

## The Use of Foucault in the Creation of Educational History: A Review of Literature

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**Abstract:** This research creates a literature review. It investigates the viability of a using Foucauldian critical analysis in creating an educational history. It examines historical methods in education and Foucauldian theory looking for commonalities and offers suggestions on the usage of Foucault in creating history in education.

Michel Foucault is often used in education as a theoretical lens through which to view education. His philosophical theory is the basis of numerous far reaching books and articles. There is also another side of Foucault's work. Foucault was also a historian. History grounded Foucault's theory and is an integral part of the lens through which Foucault examined the institutions within France.

Research in the field of education tends to focus upon the present. Yet, it is necessary to examine the past to better understand the current happenings in education. A strong and vibrant historical analysis of a field is necessary to keep a field of research integrated within the society in which it exists. Additionally, historical analysis in a field that is directly influenced by political and social influences, such as education, discerns and critiques the "rational" and "unified" cultural understating of the field as presented by the media and political institutions. History takes a myriad of forms; not all of which are appropriate for the creation of this history for education. One of those forms is the critical theory of Michel Foucault, especially his methodology of archaeology.

### Purpose of Review of Literature

This literature review examines history as a method of educational inquiry. It traces a path through critical theory, a tool often used in education, and how it through the work of Michel Foucault can create an educational history. This literature review answers the following question: Is Foucauldian archeology an appropriate method for the creation of educational history?

### Historiography

Edward Augustus Freeman stated, "History is past politics, and politics are present history" (Cunningham, 1976, p. 245). Freeman's definition of history represented the view of history held for much of mankind's existence. Today the primary focus of historians has changed. James Harvey Robinson argued that Freeman's definition of history as the history of politics robs us of much of Man's past. Instead, in *New History*, Robinson (1958) explored how history comes to bear on the present. Howell and Prevenier (2001) agreed that history analyzes the past in order to better understand today adding that history cannot exist until it is written down. History ages. Stepping back from a work of history, one can have seen the characteristics of the timeframe in which that history was written (Bentley, 1999). Becker (1938) noted that Freeman's view of history is indicative of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a time in which "the major problems of society were political and constitutional, a time when revolutions were primarily concerned with the form of government and the construction of the right kind of constitution" (p. 23). The

author's intent and theoretical framework became important in understanding the role of history within a timeframe.

Lovejoy (1938) described history as a study of ideas and their role in human affairs. Because of the focus on the idea, Lovejoy was able to break history down into 12 subcategories with one of those being the history of education. By categorizing history researchers have isolated the subject from the complexity of the totality of history in order to facilitate analysis. Lovejoy's delineation of appropriate topic of historical analysis validated the creation of educational history as a necessary field of inquiry.

Elton (2002) distinguished between three categories of historical inquiry: description, analysis, and narrative. Description accounts for the past without factoring in the dimension of time. No story is told; instead description gives a detailed account of a particular place or group of peoples (Elton, 2002). The second category, analysis, sets historical events into the wider context of "causal connections and motivations" (Elton, 2002, p. 109). Analysis arranges material into a topical structure, with the possibility of repeating events of a time frame based upon the events to individual topics. Analysis is free of the constraints of the timeline and therefore unsuitable to analysis of evolutionary forces.

Narrative writing uses time and is particularly suited to the analysis of evolution. Narration is accused of not reaching the depth of understand necessary for modern historical analysis (Burstyn, 1990). Eliot (2002) argued that through the usage of a compelling framework narration can be turned into a higher form of historical writing giving meaningful description to events of the past. This argument is consistent with Foucault's insistence on usage of the narrative form

White (1984) argued history necessitates a narrative. Narration is natural to man. This is not enough for narrative to be a scientific means of study. It must also be accompanied by analysis. "Historical narratives without analysis are empty, while historical analyses without narrative are blind" (White, 1980, p. 10). The narrative in conjunction with analysis makes history into a critical study. Although it does not have the testability or rigor of science, it gives insight into the nature of humanity.

White (1981) argued for a connection between narrative and discourse with the association having taken place through the interaction between author and reader. White contended events are only understandable through the context of the story. The story endowed the events with meaning. Thus the narrative becomes part of the discourse. The narrative having become something to be analyzed gives insight into the reality, descriptions, and analysis allows evaluative claims to be made (Stern, 1990). The story elements of the narrative have permitted holistic understanding of a subject under study.

