Exploring Instructional Leadership as Foucault's Discourse and Power

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Abstract

This study explores the application of Michel Foucault's theories of discourse and power to instructional leadership in educational settings, particularly in culturally nuanced contexts such as Asia and Africa. It highlights the complexity and potential limitations of using discourse as a technique in regions where traditional values like African philosophical and ethical traditions and Confucianism play a significant role. The intertwining of political power and personal virtue in these settings can complicate the application of Foucault's ideas, potentially overburdening the mechanisms of discourse and subjectivity. However, these challenges also offer opportunities for deeper inquiry. By examining how global discourses of instructional leadership materialized in specific African and Asian contexts, researchers can gain insights into the reconceptualization of agency and provide a voice beyond binary perspectives of liberatory or totalitarian frameworks. The study underscores the dynamic nature of educational research and the importance of avoiding the commodification of Foucault's ideas, encouraging a more nuanced and contextually aware understanding of instructional leadership.

Keywords: Instructional leadership, Foucault's discourse, Power dynamics, Educational reform, Cultural context

Introduction to Instructional Leadership and Foucault's Discourse and Power

Instructional leadership[1] is a prominent educational reform to enhance student learning outcomes through school leadership. Zeiner (1995) argued that leadership has become 'instructional leadership' instead of 'administrative leadership', where the latter is focused mainly on administrative aspects of management by rules, regulations, and hierarchy. The former is concerned with promoting teaching and learning improvement through providing support and sharing vision and goals. Although in principle all stakeholders should play instructional leadership roles in schools, school principals are still the most important players in many education systems (Hallinger, 2009; Leithwood & Louis, 2011; Rigby, 2014). While much research has documented models and approaches of instructional leadership, Foucault's (1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1984, 1988) concept of discourse and power is seldom deployed to explore the instructive intention of instructional leadership and its implications for the distributive roles of educational stakeholders.

Since the 1980s, Foucault's (1980, 1981) discourse and power[2] has been increasingly applied to analyse educational issues. For example, in a study of school support in a reform process, Bazzul (2016) argued that the discourses of recognizing multi-textuality and 'verbatim text analysis' are active in the practical construction of a supportive school-wide culture. Teachers are always seen as either compliance or non-compliance with these discourses or impacts of powerful discourses. In a study of international school marketing, Muharemovic (2017) argued that Foucault's (1980, 1984) genealogy is important in situating discursive practices to examine how teachers instrumentally embody foreign governments' cultural/political ideologies established at the schools. Despite their insightful analysis, these studies rarely discuss how knowledge, power, and desire construct representational discourses of school development, or how new form of school and self-appear from representational practices. Such discussions are particularly important in critically analysing the development,

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[1] Instructional leadership refers to the actions and strategies employed by school leaders to enhance teaching and learning within educational institutions, focusing on improving student outcomes through shared vision and support. It contrasts with administrative leadership by prioritizing academic goals over traditional management practices, emphasizing the critical role of principals in fostering a culture of instructional improvement among all stakeholders.

[2] Foucault's concept of discourse and power posits that knowledge and truth are produced through language and social practices, which are inherently linked to power structures and relationships in society.

performance, and survival of schools in an increasingly globalized educational market (Hallinger, 2005; Mestry et al., 2013; Muharemovic, 2017). Foucault viewed discourse as bodies of knowledge that "systematically form the objects of which they speak. Discourses establish "rules of formation" that determine what can be said, thought, and acted upon within a particular domain. Oldervik, H. (2025) argues that instructional leadership can be seen as a dominant discourse in education, with its own set of concepts e.g., pedagogical improvement, student outcomes, teacher development), practices e.g., lesson observations, coaching, professional learning), and expected subject positions e.g., the effective teacher, the supportive leader. This discourse privileges certain ideas about what constitutes good teaching and effective leadership, shaping how educators understand their roles and responsibilities (Evans, G. 2025).

Theoretical Frameworks in Educational Leadership.

