

Human Capital Discourse and Higher Education Policy

Authors : Tien-Hui Chiang

Abstract : Human capital discourse encourages many countries to expand the capacity of HEIs. Along with this expansion, the higher education system is redefined as a free market and in turn it is privatized and commercialized. However, the state's role in education is to balance social justice and capital accumulation. This role is further regulated by a specific form of neoliberalism constituted by social contexts. These correlations call for exploring the influence of human capital discourse on interwoven issues, such as the state's role in education, higher education policy, and employability. Method: According to the perspective of neoliberal governmentality, answers to the above four research questions are likely to be embedded within discourses in documents related to higher education policies. Consequently, this study adopts a qualitative approach by analyzing official documents, including government reports, official statistics, circulars and official statements. Documents were collected and subjected to content analysis, with a particular focus on the period from 2005 to 2021. The technique of content analysis was applied to decode keywords and core concepts of these documents. Findings: Neoliberalism is exerted through human capital discourse in China particularly in the changes in higher education policies moving from quantitative expansion to quality control via employment or employability. Such changes highlight that the principle of "neoliberalism is more suitable for illustrating the practice of free market logic in different social contexts. The modifications of neoliberalism adopted by the Chinese government reflect that the state's mission is to secure social security or the common good, so that public managerialism - in the form of programs for employment, internship and entrepreneurship - is adopted in the name of the public interest and the collective mission. Public managerialism now is not only targeted towards social institutions but the population more generally, incarnated here by college graduates. Its practice is not only to renovate organizational cultures but to activate people's commitment to national development.

Keywords : employability, higher education expansion, neoliberalism, human capital discourse

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