

Coup D'état in the Panopticon: Social Networking in Education

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Whenever one is dealing with a multiplicity of individuals on whom a task or a particular form of behaviour must be imposed, the Panoptic schema may be used.

'Surveiller et punir', Michel Foucault, 1975

'I do not know how I should communicate with students online, when they write me a private message and call me by my first name. Should I play by their rules on this space? Or, do I need to use the constructs from school?'

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Abstract Contemporary compulsory schooling emerged in the nineteenth century for the needs of an industrial age. Compulsory schooling has always relied on the Panoptic schema described by Michel Foucault. In recent decades, the development of surveillance technologies has made Panoptic schemas in schools even stronger. Information technology and the transition to an information society has significantly undermined schools' power structures. Teachers no longer possess a monopoly on knowledge. Students have learned to escape the teachers' gaze and can lead virtual lives through their own smartphones inside and outside formal educational settings. One form of modern peer-to-peer interaction takes place on social networking websites that give users the option to be 'hidden', 'passive' or 'inactive' if they wish. To examine the influence of social networking on education we rely on the Foucault's Panopticon theory. Whilst the traditional Panoptic regime may be crumbling, the social network phenomenon can transform modern learning environments for productive educational engagement. Foucault's framework does not take into account the social networks phenomenon. Therefore, empirical evidence is required to articulate the nuances of the modern-day Panopticon. In this chapter we use interviews with teachers to illustrate the reflection of Panoptic logics

This article is an output of a research project implemented as part of the Basic Research Program at the National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE).

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and practices onto the social networks in classrooms. We explore the possibility for developing dialogically based and student-led pedagogies through social networking websites.

Introduction

The concept of the Panopticon was developed by Jeremy Bentham (see Bentham and Bowring 1843). The principal notions of the Panopticon are viewed as an (in) visible surveillance system with an absolute, totalitarian, authority over its subjects. This, however, is not merely physical control as the Panopticon embodies the thought of the ‘modernity’ project (Graham and Wood 2003). The Panopticon reflects the *tour de force* of the modernity project, the *dispositif* of the Panopticon (see, Bigo and Tsoukala 2008; and Foucault 1977), and an apparatus designed to manipulate and coerce the subjectivity of the self through forces of [in]security. The Panopticon is “a body that reflects some fabricated God” (Miller and Miller 1987, p. 5). This critique of Bentham is a venomous attack on the metaphysical understanding of the ‘being’ of the self, and how the self ‘comes-into-being’, as this particular metaphysical ‘being’ is understood through the externality to, and in relation with, the external Other (God/Judeo-Christian dogma) (1987).

Expanding on Bentham, Foucault (1977) articulates the displacement and disunity of the Panopticon. The Panopticon is not a single unit or being (1977). The Panopticon is made up of multiple *dispositifs* which constitute the architecture of the Panopticon (1977). Foucault articulates the genealogical regime of Panoptic control through bio-power (Foucault et al. 2007), as a regime of control through a multiplicity of forces upon differing and disunified bodies.

Foucault reminds us that the governmentality of control is not a new phenomenon (1977). His work is important when analysing the performative role of education in respect to ‘new’, ‘disruptive’, pedagogies within the classroom (see Hedberg 2011). Social media-based pedagogies are emerging in different areas of education, in social work pedagogies (Hitchcock and Battista 2013), in higher education (Chamberlin and Lehmann 2011; Elavsky et al. 2011) and, in secondary education (Richardson 2010).

The Panoptic field does not remain static (Foucault 1977). There are ‘new spaces’ and ‘emerging fields’ in education that require deconstructive approaches to uncover deeper meanings, logics and forces (Hedberg 2011). Amidst shifting educational and technological forces the symbiosis of technology and education is becoming more and more intertwined (Madden et al. 2013). Modern students are saturated by technology (whether this is smart phones, computers, laptops) daily and through a number of ways (2013).

