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Abstract

Educational guidance is often seen as something good and empowering for the individual. In this article, such taken-for-granted ideas will be destabilised by analysing educational guidance as a practice in which confession operates as a technology which fosters and governs specific subjectivities. White papers produced by the Swedish Ministry of Education will be analysed drawing on Foucault's concepts of technologies of the self and governmentality. I will argue that the practice of educational guidance fosters our will to learn through the technology of confession. We are not only confessing ourselves to, and are the confessors of others, we are also our own confessors, i.e. we confess our inner desires to ourselves, thus participating in shaping desirable subjectivities. Our desires in life coincide with the political ambition to govern, thus we govern ourselves.

Introduction

In contemporary society, there seems to be a need for people to constantly confess to others. We confess our inner desires to our loved ones, our friends, psychologists, educational counsellors, etc. Such need is encouraged by newspapers that publish articles on how to have a good sex life, how we should be open to our friends about our desires in life. In reality shows, we are exposed to 'regular' people who constantly express (confess) their desires to the television audience. Such a 'will' to confess could be analysed in several ways, for example, by trying to understand why people confess in this way, or by analysing how effective such practices are. But my interest is different. I want to problematise such practices of confession as part of specific ways of reasoning about governance, and to make visible what desirable subjectivities are shaped through such practices.

My focus is on how confession operates in the discourses of lifelong learning, and more specifically in the practice of educational guidance. Such a task is an important one as guidance is promoted almost everywhere as part of the solution of future challenges in society, for example, in the European Union (European Commission 2001) or in Sweden as analyzed in this article. In such narratives, guidance is seen as something positive which will help people to free themselves from constraint. This article aims at destabilising such taken-for-granted assumptions by deconstructing them, to show how the very freedom we take for granted is the basis for governing. To do so, I will analyse and describe the discursive practice of confession (as operating in practices of educational guidance) and what desirable subjectivities are shaped through such practice based on Foucault's conceptions of technologies of the self and governmentality (Foucault 2003a). This means that questions of the effectiveness of such practices are outside the frames of the analysis. [1]

Researching discourses of lifelong learning using tools from the Foucauldian toolbox has increased in the last few years. Several different approaches have been present, e.g. governmentality analyses (e.g. Edwards 2002; Fejes 2006; Fejes and Nicoll 2008; Masschelein 2004), and genealogical historicising analyses (e.g. Fejes 2006; Popkewitz et al. 2006; Simons 2006). Tools from Foucault have also been used when analysing practices of counselling and guidance (I will use guidance and counselling synonymously in this article). A special issue of the *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling* focuses on guidance and

counselling drawing on Foucault (Besley and Edwards 2005). For example, Usher and Edwards (2005) analyse how one can understand educational guidance using Foucault and actor network theory. The focus is on how a subject is mobilised and stabilised through the humanistic discourse of guidance. In this article, I take a somewhat different approach, focusing on what desirable subjectivities are fostered through the technology of confession and what rationality of governing such practices is constructed by and constructs. [2]

Analytical strategy

Opening one's self to public scrutiny in the practice of confession as described in the introduction is not new. As Foucault (2005) reminds us, confession has been part of different historical practices at least since Antiquity. However, the ways these practices operate has shifted. Previously, one had to renounce one's self so as to be able to take care of the self. Today, such renunciation of the self is not necessary. Instead, we construct knowledge about ourselves through verbalization of our self. Such ideas can be related to Foucault's (2003b) concept of pastoral power. Such power emerged with Christianity, and the aim was to secure individual salvation in the next world. Pastoral power, in contrast to royal power, is prepared to be sacrificed for the salvation of the flock and it does not only look after the community but also each individual. Further, pastoral power cannot be exercised without knowing the soul and the innermost secrets of each individual. Thus, pastoral power is salvation oriented and individualizing - it produces the truth about the individual.

