

Problematizing the entrepreneurial leadership discourse

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This paper treats entrepreneurship as a policy discourse which focuses attention on the modes of subjectivity made available to school leaders under conditions of neoliberal governmentality. In keeping with the language and practices of business, being entrepreneurial is interpreted as shifting responsibility away from the state in order to posit the creativity, agility and shrewdness of individuals as a solution to gaining the best share of resources in austere times. Translated to schools, the discourse of entrepreneurship responds to, and supports, established discursive registers of competition, choice and performativity and, I contend, is most obviously embodied in expectations about the demeanor, conduct and priorities of school leaders as some struggle to fit, and others eagerly embrace, the subject position of entrepreneurial leader.

The explanatory value of a policy as discourse approach is highlighted in the consideration of entrepreneurship as a programmable reality that formulates the entrepreneurial leader as part of a rational solution to a perceived problem amongst parent/consumers of a shortage of 'good' schools, and as an in-school solution to securing more student enrolments ---- especially 'good' enrolments – in order to keep the school viable. Under the discursive influence of entrepreneurship, the social functions of schooling become divided spaces of comparison, viability, individual responsibility and enterprise, demanding entrepreneurial virtues and behaviours of school leaders that are both constitutive and deeply affecting.