Social media and social networking sites have become a performative platform for students to interact and communicate. According to statistics on social

networks, 90% of US teenagers Perrin (2015), 63% of European students from 9- to 16-year olds¹ and 91% of Russian adolescents² use social networking sites. Social networks are full of rules which are produced and reproduced by users, which, in turn, provides a problem for users: the ability of 'joining' groups and sub-communities which facilitates the formation of identity (Erikson 1996), whilst, simultaneously, these processes enable users to 'stay in the shadows' whilst overseeing the activity of others. The relationality of the Panoptic scheme in educational processes and social networks takes an ambivalent role as they could be used contemporaneously to extend and to disturb the status quo. For example, social networks have all the properties of surveillance: an appearance of visibility when the user visits the page (who are his/her friends, what are his/her interests) which could be used for control over the user. In contrast, a consequence of social networking sites is the potentiality of new 'spaces' of dialogue and communication emerging that challenge archaic power structures.

Here it is important to note the discursive and symbolic functions of power and how regimes of power are discursively engendered (Foucault 1971). Building on Mikhail Bakhtin's work on dialogism (1975, 1981) one must pay attention to the social function of language in engendering social structures, meanings (individual and collective) and identities (of the self and others). The utterances contained within language symbolically and discursively index individual, group and socio-cultural identities (Blommaert 2007). As a result, Michael Halliday's functional linguistics (1973, 1993, 1994) offers a framework in understanding the communicative and dialogical edifice of language.

It is within these emerging and developing 'spaces' where new forms of teacher-student relationships and new pedagogies can open new logics and possibilities in education (Wegerif 2006). As a Pedagogy for Liberation Freire and Macedo (1987) articulate a dialogical method for the creation and recreation of resistance contrary to dominant hierarchical structures of power. Importantly, Freire notes the pedagogical importance of teachers in providing a 'liberating' education that would ultimately lead to the 'conscientisation' of students and educators—resulting in societal change (Freire 1970). Shor articulates that the dialogical method is not a method in the traditional sense, but a collaborative learning process, whereby, through language, the student is the radical agent of change, and the teacher is "simultaneously a classroom researcher, a politician, and an artist" (Shor 1987, p. 11). Dialogical pedagogies have been developed whereby dialogical approaches offer a reflexive, inclusive, and participatory (Alexander 2008; Ball and Freedman 2004) dynamic to teacher-student relationships.

¹Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Hasebrink, U., Ólafsson, K., O'Neill, B., Smahel, D., et al. (2014). EU Kids Online: findings, methods, recommendations (deliverable D1.6). EU Kids Online, LSE, London, UK.

²Koroleva, D. O. (2016). Always online: Mobile technology and social media usage by modern teenagers at home and at school. *Вопросы образования*, 1, 205–224.

Context

In this chapter we analyse the Panopticon as a generalised model of functioning and as a way to determine the relations of power in relation to social institutions such as schools (Foucault 1977). We identify the following essential functions of this system: control through the visibility of objects and invisibility of power; the vertical and horizontal communication limit; separation of the individual from the crowd, and, identification—the construction of relationships, identities, and ‘being’. These basic principles of a Panoptic schema will be used to redescribe the organisation of power within educational processes in schools and on social networking sites. As Internet-based social networks were formed much later than Foucault’s philosophy, empirical evidence is required to problematise the uses of social networks in contemporary educational settings. For illustrating the applicability of the selected framework we will use interviews with educators. For this reason 30 semi-structured interviews with middle and high school teachers were chosen as the main instrument. The purpose of the research is to analyse how teachers perceive modern technology in education, in what cases they use in practice, what limitations they see and what their personal attitude to the intervention of modern technologies in the teaching process. In the study we interviewed educators from Russia, USA and the European Union (Italy, Spain and Greece). The sample is not representative of the specific schooling dynamics within these countries; rather, the findings serve as a basis for understanding teaching attitudes towards modern technologies in educational processes. The respondents are mostly teaching in public schools (24 respondents) and a few respondents work in private schools (6 respondents). There is a large variation in the age of the respondents. The average age of the respondents is 35 years. The interviews were conducted by one researcher throughout the year 2014–2015. The questionnaire included 30 questions about teacher attitudes towards the uses of modern technology in education and included questions on applying social networks to educational practices, communication with students and organising school projects on/through the Internet. The questionnaire helped to complement the interviews. The questionnaire aided us in identifying certain criteria such as; which teachers had experience with students in the social networks (commonly through the Facebook platform) and which teachers were strongly opposed to social networking websites. The questionnaire was useful in determining the diagnosticity of teacher attitudes/beliefs as it allowed us to identify potential limits and barriers and how teachers generally understand social networking websites.