Confession as a technology emerged during Foucault's later writings, together with the concept of governmentality, as a way to avoid too much emphasis on domination and power in his research. Thus, he shifted his focus to the interrelationship between the technologies of domination and the technologies of the self (Foucault 2003d). Governmentality focuses on the way the population and the individual citizen are being governed. The concept covers "the whole range of practices that constitute, define, organize, and instrumentalize the strategies that individuals in their freedom can use in dealing with each other" (Foucault 2003c, 41).

More specifically, what is analysed in a governmentality analysis are liberal rationalities of governing. Usually, we reason about liberalism and neo-liberalism in terms of political ideologies, political parties or as economic theories. However, liberalism can also refer to governmentality as it does here (as the broad mentality of how governing is problematised at a particular time). One could say that liberalism is a mode of governing. The notion of governmentality allows us to consider liberal mentalities – rationalities – of governing. Today, in a time of neoliberal governmentality, we can see how governing is practised through alliances between different authorities, which seek to regulate the economy, social life and the life of the individual (Hultqvist and Petersson 1995) as a contrast to the natural and spontaneous order of Hayekian liberalism (Peters 2001). Thus, freedom has been reconceptualised. Now, we are defined as autonomous and active individuals who seek self-realisation in the name of freedom. Neo-liberalism thus constitutes a particular relationship between government and the governed. The governed are subjects of their own lives who practice freedom as a form of self-governance (Burchell 1996). One could say that neo-liberalism promotes a specific form of 'freedom' as a way of integrating the self-conduct of the governed into the practices of government. Freedom has become a resource for government, where the citizens' expression of their 'freedom' coincides with the political ambition to govern – 'freedom' has become both the instrument and the effect of governing.

Governing is conducted through different technologies, which aim to intensify the relation between institutional demands and institutionalised subjectivity. A technology refers to a set of ideas, which forms the basis for creating specific subjectivities and it relies on knowledge production about the object it targets. Based on a technology, different techniques are developed in order to foster the desirable subjectivity (Foucault 2003d). In this article, the focus will be on the technology of confession and how it operates in the practice of educational counselling. In such an analysis subjects are not seen as *a priori* entities with specific characteristics and agency. Instead, in line with Foucault (2003b), the subject is decentred and analyzed as being shaped in specific ways in different historical practices. Thus, instead of studying subjects as agents (*a priori*), the focus is on studying the specific historical practices, the discourses (lifelong learning, for example) produced by and producing these practices and what different subject positions are constituted through them. In a decentring of the idea of the unified, coherent self, there is potential for a multiplicity of subjectivities, multiple and partial uptakes, constraints and elisions.

Although confession is a global western practice, I have chosen to focus on Swedish policy documents as an illustration of how such a global practice operates in a specific cultural practice. This article is part of a larger research project focused on educational policy and how such practice produces, shapes and fosters subjectivity, and how such governing discursively is constructed (see e.g. Andersson and Fejes 2005; Fejes 2006; 2008). The empirical basis for the project consists of 30 governmental White Papers produced by the Swedish Ministry of Education. The White Papers are between 80 and 600 pages long with an average of approximately 300 pages each. However, in this specific article four of these papers have been focused on in the analysis. Three of them are concerned with adult education and educational guidance and one is specifically concerned with career guidance. By paying special attention to these four white papers, I will be able to problematize how the lifelong learner discursively is constructed through practices of confession in the present time. As a way of being able to perspectivise and historicise guidance, three of these papers are from the last decade, and one is from the mid 20th century. White papers are assigned a central position in the discourse of political decision making in Sweden (Johansson 1992), I believe they are a good starting point for analysing how educational guidance as confession operates in the discourse of lifelong learning today. The discourse analysis has focused on mapping out central concepts and themes in relation to questions such as: what subjectivity is constructed as desirable, how is such subjectivity being shaped (confession), and what programmes of governing are such constructions part of?

