

An Emancipatory Role of Adult Education and Learning within a Poststructuralist Approach

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An emancipatory role of adult education and learning within a poststructuralist approach?

Focus of the paper

In the paper I will discuss the possibility of an emancipatory role or influence of teaching based on poststructuralist insights. The discussion can be divided into two parts.

First, can emancipation at all be encompassed in a poststructuralist perspective? Some may argue that any claim in this direction is an illusion, because the 'self' to be emancipated inevitably will shade into an essential 'self', which is incompatible with the poststructuralist perspective. I will argue that some kind of emancipation is possible within a poststructuralist perspective.

Following up on the argumentation I will discuss how poststructuralist theory may provide a frame within which students, teachers etc. can develop an awareness of the constitutive forces of discourses and thereby perhaps develop a strategy for reflection on the discourses mobilized in their particular setting.

The paper will include a theoretical discussion and examples from an educational setting.

Outline of the paper

First the paper will address the concept of agency and the notion of 'a poststructuralist self' in relation to 'the humanist self'. This part will encompass a focus on the constitutive power of discourses, and I will draw on theoreticians as Michel Foucault, Emmanuel Kant and Bronwyn Davies.

Next, one or two examples from the vocational training, the dual system in Denmark, will be presented, and constructions will be made about the consequences for the students of the different constituting forces within the school setting and the work place setting. I will suggest that an embedded perception of the self as essential may sustain the actual discourses.

Finally, I will argue that a poststructuralist understanding of the self may offer another perspective of development and I will discuss how the students in the vocational system (the examples) may achieve a capacity to recognize (some of) the constitutive forces within the two settings. Such a consciousness will be assessed as a kind of personal –non-normative– emancipation.

The content of the paper is part of my PhD project in progress. The project is within *The Basic Social and Health Education Programmes* in Denmark, which are part of the Danish system of vocational education and training, a dual system. The project began in June 2009 and will be finished in May 2012. The focus of the project is the students' learning processes and the correlation between the theoretical courses and the traineeships.