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Michel Foucault in technology-enhanced learning: An analytic review of 10 Foucauldian studies on online education

Kyungmee Lee

Department of Educational Research, Lancaster University, Lancaster, United Kingdom

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Abstract

This paper aims to introduce Foucault’s theoretical ideas to researchers of Technology-Enhanced Learning (TEL), particularly researchers who are interested in online educational provisions. This paper explains some of Foucault’s key ideas that may, if rigorously applied, exert disruptive and constructive power on TEL scholarship. The explanation is grounded on the author’s close reading of 10 journal articles that used Foucault’s theory to better understand social subjects and issues related to online education. Using Foucault’s ideas will enable TEL researchers to do the following: 1) to be more critical, challenging taken-for-granted assumptions that often prevent their knowledge progression; 2) to see the big picture, making sense of complex power relations embedded in their practices; and 3) to establish a historical and developmental perspective on the present, which is required to develop a better future. The paper concludes with a rather cautionary comment that researchers must use Foucault’s theory only when it clearly has something to contribute.

1. Introduction

This paper aims to introduce a French philosopher, Michel Foucault, and his theoretical ideas to researchers, including doctoral researchers, of Technology-Enhanced Learning (TEL). This article is purposely written in a conversational manner, aiming to reach out to TEL researchers who are interested in online educational provisions and who have not previously been exposed to Foucault's ideas. Despite the initial incomprehensibility of Foucault's theory that many TEL researchers will encounter, online education scholarship, I argue, would greatly benefit from Foucault's theory.

Foucault's broad spectrum of interests and his unconventional methodological approaches to examining social subjects have given him multiple titles including philosopher, historian, and sociologist. Even though Foucault was not interested in labelling himself and his scholarship as 'a something' (Ball, 2013, p. 2), his ideas have earned different labels and have influenced a range of scholarly communities for the past few decades. When it comes to Foucault's influence, educational research is not an exception (Fendler, 2010). In particular, his book *Discipline and Punish* (1995) is one of the most frequently cited references in educational research. Despite his popularity in the broader field of educational research, online education scholarship has been relatively distant and free from Foucault's influence. In fact, a search for his name in scholarly literature concerning different aspects of online and distance education in Scopus¹ currently results in only 11 journal articles including my own recent publication (Lee, 2020).

This paper explains some of Foucault's key ideas that may, if rigorously applied in online education research, exert disruptive and constructive power on online education scholarship. The narratives in this paper will be grounded on the present author's close reading of 10 journal articles found via a search on the Scopus website. I have carefully reviewed the articles, examining how Foucault's theory has been used by the authors and how it has influenced their understandings of social subjects and issues related to online education. That is, the 10 articles will serve the paper not only as an empirical data set supporting my arguments but as a set of good examples.

2. Definition: Foucault's Ideas.

This section briefly explains key ideas that construct the backbone of Foucault's theory: discourse, knowledge, power, and subjectification. These ideas are interrelational and developmental in his works, so we cannot discuss and understand one in isolation from the others.

Perhaps, the most important concept across Foucault's works is discourse. Gee (1996) distinguishes Discourse (with a capital D) referring to a particular way of thinking and behaving among certain groups of people from discourse (with a lower-case d) as a linguistic component at a conversational level. Foucault's approach to discourse is in line with Gee's notion of Discourse. Foucault's conceptualisation of discourse is often defined as a regime of truth (Coloma, 2011). That is, among multiple competing discourses in a particular historical moment, dominant discourses produce a regime of truth and further decide which knowledge, thoughts, and statements count as true and false in each society (Foucault, 1995).

Foucault's works trace the emergence of dominant discourses. To Foucault, discourse, in a broad sense, is a social and institutional process rather than a product or outcome. His historical analysis of discourses focuses on the social conditions in which particular statements become accepted by people and come to be taken for granted in that society (Foucault, 1990; Olssen, 2004). By analysing dominant discourses in disciplinary institutions (e.g., asylums, prisons, families) at different historical points, Foucault demonstrates that people's perceptions about certain social concepts and behaviours (e.g., madness, punishment, sexuality) are not fixed, but instead there are clear discontinuities between different periods. That is, he argues that knowledge is a historical product (Foucault, 1972). New knowledge is neither discovered through the natural progression of uncovering pre-existing truth (i.e., knowledge evolution) nor produced through political efforts of one social group toward enlightenment (i.e., knowledge invention).

Dominant discourses produce and circulate *power* (and power relations) among people by regulating their thoughts and behaviours. Disciplinary knowledge plays a significant role in the process. In his book *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison* (1995), Foucault argues that 'power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations' (p. 27). However, it is important to note that Foucault's approach to

1 The largest database of peer-reviewed literature (www.scopus.com)

power is different from the one postulated by Marxist critical theorists, who focus specifically on the structural mechanism of social or cultural reproduction (e.g., Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990).

Marxist theorists often focus on oppressive functions of power that indoctrinate the working class through the development of a misrepresentative ideology that serves ruling class interests (Mills, 2003). Foucault objects to such a view on power as a noun—an oppressive, possessive, and top-down product within a rigid social class structure. Instead, Foucault perceives power as a verb—a productive, relational, and often bottom-up process (Sawicki, 1991). Analogous to the role of ‘capillaries’ in our body, power distribution in disciplinary institutions allows the development of many forms of social control so that individual members and their thoughts and behaviours are regulated and governed in particular ways (often by themselves).

Subjectification can be a useful concept that illustrates the relations between knowledge and power. Subjectification is a process of constructing human subjectivity that involves both normalisation and problematisation of certain ways of thinking, talking, and acting (Foucault, 1982, 1995). In this process, people necessarily become the object of knowledge that defines legitimate thoughts and behaviours (i.e., normality) in each disciplinary institution. The disciplinary knowledge further produces a set of norms and regulations useful for correcting abnormality. Based on the norms—not necessarily based on social or economic strata—people are inevitably categorised into two groups, which are often attached to opposite human subjectivities (e.g., the mad and the sane, or the criminals and the good citizens).

This is how dominant discourses produce unequal power relations among people, thereby further inducing people to internalise the norms and normalise their behaviours by employing self-disciplinary techniques (Dean, 2010; Foucault, 1995). Foucault, in his analytic work on the discourse of sexuality, observes that disciplinary (as well as punitive) power is maximised when individuals recognise themselves (and others) as subjects of ‘sexuality’ and conduct self-correcting practices to normalise their sexual behaviours or desires. Foucault says, ‘when I came to study the modes according to which individuals are given to recognize themselves as sexual subjects, the problems were much greater’ (1985, p. 5).