In the next section, I will illustrate how educational guidance is part of a grid of intelligibility of what is possible to say about the learning citizen. I will illustrate how guidance operates in order to shape an active and constantly learning subject who is positioned as a learner whose learning is never finished. In the second section, I will illustrate how the relation between the adult learner and the educational counsellor is differently construed today than was the case 50 years ago. Thirdly, I will illustrate how confession today is a practice in which one is fabricated as both the confessor and the one making the confession, and how one becomes one's own confessor.

Educational guidance as a way to foster our will to learn

Educational guidance is a central part of the discourse of lifelong learning in Sweden today, especially when promoted in relation to adult education. There are ideas about the adult as an entrepreneur who should choose education by him/herself. Not only what to study but also

when to study, where to study, how to study, etc. To make such a position possible, guidance is provided as a support for the adult (Ministry of Education 2003).

As we can see in the quotation below, guidance is seen as even more important today since the pace of change in society and the labour market is increasing, according to the text. Thus, it becomes even more complicated to make one's choices. The lifelong learners need to be supported in their choices in such a complex world.

In the Knowledge society, educational and vocational choices are more complex and there are more alternatives. As a consequence of the rapid changes taking place in the labour market and the social life, the need for qualified guidance increases, not the least as a way to counter the tendency of increased gaps in knowledge between individuals and groups in society. The changes and the diversity developing in the labour and educational markets have consequences for the individual. The possible choices to make have increased and they have become more important at the same time as they are even more difficult to make for both youths and adults. The individual needs to develop a good self-knowledge and a broad knowledge about the world. This has to be combined with strategies for learning how to handle oneself in a changing world. Depending on target group and organization, guidance differs, but the aim is the same; to support the individual to make decisive decisions concerning their educational and vocational direction. (Ministry of Education 2003, 39)

As can be seen, the adult who is to meet the changing and more complex future is one who has a good and broad knowledge about the world. Such knowledge is more or less necessary if one is to handle the future and live a good life. However, such knowledge needs to be combined with a good knowledge about oneself and of how one can manage in the changing world. Educational counselling is provided as a support for the individual in making decisive decisions in life.

Here, we have several ideas operating in order to create a taken-for-granted interpretation of how the world is constituted. First, we have an idea about the future which is constantly changing. In several passages in the documents analysed, threats in the future are articulated – a risk that Sweden and Europe will not be able to be the leading nation/continent in the world (Fejes 2006). In such narratives, the future is, according to Petersson et al. (2007), a spatial instead of a temporal concept. The future is not something that is 'in the future'. Instead, the future is already here. Thus, one could say that an idea about the future, which is already here, operates so as to legitimate certain measures and goals – to govern in the name of the future. Secondly, there is an idea that the world of today is a more complex one than was previously the case, thus there is a need for citizens with specific characteristics. Both these ideas operate so as to legitimate the construction of a citizen who can handle a changing future. In the quotation above, such a construction can be seen in the idea that everyone needs to create knowledge about him/herself and about the world as a way of handling change, with the support of a counsellor.

Here, we have a confessional practice operating. In the confessional relation, the one making the confession is enfolded in power as he/she becomes subject to the authoritative discourse of the confessor. Through such a relation, knowledge about the lifelong learner is created at the same time as the lifelong learner is fabricated. To acknowledge the confessional practices means that you also acknowledge the legitimacy of such practice. Thus, the learner being guided has accepted being positioned as a specific kind of learner – one who constantly learns and whose learning is never finished (Edwards 2008). The output of such a confessional practice is an autonomous, self-choosing, self-regulating adult who takes responsibility for her/his own life as illustrated by the following quotation.

