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Guest editorial: special education and the deviant child in the Nordic countries μ the impact of Foucault

Julie Allan*
School of Education
University of Birmingham
Email: j.allan.1@bham.ac.uk

*corresponding author

Bjørn Hamre
Danish School of Education
Aarhus University
Email: bjha@edu.au.dk

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This special issue considers the impact of the work of Foucault on special educational needs in the Nordic countries. It comes at a point at which we are seeing a global expansion of what Sally Stiggins (2002) and Pasi Sahlberg (2007) have described as rapidly growing assessment and accountability systems, accompanied by an educational testing profession (Ydesen, 2011; Ydesen et al., 2013). These systems are validated and maintained by educational professionals and politicians, who are increasingly reassigned to categories of mental disorders and institutional gaming practices (Waitoller, Artiles & Cheney, 2010; Artiles et al., 2010). Inherent learner differences associated with race and poverty are also caught within the web of deviance through practices of genetic determinism (Gillborn, 2000). These cultural practices are more covert but are presented and taken up by politicians and others as part of a scientific discourse.
all the more important to interrogate and revisit current understandings and to acquire new conceptual tools to do so.

The work of the philosopher Michel Foucault has already proved invaluable to many education scholars for analysing how practices of subjectification and genealogy. Her analysis of the institutionalization of the feebleminded has, in turn, influenced the Norwegian way of interpreting disability studies and Foucault has been subsequently applied to fight the case of the feebleminded and other institutionalized groups during the twentieth century. The Nordic institutionality, rather than on the issues of subjectification related to questions of ethics and rights of disabled people. These studies of the constructions and accommodations of the deviant child have been quite separate from Foucauldian analyses of education in general, the latter having tended to examine how subjects have been governed in education. The discourses associated with disabled people have been shifting over the last 20 years from concerns with normalization to issues of rights and inclusion, but this has not been taken up. There are, however, some exceptions and some of the contributions in this special issue offer analyses that position the disabled subject as being capable of acting and of challenging forms of subjectivization and control.

The articles that make up this special issue offer a strong and coherent narrative on time, place, and personhood. Time is addressed through an historical and Foucauldian reading of past educational and diagnostic practices which gives us an opportunity to explore the ways of speaking about pathologies and of how psychology and medicine have taken up. They possess the truth about medicine and psychology. Foucault, in his analyses, offers some substantial theoretical tools that could enable us to understand current contexts more fully. The particularity of the space of the Nordic countries is elaborated within the articles covering Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Iceland, and the differences between countries provides a mirror with which to reflect upon other European contexts as well as back on the Nordic countries themselves. The changing nature of the space of the school is also a feature of the articles and is an extremely important consideration. Sjöberg (2014), reflecting on the radically changed space of the school, notes an increasing imperative on the student for visualization and documentation of learning and indeed engagement within school. The physical space, thus, becomes subordinate to visual and documentary representation. The subject of the child...
is consequently radically affected by an altered symmetry between adults and children, leading to an intensification of individualization and the development of a self-regulated child (Beach & Dovemark, 2011). We see, then, the emergence of the school. Finally, a broader perspective on the incursion of imperatives of the school. Finally, a broader perspective on the incursion of 

The first of the articles re-examines the diagnosis or deviant child as an entity that lives in the present is just as strange as the past. They draw attention to the particular 

The articles in this special issue offer some powerful provocations. They incite use of it, and even to re-read it (Golder, 2013), not just to revisit our understandings of our history, but as Axelsson points out, in order to see that present is just as strange as the past. They draw attention to the particular
contribution of the Nordic countries to the debates about normality and abnormality that, although reflecting differences between countries, is both significant and valuable as a whole. They add sophistication to understandings of these constructions and of their validation through testing and diagnosis. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, these contributions help us to recognize that a different kind of education could possibly help us to realize the freedoms for which Foucault exhorted us to strive.

References


The subject of exemption: through discourses of normalization and individualization in Denmark

Bjørn Hamre*
Danish School of Education
Aarhus University
E-Mail: bjha@edu.au.dk

*T corresponding author

Tine Fristrup
Danish School of Education
Aarhus University
E-Mail: tifr@edu.au.dk

Gerd Christensen
Department of Media, Cognition and Communication
Copenhagen University
E-mail: gerd@hum.ku.dk

Abstract

This article examines the constructions of the deviant subject in Danish Foucauldian educational research. Following the work of Foucault, we argue that the deviant subject, on the one hand, could be considered as a subject of exemption. In this case, exemption is deduced from Foucault's understanding of the relation between normality and deviancy. On the other hand, an examination of Danish Foucauldian disability research shows that this conception of 'the deviant subject' has changed over time. Hence, the present expectations of 'the disabled' are – more or less – influenced by contemporary discourses of general education. Thus, this article argues that Foucauldian disability studies could benefit from taking into account Foucauldian research in the field of general education. Until recently, the two research fields have been mutually isolated.

Keywords: normality, deviancy, normalization, disability studies, the subject of exemption, general education, Denmark
Introduction

The distinction between normality and deviancy, and therewith exemption, is one of the recurring themes in the French philosopher Michel Foucault’s work. According to Foucault, madness is a condition that has changed its image from the medieval period to the Renaissance and modern times, along with the transformation of society. However, a major shift took place in the middle of the seventeenth century: ‘[…] the world of madness becomes the world of exclusion’ (Foucault, 2005, p. 117). This is related to the emergence of institutions solely serving the function of internment. In his archaeological examination, *L’histoire de la Folie* (Foucault 1961), Foucault explores how the emergence of the asylum tends to position the mad as ‘an exemption’ from reason and normality.

The important point here is that normality cannot be understood without abnormality and vice versa. They establish, so to speak, each other’s constitutive ‘outside’ (Deleuze, 1986). Thus, the two are dependent on one another. The role of the researcher is, then, to examine the relationship between the two. This is also the case when Foucault shows how disciplinary power constantly reconstructs the relation between normality and deviancy in schools and institutions (Foucault, 1979; 2006).

It is meaningless to reduce Foucault’s complex thoughts solely to the deviancy-normality issue, since his writings cover many other themes like disciplinary power, the will to knowledge and truth, the subject, and so forth. As we know, Foucault develops and refines his understanding of normality and deviance throughout his authorship. In light of this, it is striking that Danish Foucauldian educational research has followed two separate tracks: one focusing on special (needs) education, and one focusing on general education. When it comes to discussions of pedagogical practice in schools it is, therefore, manifest that the two tracks or traditions have hardly communicated with one another.

The two traditions can positively influence each other (Hamre, 2012, 2014). Thus, in this article, it is argued that an examination of a possible transgression between the two research areas might lead to new valuable insights into ‘the subject of exemption’. This hypothesis entails that studying deviancy and problematic behaviour in schools must include what is regarded as normal behaviour in a given period and institutional setting. This article demonstrates that the very marked delineation between deviancy and normality becomes less clear in present conceptions of ‘the subject of exemption’. Thus, the demarcating line between the research field of general education and disability studies cannot be upheld. Issues like diagnosing, classification and stigmatization must include analyses of the constructions of normality in schools.

The methodological approach in the article takes the form of archaeology of knowledge. Hence, this article first presents an introduction to the research field of Danish Foucauldian disability studies; secondly, it examines how studies in governmentality and subjectification in general education can possibly contribute to a contemporary analysis of this subject. Accordingly, this article is positioned within the tradition of critical educational research (see e.g., Masschelein, 2004) and critical disability studies (Allan, 2005; 2008; Tremain, 2005; Slee & Cook, 1999; Slee, 2011; Baker, 2002; Goodley, 2011; Goodley & Rapley, 2002/2006). In international Foucauldian critical disability studies, the emphasis is foremost on the problem of inclusion of ‘the deviant’; however, this is not explicitly the aim of this article. And though the field has
an international background, it is important to note that the focus of the present article is on the Danish conditions for research and current issues related to this context.

**Danish Foucauldian disability studies on the efforts towards normalization**

Michel Foucault's analysis of the normality-deviancy issue (Foucault, 1962; 2001; 2005; 2006) was introduced in a Danish context in the beginning of the 1970s. The first translated book was *Maladie mentale et psychologie* (Foucault, 1962), published in Denmark in 1971 as *Sindssygdom og psykologi* [*Mental illness and psychology*], and published and revised again in 2005. The French version from 1962 contained a chapter summing up the main points from *Folie et Dérision: Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*, which was published and defended by Foucault in 1961. This work was not translated into Danish until 2003, when it was entitled *Galskabens historie i den klassiske periode* [*The history of madness in the classical age*], considered to be very close to Foucault's original work. However, the book was also circulated in Denmark in a highly abbreviated Norwegian translation (Foucault, 1973), which did not capture the literary originality in Foucault's language. *Survieller et Punir* (1975) was translated into Danish as *Overvågning og straf* [*Survelliance and Punish*] (Foucault, 2002) but a Norwegian translation had already been published in 1977. *Histoire de la sexualité 1. La volonté de savoir* (Foucault, 1976) was translated into Danish in 1978 as *Seksualitetens historie, 1: Viljen til viden* [*The history of sexuality, 1: the will to knowledge*], and revised and published again in 1994.

Apart from these translations, Danish scholars, primarily with a background in literature studies, philosophy or studies within the history of ideas, presented the normality-deviancy issue and the critique of institutions in a number of introductions to Foucault's thought; some of the most important include: Esbern Krause-Jensen, *Viden og magt. Studier i Michel Foucault's institutionskritik* [*Knowledge and power: studies in Michel Foucault institutional criticism*] (1978); Dag Heede, *Det tomme menneske* [*The empty human*] (1992); and Jens Erik Kristensen, Knut Ove Ellansen and Niels Brügger's anthology of various works by the philosopher, *Foucault's masker* [*Foucault's masks*] (1995). These introductions all appeared in the Danish context before the translations of works such as *Folie et Dérision: Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* and *Survieller et Punir* (translated into Danish in 2003 and 2002).

Only a few Danish researchers within disability studies have carried out research from a Foucauldian perspective. These studies lie mostly within the frame of the history of disability, as a way of questioning or problematizing the research undertaken in the field of special-needs education – a field of research which was and remains primarily the domain of psychologists and educational psychologists. The most prominent researcher in the Danish history of disability has been the historian Birgit Kirkebæk, who has conducted several research projects, all within a Foucauldian framework (Kirkebæk, 1985; 1993; 1997/1998; 2001; 2004; 2007; 2009; 2010). Edith Mandrup Rønn has also conducted research within the field of disability history, but with an ethnological approach to her work on the living conditions of disabled people throughout history (Rønn, 1996). Another prominent researcher is Jesper Holst, who has used Foucault's framework in order to question the living conditions of institutionalized disabled people. Holst has a background within the research field of social pedagogy and uses the Foucauldian approach to
problematize institutionalization as processes of normalization throughout history (Holst, 1977; 1993; 1998; Holst et al., 2000). Finally, Frank Bylov (2006; 2010) has made a major contribution to understanding the development of empowerment movements among people with intellectual disabilities with inspiration from Kirkebæk’s interpretations of the Foucauldian framework. Bylov’s research focuses on how pedagogical strategies have encouraged disabled people to organize in different movements as counter-discourses to the dominant medicalization of disabled people.

One could say that the contributions from these four Danish researchers belongs to the first generation of Danish Foucauldian research on disability. This research focuses especially on the efforts towards normalization in the 1950s closely related to the pioneering work conducted by the then Danish Head of Welfare, Niels Erik Bank-Mikkelsen. His efforts were directed against the eugenic discourse and involved a critique of how Danish society treated disabled people; he proclaimed that ‘we’ could and should do better, meaning that ‘we’ as a society could give disabled people a better life than the ideal ‘normal life’ (Bank-Mikkelsen, 1971).

This article interprets the first generation of Danish Foucauldian disability research as a departure from a normative emancipatory project in the wake of the social political agenda of the 1930s. It installed a process of normalization as a prophylactic approach to the improvement of the Danish population, underlining the unavoidable humanism in the wake of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Humans Rights (Kristensen & Schmidt, 1989). Bank-Mikkelsen introduced the concept of ‘normalization’ as a specific ‘deinstitutionalization’ of disabled people with regard to a ‘visibility’ and ‘equality’ approach to improve the living conditions of disabled people in Denmark. This historical concept is significantly different from Foucault’s analytical use of normalization in contrast to deviation. It was seen as an effort to install a counter-discourse to the dominant eugenic and medicalized approach to disability. According to a report from the United Nations on human rights and disability, there has been a dramatic shift in perspective towards disabled people over the past two decades in favour of a human-rights perspective on disability, which entails moving away from viewing people with disabilities as problems towards viewing them as holders of rights; the debate about the rights of disabled people is, therefore, connected to a wider debate about the place of difference in society (Quinn & Degener, 2002).

The counter-discourse was made possible in relation to the aforementioned 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Bank-Mikkelsen, 1971). In Article One of the declaration, there is a notion of ‘reason and conscience’, which has been used to question the lives of disabled people during the period from the 1880s to the 1950s (UN, 1949). Earlier, from about 1855 until the 1880s, the view of disabled people was more akin to an optimistic belief in a possible cure for disabilities (Bank-Mikkelsen, 1971; Kirkebæk, 2010). The shift in the 1880s towards a protectionist approach resulted in a classification of disabled people into those who could benefit from treatment or interventions and those who could not (Bank-Mikkelsen, 1971; Kirkebæk, 2010; Rønn, 1996).

Those disabled people who were regarded as being beyond medical and educational reach were excluded, classified as incurable and uneducable, and placed in asylums or prisons, just like criminals (Kirkebæk, 2010). This past classification of disabled people as uneducable is reversed in current Danish society, because disabled people have become ‘educable subjects’ due to a general shift to a human-rights perspective and a specific approach to The
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Salamanca Statement from 1994 and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities from 2006. When disabled people become subjects they experience the different subjectifications made available in contemporary society; in this case, the processes of subjectification follow the education or learning agenda from the 1990s, a point to which this article will return. In order to demonstrate how this change is made possible, the article follows the construction of different discourses in Danish Foucauldian disability studies.

Danish social political discourse from the 1930s developed during the period from the 1950s to the 1970s into a strong critique of the institutionalization of disabled people, which had been going on since the 1880s (Holst, 1993; Kirkebæk, 1993). The pioneering work of Bank-Mikkelsen on trying to broaden the conceptualization of ‘the normal person’ followed the human-rights declaration and the legal changes occurring in 1959. An Act known as ‘Åndssvageloven’, (i.e., an Act directed towards those regarded as feebleminded) made it possible to talk differently about the lives of disabled people according to the discourse of normalization that followed the passing of the law. In general terms, it meant that the efforts of medical categorization were questioned in the normalization efforts emphasizing both deinstitutionalization and decategorization (Rydberg, 2006).

Since the 1970s, Denmark has witnessed an approach to the lives of disabled people that is focused on education, training, and treatment, albeit with an understanding of disabled people as objects and not yet as subjects (Quinn & Degener, 2002). The discourse on education, training, and treatment follows two different tracks, which can be seen as relating to disabled people as objects in contrast to disabled people as subjects (Quinn & Degener, 2002). The ‘objectifying’ track is constituted in a psycho-medical discourse and aims at training and adaptation (Kirkebæk, 2010). The other, ‘subjectifying’ track follows a social discourse focusing on social relations and quality of life (Kirkebæk, 2010).

It is possible to see the development of these two tracks in disability history as two different approaches to the past efforts towards normalization underlying the shift to a human-rights perspective over the past two decades, best exemplified by the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for People with Disabilities, adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 48/96 of 20th December 1993 (Quinn & Degener, 2002). This shift in perspective from the 1990s has made possible the present efforts towards individualization in the contemporary Danish approach to the lives of disabled people as individuals (subjects), and in relation to Danish educational research concerning the construction of the individual as ‘the educable subject’ (Rydberg, 2006; Hamre, 2012; 2014; Drejer, 2012).

In order to understand how an individual is constructed as a deviant subject, it is necessary to consider and analyse the efforts made in the 1950s to introduce the concept of normalization. According to Holst (1993), the efforts towards normalization have made the lives of contemporary disabled people possible as an articulation of social barriers, whether this is related to environmental issues or oriented towards the use of language. The efforts towards normalization were grounded in a discourse on the integration of disabled people into society, departing from the UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities from 1993.

Within a Foucauldian framework, it is possible to understand ‘normalization’ relationally, historically, practically, and critically. This can contribute to the
understanding of what constitutes ‘the deviant subject’ as an object, when it is elaborated in a psycho-medical discourse and ordered as a deficit model with a focus on the bodily embedded deficits articulated as ‘impairments’. In the critique of the objectifying and non-social approach to disability as impairments, the individual deficit has been challenged by the social approach to disability. This was done in order to question the ways in which society governs the construction of deviation and ‘deficient’ objects. In order to debunk the dominant medicalization efforts in Danish society, the notion of object and subject constellations in a human-rights perspective can be interpreted as a normalizing humanization initiative in regard to the processes of deinstitutionalization and decategorization (Rydberg, 2006). This debunking is based on a subject-object dialectic and grounded in an essentialist view, different from Foucault’s anti-essentialist approach; further, in this case, the ‘debunking’ is shaped as a normative approach, and the self-evident understanding of the normalization (humanization) efforts as creating better and more humane lives for disabled people than medicalization and diagnostic efforts have done.

The pedagogical turn

Bylov’s (2006; 2010) work elaborated on the development of a pedagogical turn in the approach to the lives of disabled people in regard to the efforts towards normalization, which resulted in the Act known as ‘Åndssvageloven’ and disabled people’s right to education (Rydberg, 2006). The efforts at medicalization were challenged and questioned in the 1970s as the need for deinstitutionalization and decategorization, and a general humanization of disabled people was articulated as an issue of social integration (Rydberg, 2006). In the 1990s, the integrative approach to social cohesion was questioned and social inclusion became the new framework of an inclusive approach to advance social cohesion in Danish society, which later developed into ‘inclusive education’ and a problematization of the limits in the integrative approach (Holst et al. 2000). Both of the questions, or problematizations, focused on social cohesion as a necessary approach to maintaining sustainability in Danish society, and were elaborated in regard to the generalization of education as a human right that followed the UN Standard Rules from 1993 that included disabled people as ‘educable citizens’ (Rydberg, 2006; Kristensen, 2012).

But while functioning as a social and political drive to empower disabled people to live independent lives, the pedagogical (integrative) discourse became a social barrier to the emancipation of disabled people (Bylov, 2010). ‘The disabled’ became, in a Foucauldian sense, subject to a new discursive construction of ‘people with special needs’, and the need for pedagogical and therapeutic approaches articulated a ‘lifelong special-education configuration’ of their lives. The issues of integration were problematized in the dualistic objectifying and subjectifying approaches to the construction of ‘the subject of deviation’ as ‘the object of special needs’.

The efforts towards normalization replayed the dualism between the individual and the social because the efforts to integrate constituted the processes of normalization in favour of society: the individual had to adapt to society and not vice versa. This can be interpreted as an individual deficit and social-barrier approach that constitutes ‘the deviation subject’ as a ‘subject of exemption’. ‘The disabled people’ have become normalized; however, in an integrative approach they are constructed as subjects of exemption that can be managed through the pedagogical approach to their special needs.
because of the objectifying approach and the tendency to perceive people with special needs as problems (Allan, 2008).

In Danish Foucauldian studies of disability, the construction of the deviant subject is constituted as a possible consequence of the project of modernization from the 1800s eugenic discourse and further into the normalization efforts of the early 1930s and late 1950s in the development of a social and political discourse. The humanization efforts in the social and political discourse elaborated a more explicit individualizing approach in the 1980s and 1990s with regard to the shift into a human-rights perspective on the social and political agenda in order to pursue empowerment strategies in the elaborated pedagogical discourses on social inclusion (Rydberg, 2006; Bylov, 2010; Kirkebæk, 2010; Hamre, 2012; 2014; Drejer, 2012). When looking into the literature that elaborates the pedagogical discourse on ‘inclusive education’ as a problematization of the approach of ‘special-needs education’ to the construction of the subject of exemption, an explicit Foucauldian approach to the problematization is missing.

The efforts towards normalization in the era of integration have been challenged by changes in an increasingly individualized society. Following an (inclusive) agenda on ‘education and learning’ as the ‘best’ way to obtain social cohesion in an individualized society (Kristensen, 2012), the efforts for greater normalization and integration have become challenged by the efforts for further individualization and inclusion. In the literature on ‘inclusive education’, researchers point to a necessary shift in the approach to pedagogy and education, which transgress ‘the special education’ into ‘a general education’ (Holst et al., 2000). Drawing on the analysis outlined above, we argue here that the past normalization (with a focus on integration) efforts (emphasizing training and adaption) have become the present individualization (with a focus on inclusion) efforts (emphasizing social relations and quality of life): both disabled and non-disabled people have become ‘equally’ individualized as educable subjects with individual (special) approaches to learning in current Danish ‘learning’ society.

Individualization in Danish Foucauldian educational research

The view of deviancy has changed over time; in a (post-) modern Western society, everybody is considered as an individual, and thus as something ‘special’; further, in a ‘learning society’, everybody is (or must be) potentially educable. Concerning research, it therefore seems reasonable that disability studies embraces or at least looks a little further into the research field of the construction of normality in education. Here, the inspiration from Foucault has had a major impact in Denmark in recent decades.

Danish researchers have conducted Foucauldian analyses of gender (Søndergaard, 2000); gender, ethnicity, and school life (Staunæs, 2002; Kofød, 2003; Helms & Krøjer, 2011); parental involvement (Knudsen, 2010); school architecture (Juelskjær, 2007); and student project groups (Christensen, 2013). The assumption made by all these studies is that the subject for education is not a static phenomenon, but (to a varying extent) an effect of the present discourse. Accordingly, the aim of the Foucauldian research is (philosophical) critique: to question ideas that are taken for granted in our culture. Questioning the truisms of pedagogics and education inevitably leads to questioning ‘what we (as educators and researchers) are doing while we are doing it’ (Allan, 2005, p. 291). This is also the case in the educational
research that focuses on analyses of the discourse of education (e.g., Hamre, 2014; Krejsler, 2002; Krejsler, (ed.) 2004; Drejer, 2012; Christensen, 2008). From different angles, these studies are all concerned with the construction of ‘the normal child’ as the subject of normalization. Thus, they may be considered as resources for further development of the field of disability studies.

Danish Foucauldian educational research can roughly be divided into two traditions: 1) a tradition that primarily focuses on the perspectives of power/knowledge (pastoral, disciplinary, bio-power) and the construction of the human subject; and 2) a tradition that focuses primarily on governmentality. The former focuses on the micro-genetics of the construction of the individual as a subject, whereas the studies of governmentality concern the micro- and macro-genetics of government in the (post-) modern state (Senellart, 2004; Hamre, 2012; 2014). While the former can be regarded as belonging to the discipline of social psychology, the latter can be regarded as belonging to the social sciences. Thus, governmentality is Foucault’s terminology for the internalization of political control mechanisms that make the individual ‘government-able’ (Foucault, 1991; Senellart, 2004). However, in practice, the studies in both areas are quite diverse and the two traditions are rather intertwined and overlapping. Hence, the division outlined below is not fixed and is indeed difficult to uphold.

