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What's the use of Foucault in research on lifelong learning and post-compulsory education? – a review of four academic journals

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to contribute to a discussion of what potential the use of Foucault has in relation to the field of lifelong learning and post-compulsory education. Such a discussion is based on an analysis focusing on the uses of Foucault in articles published in four academic journals in this field between 1999 and 2006. Based on a qualitative analysis, four main uses were construed: an interpretative strategy, an eclectic use, a way to pose an argument and decoration. Based on my findings, I argue that the uses of Foucault in this area of research as represented in these journals are to a large extent superficial and to some extent more in the nature of a revitalised critical discourse. Further, I argue that uses of Foucault, especially as a main interpretative strategy, help us to make visible our taken-for-granted ideas about adult education and lifelong learning; how power operates in these practices and what the effects of such operations are.

Keywords

Michel Foucault, post-compulsory education, lifelong learning

Introduction

In recent decades, ideas presented by Michel Foucault have been the subject of lively debate and discussion in the academic world, not least within the social sciences. Although Foucault became more widely recognized and used in the social sciences, it took a long time before educational scholars started to use his ideas. Today, one might think this remarkable as several of his concepts such as discipline, surveillance, technologies, etc., are extremely useful when discussing the school as an institution as well as other educational practices. Although Foucault (1991) mentioned the school as a modern institution where disciplinary power was produced and exercised, he never entered the educational area of research. Nor did educational researchers start to use his ideas more extensively until the late 1980s and early 1990s (Olssen, 2006b). One of the exceptions is Hoskin (1979, 1982), who draws on ideas from Foucault's (1991) *Discipline and punish* when analysing the prehistory of examination.

The first edited collection on the theme Foucault and education was published in 1990 (Ball, 1990) where the focus was on education and its relationship to politics, economy and history in the formation of humans as subjects. Most of the contributions draw on ideas from *Discipline and punish*, especially the idea of dividing practice; how school in many different forms divides pupils into the normal and the abnormal. After this book was published, there has been a major increase in the use of Foucault's ideas in educational research. Several edited collections on the issue have been published (for example, Popkewitz and Brennan, 1998; Baker and Heyning, 2004). A general trend can be seen where there has been a shift in interest, from the idea of subjects as objects and docile bodies to a greater interest in Foucault's later work and his interest in the modes through which the subjects are constructed by themselves (technologies of the self) and to the idea of governmentality.

If we turn our attention to the use of Foucault in studies of lifelong learning and post-compulsory education, there are several authors who, in different ways, have used his ideas. For example, Usher et al. (1997) use Foucault's concepts of governmentality, power and discipline (combined with other theoretical perspectives) when they problematize adult education practices. Brookfield (2005) uses Foucault's concept of power in one of his chapters on a book on critical theory in adult education and shortly the first edited collection focusing on uses of Foucault in studies of lifelong learning mainly drawing on Foucault's concepts of governmentality and subjectivity will be published (Fejes and Nicoll, forthcoming). These books present a wide variety of uses of Foucault, and both his earlier and later work is drawn upon.

Thus, Foucault seems to be an important figure in educational research today where he is being taken up by different academics. When a scholar and her/his work is cited and used by others, this is done in ways that might be similar and/or different to the original work. Foucault made it clear that his work should not be seen as a meta-theory, which could be applied, nor did he give any clear methodological suggestions. Instead, he wanted people to use his books as little toolboxes from which to pick ideas and use in ways they found useful (Foucault cited in Patton, 1979). Thus, there are numerous ways Foucault is being used in research which, one could say, was also encouraged by Foucault himself.

The aim of this article is to contribute to a discussion of what potential the use of Foucault has in relation to the field of lifelong learning and post-compulsory education. Such a discussion will be based on an analysis of how Foucault has been taken up in this field in the last few years. What kinds of questions have been posed using his ideas, in what ways have his ideas been used and what contribution has been made using Foucault?

How the review was carried out

As my analysis is directed at different ways Foucault has been taken up in the last few years in the fields of lifelong learning and post-compulsory education, there is a need for a rich material making it possible to present a variation of uses (Bryman, 2002). Academic journals, as one of the most common ways of publishing in academia, provide a rich material which can be analyzed as to see how Foucault is being used. Thus, in this article I have chosen to analyse articles referring to Foucault published in four journals: Adult Education Quarterly (US), International Journal of Lifelong Education (UK), Studies in Continuing Education (A) and Studies in the Education of Adults (UK). These journals provide a broad geographical representation as one is published in the US, two in the UK and one in Australia. One of them also clearly states that it has an international focus (which can be seen in the title and the aim and scope section of the journal), thus it has an ambition to include articles from around the world. Further, these four journals seem to be construed as, based on database searches for what journals there are in this field, important academic journals in this field. As my interest has been directed at how Foucault has been taken up in the last few years, I have collected all articles referring to Foucault published in these journals between 1999 and 2006 – altogether 56 articles.

