Two Worlds of State Performance Accountability

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Introduction

• Steadily growing interest in P-20 policymaking and structures
• Key component of education governance is performance accountability (PA)
• Creation of P-20 system will involve some degree of unification of PA
• However, reason to believe that K-12 PA and higher ed PA are quite different
Research Questions

• What are differences between state K-12 and higher education PA in policy design (content and policy levers)?
• What are differences in political origins and dynamics?
• What are implications of any such differences for P-20 policy?
Research Methods and Data

• Describe main US patterns but concretize with cases of 3 leading states: FL, OH, TN

• Higher education data: On-going study of the origins and impacts of higher education performance accountability (Dougherty et al., 2011)

• K-12 data: Rich extant literature on K-12 PA, supplemented by additional interviews with state department of education officials
Policy Design 1: Performance Indicators

- Job Placement
  - K-12
    - No NCLB requirement for data collection on job placement and not present in K-12 PA systems in FL, OH, or TN
  - Higher Education
    - Perkins Act requirements for data collection
    - Florida and Tennessee have long-standing job-placement measures
    - Seven of 10 states studied have job placement as PA indicator (Dougherty et al., 2009)
Policy Design 2: Performance Indicators

- Student Learning
  - K-12
    - NCLB testing requirements
    - State K-12 proficiency testing pre-dates NCLB
  - Higher Education
    - Perkins act requires some data on technical skills attainment
    - Little tracking of student learning beyond passage rates for licensure exams and major field exams
Policy Design 3: Performance Indicators

• Instructional Processes
  – K-12
    • NCLB – number of highly qualified teachers, Title III language instruction reporting requirements, inclusion of immigrant children in federal programs
  – Higher Education
    • Cursory data about instructional programs and staffing
Policy Design 4: Policy Levers

- Capacity Building
  - K-12
    - Original NCLB provisions for schools and districts failing to make AYP
    - NCLB waivers: more leeway in defining support for improvements
  - Higher Education
    - Capacity building provisions are rare
    - If state capacity building assistance, it is not mandated by legislation
Policy Design 5: Policy Levers

• Incentives
  – K-12
    • Weaker emphasis on positive incentives
    • Some positive incentives, and NCLB waiver process encourages more (Reward Schools)
    • However, even with waiver process, heavy emphasis on consequences of failure to make AYP
  – Higher Education
    • Relies mostly on positive incentives e.g. publicity, performance funding as budget bonus
    • Rare use of negative incentives
Policy Design 6: Policy Levers

• Interventions
  – K-12
    • NCLB – required interventions for failing schools and districts e.g. restructuring, supp. services
    • NCLB waiver process – more flexibility, but state plans still involve heavy reliance on interventions e.g. Common Core, teacher & principal evaluation
  – Higher Education
    • No formal provisions for state intervention
Policy Origins & Dynamics 1

• Federal Influence: Big difference
  – K-12: Heavy federal influence: NCLB, RTT
  – Higher ed: No comparable federal influence e.g. performance requirements in HEA vs. ESEA

• In-State Political Actors: Substantial overlap but a big difference
  – Similarity: State officials; business
  – Difference: Education institutions and staff
Policy Origins & Dynamics 2

• Policy Windows: Substantial overlap but difference
  – Similarity
    • National mood
    • Fiscal constraints
    • Change of party in power
  – Difference
    • Court suits
Implications for P-20 Policy 1

• Difficulty in Constructing Unified System given big differences in policy design and policy origins and dynamics

• Big Differences in Policy Design
  – Performance indicators, esp. learning assess.
  – Willingness to dictate instructional process
  – Ratio of positive to negative Incentives
Implications for P-20 Policy 2

• Big Differences in Policy Origins & Dynamics
  – Federal role
  – Instate actors: Role of educators
  – Policy windows: Role of court decisions
  – Views of the societal interest in education
  – Constitutional status of education provision and institutional autonomy
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