The construction of ‘the educable subject’

Foucauldian studies within the field of social psychology are based on the concept of power/knowledge (Foucault, 1980; Foucault, 1994; Foucault, 1998): power as a productive force closely tied to knowledge; a force that has the human subject as its primary product (Søndergaard, 2000; Staunæs, 2002; Kofoed, 2003; Christensen, 2013). These studies all focus on subjectification as the production of ‘the appropriate student’ through the micro-genetics of power: these involve mechanisms of inclusion, exclusion, positioning, and possibilities for subjectification in specific settings at school and university.

These studies show how teachers and fellow students evaluate specific students and how this process is closely tied to the selection and exclusion of ‘the inappropriate student’. In the school context, students are evaluated according to academic skills and social competencies (Kofoed, 2003), how they meet expectations attached to gender and ethnicity (Kofoed, 2003; Staunæs, 2002; Buchardt, 2008; Helms & Krejer, 2011), and the extent to which they are able to position themselves as ‘appropriate’ students (Christensen, 2013). The studies also show how psychology plays a pivotal role in the evaluation of what can be regarded as ‘the norm’ or ‘being normal’ – that is, in the micro-processes of normalization. Consequently, the formation of ‘the normal child’ in pedagogy is achieved through an amalgam of psychology and pedagogy, which forms a power/knowledge complex in contemporary education (Rose, 1998; Walkerdine, 1998; Popkewitz, 2008; Fendler, 2001). Thus, the thesis in this article is that these analyses not only give an insight into the construction of ‘normality’, but may also serve as means for understanding some of the current and future insights within disability studies. In accordance with pedagogical trends in Denmark today, that is, the discourse of ‘inclusion’, no individual must per definition be excluded from the learning environment.

The studies of the ongoing subjectification in school contexts are
supplemented by studies of the Danish educational discourse that includes analyses of different kinds of texts concerning education and schooling. An example can be found in Gerd Christensen’s book, *Individ og disciplinering – det pædagogiske subjekts historie* ([*The individual and discipline: the history of the pedagogical subject*] 2008). Through genealogical analyses of contemporary pedagogical ‘trends’ in Denmark (multiple intelligences, group and project studies, classroom management, learning plans, and structured education), Christensen shows how the *power/knowledge complex* of pedagogy-psychology works in the formation of ‘the appropriate subject’ for schooling: the rational agent.

‘The appropriate student’ of today knows how to act in a flexible school without timetabled lessons and fixed classrooms, and is even able to identify when flexibility or structure is expected (Drejer, 2012; Christensen, 2008). Many of these ‘traits’ can be traced back to the progressive pedagogy of the early 1900s. Thus, the expectations for ‘the normal child’ in current Danish education are deeply rooted in the Danish culture and concept of the child (Nørgaard, 1977; Hamre, 2012; Øland, 2007). Accordingly, they can serve as a means for understanding the discourse of the student as an individual – that is, the discourse of individualization.

One of the sources for inspiration in Danish research is a paper by Valerie Walkerdine (1998), in which she shows how psychology infiltrates the practice of school education. Influenced by Foucault, Walkerdine (1998) regards developmental psychology (mental measurement as a science) and education (mental measurement as a practice) as an important *power/knowledge complex* that ‘[…] produces the object of classification, the scientific techniques for its production and as the pedagogical techniques for its normalization and regulation’ (p. 171). These two concepts define and produce ‘the normal child’, a process of normalization through practices of differentiation. Walkerdine’s (1998) conversion of Foucault’s concept of *governmentality* into the concept of ‘developmentality’ emphasizes the individualization processes further. ‘Developmentality’ refers to the equivalent internalization of discourse that makes individuals ‘development-able’ according to specific standards that are derived from psychology. This includes an idea of individual freedom and personal rationality that matures within specific developmental stages, and is expressed through the child’s curiosity, creativity, learning ability, and self-initiating activity (Walkerdine, 1998, p. 190).

Lynn Fendler also applies the concept of ‘developmentality’ in an analysis of current pedagogical principles which focus on interactionism and at developing ‘flexible’ individuals (Fendler, 2001). Fendler finds the origin for this concern in the fast-changing (post-) modern labour market, where ‘flexibility’ connotes freedom, liberation, and de-regulation – all components that are regarded as signs of a measure of competence. However, Fendler argues that interactionism by no means frees individuals. On the contrary, it constitutes a powerful technology of the self, whose specific form of being flexible refers to being transformable and capable of participation in social-learning processes such as groups and teams. Hence ‘flexibility’ and ‘social skills’ are not in themselves attached to freedom and liberation, but become hallmarks of normalization (Fendler, 2001; Hamre, 2012; 2014). Though these studies are conducted within the field of ‘normality’, they may include insights important to the field of disability studies. Hence, ‘flexibility’ and ‘development-ability’ can also be claimed to be in focus in contemporary expectations to ‘the deviant subject’. As indicated, the analyses of Fendler (2001) and Walkerdine (1998) mark an intersection between the analyses of *power/knowledge* and
The tradition of governmentality studies is taken up by the Danish educational researcher John Krejsler (2002; 2004). Krejsler, informed by Thomas Popkewitz, analyses the Danish state as a contributor to the constitution of the (post-) modern individual through education. Danish law establishes different educational apparatuses as essential to current Danish education from preschool to university, and Krejsler focuses primarily on individualization as the overriding discourse in contemporary Danish education (Krejsler, 2002; 2004). As Krejsler remarks, the discourse of individualization is productive in the sense that it makes individuals believe that institutional intentions are their own goals (Krejsler, 2004). Likewise, this is an insight that could fruitfully be applied to the field of disability research. The processes of individualization that occur both within the field of ‘normality’ and the field of ‘disability’ are framed by certain institutions that all have interests in upholding certain boundaries. Thus, the policies of the subject are an active component in the construction of the individual.

To summarize, Danish and international educational research has taken up concepts of Foucault to identify some traits in the contemporary definition of ‘the normal subject’ in education: ‘the normal subject’ is constructed as autonomous, flexible, creative, socially responsive, suitable within the categories of developmental psychology, and responsible for his or her own individuality and learning as a lifelong process. He or she is capable of co-working in groups and teams and is able to master the complexity of interdisciplinarity and the flexibility of the ‘transformable school’.

These desirable ‘traits’ may also have an impact on an analysis of the ideals and standards for ‘the deviant subject’ in postmodernity. As the analyses above show, contemporary expectations for ‘the deviant subject’ seem to meet the expectations of ‘the normal subject’. Thus, development-ability, flexibility, and learnability are not only expectations for ‘the normal subject’ but (perhaps to a different extent) things that concern all individuals. On the other hand, the category of ‘normal child’ is dependent on having a constitutive ‘exterior’, which is included through its exclusion (Derrida, 1974). Thus, the category is both establishing and dependent on the category of ‘the not-normal child’, a category ready to absorb the children who do not fit into the concept of normality. Following this analysis, ‘the not-normal child’ lacks all the qualities (demonstrating, acting, and showing) that define ‘the normal child’.

Conclusion

Looking at Foucault's contributions to the Danish field of disability studies, his early works may seem obvious when it comes to analysing internment and exclusion. However, they are inadequate when it comes to analysing newer phenomena such as individualization, individual rights, education, and inclusion. In the analysis of these issues, an equally strong influence from international Foucauldian disability research is not evident in Danish disability studies.

Foucault’s influence on Danish disability studies mainly draws on works such as *Discipline and Punish* and *Madness and civilization*. According to the analysis presented in this article, one of the reasons for the impact of this influence is the close theoretical connection to the normalization discourse of the 1960s, and the historical incarceration of disabled people, which called for a strong critique of the institutionalization of that time; in line with this analysis,
future analysis calls for a more differentiated critique of discourses such as individual rights, empowerment, and inclusion. In his work, Frank Bylov has argued for the value of education as a right for people with disabilities (Bylov, 2010), which in the current analysis has been labelled ‘the pedagogical turn’.

As the analysis shows, disabled people’s conditions are increasingly affected by expectations of individualization, similar to contemporary expectations of people in general. This concerns human rights, ethics, and learning. To some extent, it is even possible to say that the subject of exemption has been ‘normalized’. Normalization, in this case, concerns a strong focus on individualization and inclusion. This article claims that this indicates a need for a stronger emphasis on the studies of governmentality within general education in order to analyse the dynamics of individualization as a discourse in education (Rose, 1998; Fendler, 2001; Krejsler, 2004).

Thus, when it comes to the study of the ‘subject of exemption’ in particular, and issues of inclusion and exclusion in general, this approach calls for a further integration of studies in general education and similar studies in special (-needs) education. In the era of postmodernity, we are all in some way ‘subjects of exemption’, or at least positioned as human beings with unique potentials. Within the field of disability in Denmark, this change is concerned with a discursive shift from integration to inclusion. The discourse of inclusion cannot be restricted to special-needs education, since everybody in the present school is regarded as ‘special’ or ‘unique’, which requires that the teacher and the learning environment must deal with individual learning strategies. This is in juxtaposition to the strategy of integration that regarded the individual as an exemption to the ideal of the normal in schools. In the discourse of inclusion, the problems of learning are caused by the context, rather than regarded as a personal deficit in the individual. The discourse of inclusion currently appears simultaneously with discourses of individualization, empowerment, and lifelong learning. These discourses require new analytical tools, rather than drawing on the madness-reason dichotomy.

References


Intelligence testing, ethnicity, and construction of the deviant child: Foucault and special education in Sweden

Thom Axelsson
Faculty of Education and Society
Malmö University
Email: thom.axelsson@mah.se

Abstract

In this article, I discuss how Foucault may help us to reach a different understanding of special education. This article primarily draws on two analytical tools from Foucault’s ‘toolbox’: genealogy and governmentality. These tools are used to analyse three different cases of intelligence testing from the debate concerning the Swedish school organization in the early twentieth century. It is possible to see intelligence-quoting (IQ) testing as an overarching tool for controlling social behaviour. Intelligence-quoting testing was an important tool of power, with the aim of establishing certain regimes of truth on a societal as well as on an individual level. This article shows through a Foucauldian analysis that we should be careful in interpreting this entirely as an expression of state power from above or as different experts’ intentions. Rather, by using a genealogical approach, we can attempt to (re)write the history of interpretations, or problematizations, and then we can utilize a perspective of governmentality that focuses on the techniques and their effects.

Keywords: IQ testing, genealogy, governmentality, Foucault, special education, Sweden

Introduction

Throughout the twentieth century, the nature of intelligence has been a ‘hot topic’ and an intensely debated issue, especially in school and in connection with special education. It is the measuring and testing of intelligence in particular that have evoked the strongest reactions from protesters and defenders alike. The discussion of intelligence tests has frequently revolved around questions such as whether these tests will lead to increased social integration and liberation or, on the contrary, to exclusion of and discrimination against certain groups. In this context is it hard to ignore the impact of the work of Foucault on special education and on constructions of the deviant child.

It is not easy to define exactly what special education is, but it is often associated with school activities and special instruction for students in need of special support. However, this is too narrowly defined, so the special-education
activities should be seen in a wider perspective that also includes social, organizational, and didactic perspectives. Research on special education is often interdisciplinary and includes disciplines such as medicine, sociology, psychology, pedagogy, and, occasionally, history. In recent years, special-education research has been exposed to some criticism that it is too self-directed and focused on deviation. Also, it has been argued that special-education research is often ideological, normative, and policy-prescriptive, and it lacks a theoretical base (Ahlberg, 2007; Nilholm & Björk-Åkesson, 2007). At the same time, the Swedish School Inspectorate has pointed to several shortcomings both in the identification and the investigation of pupils placed in special classes, which is remarkable in the light that since the early 1990s the placements of students in special classes have increased (Skolinspektionen, 2011).

The focus of the present article is not intelligence-quotient (IQ) testing and the construction of ‘deviance’ as a political and educational concern. Rather, it is the tools and techniques of government set up in school and society for ‘the conduct of conduct’ (Foucault, 2008). The article primarily draws on two analytical tools from Michel Foucault’s ‘toolbox’, namely, genealogy and governmentality, and examines how these may help us to raise new questions that are neither normative nor have an ideological perspective.

This article primarily focuses on Swedish conditions during the early twentieth century, and comprises three main parts. The first gives a background to Foucault’s concepts and his views on knowledge and power. The second focuses on intelligence testing and the debate concerning the Swedish school organization. I shall use three different ‘cases’ or ‘problem descriptions’ to discuss how Foucault’s tools can help us to analyse the differentiation into categories of giftedness in school: the concept of talent; the ‘Tattare’: construction of a risky group; and making the right choices. In the concluding third part I shall discuss how Foucault’s work can contribute to a reinterpretation of history of both special education and the deviant child and how this may awaken us to a different understanding of the underlying issues.

Foucault’s concepts of genealogy and governmentality

Since the concept of genealogy can be used in different ways, it is important, first of all, to make some distinctions. The genealogical method as it was developed by Foucault is not about tracing the origin of things, as if thoughts and practices have a definitive and unquestionable beginning which researchers can discover through scientific methods. Rather, genealogy, according to Foucault, is a historical method that aims not to reconstruct the past as ‘it really happened’, but,

... to identify the accidents, the minute deviations—or conversely, the complete reversals—the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value to us; it is to discover that truth or being does not lie at the root of what we know and what we are, but the exteriority of accidents. (Foucault, 1984a, p. 81)

The genealogical method is more concerned with the often unexpected and strange connections between ideals, intentions, and strategies, on the one hand, and the actual outcome of these, on the other. At a more fundamental level, genealogy is fuelled by a desire to do research without leaning on the well-established enlightenment dream of society as moving towards a
humanistic utopia through reason and science. Instead, the genealogical approach presupposes a world where power relations and ongoing conflicts belong to the warp and woof of social life and where human agency, intentions, and aspirations must always be understood in relation to dominant discourses and specific, time-bound ‘regimes of truth’ (Foucault, 1980, p. 131).

The genealogical approach can never assume, therefore, an underlying essence, a strict cause or an objective truth behind certain phenomena, and consequently do research on this basis. Rather, it should examine how, under what conditions, and with what effects a certain phenomenon is viewed as true or false, important or unimportant, relevant or irrelevant, and so on. What is constructed as a problem for school or society during a certain period is, therefore, not viewed as a fact by the researcher but as something contingent, something that could have been ignored or formulated in many different ways, given the different dominant discourses. Simply put: genealogy is about destabilizing what has been taken for granted, to defamiliarize that which has come to be viewed as familiar and ordinary (Qvarsebo & Axelsson, 2015).

Furthermore, and importantly, a genealogical approach to historical research entails an analysis of power relations and power mechanisms. Foucault coined the term governmentality to theorize and analyse power relations in their many historical guises. The concept of governmentality is only briefly discussed by Foucault (2008) himself and more fully described in his lectures (Foucault, 2010). Researchers such as Dean (1999) and Rose (1999) have developed the concept, and Larsson (2005) has discussed governmentality in the Swedish context. Governmentality can be a specific modern style of governing, such as disciplining power and biopower, but it can also refer to the countless rationalities, logics, truth claims, and techniques that accompany governing in itself. In this article, the analysis of governmentality is understood in this latter sense and is geared towards analysing the different ambitions to form and shape children within the Swedish school system.

The basic premise of governmentality is that all types of governing rest on certain assumptions about those who are governed. In modern times there is almost always some form of scientific knowledge that is invoked. However, it is not possible to analyse how government works without also studying the practices through which it works as well as the desired personal qualities and behaviours that are expected (Foucault, 1988a; Dean, 1999; Rose, 1999). The assumptions of government, the knowledge it invokes, the techniques it mobilizes, and the kind of subject it seeks to fabricate are, therefore, the central features of this analysis.

To make use of genealogy is, finally, to engage in discourse analysis. Here this means that the focus is on the more or less systematic ways of talking and thinking about various phenomena and practices, which in different ways serve to structure and organize our lives as individuals and societies (Foucault, 1981). Based on this constructionist perspective, there is no pure and unmediated knowledge about the world: our knowledge is always mediated through linguistic categories, concepts, and thoughts. The world comes into existence – in the sense of becoming comprehensible, manageable, and possible to act in and on – when it is named and categorized in certain specific ways. To understand Foucault, it is important to elaborate his constructionist or, as he himself preferred to call it, nominalistic view on knowledge and his approach to power.
**Nominalism and power**

Following Foucault, Beronius (1991) argues that history, sociology, and the social sciences in general should be understood as nominalistic or anti-realistic. From this perspective, language is not perceived as a neutral medium, but as constitutive of the way we understand the world and create meaning. Truth is a consequence of the preferential right of interpretation. It is the perspective that gives or ascribes a meaning to the material. The scientist does not expose a hidden meaning, but creates a meaningful context. When working with the theory of science, we should, therefore, according to Beronius (1991), avoid concepts like reality and truth. This may sound provocative, but the problem with these concepts is that they are not readily defined. To avoid the muddle that can follow from attempts at defining reality and truth, Beronius suggests using the concept of perspective. It is not possible, Beronius says, to step outside one’s own social and cultural situation. In other words, it is inescapable that knowledge is tied to a perspective. Beronius writes that the idea of a single narrative or a theory must be abandoned in favour of narratives in the plural, a range of diverse perspectives. Everything we run into and experience in the world is interpretation. This attitude to the theory of science, therefore, entails an epistemological nominalism, according to which knowledge is created in a social context. All descriptions are necessarily incomplete and fragmentary. In this respect, according to Beronius, there is nothing different about scientific attempts to describe or explain situations and events which are not limited in language and concepts.

Foucault, with his nominalistic view of knowledge, rejects the claims, often absolute, of positivist science (Foucault, 2004). In line with this, Foucault is also sceptical of the ideological ‘meta-narratives’, which, for example, is found in Marxism and liberal humanism. While Marxism tends to see different institutions of society, such as school, as repressive and anxious to preserve the prevailing social order, liberal humanism tends to see the same institutions as supportive, as they help individuals to achieve freedom and emancipation. Foucault views ideology as a loaded concept, and believes that there is good reason to seek an attitude towards power that is removed from ideological perspectives, as these perspectives are not sufficient for understanding how power works (Nilsson, 2008). Another problem with the concept of ideology is that it talks about the division between true and false consciousness, which cannot be combined with a nominalist view of knowledge.

Historically, different processes of power/knowledge, which have contributed to the growth of new knowledge about humans and their behaviour, have acquired scientific status. It is not possible, according to Foucault (1993), to separate knowledge from the power that creates it. Power and knowledge are what determines at any given time what is to be regarded as a problem in a society. Another way to put it is that power produces truths as problems. Power and knowledge presuppose each other – there is a mutual dependence between them: power produces knowledge (Foucault, 1993; 1988a; 2008; Deleuze, 1990; May, 2006). The historian only has access to representations of reality. ‘Representations’ should here be understood as a replacement, not a depiction or reflection of reality (Nilsson, 2005).

Foucault believes that power is not something that is owned; it is exercised. Furthermore, he views power as a part of all relations, not something separate. However, though Foucault believes that power is a part of all relations, this does not mean that all relations are steered by power. The point is that power is negotiable and changeable; it circulates (Foucault, 2004).
That power is not owned also implies that there is nothing to disclose. The task is not to see what is behind the veil, but to describe the veil. Power in this sense is beyond good and evil. The interesting question to ask is, not what power is, but how it is practised (Deleuze, 1990). Power is most productive when its effects are not directly apparent as effects of power to those affected by it. Yet power should not primarily be regarded as ‘negative’, as a penalty or an obstacle, but as ‘positive’, as something creative, productive and encouraging. All in all, power creates more than it controls (Foucault, 1988c; 1980; Deleuze, 1990). The productive aspect of power is a frequently misunderstood part of Foucault’s view of power (Nilsson, 2000; May, 2006)

According to Foucault (1984a), history is not a decision, a treaty, a reign, or a battle. Instead, it is,

…the reversal of a relationship of forces, the usurpation of power, the appropriation of a vocabulary turned against those who once used it, a feeble domination that poisons itself as it grows lax, the entry of a masked ‘other’. The forces operating in history are not controlled by destiny or regulative mechanisms, but respond to haphazard conflicts. (p. 88)

A Foucault-inspired approach, therefore, makes it possible to tackle a research problem with other types of questions, by stressing the association between knowledge formation and power, and the effects this association has on groups and individuals. A fundamental question is what makes a particular phenomenon in a certain historical period gain attention, and this puts the focus on the problematic of power and the link between power, knowledge, and social practices (Foucault, 1988d). With this view of knowledge and how it is created, it is possible to question what is taken for granted. To return to IQ testing, then, the question is not how many ‘moronic’ or ‘intelligent’ people there ‘really’ are in a country. A ‘stupid’ person, just like an ‘intelligent’ person, does not simply exist, but is constructed with the aid of categories in a cultural context. Questions that are central to this perspective are, rather: How do ideas of intelligence arise? In what contexts has it been important to categorize people according to different degrees of intelligence? Some examples of this are discussed below.

The concept of talent: new technics and technology

Questions about talent and intelligence became an important part of the changes in the educational system in the Western world during the early twentieth century. Perceptions of society’s resources of talent and the gifts of individuals shaped the social life in different respects. Views on talent led to two central aspects: how good talent should be made use of, and how poor talent should be counteracted. In schools, teachers, school inspectors, psychologists, and so forth were engaged in gathering knowledge on pupils and designing tests to identify special problems and solutions. The study of the social and institutional connections in which intelligence tests came to be seen as useful makes it possible to see the influence that the professionals had, via negotiations, professionalization and scientification, over the shaping of schools and, consequently, over future citizens. Education and school were seen as important in the development of conceptual formation around the significance of citizenship and as part of identity-building, but also as a system for differentiation and control (Axelsson, 2007).

Towards the end of the nineteenth century the eugenic movement was growing. It made it important to observe deviations at an early stage, which placed
children and their development and maturity, especially their intellectual ability, in focus. Children's receptivity to education was considered to stand in relation to their intellectual ability. The lesser the talent, the harder it is to influence the environment. When the scientific and political interests started to apply to the inner human being, and their aptitude, abilities and talents, it became more important to gain both knowledge about talent and knowledge of how to measure it (Danzinger, 1997; Rose, 1995).

Knowledge was also developed within the international scientific community. The Englishman Francis Galton's normal curve, that is, his argument that every nation's intelligence was distributed in accordance with a normal curve, made an incredible breakthrough, as did the Frenchman Alfred Binet’s method for measuring intelligence. Binet wanted to use intelligence tests to determine which pupils were behind in their mental development. Those who were three years behind their biological age would be separated out and placed in remedial classes. The intelligence test never became popular in France. By contrast, in England, where the intelligence test was mainly used in sorting pupils during the transition from lower to higher forms of education, it had a major impact. So too in the United States, where intelligence testing became even more widespread and strongly influenced social policy through revised education policy, psychological practices, immigrant laws, and the relationship between them. In England, intelligence was often linked to social class; in the United States, it was linked to race (Axelsson, 2012a; Gould, 1996; Zenderland 2001).