In relation to the aim of this article, I believe an analysis of the four journals, with the position and distribution mentioned above, to some extent (more or less limited) can be seen as representative of the field analyzed. By collecting 56 articles using Foucault, there is enough material to present variations in uses. However, by not analyzing books, I limit the generalisability of my results, which indeed is not the focus of this article. Another limitation is the choice of analyzing four specific journals. Researchers who wish to submit an article to a journal have many questions to pose in relation to *where* to submit it. Where will the article have the best chance of being published (in which journals do they seem to accept my kind of work)? Who do I want to read my article (who reads the different journals)? What journal is

the highest ranking one? And so on. Thus, by selecting four journals, articles published in other journals are left out (e.g. Simons and Masschelein, 2006; Popkewitz *et al*, 2006; Fejes, 2006a) as are articles not accepted for publication (rejected) in these journals (which we can know nothing about unless we speak to the editors or academics who hade their papers rejected). My selection also excludes publications in languages other than English. Nonetheless, I would argue that by selecting these four journals I will be able to analyze and present different uses of Foucault. The analysis will not cover all uses, but some, which can then be used to create a starting point for reflection on the usefulness of Foucault, and what uses could be fruitful in future endeavours.

In my analysis, the focus is on discerning what different uses of Foucault there are in the articles. How does the author use Foucault? What parts of Foucault's work does he/she draw on? To what extent does he/she draw on Foucault? What phenomena does he/she study when using Foucault? I have conducted a qualitative analysis (Bryman, 2002) where a close reading of the articles has produced the categories. In this analysis, I have focused on the above questions, and categorised the articles in groups where the common feature has been the way Foucault is being used. Thus, the categories are constructed based on my reading, and not based on a pre-defined theoretical framework. My analytical strategy is not a Foucauldian interpretative analytical strategy analysing uses of Foucault. However, by analyzing uses of Foucault, by using the result as a starting point for discussion of future uses of Foucault and by referring to the work of Foucault, this article is in itself a use of Foucault which could be analysed as such.

By writing this article, I myself participate in the production of certain truths about what Foucauldian uses in the field of post-compulsory education and lifelong learning are and are not. Language is connotative (see Nicoll and Fejes, forthcoming); we 'make up' – constitute – forms of social and human life through our language and social practices. In this case, language and social forms constitute objects such as Foucauldian uses. Thus, by writing this article, and having people read it, I contribute to a reinforcement of Foucauldian uses as 'real' objects, even if people reading the article do not agree. Therefore, my categorization does something to the work, which is being analyzed – it positions it in a certain way that might, or might not be accepted by the author her/himself. My article also might do something to the field being analysed – it might contribute to a construction of what kinds of uses of Foucault are desirable and non-desirable, which kinds of uses are good ones and bad ones. Thus, this kind of article is a disciplining one as it produces the object of which it speaks – it produces truths about Foucauldian uses. As power operates everywhere (Foucault 1980), such effects cannot be avoided, but they can be made visible by analyzing the discourses making this kind of analysis possible; thus, my analysis is in itself open for deconstruction by others.

Results

There were in total 56 articles (out of 617 articles) referring to Foucault in these fours journals published 1999-2006. More precisely, the following number of articles in each journal contain one or more references to Foucault:

Adult Education Quarterly	10
International Journal for Lifelong Education	19
Studies in Continuing Education	13
Studies in the Education of Adults	14

If one looks more closely at these texts to see which body of Foucault's works are used, we can see that the most commonly quoted books are *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, 1991)

quoted in 28 of 56 articles and *Power/Knowledge* (Foucault, 1980) quoted in 22 articles. I will discuss this later on in the article.

9% of all the articles in these journals to some extent relate to Foucault. However, when reading the articles more closely, such numbers of references can be problematised in relation to how Foucault is used. Based on my reading, four categories of uses of Foucault were construed: as an interpretative strategy, an eclectic use, as a way to pose an argument and as decoration. In my review, I will only focus on the first two categories (22 of the articles) as it is in these that we find more elaborated uses of Foucault. The third category, Foucault as a way to pose an argument, contains articles that might use a concept from Foucault to pose an argument (13 articles). For example, using the concept of panopticon to make an argument about how women learn empathy in prison (Kilgore, 2001), or using the concept of power and knowledge to argue how motivational theories in adult education construct the unmotivated adults (Ahl, 2006). There is a strikingly large number of articles that only use Foucault as what I call decoration (21 articles). These authors only refer to Foucault in passing as a way of noting, for example, that Foucault has had a major influence on how power is viewed, or that Foucault is a central scholar in the discussion of post-structuralism. Foucault is not really 'used' in the analysis conducted. One reason for such a use of Foucault could be that he is presented as one of the major 'icons', which one 'should' refer to (others might be Giddens, Habermas, Marx, etc.). Another reason might be that the author wants to indicate the source of a concept, idea etc. No matter what reason, all these articles drawing on Foucault as decoration reduce the number of articles where Foucault is 'used' more thoroughly. Thus, it seems that more elaborated uses of Foucault are not very common in these journals. In the following, I will firstly discuss the articles in the category "Foucault as interpretative strategy", followed by a discussion of "eclectic uses of Foucault". Secondly, I will discuss how Foucault contributes to this area of research.