Although he emphasises the regulative power of discourse, Foucault does not deny human agency. Even in his early work, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), he clarifies his position, ‘I have not denied—far from it—the possibility

of changing discourse: I have deprived the sovereignty of the subject of the exclusive and instantaneous right to it’ (p. 209). Human subjects ‘are faced with a field of possibilities’ for different behaviours and reactions although power relations are often so fixed and rigid that a space for freedom or resistance is extremely limited (Foucault, 1982, p. 221). Foucault (1990) further explains the ubiquity of resistance:

Power is everywhere and always is accompanied by resistance; therefore, resistance is everywhere. Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power. (p. 95)

Given that there are always multiple competing discourses, not only the dominant one but also many less dominant ones, in a particular social context (Foucault, 1995), the existence of resistance seems rather obvious. Foucauldian scholars often focus on the resistance; in doing so, they can effectively reveal the disciplinary power relations produced by dominant discourse (or taken-for-granted assumptions) and ultimately ‘contribute to changing certain things in people’s ways of perceiving and doing things’ (Foucault, 1991, p. 83).

3. Motivation: Author’s Narrative

I am an online educator and researcher who has, for more than a decade, strived to increase openness in online higher education (HE). Before presenting the results of my critical literature review, I want to briefly tell readers what has motivated me to write and publish this article in the present journal.

I received my doctoral training at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto—Canada’s only (and largest) all-graduate institute of educational research, established in 1847. I originally started my PhD with a well-developed research programme aimed to address a problem of the slow adoption of online education among university teachers. I felt a strong sense of commitment to improving the quality of university teaching by solving this problem. It seems fair to say that such a problem-solving attitude related to using technologies is rather commonly observed by many TEL researchers.

In my doctoral programme, a wide range of modules concerning diverse educational subjects, methodological approaches, and theoretical ideas were offered. Around 50 faculty members taught the modules closely linked to their research topics and expertise. Each term, I took four or

five modules of my choice (out of 50 modules). Within the vibrant scholarly community with theoretical diversity and methodological multiplicity, I was privileged to be exposed to both ‘radically’ positivist and ‘radically’ anti-positivist approaches to educational research.

In my second year, I first encountered Foucault in one of the introductory modules of critical educational research paradigm (see Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). The initial shock that I had after reading a set of scholarly works written by critical pedagogues—starting with *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by Paulo Freire (1996) and continued to *Teachers as Intellectuals* by Henry Giroux (1988)—was both intellectually and emotionally challenging. I found that having discussions on social inequalities and class struggles with other doctoral students (many of whom were Canadian and Caucasian with European heritage) especially unpleasant and exhausting. The intersectionality theory promoted by those ‘feminists’, ‘anti-racists’, ‘post-colonial theorists’, or ‘Marxists’ (whichever they called themselves) made me feel uncomfortable.

I ticked all the surface-level boxes as a woman of colour from the Far East, speaking English as a foreign language (I was often reminded that I am at least not from the third world). However, I had never thought that I was oppressed, or that we were—solidarity seemed like a big word there. No matter how we divided oppressors and the oppressed, I somewhat got caught in the oppressed group. Some of my colleagues seemed to think that was a natural process of enlightenment, gaining critical consciousness, which needed to be celebrated. However, I felt that my passion, as a TEL researcher who wanted to solve the problem, was being challenged and that my pride in being a doctoral student with a full scholarship at a prestigious university was injured. After all, I was not critical enough, and I was just naïve. At the moment I began to feel paralyzed and ready to ignore all those ‘critical’ people’s righteousness, I encountered Foucault.

He lifted the oppressor-oppressed boundary and offered me a far more productive and comfortable way to sit in the critical conversations. I felt liberated (I am not unaware of the criticism of Foucault as a colonial theorist; however, at least to me, the Foucault effect was decolonising).

At the end of the journey, in short, I arrived at the conclusion that Foucault’s theory worked for me. It enabled me to notice that my initial research programme consisted of many taken-for-granted, but problematic, assumptions about technology, pedagogy, and teacher subjectivity. Subsequently, I came to the realisation that I, without questioning those

assumptions, had subscribed to popular (but now I believe limited and uncritical) conceptualisations of TEL and other educational subjects. Reading Foucault also provided me with effective language and methodological strategies to challenge those assumptions and to reconceptualise teacher subjectivity and technology in online HE. With generous advisory support given by three academics, I was privileged to be able to conduct Foucauldian critical discourse analysis for my thesis project, entitled *Discourses and realities of online higher education: A history of [discourses of] online education in Canada’s Open University* (Lee, 2015).

The successful completion of the thesis study led me to my current position as a lecturer on an online doctoral programme at Lancaster University in the UK—a very different programme from mine at the University of Toronto in terms of both focus and size. For example, the current programme has rather narrow scholarly boundaries of TEL. It is also operated mainly by six academics all researching different aspects of TEL, but only TEL. The programme offers five pre-selected modules covering different areas of TEL research, including one research methodology module. All students, as a cohort of thirty, take those five modules in the same sequence during the first and second year in the programme and then embark on their thesis study in the third year.

The structured and fixed nature of the programme, in turn, provides students with restricted opportunities to be exposed to the diverse theoretical and methodological approaches that exist in the wider field of educational and social research—beyond TEL. In other words, the programme does not allow tutors to teach theoretical ideas outside TEL boundaries. I have noticed that most of my doctoral students, who are working professionals in different educational contexts, enter the programme with a particular view on technology and pedagogy that is similar to the one I had at the beginning of my doctoral study. That is, they bring the popular discourses of specific aspects of TEL as a problem-solver into the programme, and many of them tend to earn their doctorate without having the opportunity to have those assumptions challenged or changed.

I have tried to create opportunities for my students to engage with Foucault’s theory by incorporating some of the Foucauldian works (including my own article) in a reading list in my module. I have encouraged some of my supervisees to consider using Foucault’s theory and methodology for their thesis project. However, it has been a challenging task—particularly given that I am not a Foucault lecturer but a TEL lecturer. Although I have produced a series of video lectures on Foucault, most students seem to find Foucault’s

theory intimidating and his methodology impractical. What makes such a pedagogical effort more challenging for me is a lack of good examples that use Foucault's theory in TEL research. There is no text explaining or showing that Foucault's theory can be used in TEL research. In a broader educational research context, most available texts that can be used as teaching materials require students to already possess a considerable level of background knowledge and sociological understandings that underpin Foucault's works.

