

Adult Learning Choice Making: What I Found

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Adult Learning Choice Making embodies three key ideas:. Firstly, that adult education has unique characteristics that include a separation between formal education paths and multiple options for learning (including degrees of formality and styles of engagement); secondly, that education and learning follow individual experiences of understanding, empowerment, selection and engagement by the adult before learning is apparent; and thirdly, that choice making is also a complex amalgam of contexts and perspectives that needs careful unwrapping beyond theories of choice, decision and preference. The project includes two years of data gathering through up to three interviews per participant, as well as the sharing of transcripts and visual representations via the semiotically inspired and researcher developed Learning Choice Tracker, to enhance improved understanding for the participant, PhD researcher and other readers. This multi year project includes three key findings. Firstly, that the context of how adults choose to engage in learning is complicated and often not understood by the adult without timely reflection and reconsideration. Secondly, that the policy positions and institution offerings are framed in ways that are quite disconnected from the ways in which adults make their learning choices. Thirdly, that the consideration of complex data that arises from multiple interviews can be enhanced when data is presented in visual ways to improve the developing understanding of both researchers and participants. I conclude with a discussion about how the Learning Choice Tracker can be used as a practitioner tool, or as a means to enhance other types of research.

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