Foucault as an interpretative strategy

Among the 56 articles only a few (13) draw on Foucault as a "main" basis in the analysis conducted. On a general level, these uses can be divided into three different themes related to Foucault's work: governmentality; genealogy; and power, knowledge and discipline.

Governmentality

A few articles (Edwards, 2003; Edwards and Nicoll, 2004; Fejes, 2005; Kennedy, 2004; Olssen, 2006a) draw on Foucault's (2003) later work where he problematised political power in relation to government. With the introduction of governmentality, the microanalysis of power, which dominated his earlier (or 'middle') work on e.g. the prison, (Foucault, 1991) was now combined with analyses at a macro level. The interest was in the governability of subjects related to the political ambition to govern. What rationalities of governing are constructed in specific historical spaces? The focus of his analysis is on the emergence of the modern social state. Through it, the exercise of power has become more finely meshed, expanded and scattered. The result is increased governability by means of regulations, standardisations of people's conduct, etc. (Hultqvist and Petersson, 1995). However, before his death, Foucault did not make any extensive analysis using the concept. Instead, it has been developed by other researchers. According to Dean (1999), the concept of governmentality seems to have started to be used to a greater extent in the early 1990s, and by the end of the 1990s its time had arrived. Such a development can be related to the fact that Foucault gave his lecture on governmentality in February, 1978. It was first published in English in a journal in 1979 but not until 1991 was the lecture presented to a larger audience as a result of its publication in an edited collection in English (Burchell et al., 1991). Since then, several edited collections with the theme of governmentality have been published with contributions from both inside and outside the educational field (e.g. Hultqvist and Petersson, 1995, Barry et al 1996, Dean and Hindess, 1998).

In my review, five articles draw upon governmentality. One of the articles (Kennedy 2004) states that it is a governmentality analysis. However, such an analysis is never conducted. The other articles draw on governmentality to ask questions about how governing is conducted. Two of the articles relate governmentality to actor network theory. Edwards (2003) focuses on the significance of lifelong learning in the changing contours of governing and argues that it can be seen as a strategy of governmentality. Ideas from Foucault are used to analyse how certain subjectivities are deployed in the discourse of lifelong learning and actor network theory is used to illustrate how different subjectivities are mobilised. A similar approach is taken by Edwards and Nicoll (2004) in their study of how workplaces are mobilised in relation to a political ambition to govern. They argue that governmentality cannot only be seen as a modern form of political power. One must also look at the micro-practices of the exercise of power to see what kind of power operates (it could be governmentality, disciplinary power, etc.).

Fejes (2005) takes a slightly different approach when he analyses the ways in which the adult learner is constructed through policy discourses and how such a subject is governed. The focus is on the subject to be governed, how governing should be conducted, what the teleos of governing is (why govern?) and what rationalities of governing are constructed through discourse. Olssen (2006a) takes yet another approach based on governmentality in which he construes Foucault as part of a revitalised critical discourse. Olssen argues that lifelong learning constitutes a technology of control, which makes the population subject to a new form of flexible rationalisation. Relating such reasoning to an excursus into neo-liberalism, he argues that the concept of governmentality offers a new version of a superstructural sociology, which can explain how educational and economic practices mutually condition and adapt to each other. The technology of lifelong learning enables the responsibilisation for education and learning, at the same time as it makes it possible to abolish the state's obligation to provide welfare. Thus, this technology can be seen as both cause and effect. He concludes by giving some normative suggestions for the future of education in which he wants to link the discourse of lifelong learning to an emancipatory project of social justice.

Genealogy

There are only two articles that draw on genealogy (Chapman, 2003, Fejes, 2005). Genealogy was developed during the later part of Foucault's (1972, 1977) career in contrast to the history of ideas. History has usually been seen as a process in which we should create order out of chaos and where we need to tell a story of causality as a way of explaining our past and our present. For example, Marxism focuses on explaining the development of society in relation to the base and superstructure, where materiality (the base) is used as an explanation of events in history. Foucault (1977), drawing on Nietzsche, argues that history should instead be seen as a process of discontinuities, temporality and without essence. The focus is on reestablishing systems of subjection by tracing the emergence of events, which arise in a play of domination. Such plays are temporary, specific to time and space, and they contain uncertain relative strengths, which produce non-calculated consequences. In these battles, there are no pre-existing subjects. Instead they emerge and their roles are constructed and played out in different practices (Beronius, 1991).