Intelligence testing was introduced in Sweden and used for the first time in 1910. A common perception was that 50 per cent of children were normal, 22 per cent were dull, and 22 per cent were bright. Of these, three per cent were very bright and three per cent very dull. The comprehensive problems of drawing up boundaries also led to new, stricter categories of talent to describe pupils, such as 'idiot', 'imbecile', 'moronic', 'slightly backward', 'normal', and 'above average'. At the same time, at the beginning of the twentieth century, as schools moved towards a more organizationally uniform system, the separation widened regarding talent within elementary schools through new class types being introduced. Remedial classes were introduced in 1905 in Stockholm and in the following year in Gothenburg. During the 1920s many towns introduced different types of ‘B’, ‘extra’, and ‘weak classes’. In Sweden, intelligence was frequently linked to social class and intelligence testing was used primarily to determine which class a pupil belonged to. What was central to the sorting of pupils was to homogenize the classes in such a way that all pupils received the type of education that, with reference to talent, they were seen to be able to cope with. The 'idiots' and 'imbeciles' were completely separated from elementary schools. ‘Moronic’ and ‘slightly retarded’ pupils would, however, remain within the framework of elementary school education, but would be separated from normal classes and placed in remedial and ‘weak’ classes (Axelsson, 2007).

Power and knowledge determine, according to Foucault (1993), what is considered a problem in society at a given time. Historically, new knowledge on the human race and its behaviour has been given scientific status, which has led to various consequences for groups and individuals in society. Through different boundaries and exclusions (that is, separating practices) in the educational system, individuals become visible both as individuals and as groups. The processes involved in this sorting work can, in Foucault's terminology, be described as a disciplinary exercise of power where the examination combines hierarchizing and standardizing. What is important in this form of exercise of power is that the social norm, rather than the legal regulations, is central (Foucault, 2004).
The examination was shaped in schools where different professionals increasingly began to determine the pupils’ evaluations and the schools’ social organization. Different qualities described as desirable or undesirable were linked to the different categories of talent. The examining and separating processes identified students who were understood to be problematic and also revealed a view of what talent is and when it is absent. The techniques that were used were not necessarily connected to a particular profession that exemplifies a system, nor were they linked to a particular person or profession, and in this respect the techniques were impersonal (Foucault, 1993).

Foucault (2004) was interested in different governing techniques that shaped new forms of subjectivities and procedures for the individualization of power. It is possible to see IQ testing as an overarching tool for controlling social behaviour. Intelligence-quotient testing was an important tool of power aiming at the establishment of certain regimes of truth, both on a societal and on an individual level. It entails techniques and tools that have been instrumental in shaping and moulding collective bodies, regions, and nations in the Western world in specific ways, often in relation to social class, gender, and ethnicity. In the next section, I present an example of how this could also be directed against a specific group.

The ‘Tattare’: how to construct a risky group

When the early Swedish welfare state was created, the aim was to develop ‘a good society’ through meticulous planning. Therefore, it was especially important to be aware of those who could not support themselves. At the time, the so-called ‘Tattare’ came increasingly into focus. Gradually, the families labelled as ‘Tattare’ came to be racialized as they were described as ‘dark’, and ‘black-haired’ and their ways of life were said to be the result of genetics and hereditary biology. The newspapers often wrote about the Tattare in a negative way, and as a group they were often portrayed as a heavy burden for society. Initially, ‘Tattare’ was a name for several transient groups. They were characterized by certain cultural traits, as ‘social outcast[s] formed by continuous exclusion from the majority population’. The Tattare can be seen as a minority group created when Sweden turned from being a nation with an agrarian economy into one with an industrialized urban society (Broberg & Tydén, 1996; Ericsson, 2015; Axelsson, 2012b).

The National Board of Social Welfare were looking to introduce some measures to prevent vagrancy, since vagrancy was viewed as being closely connected to most problems associated with the Tattare. Furthermore, according to the Board, manslaughter, knife fighting, and violence were common among the Tattare. This could, according to the Board, be explained by the Tattare’s inferior intelligence. In particular, there was an interest in the Tattare children of school-going age. The National Board of Social Welfare in 1940 reported that, ‘It is now a well-known fact that childhood can very often lay the basis of criminality and other forms of social maladjustment’ (Sociala meddelanden, 1940, p. 805).

In 1942 the Swedish government commissioned the National Board of Social Welfare to investigate the Tattare question. The Board of Social Welfare, in turn, commissioned the Race Institute to compile a complete register and catalogue all persons considered to be ‘Gypsies’ or ‘Tattare’. In connection with this, several Tattare projects were initiated. One of these was an inquiry into educational ability among this group – a project initiated by a head teacher for the remedial classes (hjälpklasser) in Gothenburg, Manne Ohlander. He thought
that mapping their educational ability might be of practical use in the ‘battle’ against the ‘problem of Tattare’.

Ohlander carried out his inquiry in two different ways. One involved tracing the lineage of three different families. He sent out questionnaires about their marriage, and number of children, as well as work history, criminality, and so on. Alternatives to the answers included ‘deceased’ and ‘completed schooling a long time ago’. One of the questions related to signs of intellectual deficiency. Ohlander employed different methods to ‘calculate’ and estimate their intelligence. Even where no intelligence test had been done, Ohlander sometimes estimated an IQ of < 80, which meant that they were regarded as ‘backward’ (Ohlander, 1943a, pp. 2-4).

Ohlander’s other method involved sending a questionnaire to approximately 80 school districts. He asked how many Tattare children were in each class, and how many attended special-education class. The result was disheartening. No fewer than 30 per cent of the Tattare children in this report went to special classes, which meant that they probably had an IQ < 80. Still, Ohlander insisted that this percentage was too low, since not all Tattare children could get a place in a special-education class (Ohlander, 1943b). In his report Ohlander wrote that the Tattare were criminals and anti-socials, and that they were unable to look after their homes and children. Words like ‘backward’, ‘less able’, and ‘unreliable’ were common in Ohlander’s text. Referring to the case of the United States, Ohlander argued that differences exist between races, especially with regard to ability (Ohlander, 1943a).

Ohlander had a great influence on special education at a local level in Gothenburg and, to some extent, at a national level, since in a few official studies he was consulted as an expert. Ohlander’s views never became the dominant opinion, but he was a part of the eugenics movement in Sweden and represented a commonly held fear that ‘the wrong people’ should be allowed to propagate. Social problems were linked to a lack of talent and it was discussed how these problems could be controlled. This does not mean that all ‘less talented’ people were looked upon as asocial or criminal, but there was a ‘high risk’ of this. The problems lay mainly in an imaginary future and had to be prevented through proper education and upbringing. As Foucault points out, citizens were directed to recognize themselves as part of society, as a part of a social unit, as a part of the nation or State. The logic and rationality that emerged in connection with the welfare state was that the State referred to its own nature and its own rationality (Foucault, 1988e). In order to be a satisfactory citizen, certain rationalities had to be accepted (Cruikshank, 1999).

Intelligence tests can be seen as an alternative to previous categorizations. If someone had a low IQ it was not so important which other category they belonged to. Though the degree of intelligence replaced earlier divisions, it was nevertheless built on the same pattern. Intelligence tests were presumed to make certain invisible differences visible and it did not matter if the person was a Tattare, a Gypsy, a criminal, an alcoholic or if the person was immoral, unwilling to work, or merely poor. Low levels of talent could be reason enough for different authorities such as schools, poor relief or care for the mentally retarded to intervene if they believed it was necessary. In this context, schools had two important tasks to carry out: through intelligence testing the less talented could be discovered in time and by this means the school could educate them correctly (Axelsson, 2012b).
Making the ‘right choices’: a field of opportunity

With the help of intelligence tests, institutional changes were carried out in Sweden, which led to a new system and new forms of sorting in schools. Sorting according to intellectual ability became the cornerstone in the categorization of pupils in cities during the 1920s and onwards. In a democratic society built on meritocratic ideals it was difficult to justify a school system that was divided according to social class, gender, geography, and, later, ethnicity. The radicals of the time saw this as social injustice. In this context, talent functioned as a bridge. In 1927, a reform was implemented that enabled students to move on after a number of years in the common elementary school to lower secondary school. But education was seen to be expensive and during the 1920s there was also the worry that an overqualified proletariat was being created. For talented individuals, there were no formal obstacles after 1927 to enter further studies, but for the poor, the opportunities were few in reality. That all future citizens required a deeper political education was, therefore, not the same as allowing everyone to have the same education. Consequently, a socially stratified school system was by and large preserved (Axelsson, 2007; Hjörne & Säljö, 2008).

As a way of bridging the opposition that might arise between the individual’s educational wishes and society’s interests, it was a central task of the school to lead the pupils to come to the decision themselves to want to make the right choices depending on ability and capability. Different talent categories were seen to be adapted for different social tasks. Symptomatically enough, intelligence was defined as the ability to adapt to surrounding circumstances. The less talented, often hereditarily tainted, were supposed to have difficulties in adapting and were, in some respects, easily influenced by their environment. Swedish sociologist and politician Alva Myrdal calculated that three per cent of the population would never be able to ‘keep house’. These three per cent, ‘the very dull ones’, were a heavy burden on the general welfare system (Myrdal, 1946). These divergences from the norm were often found in school among the children in remedial classes (help classes). Gunnar Dahlberg (1936-1937), director of the Swedish Race Institute, argued that it was important to study the children in the help classes: already at school age, these children showed that their intelligence was too weak for them to follow a ‘normal’ working pace. Both Myrdal and Dahlberg had some degree of influence on the Swedish social policy and they shared the fear that the less talented would develop asociality, criminality, and a hostile attitude towards society if they did not receive a suitable education. The special classes would really benefit them and give them the right direction and attitude for society. Through training, they could be brought up to become competent citizens who could support themselves (SOU 1936:31).

But children who went to help class left school, according to paragraph 48, which stated that a pupil who was less talented could be released from school duties before the six compulsory years, but not before the age of 14. Paragraph 48 made it difficult for such pupils to enter government employment and work for, say, the State Railways or the Post Office; only in 1955 was this paragraph removed (Axelsson, 2007).

Intelligence tests and other techniques can be seen in the light of an early form of social engineering. The logic that characterized social engineering was the acceptance that people needed to be informed or led by different experts. It was science that should organize society in the best conceivable way, and it was able, through its expertise, to find strategic solutions to society’s problems. So-called ‘prophylactic social politics’ were the means for creating good order in society, and they began to make an appearance in the 1930s.
The modernization of society demanded a modernization of the individual and hence new steering techniques were required. I have considered the welfare state as a form of control in the spirit of Foucault, in the sense of it structuring a field of opportunities (Foucault, 1982). This has been about making the ‘right’ decisions within the frameworks that were formed within schools. These frameworks, which were based increasingly on talent, were decided upon during the construction of the welfare state. Talent was seen as crucial in determining which education and which position the individual would later be expected to take. Having different sorting systems in elementary schools could be seen as different forms of upbringing and was a way of steering pupils towards the ‘right’ occupation after school.

Conclusions

To use a Foucauldian genealogical approach is to write a history of interpretations, or a history of problematizations. This together with a perspective of governmentality – the knowledge it invokes, the techniques it mobilizes, and the kind of subject it seeks to fabricate – can help us to understand our contemporaries and ourselves in different ways. Foucault (1988b) argues that we need to recognize the welfare state for what it is: a combination of political power exercised over legal subjects and pastoral power exercised over individual subjects. This complicated relationship between dominant discourses of power brings with it a fundamental contradiction between the welfare and care of individual lives and the upholding and maintenance of the exclusive status of citizenship. Who should belong to the flock and receive care and help, and who should be subject to the power of the state?

According to Foucault, knowledge and political power go hand in hand – they do not go their separate ways. But Foucault finds it less interesting to dwell on the State or on different actors’ intentions. He distances himself from the idea that the State can be discussed as if it were a ‘superhuman’ actor with the same will and intentions as individuals. The State, no more probably today than at any other time in history, does not have this unity, this individuality, this rigorous functionality, nor, frankly, this importance. Maybe after all the State is no more than a composite reality and a mystical abstraction whose importance is far more limited than many of us might think (Foucault, 2008).

Previous research has pointed to the State’s increasing influence over schools at the beginning of the twentieth century. This was also the case generally, but there was nothing that characterized the schools’ categorization at a local level. The schools’ formation was decided, less as a result of political decision at a national level and more as a result of different local decisions. In this context it is justifiable to speak about social engineering from below. Not infrequently decisions were taken in agreement with professionals such as doctors and elementary school inspectors. In schools that were established during the earlier part of the twentieth century new cultural norms became crucial for the separation of certain pupils. Many children began to be perceived as problematic in relation to the schools’ institutional and social changes. Those pupils who were separated were those who could not live up to the schools’ norms, mainly in respect of intellectual ability, but also regarding physical, moral and disciplinary norms.

At the same time one should be careful with individual intentions. The individual can, of course, have intentions, but this is not crucial for Foucault. From a
Foucauldian perspective, Binet’s intentions, for example, are not of primary interest; the central thing is what happens in social practice and what consequences different configurations of power/knowledge have for different individuals and groups in society. Generally speaking, Foucault finds it difficult to see history as a consequence of people’s deliberate intentions and acts of will. Instead, he emphasizes the contingency of history: history is a result of a number of occurrences, uncertainties, and random events (May, 2006).

Viewing history in a Foucauldian manner can help us to see that the present is just as strange as the past, and not to think that a sensible or desirable present has emerged or might emerge (Kendall & Wickham, 2003). Intelligence tests, which in the cases presented became a technique for defining talent as well as quality of citizenship, were used, and are still used today, together with other techniques to identify similarities and differences and to define who the individual is and what can be expected from him or her. Thus, for example, mental retardation came to be seen as a boundary between good, responsible citizens and the socially, morally, and intellectually ‘incompetent’. Since different tests were seen as scientifically legitimate the drawing of boundaries could be accepted in a democratic society (Thomson, 1998). Together with democracy, intelligence tests became a way of decoding previous categories, yet were judged essentially to have the same effect on a particular individual and group. Or, as Cruikshank (1999) puts it, democratic citizenship is less about solutions to political problems than about a strategy of government.

The questions that have been discussed here are still of great importance. The educational system builds on the notion that pupils’ abilities to utilize knowledge is to be reflected in the setting of grades and future careers, yet are at the same time a democratic right for everyone, whatever their background and individual conditions. Talent is a concept that is still used today – though not so openly, perhaps because it is connected to heredity. The new concepts, or diagnoses, are based, like talent, on biology. Within the school’s framework, instruments and tools are being created that describe both the normal and the abnormal. This often takes the shape of different diagnoses, and it is often doctors and psychologists who are responsible for the separating technique in a new type of categorization of behaviour, giving expression to cultural notions and political ambitions.

The above shows that the tests tend to take a life of their own, and there is reason to be cautious and to adopt a higher level of humility when dealing with test results. Tests in general and IQ testing in particular are at imminent risk of stifling and suspending idiosyncrasies. As Ydesen (2011) puts it,

> The reason is that the attraction and allure of quantification is in perpetual danger of overruling human reservation when using test results. The temptation of comparing numbers with no thought as to reservations and sources of bias can be overwhelming. (p. 238)

Therefore, there is cause to be sceptical of the use of both political arguments and specific techniques, like supposed ‘intelligence tests’, to create categories.

Testing is a tool of power, although, according to Foucault (1984b), it is important to remind ourselves that this faceless power is not necessarily bad, dangerous or oppressive – just that it could be. A Foucauldian perspective need not be regarded as either a better or a worse way to relate to our history, but it reminds us that the writing of history also entails choosing events, facts, and perspectives. It is, therefore, a view of history that is not afraid to embrace perspectival knowledge. It is problematic when these categories – often with
biology as the determining argument – are seen as indisputable and impossible to discuss. This entails – as history has proved more than once – that these intelligence tests, whatever the design, will tend to move from descriptive diagnoses to determining forecasts. Something that seems to have completely disappeared in today’s debate on placements in special schools is that these categories and boundaries are created in a social context. They should therefore be possible to challenge, negotiate, and change.

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Why Michel Foucault in Norwegian Special-Education Research?

Hege Knudsmoen*
Centre for Studies of Educational Practice
Hedmark University College, Norway
Email: hege.knudsmoen@hihm.no

*corresponding author

Eva Simonsen
The National Support System for Special Education (Statped)
Oslo, Norway
Email: eva.simonsen@statped.no

Abstract

This article seeks to identify what impact the works of Michel Foucault have had on special-education research in Norway. We also discuss what his writings may contribute to future research. Foucault’s perspectives are far from dominant in special-education research today. We present research within the relevant social sciences which has been influenced by Foucault and which has had impact on special-education research. We aim to demonstrate that Foucault’s genealogy of ethics may bring new insights and a new critical approach to special-education research. The ethics of inclusion are particularly constructive and productive in both pedagogy and special-education research. In the discussion of Foucault’s relevance in special-education research, we focus on his texts on governmentality to conduct and govern a learner and the ethics of inclusion. The mode of subjectivity highlights the productive nature of disciplinary power – how it names and categorizes learners, the conduct of conduct or how learners govern themselves under education.

Keywords: special education, deviance, conduct, genealogy, ethics, Foucault, Norway

Introduction: Michel Foucault, a critical social philosopher

Traditionally, special education has centred upon the concept of the deviant, dubious or disabled child. Research has been based on traditions of knowledge that are rooted in long-standing labelling, as medical and psychological discourses. Therefore, not surprisingly, Foucault’s critical writings about those systems of knowledge are far from dominant in special-education research in Norway today. In spite of their present modest position, we argue that Foucault’s
perspectives – in particular, his genealogy of ethics – offer a constructive critical stance for probing special-education research.

Foucault’s body of works is relevant for the analysis of social and political frameworks – how education could be organized, the ways the system expresses the optimal educational outcome at a particular time, and the ways people frame their views about a learner and what is good for the child. Foucault (1997) offers two lines of thinking about human beings, the philosophy of the subject and the genealogy of the subject. In Norway, Schaanning, a historian of ideas, argues that ‘subjectivity is not only a product of disciplinary practices, but it gives premises and produces conditions, such as the expectation to conduct oneself and to conduct others in institutional practices’ (Schaanning, 2000a; own translation). Foucault’s perspectives indicate a critical concern about how special-education practices and research divide students by labelling them (Thomas, 2014; Harwood & McMahon, 2014). If we take these practices into account, it is reasonable to look at the structures of discipline from the perspective of Foucault’s ethical genealogical approach.

The genealogy of the subject examines ‘the constitution of the subject across history which has led us up to the modern concept of the self’ (Foucault, 1993, p. 202). Foucault’s genealogy points to the formative moments in modern history and the scope of discourses about the ‘deviant’ student. In this article we elaborate on how the deviant child is acknowledged as a learner with a subject positioning. According to Foucault, subject positioning is to become the subject of a particular discourse. We must locate the position from which the discourse makes sense, and thus become its subjects by subjecting ourselves to its meanings, power, and regulation. Subject position highlights the productive nature of disciplinary power – how it names and categorizes people into hierarchies of normalcy, morality, and so forth.

Foucault assumes that genealogical research will result in the disintegration of the epistemic subject, because the continuity of the subject is broken up. The production of knowledge is linked to power, and traces how power is related to ‘true’ knowledge. According to Foucault, the construction of truth is not outside power, and systems of knowledge vary between different scientific fields, disciplines, and institutions. The structure of special-education systems facilitates control, observation, and discipline of the deviant, dubious or ambiguous child by expert regimes of knowledge. These expert regimes of knowledge offer measures to govern the politics of welfare and other policies and social formations. For example, one of these formations is the transfer of students from ordinary to special education. The referral process is closely related to students’ academic outcomes, social adaptation, and personal development in ordinary education.

Foucault changes his perspective through his archaeological, genealogical, and ethical approaches. In this article, we begin by introducing Foucault’s genealogy of ethics. Our argument is that his genealogy of ethics is particularly relevant and much needed in special-education research in relation to inclusion and the deconstruction of the deviant child. We then trace the impact and influence of Foucault’s works on research in special education and the history of disability in Norway, focusing on work on the ethics of inclusion, constructions of the deviant child, and the conduct of conduct as a learning positioning.

Norwegian society has been committed to the ideals of education for all in inclusive settings, and there is a close connection between ordinary and special education and the concept of inclusive special education. However, the volume of special education is growing, and excluding mechanisms in the school
learning community are increasing (Bakken & Elstad, 2012; Nes, 2013, 2014). After the presentation of selected studies within the Norwegian context, we discuss what use can be made of Foucault’s ethical genealogical writings in future special-education research. We ask how his texts on governmentality, conduct of conduct, and subject positioning may contribute to the ethics of inclusion in future special-education research.

**Foucault on the genealogy of ethics**

_Taking care of oneself requires knowing oneself. Care of the self, is knowledge of the self, but also knowledge of a number of rules of acceptable conduct or of principles that are both truth and prescriptions. To take care of the self is to equip oneself with these truths: this is where ethics is linked to the game of truth._ (Foucault, 1997, p. 285)

The politics of inclusive education, dating from the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), have made Foucault’s perspectives on the genealogy of ethics highly relevant for special education. Inclusion is thus seen as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all children, youth, and adults through increasing participation in learning, cultures, and communities, and reducing and eliminating exclusion (UNESCO, 2009). The educational system in Norway has moved from a disciplinary notion of normalizing conduct to one of governing students’ own conduct of conduct (Knudsmoen, 2015). Student’s subject positioning to become a learner ought to be a main concern in special-education discourses.

The enrichment perspective emphasizes how the individual learner in inclusive education can contribute in a fruitful way to the school community (Befring, 1997; 2014). Children with special needs bring new dimensions to the learning community of the classroom, enhancing diversity and possibilities for learning for all participants. The enrichment perspective means that each subject is being included as an agent in its own learning and development. Befring (1997; 2014) highlights how the medical model has led to great attention on diagnosis with the subsequent highlighting of problems and weaknesses in the individual, labelling and its attendant stigmatization, and an overreliance on the identification of problems rather than a focus upon teaching and learning. The ethics to include all students as active participants in educational society presupposes acceptance for various subject positioning.

Foucault draws ‘three axes of genealogy’ concerning ethics and subject positioning. First, there is a historical ontology of ourselves in relation to truth through which we constitute ourselves as subjects of knowledge, for example, a learner or professional as the subject positioning. Secondly, there exists a historical ontology of ourselves in relation to a field of power. Through which we constitute ourselves as subjects acting on others and ourselves. Thirdly, there is a historical ontology in relation to ethics through which we constitute ourselves as moral agents as professionals, students, and learners (Foucault, 1982, p. 237). Foucault argues that it is not possible to examine a subject’s relation to itself without referring to experience, and he does that by considering the subjective experience from the point of view of practices and self-technologies.

Self-technologies, such as self-mastery, is a way of being active – for example, adapting to schooling – in relation to what was passive by nature and ought to remain so (Foucault, 1990b). The concept of self-mastery can be the idea of...
becoming a learner in school, gaining the agency to become a learner and having a will to conduct oneself (Knudsmoen, 2011). Foucault’s concept of self-mastery is the degree of control one can exert over oneself, as if at a certain level and in particular, institutions or contexts, certain modes of determinism and free will coexist and circulate. Foucault describes a concept of coexistence between necessity (rules, norm, and constraints) and freedom (agency, initiative, choice); that is, in an institutional practice, one is both free and constrained. In an interview about the ethical concern of the self as a practice of freedom, Foucault argued that ‘freedom is the ontological condition of ethics, but ethics is the considered form that freedom takes when it is informed by reflection’ (Foucault, 1997, p. 284). One result may be that a learner provides a basis for developing self-regulatory skills, with the learner willingly conducting self-discipline as a learner. School is an important arena for building community, from Foucault’s perspective; school is a system of power techniques and relationships, involving a range of agency inside and outside schooling.

