Influences Affecting the Development of the Applied Baccalaureate

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The Problem

- Global economy – demand for “knowledge workers”
  - Jenkins (2006) projects that "in a global economy, communities will thrive or decline based on how well they do to ensure sufficient numbers of high-value jobs and an ample supply of ‘knowledge workers’ to fill them" (p. 4).
- State seek ways to enhance workforce and economy
- Approximately 20% of adult workers have some college but no degree
- Call for improved baccalaureate attainment
The Purpose

- Determine the current status (as of July 2008) of applied baccalaureate degree programs in public higher education institutions in the US.

- Use Stark and Lattuca’s (1997) lens of factors affecting curriculum development to determine factors most influential in the development of this degree.

- Curriculum development
  - External influences
  - Organizational influences
  - Internal influences
Research Questions

- What is the definition of the applied baccalaureate used in this study?
- When did the applied baccalaureate first appear in the public sector of US higher education?
- What is the extent of the applied baccalaureate in the public sector, both by state and by institutional type?
- What external factors led to or discouraged its development in particular states?
- What organizational factors affected its development in particular higher education institutions?
- What institutional factors affected its development in particular institutions?
Methods

- Mixed methods design:
  - Review and analysis of library and Web-based databases and other information available on the Web, including relevant reports of professional groups
  - LexisNexus and Westlaw for statutes authorizing degree
  - Telephone interviews with one or more state officials knowledgeable about or responsible for degree (by referral or snowball sampling)
  - Input from an advisory committee comprised of nationally recognized experts
Definition

• A bachelor’s degree designed to incorporate applied associate courses and degrees once considered as “terminal” or non-baccalaureate level while providing students with higher-order thinking skills and advanced technical knowledge and skills.
  • Associate-degree granting institutions
  • Traditional baccalaureate-degree granting institutions
  • Typical titles:
    • Bachelor of Applied Science
    • Bachelor of Applied Technology, Science Technology or Technology
    • Bachelor of Applied Arts and Sciences
Status of the Applied Bacc

Map 1: Applied Baccalaureate in the Public Sector
- Traditional Baccalaureate Degree-Granting Institutions Only
- Both Associate Degree-Granting and Traditional Baccalaureate Degree-Granting Institutions

NOTES:
The Adult Learner and the Applied Baccalaureate (Townsend, Bragg, & Ruud)

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Types of Applied Bacc

- *Career ladder program* requires a substantial number of upper-level courses in the technical major of the applied associate degree (e.g., BAS in Instrumentation Technology, Great Basin College, Nevada)

- *Inverse or upside down program* reverses or turns the traditional curriculum sequence upside down by accepting courses taken in an associate degree program as satisfying much of the baccalaureate requirements for a major (e.g., Bachelor of General Studies (BGS), Western Kentucky University)

- *Management ladder program* provides its recipients with applied management skills sufficient to prepare for a managerial position (e.g., BAS in Business Administration – Management, Peru State College, Nebraska)
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External Influences

- *External influences* include disciplinary and regional accrediting bodies; reports calling for curricular and educational change; attitudes about the necessity of a college education; and workforce needs.

**Results:**

- State need to increase and enhance the technical workforce, including at the baccalaureate level.
- State concern about low percentage of adults with baccalaureate degrees, as well as low percentage of adults with some baccalaureate credits.
Organizational Influences

• *Organizational* influences include aspects of the educational institution offering the curriculum, such as institutional mission, resources, and governance structure.

**Results:**

• Institutional history and mission.
• Resources, including faculty, facilities and student enrollment.
• Distinctive identity & market niche.
Internal Influences

- *Internal* influences include faculty backgrounds, educational beliefs, and disciplines, as well as student characteristics and goals.

**Results:**

- Desire by faculty and institution to meet needs of a particular student population.
- Concern for quality and credibility of the degree.
Logic Model: Factors Influencing Development of Applied Baccalaureate

- State need to increase workforce
- Adults without college or some college credit – no bacc. degree
- Resources
  - Institutional history & mission
  - Unique identity & market niche
- Meet student need
- Quality & credibility
Conclusion

- The emergence of the degree and in particular the authorization of the community college to award this degree reflects influence of a global, knowledge-based economy and need for workers with higher levels of education.
- For adults who lack baccalaureate-level education but have some technical credits or an applied associate degree, the applied baccalaureate offers pathway to baccalaureate degree.
- States seeking to increase baccalaureate attainment, the Applied Bacc degree is an attractive option.
Phase Two

Case studies of implementation of Applied Bacc policy and programs in 8 states and 2-3 applied and traditional baccalaureate institutions per state:

- To what extent does creation of the Applied Bacc degree facilitate baccalaureate attainment for adult learners?
- To what extent does receipt of the Applied Bacc serve its recipients well from an employment perspective?
- To what extent does the Applied Bacc meet workforce needs and justify its maintenance and even extension to other public institutions and to all states?