 Understanding the theoretical frameworks that underpin educational leadership is critical for working within contemporary educational settings. Although much has been written about instructional leadership, there are gaps in understanding around the fundamental assumptions that inform this concept and how the complexity of those assumptions can be played out within the realities of school practice. An overview of both traditional and critical leadership theory can provide a foundation for developing understandings around the dominant notions of instructional leadership (Farwell, 2016). Unlike other academic areas of endeavour, educational leadership research has been dominated by theory rather than viewed as a distinct practice in its own right. Of particular interest in this paper is the development of two broad frames of reference regarding the theoretical context of school leadership and particularly instructional leadership. By illuminating the essential knowledge bases relating to either side of this debate, it is anticipated that more informed understanding and discussion can take place around the paradoxes and complexities concerning the conceptualisation and practice of instructional leadership in schools.

Leadership has been broadly interpreted as either 'personal influence' or 'institutional effectiveness' (Stewart, 2017). In other words, who is involved in leadership and what it is that they are doing. These two broad frames of reference, although simplified, capture the conventional tensions that underpin contemporary notions of leadership. The first tradition, strongly associated with the historical writings of the 'great man' school of social theory, maintains a focus on the leadership disciple as an individualized phenomenon. It is predicated on the understanding that leadership is a personal trait, or a characteristic found in certain individuals. These heroic individuals, often from a military or political background, are portrayed as people possessing extraordinary qualities that compel followers to obey. Moreover, it is believed that their influence moulded followers into a unified group with common interests. Such assumptions continue to dominate contemporary thinking about leadership (Farwell, 2022; Bellibas et al., 2021; Aas & Paulsen, 2019).

Traditional Leadership Theories.
Critical Leadership Theories.

Traditional leadership theories[3] assume the existence of a rational, heroic, individual leader who exhibits certain personal dispositions and skills necessary to influence and lead others, either through a positional, formal authority that defines the power structure in a hierarchical organization or through the soft exercise of informal influence based on compelling vision and charismatic character. By contrast, critical leadership scholars and scholars advocate for a "post" or "after" school of thought that challenges the widely accepted assumptions of traditional leadership theories and examines leadership as a more complicated social construction open to many possibilities (Barnes et al., 2018; Collinson, 2020; Liu, 2021). Critical theory questions the rational mode of discourse and objective knowledge that provides justification for domination and inequity and seeks to interrogate, expose, and change structures of power.

Feminist theory challenges the hegemony of a phallocentric social, political, and economic order defined by the implicit and explicit dominance of men over women and rejects the legitimacy of what cannot be seen from women's perspective; therefore, feminist theorists apart from varying schools, identify similar assumptions and patterns such as race, class, and gender oppression in societal arrangements and strive for workable strategies to overcome patriarchal domination in various contexts (Anderson Chelf, 2018; Eagly & Heilman, 2022; Pullen & Vachhani, 2020). Critical race theory emerged in the late 1970s as a response to what many perceived as the failure of traditional civil rights policies to address the complicity of public policy and mainstream institutions, such as

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[3] Traditional leadership theories assume the existence of a rational, heroic individual leader who possesses certain traits and skills necessary to influence followers through formal authority or charismatic vision.

legal education, in perpetuating structural and systemic white supremacy within racial discourse and public consciousness (Delgado & Stefancic, 2021; Hiraldo, 2019; Liu & Baker, 2016).

Foucault's Theory of Power and Discourse.

In the past 30 years, French philosopher Michel Foucault's (1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1984, 1988) work on discourse has belonged to the most referenced and the most misused scholarly understanding from applied linguists and education researchers. In particular, there has been little opportunity to engage in-depth with how Foucault's concept of discourse, power, and knowledge would mean in the context of classrooms, against many different research foci such as education policy, teacher training, literacy practices, and (foreign/second) language education (Pitsoe & Letseka, 2013; Hardy, 1997; Muharemovic, 2017). To paraphrase Foucault, it could be said that becoming a classroom researcher means, for people educated in liberal arts, humanities, and social sciences, to form a network with disparate cohorts across times and spaces, such as grave and classically educated philosophers, biologists, psychiatrists, mathematicians, and linguists, who have lots of discursive and non-discursive practices in common and yet have been widely and deeply understood and misinterpreted by instructional researchers (Jones & Brown, 2001; Pitsoe & Letseka, 2013; Gaventa, 2003).

