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Student participation in Business Education: A backwards agency

CARLA CAMPANA

ESCOLA DE ADMINISTRAÇÃO DE EMPRESAS DE SÃO PAULO (FGV-EAESP)

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Introdução

The world has experienced a transformation in the ways information is produced, accessed, and stored, aggravating the multidimensional crisis in higher education institutions. The erosion of purely transmissive pedagogical practices invited to debate other theories and practices that promote active participation of students. Research in business education demonstrates that there is an incentive to increase student participation, but the theoretical definitions are imprecise and the operational limits have not been fully explored, besides studies about agency in higher education are scarce.

Problema de Pesquisa e Objetivo

In order to help close this gap, this paper aims to understand how student agency happens in business education by analyzing and comparing the discourse and the practice of educational experiences based on active participation of students in business courses.

Fundamentação Teórica

The conceptual framework addresses educational practices based on active participation of students, including relevant works in Business Education; also defines student agency and positions it theoretically as a dimension of Student-Centered Learning. Finally, explores actions performed by or expected from students mapped on literature.

Metodologia

The research was qualitative and the information set was textual, formed by 23 reports by representatives of higher education institutions, produced with the intent of winning an award in teaching/learning innovation and the transcripts of four semi-structured interviews with the coordinators of the three best-evaluated initiatives and with the coordinator of the prize itself. For the constructivist analysis, the text was examined in search of empirical excerpts that contributed to achieve the research objective, which resulted in the construction of categories.

Análise dos Resultados

The articulation between theory and categorized empirical data made it possible to achieve the research objective. The results showed that: (1) there is a mismatch between the discourse and the actions of educational institutions and (2) there are misconceptions about the meaning of student agency in relation to practical activities and student engagement. A third conclusion corroborates existing studies, confirming the lack of theoretical rigor in projects that aim to promote active student participation.

Conclusão

The mismatch between theory and practice, the mistaken definitions, and the lack of conceptual rigor can conduce pedagogical initiatives to discredit, since closer examination may reveal the emergence of a backwards agency: in spite of professing to encourage and promote active student participation, the actions undertaken by educational institutions were modest in relation to the possibilities of agency already outlined in studies about higher education outside of the business field.

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