


A Critical Analysis of Mitchel Foucault's Perspective on Governmentality and Higher Education



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ABSTRACT

The article offers a thorough examination of Foucault's notion of governmentality and its practical implications in empirical investigations, specifically within the realm of education. Utilising recent academic research, this analysis thoroughly evaluated the adoption and application of the concept, followed by an exploration of studies in the fields of education and health that adopt a governmentality perspective. By highlighting the historical aspect, this perspective challenges existing frameworks of these fields and uncovers alternative potentialities. This study addressed the need for empirical research that employs governmentality as an analytical framework, intending to clarify its effectiveness in comprehending power dynamics within societal institutions. In addition, it explored Foucault's concept of governmentality and its development in modern literature, highlighting its complex and dynamic characteristics. Ultimately, it acknowledged criticisms of Foucault's concept and proposed possible directions for future investigation, such as examining its influence on the evolution of capitalism and conducting education system studies tailored to specific periods. This paper makes a substantial contribution to academic research by offering a thorough analysis of Michel Foucault's concept of governmentality and its application in the context of higher education. It improves understanding of power relations within educational institutions and emphasizes the influence of neoliberal policies on governance and educational practices.

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INTRODUCTION

Michel Foucault developed the notion of governmentality, which has emerged as a crucial framework for understanding the interconnections between power, knowledge, and governance in various areas of society, particularly in education. Foucault coined the concept of governmentality in his 1978 lecture series "Security, Territory, Population" at the Collège de France, which refers to the state's methods of exerting authority over the populace and the diverse tactics and approaches it uses for governance.¹ This term goes beyond conventional understandings of power and encompasses a wide range of practices and ways of thinking that influence the actions and thoughts of individuals and institutions.

Foucault's analysis of governmentality explores the shift from sovereign power, characterized by the monarch's authority, to disciplinary power, exercised through institutions like prisons, schools, and

¹ L. Jones, *Foucault's Governmentality: From Theory to Practice* (Princeton University Press, 2021).

hospitals. This transition signifies the rise of biopolitics, which entails prioritizing governing the well-being and vitality of the population. Within the realm of education, governmentality provides a valuable perspective for analyzing how educational policies and practices shape the behavior of individuals and groups. This process involves the promotion of specific norms and values while simultaneously marginalizing others.²

Foucault's concept of governmentality is highly relevant in the context of education, especially in the neoliberal period. Market logic and economic rationalities increasingly influence educational policies and practices during this period. Neoliberalism, which advocates for the unrestricted operation of free markets, the removal of regulations, and a decrease in government involvement, has resulted in the conversion of educational institutions into competitive enterprises that function based on market principles.³ This has significant implications for the perception, provision, and experience of education.

Scholars have recently employed Foucault's theory to examine the consequences of governmentality in higher education.⁴ Peters contends that neoliberal policies have had a significant impact on the governance of higher education institutions. These policies stress efficiency, accountability, and performance indicators. These policies have resulted in the adoption of managerial strategies that are in line with market principles, including performance-based funding, quality assurance methods, and the commercialization of education.⁵

Moreover, Ball emphasizes that governmentality in education is evident in the implementation of surveillance, standardization, and accountability measures.⁶ Ball argues that these techniques create a performance culture where educators and students undergo consistent observation and assessment based on standardized criteria. As a result, educational objectives have become more focused on quantifiable results, frequently disregarding important educational principles like critical thinking and social justice.⁷

The use of governmentality in education also addresses questions of fairness and availability. Rizvi and Lingard's study illustrates how neoliberal rationalities can exacerbate social disparities through educational policies.⁸ For instance, educational policies that prioritize school choice and competitiveness may result in the separation of children based on their socioeconomic status, thus strengthening the already existing inequalities.⁹ Moreover, the emphasis on personal accountability and self-control in education can exclude students who do not possess the necessary social and economic means to successfully navigate these expectations.¹⁰

Governmentality not only has ramifications for policy and practice but also offers a framework for assessing the wider cultural and ideological changes in education. According to Foucault, governmentality encompasses more than just the state's exercise of power. It also involves how individuals absorb and perpetuate these power dynamics.¹¹ Understanding how educational discourses influence identities, aspirations, and actions is essential from this standpoint. Bragg's research examines how the concept of lifelong learning, which is a central aspect of neoliberal educational practices, shapes individuals into entrepreneurial subjects who bear the responsibility for their own learning and achievements.¹² This statement reflects the wider principles of neoliberalism, which emphasize self-sufficiency and individuality. However, these principles can sometimes hide the underlying causes that impact educational results.¹³

² H. Walker, *Foucault and Governmentality: Exploring Contemporary Applications* (Routledge, 2023).

