulation. The socio and geopolitical phenomena of increased access to higher learning (massification) and systemic globalization add further pressures. These conditions, which engender student and professional mobility, have supported moves towards mutual recognition by quality assurance bodies as well as credential harmonization. Homogenization and academic fraud are described as potential consequences which need to be considered.

Policy changes to align with quality assurance requirements have created situations which challenge the importance of the traditional system of academic beliefs and systems of work (Henkel, 2005). Given the systemic implications to the purpose and nature of delivering higher education in its context as a private good (as opposed to a public responsibility), some philosophical considerations regarding quality gatekeeping were raised. Finally, Alberta's Campus Alberta Quality Council was

situated in the broader context and Canadian veterinary medical education, as well as unique elements of regulated professions, were indicated.

The research design is elaborated in the chapter that follows.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN

Conducting the Study

This chapter provides the rationale for selecting a qualitative paradigm and grounded theory approach. Various interpretations of grounded theory are presented in light of my own world view. The chapter illustrates some of the challenges inherent in conducting a classic grounded study project, as well as (mis)interpretations of this methodology.

Qualitative Study

The predominant reason for selecting a qualitative approach is that this investigation sought to better understand what occurred in a given situation by re-interpreting conditions, events, and effects. Qualitative research makes room for intangibles of this nature. A statistically based study was considered but I determined that a qualitative analysis offered a better opportunity to analyze this subjective phenomenon.

There are a number of methodologies available for qualitative studies. Phenomenology was eliminated for its emphasis on individuals, given the organizational unit of analysis originally selected for this research. Case study, while appropriate given the bounded nature of limited participants, would require a predetermined framework for analysis, which was not the intended approach. With its particular emphasis on culture and flexibility towards micro and macro environments, ethnography seemed appropriate and institutional ethnography in particular, which explores the processes and social relations that occur in the context of work. However, it was grounded theory that appeared to be best aligned with the goal of the research. With an emphasis on process, and focus on developing theory from data, grounded theory provided an opportunity to learn how phenomena are understood and then interpret how culture has constructed it (Haughey, n.d.). It has particular utility for those who are looking at conditions which give rise to complex and dynamic phenomena (Moghaddam, 2006).

Grounded theory analyses the data found in ‘real world’ actualities⁹, without preconceived hypotheses (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). With no ideas to prove or disprove, the issues which are of importance to the participants emerge in the information that they share (Bonner, Francis & Mills, 2006). Importantly, it seeks a process-oriented theory which underpins the phenomenon that is under exploration.

Grounded theory has been used elsewhere in similar investigations. Lomas (2007) selected this method when investigating academics’ perceptions of the purpose for quality in UK higher education, as did Bauder and Girard (2007) when examining processes and underlying social and cultural forces which occurred in a regulated profession. Nilsson (2010) constructed dimensions of specialist and generalist competencies in a study of how graduates consider the relationship between education in university professional programs and work. As well, Bowman, Hart, Hill, and Stalmeijer (2014) chose grounded theory to investigate how medical students negotiate the hidden curriculum of surgical education.

Grounded theory is not without its detractors and is an ambitious methodology for a novice researcher. Dorothy Smith, founder of institutional ethnography, observed grounded theory to be confined to the local, and as such “a disaster” (Smith, 2004), p. 3). Alvesson & Sköldböck wonder, “...how it is possible to do research – or any mental activity – without theoretical preconceptions, and what the point is with pure descriptions” (2009, p. 33). These claims are handily refuted by Glaser’s insistence that any hypothesis (theory) be thoroughly applicable to broader settings, and that description is the adversary of truly grounded data. “Researchers not clear on the distinction between conceptual and description become easily confused on whether the theory describes a unit or conceptualizes a process within it” (Glaser, 2002a, p. 9). That being said, Glaser is only one purveyor of the grounded theory method.

⁹ Actualities are viewed to be shared interpretations of language and culture.

Grounded Theory is generally described in the following categories: (a) positivist when associated with Glaser, (b) postpositivist as articulated by Strauss and Corbin (a student of Strauss), and most recently, (c) constructionist as formulated by Charmaz, who was a student of Glaser and Strauss. My worldview seems most closely aligned with Charmaz' approach. Like her, I subscribe to the belief that findings are created through interaction between the investigator and the phenomenon, rather than through (literal) discovery (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). To summarize this methodological perspective, Charmaz' constructivist approach has been described in the following passage:

“...When relativist in ontology, subjectivist in epistemology, and when recognizing the interactive nature of the inquirer/inquired-into dyad (rendering obsolete the ontology-epistemology distinction to some degree), recently espoused grounded theory method obtains a dialectical quality. Thus a judgment can be made that grounded theory method can reside within the constructivist belief system...” (Annells, 1996, p. 389)

While sharing Charmaz' constructivist perspective, I was reluctant to code in either the manner she or Strauss and Corbin prescribed. Both have been critiqued for their over-formulation in the treatment of the data “...the technical tail is beginning to wag the theoretical dog” (Melia, 1996, p. 376). Nevertheless Kathy Charmaz provides effective advice to fledgling researchers about investigating latent phenomena. She suggests for example that the investigator ask, “What symbols do actors invoke to understand their worlds, the participants and processes within them, and the objects and events they encounter? What names do they attach to objects, events, persons, roles, settings, equipment?” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 24)

Barney Glaser has been out of academia for many years but remains a prolific writer about the method. He has a strong following of devotees, actively advises graduate students, and sells out workshops internationally. But he deals in contradictions. On one hand he has stated, “Not all data is socially constructed, but if the researcher has some, it too will have its patterns” (Glaser, 2013, para. 7). He also claims, “GT is a general methodology that can be used with any type of data and therefore any TC [theoretical code]. Therefore, it has no special theoretical perspective or epistemology” (ibid.). On the other hand, he seems to take constructivism for granted; “There is always a perception of a perception as the conceptual level rises. We are all stuck with a "human" view of what is going on and hazy concepts and descriptions about it” (Glaser, 2004, para. 45).

Regardless of his own inconsistencies regarding how knowledge comes to exist, or perhaps indifferent to the academic debate, Glaser’s main concerns with Charmaz’ approach are two-fold. In the first case he disputes the need to emphasize or compensate for the interpretive nature of data gathering. Giving primacy to the language used by the participants, he contends that a researcher’s projections will not surface in the analysis provided that she first generates in vivo codes. Further, where projections cannot or are not avoided, an author’s interpretations will only surface as pertinent if critical mass is attained, so other sources must similarly contribute.

Second, he rebukes Charmaz’ use of description in the analysis and outcome; it is antithetical to his concept of a truly grounded theory. According to the classical application, description does not raise observation to the conceptual level. Words attributed to categories or concepts must be representative of indicators of behavioural patterns, and not logical elaborations. Logical elaborations are a critical threat to authentic grounded theory. Precisely because they are logical, they appear obvious – but by not actually being founded in the data, they are completely irrelevant.

Methodology: Constructionism

As was articulated in the section addressing the assumptions with which I entered the study, it is appropriate to disclose that I view reality to be constructed socially, and knowledge to be generated and affirmed as such in social groups. These viewpoints are discussed in relation to the grounded theory research design.

In the broadest strokes, two ideas about how knowledge exists are predominant in social science research: (a) that knowledge is observable and verifiable and exists outside of the human experience (positivism), and (b) that knowledge is created through social interaction, or by an individual's own schema, and interpretation is shaded by interests, legitimated by consensus and over time (constructivism). The latter position is more comprehensible to me, as described in the following passage:

“...What we consider to be meaningful reality is real—for it is real in its consequences—in that we accept it as real. It is also relativist because we recognize that different cultures, times, peoples have different frames of understanding for these things. Description (of what we see, of the way things are and narration of stories about these ways) are not straightforward re-presentations but are inevitably cultural and historical and reflect social understandings.” (Haughey, n.d.)

In social constructionism, knowledge and language are created in communities. A community verifies and justifies the group's knowledge, and so knowledge can differ from group to group. Research is not value-free.

A culture of a community of practice holds its own symbols and concepts which indicate the language norms and values of that community. For example, in the postsecondary education regulatory knowledge community, “[R]eports are written in ways that help to protect institutions and the regulator, who form a common interpretative rule community, by applying the protective jargons of the governmental bureaucrat” (Griffiths, King & Williams, 2007, p. 173). Atkinson & Coffee provide examples of “insider” language in this context, describing “interdisciplinary” and “capacity to deliver” as the “linguistic building blocks of academic representation” (2004, p. 66). Further, it is purported to be, “... clear that the external quality assurance system...has developed a set of 'rules' and language that are only fully interpretable by insiders - those who understand the rules of the game” (Griffiths et al., 2007, p. 172).

Professions like veterinary medicine also constitute knowledge communities. “[P]rofessional education...imparts more subtle embodied knowledges to those joining the profession. In this way, professional education can be seen as one way of shaping the subjectivities of professionals as they learn to perform an appropriate ‘professional’ persona’ (Faulconbridge & Hall, 2009, p. 176). In one study, regulatory administrators expanded on published criteria in their identification of “...additional elements that form part of the habitus of the profession” (Bauder & Girard, 2007, p. 46). In another, Solbrekke (2008) found graduates of professional law and psychology programs acknowledge their moral responsibility to society at large, juxtaposed with a social responsibility entwined with their professional identities as academically trained experts.

“...Thus, individuals create their reality, the institutions and their legitimizations, but this created reality in turn creates the individuals. This happens through socialization,

the social influence through which individuals internalize social norms and knowledge” (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009, p. 28).

Preconception and Description

It was challenging to not force existing ideas on the data, given the extensive reading I had done previously around (if not about) this subject, and practical experience working with accreditation and program proposal assessment. Ultimately, in what seems to be a test of authenticity for grounded theory, when preconceptions were inadvertently imposed, the analysis was fruitless. Several attempts at the coding, memoing and categorization sequence led me to internalize and articulate what were *not* the main concerns:

- Why both bodies required specific regulations;
- How those regulations compared;
- Whose requirements were more robust;
- Whether or not and how the two organizations worked together;
- If dual oversight was excessive.

In August of 2013, I had the opportunity to video Skype with Barney Glaser at a time when I was immersed in description, which didn't satisfy me, nor, I was sure, would it satisfy the Committee. Providing assurances that, “Confusion is the royal road to preconception” (preconception being Glaser's term for subconscious conceptualization), I continued conscientiously, employing constructionist ideals in my use of classical Glaserian grounded theory. By trusting in the methodological approach I allayed, to some degree, concerns about preconceptions¹⁰.

¹⁰ By August 2013 I had conducted four interviews, and coded the transcripts in addition to approximately 200 pages of published materials.

On the use of this method, (Glaser, 2002a) has commented,

“...at this [graduate] level ability still varies between those who got through and have no ability to conceptualize, those who conceptualize sufficiently well, and those who are very capable. The former drift into QDA [Qualitative Descriptive Analysis], whatever the methodology, and use a few received, preconceived concepts for a forcing framework that yields lots of description” (p. 11-12).

So while concerns about preconceptions were held in abeyance, a new worry took its place – my capacity to conceptualize.

In the winter of 2013 I had obtained what appeared to be saturation of 10 codes. These codes, when collapsed, reframed, extended or minimized, did not align with or form into any discernable construct. Most were the artifacts of a concern that nothing was happening in the data, and therefore of forcing. As one example, there was a curiosity regarding the nature of the AVMA/CVMA COE construct, with a reliance on primarily American infrastructure for educational quality assessment. Canadian “piggybacking” also occurs with respect to the North American Veterinary Licensing Examination which must be passed for registration/licensure. Given that the Competition Bureau of Canada (2007) was critical of the program accreditation process for the optometrists’ US-based educational accreditation program, I ventured to guess there may likewise be implications for Canadian veterinary medicine. This was an indication of the influence of the literature on my thought process.

While each provided a slightly different perspective to the situation, there was uniform support for co-regulation by the participants who I interviewed and spoke with informally. Organizational documents took it for granted, as the official representation of the current state of affairs. Observations of related discussions revealed no angst; there was tremendous support for the alliance for practical

reasons, namely economies of scale and physical proximity of the two nation-partners. I could find no journal articles, news clippings or editorials to challenge the concept. When probed regarding cultural differences that may surface in a program evaluation, I was advised that additional Canadian representation on domestic site visits mitigated misunderstandings. Further only three differences were suggested between the two contexts: (a) approaches to equity in admissions, (b) non/centralization of faculty management, and (c) institutional funding and tuition. A rich history of the CVMA (Barker & Crowley, 1989) indicated deep ties between Canadian and American veterinarians since before the inception of the Canadian national body. I investigated this history, noting that one annual convention (American) was held in Banff, and two Canadians have served as President. Therefore, while it should not be concluded that these observations negate the possibility of latent concerns or implications to co-regulation, it was not a main concern of the participants and therefore irrelevant in this instance.

At the suggestion of my Supervisor I contacted the program assessment expert on my Committee, whose remarks and observations demonstrated insights that this study still lacked. I reflected on this and the difficulty I was having finding relationships among the concepts, a prerequisite to theory, and began the analysis once more.

Methods - Overview

Two methods of data collection were originally proposed; documentary analysis and interviews. A third opportunity for data collection, by way of memoing relevant, informal conversations and observations provided an additional source of information. Despite the choices of software available to qualitative and grounded theory researchers, being a tactile learner, and heeding advice of others I chose to code using a basic word processor, spreadsheets, literally hundreds of sticky notes and pens and paper. I memoed almost exclusively on paper. This allowed for free-form diagramming and the ability to

work with text spontaneously and in a non-linear way. The One Note application was used to partially organize the data, which is essentially an electronic post-it note system.

