Making Logic Models More Systemic: An Activity

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Introduction

A system is an assemblage of related components forming a complex or unitary whole. To make a logic model systemic means adjusting the logic model to attend to the social system(s) in which the initiative depicted in the model is intended to fit. Initiatives may make logical sense when viewed in isolation but take on a different character when viewed within the context of a given system.

This handout focuses on moving from a basic logic model of an initiative to one that takes into account the dynamics of the social systems that the initiative is designed to influence. The handout has a basic model that was built using the perspective presented in the paper, *Everything You Wanted to Know About Logic Models But Were Afraid to Ask*.

The logic model bears considerable resemblance to an initiative developed by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation but has been modified to support the purpose of this activity.

For purposes of this activity, assume the initiative is designed by a private foundation. A number of grantees will be involved in using the model to make changes in their local situation. The grantees are expected to make changes within their own sites within the general framework of the initiative. The initiative has some processes the grantees are expected to follow and some outcomes they are expected to achieve. Yet, the foundation wants grantees to modify the model to be appropriate to their situation.

An Example Logic Model

The following IF-THEN statements describe a Native American Higher Education Initiative (NAHEI).

**IF-THEN Statements for NAHEI Basic Logic Model**

Before giving the IF-THEN statements, a definition of the problem that prompted the initiative is given.

**Problem Definition**

Certain conditions in society have generated conditions that lead to low Native American graduation rates from higher education. Those conditions include the fact that Native American education is government controlled, fragmented, inadequately funded, has low expectations for Native American students and neglects their needs. On a broader social level, historically Native Americans have experienced attempts at assimilation into non-Native cultures, neglect, disrespect, racism, poverty, and ridicule.

These conditions have led to limited Native American access to higher education, culturally irrelevant higher education programs, unsupportive academic environments, low connections of education to the Native American community, a lack of Native American leadership in higher education, weak organizational capacity in Native controlled higher education institutes (including poor funding, management structures, and policies), conflicting educational visions and lack of collaboration among Native-controlled institutions, mainstream institutions serving Native Americans, communities, tribal government, and other institutions.

**IF-THEN Logic Model Statements**
The NAHEI is designed to have three phases. Through these three phases the problems described above will be addressed leading to the desired impacts. The first impact is that Native American graduation rates from Native-controlled higher education institutions (largely tribal colleges) will increase. For some graduates, this will build a pipeline into mainstream institutions resulting in more Native Americans obtaining four-year degrees. Consequently, Native Americans will gain their fair share of higher education, employment, leadership opportunities, and gain support for their communities and respect for their culture.

Each of the phases is built around a set of cause-and-effect assumptions.

In Phase I, the theory is that IF visioning, planning, dialogue, and interest among funders occurs along with the development of initiatives VIA activities of the foundation, participating institutions of higher education (IHEs), and national Native American organizations, THEN the following will result: shared vision, collaboration, funding, stronger infrastructures, and national organization and the foundation’s capacities.

In Phase II, the theory is that IF the shared vision, collaboration, funding, stronger infrastructures, and national organization and the foundation’s capacities are transformed VIA the development of Native-controlled institutions, capacity building within Native American national organizations, and specific academic, culturally relevant collaborative projects (sometimes involving mainstream institutions), THEN students will have greater access and success, academic program will be stronger and more culturally relevant, learning environments will be more supportive and/or students will be more connected to their community, traditions, and/or larger society. Additionally, the national Native American organizations will be able to support Native-controlled and mainstream institutions in fundraising, faculty development, management and/or economic planning.

Phase III has many similarities to Phase II except that now the impetus for action is largely shifted from the foundation to the participating IHEs and national organizations via improved infrastructures such as use of technology, reward policies, allocation of resources and course offerings. Phase III is still focused on specific settings and issues.

Over time (beyond the five years of foundation funding) the institutions and national organizations will continue the processes learned through the initiative to keep determining how to balance the forces that support and undermine their goals.