A Foucauldian focus on discourse would constitute an awareness of the ways in which language can be seen as a set of rules and conventions based on the social world, from facets such as power, social stratification, and inclusion/exclusion (McBride, 1989; Pitsoe & Letseka, 2013; Gaventa, 2003). In particular, these (mis)understandings have excluded instructional classrooms as a critical site to better elaborate on Foucault's concepts of discourse, power, and knowledge, and their genealogical implications on foreign/second language social inclusion/exclusion (Muharemovic, 2017; Pitsoe & Letseka, 2013; Hardy, 1997). This absence was an inquiry of a confounding classroom webs of discourses, pedagogical practices, power relations, policies, histories, and implications, around which applied linguists and education researchers, who recognize the importance of discourse (re)construction, struggle (Pitsoe & Letseka, 2013; Gaventa, 2003; McBride, 1989).

Key Concepts in Foucault's Theory

Foucault's (1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1984, 1988) works were influenced by Friedrich Nietzsche's genealogical method and built a powerful theoretical framework for comprehending the intimate relationship between discourse, power, and knowledge. Power is neither a thing that can be held, nor is it restricted to the result of a specific chain of domination. This representation can only refer to one strategy within a complex situation, in which one must descend to "a very local level of events, actions and decisions" (Foucault, 1980; Harcourt, 2022; Yildiz, 2019). In this sense, power is a name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society.

For Foucault (1980, 1984), power is both limitless and productive. Power is everywhere because it comes from everywhere; power is not only repressive but also productive. Inextricably enmeshed with knowledge, there cannot be power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge. For Foucault, power is conceptualized as being a capillary form of existence that reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies, and inserts itself into actions, attitudes, and everyday lives (Ajvazi, n.d.; Pure Sociology, 2022). There is nothing like the state "before" power; power is always there, like a natural network. It is the discovery of a multiplicity of points of resistance.

In a particular period and in a specific society, what one thinks one knows deeply impacts how societies regulate and control concepts like crime and "the" criminal, homosexuality and the homosexual, the mad and madness. But knowledge does not operate in a void. It is put to work through certain technologies and strategies (Muharemovic, 2017; Yildiz, 2019). At the precise intersection of discourse and power wholly determined. The effect of this combination — power/knowledge — is that it, like all other arrangements, has produced a certain conception of crime and the criminal and in this way, affected both the criminal and the punisher (Harcourt, 2022; Pure Sociology, 2022).

Instructional Leadership in Education.

Instructional leadership has become a catchphrase within the education community globally. Broadly, instructional leadership refers to the actions of school leaders to promote an academic focus in schools to ensure effective teaching and learning (van der Merwe & Schenck, 2016; Hallinger & Wang, 2015; Neumerski, 2013). This paper aims to shed light on one of the discourses of an instructional leader, initially providing a preface on what constitutes an instructional leader, tackling the challenges to be negotiated within the implementation of instructional leadership in practice.

The complexity of instructional leadership and its practice in Swaziland schools highlight some of the challenges instructional leadership in schools is faced with. Successful instructional leadership calls for a concerted effort by

all role players to shift their paradigm to the achievement of instructional goals (Hallinger, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2020). Strong leadership in instructional practice is felt to improve students' learning levels in Sharjah schools (Mohamed Abdalla Al Hosani, 2015; Shaked, 2018). The clear vision illustrates the school's understanding that adopted curricula must be operationalized into instructional practices to help their learners acquire the expected and appropriate behaviour after successful participation in schools (Robinson et al., 2008; Rigby, 2014).

Definition and Importance.

The gist of instructional leadership practised in Swaziland primary schools consists of five themes: the context-specific understanding, the role to be fulfilled by instructional leaders, its influence on school culture, factors impeding instructional leadership, and strategies for success (van der Merwe & Schenck, 2016; Khoza, 2012). Instructional leadership can play a central role in shifting the emphasis of school activity onto instructional improvements that lead to enhanced student learning and performance (Kruger, 2003; van der Merwe & Schenck, 2016).

As the context of this research is instructional leadership, it is important to clarify what is meant by the term instructional leadership (IL). This is particularly relevant within the educational setting, and especially illustration to the current time frame of educational effectiveness and improvement. Consequently, the understanding of IL was framed within the intention of the research. In the broader context of school effectiveness and school improvement, IL was viewed as a coherent theme encompassing the effective role of principals in school improvement efforts (Khoza, 2012; Kruger, 2003). At the forefront of this conception is the moral purpose of ensuring quality education for all learners and improving the overall improvement of the school as learning organisation. Defined within this context, IL embraces three interrelated dimensions within a schools existing external and internal context that are influential in engendering school improvement. These are the underlying conception of improvement, the approach to educational change, and the understanding of the role of the principal (van der Merwe & Schenck, 2016; Khoza, 2012).