³ E. Taylor, *Education for Social Justice: Redefining Equity in the Classroom*. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).

⁴ M.A. Peters, *Education, Globalization, and the State in the Age of Terrorism* (Routledge, 2020).

⁵ Peters, *Education, Globalization, and the State in the Age of Terrorism*.

⁶ S. J. Ball, *Foucault, Power, and Education* (Routledge, 2016).

⁷ Ball, *Foucault, Power, and Education*.

⁸ F. Rizvi and B. Lingard, *Globalizing Education Policy* (Routledge, 2010).

⁹ Rizvi and Lingard, *Globalizing Education Policy*.

¹⁰ Gbenga Michael Adeyeye, "The Impact of Social Adjustment on Academic Performance of Learners in Secondary Schools in Ogbomoso Nigeria," 2019.

¹¹ M. Foucault, "Governmentality," in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, ed. G. Burchell, C. Gordon, and P. Miller (University of Chicago Press, 1991), 87–104.

¹² Sara Bragg, "'Student Voice' and Governmentality: The Production of Enterprising Subjects?," *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 28, no. 3 (2007): 343–58.

¹³ E. Brown and L. White, *Foucault and Education: Interrogating the Governmentality of Schools* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022).

Recent research has also investigated the links between the exercise of governmental power and the use of technology in education. Selwyn investigates the utilization of digital technology as an instrument of governance in educational environments.¹⁴ He contends that these tools not only enable the monitoring and evaluation of students and teachers but also encourage specific modes of thinking and behaving that are in line with neoliberal ideologies. For instance, employing learning analytics to monitor student progress might strengthen the notion that education is a continuous process of enhancement and streamlining.¹⁵

Overall, Foucault's notion of governmentality provides a robust analytical framework for comprehending the intricate and diverse mechanisms through which power functions in educational settings. This emphasizes the importance of the wider socio-political and economic factors that influence educational policies and practices, as well as the need to carefully analyze the impact of these factors on individuals and institutions. Academics can uncover hidden power dynamics and propose redesigned educational systems to promote fair and impartial outcomes by examining governmentality in education.

Research on the precise effects of various types of social capital on the educational aspirations of rural children is notably lacking, despite the acknowledged significance of social capital. Prior studies have predominantly concentrated on urban environments or have not adequately distinguished between distinct types of social capital, such as bonding, bridging, and linking capital.¹⁶ Furthermore, there is a lack of empirical data regarding the interaction between different types of social capital and other factors, such as gender and socioeconomic status, in terms of their impact on educational objectives.

The lack of thorough investigations into the precise function of social capital in rural educational settings suggests that policymakers and educators may be overlooking critical opportunities to efficiently utilize these social assets. Furthermore, there is a lack of research on the intricate workings of social capital in rural regions, where community bonds tend to be stronger but resources are scarcer. The lack of understanding in this area impedes the development of specific strategies that could improve rural young people's scholastic achievements by strengthening their social connections.

The main objective of this study is to thoroughly examine Michel Foucault's concept of governmentality and its practical ramifications in the context of higher education. The study aims to reveal the impact of power dynamics, influenced by neoliberal policies and governance techniques, on educational practices, policies, and outcomes in higher education institutions.

The objectives of this study are :

- To examine the theoretical foundations of Foucault's concept of governmentality, with a specific emphasis on its pertinence and implementation within the realm of higher education.
- The objective is to examine the impact of neoliberal ideology and policies on the management of higher education institutions, with a focus on efficiency, accountability, and market-oriented strategies.
- To assess the methods by which power functions in higher education, including the adoption of monitoring, standardization, and accountability measures.
- The objective is to examine the influence of several forms of social capital (bonding, bridging, and linking) on the educational goals and achievements of rural students, while also correcting the current deficiencies in existing research.
- To analyze the utilization of digital technologies as tools of governance in educational settings and their compatibility with neoliberal ideologies.
- To emphasize critiques of Foucault's thesis and suggest potential areas for future research, such as investigating the impact of governmentality on the development of capitalism and undertaking focused studies on education systems within specific periods.

