

Unwrapping the Dimensions of Quality in Online Degree Programs

Amy M Grincewicz, PhD
agrincew@kent.edu

Director of Instructional Design

QM Senior Research Colleague



Objectives



Identify key dimensions of quality in ODP.



Discuss research-based strategies to enhance online learning.



Identify institutional and student factors affecting online program success.

Growth of Exclusively Online Degree Programs



Rising Enrollment: 23% increase in exclusively online degree programs (2012–2020).



Student Demand: 46% of students prefer online courses (Wildenhorn et al., 2022).



Enrollment Surge: Nearly 4.9 million students enrolled in fully online courses by Fall 2022.



Institutional Gap: Only 4.5% of U.S. higher education institutions offer fully online degrees.

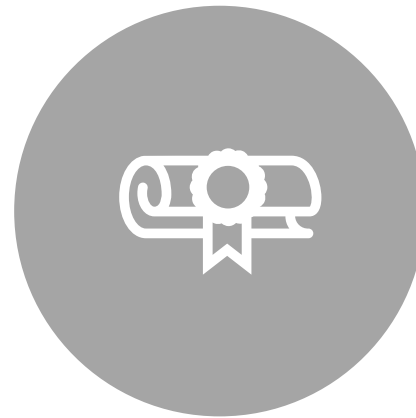
What does the literature
say?



Research Context and Key Themes



OBJECTIVES OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW



UNDERSTANDING THE LANDSCAPE OF
ONLINE DEGREE PROGRAMS (ODPS)



KEY THEMES: ADMINISTRATIVE
MOTIVATIONS, STUDENT PERSISTENCE,
AND PROGRAM DESIGN CHALLENGES

Institutional Motivations & Strategic Planning

Administrators' motivations: student demand, faculty support, financial viability (Özcan & Yildirim, 2018)

The role of regional needs and institutional missions

Strategic marketing decisions for online degree programs (Hardy et al., 2024; Robinson, 2024)

Student Persistence in Online Programs

Yang, Baldwin, & Snelson (2017): Factors influencing persistence

Individual attributes: motivation, self-discipline, and sense of accomplishment

Program attributes: institutional support, engaging coursework, and alignment with professional goals

Student Perceptions and Adult Learners' Experiences

Student Perceptions & Performance (Hakkarainen et al., 2024)

- Career development opportunities
- Community belonging and engagement
- Role of self-efficacy and regular feedback

Adult Learners in Asynchronous Programs (Baker & Tukhvatulina, 2023)

- Challenges: lack of human connection, navigating independent learning
- Need for constructive feedback and clear connections between assignments and learning objectives

Degree Completion & Ethical Considerations

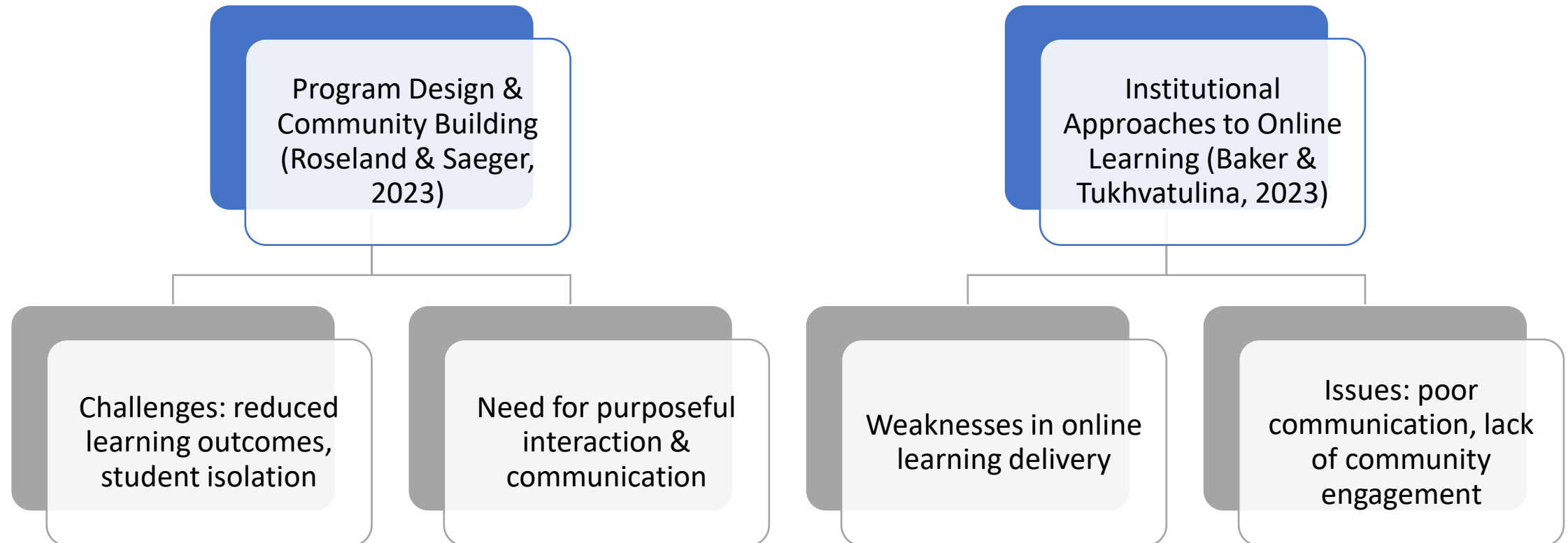
Degree Completion Rates (Ortagus et al., 2023)

