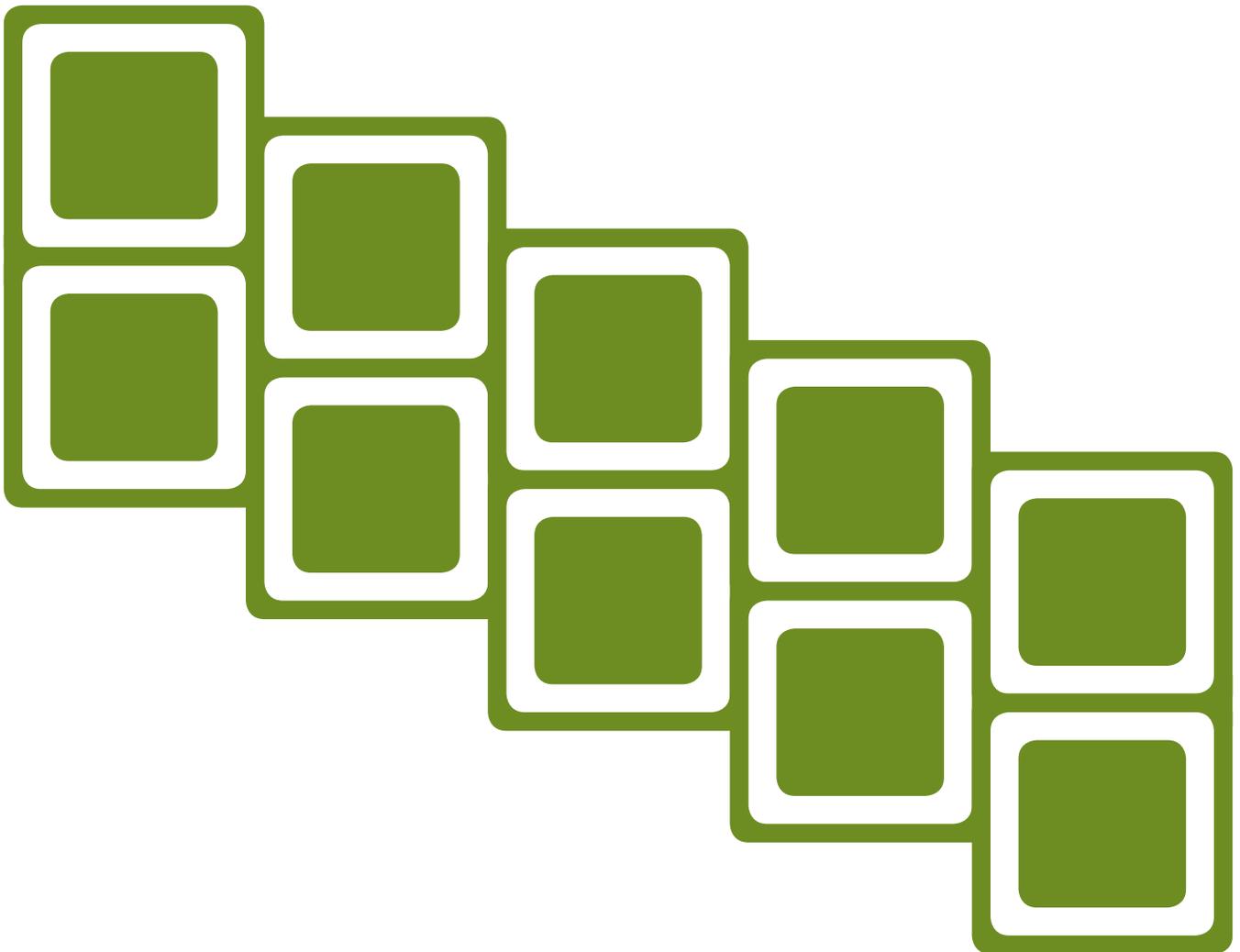


Summer Academe
Review

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Higher Education Transitions: Theory and Research

Eva Kyndt, Vincent Donche, Keith Trigwell & Sari Lindblom-Ylänne (Editors)
(London/New York: Routledge, 2017, 320 pages)

Summer session offers specialized transitional programs for students entering university and generally supports students with transitions during their university careers—helping them make up missed courses, speed up completion of degrees, change majors, and, in some cases, providing programs for school-to-work transitions.

Higher Education Transitions: Theory and Research is an edited volume of 18 articles from eight European countries that looks at research related to three student transitional stages in higher education: transition to higher education, transitions within higher education, and transition from higher education to work. At all stages, the implications for higher educational institutions are examined and, although not specifically discussed, by extension, an interested reader can imagine the facilitative role that summer sessions can play in these transition stages. The underlying premise of the volume is captured in the preface:

In the current era where lifelong learning takes the fore, higher education can no longer be regarded as an isolated trajectory within one's educational career. Students face substantial challenges in crafting their professional careers . . . transitions from school are often difficult to hurdle . . . moving on to higher education, almost half of the students do not succeed in their first year . . . When entering the labour market they [students] are often confronted with structural barriers to finding a job. (p. xvii)

If higher educational institutions are to prepare students as lifelong learners, it is important to understand the connections between secondary school and higher education, within higher education, and between higher education and work.

The three sections of the book deal with these transitional stages in turn. Each section begins with a conceptual overview to set the context, followed by five chapters, each of which presents a different research perspective on the designated transitional stage. As the title of the book suggests, the content is both theoretical and research based, providing the reader with a foundation for understanding the transitional stages related to higher education. At the same time, most chapters outline the applications and/or implications of research findings to practice, from the perspectives

of the individual student, of teaching–learning environments, or of supports at an institutional level. All should be of interest to summer session directors and administrators.

Section 1 focuses on the transition from secondary school to higher education. The introductory chapter sets out the section’s research studies in a typology that overlays four dimensions—phase, time, level, and outcome—on three research themes from the last four decades. The individual chapters range from examining conditions before entry into higher education through to performance in first year, including consideration of variables such as secondary school grades, gender, nationality, motivation, fear of failure, and self-efficacy. In my view, this section is the most relevant for summer session directors and administrators because of the popularity of precollege transitional programs offered in summer sessions.

The second section looks at transitions within universities, an area in the research trilogy on higher education transitions that the editors indicate is least researched. The research discusses the features of transitional issues for students changing programs/majors, progressing towards degree completion, or continuing into professional and graduate programs, which should pique the interest of summer session directors and administrators.

Section 3 presents research related to transitioning from higher education to the labor market. The claim is that transition from an educational context to a work context needs to consider different phases: preparation at university, the after-education and before-work phase, and the early employment period. We hear much about the lack of preparedness of university graduates for work, and this section provides some research insights into the issue. The individual chapters address topics including labor market requirements and what it takes for graduates to be successful, competencies needed in the workplace, and how higher education can develop necessary competencies in its graduates. While pre-college programs are familiar to summer sessions (a number have been described and analyzed in previous volumes of *Summer Academe*), there is little evidence that summer sessions play a role in the university-to-work transition; this might be fertile area for new programming.

In the concluding chapter, the editors summarize the chapters thematically, provide suggestions for future research, and emphasize the importance of well-designed research studies for better understanding higher education transitions. The book should be of interest to summer session directors and administrators because much of what we do is to assist and support students through transitions in higher education. Most importantly, it presents supporting research to continue and improve existing programs while providing a platform from which to consider new programs to support students in transition.

*Review by Bill Kops
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