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What Defines a Future Postmodern Education?

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Résumé de l'article

As early as the 1990s, educationists, and even some governmental policy makers in China, advocated suzhi (quality) educational reform, aiming to develop creative individuals, and to revamp the exam-oriented and authoritarian education system. However, this suzhi educational reform was not entirely successful, with education in China becoming a hybrid of suzhi coupled with the much-maligned authoritarian and exam-oriented system. I believe that students' quotidian life at school is governed by a disciplinary power that imposes a hidden curriculum. This essay uses Foucault's major theories as a conceptualizing framework by examining the control of time, space, and body etc. as technologies of power at Chinese primary and secondary schools. The study concludes by depicting a postmodern future for Chinese students in which they flourish with creativity and innovation.

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Abstract

As early as the 1990s, educationists, and even some governmental policy makers in China, advocated suzhi (quality) educational reform, aiming to develop creative individuals, and to revamp the exam-oriented and authoritarian education system. However, this suzhi educational reform was not entirely successful, with education in China becoming a hybrid of suzhi coupled with the much-maligned authoritarian and exam-oriented system. I believe that students' quotidian life at school is governed by a disciplinary power that imposes a hidden curriculum. This essay uses Foucault's major theories as a conceptualizing framework by examining the control of time, space, and body etc. as technologies of power at Chinese primary and secondary schools. The study concludes by depicting a postmodern future for Chinese students in which they flourish with creativity and innovation.

Introduction

In 2019, China's central government introduced an ambitious national blueprint called "China's Education Modernization 2035 Plan," which sought to make the country a world-leading educational powerhouse within about 15 years (China Daily, 25th February 2019). Specifically, the plan addressed the importance of developing a balanced compulsory education, in the form of primary and secondary school education, and the need to nurture first-class talent with strong innovative capabilities (China Daily, 25th February 2019). As early as the 1990s, educationists, and even some governmental policy makers in China, advocated *suzhi* (quality) educational reform, aiming to develop creative individuals, and to revamp the exam-oriented and authoritarian public foundation education system (Wu, 2016). However, this *suzhi* educational reform was not entirely successful, and education in China became a hybrid of *suzhi* together with the much-maligned authoritarian and exam-oriented system (Wu, 2016). Even now, many Chinese often make comments, such as, "the survivors of the *gaokao* [College Entrance examination] tend to have high scores but low competence" (Gu, Ma & Teng, 2017a, p. 59), as a criticism of the examination-oriented education system, to convey a negative view of the unbalanced development of students.

As an insider who underwent all the stages of China's public foundation education, I believe that students' quotidian life at school formulates a disciplinary power subjected hidden curriculum, which may counteract any reform intended to cultivate students' creativity and innovation. This essay begins by introducing Foucault's major theories as the conceptualizing framework before examining several features as technologies of power at Chinese primary and secondary schools: the control of time, space, and body, Panopticon, hierarchical observations, normalizing judgment, and the field of documentation. I chose Foucault's philosophy as the theoretical lens because there are not many studies that explicitly use Foucault's discipline theory to examine students' quotidian life at Chinese schools; therefore, it is also a rationale of this study to examine the suitability of using Foucault's theory to explain education in China.

Finally, I will depict a postmodern future for Chinese students in which they really flourish with creativity and innovation. However, according to Usher and Edwards (1994), education is an area being least and reluctantly affected by postmodernity. It is because but is not limited to that the present-day education, having been conceptualized based on certain modernism premises such as enlightenment ideals (Usher & Edwards, 1994). However, as the modernism influenced education technologies like schools and curricula have also been used for technical-rational and functional purposes, e.g., providing human power for industrial manufacturing (Bowels & Gintis, 1976), the side effects of modernism in present day education have emerged. It has led to distracting the real aim of education as a form of pure communication (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2000), and as the realization of the potential of each student (Rogers, 1980). Therefore, a future postmodern education may work both as a visionary hope and a possible alternative.