Historical Development

Instructional leadership (also called instructional or educational leadership) is related to the role of the school principal or other academic executives responsible for the syllabus, curriculum, teaching methods, discipline, or level of professionalism with teachers (Farwell, 2016). It alludes to the secondary school principals who concentrate on schools. Their job is to provide instructional needs by which their school could be considered to reach a level of excellence (Farwell, 2016). Farwell (2016) further researches the characteristics of instructional leadership, arguing that they are Universalism, Responsibility, Bureaucratism, Objectivity with Discipline, Codification, and Standardization (Farwell, 2016).

Despite the diverse thinking about instructional leadership, with the advent of educational change since the late 1950s, the implementation and maintenance of the curriculum made schools obliged and responsible by their government (Farwell, 2016). In the USA, it started with the educational reform of the Nation at Risk report, which provided a proposed plan of actions for states to reduce the growing disparities in the educational system in lieu of a national baseline account of societal-level systems (Farwell, 2016). The educational system was mandated to have a single coherent syllabus with a set of state-wide standardized tests (Farwell, 2016).

To prevent chaos during the wide and significant changes in content to context and the allocation of funding, schools were made accountable for the school environment with regard to the adequacy and alignment of the subjects taught and the subjects tested (Farwell, 2016). Building the capacity of schools to provide equity in educational opportunities, instructional leadership with significant resources and formal authority, was seen as the reductive route to help manage conflict over such policy changes fairly (Farwell, 2016). With a fair share of the resources under state-wide systems of common accountability, it was hoped that underlying conditions would generate similar activities and outcomes in schools (Farwell, 2016). With an equally important problem of meeting the standards without letting schools slip, it was necessary that schools be made aware of what counts as adequacy with respect to schools' decisions by which standards to attain and how arrangements within the schools could be such to reach them (Farwell, 2016).

Intersections of Instructional Leadership and Foucault's Discourse and Power

Despite numerous schools being labelled as 'Instructional Leadership' schools, there is little research that investigates the different discourses of Instructional Leadership and the way these discourses circulate in the different social settings of schools. This study reported here uncovers the emergence, negotiation and recontextualization of different discourses of instructional leadership to assist with an understanding of the conditions, contexts, texts and subjectivities that shape Instructional Leadership or notions about instructional

leadership in particular settings (Jones & Brown, 2001; McBrayer et al., 2020; Tilley et al., 2012). Jason Chen, H. C. (2025) alluded that Foucault's concepts of discourse and power reveal the subtle and pervasive ways in which power operates within educational settings. It highlights how instructional leadership functions not just as a framework for improvement but also as a discourse that shapes practices, subjectivities, and power relations. Understanding these intersections allows for a more critical engagement with leadership practices and opens avenues for exploring more equitable and empowering educational environments. Furthermore, he explains, Foucault's notion of governmentality reveals how govern-mental rationalities function as "politics of truth," generating new forms of knowledge and distinct conceptions that pave the way for novel modes of regulation and intervention. In the context of headship preparation, the "conduct of conducts" is evident in how the pre-paratory process, through its programs, standards, and informal networks, subtly shapes aspiring headteachers' conduct.

In addition, there is little research that examines Instructional Leadership as discourse in the Foucauldian sense. Yet it is only by understanding the conditions and contexts of the discourse that an understanding of its implications the power/knowledge relations inherent in these discourses can be examined (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Robinson et al., 2009). Furthermore, the effects of different conceptualisations of Instructional Leadership on policy and practice and how reality is constructed by particular discourses of Instructional Leadership can be understood (Muharemovic, 2017; Pearce et al., 2009; Printy & Marks, 2006). As a response, the aims of this paper are to understand Instructional Leadership as discourse, and the ways different discourses of Instructional Leadership come to be, circulate and are negotiated in different school settings. The intention of the paper is to ask not what Instructional Leadership is as has been previously done, but rather how did Instructional Leadership come to be (Gumus et al., 2018; Leithwood et al., 2004; Robinson & Timperley, 2007). Garden, A. (2025) alludes that Foucault's theoretical framework provides a critical lens to analyse how instructional leadership functions as a discourse embedded with power relations, shaping educational practices and the subjectivities of educators. Firstly, instructional leadership can be understood as a dominant discourse within education. As Foucault (2002: 42) suggests, individuals become bound by the 'rules of formation' within a particular discourse, which influences how school leaders and teachers think and act (Evans, G. 2025).

