The CQ has two facets to it, the obvious facets which are the sub scales, you’ve got a scale for quality teaching, you’ve got a scale for course organisation and clear goals, it’s got a scale about assessment and so on and there the predicable kind of obvious dimensions of our learning environment and we know about those.

But then it’s got this mysterious thing called student satisfaction which all these things predict to and I think of all the contention is around how these scales reportedly predict student satisfaction and more importantly what students, what does student satisfaction really mean?

And so I think what’s happened is that we’ve embraced the nation of student satisfaction somewhat uncritically and just assume that we, we’ll just use the CQ uncritically to predict of this thing until we know something about the learning environment.

But if we just take student satisfaction on it’s own and forget the rest of the CQ and just look at the concept of satisfaction and if you look at the research on satisfaction, it’s got certain sub-dimensions to it which if we understand we can better able to then use the CQ in relation to it.

So one of the first dimensions of student satisfaction is what you talk about in terms of the outcome domain and when students talk about satisfaction in this way they really, really start talking about value for money, “I’m satisfied with this program because it gives me a return on my investment”, I’m getting something for what I’m putting in and there are some facets to that.

Another domain of satisfaction for students is process and process refers to how I’m treated while I’m supposed to be getting my education and that comes down to the relational qualities between students and staff, their sense of respect, they’re sense of justice and so on and that’s another facet of satisfaction.

The third facet of satisfaction is procedure and it’s the predicable consistent nature of the learning experience that students report as being important in their satisfaction and look and the fourth – but other factors, there are many other components to satisfaction but the fourth is probably the contextual factors around the program itself.

So you’ve got this thing called student satisfaction which we call a single theme but it’s actually got multiple facets to it, so we predict but we aren’t really understanding what we’re predicting to, so I think one of our big challenges are a better understanding what satisfaction then talking about how that might be predicted by facets of the CQ, so I think then the next step in this work is to actually be constructive at another level of the student experience.
I think one of the problems with student surveys more generally is that people take them as information that’s almost a point of arrival, the CQ data is the point of departure it’s a stimulus for further conversation with the students.

You say, “Okay we’ve got this profile, we’ve got this feedback let’s go and talk to our students a bit more about what they meant when they said they were satisfied or dissatisfied”, or how they thought things related, so I think it’s about a stimulus for conversation rather than an interrogation of a data set, the data means nothing without a subsequent conversation.

To a large extent we make the simplifying assumption that students are the same as they are in Year one as they are in year three, it simplifies our lives terribly to just call them students do matter what year there in and we treat them the same and I think we started to step back and look at two things, I think firstly a life cycle construct to see that there’s actually continuum experience here and that students are in fact experiencing series of transitions with different demands and stresses on them.

There’s certainly a transition into university and we know from some quite quality research what the predictable dimensions of a student experience are around the transition in. But there’s also a transition out which is and you call that a transition out and up as they move up in the world and out in to the world and so I think there’s two quite unique bookend transitions that we need to talk about.

The second dimension that I think’s important in understanding students as they move through their degree is the notion of identity and I was you know, I was saying before that we just treat them as students. Students come into university and they are – they struggle to come to terms with and feel confident as a student and a, well their student identity.

And as they move through the degree and they become comfortable in that there becomes a challenge I think for us as educators and I think the challenge is allowing that identity to develop, so in many ways if students claim more maturity and want to mature as they move forward and we simply ascribe to them as homogenous, you’re just a student, we actually constrain their growth in terms of identity.

Flipping that on it’s head, sometimes students become comfortable as students but we know that their future lives will demand more of them and so we’ve actually got to encourage them to have a broader identity. So I think the unacknowledged invisible part of education is identity working, how to help students to have a richer sense of themselves and what they’re, what they can and could become and what they – and what our role is in encouraging that regard.
Now all that being said the transition inexperience is about us enabling students to have a strong and competent and confident student identity and that will be a function where they’re working with their diverse entry pathways. At the other end I think our challenge is to help them embrace what you might call and emergent graduate identity and that’s got a different set of constructs around it.