The analysis was an attempt to identify and disaggregate the constructions that participants, including myself as the researcher, hold about the themes and concepts that emerged during the investigation. Following substantial effort, I was able to attribute representative categorizations to what emerged as (some) of the actions interpreted from the data, originally derived from coding which was ascribed directly from the language of the participants.

Observations

I was fortunate to participate and observe several conversations that fit within the realm of this inquiry; for example, a workshop at the Middle States Commission on Higher Education facilitated relevant conversations with a senior administrator from a SUNY optometry program (profession), a Dean from Cornell, and lunch with a Middle States Vice President/Commission Liaison (regional accreditor). Towards the end of the study, I was able to attend a keynote address by an expert from the World Bank who, when discussing important trends in higher education, noted massification, credential harmonization, and accreditation ‘syndrome’ as key (Marmalejo, 2014). As part of my professional obligations I co-manage the AACSB accreditation for Athabasca University’s Faculty of Business; this offered insights into a very rigorous, discipline-specific voluntary regulatory process. I was also able to discuss the wider phenomenon of institutional review and monitoring with colleagues from across the post-secondary sector. Conversations with those from peer institutions were extraordinarily valuable; existing relationships and support for my studies seemed to factor into their candor. All of these encounters resulted in memos that contributed to varying degrees of the final constructions.

Documents

Documentation was a major source of data for the research. Documents are ‘social facts’, in that they are produced, shared and used in socially organized ways. They are not, however, literal representations of organizational routines, decision-making processes, or professional practices. “Texts...often represent what their authors assumed were objective facts” (Prior in (Charmaz, 2006, p. 35). “...We have to approach documents for what they are and what they are used to accomplish. We should examine their place in organizational settings, the cultural values attached to them, their distinctive types and forms” (Atkinson & Coffee, 2004, p. 79). Here Glaser’s approach demands that all data, regardless of source, be treated equally. This practice has been substantiated elsewhere, “...it is vital to give documentary data due weight and appropriate analytic attention” (ibid p. 80).

In addition to hundreds of pages of policies, procedures, guidelines, handbooks, forms, legislation and media reports, I was generously provided with several confidential self-studies and external assessments including the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine’s self-study report for the CAQC (2007), self-study report for the COE (2007), reports of the external reviewers of the CAQC (2007), report of the external reviewers from the COE (2007) as well as self-study documents for the 2009 and 2012 site visits (submitted to the COE with copies to the CAQC). A number of codes were identified and cross-referenced using constant comparison.

“The constant comparative method enables the generation of theory through systematic and explicit coding and analytic procedures. The process involves three types of comparison. Incidents are compared to incidents to establish underlying uniformity and its varying conditions. The uniformity and the conditions become generated concepts and hypotheses. Then, concepts are compared to more incidents

to generate new theoretical properties of the concept and more hypotheses. The purpose is theoretical elaboration, saturation and verification of concepts, densification of concepts by developing their properties and generation of further concepts. Finally, concepts are compared to concepts” (Glaser, 2004), 3.8).

Working with the materials I considered Dorothy Smith’s position that texts cannot be divorced from social contexts and individual participants; there is “an ongoing intertextual process” (1990, p. 161). “Relationships and organizations are produced through the relations of individuals but the forms of organization are neither fully intended nor controlled by the participants involved” (ibid.). Therefore in as much as “quality” and “quality assurance” are not neutral, rules of action were examined; how were readers guided to perform in specific ways? “[T]he researcher who wishes to concentrate on the use of documents in action has to be constantly aware as to how the written record is tied into and anchored within other aspects of organizational life...” (Prior, 2004, p. 87) An examination of the emergence of standards and their processes for renewal revealed a deliberate and complex network of assumptions and actions.

Interviews

Six of nine interviews were captured through MP3 telephone audio recordings and three were conducted in person. The MP3 recording device for in-person interviews has a password-protected security folder in which audio files were stored. Telephone interviews were conducted using Telus Collaboration Services. Using this service, calls are recorded on a Canadian server, and the audio files are recorded and provided to the investigator by email. These files are not encrypted, which represented a risk; however, by all appearances no breach occurred. Within 48 hours of receiving the recording each was downloaded from the device and deleted from its origins (i.e. deleted from email and deleted from

deleted folder; deleted from recording device). Each interview was subsequently stored on a password-protected home computer, and backed up to a password-protected USB flash drive that remains stored in a locked cabinet. A home computer with an additional external back up drive and separate password protection also held the data, which has since been deleted.

Interviews were transcribed by me using the excellent Listen 'n Write MP3 player program. Transcription was not particularly cumbersome; it was a welcome change from the tedium of coding/constant comparison and I am a proficient typist. Interviewees were provided with transcripts by email and encouraged to make corrections or clarifications as they felt necessary; several participants did.

Discussions opened with the required recitation regarding ethics (Appendix A) and the voluntary nature of participation, and proceeded to a general question about each participant's interpretation of quality assurance in education generally (Appendix B), and then with respect to program proposal assessment. Speaking directly with participants provided an opportunity to obtain more data and to test emerging concepts and potential relationships among them. I was able to negate several potential data categories because of the interview process, which also provided new pathways to others. For example, given the initial emphasis of a double-review, I enquired about other experiences of this nature, as well as experience with other representatives on the UCVM exercise. References from one domain to another (regional to profession, profession to regional) were conspicuously absent, despite the documented relationships and the fact that the review was conducted concomitantly. Rather what was mentioned more frequently were agencies aligned with the interests of the regulator, depending on who s/he represented. A documentary analysis alone would not have brought this to the forefront.

Regrettably, parts of the interviews, open ended to keep the participants' main concerns at the forefront, at some points, in hindsight may have been missed opportunities for more sophisticated or probing questions as well as participant introspection.

Summary of Chapter 3

Chapter 3 acknowledged that choices regarding paradigm (qualitative), perspective (constructionism), and methods (observations, documents, and interviews) are intentional and influence the viewpoint and outcome of the analysis. Illustrations of two lived challenges of classical grounded theory, preconception and description, were provided.

CHAPTER 4 - ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Overview

This chapter illustrates the progression of data gathering and analysis towards obtaining a grounded theory. The ensuing theory hypothesizes a main concern of program proposal assessment, and proposes one process used to resolve it. This is specifically applicable to the University of Calgary's Doctor of Veterinary Medicine program application; however, other accreditation events and academic regulators were used to test the efficacy of indicators, categories and concepts during theoretical sampling. Although this supported verification, it is possible that testing ideas against this 'external' evidence may have influenced the analysis to some degree. This risk of contamination was mitigated in part by the timing of the use of other data, by testing once concepts had matured somewhat, and only once data had been abstracted to a considerable extent.

Introduction to Presentation of the Data

Grounded theories propose a basic latent, social-psychological or structural process of the phenomena being investigated. The process is identified through an analysis of variables obtained through data collection and memoing in which observations, ideas, and commentary about ideas related to the study are recorded. Glaser describes memos as the ideas that originate from abstract processing and conceptualization. As the research progresses the in vivo and ascribed codes are grouped into categories, which, if saturated, are elevated to conceptualization. The memos are sorted theoretically to establish potential relationships among the concepts, which are tested in additional scenarios ("theoretical sampling") until a core process is identified.

This rigor informs the trustworthiness of this study, but cannot, in accordance with the social constructivist perspective, indicate an objective truth. Kvale (1995) writes,

“The issue of what is valid knowledge of the social world involves the philosophical question of what is truth. Within philosophy, three classical criteria of truth are discerned~ correspondence, coherence, and pragmatic utility. The correspondence criterion of truth concerns whether a knowledge statement corresponds to the objective world. The coherence criterion refers to the consistency and internal logic of a statement. And the pragmatic criterion relates the truth of a knowledge statement to its practical consequences” (p. 23).

The data obtained for this study was informed from the language of the participants, and the context in which it was presented was seriously considered. The concepts as they are presented in the following sections do correspond to the objective world in which this coordinated review occurred; it is firmly grounded in the program proposal assessment scenario. Secondly, although the logic framework that was constructed is my own, it was devised only after many attempts to ensure that the themes were accurately represented by each of the subsequent concept labels; maps can be drawn from the initial data through to the abstraction. Thirdly, this thesis proposes a grounded theory of blueprinting as its core knowledge statement, which resonated with members of the social group who were informally surveyed with regard to its relevance. Therefore, although there are no objective truths against which this study’s hypothesis can be measured, it does represent a scrupulous account of the UCVM’s coordinated program assessment review process.

Sandelowski (1998), says that the presentation that follows may be somewhat unique to grounded theory.

“Although grounded theories must be faithful renderings of experience, there is no mandate in grounded theory write-ups, as there is in studies whose central purpose is to foreground the perspectives and voices of individual participants, for the reader to see or hear every person whose experiences contributed to the theory. Data are not the stars here; instead, they play important, but supporting roles...” (p. 377)

While grounded theory write-ups emphasize a constructed understanding, it is imperative to illustrate evidence of rigorous data analysis and decision-making. It must also be acknowledged that labels not generated in vivo are socially constructed attributes and my arrangement of them, and subsequent abstractions are equally constructions.

For this study, as prescribed by Glaser, open coding as the first level of analysis extracted incidences verbatim. Tentative labels intended to summarize and represent a synthesis of those data were subsequently assigned, and amended. Re-naming occurred as new incidents required it for accuracy. Data sources included participant interviews, organizational documents, faculty reports, other accounts, observations and personal conversations. Transcripts and organizational documents were shuffled into a random order, to avoid (unknowingly) assuming meaning from page to page. This increased the number of incident codes from the first few iterations, which was beneficial to the robustness of the data gathering and analysis process.

The following sections reproduce the inductive process that was used to work with the data and generate the proposed grounded theory, although in a much more linear fashion than actually occurred. The process of constant comparison, comparing incident to incident, and category to category, made the

process far more iterative than is articulated. The main concern of the participants is identified in the next section and is followed by one understanding of categories of incidents. The sub-core conceptual processes which overarch the more precise actions (categories of incidents), are presented. My understanding of the proposed core variable which represents a basic latent social-structural process concludes the chapter.

Identifying the Main Concern

An assumption entering the study was that the main concern of program proposal assessment would be to assure the quality of proposed academic programs. Therefore, the sensitizing questions sought to investigate each regulator's approach to achieve this goal. Given the nature of the simultaneous review by two bodies, it was also assumed that a relationship between them would be investigated.

Unexpectedly, participant data did not indicate a relationship between the CAQC and COE to be a main concern; nor was assuring quality, per se. Rather, there was more emphasis on the process. Language taken directly from the data stressed that it must be "based on integrity" (COE, p. 6)¹¹ and be a "seamless operation" (P6)¹². Although the materials committed the regulators to expectations for rigour and displayed strong ethical value propositions, they emphasize administration and logistics, leaving conspicuously absent the philosophical and theoretical paradigms in which the frameworks are set.

¹¹ References to COE, unless otherwise stated, are to the April 2012 Policies and Procedures Manual revisions to October 2012. Similarly, references to CAQC are to the 2009 Handbook, with revisions to October 2013.

¹² References to P(x) indicates Participant (#) – interviewee.

Engaging in formative, deliberate program proposal assessment assumes the evaluative framework, when appropriately applied, indicates quality. Its effectiveness hinges on the integrity of the framework's application – the *process* of program proposal assessment. As it states (in all capital letters) in the training material for COE reviewers,

“Accreditation decisions made by the COE can have far-reaching consequences for the college. Careful and thoughtful site visit activities and accreditation decision activities must reflect the integrity of this process” (COE, p. 7).

The weight of this responsibility is also implied by the CAQC; negative recommendations require consensus of the full Council, while an executive sub-committee may make positive rulings.

Pre-existing criteria absolves reviewers from having to judge the adequacy or legitimacy of agency requirements or obtain consensus on what quality might be. As one participant explained, this is still relatively complicated;

“And how we manage that through the process is difficult to not bring your own perspective and experience into those and not have some kind of comparative comments in terms of comparative perspectives in terms of what you think that standard should look like.” (P5)

As suggested in that comment, a thorough analysis of the program proposal assessment exercise recognizes that it is permeated with subjectivity. Peer reviewers are mandated to interpret self-assessments, make judgments against the requirements and determine what if any additional information or action is necessary. These are social constructions for what counts as quality and how particular people at a specific point should measure it.

The members of communities that engage in quality assurance understand these observations; such comments are not novel, but are important. As one interviewee explained “[a school] could design an excellent program without [graduates] being licensable...” (P3) And another describing the standards, “Really they’re proxies... And it's the peer review and the discussions and the site visits that actually go into the evidence of, or the possibilities that this will have quality” (P1).

Reframing the study’s main concern from ‘assuring quality’ to ‘effectively assessing’ more concisely describes the goal of the action occurring in the evaluation exercise, and reflects what is presented in the data. This subtle shift does not intend to diminish the value or potential for obtaining program quality assurance. Rather, it substantiates the assurance of quality by recognizing ‘effective assessment’ as an implicit process, regardless of what the characteristics of quality are said to be at a given point in time.

‘Effectively assessing’ allows the analysis to transcend the details of quality parameters for each of the regulators involved in this study. The examination of the program proposal assessment process by each of the agencies, with particular attention to how they intersected during the coordinated review, intends to generate observations and insights about the broader nature of program proposal assessment in the contemporary higher education landscape. Examining program proposal assessment through the lens of ‘effective assessment’ supports observing the data from multiple perspectives. As the grounded theory approach aims to detect behavioural patterns which indicate an underlying and elemental social structural or psychological process, this is the goal when seeking to determine how ‘effective assessment’ is perceived to occur.

