

Re-Considering the Epistemology of Student Engagement in Higher Education

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Student engagement in higher education as part of a democratic and sustainable education system that goes beyond neo-liberal groundings. In our exploration, we mainly draw on the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and his co-writers Felix Guattari and Claire Parnet. Student engagement is perceived as an important factor in quality measurements – a trend that can be connected to the neoliberal marketization focusing on performance, individualization, competition, goal-rationality, and linear progression. This neo-liberal agenda produces new demands on education, changing students' and teachers' possibilities for acting and becoming within higher education. In addition, certain theories are prioritized that lead to narrowed and limited epistemologies for higher education and thus student engagement.

Deleuze's thinking challenges linearity and dualistic views of subject/object and process/product by emphasizing becoming, as well as appreciating multiplicities and the unpredictable; what has not yet come into being. When "doing" Deleuze in teacher education, we consider 'pedagogical relations' to involve both human and non-human relations – assemblages that are both intercorporeal and entangled. Such assemblages open, according to Deleuze, to a rhizomatic thinking about learning, where events are created that bear possibilities for all actors involved to become "multiple others" for a while. These processes of becoming run through ongoing affective, entangled, and moving relationships and modes of existence.

We will attempt to reconsider the epistemology of student engagement, challenge structures, power-relations, and epistemological pre-assumptions in higher education by creating disruptions, openings, and lines of flight.