Chapman (2003) draws on genealogy as a way of asking questions about her own subjectivity. She wants to describe power and how it works in education when it creates bodies and she proposes self-writing as a way of surfacing such power and maintaining an ethical practice. The analytical framework draws on the Foucauldian notions of power and subjectivity and she uses her own body to study the embodiment of her different subjectivities. Through

genealogy, she traces her educated body back in time by analysing a book in which she has collected self-writing about her past. She shows how disciplinary power and pastoral power are part of her genealogy. Fejes (2005) has a different use of Foucault when he draws on genealogy as a way of problematizing how the adult learner is constructed and governed in contemporary discourses. Based on a governmentality analysis, he traces the emergence of the idea of the adult learner as one who learns the entire time and one who should govern him/herself.

Power, knowledge and discipline

Seven articles (Devos, 2004; Edwards and Clarke, 2002; Egan, 2003; Harrison, 2000; Nicoll and Harrison, 2003; Usher and Solomon, 1999; Wilson, 1999) draw on Foucault's conceptions of power, knowledge and discipline as a main framework for analysis. For example, in a study of HIV prevention workers (Egan, 2003); a study where lifelong learning is seen as a disguise for the exercise of power (Wilson, 1999) or in a study in which the authors ask about the spatial aspects of a strategy of lifelong and flexible learning (Edwards and Clarke 2002).

In another study, Usher & Solomon (1999) aim to locate work-based awards in a theoretical context, drawing on Foucault's notion of disciplinary power and how power operates in the micro practices of government. These awards are related to how the workplace has been constructed by contemporary discourses that combine elements of managerial and educational practices They analyse how the subjectivity of the workers is shaped through these discourses and argue that subjectivity in the workplace is shaped in line with a managerial discourse where the desires of the employees are in line with the desires of the companies. Subjectivity is not a given, it is part of a process of shaping.

The managerial discourse is also analysed by Harrison (2000). He asks questions about how the learner is constructed in the discourse of the self-managing learner today, and what the effects of such constructs are on practices of teaching and guidance. He draws on Foucault's conceptions of discourse, regimes of truth and power. Three arguments are made: there is a construction of an entrepreneurial learner; the learner is a manager who manages his/her own learning and the learner is managed by others through pastoral power. The paper ends with a discussion on resistance, where Harrison argues that it is possible to disturb power through a re-conceptualisation of knowledge. Devos (2004) has another use of Foucault where resistance (or other ways of ordering our way of thinking) is focused on. She analyses how women in academia construct subjectivities through mentoring. She uses discourse as a way of seeing what the productive effects of discourses of academic life are on women and the construction of their subjectivities. She argues that the practices that discipline women also facilitate the ability to form alternative or oppositional discourses and subject positions.

Another study of academia was carried out by Nicoll and Harrison (2003). They ask the question of what way a good teacher in higher education is constructed based on documents on teaching at a university in the UK. Contemporary forms of professional development are understood as attempts to fashion subjectivities, as a non-coercive form of discipline that cultivates the self-steering capacities of the individual, and they draw on Foucault's ideas of disciplinary power and pastoral power. They carry out a discourse analysis where the discursive strategies through which the individual who is subject to pastoral power are made visible.

To conclude this part of the article, we can see how these uses of Foucault as an interpretative strategy mainly draw on Foucault's concepts of power, knowledge, discipline and pastoral power. Genealogical and governmentality analysis are quite rare, something I will return to later on in the article.

Eclectic uses of Foucault

One clear pattern when reading these articles was the emergence of many feminist analyses drawing on Foucault. There are several authors who combine Foucault with feminist post-structural theories as a way of analysing and constructing practices of resistance. Further, practices of resistance are also analysed and constructed by authors who focus on issues of inclusion and exclusion.

A common theme in several articles (Albertyn et al., 2001; Alexiou, 2005; Crowther et al., 1999; Crowther, 2000; English, 2005, 2006; Fenwick, 2001, 2002; Hughes, 2000) is analyses of practices of resistance and, in some of them, also discussions on how such practices can be created based on Foucault's conception of power and knowledge. Usually one relates power to governing in a specific way. The one who governs is the one who has the power, which Foucault (1980) calls the repressive hypothesis. He questions such a view. Instead, one of his starting points is that power is not something that a person inherits and which can be used against others. It is not a thing, a commodity or a position. Nor does power have any essence. Therefore it cannot oppress people. Instead, power is relational. Foucault argues that power:

must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localised here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. They are not only its insert or consenting target; they are always also the elements of its articulation. In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application (Foucault, 1980, p. 98).

Foucault emphasizes the power produced in the micropractices of relations, such as in a class-room, a prison, a factory, etc. Everyone undergoes and exercises power at the same time. Therefore, power should be studied in its extreme points of exercise, where it is in an immediate relationship with the object (its target) and where it installs itself and produces its effects (Foucault, 1980). For Foucault, power and knowledge are not external to each other, nor are they identical. Instead, they are intertwined in a correlative relationship, which is determined in its historical specificity (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1983). For power to operate, it needs to be grounded in knowledge about the things it operates on and in relation to. Knowledge about the subject is the basis of the operation of power and power defines what knowledge is legitimate.

