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Abstract

As the quality of university education garners increasingly more interest in both the public and in the literature, and as quality assurance (QA) processes are developed and implemented within universities around the world, it is important to carefully consider what is meant by the term quality. This study attempts to add to the literature empirical data from interviews conducted with senior administrators within Canada's province of Ontario. A quality assurance framework was developed by the Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents in response to international trends in QA and implemented by all 21 Ontario universities in 2011. This phenomenographic study explored the conceptions of quality held by senior university administrators and their strategies for implementing QA processes. Results revealed a range of QA approaches that are employed within Ontario's universities. Rather than the two categories of retrospective QA and prospective QA that Biggs (High Educ 41:221–238, 2001) postulated, results indicate a more complex spectrum that involves three main approaches to QA: an approach aimed at defending quality, an approach aimed at demonstrating quality, and an approach aimed at enhancing quality. These approaches are considered in relation to Biggs's (High Educ

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41:221–238, 2001) ideas about quality enhancement and a revision to his model is proposed. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Goff, Lori, E-Mail: lgoff@mcmaster.ca