Guidance is synonymous to possibilities. Guidance should provide the individual... with tools which makes it possible for them to influence and take responsibility for their development and competencies in education and work. The starting point for career guidance is the intrinsic forces and dreams of the individual. The individual should be the bearer of her/his own career process. This responsibility is... important in order to strengthen one's self-esteem and a belief in one's own aptitude for development. (Ministry of Education 2001, 109)

Through guidance, the will to learn is being fostered. The adult is being fabricated as one who wants to learn as a way to face the changing future. Adults are responsible for the development of their own competencies and the bearers of their own career process. What we see is an individualisation of responsibilities in relation to educationally related activities, which is argued to be good for the self-esteem of the individual. It is the whole person who is the target of intervention through guidance. Such ideas are influenced by a humanistic discourse (humanistic psychology) where practices of guidance present possible choices for the individual, choices which are seen as more democratic and empowering than was the case before. By making well-grounded choices, your expressions or the self are seen as more 'authentic' (Usher and Edwards 2005). As Usher and Edwards (2005, 398) argue:

Here therapeutic notions of the importance of feelings to the authentic all round expression of self are translated into educational discourses and practices where self-development and self-realisation become framed as a central normative goal.

Using a Foucauldian perspective, such a development is not seen as more humane or more empowering than something else. The regulatory side of power has not diminished; instead, it has taken on new forms where it works through the desires and choices of each citizen. What we see is a specific set of power relations that define the adult in a certain way. In this case, the adult is one who should be autonomous, self-choosing, self-regulating and responsible for her/his own future. Through such choices, you become the desirable citizen who is seen as more authentic. However, the power relations also define what is not acceptable. If you do not take care of yourself and become what is desirable, you will be excluded. You will be the one who is in need of correction and therapeutic intervention.

Changing relations between the lifelong learner and the educational counsellor

If we focus on the relation between the lifelong learner and the educational counsellor, there are several different tactics which all work upon the subjectivity of the adult so as to foster the will to learn. Such tactics are historically related to the political ambition to govern. In this section I will illustrate how the tactics of contemporary discourses, such as dialogue pedagogy and the individual study plan, shape other kinds of subjectivities than was previously the case.

If we trace the idea of educational guidance back in time, we can see how there is a construction of a talented/gifted adult with an inner essence in documents from the mid 20th century. The goal in life is for everyone to follow what their inner essence foretells. If one follows the inner essence, there is a promise of satisfaction.

The individual who finds a place in life where he best can use his talent and other resources, will achieve a sense of satisfaction. This is also in the interest of society since the individual can then be expected to make a greater effort in his work. (Ministry of Education 1952, 14)

The white paper further argues that by means of a board of exemption, the talented adults can be distinguished through intelligence tests and interviews (Ministry of Education 1952). Such

discourse on the talented adult was related to major research projects in Sweden from the late 1940s to the early 1960s on the reserve of talent. Through intelligence tests on conscripts intelligence and by analysing their school grades, calculations were made of how many people in the Swedish population had not reached the level of education that matched their intelligence – these persons were categorised as the reserve of talent (e.g. Husén 1948; Härnqvist 1958). Thus, the adults defined by the board of exemption as being part of the reserve of talent were offered the opportunity to study, while others were not.

In such a practice, educational and vocational guidance was present and justified, based on the knowledge that adults may feel insecure when they are confronted with the thought of studying in adult life. According to the white paper, they might have difficulties in estimating their own qualifications. Consequently, they should be supported by some kind of educational guidance (Ministry of Education 1952).

In the proclamation of 30th September, 1947, concerning the public employment office (no. 983), it is stated that vocational guidance should be available at the public employment office, with the task of giving the general public advice and information on choice of profession and educational issues and in other ways [offering] suitable measures for promoting the individual's vocational training and adaptation to a profession. (Ministry of Education 1952, 136)

Here, guidance is defined as providing advice and information on study opportunities and vocational career paths. If we relate this to the way the adult is constructed as talented/not talented, guidance is part of the process in which such subjectivity is fostered. Through a board of exemption and its associated tests, and through the process of guidance, the aim and hope is to get the individual to find the place in life which corresponds to her/his potential. Further, such a definition of guidance discursively constructs a passive subject. Firstly, the adult is defined as talented/not talented through different tests and secondly, she/he is provided with information on what is a suitable path to choose in life based on the results of these tests. Thirdly, the adult not defined as talented is excluded from studying. Here, guidance seems to represent more of a one-way communication than a two-way communication. The subject is not fostered as an active subject who governs her/himself. What we see is a 'visible' [3] kind of governing operating in the discourse, where the counsellor and the board of exemption are construed as the 'state's' representatives in the local practice. They participate in the construction of the desirable subject by carrying out the tests and, based on these, deciding who should study or not.