There are two different eclectic uses of Foucault on a general level in this area, which draw on Foucault's definition of power: feminist analyses of practices of resistance and analyses of resistance in relation to issues of inclusion and exclusion.

In the first category of eclectic uses, we can take the example of Fenwick (2001, 2002) who adopts a Foucauldian view of power when she analyses women who start their own business. She wants to understand how the subjectivities of these women are shaped through dominating discourses, and in what way they adapt to the dominating subjectivities or whether they resist and adopt other subject positions. In this analysis, she also draws on Foucault's conception of pastoral power. However, she is not content with such an analysis; instead, she wants to analyse agency and resistance. Thus, she turns to post-structural feminism to analyse how practices of resistance are created by the women. Based on such an analysis, she gives suggestions about how one can contribute to the creation of counter discourses in educational practices. Another feminist eclectic use of Foucault and his concepts of pastoral power is employed by English (2005, 2006) who studies feminist non-profit organisations and how the organisations and the policymakers interact and exercise power. Based on her analysis, she argues in favour of more analyses where the governmental and societal discourses that

shape feminist organisations are made visible as a way of creating more transformative discourses (English 2005).

The second kind of eclectic use of Foucault is related to issues of inclusion and exclusion in relation to practices of resistance. Crowther et al. (1999) has an outspoken ambition to make changes in adult literacy issues in Scotland, which will take place if the dominating discourses and the power-knowledge relations are made visible. The authors draw on Foucault's notion of power and knowledge to argue what is the dominant way of speaking, which affects who we should be. The authors do not make a discourse analysis. Instead, they present an argument about what the dominating way of reasoning is, and then they propose a solution of how one can/should reason instead as a way of building a new Scotland. They want all the voices of the citizens to be heard. Thus, there is an eclectic approach in the sense that an use of Foucault is used as a means of making statements about how one should act and form a better society. In another study, Crowther (2000) analyses what the discourse of participation includes, what the power-knowledge formations and the regimes of truths are, in order to see what is being excluded. He wants to deconstruct the rules of the dominant discourse in order to make clear what is left out. Further, he asks questions about whose interests are served by the way participation is constructed, and who loses? The author refers to actors who have different interests, and who are thus closely related to intentions and a notion of power where someone has power which is exercised over others. Thus, this can be seen as an use where Foucault is interpreted and used within a revitalised critical discourse.

These kinds of articles produce interesting results, which make visible how power operates in gendered and exclusionary discourses. However, one might ask whether some of these analyses are more of a revitalised critical discourse where liberation from constraints (power as repressive and a possession) is focused on rather than an analysis of the productive side of power. Such a question might be posed in relation to the end of both of Fenwick's (2001, 2002) articles were she discusses the implications of her analysis for educators and how educators (agency) can contribute to the production of other kinds of discourses. Or one can pose such question in relation to Crowther et al. (1999), who want to make changes to adult literacy in Scotland, or in relation to Hughes (2000, p. 54) who, in relation to a feminist post-structural and Foucauldian perspective, argues that such a perspective acknowledges for example: "how, women exercise power over other women." In this quotation, power becomes something that someone has and exercises over others.

Such a question is also related to the way some of these writers problematize subjectivity in relation to power. As Fenwick suggests:

However, if we are to hope that resistance and transformation are possible, we must accept that individuals exercise some degree of agency in their own authorship....The purpose of this analysis is to identify those cultural sites where women entrepreneurs struggle to win a space for themselves and those sites where they don't struggle, where perhaps they are manipulated into taking up positions they would not choose deliberately (Fenwick, 2001, p. 129).

Thus, the focus is on how these women, as agents of their lives, take up different positions, some of which are intentional and some forced on them through manipulation. In the articles by English, we can also see how the feminist organisations and the state are made into actors at the same time as she speaks about subjectivity. In one article, she states that "the State and the feminist organisations both exercise the technologies of pastoral power, albeit in different ways and in response to different stimuli" (English, 2005, p. 142). Thus, there are stimuli that make individuals act in specific ways, something she analyses empirically.

Thus, such uses of Foucault seem to result in the following statements:

- 1. Power is repressive in the sense that it constructs discourses with bad effects, which regulate our conduct, at the same time as these discourses produce different subject positions possible to adopt (productive side of power)
- 2. There is agency
- 3. Thus, by making these bad discourses visible they can be resisted, and people can adopt other kinds of positions as agents of their lives

In such reasoning, the repressive side of power seems to dominate in relation to the productive side. People's conduct is regulated through the repressive side of power and such regulations are both constraining and bad. However, as there is agency, it is possible to resist these discourses and become free of these constraints. Thus, I argue that some of these articles represent a revitalised critical perspective with a focus on power as repressive. Further, these eclectic uses explore Foucault's toolbox in relation to other theories, which have specific implications in terms of how to view subjectivity and resistance. However, discussions of such implications are not extensively elaborated upon in the articles. For example, English (2005) mentions some similarities between Foucault and post-structural feminism at the same time as she states that there are many differences. These differences are, however, not elaborated upon.