The learning willingness to adapt and normalize oneself is where certain abilities and characteristics will be perceived as good, expected or worth striving for under particular conditions. The will to learn and the willingness to conduct oneself seem to reflect the conduct of conduct in educational practices (Knudsmoen, 2011). Today we have moved away from disciplinary techniques towards normalizing a learner, creating students who have the agency to utilize self-technologies by being adaptive, autonomous, and engaged in what is going on in school.

The concept of genealogy

Foucault’s notion of genealogy in Discipline and Punishment from 1975 was concerned with the power of normalization to impose homogeneity (Foucault, 1995, p. 184). Normalization is understood as a system of graded and measurable categories, indicators, and intervals in which subjects can be distributed across a norm relating to expected conduct of the students. According to Foucault’s archaeology, the construction of disability can be to divide the Other from the Same in the way that Foucault describes the discourses on madness in Madness and Civilization (Foucault, 1961). The history of madness could be considered as the history of the Other. Foucault changed the investigation from ‘the history of the Other’ to ‘the history of the Same’ in his genealogical writings (O’Farrell, 1989) and made the subject position apparent. Today, inclusiveness means involving all children in education, rather than developing knowledge about the disability and deviancy of a child within education.

In his Abnormal lectures at the Collège de France 1974–75, Foucault (2003) focuses upon the double codification of madness throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. First, disability and deviancy were concerned with the codification of madness as illness, pathologizing disorders, errors, and illusions and undertaking analyses to bring public hygiene, or the social safety it was responsible for, as close as possible to medical knowledge. Secondly, madness had to be codified in the same manner as danger. Psychiatry produces madness as a danger – a bearer of risk – and as a result, the knowledge of mental illness could be found in public hygiene (Foucault et al., 2003). Rather than producing discourses about children’s learning and development, the medical system has had a controversial influence on special-education diagnostics labels (Befring, 2014). The idea of the norm is not only a discriminating social, economic, and moral constraint; it is also written into the social contract right from language (Kristeva, 2013). Shifting practices of
labelling ‘the deviant student’ reflect Kristeva’s notion of the relation between language and the social contract. It is evident that when the least advantaged individuals are humiliated, cast out, or neglected, there is an abuse of power, a lack of solidarity, insecurity, and a jockeying for the higher, better positions in the social order. In contrast, the enrichment perspective engenders more positive expectations of all students’ potential and gives impetus to creating a more diverse and inclusive learning environment (Befring, 1997; 2014).

In his genealogical approach, Foucault deconstructs knowledge systems such as episteme, which was a concept developed throughout his archaeological approach. The referral process that moves students from ordinary (or no education at all) to special education has changed throughout history, alongside the ideas of upbring, education, and childhood. The process from ordinary to special education creates a link between particular systems of power in the production of professional knowledge about a student’s learning and development. The limitations of students’ autonomy and freedom as learners are constituted by demands of adaptation to existing norms and expectations of the educational system at a historical time. It is important to develop critical discursive strategies in order to emancipate the student as a learner (Knudsmoen, 2011; Befring, 1997; 2014).

Throughout his ethical works, Foucault locates two main strategies of power that dominate modernity. The first is the anatomy-politics of humans that are directed towards making the human body docile through normalized conduct, which is an effect of the power that characterizes various disciplines. Anatomy-politics focus on the body, biological processes, birth and mortality, the level of health, and life expectancy and longevity, and ‘the question of anomaly permeates the whole of biology’ (Foucault, 1998, p. 476). After the anatomy-politics of the human were established in the eighteenth century, the second strategy, ‘bio-politics of the population’, emerged at the end of that same century. Bio-politics are no longer the anatomy-politics of the human body, which were effected through a series of interventions and regulatory control, primarily as discipline (Foucault, 1990a). Bio-politics have become prominent in social and humanistic sciences, and have shaped special-education understandings of deviancy, disability and impairment, with regard to the medicalization and diagnosing of student conduct in special education today (Hamre, 2013; Harwood & McMahon, 2014; Knudsmoen, 2015). In addition, forms of bio-politics are associated with the construction of a biological citizenship in global governance through the normative regimes of rights and responsibilities (Nguyen, 2015). The professional boundary work indicates various systems of judgement of disability and deviancy. The ethical concern of the students’ subject position as a learner can be to adapt – to take care of oneself or the conduct of conduct (Foucault, 1997).

**Foucault’s writings in a Norwegian context**

> What we call ‘discipline’ is something really important in this kind of institutions; but it is only one aspect of the art of governing people in our society. (Foucault, 1997, p. 177)

This quotation refers to Foucault’s ethics where we find various possibilities for the subject to become a learner within education, rather than to discipline a learner’s conduct. In Norway, both Sandmo (1999) and Schaanning (2000) argue that Foucault’s genealogy is concerned with the ethical relationship between knowledge and power. Ulleberg (2007), writing in the field of education,
maintains that one of the most important contributions of Foucault in this respect has been the discursive analysis of various social interactions and institutions.

The two Norwegian criminologists Ericsson (1974; 1977) and Stang Dahl (1978) were the first academics to introduce Foucault's perspectives to social-science research in Norway. Their work has influenced special education, historical research, and disability studies. Thuen (2001), a historian in the field of education research, states that the idea of the child as a particularly vulnerable and worthy category among the poor led to the establishment of the first children's asylums and 'rescue institutions' from about the nineteenth century. Thuen makes no direct references to Foucault. In their works, Ericsson, Stang Dahl, and Thuen each demonstrate how the establishment of institutional practices required measurements in order to differentiate between the 'normal' and the 'abnormal' children. During this process, students were inscribed through a regime of discipline and truth was produced as part of the system of knowledge production. Thuen (2001) demonstrates how discourses of discipline influence the whole body, which was inscribed as expectation of the actions or conduct of a learner. The subject itself is a product of the process, as the modern subject is constituted by the internalization of the norm of discipline. Discourses ought to be concerned about the students are bearers of diverse subject positions of agency and identity in relation to various forms of knowledge and practice.

Reindal (2010) argues that today the basic question to be addressed from a Foucauldian perspective is an ethical one regarding the meaning of disability and deviancy. The conceptualizing of disability within the context of a social-relational model opens up for ethical consideration and the possibility of revealing unjust ideologies, practices, and structures. She discusses the interplay between impairment, impairment effects, and disability, stressing the ethical elements of each (Reindal, 2010, p. 113). Reindal underscores the importance of coming to terms with the purpose of inclusion: to conduct and participate within education. Furthermore, Hausstätter (2011) refers to Foucault's ethical arguments in his analysis of the professional in special education. The relation between the normality and morality of the professionals' recognition of a learner is also central to discussions regarding the relationship of a student in between ordinary and special education (Hausstätter, 2011).

**Concept of institutional knowledges: disciplinary practices and the deviant child**

Ericsson (1974), in *Ambiguous Care*, used Foucault's archaeological approach from *Madness and Civilization* for her analysis of how the knowledge of mental illness was integrated with public hygiene. Her main thesis is that the history of the system of psychiatric care in Norway fits the pattern of 'the great confinement in Europe': mass poverty resulted in social upheaval, which led to mass institutionalization accompanied by a specific ideology that pointed to the individual as the origin of massive social misery, constructing the deviant and dangerous citizen. Ericsson (1997) has updated her analysis to include contemporary political mechanisms of the marginalization and exclusion of disabled people and people with chronic illnesses from the labour market (Simonsen, 2015). Stang Dahl (1978) has made an innovative contribution to the history of child welfare in her analysis of ambiguous motives in the construction and institutionalization of the deviant and dubious child. Influenced by Ericsson, Stang Dahl applied the concept of the disciplining asylum as an analytical approach to the double scope of the child welfare system in Norway – social control in the name of upbringing and saving the child. Other children...
were included in special educational institutions or in medical institutions, or they were simply left at home and labelled as not teachable. Today these children are included in mainstream schooling in Norway.

Steinsholt (2011), a professor in the field of education, focuses upon the Enlightenment with reference to Kant’s epistemological project and Foucault’s critical perspective on discipline and normalizing. Foucault points out that the normative judgement of human nature is engraved with the hallmark of the Enlightenment (Hacking, 2008; Steinsholt, 2011). Foucault (1997) identifies the Enlightenment as a modern history of thoughts about humanity. In his genealogical approach, he considered power in relation to different domains, such as the structures of knowledge, rationalities, disciplines, and punishment (Olssen, 2006). In his ethical writings, Foucault does not simply reject the Enlightenment’s values, as he does in his archaeological approach. Instead, he reworks some of its central categories, such as notions of the self, freedom, and emancipation. In Foucault’s version of the Enlightenment, the individual subject’s rational autonomy and choice are dependent on how we interact with our circumstances. Such critiques cannot be grounded in universal reasoning of satisfactory learning outcomes, because this would ignore individual differences and the elements of rational disintegration within the subject itself and reasoning about a norm such as educational outcomes. The concern about the subject positioning of a learner seems to be an ethical consideration between ordinary and special education to achieve education and upbringing and to become a learner today. Steinsholt (2011) emphasizes how the modern subject will invent itself.

School is a place where observation, treatment, and training is implemented in order to alter conduct, to train the body or to correct an individual’s mind or conduct (Foucault, 1995). Within education, discipline can be a normalizing practice, for example, making the body docile and teachable (Hoskin, 1990; Knudsmoen, 2011). The conduct of conduct and practices of the self were also linked to ‘the way individuals were led to assign meaning and value to their conduct’ (Foucault, 1990b, p. 4). Concern about a learning subject as a conduct of conduct, with the construction of the deviant, dubious or ambiguous student, seems to be a focal point in special-education research (Knudsmoen, 2015). Most important is grasping the cultural, social, special pedagogical, and political contexts that produced such discourses about satisfactory learning outcomes from an ethical perspective. Collectively, this research identifies the local struggles and points of articulation of specific forms of knowledge, power, and governmentality. They can unmask the contingencies and consequences of systems of power-knowledge and demonstrate the ways that power acts on subjects (Yates, 2015).

Concept of ethics, bio-politics, and professional knowledge

Bio-politics influenced special education in Norway from the first part of the twentieth century (Simonsen, 2000). Social Darwinism and social hygiene interacted, establishing a biologically founded paradigm of normalcy. The disabled or the deviant child was defined as a child with no or very limited chances of intellectual or social development. Kirkebæk, a leading scholar in the Nordic countries since the mid-1990s, has introduced bio-politics as a topic in Nordic special education and has explored Foucault in an influential way in Nordic disability history research. In her doctoral thesis on the emergence of a medical discourse on intellectual disability in Denmark, Kirkebæk (1994) has placed this discourse within the eugenic paradigm of western society at the turn of the twentieth century. The influence of Foucault, her writings is particularly
prominent in Nordic research on the history of disability, which is a joint venture based on networking, conferences, and publications (Simonsen, 2005). This influence can be traced to the work of, for instance, Simonsen (2005; 2015) and the historical construction of the deviant child as a dimension of bio-politics and eugenics in special education in Norway.

Schaanning (2005), a principal Foucault reader in Norway, identifies Kirkebæk as a researcher who has greatly influenced both disability-history research in Norway and Nordic special-education research since the 1990s. On the basis of Foucault, her discourse analyses of the shifting historical, social, professional, and political processes of constructing intellectual disability include the concept of the deviancy in the shape of the ‘mentally retarded child’, the ‘feeble-minded’, and the ‘morally deficient woman’. Introducing the politics of eugenics as part of the history of special education, Kirkebæk influenced our research with regard to how medical, psychological, and special-education discourses intertwine and are embedded in professional struggles for jurisdiction (Simonsen, 2000). The detrimental discourse on individuals at the very bottom of a hierarchy of disability was introduced, with people identified as being in need of extensive care. From a bio-political point of view, they were creatures with little or no human qualities or value. From Foucault’s perspective of power-knowledge, they were of so little value that the professional interest to control them was absent (Kirkebæk, 2007). To society, these individuals were literally dispensable.

Bio-politics advances another understanding of the norm in the face of the development of democracies and the quality of life. The norm is no longer an a priori fixed concept but a dynamic one (Kristeva, 2013). Sirnes (2005), a political scientist in Norway, draws on both Foucault (1990a; 1990b) and the adapted concept of bio-politics and Agamben’s (1995) concept of ‘bare life’ in order to analyse how human life within a modern biotechnological paradigm is uncategorized, unrecognized, and thus unprotected in times of prenatal diagnostics, research, and therapy. Disability differs from nonconformity, which is the matter at hand in the singularity of the disabled subject. The gap between biology and the social norms and expectations may be perceived as a deficiency or disability. As Kristeva (2013) writes, ‘The idea of a norm, of a typical form, of a suitable rule is as indispensable in biology as it is for the social bond. Politics advances another understanding of the norm’ (p. 226). From an ethical perspective on disability and deviancy, how to govern a learner or to govern oneself during one’s education should be an important concern in special-education discourses.

In recent decades, neuropsychiatric diagnoses have become more widely used as explanations of school problems. Student conduct in education and the conceptualization of challenging conduct in school has been interpreted as individual deficits and categorized within the system of medical diagnostics (Potts, 1983; Ravneberg, 1999; Simonsen, 2000; Bakken & Elstad, 2012; Harwood & McMahon, 2014). Knudsmoen (2015) discusses the importance of viewing the construction of deviant students within education from a learner’s subject positioning, as an interpretation of Foucault’s (1997; 2007) ethics. Categories of disability and deviancy that have been constructed in medical discourses have greatly influenced special-education research, strategies, and discourses about the inclusion of the ambiguous, deviant or disabled child. Norms, problematization, marginalization, and exclusion are the results of diagnostic practices rather than from a desire to govern a learner in inclusive setting (Knudsmoen, 2015).
The history of special education has to be understood less as an example of human progress and humanitarian effort than as part of a strategy for social control (Tomlinson, 1982; Simonsen, 2000) and develop knowledge in the research field. According to Schaanning (2005), Kirkebæk turns the records from the institutions around: they do not tell the truth about the patient; rather, they tell the truth about their authors. Analysing how professionals develop their knowledge, language, and concepts of their students can bring new light to the understanding of their beings as learners, their voice, development, learning, and conduct within education. An ethical genealogy can help us to understand how ‘to govern a learner’, or governmentality as a way to understand a learner or student’s possible subject positioning between ordinary and special education and the ethics of inclusion. This has been taken up in work on disability studies, with, for example, critical commentary on medicalization and a critique of normalizing practices within special-education research (Slee, 2001; Harwood & McMahon, 2014). The role of medical discourses, however, is not the main focus of debate within special-education research in Norway.

**Why (not) Foucault in special-education research?**

Foucault’s genealogies are political, and as a critical social philosopher, he is a contested scholar. The weak position of Foucault in special-education research in Norway can be interpreted as a consequence of his contentious standing, but there are also other important considerations. Steinnes (2007) suggests that special-education research places itself too close to practice and practical aims. Because of the focus on empirical research with results that can be directly applied in practice, meta-theoretical thinking and reflection are ignored or regarded as more or less irrelevant. This near-sightedness may be compensated for with more descriptive research, than with theoretical and philosophical analysis. Steinnes, however, does not argue for the use of Foucault's perspective in special education in particular, but calls for an epistemological and ontological concept of special-education research. Others who have made an effort to apply his perspectives have been criticized for offering superficial interpretations of Foucault’s thoughts and writings.

According to Schaanning (2013), some authors in the field of inclusive education have used Foucault’s concepts simply as ornamentation, wrapping their empirical work in impenetrable academic jargon. Being met by such denunciations may, of course, discourage some scholars from pursuing and applying Foucault’s perspectives. Nonetheless, we argue that Foucault’s critical and theoretical perspectives, in particular his genealogy of ethics, ought to be accepted as an invitation to special education, not as the name on the door of an exclusive club (Simonsen, 2015).

There is another interpretation of why Foucault’s influence in special-education research has been so restricted, where the dichotomy between the orientation towards practice and theoretical and philosophical reflection may not be the core matter. The image and self-understanding in special-education research constitute a main obstacle for an increased interest in critical social philosophers such as Foucault. To start, interest in modern European philosophy in special-education research is limited. Disability studies has included meta-critical perspectives on the construction of disability, but the interaction between special-education research and disability studies has been almost non-existent. Foucault’s critical approach to the constructions of normalcy and deviancy may be perceived as being too critical.
Special education represents a brand that is designed as ‘doing good’: historically delivering, meeting, and adapting to shifting political aims (Skr tic, 1991; Thuen, 2001; Arnesen & Simonsen, 2011). In Foucault’s view, critique begins with questioning the demand for absolute obedience and subjecting every obligation imposed on subjects to rational and reflective judgement. In various educational contexts obedience is required. Foucault locates the desire that informs the question, ‘how not to be governed?’ The subject desires to govern oneself and the institutional practices govern the participant, which is the central impetus of critique (Butler, 2000). However, educational society expects the subject to govern as a conduct of conduct, and we recommend that special-education research should redirect its orientation on the subject’s conduct of conduct, ability to participation and experiences of well-being.

Disability history demonstrates the shifting historical constructions of the deviant, ambiguous or disabled child in special education (Befring & Tangen, 2012). With reference to Foucault, it seems appropriate to look at the construction of the disabled and deviant child from a new angle. Inclusive special education represents the societal and political assignments of our time. Inclusive education can also be exclusion if we do not shift the discourses about abnormality, deviances, and disabilities towards a focus upon the resilience of a learner and governing as the conduct of conduct within education. Some students have trouble adapting to life in school, and some schools face problems and challenges with other students (Nordahl et al., 2012). Schools continuously have to handle students’ diversity. Inclusive special education and institutional strategies have been the current response for preventing school failure and for handling various concrete dilemmas that will inevitably occur for some students.

Allan (2005), using Foucault’s framework of ethics, phrases the purpose of inclusion as the telos. Democracy and inclusion are closely interconnected. Educational community, participation, complicity, and outcomes are a central benefit of education as a means of creating democratic participants in inclusive special education (Reindal, 2010; Haug, 2014; Nes, 2014; Simonsen, 2015). Inclusiveness in ordinary and special education is an approach that allows children with disabilities and deviances to benefit from education. More broadly, education’s purpose is to support diversity among all learners, with the aim of eliminating social exclusion (Peters & Besley, 2014; Allan, 2005; Nes, 2013; Reindal, 2010).

Foucault’s ethical perspective on governmentality provides a critical ‘ontology of ourselves’ as professionals in special-education research. A critical ontology means that professionals reflect upon their ethos and attitudes towards the students’ educational outcome in inclusive special education. Discursive practices are about the capability to participate, a way of understanding differences and achieving inclusion as an ethical concept of participation during education. The purpose of inclusion is to achieve interrelations and interaction between ordinary and special education for each student. Power is not homogeneous, but it constructs and creates regimes of rationality about the disabled or deviant child. By analysing theses regimes as micro-regimes of truth, we may explain and understand rationality ‘as the way a human being turns him- or herself into a subject’ (Foucault, 2000, p. 327). The agency of a learner or the subject positioning to become a learner in inclusive special education presupposes opportunities to contribute and participate (Knudsmoen, 2011; Haug, 2014; Knudsmoen, 2015). Foucault emphasizes how power is not homogeneous but creates regimes of how we can explain and understand knowledge, such as the subject positioning as a learner’s satisfactory learning outcomes in between ordinary and special education. Rationality is replaced by
an analysis of micro-regimes of truth as various systems of knowledge and how a learner benefits from schooling during education. The student’s willingness to become a learner and to conduct and participate seems to be the crucial point of being included.

Concluding remarks
Foucault's influence in Norway has been quite extensive in social science in general, but his impact is limited within special-education research. In this article we have presented Reindal and Hausstätter as two exceptions when it comes to his genealogy of ethics. Their concern, among others, has been the ethics of inclusion and the conceptualizing of disability. Knudsmoen has applied Foucault's thinking in her analyses of learners and conduct of conduct in relation to the construction of the deviant child. In addition, we add the noticeable, but not explicit, influence of Foucault's genealogy of ethics on scholars within special education such as Thuen (2001) and Simonsen (2000, 2005, 2015). One may speculate about the origins of this lack of attention. We have mentioned a certain element of self-satisfaction within the field of special education, which leads to a lesser demand for new critical perspectives (Arnesen & Simonsen, 2011). Or are we talking about squeamishness or fear of contact? Or is there a fear of going wrong in interpreting Foucault's shifting complex and somehow elusive concepts and writings?

What we argue is that Foucault’s genealogy of ethics may contribute to new understandings of ‘the deviant child’ or satisfactory learning outcomes in inclusive education discourses regard special education. It gives attention to the concept of governance as conduct of conduct, self-mastery, and the subject position as learners within education discourses about satisfactory outcome. Participation, inclusion, equity, democracy, equal rights, and bio-politics are complex and pressing issues in special-education research today.

Consequently, special-education professionals need to reconsider the learner as a subject in context, meaning students within education with respect to governance and subjectivity. As a further exploration of critical ethical reflection and work, we put forward Foucault's reminder that we require parrhesia, professional and personal courage (Foucault, 2002; Raaen, 2005). Parrhesia requires being critical towards the discourses in which one participates as a professional and towards oneself as researcher in the field.

Foucault's critical and theoretical perspective ought to be accepted as an invitation to explore and examine these matters of inclusion between ordinary and special education critically. Foucault's writings of the subject could potentially lead to a widening of perspectives in special-education research. We have demonstrated how the practices of categorization, medicalization, discipline, and normalization inter-connect and how they may be critically and constructively scrutinized from his perspectives. Foucault's ethics need to be explored further in order to understand students' conduct in inclusive settings, which will develop new forms of norms and normative judgements of students' conduct as learners and subjective beings within education.

References


Schools that have problems with students and students who have problems in school. Oslo: Gyldendal forlag.


Foucault and deaf education in Finland

Lauri Siisiäinen
Department of Social Sciences and Philosophy
University of Jyväskylä
Email: lauri.m.siisaainen@jyu.fi

Abstract
The influence of Michel Foucault's thinking in critical disability studies, and to social studies of deafness, can hardly be doubted. Foucault has offered valuable tools for the critical rethinking of deaf education and pedagogy with respect to normalization and disciplinary power, which are integrally related to the historical construction of deafness as deficiency and pathology by modern, medical, and psychological knowledge. This article explores the applicability and critical potential of the Foucauldian concepts of disciplinary power, surveillance, and normalization within the specific context of the history of deaf education in Finland. The article focuses on the modernization of the education of deaf children that began during the latter half of the nineteenth century in Finland, with the influence of oralism – a pedagogical discourse and deaf-education methods of German origin. Deafness was characterized as a pathology or abnormality of the most severe kind. When taken at the general level, Foucault's well-known concepts are easily applicable to the analysis of deaf education, also in the Finnish context. However, it is argued that things become much more complex if we first examine more closely the roles played by the eye and the ear, by optic and aural experience, in these Foucauldian notions, and if we then relate this enquiry to our analysis of oralist pedagogy and deaf education.