If we turn to documents from the present time, we can see how guidance is defined as something else than previously and thus shaping other kinds of subjectivities. In the following quotation, we can see how the idea of dialogue is central as a way of satisfying the individuals' needs.

If the adult education initiative and lifelong learning are to be realized, adult education will have to satisfy the individual needs and be adjusted according to the individual's capabilities. Not least from a motivational point of view, it is important that the individual participates in the planning of his/her own education and is supported in taking responsibility for his/her own educational planning. A dialogue concerning their educational profile, possible opportunities for development and alternative educational organizers are an important service that the municipalities should give the citizens during the different stages of life. An individual study plan should also be a requirement for participating in the adult education initiative. (Ministry of Education 1998, 31-32)

Here, there is an emphasis on dialogue, something not part of the document from the 1950s. A two-sided relation between the counsellor and the adult is constructed where the desires of

the one being guided is important and where the dialogue-pedagogy is in use. By involving the adult in the planning of her/his studies, she/he is activated and encouraged to make visible her/his desires in life. Such an invitation is not present in the document from the 1950s, which does not mean that people in the 1950s did not have desires and wishes in life. Instead, what it means is that the desires of the one being guided is constructed as something important in the discourse produced in the policy documents from the late 1990s. In the 1950s, such a focus falls outside the discourse, which can be related to different modes of governing as argued in this article. The activation of the adult is further fostered through the individual study plan. Such a plan is created in cooperation between the adult and the counsellor, and through it, the adult's desires and wishes in life are made visible. Further, the plan also indicates a follow up. The next time the adult meet the counsellor, she/he has to show what progress has been made. By outlining a plan, the adult is on the one hand encouraged to confess her/his inner desires, and on the other, she/he knows that the plan will be evaluated. Thus, there are different governing techniques operating in relation to the study plan.

Here, we have seen how the concept of dialogue is central today. The one being guided is made active and responsible for her/his own studying and choices. Here, the educational counsellor is assigned the role of expert. Analogous to how Nikolas Rose (1999) argues, this means that the educational counsellor is present to handle the subjects' anxiety and to help them reach the goals they have set up. Educational counselling involves working on the individual's desire and will to learn. Through counselling as confession, you are transformed into a learning subject who should desire to become a constant learner. However, it is the individual him/herself who is responsible for her/his own destiny and the choices made. The counsellors are only supportive in these choices.

Concluding this excursion back in time, one could argue that there is a shift in the discourse of how to construct the relation between the one making the confession and the confessor. In the mid 20th century, the confessor was someone else who defined what paths were suitable for the adult to take in life. Today, the confessor is still someone else, but the responsibility for choices is placed in the hands of each individual. You confess to others as a way of making possible a range of choices from which you need to choose your own path.

To be the confessors of ourselves to ourselves

So far, I have argued that we confess our inner desires to the educational counsellor, thus positioning ourselves as a specific kind of learner – a learner whose learning is never finished. Such a relation, between the one making the confession and the confessor (who is someone else), is a somewhat taken-for-granted idea today, as illustrated so far. However, such relations are not only limited to the conversation between the student and the counsellor. Practices of confession (and educational counselling) are spreading into different practices in life. For example, we are also encouraged to confess about our desires and experiences concerning education to our friends and our family as illustrated in the following quotation.