With these questions and reflections, I do not claim that the eclectic uses of Foucault are wrong, or that they do not work. I do not believe that there is a correct or a wrong use of Foucault. What I am saying is that some of these uses and their effects are not clearly elaborated upon, something which would have made the uses more clear. Several of these analyses are conducted in a very interesting way.

We have seen what kinds of uses of Foucault there are in these four journals. I will now turn to the question of what some uses of Foucault can contribute to in this area of research.

What is missing? Or possible future uses of Foucault in research on post-compulsory education and lifelong learning

Based on the review above, we can see how only 13 of the articles use Foucault as an interpretative strategy (and 9 are more eclectic). The majority of these uses draw on Foucault's conception of power and knowledge, while only a few draw on his later works concerned with governmentality and genealogy. As I showed at the beginning of this article, the most common Foucauldian books referred to are Discipline and punish and Power/knowledge. Foucault's earlier work on archaeology is almost totally absent, and his later work on governmentality, genealogy and ethics are only sparsely used. A non-Foucauldian question would be why? One possible answer could be that it was through Discipline and Punish that Foucault's idea of how power operates through institutions (such as the factory and school) in relation to the body was made available to a wider audience, including educational researchers. Drawing parallels between Foucault's ideas of the panopticon, disciplining power, observation and division, and the school was an easy step, something that Foucault also mentioned. Thus, ideas about disciplinary power have become a major influence in educational research drawing on Foucault. If we focus on Foucault-inspired educational research in general, there is a pattern where Discipline and Punish and Power/knowledge were the dominating texts used during most of the 90s. At the end of the 90s and into the new millennium, genealogy and governmentality analyses became more common (Fejes, 2006b). Such a trend does not seem to be present in the review made here. Instead, as has been argued, governmentality and genealogy are marginally applied in research on lifelong learning as represented in the four journals analyzed.

Why, then, should we use Foucault in studies in this area? My answer would be that through a Foucauldian approach it is possible to ask other questions than those offered by positivism or alternative interpretative perspectives. Instead of focusing, for example, on life-

long learning as something good or bad, or as something with an essence, or something which can free people from constraints, a Foucauldian use might pose questions about the significance and effects of lifelong learning in other terms. Thus, it is possible to destabilize those things that we take for granted about lifelong learning today. Such an analysis places a specific focus on relational power, which is not acknowledged in the everyday policymaking and practices of lifelong learning. What specific relations of power operate in support of discourses of lifelong learning? And, what are the effects of such power relations? By posing such questions, it is possible to show, for example, how the ambition to include by means of lifelong learning has exclusionary practices as one of its effects – something that is not acknowledged in either policymaking or educational practices (see e.g. Fejes, 2006a).

Research on post-compulsory education and lifelong learning that is positivist or interpretative aims to produce 'truths' about educational and pedagogical practices. Foucault (1983) helps us to show how such research is dangerous; as are discourses in general. For example, here, critical theorists have centrally employed the concept of Bildung, which is an idea about the purpose of education being to develop the ability of the human to be reflective (about him/herself and his/her surroundings) as a means of achieving emancipation from social conditions and constraining relations. Bildung is about freeing oneself through learning, i.e. through self-autonomy and critique. Such a construction, however, is made possible by, and reinforces, that which it opposes - constraint (Masschelein, 2004). By believing that we are free, we accept constraint. Thus, the autonomous, self-reflective life cannot counter power relations. Instead, it is a particular kind of historical 'figure' of self-government through which we become traversed by power relations even as we believe ourselves to be free. This approach thus permits questions about the discourse of Bildung and what the effects of this discourse are. Where lifelong learning is predominantly considered to signify freedom from power through self-autonomy and critique, we can 'read' it alternatively as a mechanism of power whereby the individual governs him or herself within power relations. So what possible paths for future research might there be with different Foucauldian uses?

Why governmentality and technologies of the self?

As argued, governmentality approaches are limited in this review. A non-Foucauldian question one might pose is why? One answer could be that a lot of articles in these journals study the micro-practices of education, where issues of society as a whole are in the background. Thus, governmentality might not be of any great importance. Another explanation might be that people, conducting analyses of post-compulsory education and lifelong learning drawing on governmentality, publish in other journals. If we turn our attention to this latter issue, we can see how several analyses, which focus on lifelong learning and/or adult education, are published elsewhere (see e.g. Andersson and Fejes, 2005, Fejes, 2006a, Masschelein, 2001, Popkewitz et al., 2006, Simons, 2006). These kinds of articles are published in e.g. The Journal of Education policy, Educational Philosophy and Theory and The Journal of Philosophy of Education. Further, several governmentality analyses of lifelong learning will appear in a forthcoming edited collection (Fejes and Nicoll, forthcoming). Thus, there seem to be a body of work in this area of research which is published in other kinds of publications. Accordingly, what could such analyses contribute to in the four journals analysed and in this area of research?

