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A different drum: The forgotten tradition of the military academy in American education

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate little known and often neglected category of American education, the articulated military school and junior college.;Kemper Military School and College was chosen as the representative institution studied for several reasons: it has remained in almost continuous operation since its founding in 1844 at the height of the academy movement; it specialized as a military school in 1885 when the popularity of general academies began to wane; during the 1920s, it seized upon the rapid growth of the early junior college movement to expand in size and scope; and it was subsequently recognized by the American Council on Education for its attempts to integrate secondary and junior college studies.;It was hypothesized that although traditional academies had all but vanished and public community colleges had diverted significantly from the original junior college purpose, the articulated military school and junior college could have maintained a fidelity to the original missions of both. If this were true, then these schools would exhibit strong ties to their nineteenth century academy foundations, a demonstrated commitment to the original junior college philosophy, and a visible entwining of the secondary school and junior college.;Three overlapping qualitative techniques--documentary review, field observation, and personal interview--were used to conduct the study. Resulting field notes, interview transcripts, and documentary evidence were then melded to provide a comprehensive historical analysis and an answer to the research question.;It was concluded that not only had the articulated military school and college maintained a fidelity to the original academy and junior college philosophies, but that these philosophies well serve current constituents. Such a finding suggests that other unique or forgotten institutions, ignored by researchers in favor of more current or fashionable models, might be every bit as enlightening and worthy of study as those of the educational mainstream.

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