Keywords: deaf education, deafness, oralist pedagogy, oralism, normalization, disciplinary power, Finland

Introduction
The significant influence of Michel Foucault's thinking in critical disability studies can hardly be doubted (Allan et al., 1998; Allan, 2007; Tremain, 2005). This is also the case when it comes to social studies of deafness. Foucault's work – especially the seminal concepts he coined in the 1970s – has offered valuable tools for the critical, problematizing, and de-naturalizing rethinking of deaf education and pedagogy with respect to normalization and disciplinary power, which are integrally related to the historical construction of deafness as deficiency and pathology by modern, medical, and psychological knowledge (Bauman, 2004; Branson and Miller, 2002; Lane, 2002). The article contributes to this topical discussion and further probes the applicability and critical potential of the Foucauldian concepts of disciplinary power, surveillance, and
normalization, within the specific context provided by the history of deaf education in Finland.¹

First, I focus on the modernization of the education of deaf children that began during the latter half of the nineteenth century. In this reform, the import of oralism, a pedagogical discourse and deaf-education methods of German origin, played a prominent role. I shall show that oralist pedagogy is underpinned by a binary opposition of the ear and the eye, or sense of hearing and sight. In this setting, the sense of hearing and aural experience are determined as the origin and necessary condition of ‘normal subjectivity’, the ability to think rationally and to use abstract concepts. According to the oralist doctrine, it is only through the speaking voice and aural experience that a thinking subject can be born, one who has a permanent and coherent identity. It follows that deafness – the lack of hearing and ability to speak – is characterized as a deficiency and pathology or abnormality of the most severe kind. Allegedly, it hampers the entire development of human being and the separation of the human from animal life. As purely visual and silent, the sign or gesture language used by the deaf is judged as inherently non-conceptual. The only way to make the deaf ‘truly human’, the central objective of deaf education, is to give them voice, speech, and aural experience. We shall discover how these oralist notions were elaborated, put into practice, and institutionalized in Finland over time. Despite opposition and despite the weakening of the German influence, they have remained influential even up until today in modified forms.

At a general level, Foucault’s well-known concepts of modern disciplinary, surveying, and normalizing power are easily applicable to the analysis of deaf education, including in the Finnish context. However, the article contends that things become much more complex if we first examine more closely the roles played by the eye and the ear, by optic and aural experience, in these Foucauldian notions, and if we then relate this enquiry to our analysis of oralist pedagogy and deaf education. This is something which, to my knowledge, has hitherto been missing in critical deafness studies that draw upon Foucault.

The article seeks to substantiate that in Foucault’s analyses of disciplinary, surveying and normalizing power – in fact, these three belong integrally together – there are no parallels to what has taken place with the oralist pedagogy and education of deaf children in Finland, as well as elsewhere: the production of normality through voice-ear-aural experience, and the pathologization of visuality and silence. More serious, from this angle, is Foucault’s strong insistence on the purely optic-visual modus operandi of modern discipline and normalization, together with the characterization of the ear and aural experience as the adversary of normalization and discipline. This does not leave much room for the recognition and critical analyses of such cases as the history of oralism and deaf education. If critical thinking and theory are to keep a critical impetus and even strengthen and expand it and to avoid the exclusion of particular phenomena as being beyond critique, they need to engage in this kind of self-critical reflection on the taken-for-granted presumptions lurking in their own language.

¹ Primary sources or even studies on the early history of Finnish deaf education are somewhat difficult to find. Below, I mainly draw upon the study by Salmi & Laakso (2005). Although published by Finnish Society of the Deaf, which is not an academic publisher, it is credible in its use of historical material. Primary sources or even studies on the early history of Finnish deaf education are somewhat difficult to find. Below, I mainly draw upon the study by Salmi & Laakso (2005). Although published by Finnish Society of the Deaf, which is not an academic publisher, it is credible in its use of historical material.
Oralism in deaf education (I): Johann Conrad Amman

The German school of deaf education, developed in the eighteenth century, had a great impact on the Nordic countries, including Finland. Therefore, we need to begin with a concise discussion of this school: the pedagogical discourse of oralism (a set of central notions and arguments) as well as the related oralist-vocal-aural methods of teaching deaf children. Generally, it is thought that the birth of German school dates back to the late seventeenth century to Johann Conrad Amman (1669-1724), who was a Swiss medical doctor. Amman's views on deaf education are based on the belief on the unique, privileged status of voice and vocal speech as media of expression and communication. Voice is the most immediate, the most faithful, the most truthful, and the most certain sign expressing and conveying the interior life of the mind, both emotions and ideas or conceptions:

There is still a very different reason, why men should desire to open the secrets of their hearts and the conception of their minds to others in speech rather than by pictures, gestures, or characters, and other things of this kind (...) for nothing emanates from us which bears a more vivid character of life than our Voice; neither have I gone beyond the truth in affirming that the breath of life resides in the voice, transmitting its light through it; for the voice is the interpreter of our hearts and signifies its affections and desires. (Amman, 1873, pp. 7-8, emphasis added)

As we find out, any visual medium and genre of signs, pictures or gestures is condemned as being essentially defective in comparison with voice. They are mediated, partial, incomplete, and deceptive in their signifying power (Amman, 1873, pp. 7-8). In this respect, Amman's argument is reminiscent of what Derrida (1967) has called phono/logocentrism (see Bauman, 2004; 2008). Voice is also the most natural and primary vehicle for the deaf to express their feelings, affects, and sensations: 'Deaf Men Laugh, Cry out, Hollow, Weep, Sigh, and Waile, and express the chief Motions of the Mind, by the Voice' (Amman, 1694, ch. I).

However, what they remain incapable of, most essentially, is articulate vocal speech and understanding of speech. Through their non-speaking voice, they may give a subjective expression to their own affects and sensations. Still, without speech, they are unable to form, convey, understand, and learn concepts and ideas. What results from this is the necessary predicament in the development of the higher, conceptual mental faculties, that is, of intellect together with moral sense of duty. The 'enlightenment' of these faculties can only occur through the circulation of speech. Consequently, the deaf remain attached to the life of sensations and affects (Amman, 1873, pp. 2-3).

Most importantly, Amman asserts, the silent language of gestures used by the deaf can never compensate for the deprivation of speech in education, through which the higher, properly 'human' spiritual capacities could be realized. Hence, the deaf are stuck somewhere between human being and animal:

How dull are they in general! How little do they differ from animals (...) And even if their parents are most attentive to them, how inadequate and defective is the language of gestures and signs which they must use! (...) How little do they comprehend, even superficially, those things which concern the health of the body, the improvement of the mind, or their moral duties! Who does not pity their wretched condition? Who will refuse to relieve it by all the contrivances which can be devised? (Amman, 1873, pp. 2-3, emphasis added)
In this manner, giving deaf people the ability to speak and to understand the speech of others and replacing the ‘primitive’ and defective sign language with speech becomes the primary objective of deaf education. Otherwise, all attempts to educate and teach deaf children – to develop their intellectual and moral powers, to emancipate them from their ‘dullness’ – are doomed to failure. Only by making them speak and understand speech, instead of using silent gestures, can the deaf become detached from their animal existence and be elevated to the rank of true humanity.

In Amman, the strong influence of Christian ideas is explicit when he attempts to legitimize the urgency of the task of making the deaf speak:

Voice is a living emanation of that spirit which God breathed into man when he created him a living soul (Amman, 1873, p. 10) (…) I will state some preliminary axioms of indisputable truth, by which it will be shown from the nature of God, that creatures formed in his image ought, of necessity, to be able to speak and in this respect resemble their Creator (…). (Amman, 1873, pp. 12-13, emphasis added)

God is endowed with the capacity to speak, that is, to convey ideas or concepts in an articulate voice that preserves their meaning without any distortion. Thus, the human being, the ‘image of God’, must have this capacity also (albeit less perfect than God’s, of course), and the lack of it equals nothing less than falling short of humanity. Although not totally lacking, the capacity to speak remains dormant in the deaf-mutes. Relatedly, what also remains dormant is the human power to govern both oneself as well as others, to govern the whole of nature, again in the model of God. It is only with speech that the active human subject, the ruler of the earth, is created:

At last, the eternal Word (…) creates Adam, that is Man, in his own image, and commanded him to subject the land and sea and all the host of them to himself; but to the end that he might properly exercise this empire over them, it was necessary that Adam himself should have effectually the power of commanding, the force of which consists in an emanating word. (Amman, 1873, pp. 14-15, emphasis added)

This religious justification is hardly surprising or original. Rather, Amman is reiterating the doctrinal belief – dominant in the Christian church already in the Middle Ages – that the deaf are separated from the Word of God, from the Christian community, and from education. It had become a commonplace to authorize the exclusion of the deaf by reference to Paul’s Letter to the Romans: ‘faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God’ (10:17). The established opinion of the church was that the use of gestures, such as silent sign language, could never match hearing and vocal speech as the medium of religion (Knowlson, 1965).

Yet Amman thought that the deaf could be released from their state of incapacity. They could be ‘humanized’ with apt methods of education. Through these methods, it would be possible to activate the capacities to produce and understand speech that were latent in the deaf:

After close investigation, I found that most of the mutes have their organs of speech perfect, and that they are speechless because they are deaf (Amman, 1873, p. 3, emphasis added) (…) For human speech, as will appear to every one who considers it with a little attention, is a certain
combination of many different kinds of sound, the variety of which arises, in my opinion, from the various motions of certain organs, which if they were sufficiently visible, I should think, would suffice for the deaf to discern them with their eyes, just as others receive sounds through their ears; and thus, in time, they may learn to speak. (Amman, 1873, pp. 3-4, emphasis added)

Oralism in deaf education (II): Samuel Heinicke

Amman’s ideas, in turn, were a major influence on Samuel Heinicke (1727–1790), a Prussian teacher. It was largely through Heinicke that the oralist discourse and methods of teaching were institutionalized into what came to be known as the German school of deaf education (Lane, 1984, pp. 100-103). Moreover, it was to a great extent via Heinicke that oralist pedagogy became established in the Nordic countries, when deaf education was reformed there in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Hence, Heinicke’s thought needs to be discussed in some detail.

The backbone of Heinicke’s pedagogical thinking is provided by his empiricist philosophical position, inspired to some extent by John Locke. In summary, Heinicke jettisons the notion of ideas and principles that would be innate in the mind. The mind is initially empty, while all knowledge originates in sensual perception. As Amman did before, Heinicke submits that thinking has its origin and its necessary prerequisite in spoken language. Thinking is a process that takes place in the mind only by means of the sounds uttered in talking, that is, through words as phonetic and auditory units. Thinking cannot occur independently of and detached from this perceptual, aural-vocal basis. Heinicke infers that those who cannot speak or hear, or both – in other words, deaf people – cannot think either, or at least, they cannot think abstractly or conceptually. At best, without speaking voice and aural experience of words, the deaf can think in merely concrete terms. The higher stages of abstract and conceptual thinking can only be reached through the regular use of vocal speech and the aural experience of words (Arnold, 1984; Markowicz, 1972).

In Heinicke’s thinking, as it was with Amman, the privilege of voice and aural experience has its reverse in the inferiority of sight and visual experience: ‘It is a mistake to believe that the sense of sight, through written speech, can replace the sense of hearing for deaf mutes. Abstract concepts cannot be developed through the aid of writing’ (cited from Markowicz, 1972, p. 21, emphasis added). Writing and reading, just like manual communication with gestures, cannot by themselves evoke the sounds of words in the mind. Hence, they cannot offer the solid medium needed for the communication and understanding of abstract concepts:

(W)e must not believe that because words permit themselves to be represented on paper that they therefore can be similarly presented inside ourselves. No, this in no way follows. Written or printed words are like heaps of flies’ feet or spiders’ legs; they are not forms or figures that can be presented as fixed or abstracted in our imagination; and we are hardly able to represent individual letters to ourselves subjectively with any continuity. (Cited from Markowicz, 1972, p. 21, emphasis added)

As we can observe in the quotation, Heinicke sets forth his variation of the binary setting of the ear and the eye. Also in Heinicke’s version, the voice, the ear, sense of hearing, and aural experience are determined as the necessary origin
and condition of normal adult subjectivity, and, even more fundamentally, of the formation of human beings as separate from animals. With Heinicke, this setting becomes perhaps still more explicit and meticulous than with Amman. Heinicke argues that only voice and aural experience can give the firm medium, through which can develop the higher faculties and activities of the mind, ones that operate with abstract concepts, ideas or notions. Only voice and aural experience can offer the medium that supports and safeguards the permanence, unity, coherence, and clarity of concepts and abstract thinking, and of the thinking subject itself, over and against the flux of sensations and affects. Only voice and aural experience enable our memory to grasp and keep words and concepts so that they remain the same in their meaning.

In opposition to this, Heinicke proposes, our eyes, visual experience and visual signs are bound to the concrete, which is to say, to the flow of shifting and vanishing impressions and affects. In a rather mysterious fashion, voice and aural perception—although originally sensual—are supposed to provide the highway of abstraction, leading to the permanence and fixity of intellectual ideas above the instability and confusion of the sensual, concrete world. Visual experience and optic signs—forever incapable of rising to the abstract level—may even ‘contaminate’ concepts or ideas, the thinking mind, and the subject with their sensual concreteness, thus making the latter fluid and unstable. If hearing and speech are the ground of continuous and unfailing memory, then sight, writing, and gestures are the allies of forgetfulness (Arnold, 1984; Markowicz, 1972). Again, we can note the considerable influence of logo/phonocentrism (Derrida, 1967) in the history of modern deaf pedagogy.

It is no wonder that from these premises Heinicke came to oppose vehemently the use of sign language in deaf education. The only way for deaf people to gain the ability to think abstractly and conceptually would be, as with Amman, through becoming cured from their sordid state. Thus, the primary goal of deaf education is to teach deaf children to speak and to speech-read from the lips. Heinicke’s methods included the use of a model leather tongue to illustrate the correct position of the tongue in the generation of speech sounds (Arnold, 1984).

Heinicke admits that even if deaf persons learn to emit words and to speech-read, they do not actually hear the sounds of words. Still, he believed that even this obstacle could be overcome. His solution was somewhat strange. Heinicke contends that the sense of taste could function as something like the substitute for the sense for hearing, and that through this curious detour of taste, the adequate aural experiences of words could still be evoked in the mind of the deaf. As the result, the basis for the evolution of rational, conceptual thinking could finally be constructed (Markowicz, 1972; Lane, 1984, pp. 102-103). Regardless of the obscure nature of his ideas, Heinicke’s oralist pedagogy became popular and institutionalized in deaf education in Germany during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Oralism elaborated by Amman and Heinicke was not the only significant strand of deaf pedagogy in eighteenth-century Europe. In France, most notably, it was Abbé Charles Michel de l’Épée (1712-1789) who developed a very different kind of pedagogical thinking and methods for educating deaf children. De l’Épée claimed, first, that gestures are the real natural as well as universal language of humanity. Secondly, he thought that the language of gestures could be ‘refined’ through methodization, yet without losing its natural origins. In this manner, a silent language of manual gestures could be built, one that was capable of representing even abstract ideas in terms of physical movements. Due to its natural and universal basis, this manual language would be even superior to
speech. De l'Épée’s idea was to divide complex and abstract concepts into elementary, concrete parts, which might be expressed through gestures. The first school for deaf, using de l'Épée’s methods, was established in Paris in 1760, but his insights began to gain support more broadly in Europe (Knowlson, 1965; Seigel, 1969).

As we have found, de l’Épée’s pedagogy and method, also known as manualism, are almost the complete opposite of oralism. Indeed, he debated on the issues of deaf pedagogy with Heinicke. Oralism and manualism, the German and French schools, respectively, were the two major, competing veins of deaf education in Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Gradually, their rivalry also reached Scandinavia and Finland.

**The arrival and victory of oralism in Finland**

By the mid-nineteenth century, the use of sign language had become fairly common in the education of deaf children in Scandinavian countries. However, it was in this period that a process of profound transformation began to take place. From the mid-nineteenth century on, the oralist discourse and methods, discussed above, began to gain a more secure foothold in Norway and Sweden. This was supported by teachers’ increasing fieldtrips to Germany, where Heinickean methods were acquired. The development in Finland followed a similar course. The 1860s were a period during which the entire Finnish system of elementary education underwent a profound transformation. In 1869, elementary schools were detached from the Lutheran Church. Uno Cygnaeus (1810-1888) – a clergyman, educator, and the chief inspector of the Finnish school system – is often named as the ‘father’ of the Finnish public-school institution. In his study trips around Europe, Cygnaeus became acquainted also with schools specialized in the education of deaf children. He was particularly impressed by the Weissenfels School in Germany, which was a pioneer in the application of oral notions and methods. Cygnaeus had a significant role in the initial rooting of oralism in Finnish schools, and in launching the parallel process of the marginalization of sign language during the second half of the nineteenth century (Salmi & Laakso, 2005).

Besides Cygnaeus, the Finnish teacher G.K. Hendell (1843-1878) was one of the key figures in the importation and consolidation of German oralist pedagogy in Finland. Hendell made a visit to Swedish and Norwegian deaf schools, and also worked at Manilla school in Stockholm, where the oral method of teaching was already firmly established. There, he adopted the tenets of German pedagogy and brought them to Finland. Hendell was given the opportunity to put them into practice when he became the director of the school for deaf-mutes in Kuopio in 1874 (Salmi & Laakso, 2005, p. 151).

In the course of the late 1800s, the hegemonization of oralist pedagogy progressed in Finnish deaf education. To encapsulate, this was a period in which the aims and methods of special education were taken into more strict state control. The objective of making the deaf speak and the oral method became ossified as primary, far more crucial than any other subject matter taught and their contents (Salmi & Laakso, 2005, pp. 155-159, 170). Meanwhile, various new schools for deaf children were opened in different parts of Finland. An official committee memo from 1907 asserted that through compulsory education and schooling, organized to meet their special needs, the deaf population could be integrated as members of Finnish society, able to make their own living by normal, productive work (Salmi & Laakso, 2005, pp. 159, 162). Finally, in 1921 (after the civil war) Finnish Parliament passed the law on

The institutionalization of oralist pedagogy – together with the marginalization of sign language and manualism – continued in Finland during the twentieth century. Many teachers themselves acknowledged that sign language was felt by deaf pupils themselves to be their own, ‘natural language’ that they used with ease. However, this ‘naturalism’ and spontaneous facility of silent, visual signs and the parallel difficulty and anguish in oral teaching were often regarded as yet another piece of evidence on the primitive, animalistic and deficient nature of sign language, and on the superiority of vocal speech. The Finnish discourse of special education leaned particularly on Heinicke, and considered sign language, at best, only suitable for the expressions of the ‘will of the deaf’, but not a medium of conceptual thinking and abstract reasoning. It was condemned as inherently and irreparably confused, ambiguous, and insufficiently articulate. The effort, pain, and even the use of physical violence in oralist education were regarded as both justified and necessary in the task of turning the deaf into speaking beings, which also meant releasing them from their animalistic, concrete, sensual, and affective mode of life. In line with the ideas of Amman and Heinicke (see above), the task of deaf education was to make the deaf speak and understand speech, and as a result, to transform them into reasoning, concept-using, and self-governing human beings. In the early decades of the twentieth century, one of the notable and very articulate advocates of these views was the teacher Veikko Lehvä (Salmi & Laakso, 2005, pp. 172-175).

**Finnish oralism after World War II**

These oralist notions kept their dominant status in Finnish deaf education through the first few decades of the twentieth century, in spite of opposition from both deaf people and some teachers (Salmi & Laakso, 2005, pp. 172-177). After World War II, Germany lost its position in Finland as the major source of pedagogical ideas and methods. Yet this did not mean that the basic tenets of oralism, as scrutinized above, lost their impact. In the 1950s, American pedagogical ideas began to play a more central role in Finnish special education. Still, the elementary oralist notions remained central. For instance, Finnish educators became inspired by the John Tracy clinics, which proposed that it is the task of each mother to start teaching her deaf child to speak as early as possible, already before school (Salmi & Laakso, 2005, pp. 181-183).

There is one seminal Finnish contribution following World War II to the psychological study of deafness that needs to be discussed from the perspective of oralism. Jyrki Juurmaa (1929-2010) was a Finnish psychologist who conducted research on ‘sensory deficiencies’, both blindness and deafness, and their effects on the development of mental ‘ability structures’. Juurmaa was in his time a somewhat influential figure in Finnish academic culture. Moreover, he forged relations of close collaboration with American researchers and has attracted international attention.

Juurmaa implemented various tests on the mental performances of deaf and hearing persons and then compared the results. Interestingly, his studies do not refute the core notions of oralism, already familiar to us from the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century discourse of Amman and Heinicke. Rather, these notions are translated into the language of psychology after World War II. On the basis of the tests, Juurmaa’s study proposes that for the minds of deaf persons, it is the concrete, perceived details that are predominant. In those
mental tasks in which concrete empirical material is presented and operations of reasoning remain attached to immediate perception, the performance of the deaf matches those of the hearing (Juurmaa, 1963).

Contrariwise, the deaf are considerably weaker than the hearing in those tasks that require abstract reasoning, non-concrete ideation, and application of general principles to concrete instances (Juurmaa, 1963). 'On verbal ability, numerical ability and reasoning the hearing were definitely superior to the deaf' (Juurmaa, 1967, p. 118). Juurmaa (1967) proposes that blind are superior to the ‘normal’ precisely in the abstract numerical abilities or arithmetic. Furthermore, Juurmaa submits that when it comes to the linguistic abilities of acquiring and mastering verbal symbols, the deaf cannot surpass the ‘ostensive’ level, that is, the stage where concepts are understood and acquired with the help of empirical demonstration. Therefore, abstract concepts that are difficult or impossible to teach through ostentation can only stay incomprehensible and alien to them (Juurmaa, 1963).

Indeed, as a result of the psychological tests and comparisons, what re-emerges is the binary setting that is already quite familiar to us from the earlier oralist discourses. Once again, the ear and sense of hearing are posed as the origin and condition of the higher conceptual-abstract activities of the mind, while the lack of hearing and the silent visuality of the deaf mind are defined as a decisive deficiency, a pathology/abnormality that inflicts the whole mind and subjectivity. The lack of audition deprives the subject of the capacity of conceptual, abstract and theoretical thinking, and as a result, of the mastery of the world and her/himself. The deaf remain passively captivated by the flux of immediate sensations and affects, akin to animals:

Correspondingly, the crucial and most interesting problem in the study of the deaf is: How is it possible to learn language and to acquire a body of concepts without the sense of hearing? (…) the crux of the problem (…) relates (…) in the case of the deaf to theoretical mastery of the world.
(Juurmaa, 1963, Introduction, emphasis added)

As it turns out, the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century oralist notions of deafness proved to be insidious in twentieth-century psychology, including in Finland. This being the case, it is not surprising that the oralist methods persisted in the education of deaf children in the 1970s in Finland, despite the rise of the deaf pride and deaf awareness movements, which began to demand guaranteed education and teaching in sign language (Salmi & Laakso, 2005). It was not until 1995 that the Finnish Parliament, as a part of the Finnish reform of basic rights, legally recognized the status of sign language. Still today, much remains to be done when it comes to the practical realization of the equal status of sign language in education, especially in Finnish Universities (Salmi & Laakso, 2005).