Today, there is a growing focus on the idea of neo-liberalism as both an ideology and as an economic theory, which was not the case 30 years ago. In relation to the emergence of neo-liberalism in Thatcher's Great Britain during the 1980s, we could see how some researchers (e.g. Nikolas Rose, 1999) started to find 'new' or different analytical tools as a way to analyse such changes in governing practices. One of the strengths of governmentality was and is that it widens the commonly used concept of 'government'. Nor is it only concerned with govern-

ing through lawmaking, the police, decisions in governmental organisations, etc. Governmentality also concerns our everyday life; all the relations we are involved in, not least one's relation to oneself. The notion of governmentality is made possible through Foucault's (1980) view of power. There is no subject such as the nation-state, who has and uses power against someone else. Power is not the property of an object. Rather, power is relational. It circulates everywhere, operating through relations of power. Taking such a stance makes it possible to analyse government as something more complex than the government of the nation-state. It relates the government of ourselves, the government of others and the government of the state (Dean, 1999), which makes it possible for us to show the complexity of the conduct of government. The focus is not on social, economic and political circumstances that shape thought. Instead, the focus is on how thoughts operate in the taken-for-granted ways we do things and on neo-liberalism; instead of being seen as an ideology, it is seen as a way of reasoning about governing – it is a mode of governing.

Thus, governmentality helps us to understand the modern forms of the exercise of power and its different practices of governing. Even if Foucault himself never did enter the educational area of research, it is easy to see the usefulness of the concept of governmentality in relation to educational (pedagogical) practices. Such practices are spreading into society as a whole, with school as society having been replaced by the notion of society as a school (Olsson and Petersson, 2005). Thus, analyses of how governing is being conducted today through educational practices are important as a way of understanding how power operates and flows through the social body. Questions one might pose, drawing on governmentality, are: In what ways are different discourses on lifelong learning, flexibility, education, working life, etc. part of constructing and a construction of different rationalities of governing? What desirable subject should be constructed? What techniques are parts of educational practices shaping us into specific desirable subjects? In what ways do these techniques make us relate ourselves to ourselves and to others? In what ways are we being governed today, and what is the effect of such ways of reasoning about governing in terms of exclusion? Such questions might help us to combine analyses of power operating as to govern populations with analyses of power operating to govern individuals.

Closely related to the question of governmentality is Foucault's later work on the history of sexuality (Foucault, 1990) where he was interested in the relationship the subject has to him/herself – the care of the self. Foucault (2005) carries out a genealogy of the care of the self, where he analyzes the ways in which a person took care of the self during the Roman and Hellenistic periods. Then, everyone should care for his/her self as a way of living a good life. The thing to be worked on was both the soul and the body. The most fundamental theme of this practice of the self was "to become again what we never were" (Foucault, 2005, p. 95). One of the main components of such a practice was the relation one hade to "the other", a person to whom one could speak and from whom one could get guidance. Such a relation turned into a confessional practice during the rise of the Christian church as a path to salvation through the control of one's desires. Today, such a practice has spread in society and we make confessions in many different practices. Not as a way of achieving salvation but as a way of achieving our desires in life and imposing self-regulation, e.g. in the practice of educational guidance, in relation to one's love, to one's friends, to one's doctor, lawyer, teacher, etc. The confession is what Foucault calls a technology of the self which is used by the individual to effect changes on him/herself. Such reasoning can be related to Foucault's discussion of the shift from disciplinary power to one of pastoral power and self-discipline. There is a shift from one situation of making changes to a mute and 'docile' body to a situation where the subject makes changes to him/herself through technologies of the self. Such an approach is useful when analysing, for example, practices of adult education.

Let us take the example of when a teacher arranges the classroom in a circular fashion so that everyone faces everyone else. The idea is that there is a more democratic space for teaching where everyone is equal. But if we draw on Foucault, one might argue that this is a confessional practice where all the participants are encouraged to work upon their relations to themselves by confessing their inner desires to others. At the same time, the circle makes possible increased surveillance of everyone, thus nobody is unnoticed. I believe that Foucault's later work can be a good starting point for us to deconstruct narratives of democracy, empowerment and equality in practices of adult and post-compulsory education, as a way of making visible how power operates in both the micro-practices of relations, but also how such practices can be related to a more general way of reasoning about how governing is to be conducted.

Why historicise our present through genealogy?