All in all, it seems like my students come to dislike or doubt my well-intentioned teaching attempts even before reaching a sufficient understanding of what Foucault's key ideas are and how useful (or liberating) those ideas can be in TEL research. Therefore, this paper aims to provide a relatively clear and easy explanation of Foucault's theory and how it can deepen our understandings of TEL.

4. A Review of 10 Journal Articles

As of January 2020, there are 11 peer-reviewed journal articles concerning online education that explicitly mention Foucault's theory (or his name) in the title, abstract, and/or keywords. My search in Scopus used the following search terms: online education/learning, open education/learning, online education/learning AND Foucault/Foucauldian. I carefully reviewed, coded, and analysed 11 articles. The review was guided by using the following two questions:

- How is Foucault's theory (or his name) introduced and used by the authors in the selected articles?
- How does Foucault's theory influence the authors' ideas and findings in the selected articles?

Among the 11, however, 1 article was excluded in this paper. Koole's (2014) article outlines five kinds of strategies that masters' students use when developing and enacting their identities through interacting with other participants in online learning environments. The author first introduces her theoretical framework, the Web of Identity (WoI) Model that she has previously developed based on two pieces of literature: *The presentation of self in everyday life* (Goffman, 1978) and *Technologies of the self* (Foucault, 1988). The model shows how online students navigate between the five categories of 'dramaturgical' strategies (DS), altering their online actions (e.g., declining or avoiding particular interactions), to move towards cognitive resonance (p. 55). That is, the author interprets students' online interactions (i.e., social networking behaviours) in their courses as being similar to theatrical performances and impression management activities. The author discusses each of the five categories of DS,

mostly based on the ideas from Goffman (1978); and briefly mentions that Foucault's (1988) four types of technologies are cognate with each DS. However, the paper does not offer any explanations of the four types of technologies beyond naming them in parentheses. That makes it rather difficult to understand and evaluate how Foucault's theory is used in the paper.

Each of the 10 remaining articles (see Table 1) will be briefly discussed one-by-one in the next section as a way to present the results of my analysis. The 10 articles have been divided into two groups: i) first five papers utilise Foucault's ideas of discourses and knowledge to critically analyse common, often taken-for-granted, assumptions related to online HE, and ii) the remaining five articles focus more on the issues, social structures, and relationships by employing the notions of power and subjectification.

4.1 Discourse and Knowledge: Analysis of taken-for-granted assumptions

4.1.1 Different discourses, discourses of difference: Globalisation, distance education, and open learning (Edwards, 1995)

In this article, Edwards (1995) argues that to better understand the nature and direction of changes being made in the academic field of distance education, we need to explore more fundamental social trends (i.e., discursive conditions) in which the changes are shaped and developed. The author, therefore, situates his analysis of the recent shifts in academic discussions (i.e., discourses) of distance education and open learning in the relevant historical trends and social contexts of Post-Fordism and globalisation—by utilising Foucault's notions of discourse, knowledge, and power:

Increased attention therefore is given to texts and the ways in which discourses construct certain objects as 'known' and certain perspectives as 'true'. The assumptions within such texts, the issues they exclude and marginalise from debate and the powerful consequences of the acceptance of what they construct as 'true' become the subject of analysis. Examining which discourses are most powerful and how they are inscribed in practices becomes the focus for debates... power and knowledge are inseparable. Knowledge is permeated with power and exercises of power are imbued with knowledge. (Edwards, 1995, p. 249)

His analysis of the two discourses reveals that the theoretical notion and its surrounding arguments (i.e.,

Table 1. An overview of 10 journal articles

	Author(s), Year	Article Title	Journal Title	Foucault's Ideas • Foucault's original works cited (Year)
Discourse and Knowledge: Analysis of taken-for-granted assumptions				
1	Edwards, 1995	Different discourses, discourses of difference: Globalisation, distance education and open learning	Distance Education	Discourse, knowledge, power <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discipline and punish (1995); • Power/knowledge (1980) • The history of sexuality: An introduction (1990)
2	Lee, F., 2008	Technopedagogies of mass-individualization: Correspondence education in the mid twentieth century	History and Technology	Dispositif <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discipline and punish (1995); • Power/knowledge (1980)
3	Gourlay, 2015	Open education as a 'heterotopia of desire'	Learning, Media and Technology	Heterotopia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Of other spaces, heterotopias' (1984)
4	Turner & Gassaway, 2019	Between kudzu and killer apps: Finding human ground between the monoculture of MOOCs and online mechanisms for learning	Educational Philosophy and Theory	Episteme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The order of things (2005)
5	Lee, K., 2020	Openness and innovation in online higher education: A historical review of the two discourses	Open Learning	Discourse, knowledge, power <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Archaeology of knowledge (1972) • The history of sexuality: An introduction (1990) • Discipline and punish (1995)
Power and Subjectification: Analysis of social structures and relationships				
6	Knox, 2013	Five critiques of the open educational resources movement	Teaching in Higher Education	Subjectivity, governmentality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discipline and punish (1995) • Technologies of the self (1988)

	Author(s), Year	Article Title	Journal Title	Foucault's Ideas • Foucault's original works cited (Year)
7	Peach & Bieber, 2015	Faculty and online education as a mechanism of power	Distance Education	Power <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discipline and punish (1995) • The subject and power (1982)
8	Clapp, 2017	An e-learning team's life on and offline: A collaborative self-ethnography in postgraduate education development	Electronic Journal of e-Learning	Discourse, knowledge, power, subjectivity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Archaeology of knowledge (1972)
9	Ovetz, 2017	Click to save and return to course: Online education, adjunctification, and the disciplining of academic labour	Work Organisation, Labour and Globalisation	Power, Surveillance, Panopticon <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discipline and punish (1995)
10	Stern, 2011	You had me at Foucault: Living pedagogically in the digital age	Text and Performance Quarterly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power, subjectivity, body • Discipline and punish (1995) • The history of sexuality: An introduction (1990)

knowledge) of distance education are aligned with the ideas that prevailed in the previous era of Fordism (or Modernism), which stressed cultural uniformity and mass-produced learning materials. On the other hand, the knowledge that constitutes the academic discussions of open learning is closely linked to the new trends of post-Fordism (Postmodernism), which stresses cultural diversity (i.e., individual learners' unique needs). Edwards further argues the discursive shift in the field of distance education, from the discourse of distance education to that of open learning, is in line with the bigger societal shift from Fordism to Post-Fordism or producer-oriented ideals to consumer-oriented ideals.

The article provides useful insights into dilemmas experienced by distance educators while undergoing the radical discursive shift from Modernist ideas of distance education to Post-modernist ideas of open learning. Such a critical awareness can be liberating in the sense that distance educators can understand where the experienced dilemmas originate and can create an alternative direction for effective changes in their pedagogical practice and the field.