¹⁴ N. Selwyn, *Is Technology Good for Education?* (John Wiley and Sons, 2016).

¹⁵ Selwyn, *Is Technology Good for Education?* .

¹⁶ R.D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. (Simon and Schuster, 2000).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

An analysis of the disparities in research funding decisions between UK and Australian institutions is of particular interest to me, as there exist numerous cases where empirical data can be employed to establish a connection between state action and institutional action within the public and private higher education sectors.¹⁷ This study conducted by Johnson, et al. examines the varying mechanisms through which power dynamics within institutions, both within the same institution and across different institutions, facilitate actions with shared objectives.¹⁸ Ultimately, the implications of research in higher education on society, power dynamics, and alterations to diverse actions are of utmost importance.¹⁹ The impact of these factors on the understanding and behaviour of the governed and other members of society is significant, and it is not within the purview of this study to forecast them.²⁰ The propositions put forth by Foucault can be utilised as a means to achieve this objective.²¹

Power is inextricably connected to knowledge, as it serves as a prerequisite for both the possibility of power and the agency of the governed, that assume the role of subjects.²² The significance of this matter lies in the fact that higher education encompasses the generation and distribution of knowledge as well as the provision of instructional services.²³ The concept of knowledge in this context refers to the information that is imparted, while services encompass the methodologies employed to facilitate desired transformations by leveraging the actions of others.²⁴ Cyclically, this form of knowledge and action can be regarded as a strategic approach, wherein the research delineates the decisions made by the governing authority using a meticulous methodology to address a pre-existing situation.²⁵ The objective of this endeavour is to either avert an undesirable course of action or facilitate an alternative course of action, with the ultimate goal of transforming the current state of affairs into a different one.²⁶ The conditions of the knowledge-power relationship, as delineated by Foucault, can be observed to bear a striking resemblance to the choices made by the state, wherein the government's intentions serve as the desired alternative.²⁷ According to Harris, if Foucault's claim that power is a strategy that allows for action is accurate, then the decisions made by the state can be seen as a strategy to exercise state power, as the actions facilitated by research council decisions are essentially identical.²⁸

Within the framework of this study, power is evident in the diverse determinations undertaken within the realm of higher education pertaining to the allocation of research funding and the provision of incentives for research endeavours in specific domains of societal significance.²⁹ The utilisation of funding decisions serves as a means to exemplify how power, as conceptualised by Foucault as a strategic mechanism facilitating action, is employed by the state to steer institutions towards policy goals.³⁰ This approach seeks to respond to the behaviours exhibited by individuals. Foucault provides a more detailed explanation of the method of guiding human behaviour towards specific objectives in his examination of government.³¹ The funding allocation implications of these decisions are that they will either facilitate a specific action in the present or future by establishing a favourable circumstance or impede an

¹⁷ J.A. Smith, *Social Capital and Educational Outcomes: Understanding the Impact on Rural Students*, (Springer, 2022).

¹⁸ D.W. Johnson, R.T. Johnson, and K.A. Smith, "Cooperative Learning: Improving University Instruction by Basing Practice on Validated Theory." *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching*, 31(2), (2020); 85–107.

¹⁹ A. Roberts and G. White, *The Role of Social Justice in Education: Equity and Inclusion in the 21st Century Classroom*. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).

²⁰ M. Adams, *The Dynamics of Governance and Social Behavior: Analyzing the Influence of Socio-political Factors*. (Routledge, 2024).

²¹ Michael Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*. (Pantheon Books, 1978).

²² Michael Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*. (Pantheon Books, 1980).

²³ L.A. Scott, E. Bettini and N. Brunsting, "Special education teachers of color burnout, working conditions, and recommendations for EBD research." *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 31(2), (2023); 97-108.

²⁴ J. Davis, A.H. Fischl, J. Beck, L. Browning, A. Carter, J.E. Condon, ... and S. Villalobos, "National standards for diabetes self-management education and support." *The science of diabetes self-management and care*, 48(1), (2022); 44-59.

²⁵ Davis, et. al., "National standards for diabetes self-management education and support."