Viewing history as a narrative necessitates a framework from which to view the narrative taking shape. These frameworks draw together the story elements of the narrative with the necessary analytical elements to transform the story into a historical discourse. These views of history reinforce a Foucauldian analytical framework to analyze educational history. The remainder of this work examines narrative frameworks relevant to said analysis of educational history and how history arrived at Foucauldian analysis.

### **Structuralism**

Structuralism has analyzed the underlying structure of a system, answering questions concerning the structure of what constitutes society (Runciman, 1969). Society as a system can be broken down into separate structures. These structures have an isomorphic connection (Runciman, 1969). Structuralism has focused on the bonds between the structures of society

(Rosman, 1970). History then has analyzed these isomorphic relationships that define a systemized society that can be recognized as a universally understandable whole (Runciman, 1969). Barthes (1975) argued that narrative conventions are revealed through language in the form of discourse. Through formal analysis of discourse, independent of subject matter, the narrative structure has been revealed (Kellner, 1987). Structuralism began Foucault's first major principle of emphasizing language and thus discourse.

### **Post Structuralism**

Post-structuralism used structuralist conventions to create social criticism. Post structuralism has taken on multifaceted interpretations of text, whereby subjective interpretations help researchers create an argument based upon the structural elements of the text that reproduce culture (Grenfell, 1996). The post-structuralist disentangled the rhetoric in order to access the underlying content deconstructing the written works to access the underlying truths.

Post structuralism has necessitated a narrative. It has assumed life takes a narrative form. Narratives are made of language. Language can be deconstructed; therefore, life, or reality, has the same possibility for deconstruction (Patterson, 1989). Discourse becomes a tangible element of life to be deconstructed. Discourse and its relationship to culture, its creation, and its changes represent reality, as these written forms of culture give voice to human consciousness and the conditions in which it exists (Patterson, 1989). It is this that the post-structuralist deconstructs.

Post- structuralism has given import to the interaction between author and reader. All texts can be read allegorically (Jones, 2000). The reader interprets the allegorical nature of the text, pulling meaning in support of his or her argument from the author's original intent relativizing discourse (Jones, 2000). O'Brien (1989) criticized this relativity claiming danger in relativizing all texts as we then surrenders all claim to explanations of how the present came to be. Post-structuralism is representative of Foucault's second major principle that the critique of a society can occur through analysis of its discourse

### **Discourse Analysis**

Harris (1952a) defined Discourse Analysis (DA) as "method for the analysis of connected speech (or writing)" (p.1). The concept of discourse is difficult due to the variety of conflicting and overlapping definitions used in academia (Fairclough, 1993). Discourse is generally defined as relating to written or spoken communication. To Fairclough, discourse was language to be analyzed. Linguistic analysis became a method to study social change. Social change transforms the discourse and thus allows for analysis (Fairclough, 1995). The discourse becomes a part of the social change, shaping the change.

Analyzable language has been divided into two distinguishable forms of discourse. Spoken discourse analyzed the relationship between the speaker's authority and the addressee. "According to Link, a discourse can be defined as 'an institutionalized way of talking that regulates and reinforces action and thereby exerts power'" (Jäger & Maier, 2009). Spoken discourse has used the sentence as the fundamental analytical unit. A dialogue is composed of more than a sentence, and thus a linguistic analysis of the relation of those units take place. Textual discourse involved reading. The interaction of the author and the individual reading is mediated by the text (Widdowson, 1979). The text creates a gulf that does not allow the speaker to further elucidate ideas. The addressee interprets and extrapolates their own meaning. This becomes the basis for social theories of discourse analysis used by Foucault.

The method of analysis goes beyond descriptive linguistics, as it continues the description beyond the realm of the sentence. When discourse is analyzed in chunk the size of a paragraph or larger the discourse begins to reveal the culture in which the discourse was

produced. Additionally, the analysis correlates the writing to both the overall language and culture (Harris, 1952a). DA analyses morphemes connecting sequences. Morphemic sequences allow for the creation of classes of equivalence and secondary equivalence. These classes are then broadened out to the text to examine consistency and create a structural picture of the text (Harris, 1952b). From this structural picture the text can connected cultural elements within the writing. Fairclough (1995) noted the linguistic analysis of Harris is in depth, yet the social theory was lacking and what existed gave little explanation.