- Online students face lower completion rates than traditional students
- For-profit institutions show significant completion gaps, particularly for low-income students

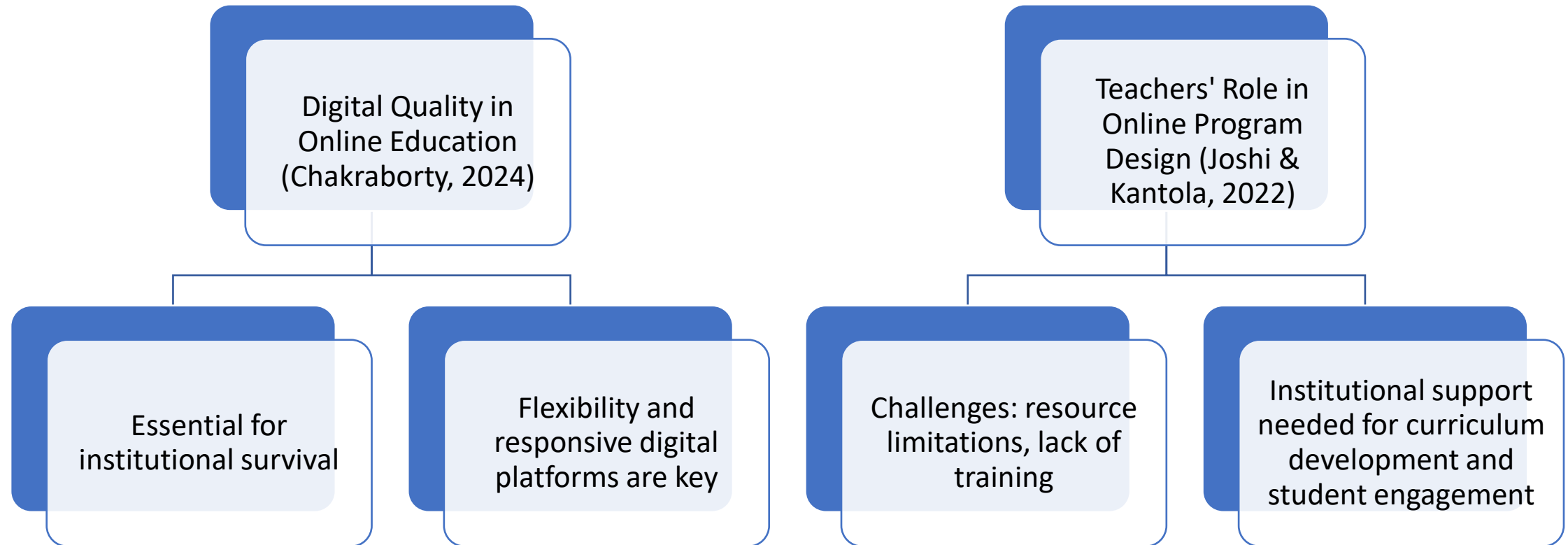
Ethical Considerations in Online Education (Ortagus, 2023)

- Are institutions setting students up for success or just enrolling them for revenue?
- The responsibility of universities to provide adequate support