Visibility and Invisibility

I told my students: “once you graduate we’ll be friends” ‘Cos: this is my personal website, and my job with you except my personal life and most students understand that. ‘Cos I tell them “would you like me know what you’re doing at home? - No, not at all “So, we’re

gonna keep that life separate.” (Special education teacher at a public school in New York, USA, 2015)

I do not want my students to see pictures of my daily life – of my family and me out of school, I want to be invisible to them. (Russian language teacher at a public school Krasnoyarsk, Russia, 2014).

Students have their mobiles and many, many unpleasant things happen because they can record teachers, I mean, some unpleasant things during the class could be recorded, and then posted on Facebook. (Foreign languages teacher at a public school in Athens, Greece, 2015).

From the interviews one of the key topics with students on Internet-based issues is an unwillingness to be under the spotlight. Whereas, in our study, educators problematise the separation of public and professional life. Teachers noted the force of the Panoptic regime as operations within the classroom usually remain closed to inquisitive eyes. Educators are seemingly afraid to be seen by students on ‘new’ or ‘uncontrolled territories’ thus finding themselves in the role of a prisoner. The Panoptic system is built so that the guard himself always remains invisible from the prisoner: “Visibility is a trap” (Foucault 2008, p. 5).

But is it always a teacher having supervisor role and never the other way around?

Today, surveillance in schools has grown exponentially. Schools have installed metal detectors at the entrance, smoke detectors, alarm systems, security cameras and in some instances armed guards. It is usually forbidden to gain access to a school without an appointment. Students wear uniforms, have a student ID cards or some form of an electronic card. Teachers also use electronic badges. Parents have online access to assessment results, timetables and have access to information about student attendance. Thus, students are under permanent control. Invisible to the student, their guardian, whether a teacher, a security guard, a parent or the police, is watching their every movement. In every modern school, year by year, security measures have intensified (see Cheurprakobkit and Bartsch 2005; Gabbard and Ross 2008; Hylton and Hylton 1996). Schools use a variety of practices and procedures intended to promote safety. ‘Safety’ is explained by the importance of preserving the health and life of students and staff and includes parents, teachers and the wider society. Though there are some fundamental questions here: Safety for whom? Safety for/against what? Who requires securing against the other? We argue, similar to Leonardo and Porter (2010) who discuss discourses of ‘safety’ amidst discourses on race, that the logics of ‘safety’ encourage discourses of ‘risk’ to subjugate particular subjects—for example, school students.

Simultaneously, teachers’ activities are also controlled by the hierarchical power of a head teacher, senior leadership teams, parents and school administration staff. If a conflict situation arises between a student and a teacher, and if CCTV is operating the video captures and documents the incident. In this sense, the presence of surveillance is visible as the camera[s] loom over the subjects. Moreover, the teacher’s day is filled with electronic forms of assessment, and their daily duties include submitting reports and monitoring of the students. Thus, in the school system we have an omnipotent power/knowledge praxis, in this sense we

(re)encounter Miller and Miller's (1987) Panoptic 'God', who is simultaneously everywhere and nowhere.

Arguably, social networks provide the same glass affect: whereby a particular translucent image of a self is visible to all. Though, we argue, the translucent image does not contain or reveal all of the subjectivities of the self. Nonetheless, published information is available on social network user pages. This information contains data on age and gender, biographical information, photos and other media, contacts, the last moment of log in, and places in which the user checked in. Social platforms have privacy settings: any user can to block (restrict) access to his/her page, choose for whom the post will be available to and have the ability to hide certain information from other public users. Students can choose what to demonstrate to the 'public' or a specific person. The individual user has a 'private' space, has the ability to hide, but what is more important, the user also has the ability to 'lurk' in the background.