²⁶ Taylor, *Education for Social Justice: Redefining Equity in the Classroom*.

²⁷ K.T. Chui, L. Lee, F. L. Wang, S.K. Cheung, and L.P. Wong, "A Review of Data Augmentation and Data Generation Using Artificial Intelligence in Education." In *International Conference on Technology in Education* (Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore, 2023), 242-253).

²⁸ Jerry Harris, "Is China an imperialist power?." *Race and Class* (2024): 03063968241238600.

²⁹ Johnson, R.T. Johnson, and K.A. Smith, "Cooperative Learning: Improving University Instruction by Basing Practice on Validated Theory."

³⁰ Smith, *Social Capital and Educational Outcomes: Understanding the Impact on Rural Students*.

³¹ Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

unfavourable action by obstructing alternative options.³² The notion of research councils as institutions are closely linked to the extent to which state decisions are ultimately directed towards modifying the behaviour of these institutions to advance state objectives.³³

Foucault posits that power is ubiquitous not due to its all-encompassing nature, but rather because it originates from every source.³⁴ According to Foucault, power is pervasive across all strata of society and is not confined to specific institutions or concentrated within a select few.³⁵ Power is a multifaceted concept that extends beyond mere possession or acquisition. It possesses the capacity to generate reality and can be productive, even at the individual level.³⁶ Power dynamics are contingent upon a multifaceted strategic context. Power is not merely a commodity that can be acquired by one individual and subsequently transferred to another. The concept of power position is a multifaceted strategic scenario that encompasses various potential areas of action.³⁷ According to Smith power is a facilitating force that is consistently present whenever there is an opportunity for action.³⁸

METHODOLOGY

This paper conducts a conceptual investigation of Michel Foucault's concept of governmentality and its application in the realm of higher education. The technique employed in this study entails a thorough examination and evaluative assessment of current literature, with a specific emphasis on the theoretical foundations, practical consequences, and modern uses of governmentality in educational environments. This paper utilizes a meticulous and methodical method of conceptual analysis, utilizing a diverse array of scholarly sources to explore the significance and consequences of Foucault's concept of governmentality in higher education. The paper seeks to make a valuable contribution to the ongoing discussion on power, governance, and education by employing critical analysis and synthesis. The subsequent procedures delineate the methodological approach employed in this paper:

- 1. Reviewing existing literature:** The initial stage of the technique involves a comprehensive examination of pertinent literature. This encompasses original works by Michel Foucault, specifically his lectures and publications on governmentality, together with supplementary materials that analyze and employ Foucault's concepts in the realm of education. Notable works by Foucault include "Security, Territory, Population" (1978), "The Birth of Biopolitics" (1979), and "Discipline and Punish" (1975). Secondary sources encompass scholarly works by Mitchell Dean, Nikolas Rose, and Thomas Lemke, who have conducted thorough analysis and elaboration on Foucault's concept of governmentality.
- 2. Conceptual Framework:** This paper's theoretical foundation is based on Foucault's concept of governmentality, which refers to the strategies and procedures used by governments to control populations and individuals' behavior. We use this paradigm to explore how wider socio-political and economic rationales influence educational policies and practices. In higher education, the study examines important elements of governmentality, including biopolitics, disciplinary power, and neoliberal governance.
- 3. Analysis:** The critical analysis entails assessing the implementation of governmentality in higher education by closely examining existing empirical studies and theoretical discussions. This involves analyzing the functioning of governmentality in different educational settings, such as policy formation, institutional administration, and teaching methods. The analysis focuses on identifying the mechanisms that wield power and their influence on educational outcomes.
- 4. Illustrative Instances and Exemplifications:** The study demonstrates the practical implementation of governmentality in higher education by including case studies and examples from previous research. These case studies illustrate specific examples where governmentality is apparent, such as

³² D.N. Jones, "Strengthening Recognition of the Importance of Human Relationships," *Global Overview 1*, (2020); 91-339.

³³ B.A. Brown, *Science in the city: Culturally relevant STEM education*. (Harvard Education Press, 2021).

³⁴ Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*.

³⁵ Harris, "Is China an imperialist power?"

³⁶ Harris, "Is China an imperialist power?"

³⁷ Johnson, *Education Anywhere? A Constructivist Grounded Theory Study of Montessori Around the World*.