What is being suggested is that, in the contemporary period, discourses of openness and open learning act to overlay, displace and subvert those of distance education. The focus is on learning and, with that, the learner takes us into areas of opportunity beyond formally-provided education and those areas of learning defined as valuable by and for educators. Distance educators therefore who espouse open learning find themselves in sorting of a paradox as the two discourses do not necessarily sit comfortably with each other. (Edwards, 1995, p. 252)

4.1.2 Technopedagogies of mass-individualization: Correspondence education in the mid twentieth century (Lee, F., 2008)

The article (Lee, 2008) analyses an historical dataset that consists of the proceedings of two conferences on correspondence education (one held in Canada in 1938 and another in New Zealand in 1950) and a pre-conference proceeding from the same series of conferences (held in the US in 1948). Based on the historical analysis, the author suggests that correspondence education in the mid twentieth century was co-produced and co-arranged by a set of pedagogical ideas grounded in progressive individualism, scientific thinking, and automation and by a series of pedagogical techniques of distance teaching, testing, and recording.

The author further argues that there is a clear tension observed in the ideals of correspondence education during

the historical period—the tension between the massification of educational production and the individualisation of pedagogical processes and outcomes. To unpack the tension, Lee (2008) employs a notion of *dispositif*, which is influenced by two French philosophers: Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze. The author uses Foucault's definition of *dispositif* as follows:

a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions—in short, the said as much as the unsaid... the [*dispositif*] itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements. (Foucault, 1980, p. 194)

By analysing the *dispositif* of a certain social phenomenon at a particular historic and geographic moment, historians can examine both discursive and non-discursive aspects of an institutionalised process through which a focused social practice is organised and regulated. The author's theoretical framework allows him to examine the interlinked and collaborative relationships between pedagogy (i.e., discursive thoughts) and technology (i.e., non-discursive/material artefacts) that co-produce particular ways in which correspondence education was practised, discussed, and institutionalised in the mid twentieth century. Alongside Foucault's definition of *dispositif*, the author utilises Deleuze's 'four discrete but intertwined levels' to analyse the *dispositif* of correspondence education:

The first level addresses the specific *forms of knowing*... the knowledge and expertise help define the objects of the *dispositifs*, codify suitable ways of handling the objects, and define the proper institutional location of knowledge and expertise. The second level directs our attention to the *grid of perception* of the *dispositif*, and seeks to understand the constitution of objects of knowledge through techniques of perception and observation... The third level directs our attention to the possible *subject positions* that are constructed in the *dispositif*: the collective or individual subjectivities that are produced in relation to the grid of perception, forms of knowledge, and relations of power and force... The fourth level pursues the aspects of power, or the actions, techniques or technologies that impose limits and create possibilities for action. (Lee, 2008, p. 240-241).

Although the theoretical complexity of the author's integrated framework falls outside the scope of the present paper, it clearly demonstrates that Foucault's theory is often

used with other social theories. In conclusion, the author suggests that the dispositif of correspondence education enabled its mass-individualisation, despite the conflicting nature of the two: the massification of the educational production and the individualisation of the pedagogical process. That is, the dispositif (i.e., the ensemble of different discursive and materialistic elements) caused correspondence education to be perceived and discussed among its adherents as a new ideal, offering an equal educational opportunity and individually-tailored education. Foucault lets us uncover the complex process through which seemingly impossible, irrational ideas become possible, rational, and dominant.

4.1.3 Open education as a 'heterotopia of desire' (Gourlay, 2015)

A departure point of this paper is Gourlay's critical observation that openness claims promoted by Open Educational Resources (OER) proponents are commonly perceived as a progressive critique of the 'traditional' university system. For example, the openness claims position university teaching on one end as a hierarchical and repressive institutional practice, and the OER movement on the opposite end as an anti-hierarchical and democratising collaborative effort that liberates and empowers learners by providing free access to educational materials. However, Gourlay (2015) argues that mainstream discourses of OER do not effectively reflect the complexity of the real-life university system and dynamic power relationships operating throughout the system, but instead present over-simplistic ideas about the university system and its actors. Thus, the rhetoric of openness creates and reinforces false fantasies and unexamined assumptions about OER and its democratizing effect, while portraying the university as an all-powerful institution and the university student as a passive subject.

Such idealisation of a social phenomenon is often framed, using a notion of utopia, an imagined perfect world non-situated and non-existing in real-life settings. However, Foucault (1984 cited in Gourlay, 2015) argues utopia is not just pure abstraction or imagination and that despite its placeless in the real world, it is relevant to and inherent in contemporary society. He further suggests an alternative conceptualisation of utopia, that is, enacted utopia or heterotopia:

There are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places—places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society—which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously

represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias (Foucault, 1984). (Gourlay, 2015, p. 315)

Although heterotopias exist in diverse forms, Foucault categorises them into two: i) heterotopias of crisis, reserved for individuals in a state of crisis (i.e., adolescents, pregnant women) and ii) heterotopias of deviation, established for individuals in deviant conditions (i.e., old age, criminal act). Heterotopias (i.e., spaces such as hospitals, prisons, retirement homes), are all existing in reality, but outside the boundaries of normal places. One of the possible characteristics of heterotopias is that those spaces are intended to compensate for the inadequacies of normal places in society by enacting utopian ideals or creating perfect spaces; however, ultimately, heterotopias accommodate abnormality and serve individuals in states of crisis or deviation.

Following Foucault's ideas, Gourlay conceptualises OERs as a heterotopia of desire. She argues that the discourses surrounding the OER movement cannot be simply reduced to utopian fantasies; instead, their relevance to the current society, university system, and social subjects needs to be closely examined and analysed. Gourlay (2015) explains OERs as a heterotopia:

OERs and the interactions they generate could be read as an attempt to create an 'enacted utopia' which is created and maintained in order to compensate for what is regarded as a morally imperfect and corrupt mainstream. The fantasy appears to be one of total liberation from the perceived constraints of formal study... The emphasis is instead reduced to access and the online generation of 'content'—which carries with it a further powerful fantasy of unfettered human potential which can be unlocked unproblematically in informal lay interaction... These fantasies may be achieved through the creation and maintenance of OERs and associated discussion spaces as 'perfect' spaces, free of the negative characteristics attributed to mainstream education. (p. 316-317)

Based on that conceptualisation, Gourlay (2015) criticises the dominant discourses of OERs in two aspects: first, the inadequacies of mainstream HE, perceived and promoted by OER proponents, are superficially critical. As discussed above, the radically negative, unexamined, assumptions about the university system are not grounded on sophisticated understandings of 'the complex web of agencies involved

in day-to-day engagement with any form of digital education' (p. 317). Second, heterotopias are not open spaces but reserved sites for particular individuals in need. The fact that someone needs free access to OERs ultimately indicates that she cannot afford access to normal education—as Foucault (1984) says 'we are, by the very fact that we enter, excluded'. Thus, it is important to more critically examine who remains inside the boundaries of normal places (i.e., mainstream HE) and who crosses the boundaries and enters into the places of the abnormality (i.e., OER learning).