There are few genealogical approaches in this review. Only two of them draw explicitly on genealogy. The non-Foucauldian question would be: why this is the case? One possible answer could be that a genealogy takes a lot of time to draw up as the researcher needs to do extensive reading in order to trace lines of emergence and descent. However, I am confident that such an approach could contribute significantly to research on post-compulsory education and lifelong learning. A genealogy makes it possible to destabilize the things we now take for granted. For example, today, lifelong learning is a mantra in national policymaking concerning education, labour, health, correctional treatment, etc., in many different countries. The narratives of lifelong learning can be seen as a new global planetspeak discourse (Nóvoa, 2002); a way of reasoning that seems to have no structural roots, no social locations and no origin. It is part of a "worldwide bible" that is on every tongue and it seems to provide solutions to the problems faced. It travels through the world and is inscribed in different countries and practices where it takes different forms. If one looks at everyday policymaking and educational practices (as well as other practices that include lifelong learning), one can see how lifelong learning is often spoken of as something which is inherently good and which will make possible for people to have a better future. The oppressed ones will empower themselves, the unemployed will acquire the competencies to get a job, etc. Thus, everyday policy making does not acknowledge the effects of power, which are present in those practices. Using a genealogical approach, such views of the present are destabilized by analyzing conditions of possibilities making such a way to reason possible. Further, it makes visible the effects of the power relations in the discourse. For example, the discourse of lifelong learning defines the normal adult student, the good employee, the good citizen through processes of dividing practices (Foucault, 2003b) where there is also an effect in terms of exclusion – the deviant adult who does not want to learn.

Concluding remarks

In this article, I have focused on different uses of Foucault as illustrated by means of four academic journals in this field, and argued for the usefulness of such perspectives. Four main uses of Foucault were construed: an interpretative strategy, an eclectic use, a way to pose an argument and decoration. The analysis has focused on the first two categories as these present more thorough uses of Foucault. Based on my findings, I argue that uses of Foucault in these journals seem to a large extent be superficial and to some extent more in the nature of a revitalised critical discourse. However, by selecting four journals I have excluded uses of Foucault as represented in books and other journals. Therefore, my result should be seen as starting point for reflecting about how Foucault is being used, what such uses can contribute, and also for seeing whether there are other uses represented elsewhere.

In the analysis, it is clear that Foucault's later work on governmentality and his work on genealogy seem to be fairly seldom used in these journals. One reason might be that research on adult education, to a large extent, focuses on the micro-practices of education and lifelong learning. Thus, governmentality does not become a useful analytical concept. Another reason might be that academics using governmentality might find their output elsewhere. Further, 21 of the 56 articles use Foucault as decoration. Foucault is only referred to in passing, and one sometimes gets the feeling that he is only referred to in order to show that the author has read his work, although some authors refer to Foucault as a way of acknowledging a certain concept. There are also 13 articles which draw on Foucault as a way of presenting arguments. In some of these articles, Foucault is superficially drawn on when presenting arguments, while in others he is drawn on in a clear and comprehensive way. Thus, there are 22 articles left where there is a more profound use of Foucault, which leads me to the second argument. In these more profound uses of Foucault, there are both eclectic uses and uses of Foucault as an interpretative strategy. In the first category, a few articles, and in the second category one article, transform Foucault into a revitalised critical discourse. Foucault is used to analyze how one can empower oppressed groups in society. The way power is used sometimes seems to shift to a focus on the repressive side of power. Thus, we are left with only a few articles where concepts from the Foucauldian toolbox are used as a 'main' interpretative strategy.

I strongly believe that Foucauldian uses can contribute to the development of research on post-compulsory education and lifelong learning. Through different uses of Foucault, one can try to get away from a focus on empowerment and oppression. Instead, one can focus on what post-compulsory education and lifelong learning (the power operating in such practices) does to our subjectivities and how everyday policymaking and educational practices focused on inclusion also have exclusion as one of their effects. Thus, we can contribute to the creation of other kinds of perspectives on contemporary society than critical theory as well as other theoretical frameworks. I also believe that eclectic uses of Foucault can contribute to such endeavours. But sometimes, as illustrated in this article, such uses become unclear and it seems as if Foucault is drawn into a revitalised critical discourse without any recognition of such a stance. If Foucault is drawn into a critical discourse, I believe he loses some of his radicalism. Making visible how power operates everywhere, and what consequences such operations have on subjectivities and the way knowledge is produced and operates are some of Foucault's major contributions.

Here, some reflexive criticism of my own practice of writing this article is called for. As I stated in my introduction, my article positions researchers (their articles) in specific places where they might or might not agree to be placed. Such an endeavour is a disciplining one, as this article participates in producing the object it speaks about (and knowledge about it). Thus, it contributes to the construction of borders of what is and what is not a desirable Foucauldian use. However, my intention has not been to argue for a "correct" way of using Foucault. I believe research on lifelong learning and post-compulsory education benefits from a wide variety of approaches and a wide variety of uses. However, I have especially argued for the usefulness of using Foucault as an interpretative strategy, so in that sense I am being normative. I believe this could be beneficial to this field of research as it would help us make visible our taken-for-granted ideas about adult education and lifelong learning; how power operates in these practices and what the effects of such operations are. Thus, a space for reflection on our contemporary society could be created.

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