

BIRTHING INTEGRATED NETWORKS: TRANSITORY LEARNING IN AN AGE OF COLLECTIVE CHANGE

DR. NATASHA JANKOWSKI

DIRECTOR, NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT



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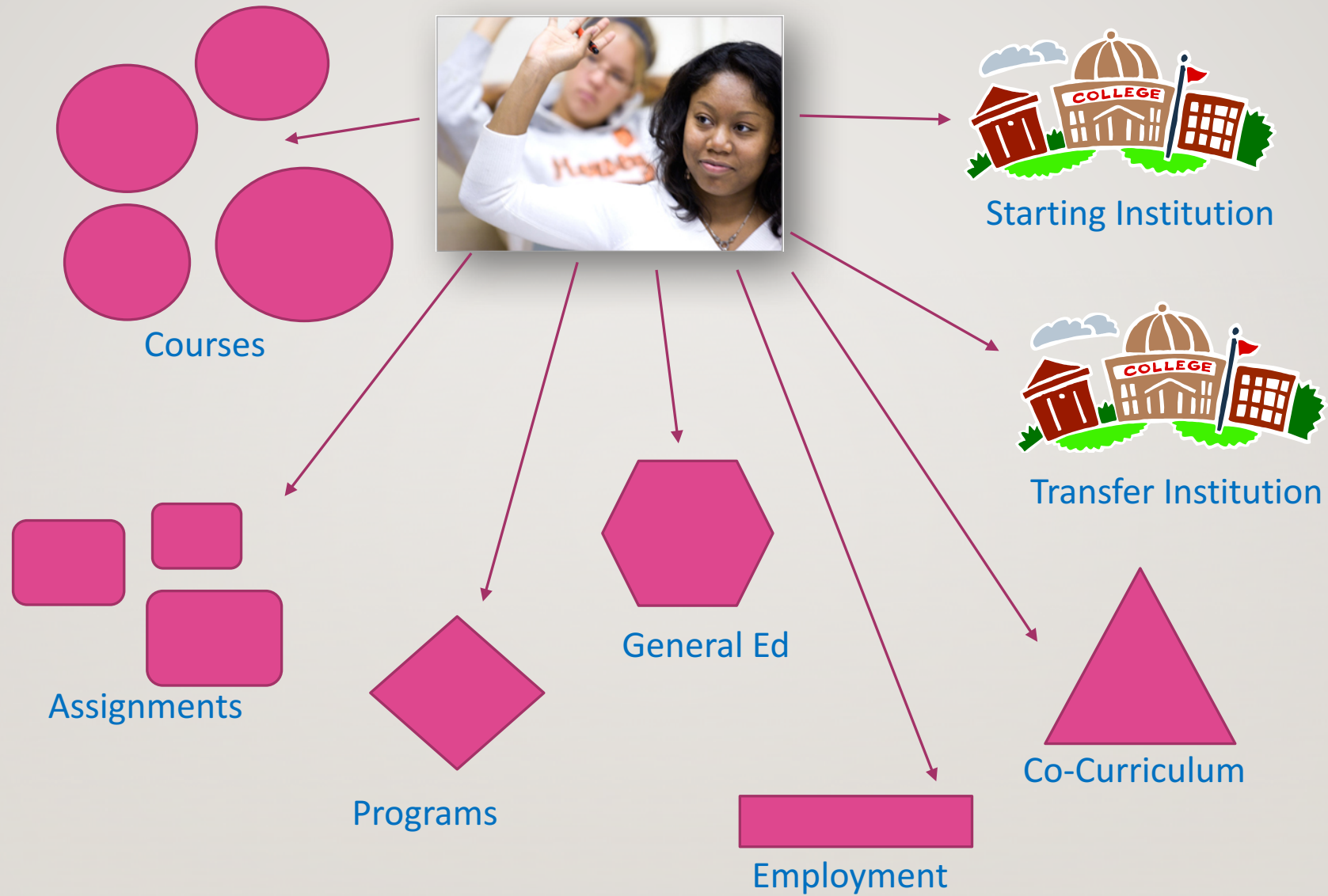
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ASSESSMENT

Assessment of student learning involves the systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development.

- It does not mean testing or marking
- Embedded in a practice literature – we are trying to help move the conversation into a more reflective space



Learning happens in all sorts of places but we only recognize and validate certain types

LEARNING VALIDATION

- Ethical and equity implications
- More providers entering the market
- But spaces disconnected, no integrated network – leaving students to put the pieces together
- Efforts are unfolding to birth integrated networks using across sector partnerships focused on alignment between the various elements

ALIGNMENT

But what does it mean!?

Narrative analysis focused on use of the word alignment including alignment with whom and to what as well as who decides something aligns.

ALIGNMENT EXPLORED

- Alignment has been largely assumed, one-sided, and has not focused on exploring relationships between the various elements in question
- There is a desire for multiple elements to work together in an integrated network that allows for transfer and movement of learning between each – to say that something is the same as or different than another
- Three main models: Biggs constructive alignment; Barr and Tagg learning paradigm; Weick loosely and tightly coupled systems

BIGGS (1996) CONSTRUCTIVE ALIGNMENT

- Within an individual class – the relationships between learning outcomes, assignment, and pedagogy to get students there
- Using constructivist theory, he observes that students create meaning in the processes by which they learn. Second, he notes that teachers align their learning activities to their assignments, which likely seems, by now, an obvious point, even if not always well practiced. Constructive alignment, then, proposes that teachers create pedagogies and activities for students that enable them to create the learning that is stated in the learning outcomes established for a class.

TAGG (2003) LEARNING PARADIGM

- Move instruction from a teaching (focused on imparting/delivering content) to a learning (focused on ensuring students learn) paradigm – expands Biggs beyond the classroom to explore how learning connects over multiple academic spaces.
- However, counter arguments have claimed that this approach is limiting because then every academic element needs to connect with or align to something else (crushing innovation and forcing standardization)
- Further – both Biggs and Tagg focus exclusively on learning in an academic setting – how expand to address the other spaces learning occurs?

COUPLING

- Institutions of higher education are places that contain multiple sites of learning, not just individual classrooms.
- As Weick (1976) observes of tight and loose coupling in organizations, different parts of the institution might have tight alignment, such as the relationship between a course-learning outcome and an assignment designed to elicit student demonstration of that learning outcome. However, the vast majority of students' learning experiences are marked by loosely coupled relationships between various curricular elements and other experiences such as the cocurricular or employment.
- Intentional design is needed for alignment of student learning experiences—be they curricular or cocurricular—along with teaching students to be reflective of when and where learning occurs

ALIGNMENT THEN BECOMES

- Alignment, in other words, is inherently dialogical and collaborative. Without different members of the educational environment talking to each other, alignment cannot be achieved – cannot assume that alignment holds when based on only one relationship element.
- Alignment then becomes an intentional effort to see the complex learning system in which our students are constructing and applying knowledge and unpack for ourselves the relationships between the pieces in ways that allow us to communicate to others the educational design – birthing an integrated network built from the vast spaces our students learn.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

- Email: njankow2@illinois.edu
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