Equity Mindedness in Higher Education

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Overview

Equity Mindedness defined

Reflection on Equity Mindedness

Questions and Comments

What is a problem your university faces -- related to equity?

"I'm no stranger to overcoming adversity. Growing up in inner city Brooklyn, I tested into gifted programs and trekked across the city to attain the education I deserved. In fifth grade, my teachers had the audacity to believe that I could understand books like *Julius Caesar* and *Animal Farm*. For that, I am grateful. I've dedicated my career to having the same impact on the next generation. In my lifetime, I want terms like "inequity in education" and "education gap" to be concepts of the past. As cliché as it sounds, I am pursuing my Ed.D. in Educational Leadership to hone the skills necessary for me to play an integral role in the eradication of these issues. My application for the Ed.D. in Educational Leadership is the next natural progression in my career."

"In my new position, I am in the trenches where I come face-to-face with the challenges that first-generation and **inadequately prepared students** must overcome. The Associate in Arts program is specifically designed for students who are 1) **not academically prepared** for Newark campus, 2) want to take advantage of free or reduced tuition, and/or 3) **are not ready to move away from home**. In my role, I am responsible for all academic advising support and programming on the Dover campus. With the latitude to develop new initiatives, I am in the position to test my theories and execute **best** practices with my students."

"In my new position, I am in the trenches where I come face-to-face with the challenges that first-generation and **underserved** students must overcome. The Associate in Arts program is specifically designed for students who are 1) **historically underserved/marginilized and the Newark campus cannot provide the adequate support** 2) want to take advantage of free or reduced tuition, and/or 3) **support their family/committed to family** . In my role, I am responsible for all academic advising support and programming on the Dover campus. With the latitude to develop new initiatives, I am in the position to test my theories and execute **high-impact** practices with my students."

Guiding Framework

Watch your thoughts, they become your words;

watch your words, they become your actions;

watch your actions, they become your habits

-Unknown

Deficit-minded thinking impacts how faculty and staff speak about underserved populations (Bensimon, 2005).
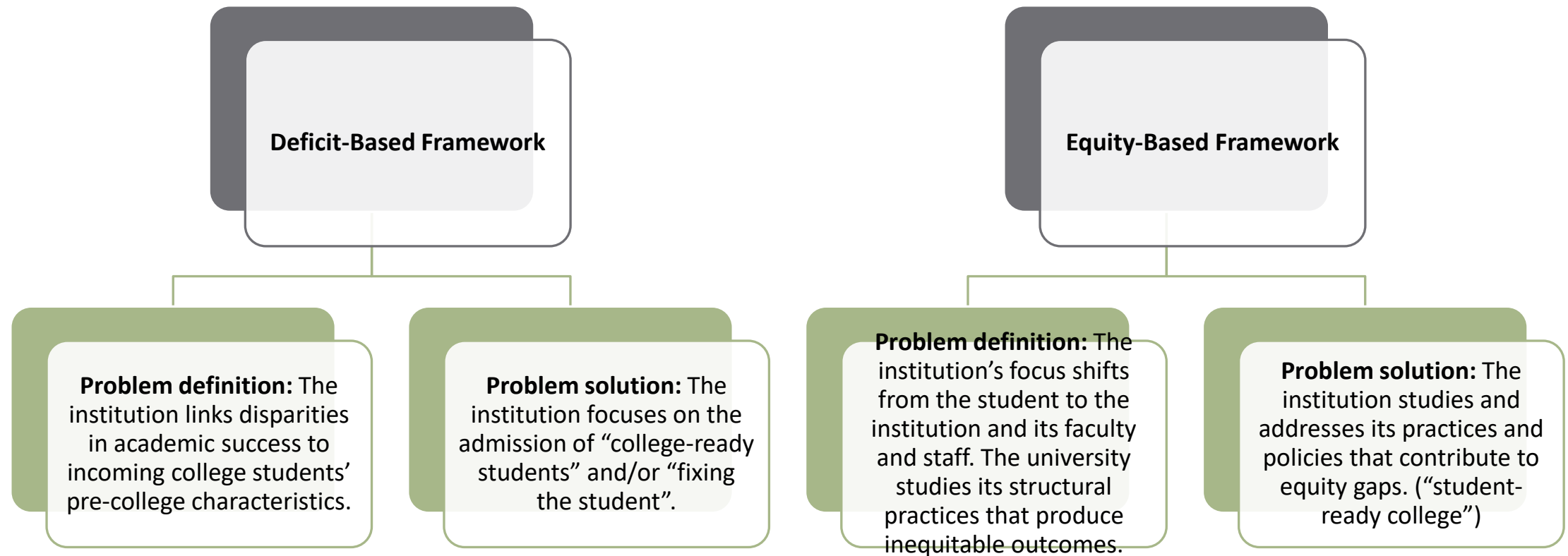
This *deficit- minded language* is evident in the same documents developed to address inequities in education. (Iverson, 2007; Bonilla-Silva, 2012)

Although well-meaning, these documents reveal *underlying norms, values, and beliefs* driving the deficit-minded actions of university faculty and staff (Iverson 2007; Patton, 2016)

In an equity-minded cognitive frame, the focus shifts from the student to the institution and its faculty and staff. The university studies its structural practices that produce inequitable outcomes.

BENSIMON ET. AL., 2004; BENSIMON, 2005; BENSIMON, 2007; FELIX, BENSIMON, HANSON, GRAY, & KINGSMITH, 2016).

Equity-Based vs. Deficit- Based Framework

Deficit-Based Framework

Problem definition: The institution links disparities in academic success to incoming college students' pre-college characteristics.

Problem solution: The institution focuses on the admission of "college-ready students" and/or "fixing the student".

Equity-Based Framework

Problem definition: The institution's focus shifts from the student to the institution and its faculty and staff. The university studies its structural practices that produce inequitable outcomes.

Problem solution: The institution studies and addresses its practices and policies that contribute to equity gaps. ("student-ready college")

Deficit Mindedness

Deficit Mindedness
- Fixation on student deficits
- Emphasis on compensatory programs

Dominant Narrative in CRT
- Focuses on the normative experiences of white students
- Counternarratives of minorities and other underserved populations may be missed or excluded
- Emphasis on student's academic and cultural background as the source of educational inequities

Single-Loop Learning
- Implementation of changes while keeping the underlying the framework
- Do NOT address the underlying norms and values
- Do NOT question underlying biases that inform that practices and policies

(Bensimon et. al, 2004, Bensimon, 2005; Bensimon, 2007; Felix et. al, 2016).

Equity Mindedness

Equity Mindedness

- Problems and solutions are institutional or structural; structural barriers
- Challenges the dominant narrative where the "student is the primary unit of analysis" (McGrath and Tobia, 2008)

Counternarrative in CRT

- Give nondominant groups a voice and validate their experiences
- Challenge the dominant narrative (Delgado, 2000)

Double-Loop Learning

- Institutional change: change value system that drives actions
- Recognize the problems with their cognitive frame and shift frame of thinking
- Emphasis on outcomes (what students learn) rather than inputs

(Bensimon et. al, 2004, Bensimon, 2005; Bensimon, 2007; Felix et. al, 2016).

Reactive vs. Proactive

Deficit-Based Framework: Reactive	Equity-Based Framework: Proactive
Students come to you	Strategic outreach
Data poor	Data rich
Generalizability (Horizonal equity)	Program-specific (Vertical equity)

Reflection

Using the equity-minded cognitive frame,

◦ How would you define a problem at your institution?

◦ What solution (s) would address this problem?

Questions and Comments

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