This section rationalized the choice of ‘effective assessment’ as the main concern. As warranted by grounded theory, many incidents led to the categorization and conceptualization of a basic social-

structural process that responds to this main concern. Following is a brief overview of the culmination of the analysis, which precedes the inductive review.

Overview of Analysis

The analysis that follows proposes a process of ‘blueprinting’, as indicated in Figure 1, to resolve a main concern of effectively assessing. ‘Replicating’ and ‘contextualizing’ are subcore concepts, the synergies of which serve together as structural supports for the core variable. Blueprinting is a basic social structural process that requires (a) the replication of activities and frameworks and (b) contextualization to the assessment environment. Replicating and contextualizing are each necessary but on their own, are insufficient to engage in the blueprinting process. Essentially, this is because a robust process requires a base framework; and, no two reviews can be the same, given there will be different organizations and people involved in each. The degree to which contextualization and replication occurs determines how blueprinting is enacted; i.e. the degree to which the assessment retains structure and is modified to be effective. Supporting the subcore concepts are four themes which were drawn from seven categories. All data was successfully coded into these seven, indicating saturation. They were subsequently collapsed into four conceptual themes: adapting, relating, standardizing, and socializing. These indicate actions that occur across the spectrum of replicating and contextualizing.

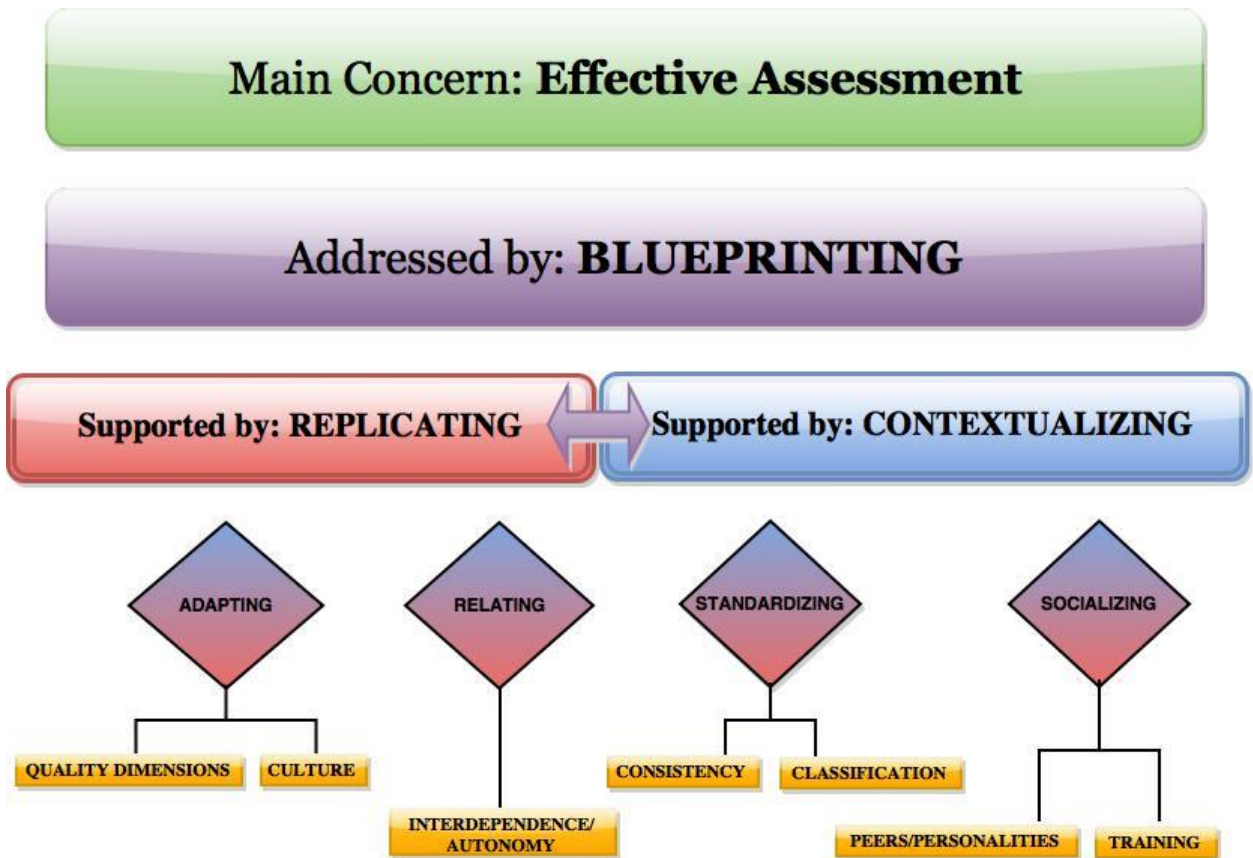


Figure 1
Blueprinting

The discussion that follows is in keeping with the inductive nature of data generation and analysis, beginning with incident categories. As Gatin states,

“Illustrations and examples are from data collected in this research and are provided for the purpose of establishing imagery and understanding. These illustrations and examples are for the purpose of making the theory clear and should not be considered as proofs or descriptions of the process used to derive the theory. References to theoretical work *by others* are

not necessarily intended to seek verification of this theory or to try to verify another theory” (2013, para. 4, emphasis original).

Synthesis of Indicators

Following the protocols approved by the Research Ethics Board, I generated a data set from participant interviews (P=9). These, along with the Campus Alberta Quality Council’s Handbook, the Council on Education’s Policies and Procedures Manual, and sections of additional reports and guidelines were coded at the incident level for meaning, purpose and action. They were identified by moving among all of the incidents and looking for patterns in the data. By going backward and forward between the incidents and naming the categories, relabeling for accuracy, the process of constant comparison supported obtaining the most appropriate labels as conceivable within my own logic framework.

The following sections indicate the phenomena that appeared most significant to a study of how a response to effective assessment might manifest. “The object, then, is to become sensitive to the number and types of properties that might pertain to phenomena that otherwise might not be noticed or noticed only much later” (Corbin & Strauss, 1998, p. 82). Included in the synopses are examples of notations from the analysis that can be traced back to the original data – totaling seven categories.

At this point in the analysis it was unclear if or how data might represent the pattern of behavior that indicates basic social structural process towards effectively assessing. Adapting, relating, standardizing and socializing were ascribed after the fact. Here they are depicted with their subcategories, the main themes into which all data could be coded. This is illustrated in Figure 2.

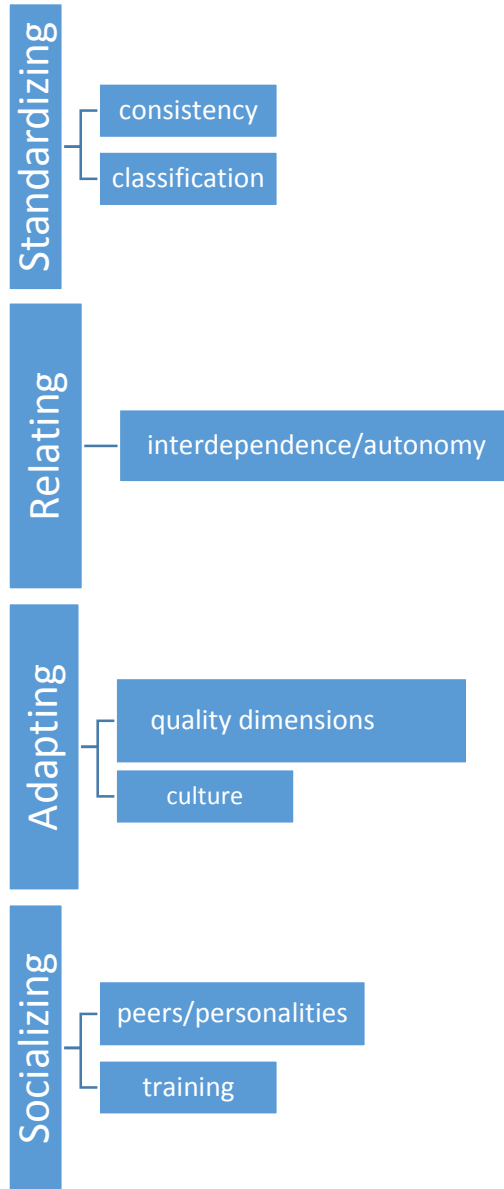


Figure 2
Incident Categories

Adapting

The label of adapting represents the ‘moving parts’ of quality assurance in one professional organization for which educational oversight is regulated by two separate bodies. This is identified specifically in (a) the context of introducing new measures of quality; (b) in the context of translating the standards across borders; (c) in the changing nature of the veterinary profession.

New measures of quality

One requirement that the veterinary medical programs, and all degree programs in Alberta have in common is that they must demonstrate a learning outcomes framework. An outcomes-based framework is different from being competency-based or using a content-based approach. A learning outcomes framework maps objectives to the assessment strategies; the outcomes of that data gathering in obtaining an assurance of learning is used as a feedback mechanism to improve and refresh the curriculum. This stands in contrast to the competency framework in which the most significant factors are what needs to be demonstrated, how it should be recorded, a description of the minimum required performance, and how many of the identified competencies need to be mastered. It is also different from the content framework where topics and resource materials are identified, consideration is given to what should be on tests, and the type of papers or other assessment instruments which will be required.

Campus Alberta Quality Council requires that external peer evaluators develop a report that provides an opinion on, among other things, the “...extent to which the systems and processes of the institution are clearly established to achieve excellence in learning outcomes” (CAQC p. 33). As well, institutional policies and procedures must be in place which address internal curriculum development and periodic program review to ensure the ongoing quality of its programs and learning outcomes (CAQC p. 104).

“We’re having great discussion in Alberta at the Quality Council level but it’s a discussion taking place right across Canada, right across the world. This whole area of learning outcomes, by program and by individual courses mapping to those program outcomes, learning outcomes. And there’s a huge push by all the accrediting agencies, whether it be professional level, and that’s common across, even in Canada, that are Canadian accrediting bodies, such as the engineering one where they’re really moving to identification of learning outcomes.” (P1)

(P8) and (P9) also attributed learning outcomes to increased transparency, noting the initial difficulties for institutions making a transition. This may have also been the case for other veterinary schools, when at the time of UCVM’s application, the COE was apparently, “...getting some grief as they tried to transition to a much more outcomes based approach...” (P3)

The COE’s adoption of learning outcomes was an augmentation to their primarily competency-based framework, specifically in standard eleven, Outcomes Assessment. The standard reads:

“Outcomes of the DVM program must be measured, analyzed, and considered to improve the program. Student achievement during the pre-clinical and clinical curriculum and after graduation must be included in outcome assessment. New graduates must have the basic scientific knowledge, skills, and values to provide entry-level health care, independently, at the time of graduation” (COE, p.20)

Despite any perception of this standard as onerous, participants expressed some support for the new measures. “I don’t think it’s [standard 11] changed their product any but maybe the way they look

at their product, meaning the new grads...But it certainly seems to have made everybody rethink that, and that's never a bad thing, if you re-evaluate what you're doing" (P7). (P5) and (P2) also indicated support, observing a strengthened examination process as a result of standard eleven's implementation.

Woodrow Wilson is noted to have once quipped that it is easier to move a cemetery than to change school curriculum. Requiring a structural curricular framework, equipped with tools for evaluation and audit, is not an insignificant demand. Yet, as noted by (P1) (P8) and (P9), this transition to outcomes-based learning is very much occurring at broad regional levels as well as in the professions.

Culture

As evidenced above, parallels may be drawn between the agencies involved in the UCVM application regarding their attention to trends in program assessment quality assurance (i.e. learning outcomes). How the quality thresholds are expressed, however, differs considerably.

The organizations in this study operate in different environments. With more than 85,000 members of the American Veterinary Medical Association that are organized under a powerful House of Delegates, the COE's work is scrutinized by a large community. Additionally the COE must comply with its own accreditors' requirements as it is responsible to the United States Department of Education and to the Council for Higher Education Accreditation. The Council describes its voluntary participation in the United States Department of Education (USDE) recognition process "...to ensure credibility", and subjects itself to the scrutiny of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), which it deems to be the "gold standard" (COE, p. 5). Therefore the body that regulates veterinary medical education is influenced by much more than the educational community.

The Campus Alberta Quality Council is responsible for all degree programming in Alberta, regardless of the discipline or type of institution, and is not subjected to scrutiny from a membership. The CAQC, struck by and accountable to the Minister, makes recommendations only; it is not itself

decisive and there is no culminating award of accreditation. Quality Council recommends program approvals based on predictive assessments without interim approvals. Council's judgments are essentially probability statements that the programs, once approved, will fulfill their proposed commitments. This ostensibly creates a unique and acute pressure for Council to be well informed.

Since the CAQC is a regional regulatory body and the COE a specialized accreditor, it is not surprising that their mandates and expectations are quite different:

“It is the objective of the AVMA COE to ensure that each graduate of an accredited college of veterinary medicine will be firmly based in the fundamental principles, scientific knowledge, and physical and mental skills of veterinary medicine. Graduates should be able to apply these fundamentals to solving veterinary medical problems for different species and types of domestic animals” (COE, p. 4).