Foucault and the silence of discipline

The applicability of Foucault's seminal analyses of modern disciplinary, surveying, and normalizing power (Foucault 1979; 2003; 2004) of the 1970s is fairly obvious when it comes to the history of deaf education in general, including the case of Finland. The oralist pedagogic doctrine and methods, as well as their institutionalization in deaf schools, can be seen as an exemplar of a more pervasive transformation in the eighteenth century. In this historical shift, the school becomes a disciplinary institution (along with the mental asylum, prison, and so on) that seeks to produce normal, docile, productive, and beneficial
individual subjects that survey and control themselves (Bauman, 2004; Branson & Miller, 2002; Lane, 2002).

If we examine Foucault’s insights more closely, things become much more complex. Foucault himself does not consecrate any explicit treatment to the medicalization and normalization of deafness, unlike for instance, of homosexuality or children’s masturbation. Still, I suggest there is an essential link between Foucault’s genealogy of modern discipline and normalization and the history of deaf education, one that has hardly been noted before. This link is unveiled if we scrutinize the roles played by different modalities of sensual perception and experience, by the eye and the ear, by optic and aural experience, respectively, in Foucault’s integrally interrelated notions of surveillance, discipline, and normalization (Foucault 1979; 2003; 2004). In other words, we need to explore what the role of visual and aural perception and experience is in the operation of disciplinary and normalizing power, but also in their product, which is the normal subject. This means asking which account of normalizing and normal perception and sensuality is to be discovered in Foucault’s take on discipline and normalization. Concomitantly, it means inquiring, what the reverse of this is, that is, the view of abnormal or pathological sensuality and perception. The next step is to query how this Foucauldian account of disciplinary and normal sensuality relates to and compares with that major construction of the normal perceiving subject, which we have already exposed in the history of modern oralist pedagogy and deaf education, and in the Finnish case in particular.

As discussed earlier, at the very nucleus of oralist discourse – ranging from its seventeenth- and eighteenth-century origins in Amman and Heinicke up until the work of Juurmaa in the 1960s in Finland – there is the normative idea of a determinate kind of sensual and perceiving subject: the speaking and hearing subject, the subject of auditory experience (or its simulation), whose normality, whose rationality, whose self-government, and whose productivity are underpinned by speech and aural experience. We also saw that in the oralist discourse, visuality and optic experience without voice, the silent language of manual gestures, were attached to abnormality and pathology, to irrationality and lack of self-government. In oralist special education, normalization was inseparably associated with curing deafness, with making the deaf speak and hear.

Undoubtedly, the most widely known idea in Foucault’s work of the 1970s (and possibly in his thinking taken as a whole) is the Panopticon (Foucault, 1979). For Foucault, it is the general, modern scheme of surveillance, disciplinary power, and normalization. Foucault developed the analysis already in his lectures during the early 1970s at the Collège de France, but it became generally known through Discipline and Punish (originally published in 1975). As is generally known, generalized and continuous surveillance – or the illusion of being continuously surveyed – is the modus operandi of the Panopticon. It is pivotal to remember that the panoptic scheme of surveillance, its modus operandi, its logic of functioning, and its effects are not just one particular technique of power among others. Panoptic surveillance is operative, in one way or another, in all modern disciplinary and normalizing power, in all of its various institutionalized forms. To put it briefly: There is no modern discipline or normalization that would operate without panoptic surveillance (Foucault, 2001).

Consequently, what Foucault has to say of panoptic surveillance has implications for his entire account of discipline and normalization. What he states on the role of senses and sensual perception in panoptic surveillance has
implications to his entire notion of modern discipline and normalization. From this perspective, it is of utmost importance for us to note how strongly Foucault emphasizes the key role of optic-visual perception in the operation of panoptic surveillance. Foucault not only highlights the central function of invisible visibility, that is, the experience of being seen all the time by the gaze that stays hidden. He presents the much more forceful claim that it is a mode of power which is purely and exclusively based on optics and visibility:

The Panopticon means two things: it means that all is seen all the time, but it means also that all the power that is exercised is never anything but an effect of optics (...) This power is rather of the order of the sun, of the perpetual light, it is the immaterial illumination, which is shed indifferently on all the people on whom it is exercised. (Foucault, 2003, p. 79, emphasis added)

The Panopticon works solely through optics and visibility, in other words, through illumination and providing visibility. We can infer that the gaze and the seeing are also what make things visible and throw light so that things show themselves. By these purely visual-optic, immaterial means the panoptic dispositive produces its most profound effect, which is not the detection of transgressive behaviour, but the production and maintenance of individuality – individual, self-governing, and docile, normal subjectivity. Whether we are dealing with modern prisons, mental institutions, schools or factories, the same optic-visual techniques are at play (Foucault, 1979; 1997; 2001; 2003).

One can read Foucault’s account of the all-intrusive panopticism of modern society as a critical response to Guy Debord’s diagnosis of the 1960s, according to which modern society is essentially a society of the spectacle. Nonetheless, similar to Debor’s (1999) ‘spectacle’, the Panopticon is also an apparatus of power that is essentially visual-optic in its performance. In both cases, it is sight, gaze, and seeing that spawn the effects of objectification, individualization, division, separation, and isolation (Foucault, 1979; 2001).

In the working of the panoptic apparatus, as Foucault understands it – and consequently in all the numerous institutions of discipline and normalization, which cannot operate without panoptic surveillance – there is neither use nor need for other sensory modalities except vision. Nevertheless, in Jeremy Bentham’s original, late-eighteenth-century depiction of the panoptic scheme, we discover that this is not the case. There, the ear and aural perception are indeed given a function in the deployment of surveillance:

Complaints from the sick might be received the instant the cause of the complaint, real or imaginary, occurred (...) Here the use of the tin speaking-tubes would be seen again, in the means they would afford to the patient, though he were equal to no more than a whisper, of conveying to the lodge the most immediate notice of his wants (...). (Bentham, 1995, Letter XX)

Foucault recognizes that the tin tubes, hearing, and aural experience figure in Bentham’s scheme, but is nevertheless unwilling to ponder their significance any further. When Michelle Perrot draws attention to this issue in a discussion, Foucault does not take this initiative (Foucault, 2001). In Discipline and Punish, all we find is a footnote, which briefly points out that Bentham later expressed some hesitations about the usefulness of the tin tubes (Foucault, 1979, p. 317, 2

2 To compare, we meet reflections on hearing, listening, and surveillance along these lines in Roland Barthes (1982, pp. 217-220).
no. 3). In my opinion, all this shows Foucault’s reluctance to question his own belief in the purely and exclusively visual-optic *modus operandi* of modern surveillance, discipline, and normalization, pertaining to all their various institutional arrangements and the concomitant absence of the ear and aural experience.

For Foucault, modern discipline, surveillance and normalization operate in and through *silent visuality*. It is through silent visuality, in the absence of hearing and aural experience, that these modern forms of power produce their most profound effect: the normal, self-observing, and self-governing individual subject. When surveillance and discipline become internalized into the self-relation of the subject, the silent, optic-visual experience continues to be the key vehicle of power. In Foucault’s genealogy of discipline and normalization, the normal subject is the seeing subject. It is not the hearing or vocal subject. In even more radical terms, the normalized and docile subject of Foucauldian modernity is akin to the image of the deaf subject, constituted in and through silent visuality, in the absence and deprivation of other sensual modalities, such as aurality. In Foucauldian discipline and normalization, there is hardly any room for something like *aural-oral normalization* and *aural-oral normality, aural-oral subject of self-government, and aural-oral docility*. However, as demonstrated above, it is precisely the fabrication of aural-oral normal subjectivity which is at the core of the modern oralist discourse and practices of deaf education, in Finland as elsewhere.

Inversely, the ear, voice, sound and aural experience are very much present when it comes to Foucault’s depiction of the *adversaries* of the modern discipline and normalization. In 1970s Foucault, masses, crowds, and multitudes all refer to resistance that confronts disciplinary and normalizing power. In various instances, when Foucault characterizes these masses, crowds, and multitudes, he states that they are emitting sounds. The masses are howling, or they generate chatter and chanson. Foucault associates these sounds with some of the central qualities of the masses: centrifugal mobility, movement in which bodies and forces spread, generating multiple horizontal contacts with one another. The horizontal conjunctions forge a merging, mingling or confusion between individualities (Foucault, 1979).

It appears that sound and aural perception belong to these ‘massy’, dynamic, and horizontal relations. What transpires in such relations – including noise, chatter, and chanson – is transition or contagion. This can occur between states of mind, between affects or between tasks and their performances (as collective distractions). Through sounds and hearing, the subjects share with each other what ought – according to the logic of disciplinary individualization – to remain separate. Crowds, masses, and multitudes collide with disciplinary power, which strives to individualize, and through individualization, to take care of the usefulness and productivity of bodies and forces.

It seems that from the perspective of discipline and normalization, just like other horizontal relations and dynamics of bodies, sound and aural experience find themselves under suspicion. In Foucault, we end up with a setting, in which silent, visual-optic normalization clashes with the aural, noisy dissolution of the individual subject. In the strand of oralist pedagogy that we have followed, from Amman and Heinicke to 1960s Finland, it is rather the opposite: It is the silent visuality and manualism of the deaf culture that are defined as the dangerous origin of *de-subjectivation*, the loss of self-government, and the affective ‘animalization’ of human beings.
Conclusions

In Foucault’s genealogy of modern discipline and normalization, what is absent is any insight on the auditory-phonetic-oral determination and spawning of the normal subject and normalization in modern institutions. Foucault is somewhat reluctant even to ponder the potential role of such a form of auditory power. Yet, as exposed in this article, it is precisely the ear, hearing, and aural experience, through which the normal, rational, and self-governing individual subject was fabricated in modern oralist pedagogy. This whole history of pedagogic as well as psychiatric-medical power, as it took place in Finland among other countries, seems to contradict Foucault’s notion of the regime of perception and sensual experience, so central in his view of modern discipline, surveillance, and normalization. In Foucault’s account, the latter revolves strictly around the eye, gaze, and visibility, deployed in silence, in the absence of voice and aural experience. Furthermore, if we follow Foucault, there is a conflictual relationship between disciplinary-normalizing power, on one hand, and sound and aural experience, on the other. This conflict ensues from the very logic of the disciplinary dispositif itself. Sound and aural experience belong together with the enemies of discipline and normalization, that is, with crowds and masses and the affective loss of conceptual thinking and self-government.

To recapitulate, what we have witnessed in the history of deaf education, stressing the Finnish case – the auditory-oral-vocal construction of the normal, rational, concept-using, and self-governing subject, and the pathologization/abnormalization of silent visuality – appears as something like an anomaly in relation to Foucault’s genealogy. In this way, we are invited to question the deep-seated binary setting of the eye and the ear, which relates the first with calmness, order, harmony, and stability of soul and community alike, and the second with madness, rapture, and subversion. In a way, we may conclude that this binary setting inverses the one that was active in the oralist discourse of deaf education, in which the ear is the source of stability and reason, whereas the eye is the origin of animalistic instability. The pertinence of this problematic is certainly not limited to reading Foucault. Western critical theory and critical thinking need self-critical reflection on their own sensory-perceptual presuppositions. Otherwise, they risk becoming uncritical to the variety of powers operating through various different sensory modalities. This is something that social and political theory could learn from studying the history of the deaf.

References


Diagnosing, special education, and ‘learnification’ in Danish schools

Bjørn Hamre
Danish School of Education
Aarhus University
Email: bh@edu.au.dk

Abstract
This article focuses on a discussion of diagnosing, special education, and ‘learnification’ in a Danish school context in which the increasing use of diagnosis is analysed as resulting from the ideas of normality that are associated with the construction of the pupil as a learner. I argue that diagnosis in schools can be seen as the shadow side of the articulation and management of learning through schools’ requirements for pupils. This article is based on my analysis of files produced by educational psychologists. Learning and diagnosis, I argue, constitute two different, but parallel, ways of looking at being a pupil in school, each of which represents conceptions of deviance and normality. The article’s methodological point of departure draws on a Foucauldian-influenced analysis of diagnosing and learning in education.

Keywords: Learning, diagnosing, special needs education, learnification, psychopathology, Denmark

Introduction
According to Søren Langager (2014), ‘the number of children and teenagers who are given a clinical diagnosis is increasing so dramatically that the development has been called a tsunami of diagnoses because it has taken place over so few years in Denmark’ (p. 284). This article focuses on a discussion of these issues in a Danish school context in which the increasing use of diagnoses is analysed as resulting from the ideas of normality that are associated with being a learner in school, similar to what Gert Biesta (2006) has termed ‘learnification’. I argue that diagnosing in schools can be seen as the shadow side of the way in which learning is articulated and managed through schools’ requirements for pupils, and the ways in which categorizations of problems are constructed in schools today. Categorizations of problems take place whenever a particular kind of behaviour, defined as problematic at the school level, leads to different professional actions within schooling and especially within special-needs education. This article is based on my research into files produced by educational psychologists during the period from 2000 to 2010.
Langager (2011) touches on the dilemma in Danish national school policy: on the one hand, ideals of inclusive schooling have led to a reduction in the number of pupils referred to special support outside the ordinary school environment, and, on the other hand, an increasing number of children are given a clinical diagnosis, most typically Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Pupils who used to be regarded as having behavioural or psycho-social problems are increasingly categorized with neurological dysfunction in child psychiatry. These issues are not isolated to the Danish context, and can be analysed as an international tendency. Harwood and Allan (2014) refer to the trend towards psychopathology at school, which points to the increasing tendency for children and young people who exhibit risk behaviour in school to be regarded as having psychiatric difficulties that require medication. The ever-increasing use of the diagnosis of ADHD is an example of the interpretation of children’s problems in psychiatric terms by school professionals. There is also a trend for increasingly younger children to be diagnosed in terms that were previously reserved for adults. The analysis of this trend also includes Valerie Harwood’s book: *Diagnosing ‘Disorderly’ Children: A Critique of Behaviour Disorder Discourses* (2006), in which she applies Foucault’s concepts to produce a critique of the tendency to diagnose children as ‘disorderly’, specifically with the term ‘conduct disorder’. In her critique she touches on issues like the power of the expert regime, psychiatry as a powerful discourse, and the increasing medicalization of children and young people. This critical perspective of medicalization in schools and special-needs education is also followed in the medicalization in schools (Harwood & McMahon, 2014).

The majority of Foucauldian-influenced research in disability studies and special education has followed a tradition of taking a critical approach to diagnosis as an expression of the individualization of human deviation (Corker & Shakespeare, 2006; Tremain, 2005; Goodley & Rapley, 2002). However, diagnosing may be part of a broader cultural tendency rather than just a categorization of deviancy. In his book *The Politics of Life Itself: Biomedicine, Power and Subjectivity in the Twenty-First Century* (2007), Nikolas Rose, for example, described diagnosis as a cultural tendency to perceive life as biological citizenship, where individuals are subjectivized and expected to take increasing responsibility for their own health and diseases. In the light of biological citizenship, diagnosis can be seen as something that not only restricts, but also provides access to options for treatment and financial privileges (see also Rabinow & Rose, 2003; Hughes, 2009).

This article argues that diagnosing may be understood and interpreted in relation to the way learning has been positioned in contemporary schooling today. Diagnosing as well as learning thus constitutes two equally important conceptions of how normality and deviancy are constructed. Rather than following the insights of the studies mentioned above, I argue that the frequency with which pupils in schools are diagnosed may be related to the way ‘learning’ and ‘the learner’ have been positioned as an ideal in schools. Drawing on an empirical study of documents in schools, I show that ‘the diagnosed pupil’ seems to be constructed as someone who has difficulties with everything the ‘learner’ is expected to be able to do (Hamre, 2012). Files produced by educational psychologists include descriptions of problems showing, for example, that diagnosed pupils have difficulties with being the curious, change-oriented, positive, and social individuals that the standards of education stipulate they ought to be. In this article I argue that learning is primarily relevant for understanding how normality is constructed, and that diagnosing is important in the construction of deviance. Through an analysis of my own empirical findings, I shall elaborate on the construction of diagnosis and learning as two
different but entangled phenomena that relate to the way in which pupils are interpreted as successful or not in current schooling.

**Subjectification and problematization**

The analysis of the empirical findings regarding ‘diagnosing’ and ‘learning’ mainly draw on Foucault’s concepts of subjectification and problematization. Theoretically, I consider diagnosis to be a technology that situates individuals in a particular form of identity. Here I am informed by the three types of subjectivity outlined by Foucault (Foucault, 1982), namely, scientific classification (such as psychiatry), dividing practices (e.g., exclusion to special education), and subjectification (e.g., the ways in which diagnosed pupils define themselves as different). Diagnosis is thus deemed to be a technology that creates the pupil in a specific way in the school. Drawing on Foucault’s theories on subjectification, I apply the term ‘subject’ as an analytical description of the individual in the article. Using technology as a term, I thus draw on Foucault’s theories on how the individual becomes a subject, as sketched out in the three types above. I have chosen to analyse learning by using Foucault’s methodological concept of problematization (Foucault, 1985, 1997, 1998). This term has gone relatively unnoticed, and, according to Paul Rabinow (2003), it is only in *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, 1979) where it is used in its explicit meaning. In this article, I argue that learning is an expression of such a typical current problematization of phenomena in schooling which simultaneously positions some pupils as non-learners, or perhaps as diagnosed individuals. Diagnosing and learning are the key empirical findings in my quantitative approach to the data. I shall now turn to this empirical study.

**Construction of data**

As mentioned above, the empirical data in the study stems from 44 files of pupils examined by educational psychologists and referred to special-needs education in Copenhagen Municipality. These files stem from the department responsible for schooling and the referral of pupils to special-needs education in Copenhagen in the period from 2000 to 2010. The files include various documents, such as evaluations of pupils, psychological, and psychiatric examinations, and objectives for how the pupil is supposed to develop in special-education contexts. In line with Foucault, a file is seen as an expression of a technology and a dividing practice that subjectivizes the pupils. The files are thus applied to demonstrate how modern schooling constructs differences between pupils who are included and those who are excluded.

**Diagnosis – analysis of data**

Drawing on the files, I argue that diagnosing in schooling often appears as something negative with regard to the image of a pupil (Hamre, 2012). The person who is diagnosed stands out as an individual who is not able to meet the expectations of being a learning subject. The analysed files make it clear that pupils are expected to fulfil requirements for emotional self-awareness and flexibility if they wish to be regarded as normal in schooling. From this perspective, the diagnosed pupils in the files’ descriptions of problems have failed, since they have not managed to act as successful learners who live up to the expectations of the schools. Many of these pupils are referred to special-education schools. Special-needs education can be regarded in this perspective as a compensatory response whereby the pupils, through different educational manuals, methods, and pupil-plans are positioned as individuals who need
guidance in order to appear as more successful pupils. The diagnosis appears in these documents as self-technologies, with pupils being expected to use their knowledge of their own diagnostic symptoms and behaviour to work with themselves in order to fulfil their potential as subjects of schooling. This can be observed, for example, in the child psychiatric files produced by the educational psychologists. These files describe the pupils not only in biographical terms with reference to their family history, using an examining process that results in a diagnosis, but also in the form of educational guidelines for the pupils diagnosed. As a knowledge regime, psychiatry exerts a hegemony that pervades the special educational approach to problems. In this case the diagnosis appears as a subjectification; it works both as a dividing practice and as a self-technology in the sense that the pupil works with her identity as a diagnosed pupil. Drawing on the above-mentioned child psychiatry files, I have found that this subjectification appears in four different ways (Hamre, 2012, p. 202). In addition to the information required for medical treatment, recommendations are thus made at four levels: 1) referral of the child to an institution of some kind, 2) the advice of the professionals who work with the child, 3) the guidance of the child’s parents, and 4) the therapy and educational initiatives directed at the child. In the medical records there is a tendency for diagnostic technology to position the pupil as working with their own diagnosis. The diagnosis in the files is associated with a number of technologies that involve a certain subjectification of the pupil. Apart from the diagnosis itself and the related medication, these technologies include educational training and guidance plans for the individual pupil, classes involving teaching in disability awareness as a personal issue, and ‘social-classes’ in which the diagnosed pupils are taught about social behaviour. These activities position the pupils as individuals who are expected to reflect on themselves as diagnostic subjects, involving special-education awareness. In an educational context, diagnosing might be a way to categorize pupils who are perceived as troubled or troublesome in modern schooling. Informed by Rose (2007), the diagnosed pupils in child psychiatric examinations and in special-education schools are manoeuvred into a biological view of themselves and their existence. This biological subjectification appears in the analysed files and documents from the special-education schools as an imperative, ‘Know yourself and your diagnosis’, encouraging the pupils to work with themselves as diagnostic subjects. For instance, this happens through the use of educational material such as ‘Asperger’s syndrome – what’s in it for me?’, in which the pupil is positioned as someone who needs to reflect upon himself or herself as a diagnostic subject. The medication itself also has a role to play when it appears in the educational settings with regard to producing pupils as biological subjects. For example, one of the child psychiatric files mentions Ritalin’s beneficial effect on a pupil’s attendance at school, including its influence on the pupil’s emotional insight and development in relation to concentration, changes in the school environment, the ability to defer needs, and so on. It describes how the medication has had the positive effect that a pupil is now able to speak out – without becoming aggressive and, not least, exhibiting an emerging understanding of disability in relation to his or her own and others’ problems. Among other positive effects attributed to the medication is ‘much more calm and coherence’. The medication of pupils together with organized work with their self-awareness and emotional habitus operate as two sides of the same coin, subjectivizing them as less problematic in relation to the school’s expectations of normality. The diagnosed pupils in the educational setting are positioned as emotional and biological individuals who are engaged in an effort to understand themselves with respect to their disability. The pupil-plans in special-needs education reflect ambivalence. On the one hand, they position the pupil as lacking understanding, which highlights pupils’ inability to meet the school’s requirement to practise self-knowledge, and generally manifest themselves as successful school
subjects. On the other hand, the pupil-plans at the same time emphasize the diagnosed pupils’ potentiality, placing them in a learning position in which they are expected to adapt to the ‘know-yourself’ imperative mentioned above.

**Diagnosing – analytical perspectives**

Diagnosing in schooling plays the role of a certain kind of subjectivity, positioning the pupils as unsuccessful learners. According to Langager’s (2008; Langager & Sand Jørgensen, 2011) research, a new kind of positivity has arisen through the development of brain science, draped in diagnosis, which results in a waiver of individual responsibility for the diagnosed individuals and their parents. The result is a new landmark in the understanding of issues among children because diagnoses are then surrounded with a form of exclusivity, triggering resources for a child. Yet children with social or psycho-social problems, or both, who are ‘non-diagnosed’ but still ‘different’ are subjectivized as clients and are met with requirements for self-normalization. However, it is not easy to define the two different groups. The picture is complicated by the fact that a diagnosis of ADHD can occur in combination with several other diagnoses related to anxiety, depression, behavioural disorders, and so forth. The trend is towards children being diagnosed with ‘complex problems’. Special-education issues that were formerly described as behavioural problems and learning disabilities are now classified as ‘supplementary diagnoses’, and thus social and emotional problems are covered by a diagnosis (Langager & Sand Jørgensen, 2011, p. 24). According to the Danish professor of psychology, Svend Brinkmann, this has resulted in a social and cultural tendency to treat diagnosis as a way of relating to existential problems (Brinkmann, 2010, 2011; Rose, 2007, 2010). Phenomena that were previously seen as part of human life have become pathologized on the basis of medical and psychiatric terms, with restlessness, for example, becoming ADHD (Brinkman, 2010). According to Rose (2007), the profession’s increased use of diagnoses of mental health has increased in importance as an explanatory model for general human and existential problems.