4.1.4 Between kudzu and killer apps: Finding human ground between the monoculture of MOOCs and online mechanisms for learning (Turner & Gassaway, 2019)

Turner and Gassaway (2019) unpack the complex societal, economic, and educational conditions in which affirmative attitudes to Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) have arisen and continuously developed among university administrators, despite significant temporal and human constraints that online learners and teachers experience in actual MOOCs. Embracing prestigious universities' brand advantages and cost-efficient production strategies (and related rhetoric), MOOCs have successfully appealed to the public and HE institutions and attracted both public and private funds.

The paper argues that, in the neoliberal HE context, where the market-based ideals (e.g., consumerism, privatisation, and individualisation) strongly influence educational policies and administrative decisions, a set of claims about MOOCs (e.g., learner freedom, choices, and self-regulation) effectively support those policies and decisions. In addition, pedagogical principles and roles that are currently being promoted under the constructivist learning paradigm (e.g., learner-centred learning, active learners) underpin the mechanism of learning in MOOCs. Foucault (1980) explains that in any given society at any given historical moment, there is always an episteme (i.e., dominant discourse) that defines which statements are acceptable and which statements are not—that is, episteme is a historical knowledge apparatus that creates the possibilities of knowledge. Based on this idea, Turner and Gassaway (2019) articulate the subordinate relationships between the popularisation of MOOCs and neoliberal principles as follows:

While Foucault (1970[2005]) defined an 'episteme' as an era wherein power relations determine what can be recognized as knowledge, in his elaboration of *kairos* and *myth*, May (1991) noted a corollary phenomenon, that what becomes societal knowledge is prepared for

through myth. Materializing at an opportune moment for administrators seeking new revenue streams, online education conforms to predominant constructivist educational theory even as it embodies embedded cultural beliefs about the value of technology and rising productivity. (p. 383)

Although the learner-centred approaches to online learning, when materialised in real-life contexts, create a range of pedagogical and human challenges (see also Knox, 2013), the current episteme allows such claims about learner-centred learning in MOOCs to be made and believed. In this context, actual revenue-seeking motivations of HE administrators for MOOCs are effectively obscured by the neoliberal myth of MOOCs—emphasising 'the value of technology and rising productivity' in/of MOOCs. The ultimate problem caused by such discursive conditions is that humans (individual learners and teachers) in MOOCs who are facing multiple challenges and discrepancies between the myth and the reality are left alone struggling to cope with the challenges. The authors conclude with the following observation:

At this pivotal moment what may be most urgently needed is the honest recognition of human abilities and needs... More must be done to prevent online learning from becoming codified into an 'inhuman' and inhumane experience, demanding brutal hours of faculty and often resulting in the social and academic isolation of vulnerable students. Both students and faculty need more support, while instructors need more autonomy and room for creativity and students need more realistic information and different skills to enter into online learning—a totality of needs that may depress the profitability of the venture. Yet to carve out human—and higher—ground for learning will demand courage of administrators to face relentless financial demands with a view of online learning as a locus of investment and improvement, rather than a miraculous source of revenue. (p. 386)

4.1.5 Openness and innovation in online higher education: A historical review of the two discourses (Lee, K., 2020)

This article, written by the present author (Lee, 2020), fundamentally challenges the common rhetoric about online HE as being open to diverse groups of students including the disadvantaged who were previously underserved by campus-based HE institutions. Despite a lack of empirical evidence to support the openness claims and growing suspicion of the equalising power of current online HE practices, the openness discourse continues to be prevalent across the HE sector. Lee argues that the discourse is often deeply

grounded in the ‘anyone, anytime, anywhere’ accessibility hype associated with the nature of the Internet technologies, which makes its denial rather challenging. To critically analyse the rhetoric, the author employs a Foucauldian concept of discourse(s):

There are always multiple discourses co-existing in any particular institution at any given historical moment, continuously competing against each other for disciplinary power upon people’s practice (Comber, 1997; Mills, 2004). Therefore, it is possible to check the authenticity of a particular discourse by examining the relationships and the compatibility of two or more discourses in a specific institutional and historical context. By doing so, we can weaken the dominance and disciplinary power of those discourses in society. (p. 2)

Therefore, to challenge the taken-for-granted assumption about online HE being open to the disadvantaged, the author asks a simple but critical question: ‘To what extent can online HE be open and innovative at the same time?’.

Foucault, not only theoretically but also methodologically (and empirically), guides the author’s study—which follows Foucault’s historical approaches to examining the emergence, development, and shifts of dominant discourses and subsequent knowledge-power relationships in a specific institutional setting. The author analyses the development of the two popular discourses (i.e., openness and innovation discourses) and the dynamic relationships between the two throughout the history of an open university: Athabasca University (AU) in Canada. The author’s analysis involves two phases of discourse and text analysis: i) reviewing a large set of institutional documents (N=81) published by the open university between 1977 and 2015 and ii) interviewing learning designers (N=7) working at the open university.

The author’s attempt to simultaneously and contrastingly analyse the two discourses, following Foucault’s historical approach, reveals multiple points of discontinuity between our common understandings of online HE—in particular the rhetorical nature of current openness claims about online HE. The results demonstrate that, although the openness and innovation discourses co-exist harmoniously and compatibly at a conceptual level, the two discourses as major institutional principles tend to compete with each other for the operational priority in different aspects of AU practices including online course design:

The openness discourse has long dominated its practices throughout the history of AU. In more recent years, however, the expanded notion of openness, based around an

increased social aspiration for open educational resources and a growing institutional emphasis on technology- and research-oriented innovation, has made AU’s open educational practices less focused and more rhetorical.

Lee (2020) also presents empirical evidence of the openness-innovation tension in AU. For example, integrating any advanced technologies in course design may reduce the accessibility of the course among potential students, particularly those disadvantaged without access to the technologies. On the other hand, there has been a fast-growing institutional emphasis on research-oriented innovation. Under the research-focused regime, it has become increasingly difficult for learning designers to pursue and achieve teaching-oriented innovation, and openness has become a residual discourse in AU. That is, there are significant tensions experienced by the learning designers when they try to achieve both openness and innovation through their course design practices (see also Lee, 2018). This echoes Edwards’ (1995) argument on the potential dilemmas experienced by distance educators when they try to embrace both distance education and open learning discourses.