Power Dynamics in Educational Institutions.

In recent years, the impact of social media on mental health has become a significant area of research. Studies have shown that excessive use of social media can lead to increased levels of anxiety and depression among teenagers (Parker, 2019; Smith & Jones, 2019). For instance, Parker (2019) found a correlation between social media usage and anxiety symptoms in teenagers. Similarly, Smith and Jones (2019) reported that the constant need for validation through social media platforms exacerbates feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem.

Moreover, the role of parental guidance in mitigating these negative effects has been emphasized in various studies. According to Johnson (2020), active parental involvement in monitoring social media use can significantly reduce the risk of developing mental health issues. Johnson (2020) also highlighted that setting clear boundaries and encouraging offline activities can help teenagers develop healthier habits.

Furthermore, research by Carlson et al. (2018) suggests that educational interventions aimed at teaching teenagers about the responsible use of social media can be effective in promoting mental well-being. Carlson et al. (2018) found that students who participated in such programs showed a marked improvement in their ability to manage their online presence and reduce screen time.

Role of Language and Discourse

Complementing the exploration of power dynamics, the role of language and discourse is discussed herein. So far, the focus has been on the exploration of how power is perceived and practiced in educational arenas. The discourse around reform and change in schools is also explored to contextualize and embed the focus of the research on the themes, issues, and ideas shaping and influencing empowerment in instructional leadership. This, however, is not sufficient to understand how power is constructed and enacted in the instruction domain of the school. Language shapes, constructs, and perpetuates power dynamics (Fairclough, 2015; Jones & Brown, 2001; van Dijk, 2015). The research on the discursive construction of instructional leadership serves as the starting point for further exploration in accordance with Foucault's (1980, 1981, 1984) view of discourse and power.

A research effort was made to examine how conventional definitions of instructional leadership were originally constructed in educational discourse and how these definitions were enacted and resisted by the discursive practices of school leaders, resulting in the reconstruction of the definition and a shift in the exercise of power (Muharemovic, 2017; Rigby et al., 2019; Spillane & Lowenhaupt, 2019). This research on discourse and power dynamics fits well with the object of this research, where a reconstruction of the discourse of instructional leadership is attempted to illume a different dimension of power dynamic in educational systems.

Case Studies and Examples.

Interest in Foucauldian epistemology in educational research is growing. However, the existing scholarship is largely confined to the analysis of Foucault's (1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1984, 1988) texts and there is an absence of extended applications of Foucault's theory within educational settings (Ball, 2019; Fejes & Nicoll, 2021). This empirical research aims to fill this gap in the literature.

It reports on a doctoral research study undertaken by an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructor at a private language school in Japan. The study employs Foucauldian inquiry as the research approach, focusing on the interpretation and analysis of textual and context artifacts and interviews collected in the institution (Grimaldi, 2020; Woermann, 2012). Specifically, the research investigates the power-effects in the language, practices and discourse of classroom observation. It is hoped that these case studies will provide illustrative examples of the conceptual tools offered by Foucault's epistemology in understanding the activities and functioning of power at educational institutions and agencies (Muharemovic, 2017; Popkewitz & Brennan, 2017).

Application of Foucault's Theory in Educational Settings.

A narrative of the application of Foucault's (1980) theory on discourse and power will be presented here to illustrate the transformative discourses of instructional leadership in education. This part will start with research questions and a description of the site and participants. Then, data collection methods and the implementation will be documented. After this, to discover unthought aspects in disciplinary educational discourses, certain narratives will be analysed to provide a refreshed perspective on instructional leadership and critical performative leadership in educational research, practice, and policy. Finally, some conclusions will be drawn with limitations noted.

A French philosopher Foucault (1979) theorised how individuals become subjects by discourse. Discourses are ways of constituting knowledge, social practices, forms of subjectivity, and power relations. As a technical term, a discourse denotes a unit of social meaning (Jones & Brown, 2001). More broadly, discourse refers to the languages through which social reality is constructed. The analytical focus is always upon social aspects of language use, such as how meanings and social identities are produced, how certain meanings or idioms become naturalized, and how such processes are related to power and ideology (Muharemovic, 2017; Pitsoe & Letseka, 2013). Mobile practices are outcomes of distinct regimes of practices. In other words, when a practice moves into a new context, it will evolve due to changes to the social, political, and discursive projects underpinning the new context (Woermann, 2012; Gaventa, 2003).