Theoretical Framework

Foucauldian Disciplinary Power

Foucault believed that his work involved understanding how individuals are subjectified by technologies of power (Usher & Edwards, 1994) and how individuals turn themselves into subjects through self-governance (Foucault, 1981; 1982a). In his work, Foucault (1973e) claimed

that power involves a warlike relationship, and can take the forms of both momentary and constant confrontations between individuals, resulting in some individuals attaining the upper hand, where power becomes a coercive form of exertion over others.

Before the 17th century, centralized royal power reined over society in Europe, often demonstrated in the form of public spectacles of punishing criminals (Foucault, 1995). By the 18th and 19th century, royal power was gradually replaced by power held by the capitalist industrial production system (Foucault, 1973h). Foucault (1990) depicted such power as "biopower," which was a series of technologies to ensure there was enough human power for large-scale manufacturing. From a macro perspective, biopower is deeply entrenched in daily life in the form of administering the population, and from a micro perspective, it is to produce disciplined, docile and useful individuals who are suitable for carrying out tasks in industrial factories. The micro perspective of the biopower – the disciplined power – is the focus of this essay.

Since the nature of power views upper-handed individuals as exerting coercion over the other (Foucault, 1973e), the 19th century witnessed the bourgeois class taking overall control of the working class (Foucault, 1973d). Because the wealth of the bourgeois was embodied in factories, machines, and other manufacturing resources, it risked being appropriated by the workers who maintained and used the materials concerned (Foucault, 1973e). Moreover, above all other bourgeois' resources, the workers' bodies and time are the main importance in an industrial society, where the bourgeois purchase their workers' time, during which the workers' bodies are effectively used and transferred into productivity (Foucault, 1973f; 1973h). Therefore, the wealth of the bourgeois, in the form of workers' bodies and time, can be safeguarded only when irregularities such as idleness, absence, debauchery, revelry, and other forms of refusal to employ the body in production, are prevented (Foucault, 1973f; 1973h).

In this vein, certain disciplinary methods were used to replace corporal punishment (Foucault, 1995), and the latter were usually commanded by a single centralized power. The disciplinary methods have a greater applicability for economic efficiency and "elegance" (Foucault, 1995). The implementation of disciplinary methods is now decentralized from a single power like the royalty to the institutions of sequestration that are the "apparatuses of production," such as factories, and institutions responsible for the "transmission of knowledge, and suppression," such as schools, hospitals, and prisons (Foucault, 1973g, p. 208), to which civilians are attached, with their time and subject to production (Foucault, 1973g). Furthermore, within these institutions of sequestration, individuals and their bodies are trained to be useful and docile only for the purpose of industrial production (Foucault, 1995); certain normalization standards are nurtured among individuals via discourse building and rigid supervision, in order to forge the form of society preferred by production (Foucault, 1973g).

Power Knowledge and Discourse

The power behind the exercise of either corporal penalties or discipline tactics remains invisible to most people because authoritative, rational, and scientific knowledge is produced and legitimized by the tactics concerned (Foucault, 1973a). As Foucault (1973b) explained, since the 18th century, knowledge of the psychopathology of delinquency, and the sociology of the criminal, has defined crime as a danger to society, and criminals as the enemies of society, which therefore legitimizes the exercise of penalties against them. In other words, this knowledge transfers the

responsibility of exercising penalties from the power struggles to a functionalist social reaction to delinquency, which thereby conceals the power-nature of the penalties from the public (Foucault, 1973a). The birth of criminology also pushes people to see the penalties imposed on criminals as a type of progress, i.e., from being uncivil to being rational; however, as Foucault (1973i) revealed elsewhere in *The Birth of the Clinic*, the shift from traditional medical therapy to modern medicine was not an evolution, but an epistemic shift of visions of diseases or the changes of the discourse of diseases. In this way, the birth of criminology also brings a similar discourse shift, making people see it as an evolution of knowledge.

