Overcoming Divergent Institutional Logics to Streamline Transfer: Perspectives from a Grant Collaboration

Matriculation Trends and Issues, Partnerships and Collaboration

State legislatures have widely adopted vertical differentiation—through admissions selectivity—as an institutional logic to organize their higher education institutions within the state. This stratification has led to divergent institutional logics wherein 2-year and 4-year institutions prioritize different goals. In this facilitated discussion, we engage participants on institutional logics of 2-year and 4-year institutions, discuss how they manifest as barriers to effective transfer, and discuss ways that participants, serving as transfer agents, can help their institution overcome them.

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Institutional Logics Theory

“overarching sets of principles that prescribe how to interpret organizational reality, what constitutes appropriate behavior, and how to succeed”

(Greenwood, Raynard, Kodeih, Micelotta, & Lounsbury, 2011, p. 318)
Institutional Logics Theory

- Logics play a substantial role in how member organizations behave and interact and how the system is organized.

- Institutional logics exist at the macro-level of the organizational field, in organizational sub-fields, and at the level of individual organizations.

- Organizations encounter and adopt multiple logics that may or may not be compatible.

- As organizations mature and establish sub-fields, the logics prescribed can be divergent—conflicting or incompatible—across levels and sub-fields.

- When institutional logics are incompatible, they pose substantial challenges and tensions when attempting to function as a coherent macro-organizational field.

(Greenwood, Raynard, Kodeih, Micelotta, & Lounsbury, 2011)
What are the institutional logics that drive the behaviors of your institution?
Bastedo (2009) identified two logics that states rely upon to organize their institutions of higher education:
Vertical Differentiation by Academic Preparation

Research Universities & Liberal Arts Colleges

Regional Comprehensive Institutions

Community/Technical Colleges

Vertical Differentiation

Students’ Academic Preparation

(Bastedo, 2009)
Integration of Levels Through Vertical Transfer

Research Universities & Liberal Arts Colleges

Regional Comprehensive Institutions

Community/Technical Colleges

Vertical Transfer

(Bastedo, 2009)
Divergent Institutional Logics of Sub-Fields

Research Universities & Liberal Arts Colleges

Regional Comprehensive Institutions

Community/Technical Colleges

Divergent Logics

(Greenwood et al., 2011)
Divergent Logics Challenge Integration Through Transfer

Research Universities & Liberal Arts Colleges

Regional Comprehensive Institutions

Community/Technical Colleges
What are some divergent logics in your own context that impact transfer?

“overarching sets of principles that prescribe how to interpret organizational reality, what constitutes appropriate behavior, and how to succeed”
What divergent logics did you identify?
Finding from VT-NETS Grant

- Access vs. Prestige logic
  - Policy collision of articulation agreement and enrollment management
- Compliance logic vs. Autonomy logic
  - Financial aid dictates ability to take courses.
- Generalist vs. Specialist logics
  - Amy is it for the grant for NOVA – she does it all. At VT there are many people involved on grant and they defer to other offices for specialty needs
- Low resource perspective vs. High resource perspective
- Flexibility vs. Rigidity logics
Brainstorm ways that we, serving as transfer agents, can help their institutions to overcome divergent logics to realize potential of transfer pathways.
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