DA can determine whether reality is objective or subjective in a written work or utterance or, as he puts it, “do the qualities of language... tell it like it is” (Bramer, 1970, p. 347). Since this early work in DA, a wide variety of methods and analyses of discourse have taken place (Rogers, et.al, 2005). In education, DA has been used to make meaning of educational context. Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) created a framework that coded the linguistic patterns in the classroom of both students and teachers. Labov and Fanshel (1977) used DA with psychotherapy to create a therapeutic model of discourse. Grimshaw (1982) employed Labov and Fanshel’s model of DA to conversational peer interactions in education.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis**

Within DA lay Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in which texts are interpreted to understand societies power relations and the inequalities (Peräkylä, 2003). Bloome and Carter (2001) asserted a society’s power is embedded throughout texts. Careful and systematic analysis reveals the power and control mechanisms of society. Fairclough (2001) described CDA as having given

accounts – and more precise accounts than one tends to find in social research on change - of the ways in which and extent to which social changes are changes in discourse, and the relations between changes in discourse and changes in other, non-discoursal, elements or ‘moments’ of social life (including therefore the question of the senses and ways in which discourse ‘(re)constructs’ social life in processes of social change). (p. 1)

The subject of study in CDA relates to any social sciences because it analyzes a wide variety of power relationships and because it connects to a poststructuralist reading of texts. Ailwood and Lingard (2001) studied policy documents and use CDA to look at gender equality in Australian schools. Tainio (1999) used CDA to delve into personal power relationships between married couples.

Social theorists such as Habermas and Foucault analyzed discourse with the understanding that texts say more than the manifestation surface content holding a deeper latent bond between what is written and the social conditions surrounding those ideas. This bond needed to be examined and analyzed in order to find emancipation from binds of society. To Habermas, the emancipation of discourse improved the human condition of the *other* creating a better overall system (Brocklesby & Cummings, 1996). Foucault used discourse for the individual to emancipate himself or herself from subjugation. His analysis of discourse provided examples for individuals to self emancipate (Brocklesby & Cummings, 1996). Works of CDA become part of the discourse and are thus political acts that “destabilize authoritative discourse and foreground relations of inequality, domination, and subordination” (Luke, 1995/1996, p. 12). This links CDA to the ideas of post structuralism and Foucauldian analysis (Comber, 1997; Kumaravadivelu, 1999).

### **Foucault**

Michel Foucault’s style of inquiry played a driving role in the linguistic turn giving rise to post modernism, post structuralism, critical theory, feminist theory, and a host of other

alternative ways of looking at knowledge. The linguistic turn spread through philosophy, history, and the human sciences. Its progeny in these fields spread through out academia and by the mid-80s individuals like Apple and Gireaux introduced Foucault into education.

Numerous versions of what individuals consider Foucauldian, or Foucault inspired, have emerged due to the variety of subject matter and the duality and comingling of methodologies. Scheurich and McKenzie (2008) stated that no representation of Foucault exists or is possible. Numerous possible readings of Foucault exist and therefore numerous possibilities for a methodology based upon Foucault exist. Butin (2006) reviewed three books dealing with Foucault and education. His article demonstrated each author's divorce of Foucauldian theory from practice and thus reworking of Foucault for his/her own purpose. Thus there is no true Foucauldian theory besides its usage by Foucault himself.

Foucault argued meaning is encoded through the language used by the author. Anything with language can be deconstructed. The deconstruction of discourse surrounding a topic takes place in order to better understand the truth behind the discourse. These truths take the shape of new insight into power, knowledge, resistance, and subjectification of elements of the populace (Scheurich & McKenzie, 2008).

