1 Introducing Monsieur Foucault

Stephen J. Ball

Michel Foucault is an enigma, a massively influential intellectual who steadfastly refused to align himself with any of the major traditions of western social thought. His primary concern with the history of scientific thought, the development of technologies of power and domination, and the arbitrariness of modern social institutions speak to but stand outside the main currents of Weberian and Marxist scholarship. In an interview in 1982, in response to a question about his intellectual identity, Foucault characteristically replied:

> I don't feel it is necessary to know exactly what I am. The main interest in life and work is to become someone else you were not in the beginning. If you knew when you began a book what you would say at the end, do you think you would have the courage to write it?
>
> (Martin *et al.* 1988: 9)

Foucault's playfulness and elusiveness seem to have stimulated fascination and exasperation in equal measure. None the less, his work has been taken up or has impacted upon a wide range of disciplines sociology, history, psychology, philosophy, politics, linguistics, cultural studies, literary theory, and so on.

At the centre of his work, over a 25-year period, has been a series of attempts to analyse particular ideas or models of humanity which have developed as the result of very precise historical changes, and the ways in which these ideas have become normative or universal. Foucault has set himself staunchly against the notion of universal or self-evident humanity. Again in interview he explained:

> My role - and that is too emphatic a word - is to show people that they are much freer than they feel, that people accept as truth, as evidence, some themes which have been built up at a certain moment during history, and that this so-called evidence can be criticized and destroyed. To change something in the minds of people - that's the role of an intellectual.
>
> (Martin *et al.* 1988:10)

Foucault has identified certain knowledges - human sciences - and certain attendant practices as central to the normalization of social principles and institutions of modern society. Among these are psychological, medical, penitential, and educational knowledges and practices. Our concern here is with the role of the latter, education, and its interrelationship with politics, economics, and history in the formation and constitution of human beings as subjects. By normalization Foucault means the establishment of measurements, hierarchy, and regulations around the idea of a distributionary statistical norm within a given population - the idea of judgment based on what is normal and thus what is abnormal. The various chapters in this book employ a Foucauldian perspective for the analysis of aspects of the history of education and of some of the discourses and disciplinary disputes currently being formed, developed, and re-formed in the educational field.

Discourse is a central concept m Foucault's analytical framework. Discourses are about what can be said and thought, but also about who can speak, when, and with what authority. Discourses embody meaning and social relationships, they constitute both subjectivity and power relations. Discourses are 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak.... Discourses are not about objects; they do not identify objects, they constitute them and in the practice of

doing so conceal their own invention' (Foucault 1974:49). Thus the possibilities for meaning and for definition, are preempted through the social and institutional position held by those who use them. Meanings thus arise not from language but from institutional practices, from power relations. Words and concepts change their meaning mid their effects as they are deployed within different discourses. Discourses constrain the possibilities of thought They order and combine words in particular ways and exclude or displace other combinations. However, in so far as discourses are constituted by exclusions as well as inclusions, by what cannot as well as what can be said, they stand in antagonistic relationship to other discourses, other possibilities of meaning, other claims, rights, and positions. This is Foucault's 'principle of discontinuity': 'We must make allowance for the complex and unstable powers whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy' (Foucault 1982:101).

Discourse lies between the level of pure atemporal linguistic 'structure' (*langue*) and the level of surface speaking *(parole*): it expresses the historical specificity of what is said and what remains unsaid.

> [D]iscourses are composed of signs, but what they do is more than use these signs to designate things. It is this move that renders them irreducible to the language and to speech. It is this 'move' that we must reveal and describe.
>
> (Foucault 1974:49)

The issue in discourse analysis is why, at a given time, out of all the possible things that could be said, only certain things were said: 'how is it that one particular statement appeared rather than another' (Foucault 1974:27). Further it is essential to reveal the 'density' and 'complexity' within discursive practices, to go beyond the boundaries of structure, or utterances, *langue*, and *parole*. The world is perceived differently within different discourses. Discourse is structured by assumptions within which any speaker must operate in order to be heard as meaningful. Thus the concept of discourse emphasizes the social processes that produce meaning.

We are concerned here with educational sites as generators of an historically specific (modern) discourse, that is, as sites in which certain modern validations of, and exclusions from, the 'right to speak' are generated.

Educational sites are subject to discourse but are also centrally involved in the propagation and selective dissemination of discourses, the 'social appropriation' of discourses. Educational institutions control the access of individuals to various kinds of discourse.

