



Central University of
Technology, Free State

**Theme: The Stories We Tell: Using
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practice and engagement; HEIR
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Demystifying institutional mythologies
about performance and impact measures

IM Ntshoe. PhD MA



STRUCTURE OF THE TALK

Introduction

Visions, missions and mandates

Changing role of traditional university

Institutional strategic planning in differentiated systems in South Africa

Discussions and conclusion

INTRODUCTION

- Formal organizational structures arise as **reflections of rationalised institutional rules.**
- The elaboration of such **rules in modern states and societies** accounts in part for the expansion and increased complexity of formal organizational structures.



INTRODUCTION

Institutional rules function **as myths** which organisations incorporate, gaining legitimacy, resources, stability, and enhanced survival prospects.

INTRODUCTION

- Organisations whose structures become isomorphic with the **myths** of the **institutional environment**
- Contrast: organisations primarily structured by the demands of technical production and **exchange-**
decrease internal coordination and control in order to maintain legitimacy

INTRODUCTION

- Structures are decoupled from each other and from ongoing activities.
- In place of coordination, inspection, and evaluation, a logic of confidence and good faith is employed.

INTRODUCTION

- Meyer and Rowan argue that often "institutional myths" are merely accepted ceremoniously in order for the organisation to gain or maintain legitimacy in the institutional environment.
- Organisations adopt the "vocabularies of structure" prevalent in their environment such as specific job titles, procedures, and organisational roles.



- The adoption and prominent display of these **institutionally-acceptable "trappings of legitimacy" help preserve an aura of organisational action based on "good faith"**. Legitimacy in the institutional environment helps ensure organisational survival.
- However, these formal structures of legitimacy can reduce efficiency and hinder the organisation's competitive position in their technical environment.
- To reduce this negative effect, **organisations often will decouple their technical core from these legitimising structures.**

Visions, missions and mandates

- *Performance indicators (PIs)* could be defined as empirical, quantitative and qualitative data that measure the effectiveness of a system and/or an institution in attaining its goals.
- Although PISs could be used for various purposes, **they are developed to differentiate UoTs from other institutions in South Africa**, to assess and improve performance and to measure the development of this sector. In the process an attempt was made to validate the PIs against the five characteristics and to align them with the identified attributes

Mission differentiation:

- Differentiation is usually done through institutional missions and the institutional variables that follow from the institutional mission.
- By "mission" is meant the larger purpose of the institution which can be **ambitious, purported or actual**.
- The mission in turn drives the programmes, the kinds of students attracted, the kinds of faculty appointed and the expectations upon them, and the way the institution is assessed (or would be assessed)
(Johnstone, 1998)

Institutional strategic planning in differentiated system in South Africa

- HESA (Higher Education South Africa)-HE must demonstrate '*diversity*' in the institutional landscape' and 'its organisational form to effectively meet the varied social, economic, cultural developments needs of the country and the African continent, which range on a continuum from the global to the local.'

Institutional strategic planning in differentiated system in South Africa-continued

- Differentiation is also seen as institutions evolving within and across various categories in complex and dynamic ways.
- However, an open-ended institutional framework, which leads to **academic and mission drift and uniformity based on the values, priorities and practices of the major research universities**, is discouraged within the differentiated system in SA

Institutional strategic planning in differentiated system in South Africa-continued

- **Performance based differentiation:** To maintain and even increase the diversity of HE system, where different ranking instruments need to be developed in which different forms of institutional performance can be compared.
- *HESA's Strategic Plan for the 2010 to 2020 period* supports a system of progressive **self-differentiation** based on varied institutional visions, missions, policies and practices that enable institutions to meaningfully progress on a distinct development path.

Institutional strategic planning in differentiated system in South Africa-continued

However differentiation should not occur to the cost of some institutions in order to advance others.

Discussions

- Although rarely admitted, institutions' missions are strongly influenced by **league** tables.
- League tables and the individual indicators used to compile them appear to **having influence in institutions' actions and decision making**, although HEI themselves are reluctant to acknowledge this.
- League tables are used by many institutions **as key performance indicators**, and in some cases, strategic targets.

Discussions

- Resulting rankings largely reflect **reputational factors** and not necessarily **the quality or performance of institutions**
- League tables may conflict with other priorities-governmental policies and concerns e.g. on **academic standards, widening participation, community engagement and the provision of socially-valued subjects**

Discussions

Institutional pressures is to increase the **homogeneity of organisational structures in an institutional environment.**

Firms will adopt similar structures as a result of three types of pressures.

- i) Coercive pressures come from **legal mandates or influence from organisations they are dependent upon (government and market HE).** Resource dependence- Relative magnitude- the exchange assessed by measuring the proportion of resources shares provided. Challenge of institutions with narrow resource base

Discussions

Criticality of resources- the extent to which organisations' (HEIs) ability to keep functioning in the absence of the resource

ii) Mimetic pressures to copy successful forms arise during high uncertainty.

Discussions

iii) **normative pressures to homogeneity** come from the similar attitudes and approaches of professional groups and associations brought into the firm through hiring practices.

Institutional isomorphism is increased when firms & HE institutions:

- * are highly dependent on the institutional environment
- * exist under high uncertainty or ambiguous goals
- * rely extensively on professionals



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Discussions

- Resource Dependence theory holds that the internal behaviour of organisational members are understood clearly only by reference to the actions of external agents.
- It holds that that those who provide resources to organisations such as universities have the capability of exercising greater power over those organisations.

Discussions

- Thus, vision, missions and values developed in order to address **competing demands of traditional academic value, requirements and expectations of different stakeholders including the public, parents, students, market and, government that usually provide funding**



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THANK YOU