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Abstract

Student engagement has been widely hailed as the solution to all that ails higher education but there is little agreement on the meaning or ambit of the term. Similarly, literature concerning 'non-traditional' students is characterised by a multiplicity of meanings and assumptions, seldom spelled out, ascribed to the term, which is nonetheless imbued with analytical and predictive significance. This paper uses data from early stages of the research to illustrate the importance of conceptual clarity in a study of engaging non-traditional students, illuminated through the lens of the Marxian notion of 'chaotic conceptions'. The paper examines the ideological work being done in disguising interests and inequities through the use of chaotic conceptions and uses the examples of students who define themselves as 'non-traditional' in their own study contexts to illustrate the problems of deploying such chaotic conceptions for purposes beyond description. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)