Now if you look, if you look at gradual identity being if you like, the core of the experience of helping students come to terms of what that might mean we start – well part of our academics is to start helping them understand what that might mean in terms of identity markers, how we talk to them.

So for example do we start calling them practitioners in training? Do we start to call them future professionals? What we’ll do is we’ll just call them students still again so, and the thing here is how do we talk to them? How do we describe them to themselves, so that’s the key.

The other key aspect I think the way identity works is rituals and ceremony’s, so what do we do in the senior year that signals, signifies to the students that we see them having matured in status that we treat them differently, this helps them internalise a sense of themselves, it’s the mirror self in many ways so that’s the core of the experience.

Around that I think there are four, four unique and potent requirements that students have to make their gradual identity real, one is that I think they want a sense of mastery and I think our curriculum does little to encourage mastery, what is does is encourage accumulation of knowledge, declarative knowledge.

You know more at year, year two is more of year one and you’ll just do it at a more advanced level in year three and so on and it’s a building block model but mastery, mastery is about not just knowing about stuff, it’s knowing how to do stuff and knowing when to do stuff and so it’s strategic knowledge, it’s procedural knowledge and I think unless our programs are scaffolded to increase students sense of their mastery over a body of knowledge of actually practice and use it, but I think they get to an ended degree and they wonder what they’ve actually go apart from accumulation.

And I think so much of our curriculum is an accumulation rather than a deliberate attempt to develop mastery, we talk a lot about capstone experiences or you’re capstone – the capstone movement is very much an attempt to develop mastery students because I think it’s got three elements to it and I think we can still do these elements irrespective of whether you offer capstone courses.

One is I think students need an awareness of they’ve learned and an explication of what they’ve learn, so much of it become implicit so that’s the first thing, the second thing I think students need is an integration of what they’ve learned and see how it all connects together and thirdly I think, they need to understand how they can acquire that knowledge, those interactive elements give mastery and that helps – it strengthens their sense of transition and their sense of being a useful graduate.
The second, I think element of a gradual identity I think is a sense of employability, now they might be great graduates and all that sort of stuff but unless they have a sense they’ve got something that will give them a return on their investment once they leave, they have a sense they are employable graduates not just graduates, then I think their gradual identity is more tenuous.

And so anything we can do to enable that in terms of helping their job search skills, bringing in information and opportunities about that, connecting them to the world of work, all that stuff builds their sense of employability and I think that’s quite critical as well and that interfaces quite strongly with mastery as well.

The third thing I think that’s quite important in the senior experience is a sense of community and community in a richer sense than what we might think of, I think it’s the last change for students to strengthen their cohort relationships, these are the chance for students to take friendship and connection for the university experience into the rest of their professional life.

And I – in talking to students and you notice there’s that sense of students having a last go at firming up friendships, getting new one’s – they know this is a chance, they have an acute sense of the opportunity involved in that so I think cohort building actually, ironically is equally important at the end as it is at the beginning, it’s quite a fascinating process.

You also notice some students are also trying to connect with staff and I think it’s our last attempt to form ongoing mentoring relationships and students will come back over time and they become like a post-graduate but perhaps most importantly, the third element I think is a sense of students locating themselves in a broader professional community.

Becoming junior members of association, becoming aware of networks and so on so they start to define themselves as part of that gradual identity as being a member of a broader community, that’s quite important I think in the senior experience.

The final thing that I thinks quite critical is in the senior experience is a sense of leadership and I – by this I mean marking senior students increased status and maturity and marking their capacity to contribute to the university which they’re a part and giving them opportunities to do that, that’s both developmental but also it’s strengthening of identity.

And so simple things like mentoring, contributions to community projects, all sorts of possibilities or where they are able to give back and be seen as senior members of a school or a community or program, strengthens their [10:49] in themselves but also I think marks them as chipping status and that’s important.

So you’ve got gradual identity as an important – as the core construct for the senior experience and then mastery and employability, community and leadership as the surrounding one.
But all of that is for nought I think unless we wrap all that around with what, what you’d call a sense of quality, unless students have a sense that they have a quality experience and that they believe that we’re interested in quality, then I think the whole thing doesn’t hang together, so you might call the sixth sense you know in that experience.