... we are witnessing a ‘psychiatrization’ of the human condition. In shaping our ethical regimes, our relations to ourselves, our judgements of the kinds of persons we want to be, and the lives we want to lead, psychiatry, like the rest of medicine, is fully engaged in making us the kinds of people who we have become. (p. 481)

In recent years, psychology has undergone an increasing psychiatrization that threatens its scientific autonomy, and teachers’ extensive use of ADHD as a diagnosis is an example of this (Brinkman, 2011). The growing importance of neuropsychology has led to a new form of biological determinism in the observation of people and the ways in which they are positioned in the fields of education, psychology, and psychiatry (Rose, 2007). This implies a shift from perceiving the human being as a psychological self to regarding it as a biological psychiatric self. The Swedish sociologist Thomas Brante (2011, p. 73) touches on something very similar when he argues that the increase in the number of diagnoses is due to neuropsychiatry having become a truth regime which has achieved hegemony as a scientific discipline, leading to a biologically deterministic view of human differences. The explanation for this hegemony is found not only in pharmaceutical and professional interests, but also in the fact that neuropsychiatry functions as a socially stabilizing factor: ‘Neuropsychiatric diagnosis is a relatively inexpensive method for the identification of problems and the maintenance of social order’ (Brante, 2011, p. 62). On the basis of the aforementioned sociological and psychological research, we can argue that
diagnosing is a strong cultural trend that influences the way in which pupils regarded as deviant are subjectivized in modern schooling.

This is also the case in Danish schooling. In the files produced by the educational psychologists (including the child psychiatric files and pupil-plans from the special-needs schools), it can be observed that several diagnoses often occur simultaneously during the diagnostic process. Developmental disturbances, such as those associated with diagnoses, highlight psychological, social, and environmental factors in the child’s upbringing. This trend can be seen not only as an expression of the narrowing of the range of normality that meets the school’s requirements, but also as an expression of the biologization of psychological and social factors in understanding human problems. These two problems, according to Rose (2007), show a clear correlation:

> These disorders on the borders, I think, are experienced and decoded for these purposes by the individuals and their doctors in relation to a cultural norm of the active, responsible, chosen self, which realizes its potential in the world through creating a lifestyle. And they are awarded their kind of available categories, such as depression, panic, social anxiety disorder and ADHD. (p. 480)

The diagnosis thus reflects a certain concept of normality. First, we shall consider the disorders on the borders. These disorders are, according to Rose (2007), positioned in a problem-solution complex according to the dictates of psychiatry and biology. This makes perfect sense, in fact, when we consider how child-psychiatric explanations lead to practical instructions for action in schools on the basis of these statements. It can only be interpreted as a clear narrowing of normality when such phenomena as ‘loss of confidence’ or ‘changed family pattern’ become supplementary diagnoses, so that phenomena which were previously interpreted in sociological and psychological terms now become clothed in a pathologizing diagnosis. The presence of additional diagnoses such as ‘loss of confidence’ and ‘changed family pattern’ in the files might be a manifestation of psychiatry increasingly providing more effective explanations in what has hitherto been regarded as the realm of psychology. This indicates that the school’s understanding of problems is shaped by the phenomenon that has been termed ‘pathologizing disorder’ (Nielsen & Jørgensen, 2010) and the aforementioned ‘psychiatrization of the human condition’ (Rose, 2007). When it comes to the sorting of human differences in school, psychiatric diagnoses seem to offer an efficient technology for separating the able from the less able. At special schools it is part of the curriculum that pupils should evaluate themselves and their diagnosis through learning processes. This illustrates what Rose (2007) analyses as the way in which individuals are characterized as biological citizens by having a biological relationship to themselves. In line with the applied data and the subsequent sociological perspectives, diagnosing might be interpreted as a modern way of constructing deviancy, not only in Danish schooling, but also as a general cultural tendency. This leads us to the following question: If diagnosing is a modern way of constructing deviancy in schools, how then is normality constructed?

**The ideal of the learner – analysis of data**

While diagnosing appears as a self-technology and a current way of constructing deviancy, as seen in the previous section, I argue on the basis of the data that learning and the construction of the ‘learner’ demonstrate an ideal of normality in current schooling (Hamre, 2012). Learning is, therefore, a
particular way of problematizing education, and involves a certain subjectification of the pupil that includes an ideal normality as opposed to deviancy. What are the implications of regarding learning as a problematization, and how does it work at the subject level? First, learning is seen as a response to scholastic phenomena in the present. The strong focus on learning can be seen, for example, as a response to the fact that Danish schoolchildren are very poor at reading (cf. PISA studies). This kind of focus on ‘learning’ is a response to a state that is seen as inadequate. Secondly, learning is seen as something that defines what is perceived as normal or aberrant. The defining of a phenomenon as a problem is tantamount to erecting a boundary between what can be observed, both culturally and institutionally, as being either included or excluded (Fogh Jensen, 2005). In this context, it means that one thing is defined as learning while another thing is defined as non-learning.

The problematization of learning subjectivizes some pupils as learners as social or reflective subjects, and this means that a similar distinction is produced in relation to pupils whose behaviour problem is defined as, for example, psycho-social difficulties, lack of impulse control, or simply that the pupil is a ‘problem child’, which is still a current designation in the school debate in the media. In line with the data presented in the previous section, diagnosed pupils are positioned as themselves as successful learners. Simply put, it can be said that the ideal of the learner pupil defines the difference between fitness and non-fitness in current schooling. In order to be successful in school, you need to subjectivize yourself as a learning subject. Learning as problematization is visible in three different ways: 1) in the ideal pupil whom today’s schools demand, 2) in a special kind of logic that defines how problem understandings are constructed in schools and justifies exclusion, and 3) through a variety of technologies that both reinforce and confirm the construction of the pupil as a learning subject (Hamre, 2012). In these cases, learning is constructed as a matter of potentiality; that is, there is an expectation of perpetual readiness for development. You could call this being in a perpetual state of inconclusiveness or ‘maybe-fitness’. Secondly, it is clear that learning is always articulated in a positive way as something unequivocally good, which in principle there can never be too much of. Thirdly, learning is seen as an overall response to the wide range of issues and situations that occur at school. Problems are interpreted as occurring, for example, because the learning method is not taken seriously enough, because the teacher lacks a professional knowledge of learning, or because the professionals have an outdated view of what education is all about (where learning comes in as a solution). The degree of potentiality inherent in learning extends beyond the pedagogical relationship between teacher and pupil, with the responsibility for achieving their potential given to the pupil. Similarly, parents are subjectivized as co-responsible for the realization of their children’s potential as learning subjects.

The problematization of learning functions very effectively in addition to this because learning can easily be associated with a wide variety of different phenomena: 1) efficiency, pleasure, and curiosity, 2) happiness, health, and well-being, 3) the phenomenon of ‘the learning environment’ as a sacred place where something new is likely to occur, and 4) the methods of different learning styles like cooperative learning, where learning takes on the role of redeemer of the unique and personal. Additionally, learning is seen as a response to how the pupil, the teacher, and the organization are expected to orient themselves in a curious and resource-oriented way. At all levels, the message is clear: you have the potential to develop yourself. Any limitations are basically just due to your own lack of ability. For the pupils, it is about subjectivizing themselves as willing individuals who, through a labour of self-esteem, open themselves up for leadership through recognition and therapy-like work with their emotional lives.
The development of learning strategies positions pupils in their own professional- and personal-development project, which includes looking at themselves to discover their potential.

The problematization of learning thus enables a distinction to be made between what it means to be successful or less successful as a pupil in school. In line with the analytical perspective of this article, the diagnosed pupils have transgressed the standards of what is acceptable to be successful as an individual in current schooling. All pupils are subjected to the standards of being learning subjects, but not everyone manages to be a successful learning subject. Technologies like contracts, action plans, and external targets result in an individualization of schooling in which the individual pupil is evaluated and positioned to take responsibility for the learning process. This involves an expectation that the individual has an active relationship with his or her learning process. With the individualization of the learning project, it has become possible to attribute responsibility for the failure to achieve their full potential to the pupil. Technologies associated with the ideal of learning have thus introduced new dividing practices involving new types of exclusive mechanisms. As a result, learning and its related technologies constitute the most important subjectification in modern schooling. In the section below I shall discuss how these analytical findings might find support in Foucauldian studies on general education.

Learning as an ideal – analytical perspectives

Gert Biesta’s (2006) concept of ‘learnification’ denotes the increasing tendency for learning to be positioned as the central concept of educational theory in schools and in the training of various professionals. Biesta is critical of the concept of learning, and he analyses it as an expression of how neo-liberalism has affected schools and educational science. This ideal of learning also involves a certain idea of the subject. The deconstruction of learning can also be seen in educational studies as being informed by governmentality studies. In his further development of governmentality, Rose (1998) has discussed the management of the ‘subject’ in modern society based on the relationship between power and freedom. Managing through freedom is based on a number of managerial technologies (Rose, 1998, p. 67), and this is, therefore, also applicable in the field of schools and education (Fendler, 1998; Popkewitz, 2008). According to the American educational researcher Lynn Fendler (1998), the spread of the concept of learning, as well as allowing pupils to be flexible, is of independent financial value when it comes to generating labour productivity in a globalized economy. The educational system thus reproduces a financial perspective in its requirements for flexibility in training and in the school’s educational approach. For the pupils, this requirement for flexibility is synonymous with the ability to adapt, to react to external demands, and to practise self-discipline (Fendler, 1998, p. 20). The education system is expected to produce flexible and adaptable personalities, and the soul is the place where this subjectification of the pupil’s personality is expected to occur. This work on the soul performed by each pupil is designed to teach them the importance of being motivated, which includes having the right, positive attitude and a willingness to accept that all features of the personality may be the subject of learning. The construction of the flexible personality in school is related to the fact that school psychology has become a truth regime that creates pupils as psychological subjects (Rose, 1998; Fendler, 1998).

According to Fendler, the school is characterized by a developmentality rationale (Walkerdine, 1998); however, this does not mean a development
towards freedom. Instead, developmental psychology directs pupils towards self-management in fulfilling the school’s requirements and expectations (Fendler, 1998, p. 8). Developmental psychology has become a knowledge regime in which power is exercised through normalization technologies in schools, which is consistent with the state’s efforts to format pupils as productive and flexible individuals. Following Fendler’s argument, the dominance of the concept of learning in school must, therefore, also be seen from this perspective. The importance of learning must be seen in context, with the notion of the future forming an important part of the modern school. As the Swedish educational researcher Kenneth Hultqvist (2008) claims, ‘The concept of learning is both an art and an agenda to the individual to prepare to face a future that is more uncertain than ever’ (p. 163). The idea of the future is an effective managerial technology, both when it comes to the repayment of the logics in a globalized economy and for how individuals manage themselves and their time in school. It is here that the idea of the future enters into an alliance with the concept of learning.

The future is not, I would argue, about the time that lies ahead. It is a technology that organises and creates subjects, school children, teachers and parents, and during the course of events links together the two poles of control: control of the individual and control of the population. (Hultqvist, 2008, p. 160)

As a managerial technology, the notion of the future is inscribed in national programmes and standards for the educational planning of each school’s curriculum and educational methods, as well as the relationship between the teacher and the learner. Following Hultqvist, I would argue, therefore, that the deployment of the concept of learning in school can be seen as a powerful technology that shapes the pupil as an individual and the population as a whole. We follow the American educational researcher Thomas S. Popkewitz, who argues that lifelong learning has become a cultural ideal. This ideal, according to Popkewitz, should be understood through the concept of cosmopolitanism, a principle that since the Enlightenment has constructed the pupil as a rational, thinking individual. Cosmopolitanism, therefore, determines how, in different historical periods, perceptions of normality construct the pupil as a school subject (Popkewitz, 2008, p. 111). Rationality therefore has three different functions: 1) it produces norms and ideals of how one should be a pupil in school, 2) it organizes differences, because it defines what should be included and excluded, and 3) through the organization of these differences, rationality also produces exclusion. As a managerial principle, cosmopolitanism works in two ways, therefore: on the one hand, it acts as an educational ideal, emancipatory and freeing for the individual, but, on the other hand, it also produces at the same time differences and exclusion in relation to pupils who do not comply with the ideal of the rational individual. The ‘learner’ is the current ideal of the subject of cosmopolitanism, defining who is to be included and excluded. To sum up: the above-cited studies positions learning as an important problematization in contemporary schooling. In my empirical studies I have demonstrated how the idea of the learner is positioned as the ideal subject in a Danish school context. I argue that the idea of the learner reflects the historical problematization of learning. This can be analysed by taking Foucault’s theories of subjectification into account. As we have seen, problematization is a response to a historical phenomenon that is exercising power (Foucault, 1985, 1997, 1998), because it governs what is defined as included and excluded (Howarth, 2005). As a problematization learning also involves solutions to the problem, and it operates at the subject level as well; that is, individuals are subjectivized and subjectivize themselves as learning subjects (Hamre, 2012). Learning thus also works as a subjectification on the three different levels as
outlined earlier, positioning the learner as an ideal subject. The two phenomena in modern ‘learning’ and ‘diagnosing’ in modern schooling may thus represent contemporary constructions of normality and deviancy in modern schooling.

Conclusion

In light of the analysis of this article, the diagnosed child appears to be a shadowy entity in relation to the ideal of ‘the learner’, a child who has problems meeting the modern requirements to be curious, motivated, and positive. Proficiency in school is synonymous with a pupil’s willingness to work with their potential as an individual learner. The individual in modern schools is thus fixed in a ‘maybe-ability’, since they will always be subject to the ideal of learning: ‘you are always in a process, and it is expected that you will make yourself visible in this process.’ Although it sounds ambivalent, this recurring ‘maybe-ability’ may have exclusionary functions for some pupils, since they may have difficulties in adapting to ideals of knowing themselves, reflecting upon themselves, manoeuvring in groups, and taking responsibility for their own learning. The inability to fulfil such agendas in contemporary schooling might result in a sort of psychopathologization (Harwood & Allan, 2014), in which psychological or social problems are constructed and interpreted as psychiatric problems that need treatment and intervention. Accordingly, diagnosing may represent a shadow side of the tendency towards ‘learnification’ (Biesta, 2006).

In his description in The History of Madness (1973), Foucault described how the modern bourgeois sense was constructed as the ideal of normality by banishing the ‘mad’ individuals who deviated from it. The ideal of the learner and the diagnosed is a modern example of how the normal constitutes itself by excluding the deviant. The diagnosed pupil is positioned as a subject who has failed to take responsibility for their own learning, thereby representing the ultimate negation of the learning subject. Informed by Foucault, we can interpret diagnostic descriptions not as objective scientific descriptions of pupils’ problem, but as constructions that need to be analysed in the current agenda of the school. The school’s many diagnoses and the importance of diagnosis have legitimized deviation, which Bernadette Baker (2002) has described as a form of ‘newgenics’, seen as quality control and the separation of the non-able. Diagnosing represents a new way to separate the competent from the less able in schools, and in this sense is a form of newgenics that deftly ensures the sorting out of those pupils who may not readily be subjectivized as learners, subjects oriented towards a future where knowledge and people need to be transformed in order to fit market conditions.

References


Democratic and Inclusive Education in Iceland: Transgression and the Medical Gaze

Ólafur Páll Jónsson
School of Education
University of Iceland,
Email: opj@hi.is

Abstract

‘Inclusive education’ and ‘democracy’ are more than buzzwords in education. They refer to official educational policy in much of the western world. Democracy as a school policy seems to be widely accepted while inclusive education is more controversial, sometimes fuelling lively public debates where parents and politicians are vocal. However, there seems to be little agreement on what ‘inclusive education’ means, although one can discern a certain core to the understanding of ‘inclusive education’ among many of those who participate in the public debate. Central to the above understanding of inclusive education and democracy are certain features that I want to draw attention to. First, what falls under the headings ‘democracy in schools’, ‘democratic education’ or ‘student democracy’, on the one hand, and ‘inclusive education’, on the other, have little to do with one another. I discuss how the medical gaze in the context of education belongs to the dominant ideology of the time and is thus prevailing without ever having to be argued for or defended. The consequence of this is, as I see it, that education (which sometimes is more training than growth) is being cast in pathological terms. I connect the idea of transgression to that of democratic school and character. Transgression is relevant in two ways here. The school has to be a place where transgression is encouraged and, secondly, it is a place where transgression is valued as a democratic virtue. Virtue here could, I think, be understood in Aristotelian terms – or even given a Socratic interpretation.

Keywords: Inclusion, medical gaze, transgression, democratic education, Dewey, Foucault, Iceland

Introduction

In this article, I look at democratic and inclusive education in Iceland since the mid-1970s when important educational reforms took place. These changes marked the beginning of democratic and inclusive education as official educational policy (section 1). However, in the 1990s there was a backlash in this development as many of the democratic principles from the 1970s were abandoned for a more managerial system of education (section 2). The changes during the 1990s were not simply changes of policy but reflected underlying
ideological differences concerning schools and education in general (section 3). I use Foucault's notion of the 'medical gaze' to reflect on these ideological differences (section 4). I then turn to inclusion and democracy as a task for schools and go into some details about democratic education, drawing on Foucault's notion of transgression and John Dewey's conception of democracy (sections 5 and 6). Finally, I conclude by arguing that inclusive, democratic education has to be a branch of character education backed by institutional commitment to students as moral subjects and not only as objects for formation.

1. Inclusion and democracy in Icelandic schools – the beginning

‘Inclusive education’ and ‘democratic education’ refer to official educational policy in Iceland that can be traced back to the School Act of 1974, when the primary objective of compulsory education became the preparation of students for life and work in an ever changing democratic society. Although the word ‘inclusion’ did not appear until 20 years later, the 1974 School Act had clear implications in the direction of inclusion.

Whilst the 1946 Education Act shifted the main focus from school subjects to the students' needs, it was the 1974 Education Act that recognized in law for the first time that all children of a given age had an equal right to education in the state school system and that the school had a role in meeting the full diversity of student needs ... The view that this should be done in the child's neighbourhood school rather than as a segregated provision has been stated since then in an increasingly unequivocal fashion by those who formulate official education policy. (Bjarnason & Marinósson, 2015, p. 281)

The School Act of 1974, and the subsequent national curriculum for elementary schools (ages 7 to 16), was in many ways revolutionary, not only for the explicit statement of democracy and demand for more inclusive schools, but also for the extensive work on curricular design, teacher training, writing of new educational material, and so forth (Edelstein, 2013; Jónsson, 2014). Ingólfur Ásgeir Jóhannesson (2006) describes the changes in the following way:

If we look at late twentieth-century educational history in Iceland from this perspective, we see that the reform efforts of the 1970s and 1980s were aimed at modernizing the Icelandic education system, with an emphasis on primary education (6 to 16 years). The reform was based on child-centred, humanistic, and egalitarian views which I will call the democratic principle. These views are apparent in cooperative learning methods, integration of subject matter, evaluation as process rather than product, and many other ‘progressive’ views in education. (p. 105)

Following the School Act of 1974 much work was devoted to putting these progressive views into practice under the leadership of Wolfgang Edelstein, though with more emphasis on democracy than inclusion. However, during the dark months of the Icelandic winter in 1983 to 1984 a new minister of education brought that work to a halt after fierce debate about the fate of history teaching in elementary schools.

Despite the great controversies surrounding this progressive work, democracy as a school policy was widely accepted, and although changes in the 1990s were in important ways antagonistic to the democratic principles from the 1970s,
those principles have hardly ever been explicitly challenged in public discourse. The same cannot be said about inclusive education which has been more controversial, sometimes fuelling lively public debates among parents and politicians as well as scholars and teachers.

2. Discursive patterns

The term ‘inclusive education’ – or the clumsy Icelandic correlate ‘school without differentiation’ – came to Iceland with a translation of the Salamanca Statement in 1995, which the Ministry of Education sent to every school (Bjarnason & Marinósson, 2015). However, the messages from the ministry and municipalities were far from unequivocal, as Bjarnason and Marinósson have observed:

As a whole the Act from 2008 emphasizes equity, equal opportunities and an appropriate education for all children, irrespective of their physical, mental or sensory capacities, their socio-economic situation, national/ethnic origin or linguistic competences. But [in] the article on specialized services and support system for schools the emphasis is on increase in diagnostic psychological services in place of pedagogic or therapeutic work. Students should be evaluated from the first year of schooling to secure them appropriate teaching and support. Further, students who may have psychological or social problems, affecting their learning are entitled to diagnostic services, if the parents agree. (Bjarnason & Marinósson, 2015, p. 140)

In the public debate on inclusive education, beginning in the 1990s when it became official educational policy, one can discern certain understandings or discursive patterns of both the role of schools in general and their ‘proper role’ for inclusion in particular. Although these patterns are reflected in some of the policy documents that came from the Ministry of Education in the 1990s (Jóhannesson, 2006; Bjarnason & Marinósson, 2015), they do not form an explicitly stated and defended view of inclusive education, but figure rather as an ideological background to many of the claims about schools, teachers, students, and educational practices in general that are made in the public debate, as well as in various official policy documents. I shall label four distinct but interwoven themes.

(1) Individualistic understanding: Difficulties that students face are usually viewed as their difficulties, although those difficulties often result in problems for teachers and schools as well as the families of the students. The source of the difficulty is located in the individual students and the remedies proposed focus primarily on the individuals. Likewise, much of the demand for support is premised on individualized learning and the rights of the students which are, as discourses on rights usually are, very much individualistic (Jóhannesson, 2006).

(2) Medical model: Much of the discussion of inclusive education operates not only with a vocabulary of various individualistic learning difficulties (as in (1) above), but also from such a vocabulary, emphasizing mental and physical defects along with emotional disturbances. The difficulties are the starting points, often in the form a diagnosis, and the means taken are seen as remedies for whatever defect has been detected. In 2012, 16 per cent of the total elementary student population in Iceland had some formal diagnoses and in the east, where the number was highest, it was 24 per cent (Menntavísinda stofnun Háskóla Islands, 2014, p. 20). Accordingly, educational practices take the form
of special education rather than inclusive education, revolving around diagnosis and fixing whatever is found to be out of order.

(3) Technical approach: To address the problems which are the concern of special education – rather than inclusive education – appropriate methods or techniques are called for. Jóhannesson puts it very succinctly when writing, ‘Diagnosis rather than pedagogy appears as the method (technology) for inclusion’ (Jóhannesson, 2006, p. 111). This is only to be expected, given the medical view of learning difficulties, but it has at the same time resulted in an increased drive towards diagnosis which has generated an overload of demands at The State Diagnostic and Counselling Centre. A technological view of education is also manifest in higher education, although not rooted in diagnostic practices as in primary and secondary education. Reflecting on the Bologna Process for higher education in Europe, Ronald Barnett (2003) remarks that ‘... in this discursive shift, in this reduction of curriculum or specifications largely of skills, we see a framing of the curriculum in instrumental terms. A curriculum is nothing but the production of a set of skills, and is only to be valued providing it delivers skills’ (p. 564).