As opposed to,

“The primary work of Council is to review and make recommendations to the Minister on applications from post-secondary institutions seeking to offer new degree programs in Alberta. In addition, it conducts periodic evaluations of degree programs that have been approved on Council's recommendation or by the Private Colleges Accreditation Board (PCAB), as well as any other approved degree program referred to it by the Minister. Activities flowing from Council's primary work include providing advice and consultation, monitoring related developments in the post-secondary milieu, and reporting on its work” (CAQC, p. 4-5).

These expectations of quality are in part indicated by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada - Quality Assurance Subcommittee whose work at the pan-Canadian level is meant to improve the understanding of Canadian degrees and facilitate student mobility.

There are other external references which are notable. For example, CAQC requirement six for graduate degree programs reads in part,

“The program offers education of sufficient breadth and rigour to meet relevant national and international standards, and the content of the program, in both subject matter and outcomes standards, is appropriate to the level of the degree program and the field of study”

(CAQC, p. 87).

In the undergraduate setting, applicants are asked to consider proposed programs in light of Canadian offerings. The expectation in this case is that Alberta programs meet standards set elsewhere by others; an approach that stands in contrast to the COE’s confidence in being *the* benchmark against which other organizations should be measured.

The COE considers and actively promotes itself as the best in the world¹³. As well, as previously indicated, this standard extends to its own accreditor of choice, CHEA, which it deems to be the ‘gold standard’ of accreditation agency accreditors. In response to an inquiry about the tonal difference between the two agencies (P8) felt it was cultural, between the two nations. Perhaps cultural, and discipline-based; according to (P6), “...It seems like everybody’s mission statement is that we’re going to be the best there is you know... And they’ll die trying.” This may also be a function of maturity; the Council on Education precedes the CAQC by decades.

¹³ This is provocative, and not without dissent, given the other veterinary medical program quality regimes that exist in Europe, Australia and elsewhere.

The self-importance of the professional body in relation to the more modest expectations of the regional regulator may have implications. For example, the UCVM incorrectly states on its public web site that,

“UCVM is an accredited Faculty of veterinary medicine. Accreditation of North American veterinary colleges is through the AVMA Council on Education (COE), representing the Canadian and American Veterinary Medical Associations. The program is also accredited by the Province of Alberta through the Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC). The AVMA COE ensures that the program meets the standards required of veterinary education programs. The CAQC ensures that the over-all program meets the standards of university-level programs in content and administration. We require accreditation by both bodies to offer our program.”¹⁴

Despite (P8)’s perception of this misrepresentation as a “red herring” (there is no accreditation in any Canadian jurisdiction, and programs and institutions are accountable to the Minister, not the CAQC), it does indicate a more comprehensive grasp of the professional regulatory requirements than those of the regional approver.

The meaning of certain COE regulations also differs between Canada and the US. How post-secondary education is charged and financed, how diversity with respect to recruitment is considered, and the more collegial nature of Canadian governance were not considered to be interfering factors, however.

¹⁴ http://vet.ucalgary.ca/accreditation_process

While sharing regulatory matters may make economic sense (P7), as one administrator explained, “(W)e don’t make a lot of provisions for cultural differences if it means compromising the standard of care achievable by a graduate.” (P6)

“I’ve never seen that become an issue because the site visit team recognizes, and from Canadian input, that that’s just different here. That’s just not one of the things that drives our selection processes and things like that. And so it’s just fair enough left and just (doesn’t become an issue). So that’s one thing that’s quickly dealt with when the cultural differences are recognized...But again, I think the Canadian input on that rapidly modifies those perceptions and fair enough, the team moves on.” (P5)

Cultural differences were also perceived between the US and Canadian and US/Canadian and developing-world environments. As (P3) explained in one example, Brazil has more than 200 veterinary schools, and no veterinary medical program accreditation system. Although it would be desirable, given the need for international health inspections, to know that Brazilian veterinarians have an equivalent skill set to those in other parts of the world, one would not likely expect them to be necessarily knowledgeable in companion animal care to the degree that has become required in Canada and the US. Despite requirements for health checks that allow for the dissolution of trade barriers, and the existence of a global veterinary association, it is unlikely that meta-level regulators will emerge with any force, which would require ‘Day 1 skills’ to be agreed upon at the global level.

Changing profession

The literature review suggested that trust in institutions (such as the regulated professions and government) may be on the decline. In a 2014 report published by the C.D. Howe Institute (*Who Watches the Watchmen? The Role of the Self-Regulator*), however, it is noted that "...the mere fact of self-regulation enhances the credibility and standing of an occupation and its members in the eyes of the public" (p 1). Nowhere in the official documents, and in only one interview, was skepticism of the profession or the provincial regulatory body raised (in the regional context it was deemed to "not have any clout" (P4)). This may not be surprising, however, given that the overwhelming majority of interviewees had some affiliation with accreditation, as volunteers or paid staff at various institutions and regulatory bodies.

The C.D. Howe report does note that "...the initial monopoly of self-regulation can expand into an association of like-regulated, like-minded professionals whose economic and commercial interactions become increasingly governed by norms of self-regulated solidarity as opposed to competitive forces" (Mysicka, 2014, p 16). Dean Marshak of Penn State, an avid detractor of the COE's foray into accrediting international schools (apparently excluding Canada), commented at one point that, given the COE's international initiatives, if all of the graduates continued, the profession would be reduced to a trade (Fiala, 2012). This suggests a conflict between the goals of being the pre-eminent accreditor and seeking to retain prestigious status that is obtained, in some part, through exclusivity.

Summary: Adapting

Be it the introduction of new curricular frameworks, perspectives of bi-cultural governance structure, or the effects of globalization (and perhaps capitalization of professional educational accreditors), participants in program development and assessment activities, and the organizations they represent, do not exist in static environments.

Relating

In the next section two sides of the same coin, autonomy and interdependence, are discussed as prominent themes in the study of a program proposal evaluation that seeks to obtain effective assessment. The interdependencies that arise as a matter of regulatory overlap, licensing and funding have to be accommodated but are unlikely to be coordinated. Principles of autonomy may be compromised when competing authorities refuse to give ground. At the same time, as in the UCVM case, collegiality and resource-consciousness can facilitate economies of scale.

Autonomy & Interdependencies

Although there was coordination, it would be inaccurate to describe the UCVM assessment as a co-review.

“We have no relationship with the AVMA except in the actual joint site visit that they agreed to and we agreed to work together on. But there is a statement somewhere in our handbook, that if they were to lose accreditation or be put on warning or something, the institution has to let Quality Council know.” (P1)

Similarly,

“Well we ask, and it’s in the standards, that they have to be recognized in the Canadian case by the provincial body to be able to award a degree and if there any problems we should be made aware of it by the college. We also make it public that we’re coming and we ask for a provincial appointee and assume that if there are any issues or problems the provincial body will come forward or in the United States, if there’s a problem with the state, they would come forward.” (P6)

The official terms state,

“A veterinary college is considered eligible to apply for a Letter of Reasonable Assurance [the first step in the accreditation process] if the parent institution (a) Is accredited by a regional or national institutional accrediting body recognized by the USDE (in Canada the institution must be recognized by the appropriate federal or provincial body...”

(COE, 2014, p. 11).

The Campus Alberta Quality Council’s Graduate Program Assessment Standards require that,

"Learning outcomes and other requirements for graduating in programs leading to professions (such as entry to practice programs) are designed to prepare students to meet the requirements of the relevant regulatory, accrediting, quality assurance or professional body"

(CAQC, p. 87).

The applicant institution must provide evidence that, “Consultation with other institutions and professional licensing or regulatory bodies, where appropriate, has occurred” (CAQC, p. 171).

According to a subsequent standard, consultation should result in support from those bodies as well.

But conflict resolution may be required in a crowded regulatory environment. There may be multiple stakeholders with their own authority over matters that collide with the profession or region. “The licensing boards are frankly, they aren’t going to wait for any agreement from the schools about what should and shouldn’t be done. They feel that if there are skills and other things that veterinarians need, they’re going to develop exams to test for it and the schools can just catch up.” (P5)

In other circumstances, bodies seem more open to negotiation. In this case for example the CAQC ultimately accepted the UCVM’s COE proposal (with minor additions) as the official self-study

document for consideration by the CAQC evaluation team. This is not acquiescence to the professional body, it is a demonstration of accommodation: "...the burden [for institutions] is typically in the documentation" (P1).

Conflicts may arise from semantics:

"And I was curious about the language you used in the email you sent to me because you talked about the school not being approved or the college not being approved and to my knowledge, the Ministry does not approve colleges or schools, it approves programs." (P1)

But to quote the Council on Education's Handbook, one of its charges is to,

"...have autonomous authority to evaluate schools and colleges offering a professional degree in veterinary medicine, according to established standards; make accreditation decisions; and assign a classification of accreditation to each such school or college" (COE, p. 6).

"Because, it's a curiosity, their [nursing] regulations talk about them approving a program (NEPAB), whereas no degree program can be offered in the province unless the Minister approves it. So it's a bit of a chicken and egg, who's approval is paramount? I think it would be the Minister" (P1).

Complications also extend where things are unwritten; for example, as stated, the CAQC makes recommendations to the Ministry to which it reports – it has no independent powers. Members of the COE however are voted in using a political process through the House of Delegates. Agendas are not always explicit, but have included criticisms of the COE in its efforts to globalize its accreditation system. Accusations have been made that largely for political reasons, its standards have been relaxed (Fiala, 2012). Other cases may be more insidious. For example, at one point the UCVVM was not achieving its hiring targets as outlined in the implementation plan for the COE. The Faculty claimed this

was due to a hiring freeze imposed by central administration, which occurred as a result of cuts to government funding. Government funding originated from the Ministry to which the Campus Alberta Quality Council would ultimately make its recommendation; the same Ministry under which the program steering committee had been struck and which had committed separate, specified funds. The University was required to reallocate funds to meet the accreditation requirements for the UCVM, regardless of the implications for other University of Calgary programs.

Theoretical sampling identified this theme as not being isolated to the UCVM scenario. At one point elsewhere, the Conestoga College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning sought to deliver a credential that required the word ‘engineering’ in order to obtain accreditation from Engineers Canada for their ‘integrated advanced manufacturing’ degree. To meet this requirement, Conestoga applied to Ontario’s PEQAB (Provincial Education Quality Assurance Board – similar to Alberta’s CAQC) to request Minister allow it to be renamed to ‘mechanical systems engineering’. This took almost two years to grant (Milloy in Hurley & Sá, 2013).

The “pebble in the pond” is an appropriate metaphor for the actions that can follow from any one decision of a regulator. In one instance, while the UCVM was engaged in its review cycle, the National Autonomous University of Mexico School of Veterinary Medicine and Animal Husbandry (UNAM) also sought to obtain accreditation from the COE. During this time the COE concurrently underwent a USDE cyclical review. In 2006 an expert team visited the Mexican school on a consultative visit. By 2009 the University felt prepared to request a comprehensive site visit, which occurred toward the end of that year. In 2010 the COE ruled against accrediting UNAM, which the school appealed. In the meantime the United States Department of Education, to which the COE is accountable, prescribed an amendment to the COE’s process. Applicants were to be permitted to respond to external reviews prior to an accreditation decision. The COE abandoned its UNAM judgment in favour of a focused site visit

(in which deficiencies are carefully scrutinized), and by 2011, the school was fully accredited (DVM 360, 2011).

In another case, Western University of Health Sciences was just ahead of UCVM in its accreditation application. Potentially the first new US veterinary school in 20 years, Western University proposed an alternative approach to traditional US veterinary medical education that included problem based learning and clinical rotations in lieu of a teaching hospital. In 2000 the University filed a lawsuit against the COE after two unsuccessful attempts at obtaining reasonable assurance. While the official point of contention may have been the distributed model, as a very large and privately funded school Western could substantially increase the labour pool with all of its graduates, potentially driving down wages. Penn State Dean Emeritus Marshak commented, the COE “ensnared themselves in a trap...” “...How do you turn down the next crummy school without being sued?” (Fiala, 2012).

In September 2007 the University of Calgary’s Faculty of Veterinary Medicine obtained its own Letter of Reasonable Assurance. It too proposed a distributed clinical model. By this time, however, the standards had been amended to include provisions for this approach.

“...the COE was getting some grief... they’d just gone through this whole legal wrangle with this university in the States. So I think they really wanted to make things work.”... “They came to the consultative visit, they went back, they generated some things, they came back and said, here’s how we’re going to assess you...” (P3)

Not all cases are so amicably resolved in Canada. For example in the case of Trinity Western, a small private university in British Columbia affiliated with the Evangelical Free Church, students are required to sign a Community Standards document that requires abstinence from Biblically prohibited

activities, including homosexual activity and premarital sex. When the school applied for accreditation status from the British Columbia College of Teachers, it was denied on the notion that graduates may practice these same beliefs in the workplace, constituting discrimination. The decision was overturned on judicial review based on the finding that there had been no indication that TWU graduates would act in a discriminatory manner. This decision was upheld by the BC Court of Appeal and by the Supreme Court of Canada.¹⁵

A few years following the TWU case, The British Columbia College of Teachers once again found itself embroiled in controversy. The University of British Columbia proposed program changes which the College would approve subject to specific conditions. The university rejected these concerns and the BCCT denied program approval. Again, judicial review was sought by the university. UBC's argument that the BCCT intruded on its right to institutional autonomy was upheld, reinforcing the university's right to determine how its programs were implemented. On appeal however, the BC Supreme Court ruled that while the university can grant degrees, the College can determine what constitutes acceptable qualifications, meaning that graduates would not be directly licensable.