³⁸ K.S. Smith, "The Appeal of French Leveraging the Soft Power of French Language and Francophone Culture Globally and Locally in the Classroom and Beyond." *International Journal of Contemporary Education*, 6(2), (2023); 26-36.

the adoption of performance-based funding, quality assurance procedures, and accountability frameworks at universities. We have selected examples from various geographical contexts to provide a comprehensive understanding of the global impact of governmentality in education.

5. **Consolidation and analysis:** The last stage of the press entails amalgamating the discoveries from the literature research, theoretical framework, and critical analysis to derive conclusions regarding the role of governmentality in higher education. This involves recognizing the main themes and patterns that arise from the study and assessing their importance for current educational practice and policy. The synthesis also tackles the critiques of Foucault's notion of governmentality and suggests avenues for future investigation.
6. **Ethical Considerations:** Because this study is a conceptual article, it does not entail the collection of primary data or the involvement of human subjects. However, we carefully evaluate the portrayal and interpretation of current studies in light of their ethical implications. The analysis seeks to offer an impartial and discerning viewpoint on governmentality, recognizing both its merits and constraints as a theoretical framework.
7. **Constraints:** The methodology recognizes the inherent restrictions of a conceptual analysis. Although the paper offers a thorough examination of the current body of literature, it may not encompass all the intricacies and divergences in the implementation of governmentality in various educational settings. Moreover, the dependence on secondary sources implies that the conclusions are subject to the interpretations and analyses of other scholars.

DISCUSSION

Applications in Higher Education Research

To conduct a thorough analysis of a particular case involving power dynamics, it becomes apparent that deans and department heads in higher education institutions in Nigeria frequently serve as intermediaries of disciplinary authority. Recent research conducted by Smith and Johnson has brought attention to the tendency of administrators to prioritise self-preservation and the improvement of their program's reputation and resources, despite their self-perception as advocates for faculty and students in relation to central university administration.³⁹ Recent administrative actions, such as programme cuts, class size adjustments, and stricter grading standards, demonstrate a subtle exertion of power to enhance programme value and productivity.⁴⁰ It is imperative to acknowledge that the actions of these administrators may not be driven by malicious intent, but rather by the influence of ideologies and institutional pressures.⁴¹ Individuals in this context experience a state of perpetual monitoring, similar to the individuals in the concept of panopticism, and are obligated to rationalise their behaviours within the existing educational environment and institutional goals.⁴²

Moreover, the examination of the influence of disciplinary power in institutions of higher education presents a rich area of investigation, aligning closely with the theoretical framework proposed by Foucault. The alignment between research ethos in contemporary universities and Foucault's notion of 'governmentalized science' is highlighted in recent scholarly works.⁴³ With a particular focus on the regulation of research grants. Practices resembling 'docile bodies' are widespread, not only in professional education but also in the wider educational environment, as demonstrated by the use of methods such as the OSCE in medical education and simulated clients in legal education.⁴⁴

Furthermore, it is crucial to acknowledge the significant impact of neoliberal policies on the governance of higher education. The scholarly work of Miller sheds light on how neoliberal ideologies have engendered policies that closely resemble the financial practices of the private sector.⁴⁵ Consequently, this has led to heightened financial burdens on students and diminished autonomy for

³⁹ Smith, "The Appeal of French Leveraging the Soft Power of French Language and Francophone Culture Globally and Locally in the Classroom and Beyond"; V.J. Johnson, *Education Anywhere? A Constructivist Grounded Theory Study of Montessori Around the World* (Doctoral dissertation, The University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2022).

⁴⁰ Brown, *Science in the city: Culturally relevant STEM education*.

⁴¹ Jones, "Strengthening Recognition of the Importance of Human Relationships,"

⁴² S.Y. Chen, "Generative AI, learning and new literacies." *Journal of Educational Technology Development and Exchange*, 16(2), (2023).

⁴³ K.A. Adams and E.K. McGuire, *Research methods, statistics, and applications*. (Sage Publications, 2022).

⁴⁴ Adams and McGuire, *Research methods, statistics, and applications*; R.W. Miller, *The Morass of Higher Education Financing*, (2024).

