

05.4.2025

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**Title**

The effects of monopsony in higher education / Michael Cooke ; Daniel Lang

**Publication year**

2009

**Source/Footnote**

In: Higher education. - 57 (2009) 5, S. 623 - 639

**Inventory number**

26109

**Keywords**

Ausland : Kanada : einzelne Hochschulen ; Ausland : Kanada : Hochschulwesen allgemein

**Abstract**

The paper examines the results of a study of strategic plans in community colleges in Ontario, Canada between 1995 and 2005. The system was very similar to centralized systems in many jurisdictions including China. The study found that (1) the strategies of those colleges were more alike than different; (2) the strategic content of the plans as texts was relatively weak; and (3) attention to organizational field was limited. The paper uses institutional theory and the concept of monopsony to explain these findings. Individual institutions and organizational fields evolve because of the interaction of social?political forces that govern their sector and set the standards for legitimacy in the field. The colleges studied are subject to the monopsonistic power of a provincial government to the point that monopsony trumps strategy. Colleges could overcome monopsony by adopting a network model whereby they would redefine the nature of the exchange among colleges and between colleges and government. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Cooke, Michael, E-Mail: mcooke@georgebrown.ca