There is also a need to, through dialogue, reflect about the experiences one has, and the experiences developed through studying. It can be about defining one's qualities and receiving support and encouragement to take initiatives. This part of the career process takes place in school, in the workplace and during leisure time, in family life, etc., by asking questions, seeking answers and gaining new experiences in conversations, in dialogue and in reflection with others. (Ministry of Education 2001, 106)

Here, the relation to others is emphasized, and not only to the counsellor as confessor. By reflecting about oneself with others, we make visible our inner desires as an object of knowledge production, contributing to the subjectification of ourselves. Reflection is an important concept as it focuses on the scrutiny of oneself, in this case to others. Through dialogue and reflection with others, we operate on our own subjectivity. What we see is a situation in which the scientific knowledge of experts, such as the educational counsellors, the psychologist and others, is inscribed in the everyday life of the individual.

However, in contemporary society, reflection is also encouraged in relation to oneself – one should reflect about oneself in a dialogue with oneself, thus becoming one's own confessor. We can see such constructs in relation to, for example, the method of portfolio. In one of the documents from the Ministry of Education (2001), it is argued that the method of portfolio changes the focus from teaching to individual learning. Further, it is argued that through this method the:

pupils can follow their own progress and increase their aptitude for reflection. Through the method, the strong sides of the individual are emphasized. The individual designs her/his own educational goals and takes responsibility for her/his own learning. It is important that the pupil is able to document her/his learning and her/his development. (Ministry of Education 2001, 107)

What is emphasized is the individual's aptitude to reflect about her/his own progress. Through the method of portfolio, the pupil is encouraged to take responsibility for her/his own learning – something made possible through individual reflection. Here, scientific knowledge of psychology and educational counselling are inscribed in the portfolio. Reflection is a key term, which presupposes at least two things: to reflect is to be active and through reflection a modification of behaviour is expected. Thus, reflection is a central discursive concept (idea) which discursively shapes subjectivity. Through a practice of confession in which the individual should confess her/his inner desires in a dialogue with her/himself, an active learner is constructed. Such a construction is not one of domination, but one of subjectification. Subjectivity is being shaped and fostered in a situation of 'freedom', where the individual is encouraged to make choices of actions based on reflection. One should work upon one's self as a way of reaching one's goals in life. Thus, a new subjectivity is being shaped, one who not only is responsible for fulfilling her/his desires in life, but also the one who supports her/himself in such an enterprise.

To confess, there is a need to have someone to confess to. If we look at the discourses of lifelong learning today, several techniques of confession operate, not only related to educational practices. They could, for example, also be located outside education in practices such as CVs or appraisal interviews. By writing a CV or participating in an appraisal interview, you should promote yourself in relation to someone else (a potential employer). Thus, there is someone you should confess to, who participates in shaping specific subjectivities. Such a conclusion is common in research where practices of confession are focused on (cf. Fogde 2008; Krejsler 2007; Usher and Edwards 2005). In my analysis, I have illustrated how, besides confessing to others there are also confessional practices in which one is one's own confessor. Besides the practices analysed in this article, this kind of self-confession operates, for example, in the ubiquitous use of journals, diaries and e-portfolios in different teaching practices (for more examples, see Chappell et al. 2003). One could even see the production of the self as a "self as port-folio" (O'Flynn and Bendix Petersen 2007). Thus, what we see today is how the individualised, autonomous lifelong learner has become responsible for creating and enacting expertise knowledge on her or himself.

We can relate such reasoning to the changing role of the state in contemporary society. As illustrated in the previous section, the educational counsellors can be seen as the state's representatives in the local practice. Thus, governing is to some extent made 'visible'. The board of exemption decided who should study and who should not. But today, the role of the educational counsellor has changed. In one instance, the counsellors have a supporting role. But most notably, now each and everyone are to be their own counsellors, thus governing is less 'visible' than before. As Nikolas Rose (1999) argues, governing has distanced itself from the governing practice. By making our own choices in the name of 'freedom' we are governing ourselves – everyone has become the state's representatives in the local practice. What are seen as non-political bodies (our own choices) are dependent on the political bodies and norms set up. In this case, such norms are related to the idea of 'freedom' in a market of choices. Therefore, our desires in life coincide with the political ambition to govern. Thus, there is not less governing than before, instead governing has taken on new forms. The role of the educational counsellors as the state's representatives in the local practice has turned into self-management.

