

Neoliberal ideology in community college mission statements: A critical discourse analysis.

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Abstract

This critical discourse analysis focuses on neoliberal discursive representations of the community college mission. The community college's role in reproducing social inequality is explained as a neoliberal discursive project in which meanings of education are reconstituted to secure the interests of the powerful. As such, the community college mission becomes defined in economic instead of democratic terms. The author calls for a counter-hegemonic discourse that represents the community college as an opportunity for emancipation.



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With more than 1,200 campuses serving nearly half of all undergraduate learners in the United States, the community college is a major institution of postsecondary education (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Conventions of the community college up to late modernity have included public support as well as commitments to teaching, open access, an identified service area, community-based programs, comprehensive programs, and learning support services (Vaughan, 1997). The community college is particularly distinct among institutions of postsecondary education in that it serves learners through a variety of programs including student services, career education, developmental education, community education, transfer and liberal education, and general education (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Another singularity of the community college is that it serves a unique student population, including high numbers of students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds; a disproportionately large share of learners who are African American, American Indian, Asian, Hispanic, and Pacific Islander; and nearly half of first-generation college students in the United States (Cohen & Brawer,

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