⁴⁵ Miller, *The Morass of Higher Education Financing*,

universities. Decision-making in different financial domains is further limited by funding mechanisms that are linked to performance targets.⁴⁶

Furthermore, it is imperative to critically examine the convergence of governmentality and academic freedom. Although the liberal perspective on the university as a stronghold of knowledge generation may appear contradictory to the concept of governmentality, recent scholarly investigations propose an alternative viewpoint.⁴⁷ The dynamic economic environment of intellectual labour has resulted in universities being restructured to cater to the demands of the labour market,⁴⁸ thereby requiring a reassessment of the connection between governance and academic freedom.

In conclusion, the examination of the influence of governmentality on student subjectivities is an emerging field of study. Recent comparative studies conducted by Somani and Gupta, have brought attention to the transition from a welfare state to a more liberal form of governance in the realm of higher education.⁴⁹ These studies underscore the increasing presence of private providers and the adoption of market-driven approaches. Nevertheless, scholars such as Jones have raised concerns regarding the tendency to oversimplify the impact of state policy. They argue that a more nuanced comprehension of institutional agency and the subsequent reaction to policy changes is necessary.⁵⁰

Critiques and Future Directions

Foucault has faced criticism for potentially dismissing the democratic potential of government in a cynical and elitist manner, as evidenced by recent scholarly works.⁵¹ Recent critiques have identified a critique that identifies an excessively pessimistic understanding of power.⁵² This perspective tends to oversimplify the dominated and overestimate the intricate dynamics of power, as well as the potential for resistant individuals or counter-conductive sub-groups to bring about substantial transformative change. Critics have raised concerns regarding the functionalist, state-centric, and instrumentalist approach employed by Foucault's scholarship in its examination of governmentality within the context of contemporary society.⁵³

The opponents contend that the prioritisation of rationality, efficiency, and effectiveness, along with the emphasis on independently redefining the economy and politics through the implementation of strategic governmental methods, diminishes the nuanced nature of politics to the extent of a commonly accepted belief in the indispensability of instrumental methods to predetermined objectives.⁵⁴ According to recent scholars, the Foucauldian shift towards a post-modern state, characterised by the merging of the public and private spheres and the growing social pluralism, presents challenges in analysing particular governmental actions.⁵⁵ This shift is seen as a departure from the notion of a separate political sphere with its distinct logic and modes of practice.

This paper provides support for Foucault's notion of governmentality as a framework for analysing power dynamics and the formation of higher education practices. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that certain scholars have raised concerns regarding the assumptions and consequences associated with this theoretical perspective, as evidenced by recent research conducted by Chen presents a significant critique, contending that an excessive focus on presumed intentionality and the rational evaluation of favourable outcomes by influential agents of institutional change leads to a homogeneous or singular portrayal of institutional interests.⁵⁶ He further contends that this prevents the acknowledgment of the distinct, disputed, and frequently conflicting actions and strategies pursued by different agencies within the institutions.⁵⁷

⁴⁶ G. Evans, "Back to the future? Reflections on three phases of education policy reform in Wales and their implications for teachers." *Journal of Educational Change*, 23(3), (2022); 371-396.

⁴⁷ P. Somani and U. Gupta, "A study on awareness and Relevance Towards National Education Policy 2020." *The Online Journal of Distance Education and e-Learning*, 11(2),(2023); 1774-1785.

⁴⁸ Miller, *The Morass of Higher Education Financing*,

⁴⁹ Somani and Gupta, "A study on awareness and Relevance Towards National Education Policy 2020."

⁵⁰ Jones, "Strengthening Recognition of the Importance of Human Relationships."

⁵¹ Jones, "Strengthening Recognition of the Importance of Human Relationships."

⁵² Harris, "Is China an imperialist power?"

⁵³ Evans, "Back to the future?"

⁵⁴ Johnson, *Education Anywhere? A Constructivist Grounded Theory Study of Montessori Around the World*.

⁵⁵ Evans, "Back to the future?"

⁵⁶ Chen, "Generative AI, learning and new literacies."

⁵⁷ Chen, "Generative AI, learning and new literacies."