Summary: Relating

Regional regulators, disciplinary accreditors, accreditation-body accreditors and self-regulated professional bodies all have different purposes and as such, different scopes, standards and expectations. In some manner or form however, they all serve to protect the public and must secure their relevance as quality gatekeepers in order to stay legitimate. These ambitions may manifest with unpredictable results when regulatory overlap occurs, or is perceived to occur.

¹⁵ A similar case is underway once again with Trinity Western, this time regarding their legal program. In January 2015 the Nova Scotia Supreme Court ruled that the provincial Barristers' Society could not refuse accreditation to TWU grads. In May 2015 this sentiment was reinforced through a statement made by the Attorney General of Canada. <http://academica.ca/top-ten/feds-weigh-twu-law-school>

Standardizing

The multitude of policies, procedures and frameworks suggests a highly organized evaluation process. Through the use of classification schemes and tools to assure consistency, the assessment process is replicable and predictable, to some degree.

Classifying

A prime property of standardization, The COE and CAQC's official documents are highly organized. There are nine broad categories for Quality Council's evaluation of undergraduate program proposals, ten for graduate programs and another eighteen requirements for distance, distributed and blended delivery. The COE's eleven standards are also clearly stated; these sorts of requirements are among the most pronounced form of classification. Categories common to both mandate academic policies and expectations for program delivery and program content. As this data was so clearly presented, there was an opportunity to compare them as an exercise in sensitization. An analysis of what I labeled "Faculty Complement" is provided as an example in Figure 3. Ultimately, quality standards were deemed well suited to the broader category of classification.

In addition to the standards themselves, the AVMA Council on Education uses classification schemes to indicate the status of compliance with individual standards (e.g. non/compliant substantially compliant), to establish the accreditation status of a given college/faculty (e.g. full, provisional, limited, terminal), to specify the nature of a given site visit, and to label the type of revision a standard is undergoing.

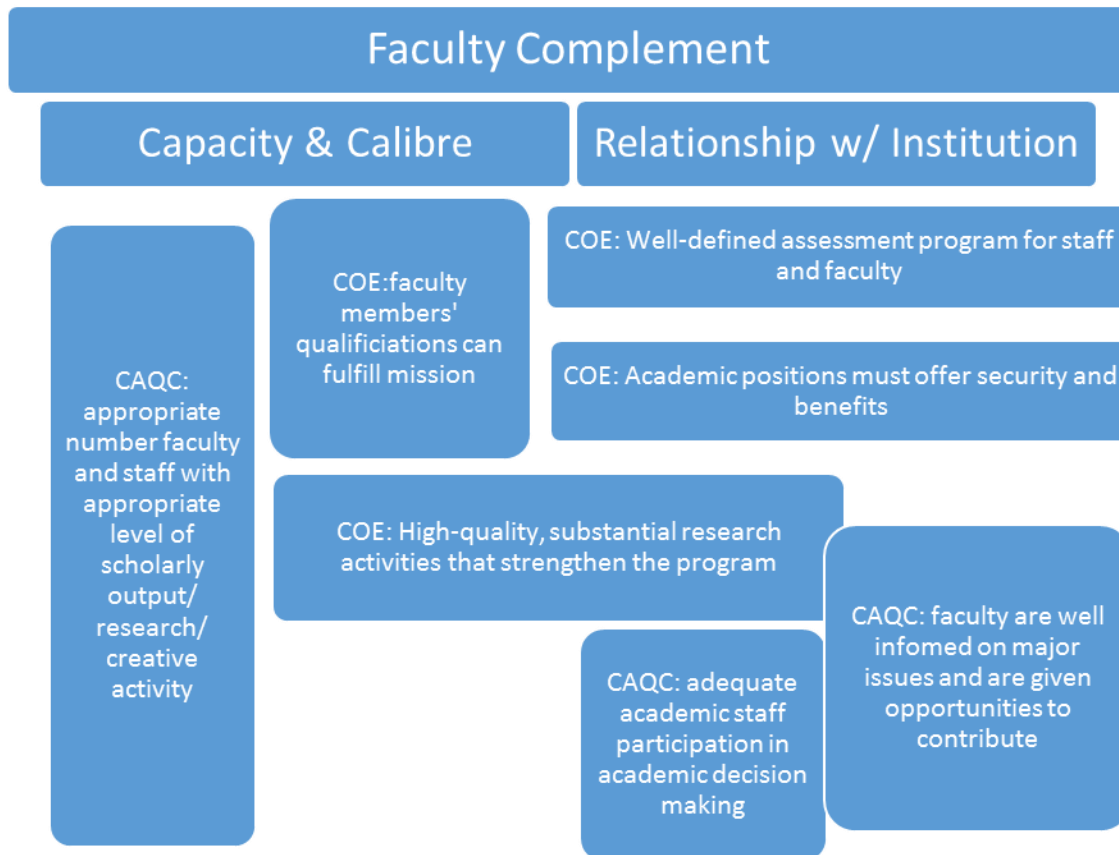


Figure 3
Faculty Complement

More subtly, classification is also used to establish hierarchies among applicant groups. For example, international faculties are not afforded the same range of COE accreditation status options as those in Canada and the US. Domestic (US and Canadian) schools planning to seek accreditation are eligible to apply for “reasonable assurance”. While reasonable assurance, the AVMA is careful to note, “...is not a pre-accreditation action by the Council and does not confer accreditation of any kind on a developing college” (COE, 2014, p. 25), it is,

“...the classification granted to an institution seeking initial accreditation....indicating that there is reasonable assurance of future accreditation...if such a college is established

according to plans presented to the Council and if these plans demonstrate intent and a realistic plan to comply with the Standards of Accreditation.” (ibid.)

While not a guarantee, it must be advantageous for schools to be eligible to undertake this preparatory work.

In another case, “Limited accreditation” is imposed by the COE when sufficient faults have been found to identify the faculty as at-risk. There are three potential outcomes: (a) be awarded full accreditation; (b) continue with limited accreditation; (c) be assigned terminal accreditation. With terminal accreditation, upon the successful fulfillment of a plan that sees enrolled students through to graduation, schools are assigned the classification of “accreditation withheld.” In the case of international schools, the notation reads, “accreditation withdrawn”. Depending on one’s interpretation, it may be that the domestic providers are advantaged again by this labelling.

Quality Council also uses classification schemes as a way to organize information. Program proposal assessments may be assigned as full reviews, partially expedited reviews, or fully expedited reviews. They are differentiated by requirements for a complete organizational review and for an external reviewer of the proposal. Program proposals must align with the expectations by the Council of Ministers of Education Canada in its own Canadian Degree Qualifications Framework. External evaluators are expected to provide a “specific and clear recommendation...in order to help Council determine if it should recommend to the Minister that the program(s) be approved” (CAQC 2011, p. 7). Reviewers have choices as to how to offer these insights; as a positive recommendation, positive recommendation with conditions, negative recommendation, affirmation, commendation, and suggestion for improvement.

The assessment convention of self-study, peer evaluation and reporting is the framework within which program (and institutional) assessments and reviews are conducted. As a near-universal model for quality assurance by mature organizations and agencies, it is recognizable to others. In post-secondary education, there are several internal administrative processes subject to peer review, including student promotion (via thesis and candidacy committees), faculty promotion and tenure, as well as suitability for publication in academic literature.

Consistency

Despite significant differences in their mandates, their approval trajectories and content requirements, for the first UCVM site visit the CAQC and COE regulators agreed to coordinate some resources that would otherwise be duplicated by two separate reviews. This coordination was considered at each stage of the review process, for which, as previously indicated, the framework is similar: self-assessment, peer review and regular reporting. Consistency of process made this efficiency possible.

According to 16.1, Consistency of Application: “The COE is committed to consistency in application of the 11 Standards used as a basis for veterinary college accreditation... AVMA staff accompanies all site teams to provide reference and consistency” (COE 2009, p. 68)¹⁶. One resource both the COE and CAQC utilize is a database on the interpretation of principles and standards vis-à-vis site visit results and outcomes:

“The database uses information from the past ten years of accreditation history and will be evolutionary as new sites are visited and data entered. Use of the database ensures that similar situations and concerns are subject

¹⁶While the Quality Council does not engage in multiple site visits for program proposal assessments, one participant (P1) indicated that if reviewers are difficult to obtain, other regional agencies may be consulted for references.

to analogous interpretation. Factual information from the database is used in evaluating similar situations (standard findings) at differing locations (colleges). Further, this activity ensures consistency of application of policy in making accreditation decisions” (COE, p. 68).

The CAQC accepted the UCVM’s self-study for the COE with only limited additional requirements. An administrator recalled,

“But then the next negotiation was having the site visit at the same time and should they even do the site visit together... that was the first time as I understand it that it had happened that there was somebody else that came along on the visit.” (P3)

This meant that faculty and administrators were only required to be available for one site visit rather than two:

“...I don’t think there was any difference in the quality from each group in terms of their ability to assess the program... So they went through the process and you couldn’t have told from the process and what question who was a CAQC and who were COE folks. You couldn’t tell.” (P3)

In the case of the Council on Education, some of the same members participated in multiple UCVM site visits:

“Because one of the regularizing aspects of having COE members on that particular committee is that, I guess what I’m trying to say is that they have a regularizing influence on the committee in terms

of interpretation of the standards and help to increase consistency in terms of how the site visit team might be assessing that and how the COE may be assessing that particular standard – or I guess the committee. So the committee and the COE aren't coming at it from a completely different perspective" (p5).

For the initial site visit, COE and CAQC debriefings were held separately and participants of the respective visiting teams wrote two separate assessments. As the COE has additional requirements as part of its multi-staged process to obtain accreditation, it was agreed that any subsequent reports would be dually provided to the CAQC under the auspices of its monitoring function.

Summary: Standardization

As the data was raised to the conceptual level, consistency and classification were found to be key properties of standardization. Classification schemes were used to identify and label different types of institutions and their status in preparation and adjudication. Consistency is indicated as being crucial to the integrity of the overall process, in the interpretation and application of standards and principles and in the activities of the peer evaluators.

Socializing

The human element of program proposal assessments should not be overlooked. The influence of personal dimensions was evidenced through remarks concerning individual personalities, the peer review team and Secretariat bodies, as well as formal and informal training.

Peers and Personalities

Peer review figures prominently and historically as the crucial intermediary that protects institutional autonomy from the imposition of non-academic interests. Reviewers are expected to represent themselves on the panel as independent experts and simultaneously act on behalf of the

regulator, for which they may undergo training. Peer review is based on the assumption that there is a general agreement about disciplinary values and key criteria for evaluation. It is also founded on the notion that critical analysis of others' work is an acceptable norm of practice. By being immersed in the discipline and achieving scholarly reputation, members of the group are entitled to make peer judgments (Henkel, 1998). From one interviewee: "It's a peer review process and ...you need to have folks who understand different aspects and you need to have folks that are stakeholders in the end product..." (P6) It was also noted, "And one of the values of peer review is that they know quality when they see it because of their experience..." (P1)

During the site visit a peer review team is brought in to verify the contents of the self-study. "As you're probably aware we are sent a self-study by the school that describes how they've met all of the standards, the eleven standards, and then basically as we get told in the training, the site team's job is to confirm that what's in the self-study is what really is." (P7) This is achieved through site tours, interviews with multiple stakeholder groups (students, alumni, faculty, etc) and the meetings are intended to be confidential and forthright, as indicated by participants who "encourage candour", and "expect truth and return the same favour..." (P6).

This is also specified in the organizational documents; Quality Council emphasizes the requirement of a commitment to quality assurance principles and practices in higher education. For the COE:

"There is no place in accreditation for adversarial relationships.

The College and Council should proceed with the premise that

both parties are dedicated to the common goal of quality in

veterinary education. Only through full and open communication

and cooperative efforts to correct deficiencies can educational excellence be attained” (COE, p. 74).

The hub in the wheel of this process, as coordinating bodies the secretariats are also deeply involved with program proposal assessment and are likely to establish relationships with applicant institutions.

“The CAQC Secretariat assists the Chair and Council in their activities by providing advice on matters of policy and procedure, organizing meetings, helping to set meeting agendas, and preparing publications. It also provides information and advice to inquiries from various agencies, current and prospective applicants, and members of the public related to matters of quality assurance of new degree programs. As well, it coordinates all activities of Council’s external evaluation teams; the Secretariat’s Director or designate serves as an advisory member on these teams” (CAQC, p. 5).

And,

“The COE, through the activities of AVMA support staff and the COE Chair, provides technical assistance to colleges seeking a letter of reasonable assurance, accreditation, or renewal of accreditation. This support is in the form of telephone conversations between the colleges and the Council Chair or AVMA staff” (COE, p. 10).

As well from the COE:

“Although AVMA staff members do not participate directly in decisions regarding accreditation of colleges, they are in a position to influence the

outcomes of the process. Conversely, staff provides continuity to the evaluation process.” (p. 87)

The effect of individuals, it was noted, should not be underestimated. “...[T]he personalities [sic] is what does it...and how you interpret the actions and the behavior...and what goes on behind closed doors...so personalities are huge... So I don’t know if it’s the fact that because it’s American or, I mean certainly American dominated, just in terms of the number of people, but the personalities of the executive directors and various other things.” (P3)

Training

Social expectations are formulated through training and personal observation. CAQC evaluators are advised to maintain confidentiality, and consider the perception that may be projected. They are expected to exhibit “...appropriate standards of behavior and to conduct themselves in an ethical and professional manner” (CAQC 2009, p. 30). The COE reminds reviewers that they are guests of the college and are prompted to “not tell war stories”, or “...bring preconceived ideas about the college to the site visit.” They should, however, “Keep a positive attitude and not offer negative feedback or other criticism during the site visit”; and “Dress in corporate/professional attire for all site visit activities (men are asked to wear suits or coats and ties, and women are asked to wear suits or dresses” (COE, 2014, p. 73) among other things.

