Abstract

Higher education institutions may find it is challenging to deliver educational programming in the global environment. In the face of declining government support, this Canadian Institution has struggled to re-invent itself by operating in a business-oriented way. With a new guiding document, the Strategic Plan, new terms appeared, such as sense of urgency, strategic priorities, and other rhetoric that revolves around the mission to be entrepreneurial.

This study used descriptive qualitative research to look at the impact of a trend in post-secondary education that might be rationalized as academic capitalism by revealing faculty and administrators’ perceptions about the role of career development and its role in educational programming. The development of dedicated educational programming that has an increasing focus on career development and/or work-integrated education was driven by predominantly economic motivations, immigration policy, and students’ needs.

The research reported on the effects of academic capitalism, entrepreneurialism, and strategic priorities in college discourse by uncovering perceptions about the role of career development that is increasingly embedded in the curriculum. Career development is a lifelong process of balancing learning, work, and personal goals and it has demonstrated a growing role within this Institution. The research draws from the theoretical framework of academic capitalism and is further informed by entrepreneurialism and resource dependency theory.

The study found that research participants defined career development in different ways for themselves as opposed to students. When referring to their own career development, participants emphasized professional development, and when referring to students, career development had the same meaning as work-integrated education. Further, participants thought that career development and/or work-integrated education were essential components that met students’ needs and created financial resources for the college. Participants believed career development should be threaded throughout all curriculum in subject-specific ways.

Six emergent themes were identified in the data and these influenced the creation of the implications for policy and practice, and recommendations that followed.
Keywords: Academic Capitalism; Career Development; Entrepreneurialism; Internationalization; Resource Dependency; Strategic Plan