**Logic Model Diagrams**

Appendix A contains the logic model diagrams. The first diagram depicts the problem definition that led to the initiative. The second diagram depicts the framework for the three phases of the initiative. Each phase is depicted as a set of IF-THEN statements—IF X happens via Y actions, THEN Z will result. The THEN statements of the Phase I become the IF statements for the second phase. Similarly, the THEN statements of Phase II become the IF statements of Phase III. The THEN statements of phase III lead to the desired impacts for the primary beneficiaries of the initiative—Native American students and their communities.

The next three pages show each of the three phases of the initiative respectively in more detail. (If they were lined up side by side with the THEN statements of the prior phase overlapping the IF statements of the subsequent phase, they would match the general framework given earlier but with more detail.)
Making the Model More Systemic: An Activity

Scenarios

Each group will assume they are a team from one local site. They will use one of the situations below:

**Situation 1:** Over the past seven years, a group of mainstream university and the tribal college leaders have been actively involved in building a pipeline between the tribal college and university. The tribal college has been in existence for 15 years. It has 300 students. The mainstream university has 10,000 students.

**Situation 2:** Over the past 10 years a few informal contacts have existed between leaders of the mainstream university and tribal college. Generally, however, there has been a history of distrust between the institutions. Now new presidents have come to both the university and the college. They are interested in building relationships between the two institutions.

**Situation 3:** The community is very supportive of the tribal college. They view the college as the means by which the community can build a stronger economic base. They are especially interested in ensuring that the young people who go to the tribal college stay in the community. The mainstream university has strong education and health sciences departments.

**Situation 4:** The tribal college is viewed by the community as distant and not necessarily supportive of the values of the community. The college is struggling to stay afloat financially. Outside Native-oriented organizations have been offering to help the college develop a stronger infrastructure.

Using the scenario as the starting point, make whatever additional assumptions about the situation that you would like as you respond to the questions below.

Questions

1. What factors would you build into the model to tailor it to the specific systems in this site? (See section below for ideas of factors to include.)

2. How would you modify or shift the emphases in Phase I to better fit the situation?

3. (If time) How would you visually depict the model? You are free to modify the existing model as much as desired. Consider visually depicting the initiative using an analogy. For example you might use a river with rapids, smooth areas, rushing water, strong currents, and rocks to depict the dynamics of the situation.

Considerations

Here are some ideas you might consider as you make the model more systemic.

1. Consider the full range of systems that affect the initiatives (e.g., even though an initiative may be designed to bring change in the higher education system, the nature of the K-12 education system may affect how the initiative is implemented).

2. Identify factors that amplify (support) the direction the initiative is taking.

3. Identify the factors that counter the direction the initiative is taking.
4. In selecting factors that amplify or counter the direction of the initiative, consider the following:

- national, state, and local governmental policies
- institutional and organizational policies
- differential impact of people outside the system versus those who are inside the system
- factors impinging on the initiative that are within and those that are beyond the control of the involved systems
- how historical patterns of change may predict what factors may support or inhibit this change initiative
- communications patterns among the stakeholders
- connections of this initiative to other efforts underway to support the desired results
- the nature and extent of power that supporters and non-supporters of the initiative have
- the degree of commitment that key people have to the initiative
- the balance of resources that are going into the initiative from outside the systems versus resources within the system that are being reallocated for the initiative
- planning processes within the systems that can be used to build the initiative into the regular life of the system
- partnerships that are or can support or inhibit the initiative
- the existing vision, philosophy, and/or mission of the involved organizations to determine their congruence with the initiative
Appendix A – NAHEI Problem Definition

Society

Native American Education
- Government controlled
- Fragmented
- Inadequately funded
- Low expectations
- Neglect

Historical Treatment of Native Americans
- Assimilation
- Neglect
- Disrespect
- Racism
- Poverty
- Ridicule

IHEs

Limited Native American Access

Culturally Irrelevant Programs

Unsupportive Academic Environment

Low Connection of Education to Community

Lack of Native American Leadership

Weak Organizational Capacity in NCIs
- Funding
- Management Structures
- Policies

Lack of Collaboration Among NCIs, MSIs, Institutions, Community, Tribal Government, Other Institutions

Conflicting Educational Visions

Result

Low Native American Graduation Rates

Abbreviations used:
- IHEs
  Institutions of higher education, (both Native-controlled and mainstream institutions)
- NA
  Native American
- NOs
  National organizations, e.g., American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC)
- NCIs
  Native-controlled institutions, primarily tribal colleges
- MSIs
  Mainstream institutions serving Native Americans
NAHEI Logic Model General Framework