The data in this study indicated that experiential knowledge is an important aspect of continuity and seen as integral to an effective process. Knowledge appears to be obtained formally and informally, as reviewers “grow into” their roles. This suggests that affiliation with program proposal assessment exercises may indicate participation in a specific knowledge community.

There appears to be a learning curve before participants become confident; "...it takes a while to develop a good Council member - at least early on in the process." (P6); "...and I'll have to confess that when I did the first couple I thought good God, what am I doing here?" (P7)

"...it's a complex process and really, for the first few site visits, you really, as a site visit attendee, you really don't get a good grounding and feel for how that all works. I mean you need a few under your belt to really understand the process." (P5)

Summary of Socializing

Although these exercises are framed in a way that projects much standardization (see previous section), the human element should not be ignored. Formal directions through training manuals, gathering of experience, individual personalities, and those who make up a peer group influence the process and outcomes of program proposal assessment exercises.

Consolidating Incident Categories: Conceptualization

Classic grounded theory refers to saturation as an important milestone towards obtaining the core variable. This means that an introduction of new data will fit into the existing constructs. Organizational documents of other disciplinary regulators and regional quality bodies were consulted (The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, Canadian Licensed Practical Nurses Association, British Columbia Degree Qualifications Assessment Board and Post-Secondary Quality Assessment Board of Ontario), organizational behaviours were considered (e.g. legal implications), and supplementary discussions were held with individuals who were familiar with regional and disciplinary program approval.

The subsequent theoretical analysis was based on accepting the preceding four variables (adapting, relating, standardizing, socializing) as being required to effectively assess the UCVM's proposal to offer a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine. Those assumptions contribute to the conceptualization of a process that is calculable (the process itself, not the outcome of the program proposal assessment) when based on the premise that (a) assessment activities are carefully and thoroughly prescribed and enacted as directed, and (b) each school, program, and peer/participants differ. This generates a hypothesis that perhaps some reliability, but not duplication, can be predicted. If indeed the case it would be one resolution to a main concern of effectively assessing.

Subcore Concept: Replicating

In organizing and re-naming the concepts it initially appeared that standardizing (consistency and classification) was the vehicle for replication and the rest subsumed under contextualization. This was not the case, however. In adapting for example, the implementation of learning outcomes frameworks across regulators contributes to replication of expectations with respect to curriculum development. As it relates to autonomy and independence, legal precedents that are set and followed provide a similar service.

Replication also occurs as a function of transmitting values and behavioral expectations. The concept of peer review is one that is prevalent in the academy and upholds specific principles unique to the sector; ideas and ideals that are not necessarily articulated in conventional documentation, but occur through socialization.

Replication is also a key tool for decision making. A variety of tools and methods for documentation (eg decision logs) creates consistency, ensuring that reviewers are equipped to make informed and impartial assessments.

As was evident in the UCVM application, replication of process is essential to obtaining efficiencies in a concomitant program proposal assessment. Using what has become a generic international process (Harvey, 2007), a self-study was written, followed by a site visit from a peer review team. Resultant actions occurred and were recorded. The external report, self-study and subsequent activities were taken together by the regulator to inform that agency's final decision. Because both groups share this framework, they were able to establish if and how they might coordinate activities at each stage of the process.

Subcore Concept: Contextualizing

Contextualizing allows for the negotiation aspect of program proposal assessment, constructing a particular perspective of effective assessment. In 4th Generation Evaluation, Guba & Lincoln, 1994 describe evaluators as "...orchestrators of a negotiation process that that attempts to culminate in consensus on better informed and more sophisticated constructions" (p. 45).

While contextualization is most obviously explained in terms of adapting, ambivalence associated with the nature of the regulator-regulated relationship, particularly concerning autonomy and interdependencies, also contributes to the uniqueness of a particular review. The socialization aspect rationalizes the experience for participants.

Even if objectivity was possible, and there were no grey areas, there would not be enough time or space to account for every possibility. Compliance would only be possible with homogenization. Given the diversity of mandates, ideologies and pedagogical choices accommodation will always be necessary.

Core Concept: Blueprinting

Rather than being a progressive, linear process, this research hypothesizes that layered and intersecting activities establish what is to be set out by the program proposal assessment process, how that process is to be enacted, and on what criteria quality should be judged. As the foundation for any of these processes, the peer review/site visit/reporting structure serves as the prototype which can be recognized by those in other educational regulatory milieu.

Blueprinting is the grounded theory being proposed by this study. Blueprints typically document and reproduce engineered designs and plans. The word was co-opted for this context in part because of the extensive use of replication at both the system and agency levels. It also seemed appropriate given conventional wisdom; very few things follow the blueprints exactly. Addressing polarization between the academy and regulators, Sidhu (2008) observes:

“...there is a need to acknowledge that performance measurement systems rarely adhere to their blueprints; that the effects of these [regulatory] regimes remain contingent and unpredictable, thus creating opportunities for resistance. At the same time, it is now clear that it is inadequate simply to dismiss the various quality systems and strategies as ideological examples of disciplinary neoliberalism” (p. 67).

And at that point, where they diverge, is the place for contextualization in the program proposal assessment process. Without it, the exercise risks becoming an outward-facing activity seeking a “pass” from the evaluator rather than a “fit” for the institution. The possibility for contextualization may facilitate some efficiencies in an arguably crowded regulatory space.

Blueprinting accounted for the maximum variation in the data that addressed a concern of effective assessment. The basic social structural process of blueprinting has taken on properties of replicating and contextualizing in order to resolve this main concern. By all appearances this holds within each of the COE and CAQC reviews, as well as in the negotiation involved in agreeing to the concomitant review.

Glaser's Theoretical Sensitivity (1978) includes eleven criteria that indicate a core category has been obtained. They are:

1. Centrality – related to many other categories and their properties and more than other candidates;
and
2. Recurs frequently (stable pattern) and related to other variables;

'Blueprinting' accounts for a basic, structured plan and acknowledges that changes may occur, they may have interdependent effects, as happens in the building process. Its recurrence, balancing prescription and variability, is frequent and consistent.

3. Takes the longest time to saturate because it is related to so many other categories and occurs frequently;

Blueprinting's predecessor was 'equivalating', with the idea that participants make everything more or less equal to the prescribed process and standards for evaluation. Equivalating's prime shortcoming was that things are not meant to be equal – they are meant to adhere to what has been agreed to by different parties.

4. Relates meaningfully and easily with other categories without forced connections;

Connections to contextualizing and replicating, and those to standardizing, relating, adapting, and socializing emerged into my logic model after much constant comparison by looking at incident and

incident, to identify patterns of behavior. More than one dozen conceptual maps were produced prior to the one presented, with particular attention to treating the data without forcing.

5. Clear and grabbing implication for formal theory;

It is possible, although not explored in this exercise, that the concept of blueprinting can be applied elsewhere.

6. Carry through – doesn't lead to dead ends, is used throughout the analysis of the process; and
7. Completely variable in degree, dimension and type and can be modified easily through variations;

Supported by the concepts of contextualizing and replicating, blueprinting was found to be relevant across a broad spectrum of action (socializing, adapting, relating, standardizing).

8. It's a dimension of the problem so it in part explains its own variation;

This is ostensibly true in this case.

9. Is not a deductive logical elaboration or sociological interest; and
10. Is not based on false criterion which the analyst sees it in all relations, grounded or not;

The concept of blueprinting was obtained through inductive analysis of the actual data through to abstraction and conceptualization.

11. Is a process, condition, two dimensions, a consequence – any theoretical code;

It is observable in this case by way of being a complex process that relies on support of subcore variables. Acknowledging some ambiguity around criteria #5, blueprinting withstood Glaser's challenges. Blueprinting is one process that resolves the problem of conducting effective assessments. It comprises two processes, replicating and contextualizing, which occur to varying degrees and are supported by concepts that are interchangeable across that spectrum. Blueprinting is a process that is

enacted by the synergies of replication and contextualization in order to address the main concern of effectively assessing.

Summary

Working from the data, this chapter presents the categories that emerged as key contributors to the general hypothesis of blueprinting. The conceptualization began with many categories which were reduced to seven, and then to four through conceptualization. Working with these themes in the abstract to maximize differences, two supporting sub-core categories, replication and contextualization, were identified.

This theory contends that blueprinting is a basic social structural process that responds to the problem of effectively assessing. It is supported by the synergies of (a) the replication of activities and frameworks and (b) contextualization to the local and regulatory environments.

CHAPTER 5 - CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER INVESTIGATION

Chapter Five concludes the study by returning to the original research questions, and presenting ideas for further investigation.

Returning to the Research Questions

Although the study did not ultimately seek to answer prescribed research questions, those that were originally posed can be answered, to some extent, by the analysis.

1. What processes and factors contributed to the meaning-making of quality, as articulated by an institutional and program review for the Campus Alberta Quality Council, American Veterinary Medical Association Council on Education and the University of Calgary Doctor of Veterinary Medicine program participants?
2. How were those definitions of quality represented by actions/processes?

Quality is constituted in part by undertaking an effective assessment; such an assessment needs to be flexible enough to accommodate multiple constituents but also designed in such a way that does not undermine or delegate authority for oversight to a different body. In the final analysis, ‘blueprinting’ was coined to represent a process where contextualizing and replicating are enacted so as to preserve this integrity and remain flexible. Interestingly, this may be equally applied in scenarios with only one regulator, as each program, external review team, and circumstance will differ, as well as in the case where regulators may enact a concomitant review, as in this study.

3. Did stakes or tensions present among or between the communities of discourse? If so, how?

Any tensions that presented were not indicated in the particular interviews, or the official documents of the organizations. Although there were indications that organizing the logistics may have required some diplomacy (“honestly I think we were more flexible” (P1)), each retained its own expert peer review team and two separate reports were written. Where there were opportunities for

conflict, for example in the nomenclature of the unit (program versus college) under review, this was treated with mutual understanding of the goals of each regulator, in the spirit, if not the exact wording, of the policies and procedures. This does not account for the possibility that tensions weren't identified as a result of more positive retrospective perspectives of the interviewees, or that interviewees may simply be unaware of tensions that did occur.

4. Were there points of similarity in these reviews? If so, what were they?

The basic review processes were very similar which made efficiencies possible. The general formula of self-study, external review and report, and response allowed for streamlining of the site visit (all participants interviewed at the same time) and the CAQC adopted the large majority of the COE document, with only a few additional questions to fulfill its own mandate. Follow up reporting was prescribed according to the more rigorous requirements of the Council on Education; when reports are submitted they are also provided to the Campus Alberta Quality Council.

Summary of Findings

Harvey (2004) states, "The lack of synchronization and the incompatible documentation are indicative of the desire for different agencies to control their corner of the quality and standards..." (p. 219). The UCVM case is an excellent example of an instance in which two regulators chose not to conform to this stereotype. The scenario demonstrates that it is possible to maintain independence in a concomitant review, obtaining efficiencies for the institution and avoiding the perception that one regulator is acquiescing to another.

This study represents one case of a concomitant review of a program proposal application to offer a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine program at the University of Calgary. It hypothesizes that 'blueprinting' as it is defined in this study is a basic social structural process that occurs in response to a problematized quality assurance exercise.

Based on data obtained from participant interviews and organizational documents, seven categories captured the themes which were most pronounced in the data. These categories, consistency, classification, interdependence and autonomy, new quality dimensions, culture, peers and personalities, and training were consolidated into four conceptual constructs: standardizing, relating, adapting, and socializing. From these, abstraction allowed for a constructed logic in which both replication and contextualization occur, to different degrees, enacting a process of 'blueprinting'.

Quality assessment exercises need to be reliable and predictable, and the interaction of these variables that support the core process of blueprinting allows the exercise to occur in a way that retains integrity but also adapts to the specific situations of each. This can be looked at in three ways in this study: in terms of the review as a concomitant exercise, the individual CAQC review, and the individual COE review.

Implications for Current Theory and Practice

This research is important because the criteria for post-secondary educational oversight is fundamentally a matter of government policy, and should not go unchecked by the public. Concerns regarding the transparency of education policy, and of focusing on policy and infrastructure rather than elevating academic standards (Dill, 2007) become very important to maintaining a fully democratic society. While accountability is an absolute requirement, institutional autonomy is the membrane which protects academic freedom, which in turn ensures the unfettered pursuit of knowledge for the common good and should be considered as policies are developed.

This study may be of value to educators, educational administrators concerned with quality assurance, those working in accreditation, higher education regulatory bodies and education policy makers. It reaffirms the importance of contextualization which is possible with expert peer review. At the same time that customization is necessary, efficiencies and reciprocity can best be achieved in

circumstances where quality assurance procedures are recognizable. That a broad range of regulators, both regional and professional, engage in continuous improvement and adopt similar frameworks, is helpful. Training and highly organized policies and procedures consistently applied facilitate predictable and reliable processes. This can result in a robust quality assurance process that is characterized by integrity – honoring the mandate of the regulator, the autonomy of the institution, and accountability to the broader public.

