

Seeking conditions of possibility: conceptualizing the space for democratic discursive practices in adult education programme processes

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“democratic hegemony is what reveals the nature of hegemony as such; and it is only with democratic hegemony that the full extent of the hegemonic relation can be historically recognised”. (Laclau 1996: 48)

Abstract

I draw on an ethnographic based research study of gendered communication practices related to land ownership and adult education programme practice, in one village in Uttaranchal (India), in order to (re)conceptualize the space for democratic discursive practices in adult education programme processes. Through ethnographic accounts I explore the (im)possible experience of hearing the Other as a need for self-deconstruction in adult education programme processes. This I claim may open spaces for hearing and acknowledging the voices and silences of gendered adult education subjects speaking for themselves within adult education programme processes. I construct the ‘ideal’ adult education programme as an ‘empty signifier’ (Laclau 1989) in order to create spaces for officially recognising conflict and strategically creating consensus within adult education programme processes. The concept of the empty signifier enables me to move beyond discursive practices framing adult education processes as ‘bottom-up’ learner centred adult education programmes. I argue that such conceptualisations of adult education programmes create closure and silence around the discursive practices which reveal that any democratic process for adult education programmes does not transcend hegemonic discursive practices. I claim that it is only through the recognition of hegemony, within democratic adult education programme processes, that hegemonic relations can be transformed.

References

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