The site of the social network includes teachers and is not merely confined to student activity. Liu (2007) argues that social networking site profiles contain socio-economic and aesthetical influences from society in the construction of the 'online self'. Thus, we argue teachers (like any other type of user), who use social networking sites, construct their 'online self' in relation to and through a dialogue with the social strata (see Harrison and Thomas 2009, on the role of language learning and identity formation). Therefore, user-generated content follows certain rules and regulations existing through the activities of other users. The amount of information a user wishes to publicise, the types of information and the specific preferences are all mediated through this 'networked site'. 'The networked self' within the 'networked site' has a performative function on group identity, collective self-esteem and behavioural characteristics (Barker 2009). The effects of online identity construction are complex and difficult to determine. It is important to note the heightened scholarly interest in narcissism and social networking activity (see, Buffardi and Campbell 2008; Papacharissi 2010) whereby egotist self-promotion and self-vanity trace the multiple identities of the self. In this regard, the question of identity subordination is raised: If teachers choose to use a social networking site to engage with students with regard to teaching content, learning materials and the like, the teacher-student relationship may grow wider due to [in]securities within the self. This may be due to 'the fear of the unknown', an unwillingness to change pedagogical styles or an unwillingness to accentuate and re-accentuate dialogical (Freire 2000) types of communication between teachers and students.

The teacher-student relationship has *guards and prisoners in both directions*—everyone watches over everyone else. Technically and logistically it is possible to set privacy settings (the admission of other users to your page) to monitor and control who has access to a teacher's personal site. A naïve response to this point would be that it is at the user's discretion what information they wish to share or not with public users. Though, the fact is this space (social networking sites) is mediated internally (such as the social construction of identity within social networks) and externally (through the use of marketing, advertisements, and data generated to the specific interests of the user). Social networking sites ultimately

blur the distinction of private versus public information, as well as, private and public relationships. These distinctions are rendered obsolete. The Panoptic scheme in this territory does not work within nor through binary forms of opposition.

What happens if one fine day the prisoner leaning against the glass wall sees the Panoptic scene in its purest form? This generates unknown fears already in someone who until this moment has always been in the tower.

Identification

I did some project with my students on the Facebook. I can't say that it was very successful project. 'Cos some of them participated, some didn't. And I didn't give them marks for this 'cos it wasn't possible to understand what was their personal involvement. (Science teacher at a private school in Rome, Italy, 2015).

Not all of my students have added me as a friend, I could not find all of my students in the social network Vkontakte. Either they are registered on some other site, or they are under an assumed name. (High school teacher at a public school in Moscow, Russia. 2014).

The analysis of the interviews we conducted shows that the issue of identification is important for teachers when using new spaces of communication. Teachers say they do not know who are they dealing with in cyberspace: Who is behind an invented name or avatar? How can they identify a student? Is it an individual piece of work or group work? "The crowd, a compact mass, a locus of multiple exchanges, individualities merging together, a collective effect, is abolished and replaced by a collection of separated individualities" (Foucault 2008, p. 6). Due to the fixed allocation scheme of many 'solo performances', the guard can always identify the prisoner.

Tasks of isolation and segregation for unambiguous identification can be described through the militarisation of the classroom (Hirschfield 2008; Pane and Rocco 2014). The forces of militarisation within schools include physical measures (for example; removing students from schools, disciplinarian approaches to isolating and segregating students, monitoring or removing underperforming students or disruptive students) instrumental measures (reports, assessments) and behavioural/relational ways such as the way[s] a teacher speaks to and interacts with a student. All of these factors can result in students feeling isolated or segregated from their peers. The (usual) single-cell classroom layout with desks facing the front of the room is how most students come-into-being with their relational superiors (teachers). Most classrooms have this archaic and hierarchical structure of intimidation. In some schools it is a common practice when at the beginning of the lesson a conducted roll call characterises the start of the lesson whereby individual students raise their hand to identify themselves. There are also a number of bureaucratic measures to create generalisations and assumptions about students, which include class monitor reports about individual attendance and attainment. The school administration has a personal file on every pupil including information about his/her behaviour, grade estimates, family, and progress. School assessment

procedures are conducted under special arrangements to prevent cheating and to help students achieve ‘objective’ examination results. In all school procedures the student is separated from the class and responds one-on-one with the system. Information about the objects is obtained usually through standardised examinations (see, Kohn 2000; Ricci 2004 for the academic cases against standardised testing).