4.2 Power and Subjectification: Analysis of social structures and relationships

4.2.1 Five critiques of the open educational resources movement (Knox, 2013)

This paper can be read alongside Gourlay (2015) and Turner and Gassaway (2019). In this literature review, Knox (2013) critiques some of the prevailing assumptions underpinning the promotion of OER movements in HE. Using Foucault’s theorisation of subjectivity, suggesting that the self is always constructed through the complex relationship among discourse, knowledge, and power, which is ‘existing in the performance of system’ (p. 823), the author challenges the notion of ‘freedom’ in the rhetoric of the current OER movements. The OER movements often promote the ideas of OER, enabling individuals to become free both from various barriers to learning and from teacher-centred instruction in traditional university settings. However, the author argues that there is a lack of comprehensive understandings of how individuals actually learn from OERs.

Knox further discusses the limitations of humanistic assumptions of learner autonomy entrenched in the notion of self-directed OER learning. OER advocates often overemphasise learner autonomy, perceiving learners as self-directing human subjects with ‘innate abilities to engage in rational and autonomous behaviour’ (p. 827) who would learn freely

and effectively from OERs. However, Foucauldian understanding of the development of human subjects challenges the fundamental belief of learner autonomy in self-directed OER learning. To unpack this critique, Knox (2013) utilises a specific concept of governmentality:

Governmentality concerns the interplay between what Foucault terms ‘technologies of domination’ and ‘technologies of the self’ (Foucault, 1988). The former relates to the ways in which individuals are constructed through discourses, while the latter concerns the induced behaviours through which an individual might perform a particular kind of subjectivity. This allows us to consider how the subject of open education might be constructed by the interplay between promotion and participation; how the OER learner might emerge from the discourse and methods of self-directed learning. (p. 828)

In other words, the author argues that the subject (or image) of self-directed learners is a discursive product of the popular rhetoric of the OER movements. This notion, Knox suggests, neglects a range of external factors that influence learners’ OER learning behaviours in real-life contexts. Nevertheless, the forged image of self-directed OER learners governs the self. That is, it causes individuals to regulate themselves to be self-directed learners regardless of their actual abilities, circumstances, and readiness for learning. Individuals’ conduct in their learner autonomy itself is not a problem; however, it is problematic when the discourse of self-directed OER learning, which is often merged into other dominant discourses of marketization and commodification of HE, reaches out to particular populations—the so-called the disadvantaged. The subject of self-directed OER learners fundamentally conflicts with the subject of the disadvantaged with deficits (or deviant conditions in Gourlay, 2015), who are likely to find it unrealistic to learn freely and independently using OERs. The author concludes the article with the following observation:

The use of OER can be perceived, not as a more rational improvement to education, or a more humane and naturalised form of learning, but as a further refinement in the exercise of power. The OER movement needs to acknowledge its own discursive alignment with the marketization and commodification of education, and the ways in which this technology constructs the learning subject as human capital. (Knox, 2013, p. 830)

The implementation of Foucault’s theory can enable open educators to see the deeply inequitable social structure that many technology-deterministic or humanistic discourses around OER fail to capture. Simply speaking, it is great to

remind ourselves of the fact that disadvantaged students would find it extremely challenging to remove various social, economic, and cultural barriers to learning in their lives, despite the prevalence of OER.

4.2.2 Faculty and online education as a mechanism of power (Peach & Bieber, 2015)

Peach and Bieber (2015), based on Foucault’s relationship-oriented approach to power, explore online education as a new mechanism of power. Through online education, power is distributed, redistributed, and exercised within structures and relationships of traditional universities where multiple individuals or groups interact with and compete against each other. That is, the paper examines how online education, as a new practice, has influenced, changed, and re-arranged the power relationships among the members of traditional universities by introducing new techniques and strategies of control:

Control is the objective of exercising power, and the success of an action can range from subjugation to autonomy (Foucault, 1982; Scott, 2001). Techniques and mechanisms are used to act but are often exercised so subtly and are so embedded in the rules, regulations, policies, and practices of social systems that their exercise may not even be recognized as power (Covaleski et al., 1998; Foucault, 1982; Ouchi, 1977; Scott, 2001, pp. 11–12). When Foucault’s (1977[1995]; 1982) conceptualization of power is applied to higher education what emerges is a social structure in which power is continually circulating as professors, administrators, students, and other stakeholders, each with competing priorities, ideals, and visions, struggle for control, employing various strategies and techniques, and acting through available mechanisms. But no individual or group ever gains complete autonomy nor are they completely subjugated to the others. (Peach & Bieber, 2015, p. 27–28)

Faculty members, as major actors in universities, largely contribute to the reconfiguration of the power relationships in their institutions by actively performing different actions—not only conforming but also resisting new techniques and strategies attempting to control their actions. Thus, to unpack the complex, but subtle, power relationships emerging through online education at traditional universities, the authors interviewed 12 professors at 4 institutions who were recruited using criterion sampling methods (Patton, 2002 as cited in Peach & Bieber, 2015). The findings are presented in four themes: i) online education as a mechanism of resistance, ii) outflanking online education as a mechanism of resistance, iii) online education

as a mechanism of gaining recognition, and iv) online education as a mechanism of subjugation. The findings suggest the multi-directional power relationships between faculty members and their institutions (and other members in the institutions).

For example, faculty members use online education to avoid some of the traditional strategies that their institutions utilise to control their behaviours such as course scheduling, office hours, and summer courses. On the other hand, however, there are also university attempts to minimise the effects of the faculty's resistance. Such attempts include devaluing online teaching by assigning a small amount of credit, developing new online course restrictions, and increasing surveillance on online teaching. The faculty members' relationships with online teaching are also varied: while some faculty members have enjoyed a range of incentives gained by teaching online such as institution recognition, financial incentives, and desirable classes, some have experienced normative pressure and professional identity changes. That is, Foucault enables the authors to construct more sophisticated narratives about faculty members' adoption of and/or resistance towards online teaching.

