

12.7.2025

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**Title**

Policy discourses and changing practice : diversity and the university-college

**Publication year**

2005

**Source/Footnote**

In: Higher education. - 50 (2005) 1, S. 129 - 157

**Inventory number**

19600

**Keywords**

Ausland : Kanada : einzelne Hochschulen ; Hochschule und Staat : allgemein ; Hochschulreform : allgemein

**Abstract**

This study reports the results of research with respect to policy and diversity, as part of a larger case study of a Canadian university-college. The study details an examination of policy discourses as a vehicle for institutional change and provides insights into the everyday experiences of educators, their perspectives on policy and change, and the contested territory of diversity (i.e., race, gender, class, disability, and sexual orientation) in an institution. The paper begins by considering the university-college and the context of the college and institute system in Canada. The paper briefly reviews state policy and the context that state public policy provides in principles of valuing diversity. Policy discourses were generated from the narratives of educators, from an institutional committee and from 'outsiders' to committee processes and to the institutional culture. Drawing from narrative auto/biographies (Gluck, S.B. and Patai, D., Women's Words: the Feminist Practice of Oral History. London: Routledge, 1991; Stanley, L., The Auto/biographical I. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992; West, L., Beyond Fragments. London: Taylor and Francis, 1996), policy stories are

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presented which illuminate the contention surrounding policy, practice and institutional change. A discourse of fairness is discussed in relation to hiring practices and how the perception of fairness actually contributes to the practice of discrimination. Discursive power relations (Foucault, M., Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972?1977. London: Harvester Press, 1980; Smith, D., The Conceptual Practices of Power. Toronto: University of Toronto, 1990) are considered in interpreting these stories and reveal the complex, competing forces affecting individuals engaged in the change process. The paper concludes by identifying a number of factors that contribute to the hindrance and advancement of the goals of diversity within an educational institution. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)