In another example, Foucault (1973a, p. 3) claimed that "mad" people in nature are part of a social minority group "who fall outside the circuits of production or consumption," and labelled people deviant or abnormal in the name of rationality and scientific knowledge, for the purpose of exclusion. Thus, "mad" people are confined and controlled in psychiatric hospitals by the power of doctors, which the public perceives to be acceptable, as doctors are regarded as knowledge authorities (Foucault, 1973a).

Nevertheless, Foucault (1995) claimed that there is a long-held misunderstanding that knowledge can only exist and develop when power is not an influencing force; rather, power produces, encourages, utilizes, and determines the form and content of knowledge. He proposed the term "power-knowledge" to signify the co-existing relationship between the two (Foucault, 1995). Thus, knowledge of pedagogy becomes a technology of power, and knowledge authorities, such as educationalists replace executioners as power representatives (Foucault, 1995). In order to make power-knowledge possible, it is necessary to construct a particular discourse (Usher & Edwards, 1994). As Buchanan (2018, p. 140) argued, "[to] be able to say someone is 'mad' for instance requires that madness exist as a concept and that the rules for its use are established." In this sense, the discourse formation is a truth-making process that determines the possibilities and principles of knowledge of what is legitimate and what is not, which Ball (1990, p. 17) defined as follows:

> Discourses are … about what can be said, and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where and with what authority. Discourses embody meaning and social relationships, they constitute both subjectivity and power relations… Thus, discourses construct certain possibilities for thought. They order and combine words in particular ways and exclude or displace other combinations.

In practice, in order to justify the disciplinary measures employed for the labouring classes, forms of propaganda stigmatizing these individuals were adopted, (Foucault, 1973e). For instance, many texts were formed that workers are nomadic, improvident and anarchical, and such manners would make them waste their bourgeois employers' time as a form of wealth (1973f).

The formation of such discourse creates knowledge-power, and judiciary and pedagogical discipline for the labouring class is thereby deemed to be necessary. Furthermore, such discourse creates normalization standards in sequestration institutions, such as schools, which seek to interfere in aspects of their students' daily life that are unrelated to their study, for example, strictly prohibiting and even monitoring homosexuality (Foucault, 1973g). According to Foucault (1973g), such forms of discipline in schools seek to diffuse the normalization of such behavior in individuals' social lives by expressing it within the school discourse, "[presenting] a fictive image of society the function of which is to give individuals both a certain conception of the society in

which they live and a certain model for their future behavior [in the society in which they will live].” In other words, sequestration institutions seek to successfully fabricate society by shaping every individual’s habits, as through these habits, every individual is connected as a social contract, upon which social norms and ethics are established (Foucault, 1973h).

Docility-Utility and Discipline Techniques

According to Foucault (1995), discipline is a technology that imposes a meticulous docility-utility power relationship within the body to make the body useful by rendering it obedient, and vice versa. Discipline technology involves the control of time, space, and body, and architectural and hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment, and the field of documentation.

Control of time. Industrial manufacturing requires a workforce that is able to constantly, vigorously, and intensively participate in production, and any irregularity in time, such as absence, lateness, laziness, absent-mindedness caused by festivities, and debauchery that causes illness, which can result in a reduction in productivity (Foucault, 1973f). However, the natural inclination of humans is not to spend their time engaged in labour, but in “pleasure, discontinuity, festivity, rest, need, moments, chance, violence, and so on” (Foucault, 1973h, p. 232). In order to transfer the native power of humans into the labour force, by representing the working class within the discourse as morally inadequate and habitually lazy, the bourgeois thereby sequestrates the workers’ time via institutions, even when the workers are young (Foucault, 1973g). Within these sequestration institutions, such as kindergartens, schools, and factories, intensive schedules are implemented to keep individuals busily occupied in production, disciplinary activities, or predesigned public entertainment (Foucault, 1973g). Similarly, the individual workers’ time is monopolized by, and synchronized with, production mechanism. Meanwhile, the discourse within the institutions also subjectifies individuals, seeking to persuade them that wasting time is morally offensive and dishonest. In this way, rigid time control seeks “to teach speed as a virtue,” which is particularly believed to be beneficial for children at school as a process of learning (Foucault, 1995, p. 154).