4.2.3 An e-learning team's life on and offline: A collaborative self-ethnography in postgraduate education development (Clapp, 2017)

Clapp (2017) investigates an e-learning team's (learning designers') lived experiences of working with other faculty members in the context of online distance course development at an HE institution. Through analysing on- and offline interactions and working relationships between e-learning specialists and subject specialists (e.g., clinicians and scientists), this self-ethnographic study aims to better inform HE institutions of requirements and methods of staff development for online distance course design. Drawing upon Foucault's ideas, the author explains how subject specialists' perspectives and attitudes towards online teaching are constructed and subsequently influence their relationships with e-learning specialists:

'Do not ask who I am and do not ask me to remain the same: leave it to our bureaucrats and our police to see that our papers are in order' (Foucault, 1972). This implies we all have to change but the change is forced upon us by the power of other people within their own structural systems. In order to change from a subject specialist with a history of face-to-face lecturing to online teaching, a subject specialist will undergo some changes in knowledge which may also require changes in attitude. Response to this requirement for change will

have a bearing on the success of any staff development methods. (p. 35)

The author suggests that Foucault's concepts of discourse, knowledge, and power are relevant to the focused issue of the complex, multi-directional, and ubiquitous nature of power relationships (or tensions) between the two groups of specialists. That is, faculty members who are accustomed to face-to-face lecturing as a solo player may find it challenging to design their online distance courses collaboratively with a team of other people—so-called 'e-learning specialists'. Such changes in their teaching practice require them to develop different sets of pedagogical and technological knowledge and communication skills. Under the circumstances, however, faculty members may feel that such changes are forced upon them by other people in the institution, which in turn may create tensions (or a sense of resistance) among the members of the university.

It is also argued that not only subject specialists but also e-learning specialists develop particular value-laden discourses represented in their narratives about their counterparts (i.e., subject specialists). Simply speaking, in the given institutional context with a strong emphasis on online teaching, the teacher subjectivity of faculty members is categorised into two rather binary groups of 'good' online teachers who 'get' e-learning and 'bad' online teachers who 'don't':

Analysis of the discourses within the narrative shows that as a team there is a certain amount of judgement of those who 'get' e-learning, and those who don't, creating divisions. Here, Foucault's bio-politics, the different bodies, are apparent where the world is categorized according to those who understand [online distance learning] teaching and learning (the e-learning team) and those who don't (almost everyone else). (p. 43)

The author further suggests that subject specialists' resistance to the institution-wide pedagogical changes needs to be understood in line with their struggles rather than being received and/or perceived by e-learning specialists as personal attacks towards them. The author believes that the Foucauldian way of thinking about the institutional structure and power relationships can facilitate more productive and collegial relationships between the two specialist groups. The article concludes with a rather cautionary note:

care must be taken within staff development approaches to avoid alienating those who show 'otherness' to the team experts in their knowledge of elearning. Approaches should be empowering rather than emphasizing the

| differences in knowledge of teaching activities. (p. 43)

4.2.4 Click to save and return to course: Online education, adjunctification, and the disciplining of academic labour (Ovetz, 2017)

This paper discusses how the division of academic labour in US colleges and universities has been transformed and shifted through the adoption of online education and neoliberal adjunctification. The author (Ovetz, 2017) applies Foucault's conceptualisation of power, as a productive force that enables a particular form of institutional structures and relationships, into his analysis of academic labour in online HE contexts. His analysis reveals that online education has served neoliberal agendas of HE institutions:

| by separating [academic labour] from the delivery of educational content while transforming learning into the self-disciplined completion of sequential tasks... under the panoptic surveillance of online course management systems (Ovetz, 2017, p. 48)

That is, neoliberal learners are disciplined to become an autonomous self and a productive worker by participating in self-regulated online learning activities. Their online learning processes are not directly monitored by full-time academics but always exposed to the ubiquitous surveillance systems featured by multiple online technologies and tools in learning management systems. In this context, learners self-monitor their own learning without knowing whether their learning is actually monitored or not by their teachers or institutions. The author explains this mechanism of surveillance using Foucault's notion of panopticon, which was originally drawn from Jeremy Bentham's design of a prison building:

| Foucault describes this as 'making architecture transparent to the administration of power, of making it possible to substitute for force or other violent constraints the gentle efficiency of total surveillance' (Foucault, 1995, p. 265). [Online learning] turns the panopticon inward and strips it of its walls, guard towers, and cells at the same time that it strips the classroom of its walls, seats, lectern, and professor. Stripped of their walls and cells, the classroom and prison migrate ever closer to one another across the border of what Foucault called the 'carceral system' of 'the disciplines' (Foucault, 1995, 318 & 321). (Ovetz, 2017, p. 64)

The author argues that unwaged labour of self-regulated online learners has substituted academic labour of online teachers, which in turn enables universities and colleagues

to adopt 'the casualization of labour' (p. 55). HE institutions hire new contract-based faculty members who are 'only paid per classroom 'contact hour' while being ultimately removed from institutionalised benefits, shared governance, and unionised protection. In the online teaching contexts, however, the notion of the contact hour can be problematic, given the 24/7 accessibility of online communications; as a result, this adjunct faculty members can do ever more unwaged work outside their classrooms. Of course, this academic labour is not free from the ubiquity of panopticon surveillance:

| In the [course management systems,] the individual works alone in a diffused network of surveillance. But the appearance of isolation is misleading. The computer places the individual within a vast unseen diffused network of students working under its relentless digital gaze. The disciplining of labour power is, paradoxically, both individual and social, isolated and diffused, discrete and connected, autonomous and directed. It is the ultimate realisation of Foucault's panopticon in that it requires no walls or overt means of observation. It inculcates a sense of ceaseless surveillance that trains the individual to work reflexively as if being perpetually monitored and assessed. In turn, learning is subtly transformed into the work of completing tasks in the knowledge of being monitored, recorded, and assessed. (Ovetz, 2017, p. 64)

The author, therefore, concludes that new disciplinary power of online education has produced new neoliberal human subjects such as unwaged self-regulated online learners and adjunct online teachers whose actions and behaviours are efficiently governed by new surveillance mechanisms and self-disciplinary strategies.