To some extend all students are the same and some students are different, we know from research into the student experience around good teaching for example, that a really core part of the good teaching construct is actually quality of relationship between teacher and student, it’s fundamental to that construct so teaching is relational in that sense. So the question becomes, “Would I relate to first year the same as I would relate to final year students”?

The answer is yes because there are some baseline qualities of respect and interaction and so on, but you see satisfaction is a function of expectation so how first year’s expect to be treated and what they’ll put up with will be quite different I think to what final year’s would because they have a difference sense of themselves, a different sense of what they deserve in that process.

So if we treat them the same I think we’re missing the point with expectations, in the satisfaction expectation actually drives ratings or satisfaction, so one would argue that in a final year class these student’s are more mature, they have a greater sense of themselves and their work and a greater sense of their progression if you like.

But their expectations of horizontal communication are great, that they have a great expectation of collegial transaction, they have a greater sense that they would like to be trusted and there’s more discretion in those relationship, so the relational quality between teacher and student while the same, probably have to be different in the final year, there has to be a move towards horizontal collegiality otherwise those environments don’t really take off.

Of course you can also say that then the basic curriculum, you know if we’ve – we’re really trying to get the mastery and all the other, all those other senses then of course we’re going to work to a more and more engaged learning environment where there will be more applied work, more – there’s more group work that sort of thing.

And it doesn’t mean to say they want us to have small classes to do that, you might have to structure the learning environment with the transition in mind with the understanding that the end is closer than the beginning and so these students are about to leave us, so what’s the last thing we can do to help them leave successfully?

And that mean a isomorphic kind of embrace, an isomorph is an attempt to replicate a future experience so we look towards the future and see what learning environment’s they will be in, we should try as much as possible to make our year of teaching lead to that and so we’re talking about you know more case study based work, more applied work that sort of stuff.
What might a school do to support senior students? You can flip that question on its head and ask, “What might a school do to enable senior students to embrace their capacity and their potential”? To actually make their own experience more potent and you toy with the idea of saying, “Well why not have a senior year cohort, a senior year committee where they manage their own sense of what they want and bring that – those requests to the school”?

That in itself is a marker of their status, “You’re our seniors”, I mean the Americans do this brilliantly, they have names for every year you know, sophomore and junior and this that and [14:40], they – their, they specialise in identity markers but we don’t, so one thing we can do is actually name the – name for the seniors their status and name for them their responsibility and give them opportunities to lead.

So I think part of it’s capacity building but I think as academics, too often we slip in to support language and we think, “Oh yeah one more thing to do, one more thing to give”, actually we just need to activate, there’s lots we can do I think you know, rituals and ceremonies are potent things.

I think when in doubt talk to students, I think for example without being – attempting to be cynical if we’re – if we really want to implement the CQ in May or June the following year, then what are we doing in terms of maintaining a relationship to those students so they feel a sense of up when they fill that questionnaire in.

So if they’re final memories of us are that we asked them the question, “So how was your time with us, tell us what you’ve learned, tell what we can do better next time”? And we do that in a very sincere, not just with a two page survey but in a big conversation, I think that’s a very lasting and potent memory about what think is important and they might, it might in fact influence how they feel about us when then in our questionnaire.

Similarly playing with the notion at the moment of the potency of mid course reviews rather than second, second set end of semester reviews, the potent of a lecturer saying, “It’s half way through the course boys and girls, ladies and gentlemen let’s stop for a minute, I want you to tell me how this course is going so far, what have you learned so far – based on our time together what can we do differently for the rest of the course”?

So you’re signalling an attempt to be in a relationship and improve acts of – acts of gathering hot data into a relationship, both at the course and at the program level, are the most potent way of saying, “We care and we will change if you’re not happy”, that’s what students will remember in three or four months time when they fill it out for that certain questionnaire.

So I think that’s the most potent thing you can do, have a commitment to quality which is why I was saying before all that senior year stuff, unless it’s wrapped in a sense of quality it doesn’t mean anything.

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