Control of space. In order to prevent individuals exhibiting nomadism in production, the bourgeois seek to employ space distribution. In this regard, Foucault (1995) mentioned places, cells, and ranks as forms of space distribution that enable the effective time control, and supervision of individuals. In terms of making “places,” Foucault (1995) employed the example of Louis-le-Grand, the model school, and the Chaussade ironwork factory, which is a grand, populous, exclusive, and closed-door institution that functions as a place of confinement for the restless individuals who work there, requiring them to assemble under the same roof for ease of supervision. Such place distributions also incorporate a rigid timetable that makes the control of time possible. To illustrate this, Foucault (1995) provided an example of a factory that only opened its gate when the bell signaling the resumption of work rang, and prohibited the entry of any individual who was more than 15 minutes late. Within this grand and exclusive place, individuals were separated into large working “cells,” thereby distributing them in an orderly manner, and exposing them directly to the supervisors, who were able to observe and judge any absence, disturbance to co-workers, diffusion, or “vagabondage” (Foucault, 1995). “Ranks” are also known as “serial space,” due to the fact that they mobilize the individual cells according to their monthly or weekly performance in certain tasks or examinations; Foucault (1995, p.147) referred to this as “one of the great technical mutations of elementary education.” In schools, by employing this

approach, teachers are able to distinguish between their students by simply referring to their cell position, and through such categorization, those who perform well can be separated from those who do not (1995). Through such architectural, functional, and hierarchical space distribution, discipline produces "*tableax vivants*" (living tables) that transform restless individuals into "ordered multiplicities" (1995, p. 148).

Control of body. Exercise is a technology that employs control of the body, and it is a categorical, repetitive, and graduated task imposed on an individual's body to shape it into a terminal state (Foucault, 1995). Exercise can be seen as an extension and specification of time control, as it regulates the relationship between time, bodies, and energy in an individual according to their ultimate utility (Foucault, 1995). According to Foucault (Foucault, 1995), exercise includes four elements: time segmentation, gradual training from simplicity to complexity, examination, and further tailor-made training. Time segmentation divides a complete time slot into consecutive or parallel sections that conclude at a specific time, with each section intended for the practice of one subtle issue, for instance, the movement of a soldier in a military college (Foucault, 1995).

According to Foucault (Foucault, 1995), the gradual training from simplicity to complexity is an analytical succession of the divided segments. He exemplified the seven levels of learning to read in the context of the 18th century, during which a student who could only read letters was at level one; those who had learned how to spell were at level two, with each level gradually progressing to those who had learned how to write manuscripts at level seven. Such a learning progression is appropriate for every individual, regardless of their abilities, as they are situated within a level that is suitable for them. Next, and most importantly, each section of learning concludes with an examination to determine whether the training concerned achieved the expected results for all concerned (Foucault, 1995). Such examinations are a feature throughout schooling, and schools are therefore "a sort of apparatus of uninterrupted examination" (Foucault, 1995, p. 186). Due to these frequent examinations in school, students are always in the position of being monitored, judged, and recorded, and are therefore subjectified by a pedagogical discourse, which is why examinations are considered to be a ceremony of objection, rendering individuals as bodies of docility of the disciplinary power (Foucault, 1995). The final stage in the process is further tailor-made training, which is viewed as a follow-up to the exams that offer specific, customized training for the individuals concerned (Foucault, 1995).