If via (Phase II)
Then

- Vision
- Collaboration
- Funding
- Infrastructure
- NO's Capacity
- NCI/MSI Collaborative Projects
- Foundation's Capacity
- National Organizations
- IHE Activities
- Foundation Activities
- Funders' interest
- Initiatives
- Visioning, planning

If via (Phase III)
Then

- IHEs: Students, Programs, Environment, Connections
- NOs Support NCI and MSIs
- Leadership Transfer from Foundation
- Infrastructure, technology, rewards, resources, offering
- NA Graduation from NCI

NA Graduation from TCs Pipeline to MSIs
NA Graduation from MSIs
NA Fair Share, Support, Respect

Impact
NAHEI Logic Model – Phase I

If

Dialogue

Visioning, planning

Interest among funders

Initiatives from strategic development

via

Foundation’s:
- Grantmaking
- Convening
- Leadership development
- Evaluation, dissemination

IHE Activities
- NCIs - policy development
- MSIs - policy development

National organizations’ activities

Then

Shared Vision

Collaboration

Funding TCs’ access to land-grant resources

Infrastructure development

NO’s capacity for sustainable programs and policies

Foundation builds own support capacity

Impact

Increased NA graduation rates from NCIs

TCs are pipelines to MSIs

Increased NA graduation rates from MSIs

Phases II & III

NAs get:
- Fair share of higher education, employment, leadership opportunities
- Support for communities
- Respect for culture

If via Then

Making Logic Models More Systemic: An Activity
NAHEI Logic Model – Phase II

**If**

- Shared Vision
- Collaboration
- Funding: TCs’ access to land-grant resources
- Infrastructure development
- NO’s capacity for sustainable programs and policies
- Foundation builds own support capacity

**via**

- NCI’s institutional development and capacity-building
  - Fundraising
  - Faculty development
  - Curriculum development
  - Institutional management
  - Long-range economic
- NO’s institutional development and capacity-building
  - Fundraising
  - Organizational development support to NCIs
  - Organizational development support for student support programs
- NCI’s/MSI’s academic, collaborative, and institutional reform projects
  - Culture, language, land
  - Economic/social community development
  - Access and success

**Then**

- IHEs
  - Students: NA access, NA success in institution
  - Academic programs: excellent, culturally relevant
  - Learning environment: supports academic and personal growth
  - Connections: students connected to community, traditions, larger society
- NOs support NCIs and MSIs in:
  - Fundraising
  - Faculty development
  - Curriculum building
  - Institutional management
  - Long-range economic

**Impact**

- Increased NA graduation rates from NCIs
- TCs are pipelines to MSIs
- Increased NA graduation rates from MSIs
- NAs get:
  - Fair share of higher education, employment, leadership opportunities
  - Support for communities
  - Respect for culture
NAHEI Logic Model – Phase III

**If**

IHEs
- Students: NA access, NA success in institution
- Academic programs: excellent, culturally relevant
- Learning environment: supports academic and personal growth
- Connections: students connected to community, traditions, larger society

NOs support NCIs and MSIs in:
- fund raising
- faculty development
- curriculum building
- institutional management
- long-range economic planning

Phases I & II

**via**

IHE's infrastructure revisions to support vision
- Teaching, research, and service reward structures
- Technology facilitates learning, sharing knowledge with new audiences
- Reallocation of resources
- Revised curriculum offerings

Processes that transfer guidance from foundation to NCIs, MSIs, and NOs

**Then**

NCIs and MSIs:
- Increased NA access to/success in higher education
- Excellent, culturally relevant academic programs
- Learning environments encourage academic, personal growth
- NA students provide leadership in community, state, nation, and world

NOs support NCIs and MSIs in:
- fund raising
- faculty development
- curriculum building
- institutional management
- long-range economic planning

**Impact**

Increased NA graduation rates from NCIs

TCs are pipelines to MSIs

Increased NA graduation rates from MSIs

NAs get:
- Fair share of higher education, employment, leadership opportunities
- Support for communities
- Respect for culture