



Reimagining Doctoral Education as Adult Education (New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, Number 147)

Heaney, Tom; and Ramdeholl, Dianne, eds.
Wiley, John & Sons, Inc., 2015

Book Review

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This book answers the question “Why not?” to Robert Smith’s (professor of adult education in the doctoral program at Northern Illinois University) statement, “Higher education is not adult education” (1). There are nine chapters by contributors who place importance on adult education as a collaborative methodology within a doctoral program. Each contributor reflects on their own principles and practices for reimagining doctoral study for adult educators, faculty, and administrators within higher education. Many of the contributors give real life experiences either as faculty or students of a doctoral program at National Louis University.

Tom Heaney (Chapter 1) shares how the cohort-based program provides a space for doctoral students to critically reflect as a group, take control of their own learning, and assume ownership of the curriculum for which they can negotiate with faculty. He views democracy within a doctoral program as “unleashing the power of we” which allows the students see themselves as agents of change through the collective voice of intellectual discourse. Building a democratic forum is not an easy task, but it requires trust, discipline, and confidence among doctoral students and faculty (11).

Stephen Brookfield (Chapter 2) notes that there are four lenses through which practitioners within education view their thinking and actions: student’s eyes, colleagues’ perceptions, theory, and autobiographical experiences. He emphasizes that professors and instructors need to get into the habit of stating out loud the reasons why they are doing what they do: readings, participation in class, order of curriculum, and the evaluative process (17-18).

Nadira K. Charaniya and Jane West Walsh (Chapter 5) reflect on their experience as doctoral students and how collaborative learning partnerships were central to their peer relationships. They recall five outcomes: (1) deep trust and respect, (2) the conscious selection of one another as learning partners, (3) mutual striving toward common goals, (4) different but complementary personality traits, and (5) the development of synergy (49). They include a detailed case of their own journey as collaborative research partners where they created the Collaborative Inquiry Metaphor Creation and Analysis Method (CIMCAM) which involves the use of metaphor analysis as a research analysis. They share through a graphic representation the five steps to their research methodology (53) as well as focused group dialogue of the visual metaphor process. The outcome is the shift of power between research facilitators and participants as a means of collaborative co-construction of knowledge (56).

The volume is an easy read. Each chapter could provide insight for doctoral programs in any discipline. It could also be a useful resource within a school of theology even though the focus of the book is a doctoral program at a private non-profit higher education institution. The authors explore the question of why it is important to reimagine doctoral education as adult education. In the introduction the editor claims, "An obvious goal of adult learners is to find their own voice, to be heard in rational discourse with their peers, and to gain control over the day-to-day decisions that affect their lives" (5). The book underscores the point that collaborative learning within a doctoral program is central to adult education.

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