(Post)Modern Asymmetry: Calibrating the Adult Education Philosophy and Practices of Faculty Teaching Interdisciplinary Studies in the Community College

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Abstract
In adult education, the term interdisciplinarity is often treated as an agent for transforming teaching, learning, and research. This appreciation of the concept proliferates despite the fact that its actualization often supports competing interpretations and practices. Many adult educators are unaware of the distinctions made among instrumental, conceptual, and critical interdisciplinarity and the philosophical traditions employed to legitimate their different trajectories. To address these concerns and others, scholars such as Lisa Lattuca have advanced a postmodern conceptualization of interdisciplinarity and introduced a supporting theoretical framework to clarify its character and modes of operation. However, Lattuca omitted community college faculty from the 2001 study that inspired her paradigm. She also undervalued the asymmetry of power in the postmodern logic used to substantiate its theoretical underpinnings. For some, this delimitation is at odds with the democratic ethos and inclusive rhetoric that postmodernists value and many conceptual and critical interdisciplinarians champion. To address these concerns in Lattuca's innovation, this case study used a mixed methods approach to reveal the ways that faculty members at a large community college in the Midwest contribute to interdisciplinary education and enrich postmodern interdisciplinarity. The findings from the study revealed how the faculty participants’ philosophy of adult education and practices correlated and how they supported instrumental, conceptual, or critical interdisciplinarity and their interstices. Also, the study revealed the significant ways in which the faculty participants’ praxis signaled the asymmetry of power in higher education and beyond. For future consideration, the author introduced Foucauldian architectonics, a postulation on the simultaneity of differences and power, as the kind of postmodern interdisciplinary additive that novice and seasoned adult educators can use to (re)develop their philosophies of education and (re)calibrate their practices as subjects and agents of disciplinarity.

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