> But we know very well that, in its distribution, in what it permits and what it prevents, it follows the lines laid down by social differences, conflicts and struggles. Every educational system is a political means of maintaining or modifying the appropriateness of discourses with the knowledge and power they bring with them.
>
> (Foucault 1971:46)

Above all, the distribution and appropriateness of discourses in education is mediated by the examination, that 'slender technique' in which is to be found 'a whole domain of knowledge, a whole type of power'. Indeed, Keith Hoskin in Chapter 3 argues that the examination is a key concept in understanding the nexus of power-knowledge relations. The act, the process of examining, embodies and relates power and knowledge in technological form.

Foucault's history is the history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects. (Foucault in Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982: 208). That is the objectification of

the subject by processes of classification and division. The latter, what Foucault called 'dividing practices' are clearly central to the organizational processes of education in our society. These divisions and objectifications are achieved either within the subject or between the subject and others. The use of testing, examining, profiling, and streaming in education, the use of entry criteria for different types of schooling, and the formation of different types of intelligence, ability, and scholastic identity in the processes of schooling are all examples of such 'dividing practices'. In these ways, using these techniques and forms of organization, and the creation of separate and different curricula, pedagogies, forms of teacher-student relationships, identities and subjectivities are formed, learned and carried. Through the creation of remedial and advanced groups, and the separation of the educationally subnormal or those with special educational needs, abilities are stigmatized and normalized.

These dividing practices arc critically interconnected with the formation, and increasingly sophisticated elaboration, of the educational sciences: educational psychology, pedagogics, the sociology of education, cognitive and developmental psychology. These are the arenas in which 'truth games' about education are played out For example, the development of the sociology of education in the 1960s and 1970s was organized around and informed and reinforced the 'problem of working-class underachievement'. The sociological findings of the period constructed a sophisticated and powerful social pathology of working-class family life as deficient and culturally deprived - abnormal. The problem of underachievement was defined as beyond the control and capabilities of the teacher, and as culturally determined and inevitable. Teachers were provided with a rich, pseudoscientific vocabulary of classifications and justifications for the inevitability of differences in intellectual performance between die social classes. Individuals drawn from the undifferentiated mass of school students could be objectified in terms of various fixed social class or other social indicators (Sharp and Green 1975) instituted in the school's spatial, temporal, and social compartmentalizations. Knowledge and practices drawn from the educational sciences provided (in Foucault's terms) modes of classification, control, and containment, often paradoxically linked to humanitarian rhetoric of reform and progress: streaming, remedial classes, off-site units and sanctuaries, informal or invisible pedagogies (Bernstein 1975).

In the processes of schooling the student is compiled and constructed both in the passive processes of objectification, and in an active, self-forming subjectification, the latter involving processes of self-understanding mediated by an external authority figure - for our purposes, most commonly the teacher. For example, this is apparent in the increasing use of profiling and records of achievement in schools (Hargreaves 1986).

As indicated already, the key concepts in Foucault's exploration of the problem of the subject are those of power and knowledge, or more precisely that of power-knowledge, the single, inseparable configuration of ideas and practices that constitute a discourse. Power and knowledge are two sides of a single process. Knowledge does not reflect power relations but is immanent in them.

One text of Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, is key reading for much of the analysis and argument contained in this volume. Several of the chapters make extensive reference to this work and both Marshall and Hoskin discuss its significance and implications at some length. This is not surprising in a consideration of education, and Foucauit suggests in his conclusion to *Discipline and Punish* that the book will 'serve as a background for various studies of normalization and the power of knowledge in modem society'. *Discipline and Punish* traces the shift from the spectacle of punishment to disciplined institutional punishment via the constitution of apparatuses which

function to define power relations in terms of everyday life; the school and the classroom are specifically mentioned as apparatuses of this sort In the nineteenth century they emerged as particular organizations of space and persons experienced by virtually all people, at one and the same time totalizing the power of the state and producing and specifying particular individualities. This is Foucault's political 'double bind'.

But education works not only to render its students as subjects of power, it also constitutes them, or some of them, as powerful subjects. The effects of power are both negative and positive. Major examples of the latter are the historic shift in gender relations in the nineteenth century which made it possible for women to take advantage of the new practices of credentialing and meritocratic selection, and the appearance in the twentieth century of a new professional and managerial 'education-generated class' - Bernstein's 'new middle class'.

