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Author

BEATTIE, Liana

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Educational leadership: Producing docile bodies? : A Foucauldian perspective on Higher Education

Liana Beattie

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to contribute to a long-standing critical tradition in the educational leadership literature through an analytical examination of the idiosyncrasies of leadership in Higher Education institutions (based on the UK example). It applies a postmodern way of thinking to the educational leadership phenomenon to problematise and challenge the traditional views on the trajectories of power in Higher Education institutions, utilising Foucault's key theoretical units of discipline, governmentality and biopolitics as a toolbox for dissecting the implications of neoliberal ideology on the leadership praxes. Significantly, the paper demonstrates how the engagement with Foucault's three modes of objectification—dividing practices, scientific classification and self-subjection—can expose the ways, in which the roles of educational leaders become reconfigured into economic-rational individuals or subjects, who are compliant with the imposed requisites of the government's neoliberal agendas. The paper concludes that Foucault's theoretical perspectives could

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be used as a methodological template for a deeper critical analysis of leadership practices, equipping academics with additional tools for critiquing the existing boundaries of neoliberalism and intervening in the transformation of the social order by undertaking an investigation into the practices of governmentality, as suggested by Foucault. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)