(4) Market-commodity view of education: All this is then set against a background condition of schools where students compete with each other for rank and opportunity – and where the schools themselves (from primary schools to universities) compete with each other for rank and funding – in an environment where education is by and large seen as any other market commodity. Education, especially at the upper secondary and university levels but also to some extent at the lower levels, is talked about as an investment and the students are said to increase their own market value by obtaining education. Although the market-commodity view of education may not be as entrenched in Iceland as in the US (Molnar, 2005), it has become a dominant view in much of the educational discourse (Jóhannesson, 2006), not least since 2013 when the Independence Party took over the Ministry of Education from the Left-Green Movement.

One can discern somewhat similar discursive patterns or underlying ideas relating to democracy in education. Individual preferences are taken to be the ultimate unit of analysis, democracy is thought of as a means for advancing such preferences (thus ‘technical’), and its basic function is to regulate a free competition of individual opinions and preferences (thus the ‘market-commodity view’).

Public understanding of democracy as an educational ideal may, however, show itself more in what is omitted than what is explicitly stated. This is in part due to the fact that democracy, unlike inclusive education, has never been the explicit topic of public controversy. Thus, when the democratic principles of the 1970s were abandoned during the 1990s, democracy as an educational objective remained intact, though only as a dead letter. Official educational policy was silent about things that one should expect to be central to democratic educational policy such as equality, gender, and class. This has been pointed out by Jóhannesson (2006):

The conjuncture of the vision of inclusion, the technological approach to defining differences, and the market-oriented approach in financing education (e.g., management by results) creates a silence about equality in other terms, such as gender, residence, class, and culture. (p. 114)

The final thing I want to point out concerning background ideas or discursive patterns relating to democratic and inclusive education is that the two are by
and large considered to be distinct fields. Although inclusive education and democracy as educational policy can both be traced back to the School Act of 1974 the two have not been thought of as part and parcel of the same ideal. This may perhaps be explained by such down-to-earth factors as school financing (Jóhannesson, 2006). Debates about inclusive education – or tensions between inclusive education and special education – tend to revolve around (a) systems of aid for specific groups of students (diagnosed with specific conditions) rather than general pedagogical practices; (b) the distribution of limited resources such as welfare provisions rather than things that are owed the individuals as matters of basic rights; and (c) the role of schools as preparation for what awaits the students once they move on to the next school level and, finally, to the job market.

3. Different ideologies of schools and education

The above view of democratic and inclusive education runs contrary to strong currents in scholarship and advocacy on inclusion and disability exemplified by, for instance, the Salamanca declaration from 1994 and the World Report on Disability from 2011 (WHO, 2011). It also runs contrary to recent academic work in the field of inclusive education (Allan, 2003, 2008; Jóhannesson, 2006; Jónsson, 2011; Slee, 2011). Considering inclusive education as an essentially democratic requirement that ought to permeate school practices means that inclusion must be taken as a fundamental value, both political and educational. And here one encounters differences among teachers, parents, and scholars alike which are both deeply rooted and have widespread implications. The differences are not simply about the effectiveness of certain methods or some practical matters but are best described as ideological differences about education and schooling in general.

A dominant ideology is a collection of ideas, prejudices, and conceptions of the world in virtue of which people look at and think about society, social institutions, their surroundings, other people, and themselves. Ideology in this sense is not explicitly expressed, neither by certain individuals nor by any group of people, but is exemplified by what people say and do, and what they don’t say or do. It may be difficult to articulate or even recognize because the dominant ideology constitutes, at any time, the obvious – it is ‘common sense’ – though in retrospect it is often all but that (Zizek, 1997). Foucault (1984) puts the point well when discussing the sources of his work on psychiatry and medicine:

"There were no ready-made concepts, no approved terms of vocabulary available for questions like the power effects of psychiatry or the political function of medicine … The price Marxists paid for their fidelity to the old positivism was a radical deafness to a whole series of questions posed by science. (pp. 52–53)"

Ideology is also implicit in the institutional structures that are found in society, not least in schools where it is shown by what is counted as normal functioning of those institutions.

Ideological differences, although general in character, generate conflicts in the everyday work of teachers who feel pulled in different directions (Bjarnason & Gunnþórsdóttir, 2014). Many teachers experience frustration and when things are at their worst, school may turn into a territory of failure (Allan, 2008) – for students and teachers alike.
Conceiving of the frustrations in the field of inclusive education as a conflict of ideologies echoes some recent trends in the related field of disability studies. In an editorial to a special issue of the International Journal of Inclusive Education, recent trends in the field of disability studies are described in the following way:

Gabel & Peters (2004) acknowledged that the social model is explanatory, but insufficient for creating change. To move forward, they suggested the use of resistance theory to comprehend the intricate and multifaceted relationships, interactions, and negotiations among divergent ideas, while simultaneously bringing together the global community in pursuit of praxis. (Connor et al., 2008, p. 443)

Though Gabel and Peters (2004) do not describe their approach in terms of conflicting ideologies – and may narrow the focus too much by using the word ‘paradigm’ – they come close to this when writing:

Thinking of resistance in this way, as operating in all directions of the social sphere and across paradigmatic boundaries, helps one to understand the push and pull of the conversation of resistance. Resistance functions as a way for disabled people to push against dominance while also attempting to pull society into disabled people’s way of seeing. (p. 594–595)

The resistance described here does not stem from nuances between competing views of specific professionals, but from a conflict of ideas about what is a normal function of a social system. In the field of inclusive education similar conflicts concern ideas about what are the normal workings of schools, what institutional structures are legitimate, and to what kind of authority students can be subjected. Recent trends in inclusive education have emphasized human diversity and the demands of justice and democracy in general, not only for disabled students, but also for the very bright, the non-native speaking, the poor, and the very shy (Guðjónsdóttir & Karlsdóttir, 2010).

4. Ideology and the medical gaze

Foucault's concept of the medical gaze can be illuminating when discussing ideological presuppositions for inclusion and democracy. In the introduction to Reassessing Foucault: Power, Medicine and the Body, Jones and Porter (1994) write:

[Foucault] was fascinated by the conventions of the medical ‘gaze’ for eliciting truth; the production of symptoms and signs within determinate frameworks of signification: the vital role of technologies of power and specific institutional settings (diagnostic tests, hospitals, asylums); and not least the capacity of medical power to be – or appear to be – positive and benign rather than oppressive, and to create ‘subjects’ in both senses of the term: clients subjected to protocols of power, but also specific individuals (everyone has, for example, his or her own unique medical history or fingerprint). (p. 11)

As noted above, discourse about inclusive education has been individualistic, medical, and technical and premised on education as a market commodity. Students with special educational needs are accordingly identified as having ‘symptoms and signs within determinate frameworks of signification’ and although the treatment these students receive is portrayed as benign – and certainly may have various good consequences – it subjects them to power...
which has little or no commitment to democratic principles nor need it be
sensitive to the socio-economic conditions of the students. The latter is
observed by Jóhannesson (2006) while examining policy documents from the
late 1990s.

... because clinical methods have become the way to deal with special
educational needs, they must be treated as individual differences; clinical
psychology or medicine cannot properly deal with cultural differences or
gender differences. This means that only individual differences are
acknowledged, thus side-lining differences that may arise in terms of
culture or the socio-economic circumstances of the children. (p. 115)

The medical gaze is not only relevant when considering treatment of ‘diagnosed’
special educational needs but extends to the conception of the child itself, as
noted by Bjarnason (2008):

Medical staff, trained to alleviate suffering and prevent harm, tend to
favour screening and the termination of pregnancy when the fetus is found
to be impaired. Prospective parents are more than likely to share this view
owing to the widespread acceptance of the medical perspective. Such
prospective parents are likely to take upon themselves the suffering of
abortion to save their future child and the family from suffering, stress, and
harm, and to prevent the unborn fetus the loss of future opportunities. (p.
266)

Bjarnason (2008) then refers to Foucault’s notion of medical gaze to
textualize the above observation:

[The medical gaze] implies the power the medical professionals gain over
their patients when they denote the often-dehumanizing method of
separating the patients’ body from the person in diagnosis and treatment.
This term [medical gaze] captures some of the greater social issues
involved that reify the impaired fetuses as ‘a social artifact’ and how that
is communicated to parents-to-be who themselves are placed under the
gaze as patients. (p. 269)

The medical gaze constitutes an element of the dominant educational ideology.
However, it is not something people deliberately accept or defend, but figures
as a legitimizing principle and structuring force in both institutional design and
personal interaction. The medical gaze is also evident in much research on
deviant children or deviant child behaviour, where the children themselves, as
persons with complex lives in a socio-economic setting, fade out of sight – or
become ‘a social artifact’ – with the researchers gaining power by defining what
is legitimate or deviant behaviour and what constitutes a deviant child as
opposed to a normal one. The focus becomes predefined deviation and the
means of either managing it directly or modifying antecedent behaviour that has
been found to correlate with future behaviour defined as deviant (Kazdin, 1980;
Ialongo et al., 1999).

5. Inclusion and democracy as tasks for schools

Different conceptions of democracy not only entail different roles for schools as
institutions in a democratic society, but they also entail different conceptions of
what makes school practices democratic. An underlying idea in the conception
of democracy that I described above is that social affairs should be organized
as a free and open competition among people for preferences, positions, and various other social as well as personal goods. It is granted that people have different views, needs, and preferences, and democratic institutions are then designed to ensure a free market of ideas and opinions and competition free of coercion and monopoly to accommodate this diversity. This conception of democracy has been labelled ‘aggregative democracy’ (Young, 2002, pp. 18–22).

The democratic role of the school, in this view, is mainly twofold. First, it is to make people fit to participate in the market of ideas and, secondly, to ensure knowledge of fundamental rights and basic principles that are needed for society to function efficiently. In this view, the role of the school is to prepare students for a society to which they do not yet belong, in much the same way as the school serves to prepare students for the workplace. Here we see the technical, individualistic, and neo-liberal aspects of the dominant ideology of education. Democracy becomes a task for the schools or even a problem; it is something that schools face and must solve however successfully, just as they must produce knowledgeable and skilled workers for the workplace (Biesta, 2006). But democracy as a problem for schools may be impossible to solve as Keith Ballard (2003) observes, drawing on work by Paul James:

James … says that in the fragmented, individualized and globalized world of New Right liberal economics, the ‘sociality of identity’ is being lost…. In part, this is because the concept of a society is challenged, and replaced with the idea that only the ‘personal and familial’ … has meaning. In this context, rather than recognizing and valuing our dependencies and interdependencies, which would seem to be central to the notion of an inclusive society, the term dependent is constructed as involving a ‘lesser person,’ one who cannot, or will not, fend for themselves … (p. 11)

### 6. Democratic character and transgression

The aggregative view of democracy is often contrasted with a deliberative conception (Bohman & Rehg, 1997). Most theories of deliberative democracy focus primarily on structure and policy and on the making of collective decisions, premised on the mutual benefit of people who live together as equals and who have joined forces in a free association (Cohen, 1997; Gutmann & Thompson, 2004). Proceeding from these premises, one faces difficult problems when applying a theory of deliberative democracy to schools where (a) the individuals involved do not come together as equals but as unequal in important respects (teacher/student, headmaster/teacher), (b) are not there for mutual benefit, and (c) part of the population, namely, the students, has no choice but to participate irrespective of experience or preferences.

Considering the diversity of the students, both psychological and socio-economic, the deliberative model lacks an account of the role of attitudes and practices that are essential for sustaining and cultivating just and democratic functions, while at the same time being central for transforming the school into a truly educational setting; a learning community in the sense of bell hooks (1994). However, such a concept of democracy and education was argued for by John Dewey (1916) 100 years ago. Despite important similarities between Dewey’s conception and the deliberative tradition there are also important differences between the two, the most important of which have to do with Dewey’s starting point. In a speech from 1939, ‘Creative democracy – the task before us’, he states:
Instead of thinking of our own [democratic] dispositions and habits as accommodated to certain institutions we have to learn to think of the latter as expressions, projections and extensions of habitually dominant personal attitudes. (Dewey, 1998 [1939], p. 341)

The common way of applying a theory of democracy to school practices is by beginning with a notion of democracy as a system of government or means of making collective, binding decisions and then adapting it to the circumstances in the school. Dewey, on the other hand, insists that the starting point should not be a theory of institutional structure or procedural design but ‘habitually dominant personal attitudes’ (p. 341). It is here where Foucault’s idea of transgression becomes helpful. In ‘A preface to transgression’ (1977), Foucault says:

Transgression is an action which involves the limit, that narrow zone of a line where it displays the flash of its passage, but perhaps also its entire trajectory, even its origin; it is likely that transgression has its entire space in the line it crosses. (pp. 33-34)

A little later, Foucault (1977) reflects on the interdependence of the limit and transgression:

The limit and transgression depend on each other for whatever density of being they possess: a limit could not exist if it were absolutely uncrossable and, reciprocally, transgression would be pointless if it merely crossed a limit composed of illusions and shadows. (p. 34)

It is important to note here that when talking about transgression, Foucault is not envisaging a world without distinctions – without class, gender, roles such as student/teacher, and so on – but is opening up a way of seeing the distinctions as dynamic and not defining of their constituent elements. Transgression means that the relevant distinctions are as much a potential for a new being as they are definitive of being itself. Thus, he writes:

Transgression, then, is not related to the limit as black to white, the prohibited to the lawful, the outside to the inside, or as the open area of a building to its enclosed spaces. Rather, their relationship takes the form of a spiral which no simple infraction can exhaust. (Foucault, 1977, p. 35)

Julie Allan (2011) has applied the notion of transgression to disability research where she has observed students with disability. She writes:

Transgression, the practical and playful resistance to limits … is an important way for people with disabilities to challenge the disabling barriers they encounter. Transgression is not antagonistic or aggressive, nor does it involve a contest in which there is a victor; rather, it allows individuals with disabilities to shape their own identities by subverting the norms that compel them to repeatedly perform as marginal. (p. 154)

This idea of challenging barriers and subverting norms that compel students to perform as marginal can be applied more widely to a theory of democratic education and, I shall argue, one can see this as a central feature of a Deweyan conception of democracy. Dewey’s way of framing his ideas is different from that of Foucault, and I do not want to hint at any general agreement between the two. My point here is simply that Foucault’s conception of transgression can be used to shed light on Dewey’s idea of democracy and, likewise, Dewey’s
ideas of democracy can help us see the relevance of the concept of transgression for democratic education quite generally.

To move forward in this direction it is important to situate Foucault in the Kantian tradition – as he himself readily did. As Mark Olssen (2006) writes:

Foucault ... situates his own work within the critical tradition of Kant. This tradition, says Foucault, entails 'an analysis of the conditions under which certain relations of subject and object are formed or modified' and a demonstration of how such conditions 'are constitutive of a possible knowledge'. (pp. 246–247)

The process of education and its ‘possible knowledge’ is a constant play on the relations between subject and object. But possible knowledge for Foucault is not simply possible propositional content (as it may have been for Kant) but also possible ways of knowing where the body is as relevant as the cognitive powers, and where feelings and emotions are as relevant as propositional knowledge. Foucault would also include considerations about who is recognized as a knower and the various power relations that come with such recognition.

We only know the limits of possible knowledge by reflecting on actual knowledge. Here, transgression is relevant as a means of challenging and expanding these limits. However, for an educational setting to be genuinely free and democratic, no individual nor any specific group of individuals (be it adults, teachers, ‘the experts’, et al.) may have an authority on where these limits lie. Thus, in democratic education, the very process of education must be open to creative challenges, not only the ordinary challenges to claims of knowledge one might see in a scientific debate, but also to challenges that constitute transgression of categories which define who someone is, what is appropriate for such a person, and where such a person belongs.

An illuminating description of a transgression in this sense is ‘On Being a Cripple’ by Nancy Mairs (1986). In this essay Mairs deliberately chooses the label ‘cripple’ for herself, for she finds that it describes her condition better than labels such as ‘disabled’ or ‘handicapped’. Mairs embraces the label while, at the same time, she rejects the ideological baggage that comes with it by being in charge of her own life as a cripple.

People – crippled or not – wince at the word ‘cripple,’ as they do not at ‘handicapped’ or ‘disabled.’ Perhaps I want them to wince. I want them to see me as a tough customer, one to whom the fates /gods /viruses have not been kind, but who can face the brutal truth of her existence squarely. (Mairs, 1986, p. 9)

In an educational setting the most basic defining categories are that of subject and object, categories which ought not to be fixed although much of the institutional educational structure is precisely designed for fixing them. Disabled students, as well as students of colour in many parts of the US (see e.g., bell hooks, 1994), and poor students or shy students, students portrayed as having special educational needs, or students showing deviant behaviour are commonly denied the possibility to be subjects in their own lives (Jørgensen, 2004). Such students are constantly the object of this or that programme, steered into this or that direction, being modified for this or that end, none of which are of their own choice. Not only are they compelled ‘to repeatedly perform as marginal’, as Allan notes (Allan, 2011, p. 154), but they are also denied the ability, within the educational process, to pass judgement on what they find interesting and what counts as relevant, fair, or worthy of knowing. In
short, intellectual authority is handed to them from the teachers (with the medical gaze) or from textbooks. None of this is confined to disabled students or students who are marginal or deviant for some reason or another but applies to the whole category of the student. In the introduction to her book *Teaching to Transgress* (1994), bell hooks writes:

School was the place of ecstasy – pleasure and danger. To be changed by ideas was pure pleasure. But to learn ideas that ran counter to values and beliefs learned at home was to place oneself at risk, to enter the danger zone. Home was the place where I was forced to conform to someone else’s image of who and what I would be. School was the place where I would forget that self and, through ideas, reinvent myself. (p. 3)

School is a place for transgression for hooks – a learning community which urges students ‘to open [their] minds and hearts so that [they] can know beyond the boundaries of what is acceptable, so that [they] can think and rethink, so that [they] can create new vision’ (hooks, 1994, p. 12). This kind of learning community is one which, according to hooks, makes education the practice of freedom. It is this connection between learning, transgressing boundaries, and freedom that must be at the centre of any theory of democratic education, that is, education opposed to coercion into predetermined forms of knowing and being.

Going back to Dewey (1998 [1939]), we can see how he identifies learning as a central element in the democratic process, emphasizing both its cognitive and emotional aspects:

[...] democracy as a way of life is controlled by personal faith in personal day-by-day working together with others. Democracy is the belief that even when needs and ends or consequences are different for each individual, the habit of amicable cooperation – which may include, as in sport, rivalry and competition – is itself a priceless addition to life. To take as far as possible every conflict which arises – and they are bound to arise – out of the atmosphere and medium of force, of violence as a means of settlement into that of discussion and of intelligence is to treat those who disagree – even profoundly – with us as those from whom we may learn, and in so far, as friends. (p. 342)

Dewey does not describe democracy as a way of managing differences – or providing means for making decisions in the face of differences – but as a way of living with other people with whom one may disagree. Fundamental to the democratic way of living is the ability to approach other people not only rationally but also emotionally – as friends, as he says, and as people from whom one may learn. Dewey thought of democracy as rooted in personal attitudes and habits – democratic character or moral virtue, one could say – arguing that institutions are democratic only in so far as they can be seen, in their day-to-day functioning, as being projections of democratic character.

Dewey may overstate the point when using the word ‘friend’, since from the perspective of society, friendship as a basis for democracy is too strong a demand. However, we can maintain his insight, for what is needed may not be friendship but respect. The point is not simply that respect will make society better, but that without respect for each other the social relations among the citizens will be cast into a competitive mould and living in a society will be a struggle – a fight for one’s own interests – and not a life of mutual learning among people.
Central to most contemporary thinking about democracy and justice is an acceptance of pluralism and a rejection of independent authority on moral and political issues. Rawls (2001) takes ‘reasonable pluralism’ as his starting point, and Sen (1992) and Nussbaum (2006) go even further in their insistence on the acceptance of profound diversity, not only in opinions and philosophies of life but also in capabilities. The French philosopher Chantal Mouffe (2000) goes further still, insisting that theorizing about democracy and justice must not only accept pluralism and diversity but has to recognize actual disagreements and conflicts as a basic social condition. A theory of democracy, according to her, is a theory about how to live justly in a society that is marked by such social realities. I think she is right, and I also think that any such theory must include within its scope an account of personal, democratic attitudes in much the same way as Dewey (1916; 1998 [1939]) argued for. Moreover, democratic education in this sense will be an education for transgression along the lines of Foucault and bell hooks, helping people to face the truth of their existence squarely, to use the Mairs's words, whether it is brutal or not. This requires that students be subjects in their own lives and not mere objects of formation. It also requires that students be given both the opportunity and ability to define and redefine who they are and how they are. The deviant child must be on board from the beginning, not as an afterthought or a case for concern, but as an individual facing his or her own reality.

7. Transgression and Icelandic educational reality

Reflecting on Icelandic educational reality from the point of view of transgression and democratic education, one can observe both positive and negative aspects. On the positive side, there is high enrolment of students in general compulsory schools; less than one per cent attend special schools (Sigurðardóttir et al., 2014, p. 103). Moreover, data from 2012 shows that around a quarter of all students in the compulsory school receive special support (Menntavísindastofnun, 2014, p. 16); this support is often provided in the classroom, although there is no clear data on this. But on the negative side, the system relies heavily on a medical model view of learning difficulties, with formal diagnosis (usually carried out by the State Diagnostic and Counselling Centre) being a precondition for extra funding and, consequently, increasing the ‘need’ for diagnoses instead of turning to pedagogical responses. Accordingly, Sigurðardóttir, et al. observe that disabled students are often not included except in a superficial way:

However, the location of students with disabilities within the mainstream schools does not mean that they are included or acknowledged as participants in the school life. Participation has not been measured generally in Iceland, but authors of a recent study of the education of mentally disabled students [Marinósson, 2007] concluded that the ground rules were that the school is still considered a ‘normal’ place where all major deviations were considered problems in need of ‘fixing’. (Sigurðardóttir et al., 2014, p. 103)

Shortcomings do not only affect disadvantaged students but also extend to educational practices quite generally. The dominant way of teaching is direct lecturing by teachers followed by students working with textbooks and predefined assignments (Óskarsdóttir, 2014). And even though changes towards more open spaces, wider cooperation among teachers, more thematic work, and a move towards a professional learning community (Sigurðardóttir, 2010) have had positive influence on educational practices, teacher-centred
educational authority is rarely challenged (Jónsson, 2015). Students are given little opportunity to influence the work, to contribute to the formation or transformation of values and goals, and to exercise their own critical and creative abilities. Their inclusion in the process of education is shallow and there is little sign of students transgressing the line between being objects of formation and subjects in their own lives. This is not without exceptions, as, for instance, Hanna Ragnarsdóttir and Börkur Hansen have observed, documenting the development of a collaborative school culture in an inner city school in Reykjavík (Ragnarsdóttir & Hansen, 2014).

The progressive changes in the 1970s and early 1980s in Iceland opened up spaces for students to be more involved in the process of education, relating it closer to their own reality by curriculum amendments and the writing of new teaching material (Edelstein, 2013). This movement never got to the point of what one might call transgressive education, and it is difficult to say how things would have evolved if the whole project had not been cut short in the mid-1980s. During the 1990s and the first decade of the twenty-first century, the whole educational system moved away from democratic education, with increased emphasis on standardized tests and a technical view of education. A new national curriculum in 2011 aimed at a return to democratic principles in education. How it will fare in the long run is still unclear but, as things are today, it seems that schools are preparing students for a predefined future rather than setting them on a journey of transgression and discovery.

References