We argue, such controlling measures foster a pedagogy of fear and violence (Giroux 1996, 2008; Leonardo and Porter 2010) prohibiting ‘youth voice[s]’ within the classroom as this ‘system’ constrains and curtails students in a number of ways (physically, psychologically, bureaucratically and through the forms of assessment standardisation). We identify pedagogies of fear as a Panoptic system of control within schools.

Social networks not only enable one to design one’s ‘own’ profile whereby the user can decide what information the page will contain, but also gives an opportunity of user identity ‘spoofing’ and the creation of alter ego[s]. If a student wants to hide under a false name they are permitted to do so and they can do this without falling out of communication with classmates and friends. Parents or teachers may also choose to register under an alter ego to differentiate their ‘online self’ amidst the many Other’s-within-the-self (Bakhtin 1981).

Thus, the full identification of the self within the social network is not available nor it is required for each contact. Mutual trust is required by all participants. Problems may arise from breaches of this trust, such as; it is difficult for a teacher to assess an individual student’s work, since [s]he does not know who produced a particular piece of work. If the student’s identity is ‘known’ group assessments and collaborative projects can be assessed through social networking sites. Social networks and teacher pedagogies can be combined as a universal platform for ascertaining meta-subject competencies and the implementation of student knowledge. We suggest that on this new territory of social networks the supervisor function itself is being questioned. The guard sees only shadows and can only guess who they really are.

Communication

I have to get in touch with students unnecessarily. I’m afraid to see them discuss some of the teachers, or even myself. I do not know how to react on it. I don’t know whether to intervene or remain a mute witness, my attitude towards them will change when I move into the school life. (Literature teacher at a public school in Krasnoyarsk, Russia. 2014).

I do not know how I should communicate with students online, when they write me a private message and call me by my first name.³ Should I play by their rules on this space?

³Every Russian has three names: a first name, a patronymic (the father’s first name), and a surname. The common respectful treatment to the teacher is by name and patronymic.

Or, do I need to use the constructs from school? (Geography teacher at a public school in Moscow, Russia, 2014).

Among issues relating to communication in social networks, with the reliance on interviews we can highlight several categories:

- Use of unknown/unclear terms for teachers, such as emoticons, 'likes' and different tones of the conversation (more informal). Teachers say they do not know how to react to this 'language' which is used in the social network;
- A willingness to communicate outside the classroom. This saves time and constructs distance between teachers and students;
- The fear of saying something 'wrong'. The fear of being misunderstood and recorded in the space of the social network.

The Panopticon functions through discursive and symbolic apparatuses. For example, as children enter the classroom they are positioned in a class of single or double desks designed to isolate them from each other. This is another example of the comprehensive Panoptic schemas within schools. Within the Panopticon, the prisoner is the subject of communication. In many ways, we see this reflection in school practices: it is impossible and impracticable to say that a teacher cannot communicate with students. But what are the forms and types of communication?

Michael Halliday's functional linguistics (1973, 1993, 1994) offers a sociolinguistic model to offer a site of analysis. Halliday's functional linguistics focuses on the relationship between the linguistic structure and the social structure. Here, through the metafunctions of language, linguistic meaning is expressed in relation to social context and differing environments (1973). Halliday argues within the context is where the text comes alive, it is within the context—in our analysis, within schools and within social network sites, it is these locations where the student "takes over the code" (Angermüller et al. 2014, p. 268). As the students begin to code (linguistically) for themselves this socialisation process is how students begin to encounter, understand and interpret meanings. We argue, it is in the site of the school and, now, the site of the social network where these processes of socialisation come-into-being.

Here, it is important to note the symbolic and discursive function of power (Foucault 1971). As Norman Fairclough (2001, 2013) demonstrates, power exists and acts through grammatical and linguistic structures. Forces of power are located within language and are performed through communicative acts (Fairclough 2013). Therefore, relationships such as student and teacher relations are constituted by and through the power/knowledge praxis (2013).