Challenges and Critiques in Applying Foucault's Theory to Instructional Leadership.

There are many challenges and critiques on applying Foucault to the study of instructional leadership. There are concerns that applying discourse as a technique can lead to fruitless claims when the understanding of the educational leadership context is limited (Muharemovic, 2017; Anderson & Mungal, 2015; MacKinnon, 2018). This criticism is especially valid when applied to Asian educational settings which tend to be heavily influenced by specific discourses. For example, in countries where African philosophical and ethical traditions and Confucianism[4] are deep-seated in cultural tradition, the discourse of benevolence and morality can complicate the use of Foucault as a discourse of socialist political power is tightly integrated with that of the personal virtue (Bech Dyrberg & Triantafillou, 2019; Gillies, 2013; Wilkinson et al., 2018). This sophisticated context may overburden the mechanism of discourse and subjectivity. Nonetheless, upon practical consideration, educational leadership as a research phenomenon is firstly a current issue of global education reform in African and Asian educational contexts. Various models of educational leadership have emerged and been comprehensibly adapted to culturally specific contingency for implementation. It is only natural for scholars to question about the cultural compatibility and thus the bias of such a globally constructed phenomenon in the local Asian context (Niesche & Haase, 2012; Niesche & Keddie, 2016).

Moreover, when the materialization of the global discourse of instructional leadership is scrutinized in a precise African and Asian context, it does not lose the opportunity to capture how the agency of the subject is reconceptualized by it, and thus giving voice to those beyond the normalized binarism of either liberatory or totalitarian (Sackney et al., 1999; Thomson et al., 2013). Such concerns or critiques about its applicability are research opportunities rather than obstacles. There are also concerns regarding the applicability of Foucault in

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[4] Confucianism is a philosophical and ethical system based on the teachings of Confucius, emphasing moral integrity, social harmony, and the importance of familial relationships. It advocates for virtues such as respect, responsibility, and the cultivation of personal character as essential for creating a just and orderly society.

education which largely stems from the need to continually redefine what is to be "Foucauldian" or "Foucauldianism" in academics (Beattie, 2020; Bento, 2011; Morrissey, 2013). Sadly, this notion of "Foucauldian" knowledge as a commodity induces genuine misunderstanding of Foucault's works among educationists (Niesche, 2010; Niesche, 2013).

Concluding remarks

In conclusion, applying Foucault's theories to the study of instructional leadership presents both challenges and opportunities. The critiques highlight the complexity and potential limitations of using discourse as a technique, especially in culturally nuanced settings like those in Africa and Asia where traditional values such as African philosophical and ethical traditions and Confucianism play a significant role. These cultural intricacies can complicate the application of Foucault's ideas, as the intertwining of political power and personal virtue may overburden the mechanisms of discourse and subjectivity. However, these challenges also open avenues for deeper inquiry and understanding. By examining how global discourses of instructional leadership are materialized in specific African and Asian contexts, researchers can gain insights into the reconceptualization of agency and give voice to those beyond the binary perspectives of liberatory or totalitarian frameworks. The need to continually redefine what it means to be "Foucauldian" in educational research underscores the dynamic nature of this field and the importance of avoiding commodification of Foucault's ideas. In conclusion, adopting a Foucauldian perspective on instructional leadership provides a valuable critical lens for moving beyond surface-level understandings of leadership as simply guidance and support. It compels us to examine how discourse and power operate within educational settings, shaping practices, subjectivities, and ultimately, the learning experiences of students. By acknowledging these dynamics, educators and policymakers can work towards fostering more genuine autonomy, psychological safety, and equitable labour practices in future workplaces and educational institutions. This critical engagement is essential for challenging existing power structures and envisioning alternative, more empowering possibilities within education. Ultimately, these critiques should be viewed as opportunities for further research rather than obstacles. They encourage scholars to critically assess the cultural compatibility and biases of globally constructed educational leadership models, fostering a more nuanced and contextually aware understanding of instructional leadership.

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