Foucault utilized three analytical phases he terms archeology, genealogy, and care of the self. Two of those, archaeology and genealogy, he also described as methodologies. To understand these methodologies certain terminology must be understood. Foucault wrote in French where the verb "to know" has two differing forms. Foucault took advantage of subtle differentiation of knowledge to make a large distinction. Foucault called these two interrelated types of knowledge, *savoir* and *connaissance*. In *The Archeology of Knowledge*, Foucault (1972) defined *savoir* as "different bodies of learning, philosophical ideas, everyday opinions, but also institutions, commercial practice and police activities, mores" (p. 261). Gutting (1989) described *savoir* as the "discursive conditions that are necessary for the development of *connaissance*" (p. 251). This is why Foucault studied *savoir* in his archaeologies. *Savoir* is "what makes possible at a given moment the appearance of a theory, an opinion, a practice" (Foucault, 1975, p. 261).

*Connaissance* is the formal body of knowledge. It exists within the *savoir*. It can be found in "scientific books, philosophical theories, and religious justifications" (Foucault, 1975, p. 261). *Connaissance* are as Gutting described them "particular bodies of knowledge" (Gutting, 1989). The *savoir* precedes the existence of *connaissance*. Once the *connaissance* exists it is encompassed in the *savoir* from which it emerges.

Archeology traces a body of knowledge, *connaissance*, from its origins through to the modern representation of such an event. It is necessary to study the broader body of knowledge that allows the *connaissance* to exist (Foucault, 1975). In *Madness and Civilization*, Foucault traced the psychological distinction between madness and reason. He began at what he considered the origins of madness in the classical age and traces the subject through to the medical version held as the standard today. The progression was not linear, but "a complex series of transformations where the evolution of structures of social control gave rise to new forms of consciousness which in turn produce new forms of social control" (Khafla, 1972). Foucault placed madness within the greater framework of society and its workings. Thus the work took a narrative form.

Foucault termed his second methodology genealogy. Genealogy attempted to identify the truth inherent in the knowledge base of a subject matter. The mining for truth resulted in the recognition of dissenting views placed in the power structure of society (Shiner, 1982). Foucault

examined changes to the power structure that attempt to subvert dissenting views. He did this by comparing periods of time and examining the mechanisms of social control. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault described the differences between penal styles from one period to another. With the reduction of severity of physical punishment emerged new sets of controls with similar oppressive functions as the previous system of physical abuse. These new systems included the medical field, religion, psychology/psychiatry, and education (Foucault, 1975).

### **Foucault and Educational History**

Educational researchers tend to use Foucauldian ideas of genealogy as their lens through which to create social criticism. I suggest that in the specific instance of educational history researchers must instead look to the archaeology as the Foucauldian methodology of choice. Archaeology fits within the boundaries of the historical process as demonstrated earlier, while meeting the needs of educational researchers concerned with modernity.

Foucault's methodology of historical analysis has additional benefits specifically suited to education. Too often, educational research remains within interdiscursive relationships, interrelating only with the educational field (Olsen, 2004). Through archeology the impact of the research, especially historical research, is broadened into extradiscursive relationships, relating to the cultural complex of society (Olsen, 2004). Foucault argues that the *connaissance* is subsumed within and cannot be understood without the understanding of the larger *savoir*.

Archaeology inherently interlocks the exploration of an educational topic with the economic social and political practices of society, which is made evident through the discourse. The breaking of knowledge into discrete subjects is an administrative convenience that limits the researcher from full understanding (Hatlin, 1988). Lovejoy (1938), even in his creation of different historical subcategories warned of this limiting potential. He stated that his analytic categories are artificial and that the synthetic nature of categories while facilitates certain types of analysis also severs interrelatedness and limits analysis.

Massive changes in the educational system are taking place in America today. Political influences reshape the educational landscape through new systems of funding and evaluation as high stakes testing reshapes the curricula of the nation. Foucauldian archeology serves as a viable lens through which to create history in the field of education examining these changes. His work gives educational historians a way to examine the forces inherent in the underlying power structures of society to examine the effects of educational policy and reform upon the culture of the nation. Foucault's methodology gives liberty for the historian to place education within the larger framework of the society in which it is embedded. The archaeology allows that inquiry to look at all facets of effect while refraining from making judgment of truth inherent in genealogy. This usage goes beyond using Foucault simply as a framework for examination such as is usually seen in education. Instead it suggests that taking the totality of Foucault into account and using him to create histories of education stay truer to Foucault and better serve the field of education.

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