Language and power play an important role in constituting relationships (Foucault 1971) Here the power/knowledge praxis (Foucault 1980) can be a useful tool in illustrating Panoptic forces within schools. For example, 'data' that is produced from these relations can act as a force of control over students. With regard to mental and physical health in many Russian schools, for example, it is mandatory for students to take a drugs test. The school system constantly monitors

and receives information about the subjects of exposure. The information about the system (the ‘objective data’) reinforces and reproduces the systems of control.

Social networks have their own language-based ‘rules’. It is impossible to bring the ‘rules’ from school into the social network. But it depends on how one views these complexities. We argue that social networked-based pedagogies can restructure the relationship between students and teachers, and have an impact upon student socialisation in building new relationships inside and outside the classroom. Arguably then, the prisoner not only sees the warden, but communicates with the warden in their own language.

Coup D’etat: Resisting the Panopticon

Perhaps the key to the coup and regime change in the Panopticon is precisely communication in social networks. Firstly, there is a significant change in the student–teacher social role. Teachers lose their socio-historical iconography of being ‘enforcers’ of education rather than facilitating learning in a dialogical environment. In social networks teachers can be seen as one of the users. Social networks can transform relationships through offering different platforms for communication. For example, many scholars have noted the role social networks play in political regime change (Attia et al. 2011), engaging young adults in politics (Baumgartner and Morris 2009) and how social networking sites can have an impact in changing political attitudes and behaviour (Zhang et al. 2010). Moreover, social networking sites develop horizontal connections between the agents of change—teachers and students. In comparison with the school lesson it is impossible to control any of the agents at one specific moment. Social network users produce a flow of events and messages which can pedagogically open up educational practices to new methods and styles whereby one can move beyond the standard schema of ‘questions and answers’. Another feature of such horizontal communication among teachers and students is a mixture of all of their interests and levels of communication. In the ‘physical’ school space students can switch between peer-to-peer communication and student–teacher communication enabling possible debates and discussions of different levels, rather, than having segregated language ‘in the peer-to-peer network’ and language ‘to speak to teachers’. Social network pedagogies can facilitate ways to break historically institutionalised boundaries between students and teachers.

Social network-based pedagogies can enable the possibility to create new and temporary identities. These possibilities can be liberating, as one can feel like one has a greater expression of how the identities within the self are represented. One example is dogmatic stereotypes about young people whereby users have the ability to reconstruct these meanings, identifications and representations. Such forces will extend beyond the realms of the ‘virtual’ spaces and into other social spaces. Moreover, social network-based pedagogies enable the fluid transition from one social space to another. For teachers, social network-based pedagogies can be used

to make a transaction from formal to informal learning. In addition, students can use this fluidity to rupture new possibilities, as users can organise and acquire stronger collective voices through dialogical interactions and communication. There might, however, be a number of practical difficulties in implementing dialogic social network pedagogies. For example, it may be unclear how to assess student work within the network. Further critical scholarly work will be required to understand the role of social networking pedagogies in compulsory education.

Conclusion

In articulating the results from our data collection we built our interpretation based upon the premise of three areas of analysis: visibility and invisibility, identification, and communication. The theoretical and linguistic approaches we have discussed enable one to locate historical trends of power evolution. Modern learning environments, such as those connected to social networks, are ambivalent. They both contain a danger of increased surveillance and diminished freedom, and yet also offer a possibility of transforming the Panoptic schema into a dialogic social network pedagogy.

We cannot foresee dialogic social network pedagogies through the current Panoptic structures in schools. Panoptic structures in compulsory education (logical structures, pedagogical practices, schooling structures, and practices) are too oppressive to reform, so the only solution we see is a coup d'état from within the Panopticon. Educators must learn to convert the student resistance to the Panoptic schemas into educationally worthwhile experiences. To put it simply, social networks are still a space largely unmediated by Panoptic logics. To free students from institutional subjugation alternative pedagogies must be sought. We argue that social networking pedagogies can offer an alternative space to construct new teaching methods and learning relationships. Thus, the spaces of modern learning environments must be co-designed and co-constructed through teacher–student collaboration.

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