Concluding remarks

My analysis has focused on analysing and describing the technology of confession in educational guidance and the discursive work such technology does in shaping desirable subjects. I have argued that practices of confession are spreading across many different practices, which can be linked to changes in how governing should be practiced. By historicising educational guidance, I make visible how guidance today is linked to an idea of the individual being an active partner in the process. Dialogue pedagogy operates as a technique, which should shape active, self-regulating, responsible individuals. Through the technology of confession, the adult is shaped and positioned as a learner whose learning is never finished. Such a construct can be related to rationalities of governing in contemporary society. Today, governing should be practised through the free and active choices of each citizen – a rationality called advanced liberalism by Nikolas Rose (1999). Such rationality is dependent on the very notion of 'freedom' where the political ambition to govern coincides with the active and free choices of each individual.

I have also pointed to how the role of the counsellors, as the state's representatives in the local practice, is still part of the discourses. But instead of the counsellor only being someone else, we have now also become the counsellors of ourselves. By confessing our desires to ourselves through reflection and self-scrutiny, we govern ourselves. Therefore, governing has become less 'visible' than was previously the case. There is no clearly 'visible' representative in the local practice who decides who should or should not study (as in the mid 20th century). However, this does not mean that there is less governing than before. Only that governing is now done from a distance.

I think this point, that we are also our own confessors, is an important one in contemporary rationalities of governing. By confessing to ourselves, individualisation has been shaped in one of its more extreme versions. In previous governmentalities, experts were important. Today, our friends and families as experts are important. But this latter form of expertise is now also combined with us being our own experts. Such expertise, as earlier on, is dependent on the expertise knowledge construed as legitimate today. What has changed is how the knowledge of expertise is exercised.

Referring to the above, I believe the kind of discourse analysis carried out in this article is helpful. Through the analysis, taken-for-granted ideas about guidance as something good,

voluntary and ‘free’ have been destabilised. The analysis shows how power relations, which define what is desirable and not desirable, induce practices of guidance. The one doing the confession in the name of ‘freedom’ is being governed in the very act of exercising such ‘freedom’. To illustrate such operation of power, instead of engaging in a struggle for truth, we can bring out how guidance and lifelong learning come to be persuasive and powerful, and how the narrations of that which we come to take as truthful might be made to stutter or be countered. However, I do not offer any prescription for what the result of this kind of questioning might be, which some other kinds of theoretical perspectives might have given. Instead, what I have done is to present ‘exemplary criticism’ (Dean 1999, 38) instead of foundational critique. This is a normative task as I do not prescribe what the results of my questioning are (cf. Dean 1999; Fejes and Nicoll 2008). As Foucault himself stated:

My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy but to a hyper- and pessimistic activism. (Foucault 1983, 231-232)

Notes

1. Policy analysed as discourse drawing on Foucault, means that questions about policy realisation are not in focus. However, such a focus would produce other, complementary results. See, for example, Coffield et al. (2007), and Beach (1995).
2. Research on policies of lifelong learning has been a growing field of research during the last decade. See, for example, Biesta (2006), Field (2000) and Coffield (1999).
3. Here, although based on another epistemology than the one used in this article, there is a parallel to Bernstein’s distinction between visible and invisible pedagogy. According to Bernstein (2001), a visible pedagogy is based on a hierarchical relation between the teacher and the taught, and the instructional discourse is controlled by the teacher. In an invisible pedagogy, such hierarchical relations are disguised and the students seem to have considerable control over the instructional discourse. Thus, as in this article, power is in a sense not as ‘visible’ as was previously the case.

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