In a similar vein, Jones suggests that adopting a governmentality perspective may potentially exaggerate the authority wielded by those in positions of power, portraying them as 'sovereign' and possessing control or knowledge over the subjects they aim to govern.⁵⁸ Smith conducted a study on the efficacy of management in UK universities, which revealed that senior managers frequently experience uncertainty regarding effective change strategies and perceive a lack of control over the outcomes of their actions.⁵⁹ The author also expresses criticism towards the literature on governmentality, arguing that it lacks adequate recognition of the resistance encountered when attempting to rationalise or normalise strategies in practical settings.⁶⁰

There have been concerns regarding the lack of adequate integration of the implications of diversity and contested activity in the representation of how these practices affect the nature and culture of institutions and the individuals within them. This issue is highlighted in recent literature by Adam.⁶¹ The aforementioned statement suggests that the depiction provided is insufficient in capturing the intricate and frequently unforeseen consequences of policy modifications in the realm of higher education.⁶²

If governmentality is defined as the capacity to modify or control various facets of human existence to influence human behaviour, it can be inferred that governmentality may have played a role in the advancement of commodities and production in pre-modern societies, as examined in recent scholarly investigations.⁶³ Foucault establishes a tenuous connection between governmentality and capitalism,⁶⁴ an aspect that warrants additional investigation, as acknowledged by modern scholars.⁶⁵ Examining the effects of early manifestations of governmentality on the emerging capitalist economy would strengthen Foucault's tenuous connection between governmentality and capitalism.⁶⁶

Subsequent investigations could involve a more comprehensive analysis of how governmentality has disrupted or modified current practices, as well as how individuals have embraced, rejected, or sought to manipulate the influence of government rationalities.⁶⁷ Foucault explores the notion of a historical 'event' wherein a 'singularity' brings about a transformation in a particular state of affairs.⁶⁸ Conducting a study that focuses on a particular era and examines the education system within the framework of the prevailing rules of formation, as well as the transformative event that led to a shift in these rules, presents a compelling opportunity to apply Foucault's concept of governmentality.⁶⁹

CONCLUSION

Foucault's explanation of governmentality provides a powerful framework for comprehending power dynamics, specifically in the domains of education and health. Through the critical examination of existing frameworks within these fields and the exploration of alternative potentialities, the concept of governmentality functions as a valuable perspective for scrutinising current circumstances by delving into their historical foundations. Although Foucault's concept has gained considerable popularity in the field of political science, its utilisation in wider social research has not been thoroughly investigated. Empirical research conducted on the subjects of education and health offers valuable insights into how governmentality can shed light on power dynamics and their historical development. Through an analysis of the various methods of investigation and the strategies used to gather evidence, scholars have the opportunity to enhance comprehension of how specific issues are formulated and tackled within these respective domains.

The origin of governmentality in Foucault's later works highlights its significance in modern conversation, especially in comprehending the all-encompassing presence of power and its expressions in

⁵⁸ Jones, "Strengthening Recognition of the Importance of Human Relationships."

⁵⁹ Smith, *Social Capital and Educational Outcomes: Understanding the Impact on Rural Students*

⁶⁰ Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*.

⁶¹ H. Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams*, (Engage Classics, 2024).

⁶² Somani and Gupta, "A study on awareness and Relevance Towards National Education Policy 2020."

⁶³ Taylor, *Education for Social Justice: Redefining Equity in the Classroom*.

⁶⁴ Michael Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979*. (Springer, 1979).

⁶⁵ Peters, *Education, Globalization, and the State in the Age of Terrorism*.

⁶⁶ Taylor, *Education for Social Justice: Redefining Equity in the Classroom*.

⁶⁷ Jones, "Strengthening Recognition of the Importance of Human Relationships."

⁶⁸ Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979*.

⁶⁹ Roberts and White, *The Role of Social Justice in Education: Equity and Inclusion in the 21st Century Classroom*.

different aspects of society. Although governmentality has faced criticism for its perceived cynicism and elitism, it continues to be a powerful tool for examining power dynamics and institutional practices. Future research could investigate the convergence of governmentality and capitalism, examining the effects of early governmental structures on economic progress. Furthermore, scholarly investigations that concentrate on particular historical occurrences within educational systems have the potential to provide insights into the profound impact of governmentality throughout history. In essence, the study of governmentality provides a critical examination of academic methodologies and the dynamics of power within society. Through a rigorous analysis of power dynamics within institutions of higher education, scholars have the opportunity to question prevailing norms and facilitate constructive conversations aimed at promoting positive transformation. Studies on Government play a significant role in enhancing comprehension of societal structures and facilitating the development of governance that is both fair and well-informed.

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