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**Title**

Institutional research and improving the quality of student engagement / Nick Zepke, Philippa Butler and Linda Leach

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**Abstract**

This article asks whether institutional research could help improve the quality of student engagement by researching at sub-institutional levels such as in courses bridging students from school into higher education. In answer it argues two interacting propositions: one, that student engagement provides useful indicators of quality in higher education; and, two, that research into student engagement is best conducted at a sub-institutional level. The authors use evidence obtained from a funded Teaching and Learning Research Initiative project in New Zealand to support these propositions. The project gauged the perceptions of first-time students in four different bridging (access) courses in one higher education institution. Results showed significant differences in the way they perceived the efforts of teachers and the institution to support their engagement. Not only did course results differ from institutional scores, courses also differed significantly from each other. These results suggest that the quality of student engagement could be enhanced if institutional research focused closely on

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engagement at sub-institutional levels such as courses. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)