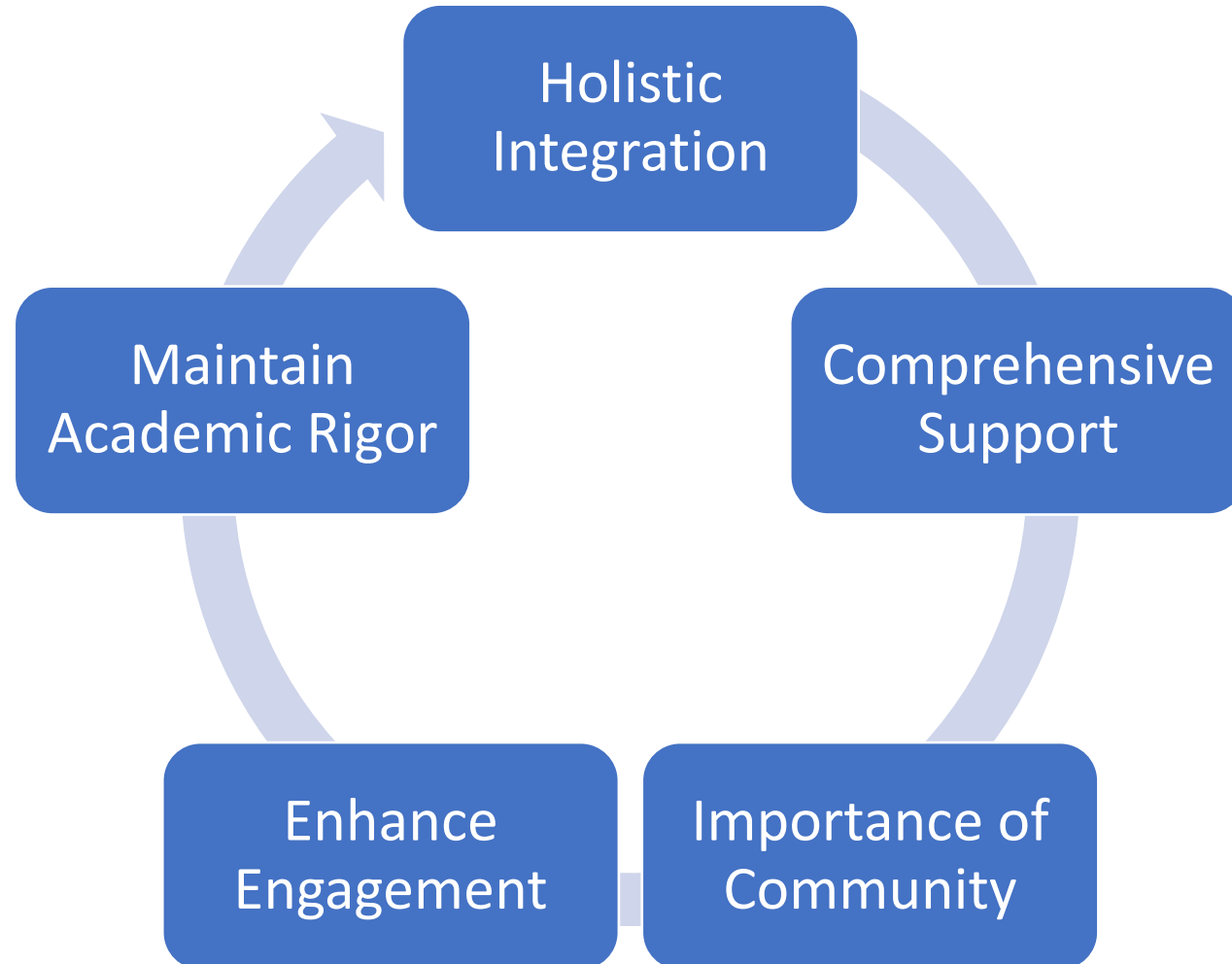
Program Design, Community Building & Institutional Approaches



Digital Quality & Teachers' Role in Online Education



Building Effective Online Programs: A Holistic Approach



Analysis of Key Elements



ADMINISTRATIVE STRATEGY
& STUDENT ENGAGEMENT



INSTRUCTOR PRESENCE &
DIGITAL QUALITY



HOLISTIC DESIGN
APPROACH

What is my plan?



Craftsman tools

- 3 Screwdrivers
- 1 Saw
- 1 Hammer
- 1 Cable cutter
- 1 Sandpaper
- 1 Dragon
- 1 Laser
- 1 Long
- 1 Me
- 1 F
- 1 T

Furniture lists

- | Bedroom | Living room | Kitchen |
|---|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> King size bed | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sofa | <input type="checkbox"/> Dining table |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Headboard | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Coffee table | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chairs x 2 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Drawer | <input type="checkbox"/> Television set | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Appliances |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Built-in closet | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stools x 4 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kitchen island |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mattress | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bookshelf | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Food pantry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lamp x 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Second-hand plant | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stove |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Towel | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sinks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rug | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stairs |
- Will be delivered on 6th Apr
- Bedroom 1
- Room plan 1st floor



Theoretical Frameworks

Institutional Theory: Motivations and strategic planning (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983)

Tinto's Theory of Student Retention: Academic and social integration (Tinto, 1975; Tinto, 1983)

Integrating both frameworks for a comprehensive analysis



Research Questions

Institutional motivations and strategies

Key factors influencing student perceptions of quality

Relationship between perceptions and student outcomes



Methods

Quantitative: Surveys and institutional data

Qualitative: Interviews with administrators and focus groups

Mixed-methods approach for comprehensive insights

Reflection and Wrap-Up