Recommendations for further research

There is scant literature in the Canadian context that examines provincial quality assurance regimes, or that investigates the program proposal assessment processes. It is also unclear how visible these processes are to the public that they have been established to protect. It would be interesting to engage with students and parents to explore their perceptions of post-secondary quality, and quality initiatives, particularly in light of rankings exercises. The SSHRC Connection Grant provides support for outreach activities aimed at targeted knowledge mobilization projects. Such a project may be a candidate for this type of award. Bringing together postsecondary consumers with academic experts and practitioners in quality assurance would provide an opportunity for dialogue and to be action-oriented towards raising the profile post-secondary quality assurance through increased awareness in Alberta, or beyond.

In the 2010 Higher Education Handbook of Theory and Research, E.C. Ness contends that policy diffusion may be used as a framework to look at sources of information, as well as flow. Given the broad use of the generic international model, concerns regarding homogenization, and the general similarities that quality assurance bodies in Canada share, it would be interesting to apply this lens to the existing context for a different perspective, to dig more deeply into the replication aspect of the hypothesis through policy studies.

Thirdly, a legal analysis of some aspects of educational regulatory environments, and a review of judicial rulings, would reflect important dimensions of the contemporary post-secondary accreditation context. One aspect to explore would be broadening geographies. For example, any institution providing educational opportunities to US-based students is subject to state authorization requirements; distance delivery is not always exempt. Until recently in Alabama, as one example, it has been a felony to operate, even by distance, without necessary permissions. As evidenced in this study, legal disputes also arise when eligibility for licensure is at stake. This type of conflict also relates to power, and relations between licensing regulators and academic institutions.

Finally, this research program is envisioned to probe the effects of professional accreditation on institutional autonomy, where policy and values intersect. It was noted in this case for example that COE hiring requirements affected other faculties within the university's decision making. This is likely not an isolated case. Concerning disciplinary accreditation, (P4) posed the hypothetical scenario: "So then you create hysteria, we're going to lose our accreditation, our whole business school is going to fall apart, and then you'll get a few more people out of the administration." (P6) referred to the accreditation phenomena in similar terms, generally, as "a game", without condemnation or contempt, but as a form of explanation. In Peter Ewell's (2007) account of 30 years of external review in the USA, he titled his chapter, in part, 'The 'Quality Game'. It would be worthwhile to explore these descriptions, and their implications a means to understand this political dimension of post-secondary regulation.

References

- Adams, T. (2009). Regulating professions in Canada: Interprovincial differences across five provinces. *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d'etudes canadiennes*, 43(3), 194-221.
- Altbach, P., & Knight, J. (2007). The internationalization of higher education: Motivations and realities. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 11(3/4), 290-305.
- Alvesson, M., & Sköldbberg, K. (2009). *Reflexive Methodology: New Vistas for Qualitative Research* (2 ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- American Council on Education. (2008). *Working paper on conflict of interest executive summary*. Retrieved from <http://www.acenet.edu/Search/Pages/results.aspx?k=conflict%20of%20interest>
- American Veterinary Medical Association/Canadian Veterinary Medical Association. (2012). *Accreditation policies and procedures of the AVMA Council on Education*.
- Anderson, S., & Jaafar, S. (2007). Policy trends and tensions in accountability for educational management and services in Canada. *The Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 53(2), 207-227.
- Andresani, G., Ferlie, E., & Musselin, C. (2008). The steering of higher education systems: A public management perspective. *Higher Education*, 53(6), 325-348.
- Annells, M. (1996). Grounded theory method: Philosophical perspectives, paradigm of inquiry, and postmodernism. *Qualitative Health Research*, 6(3), 379-393.
- Atkinson, P., & Coffee, A. (2004). Analyzing documentary realities. In D. Silverman (Ed.), *Qualitative research: Theory, method and practice* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Baldwin, R., Cave, M., & Lodge, M. (2012). *Understanding Regulation: Theory, Strategy, and Practice*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

- Barker, C., & Crowley, T. (1989). *One Voice (A History of The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association)*. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Veterinary Medical Association.
- Bauder, H., & Girard, E. (2007). Assimilation and exclusion of foreign trained engineers. *Antipode*, 39(1), 35-53.
- Beck, J. & Young, M. (2005). The assault on the professions and the restructuring of academic and professional identities: a Bernsteinian analysis. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 26(2), 183-197.
- Bergan, S. (2009). Academic recognition: status and challenges. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy and Practice*, 16(1), 39-53.
- Boehm, F. (2007). *Working paper #23: Mitigating corruption in public service sector regulation*. Retrieved from <https://fredericboehm.wordpress.com/>
- Bond, R., & Patton, M. (2007). *Local, regional, professional and national quality assurance arrangements: The Alberta perspective*. Paper presented at the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education, Toronto, ON.
- Bonner, A., Francis, K. & Mills, J. (2006). Adopting a constructivist approach to grounded theory: Implications for research design. *International Journal of Nursing Practice*, 12(1), 8-13.
- Brennan, J., & Shah, T. (2000). Quality assessment and institutional change: Experiences from 14 countries. *Higher Education*, 40, 331-349.
- Brittingham, B. (2009). Accreditation in the United States: How did we get to where we are? *New Directions for Higher Education*, 145(Accreditation: Assuring and Enhancing Quality), 7-27.
doi:10.1002/he.331

- Bótas, P., & Huisman, J. (2012). (De)Constructing power in higher education governance structures: An analysis of representation and roles in governing bodies. *European Journal of Higher Education*, 2(4), 370-388. doi:10.1080/21568235.2012.746422
- Bowman, K., Hart, J., Hill, E., & Stalmeijer, R. (2014). You've got to know the rules to play the game: How medical students negotiate the hidden curriculum of surgical careers. *Medical Education*, 48(9), 884-894. doi:10.1111/medu.12488
- Calderon, A. (2012). Massification continues to transform higher education. *University World*.
- Campbell, C., & Middlehurst, R. (2003). *Quality assurance and borderless higher education: Finding pathways through the maze*. London, England: The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education.
- Campus Alberta Quality Council. (2005). Meeting minutes September 9-10, Sylvan Lake, AB.
- Campus Alberta Quality Council. (2006). Meeting minutes September 15-16, Banff, AB.
- Campus Alberta Quality Council. (2009) *Handbook: Quality assessment and quality assurance*. Edmonton, AB: CAQC.
- Campus Alberta Quality Council. (2011). *A guide for teams conducting evaluations of proposed undergraduate programs*. Edmonton, AB: CAQC.
- Cardoso, M., Rosa, M., Sarrico, C., & Teixeira, P. (2010). Assessing quality and evaluating performance in higher education: Worlds apart or complimentary views? *Minerva*, 48(1) 35-54. doi:10.1007/s11024-010-9142-2
- Chan, Y., Chen, H. J., Chiang, C., Hou, C., Ince, M., & Morse, R.(2015). Is the Asian quality assurance system for higher education going global? Assessing the impact of three types of program accreditation on Taiwanese universities. *Studies in Higher Education*, 40(1), 83-105. doi:10.1080/03075079.2013.818638

- Chapman, D., & Lindner, S. (2014). Degrees of integrity: The threat of corruption in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*. doi: 10.1080/03075079.2014.927854
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Clark, B. (1986). *The Higher Education System: Academic Organization in Cross-National Perspective*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Cohen, B., & Winch, R. (2011). *Diploma and Accreditation Mills: New Trends in Credential Abuse*. Retrieved from Bedford, Great Britain: Verifile / Accredibase.
- Competition Bureau of Canada. (2007). *Self regulated professions: Balancing competition and regulation*. Gatineau, Quebec: Government of Canada.
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (1998). *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. (2 ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Council of Higher Education Accreditation & United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2009). *Toward effective practice: Discouraging degree mills in higher education*. Retrieved from www.chea.org/pdf/degree_mills_effective_practice.pdf
- Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. (2007). *Ministerial Statement on Quality Assurance of Degree Education in Canada*. Toronto, ON: CMEC
- Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. (2011). *Bringing education in Canada to the world, bringing the world to Canada: An international education marketing action plan for provinces and territories. A response to the Council of the Federation from Provincial and Territorial Ministers of Education and of Immigration*. Retrieved from <http://cmec.ca/9/Publications/?searchCat=41>

Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. (2015). Postsecondary Education Programs and Initiatives.

Retrieved from <http://www.cmec.ca/158/Programs-and-Initiatives/Postsecondary-Education/Overview/index.html>

Council of Ministers of Education, Canada - Quality Assurance Subcommittee. (2008). *European*

Higher Education Area (EHEA): The Bologna Process. Retrieved from

<http://www.cmec.ca/160/Programs-and-Initiatives/Postsecondary-Education/Quality-Assurance/index.html>

DVM 360 staff writer. (2011, March 16). Ross, UNAM earn Full AVMA Accreditation.

De Boer, H., Enders, J. , & Weyer, E. (2013). Regulatory autonomy and performance: The reform of higher education re-visited. *Higher Education*, 65(1), 5-23.

Dill, D., & Beerkins, M. (2013). Designing the framework conditions for assuring academic standards:

lessons learned about professional, market and government regulation of academic quality.

Higher Education, 65(3), 341-357.

Ewell, P. (2007). The 'quality game': External review and institutional reaction over three decades in the

united states. In D. Westerheijden, B. Stensaker & M. João Rosa (Eds.), *Quality Assurance in*

Higher education: Trends in Regulation, Translation and Transformation (pp. 119-153)

Springer.

Ezell, A. (2009). Recent developments with degree mills: Accreditation mills and counterfeit diploma

and transcript operations. *College and University*, 85(2), 40-50.

Faulconbridge, J., & Hall, S. (2009). Educating professionals and professional education in a

geographical context. *Geography Compass*, 3(1), 171-189.

Felbinger, A. (2011). *Quality Assurance in an International Higher Education Area: A case study*

approach and comparative analysis. Wiesbaden, Germany: Springer Fachmedien.

- Fiala, J. (2012). Government orders veterinary-school accreditor to correct problems. *Veterinary Information Network*. Retrieved from <http://news.vin.com/VINNews.aspx?articleId=35072>
- Gatin, G. (2013). Keeping your distance. *The Grounded Theory Review*, 12(1), 19-25.
- Gilad, S. (2010). It runs in the family: Meta-regulation and its siblings. *Regulation and Governance*, 4, 485-506. doi:10.1111/j.1748-5991.2010.01090
- Glaser, B. (1978). *Theoretical Sensitivity: Advances in the Methodology of Grounded Theory*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. (1998). *Doing Grounded Theory: Issues and Discussions*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. (2002). Constructivist grounded theory? *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 3(3).
- Glaser, B. (2002a). Conceptualization: On theory and theorizing using grounded theory. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 1(2), 1-31.
- Glaser, B. (2004). Remodeling grounded theory. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 5(2).
- Glaser, B. (2012). No Preconception: The dictum. *Grounded Theory Review*, 11(2).
- Glaser, B. (2013). Staying open: The use of theoretical codes in GT. *The Grounded Theory Review*, 12(1).
- Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. Chicago, IL: Aldine Publishing Company.
- Gnanam, A., & Stella, A. (2004). Quality assurance in distance education: The challenges to be addressed. *Higher Education*, 47(2), 143-160.

- Griffiths, P., King, R., & Williams, R. (2007). Regulatory intermediation and quality assurance in higher education: The case of the auditors. *Oxford Review of Education*, 33(2), 161-174.
- Guba, E., & Lincoln, Y. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In E. Guba & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 105-117). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Gürüz, K. (2008). *Higher Education and International Student Mobility in the Global Knowledge Economy*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Hallak, J., & Poisson, M. (2007). Academic fraud, accreditation and quality assurance: Learning from the past and challenges for the future. *Higher Education in the World* (pp. 109-133). Retrieved from <https://upcommons.upc.edu>.
- Harman, G. & Shin, J.C. (2009). New challenges for higher education: Global and Asia-Pacific perspectives. *Asia Pacific Education Reviews*, 10(1), 1-13.
- Harvey, L. (2004). The power of accreditation: Views of academics. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 26(2), 207-223.
- Harvey, L. (2004a). War of the worlds: Who wins in the battle for quality supremacy? *Quality in Higher Education*, 10(1), 65-71.
- Harvey, L. (May 27-29, 2008). *Placing Canadian quality assurance initiatives in an international context*. Paper presented at the CMEC Quality Assurance Symposium, Quebec City, Quebec.
- Harvey, L., Mason, S., & Ward, R. (1995). *The Role of Professional Bodies in Higher Education Quality Monitoring*. Birmingham, England: Quality in Higher Education Project.
- Haughey, M. (n.d.). Course Notes.
- Henkel, M. (1998). Evaluation in Higher Education: Conceptual and Epistemological Foundations. *European Journal of Education*, 33(3), 285-297.