4.2.5 You had me at Foucault: Living pedagogically in the digital age (Stern, 2011)

This article is rather different from the other three presented in this section in terms of its pedagogical context and theoretical focus. In this article, the author, a Feminist lecturer, reflects on her personal experiences with using online technologies and social media in her teaching (and living) to create and enable her bodily ambiguity. Stern (2011) conceptualises online learning as an effective means to close a gap between institutional teaching spaces and personal living spaces, or a gap between societal norms towards the heterosexuality of pedagogical bodies and her own queerness of living bodies. She focuses on Foucault's theorisation of the relationship between body, disciplinary power, and human subjectivity, as Foucault stresses:

the importance of who is speaking about the body—what institutions have the power to prompt people to speak about the body. The deployment of sexuality is linked to the economy in many ways, but mainly through the body, ‘the body that produces and consumes’ (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 107)... A political economy of the body rests in human’s adhering to rigid disciplinary practices—constant training and surveillance—that normalize our behaviour. The bodily disciplinary regimes Foucault spoke of, including dieting and fashion, can be both empowering and constricting... This constant negotiation of the public and the private complicates our pedagogical performances, sustaining increasing pressures to perform to the expectations of our students, colleagues, administrators—and ourselves (Goffman, 1959). (Stern, 2011, p. 251)

The author argues that teachers (as well as students) can respond and resist the bodily disciplinary power (and pressures) upon their bodies and subjectivities by creating and performing the genderless self—the bodily ambiguity. She also observes that it is more feasible for teachers to enact the bodily ambiguity and further present their queer identities in online socially-networked spaces (i.e., blogs, Twitter, Facebook) outside of face-to-face institutionally-arranged classrooms.

Our bodily performances are already socially coded through clothing, jewellery, makeup, cars, living spaces, and other markings... Digital technologies help us move away from particular norms of gender, sexuality, class, race, and other identity markers in ways that traditional pedagogy has failed us. Grosz (1995) identifies a ‘civilized’ body as grounded in utility and fragmented, purchasable commodities. This is useful in that we can investigate the body as an entity in itself, wrapped around and intertwined in the political and social struggles of the day, with the hybrid classroom the present site of cultural resistance. (Stern, 2011, p. 261)

The paper illustrates a useful example of how online learning, if effectively integrated into HE contexts, creates emancipatory possibilities for pedagogical bodies, particularly for those underrepresented by dominant, socially-accepted, and normalised images of teachers’ bodies.

5. Discussions

The analytic summary of the 10 articles above demonstrates that, although each paper focuses on different aspects of online education, there are three characteristics

shared by most of the articles. First, the shared purpose of the 10 papers is to question and re-examine the common assumptions and rhetoric about online education and human subjects performing and/or participating in online education practices. Knox (2013) challenges the notions of human freedom and autonomy, underpinning OER movements. Gourlay (2015) questions the democratising power of open education promoted by its proponents in terms of providing equal educational opportunities to the disadvantaged, while Turner and Gassaway (2019) focus on the temporal and human constraints of online education, which are often overlooked in the democratic rhetoric of learner-centred online learning. Lee (2020) also notices the conflicting relationships between openness and innovation of online education and argues that achieving both in a single online course can be challenging.

Second, most of the papers situate a focused aspect of online education in a structured framework, providing more comprehensive accounts of online education and institutions. Whereas most online education researchers in TEL have a relatively narrow scope of their study, looking at attitudes and behaviours of one or two specific pedagogical actors in online courses and programmes (i.e., learners and tutors), the authors listed in this paper tend to examine the institutional/social relationships among different parties in online education and complex power mechanisms underpinning those relationships. Peach and Bieber (2015) demonstrate how online education creates complex and multi-dimensional mechanisms of power that both liberate faculty members from previously-existing institutional restrictions and control their newly emerged online teaching practice. Clapp (2017) more specifically analyses power relationships between different groups of specialists in online education, and Ovetz (2017) provides in-depth descriptions of the development of adjunctification and unfair characteristics of academic labour in online HE contexts.

The theoretical idea that is most frequently employed in the reviewed articles is Discourse, which, in Foucault’s works, refers to a system of thoughts that enables certain ideas and statements to be acceptable and truthful and others not. Six papers specifically employ Foucault’s theory of discourse or related concepts such as *dispositif* and *episteme* (Clapp, 2017; Edwards, 1995; Knox, 2013; Lee, F., 2008; Lee, K., 2020; Turner & Gassaway, 2019). Those studies are mainly interested in examining the historical and social conditions in which the focused discourses have earned their dominance in online education (or social) contexts and critical shifts in those discourses. Edwards (1995) traces the gradual shift from the discourse of distance education to the discourse of open learning influenced by other

social discourses. Lee (2008) analyses the development of correspondence education collaboratively created by technological and pedagogical discourses. Lee (2020) also reports the changing dynamics between openness discourse and innovation discourse throughout the historical movement from distance (correspondence) education to online education.

As already mentioned in the introduction of this article, *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, 1995) is the most frequently cited references among the review articles, followed by *The history of sexuality: Volume 1* (Foucault, 1985). Thus, those two books can be a good starting point for TEL researchers who are interested in using Foucault's conceptual framework of discourse in similar ways that other authors have done, to begin their own Foucault journey. However, it is also worthwhile to stress that there are many other notions developed by Foucault that can be useful even though they have not been frequently picked up by TEL or educational researchers. Among the reviewed papers, for example, Stern (2011) focuses on the emancipatory power of online and social networking spaces (existing outside formal classrooms that are controlled by traditional norms about the pedagogical bodies) that enables teachers to create bodily ambiguity and genderless learning contexts. She analyses her own teaching experiences using Foucault's conceptualisation of the disciplinary power upon human body and subjectivity. Gourlay takes up Foucault's notion of heterotopia and provides insightful perceptions on how to understand the popular open education phenomena.

Using Foucault's ideas in TEL research will enable TEL researchers to do the following: 1) increase their criticality, challenging taken-for-granted assumptions that often prevent our knowledge progression; 2) see the big picture, making sense of complex power relations embedded in our practices; 3) establish a historical and developmental perspective on the present, which is required to develop a better future. Nevertheless, I want to conclude the paper with a rather cautionary comment that researchers must use Foucault only when he clearly has something to contribute. Using Foucault's big ideas requires researchers to invest dedicated and meticulous presentational and organisational efforts. Careless presentations of Foucault without in-depth discussions and explanations can simply make articles incomprehensible. I often come across articles that mention Foucault's names without making a convincing case for the effective use of Foucault, failing to demonstrate their thoughtful engagements with his ideas in the papers. It could simply be a presentational issue; however, most of those works do not offer anything special or particularly Foucauldian. Thus, despite its usefulness, Foucault's name

cannot be a simple add-on ornament in our work—it is a heavy name better not to hang up on a weak hook!

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About the author



Kyungmee Lee is a Lecturer in the Department of Educational Research, Lancaster University, and co-Director of the Centre for Technology Enhanced Learning. Her research targets the intersection of online education, higher education and international education. Kyungmee's scholarship emphasises concepts of discourse, knowledge and power, understood through a broadly Foucauldian lens.

✉ Email: k.lee23@lancaster.ac.uk

ORCID: [0000-0002-9580-9026](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9580-9026)

🐦 Twitter: [@hi_klee](https://twitter.com/hi_klee)

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