What is on offer here is an exploration of the application of Foucault's work within the field of education. And education, as the new role for intellectuals and knowledge experts after 1800, as the establishing of the credentialing society, as the primary institutional experience of virtually all young persons, is fundamental to a Foucauldian analysis of modern society. This book can be read as an illustration of facets of this new power of education. Its view is, via Foucault, to render the familiarity of mass education strange. The majority of the chapters are substantively focused on a particular area or issue but the Foucauldian perspective plays a slightly different role in each chapter. Thus while Dave Jones and Richard Jones maintain a fairly purist adherence to Foucault's techniques of historical analysis, Kenway and Smith *et al.* operate within a broader theoretical and analytical frame. Kenway draws in part on Gramsci, while Smith *et al.* work within a more general post-structuralist, deconstructionist perspective. Dowbiggin and Goodson attempt to draw Foucault into relation to a more mainstream history of ideas and curriculum history perspectives.

Part I is mare expository and exploratory. Marshall considers the question of the implementation of the Foucauktian perspective for the weak of historians of education, although he notes Foueault's project is normally seen as anti-history. Foueault stresses discontinuity, complexity, and circumstance and shows little interest in causality. He writes against rather than within the canons of historical scholarships. Marshall also indicates Foucault's debt to Nietzsche. Hoskin's chapter goes in search of the elusive link between power and knowledge, the meaning of the hyphen that joins them. Following the clues in various Foueault texts, he finds the solution, the principle of coherence, in the examination, or mote generally in that which is 'the educational' in different epochs.

In the historical chapters, Dave Jones, Richard Jones, and Dowbiggin and Goodson each contribute, in different ways, to what Foueault has called 'the history of the present'. They attempt to excavate and analyse some of the key concepts that provide the bedrock of contemporary educational practice. Thus Dave Jones offers a genealogy of the urban schoolteacher; Richard Jones explores the emergence of modern educational practices and modern scientific knowledge in postrevolutionary France; Dowbiggin and Goodson compare the rise of psychiatry in Fiance and geography in England to illustrate the establishment of key disciplinary professions and their relation to the state.

The final section is concerned with some common aspects of the contemporary restructuring of education, particularly the deployment and effects of the 'radical/critical' discourses of the New Right in struggles over 'what is to count as education'. Smith *et al.* compare and deconstruct two competing texts which embody and advocate competing versions of 'multiculturalism' and

'education'. Kenway investigates the New Right political and media campaigns launched in defence of state funding for private schools in Australia and their effects upon the grounds of educational debate and the constitution of educational commonsense.

My own short chapter offers a critique of the development and application of management in education, and the ways in which management operates to control, classify, and contain teachers' work, towards the end of governmentality, in its 'best' and 'most economical' form. As Foucault explains:

> The art of government ... is concerned with ... how to introduce economy, that is the correct manner of managing individuals, goods and wealth within the family ... [h]ow to introduce this meticulous attention of the father towards his family, into the management of the state.
>
> (Rabinow 1986: 15)

Management provides a paradigm case of a disciplinary technology, a form of bio-power, which employs scientific categories and explicit calculations to objectify the body - the worker - and to render individuals docile and pliable. In this chapter and in several of the others, Foucault's view of the relationship between economic change changes in the accumulation and mechanisms of power - provides a backdrop. Historical moments in the transformation of the state and the economy are taken to be mutually dependent, but with 'the growth and spread of disciplinary mechanisms of knowledge' preceding and providing preconditions for economic transformations.

The bulk of Foacault's analytical effect is weighted towards the subjection of individuals to the accumulation of power in the state by the use of technologies of discipline and confession. He gives little attention to the ways in which such domination might be resisted or subverted by those subject to it And yet, as indicated by the interview extract quoted earlier, he does see his work as providing a mechanism of critique, or a tool of subversion. He is reticent about specifying an ideal society beyond that which is, but he is adamant that there 'are more secrets, more possible freedoms, and more inventions in our future than we can imagine in humanism as it is dogmatically prescribed cm every side of the political rainbow' (Martin *et al.* 1988: 13). Thus for Foucault

> the real political task in a society such as ours is to criticize the working of institutions which appear to be both neutral and independent; violence which has always exercised itself obscurely through them will be unmasked, so that we can fight fear.
>
> (Foucault 1974: 171)

This is very much the spirit in which this book was conceived and is offered. It is to be hoped that the application of Foucauldian analysis to education will unmask the politics that underlie some of the apparent neutrality of educational reform. We leave the last word to Foucault, who commented in an interview, 'I'm proud that some people think that I'm a clanger for the intellectual health of students' (Martin *et al.* 1988: 13).

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