- Henkel, M. (2005). Academic identity and autonomy in a changing policy environment. *Higher Education, 49*, 155-176.
- Hurley, P., & Sá, M. (2013). Higher education policy and legitimacy building: The making of a new academic credential in Ontario. *Higher Education Quarterly, 67*(2), 157-179.
- International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education. (2011). *Postcards to INQAAHE: Celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education*. the Hague, Netherlands: INQAAHE.
- Jarvis, D. (2014). Regulating higher education: Quality assurance and neo-liberal managerialism in higher education - a critical introduction. *Policy and Society, 33*(3), 155-166.
- Jones, G., & Shanahan, T. (2007). Shifting roles and approaches: Government coordination of post-secondary education in Canada, 1995-2006. *Higher Education Research and Development, 26*(1), 31-43.
- Jones, G. & Weinrib, J. (2014). Largely a matter of degrees: Quality assurance and Canadian universities. *Policy and Society, 33*(3), 225-236.
- Kettunen, J. (2008). A conceptual framework to help evaluate the quality of institutional performance. *Quality Assurance in Education, 16*(4), 322-332.
- King, R. (2007). Governance and accountability in the higher education regulatory state. *Higher Education, 53*(4), 411-430.
- Kirby, D. (2007). Reviewing Canadian post-secondary education: Post-secondary education policy in post-industrial Canada. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy, 65*, 2-24.
- Kunin, R. (2012). *Economic Impact of International Education in Canada - An update. Final Report to Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade*. Retrieved from

<http://www.international.gc.ca/education/report-rapport/economic-impact-economique/index.aspx?lang=eng>

- Kvale, S. (1995). The social construction of validity. *Qualitative inquiry*, 1(1), 19-40.
- Lasanowski, V., & Verbik, L. (2007). *International Student Mobility: Patterns and Trends*. London, United Kingdom: The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education.
- Latchem, C. (2011). Quality matters for Turkish higher education. *Anadolu Journal of Educational Sciences International*, 1(1), 6-18.
- Lavrow, M. (n.d.). *National quality standards for university-based professional education in architecture and global expectations*. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Architectural Certification Board.
- Lewis, S. (2007). *Accreditation in health care and education: The promise, the performance, and lessons learned*. Toronto, ON: Housing Services Corporation.
- Logan, D. (2003). *Review of British Columbia health professions' quality assurance programs; A report prepared for the legislation and professional regulation divisions, Ministry of Health Planning, Province of British Columbia*.
- Lomas, L. (2007). Zen, motorcycle maintenance and quality in higher education. *Quality Assurance in Education*, 15(4), 402-412.
- Loukkola, T., & Zhang, T. (2010). *Examining quality culture: Part 1 - Quality assurance processes in higher education institutions*. Brussels, Belgium: European University Association.
- Lowrie, A. (2008). The relevance of aggression and the aggression of relevance. *International Journal of Education Management*, 22(4), 352-364.
- Marginson, S. (2007). *Are Neo-liberal reforms friendly to academic freedom and creativity? Some theoretical and practical reflections on the constituents of academic self-determination in*

research universities. Paper presented at the Ideas and Issues in Higher Education, Melbourne, Australia.

Marmalejo, F. (2014). *Issues and trends in higher education: implications for international quality assurance*. Paper presented at the Middle States Commission on Higher Education annual conference, Washington, DC.

Mason, R. (1998). *Globalising education: Trends and applications*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Mishra, S. (2007). *Quality Assurance in Higher Education: An Introduction*. Bangalore, India and Vancouver, Canada: National Assessment and Accreditation Council and Commonwealth of Learning.

Moghaddam, A. (2006). Coding issues in grounded theory. *Issues in Educational Research*, 16(1), 52-66.

Mysicka, R. (2014). *Who Watches the Watchmen? The Role of the Self-Regulator*. Toronto, ON: C.D. Howe Institute

Ness, E. The role of information in the policy process: Implications for the examination of research utilization in higher education policy. In J.C. Smart (Ed.) *Higher Education Handbook of Theory and Research* Vol 25 (p. 1-49). New York, NY: Springer.

Nicholson, K. (2011). Quality assurance in higher education: A review of the literature. Council of Ontario Universities Degree Level Expectations Project.
http://works.bepress.com/karen_nicholson/19/

Nilsson, S. (2010). On the meaning of higher education in professional practice: The case of physicians and engineers. *Journal of Education and Work*, 23(3), 255-274.

- Office of the Fairness Commissioner. (2013). *A Fair Way to Go: Access to Ontario's Regulated Professions and the Need to Embrace Newcomers in the Global Economy*. Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer for Ontario.
- Okafor, T. (2011). *Postcards to INQAAHE: Celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education*. The Hague, Netherlands: INQAAHE.
- Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. (2012). *Country Note: Canada*. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eco_surveys-can-2012-en
- Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. (2013). *Assessment of higher education learning feasibility study report volume 2 - Data analysis and national experiences*.
- Palfreyman, D., & Tapper, T. (2009). Converging systems of higher education? In D. P. T. Tapper (Ed.), *Structuring Mass Education: The role of Elite Institutions*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Parker, N. (2012). Quality Assurance and Accreditation in the United States and Canada. In I. Jung & C. Latchem (Eds.), *Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Distance Education and e-Learning; Models, Policies and Research* (pp. 58-68). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Piña, A. (2010). Online diploma mills: Implications for legitimate distance education. *Distance Education*, 31(1), 121-126.
- Post Secondary Learning Act, P-19.5 Stat. (2003).
- Prier, J. (2009). The Anatomy of Accreditation. *Journal of Veterinary Medical Education*, 36(3), 249-251.
- Priest, M. (1998). The Privatization of regulation: Five models of self-regulation. *University of Ottawa Law Review*, 29(2), 233-302.

- Ramírez, G. (2014). Trading quality across borders: colonial discourse and international quality assurance policies in higher education. *Tertiary Education and Management*, 20(2), 121-134.
- Randall, G. (2000). Understanding professional self-regulation. <https://fredericboehm.wordpress.com/>
- Roney, C. (n.d.) *What is Engineers Canada doing about Globalization?/Interviewer: M. Mastromatteo.* Engineering Dimensions.
- Shanahan, T. (2009). *Accountability initiatives in higher education: An overview of the impetus to accountability, its expressions and implications.* Paper presented at the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations: Accounting or Accountability in Higher Education?, Ontario, Canada.
- Singh, M. (2010). Quality assurance in higher education: Which pasts to build on, which futures to contemplate? *Quality in Higher Education*, 16(2), 189-194.
- Smith, D. (2004) *Institutional Ethnography – Towards a Productive Sociology/Interviewer: K. Widerberg.*
- Solbrekke, T. (2008). Professional responsibility as legitimate compromises - from communities of education to communities of work. *Studies in Higher Education*, 33(4), 485-500.
- Stilwell, F. (2003). Higher education, commercial criteria and Economic incentives. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 25(1), 51-61.
- The Alliance of Sector Councils. (n.d.). *Setting the standard, accepted principles and recommended practices for national occupational standards, certification programs, and accreditation programs.* Retrieved from Ottawa, ON: TASC.
- Transparency International. (2013). *The global corruption barometer.* Retrieved from <http://www.transparency.org/>

- Trow, M. (1970). Reflections on the transition from mass to universal higher education. *Daedalus*, 90, 1-42.
- United Nations Education, Scientific and Culctural Organization. (2005). *Guidelines for quality provision in cross-border education*. Retrieved from Paris, France: UNESCO.
- van Damme, D. (2001). *Higher education in the age of globalisation: The need for a new regulatory framework for recognition, quality assurance and accreditation*. Paper presented at the UNESCO Expert Meeting, Paris, France.
- van Damme, D. (2001a). Quality Issues in the Internationalisation of Higher Education. *Higher Education*, 41(4), 415-441.
- van der Wende, M., Beerkens, E., & Teichler, U. (1999). Internationalisation as a cause for innovation in higher education: A comparison between European cooperation and the Dutch cross-border cooperation program. In B. Jongbloed, P. Maassen, & G. Neave (Eds.), *From the eye of the storm: Higher education's changing institution* (pp. 65-94): Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Veterinary Profession Act Revised Statutes of Alberta 2000, § Chapter V2 (2000).

APPENDICES

Appendix A - Consent Form

Name of Researcher, Faculty, Department, Telephone & Email:

Supervisor:

Title of Project:

An Analysis of the roles of the Campus Alberta Quality Council and American Veterinary Medical Association Council on Education in assessing the University of Calgary's application for a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine program

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this research study.

Purpose of the Study:

The proposed study seeks to better understand the phenomenon of comprehensive program quality review when required and undertaken by both a delegated provincial authority for higher education quality assurance and an education committee of a regulated professional body.

As a (member of one of the regulatory panels; professional working in this context; person who was affiliated with this program review), your participation will provide additional insights about definitions of quality veterinary medicine educational programming, the processes involved in assuring that quality is in place, and where roles differ or converge when two regulatory bodies are involved in a review.

By describing a thorough representation of the University of Calgary's initial program review, the resulting research will illuminate similarities and differences in understanding about the conceptual parameters of quality as seen by each of the regulators, as well as the foci of their respective processes.

Research undertaken in this study will be used towards the partial fulfillment of an EdD credential by the researcher. There is further intent to subsequently publish and describe the research and/or key dimensions of the study in scholarly publications and in appropriate professional settings.

What Will I Be Asked To Do?

Your participation is voluntary. You may refuse to participate altogether or at any time during the research process. Any data collected until the time you withdraw will be kept for the study. For example, should you choose to withdraw after the first interview, information contained in the transcripts may be used as data for further analysis.

The research methodology being used is called grounded theory. In grounded theory, data is generated from participants and interpreted by the researcher. This approach is helpful when looking at processes, such as this kind of regulatory assessment.

Importantly, in grounded theory the issues of importance to the participants emerge as the concepts worthy of exploration. Your input will help to guide the course of the research.

A one-hour interview will be scheduled, during which time you will be asked questions which will address some or all of the following themes:

- * review team composition
- * the role of learning outcomes in/and accreditation standards
- * how documentation and site visits informed your experience
- * dual-panel reviews: observations about your participation with (AVMA-COE/CAQC) reviews

You will receive the transcript of our discussion and the opportunity to make amendments or provide additional comments within a two week period. With your permission, you may be contacted for a follow up discussion in order to clarify particular points and/or for additional information.

What Type of Personal Information Will Be Collected?

No personal identifying information will be released into the resulting publication, and all participants shall remain anonymous.

There are several options for you to consider if you decide to take part in this research. You can choose all, some or none of them. Please put an X on the corresponding line(s) that grants me your permission to:

I grant permission to be audio taped (telephone or in person): Yes: ___ No: ___

I wish to remain anonymous: Yes: ___ No: ___

I wish to remain anonymous, but you may refer to me by a pseudonym: Yes: ___ No: ___

The pseudonym I choose for myself is:

Are there Risks or Benefits if I Participate?

No foreseeable risks, harms or inconveniences are anticipated as a result of your participation in this study. Your contribution to the research will be based on experiences and insights undertaken in a professional capacity.

You are not expected to incur costs for participating in this study. Nonetheless the payment of any incidental fees (e.g. parking or long distance charges), will be reimbursed.

What Happens to the Information I Provide?

Neither your name nor identifying characteristics will be published in any works which are published as a result of this research without your explicit permission to do so. All efforts will be made to represent participant transcript data in such a manner that the individual and his/her professional role and affiliation are broken into discrete elements in order to reduce the reader's ability to deduce individual participant comments.

Further, the nature of grounded theory methodology (abstraction to the theoretical level) will minimize references to individual details of your interview(s). It is the researcher's responsibility to note, however, that given the modest sample size, confidentiality cannot be absolutely guaranteed.

Your participation is voluntary. You may refuse to participate altogether or at any time during the research process. Any data collected until the time you withdraw will be kept for the study. For example, should you choose to withdraw after the first interview, information contained in the transcripts may be used as data for further analysis.

Participation is completely voluntary, anonymous and confidential. You are free to discontinue participation at any time during the study. As the initial storage of audio recorded telephone interviews will occur on a Telus server, this research project involves the collection of unencrypted data via electronic means, and as such your information may be seen by others. The recording will be destroyed once the written transcript is complete. No one except the researcher and her supervisor will be allowed to see or hear the interviews tape or access the transcripts. Any artifacts produced (e.g. tapes, documents) and data storage devices will be kept in a locked cabinet only accessible by the researcher. The data will be stored on a mobile storage device (files will be password protected) and backed up to a computer (access is password protected) for five years, at which time, it will be permanently erased unless you are otherwise contacted.

Signatures (written consent)

Please note that consent will be requested at the outset of our interview; written consent is not required. Your signature on this form indicates that you 1) understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and 2) agree to participate as a research subject.

In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from this research project at any time. You should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Participant's Name: (please print) _____

Participant's Signature _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Name: (please print) _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Questions/Concerns

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact: xxx

If you have any concerns about the way you've been treated as a participant, please contact: xxx

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. The investigator has kept a copy of the consent form.

Appendix B - Interview Questions

The following are examples of questions that were asked in interview settings, as indicated in the transcripts.

1. "...there was a paper that was published by representatives of the Campus Alberta Quality Council that said this was the first time in Alberta two agencies worked together...And I thought that was a really interesting starting off point; there are 65 odd regulated professions – that's a lot of double work, potentially. On the other hand, maybe it's more robust if you've got two bodies looking at it. (Thoughts?)
2. "So if you wouldn't mind just, the nature of grounded theory is that I'm trying to look at what's going on around quality in program reviews when conducted by two different boards. And it's really up to the participants – it's the themes that you all raise, and the things that emerge from that from which the actual analysis will be conducted. So really I just open this up very broadly so I can get your thoughts on quality, with respect to the reviews and perhaps particularly the site visits, documentations, any dealings you had with..."
3. What I am trying to do us just find out what is going on here – what is going on when a school is subjected to two different assessments of quality and what does it look like in this contexts and so my questions are very broad...because what I want to hear about is what you have to say about the experience in general about quality from the COE's point of view...
4. I'd like to revisit something you just said, it reminds me going back to the engineers...alongside technical the requirements that you can test for, and the educational outcomes that they've achieved for the program, there are some cultural norms that are difficult to articulate. And you just talked a little about informal mentoring not being a requirement, but being sort of a reality. Can you talk a little bit about that?
5. Do you think that by using learning outcomes now as an emphasis it helps to stabilize the many different interpretations of what quality is?

Appendix C - Coordinated Review Process