Architectural observation. Foucault (1995) emphasized that the mechanism of observation must be presupposed in order to coerce those technologies of discipline. He mainly exemplified two kinds of observation: through the cooperation of light and space in architectures and through people with hierarchical positions (Foucault, 1995). The best example of the former raised by Foucault (1995) is the Bentham-invented, Panopticon, whose exterior shape is similar to a colosseum with divided cells built along the prison wall and a tower at the center of the square. The tower is punctuated with wide windows, through which the guard(s) can see the details in every cell (Foucault, 1995). Foucault (1995) claimed that the cells are identical to cages with light shed from the exterior into the interior windows, formulating a backlighting effect helping people in the tower to easily visualize the activities in each cell. On the contrary, inmates in the cells could not see the interiors of the tower as venetian blinds were installed on the tower windows and the interior space was also segmented by zigzag partitions to twist any incoming light that might expose the observers (Foucault, 1995). Therefore, "the inmates must never know whether he is

being looked at any moment; that he must be sure that he may always be so" (Foucault, 1995, p. 201).

Foucault (1995) reckoned that school buildings are constructed based on a similar concern for observation. For example, students sit in divided classrooms that are distributed along a corridor, and apertures and windows are mounted for constant surveillance; even in dining halls, the inspectors' tables are placed higher than the students for observation (Foucault, 1995). Thus, both the inmates of Panopticon and the students at school are under unverified possible observation all the time resulting in constant vigilance of their behaviour so as not to violate the rules. The outcome finally reaches the development of the disciplinary power in the bodies (Foucault, 1995). As Foucault (1995, p. 172) penetrated the disciplinary function of the architecture, he claimed: "an Architecture that is no longer built simply to be seen… but to permit an internal, articulated and detailed control – to render visible who are inside it… Stones can make people docile and knowable."

Hierarchical observation. Foucault (1995) pointed to the student officers at schools to explain hierarchical observation, which entailed selecting a group of outstanding students as officers to help teachers supervise and record fellow students' absence, absent-minded studying, time wasting, unauthorized chatting, and other types of rule-breaking behaviour. The student officers included those with roles such as, "intendants, observers, monitors, [and] tutors" (Foucault, 1995, p. 175). Their relationships are also hierarchical: lower ranking student officers, such as group tutors, watch over common students, and higher ranking student officers, such as monitors watch over both tutors and common students (Foucault, 1995). Unlike the Panopticon, which enforces an external power onto the individuals, hierarchical observation works as an insider surveillance power growing from and acting within the populace (Foucault, 1995). The birth of it can also be related to the bourgeois' intention to watch over the manufacturing resources in factories to prevent being embezzled by the workers (Foucault, 1995). Therefore, when the power technologies of time, space, and body combine with the external architectural and internal observations, a subtle physics of power is invented, which does not resort to violence, but uses unconscious methods to subjectify individuals into docile bodies (Foucault, 1995).

Normalizing judgment. Accompanying observation, a series of penalty and reward regulations were also necessary, which was named "normalizing judgment" by Foucault (1995). The power sequestration institutions, i.e., schools, factories, or armies, all have their respective micro-penalty regulations, and they normally look like:

> micro-penalt[ies] of time (lateness, absences, interruptions of tasks), of activity (inattention, negligence, lack of zeal), of behaviour (impoliteness, disobedience), of speech (idle chatter, insolence), of the body ('incorrect' attitudes, irregular gestures, lack of cleanliness), of sexuality (impurity, indecency) (Foucault, 1995, p. 178).

Upon any violation of the regulations, the individuals may expect to face a situation that will embarrass and humiliate them, such as "a certain coldness, a certain indifference, a question, a humiliation, a removal from office" (La Salle, 1783, p. 204-5, cited in Foucault, 1995, p. 178). In schools, students who fail to grasp the content of their previous day's lesson are requested to repeat, to stand, or to kneel (Foucault, 1995). The aforementioned micro-penalties are often quantified so any violation results in a lowering of a student's grades, while a good performance

may lead to higher grades; and after some accumulation of grades, the institutions may rank the individuals (Foucault, 1995). From the quantified micro-penalty, every individual may see an accurate judgment of their performance and will receive their tailored penalty (Foucault, 1995). In this way, the normalizing judgment not only differentiates an individual's behaviour, but also distinguishes ones' nature, potentialities, and values (Foucault, 1995).

The field of documentation. The field of documentation can be regarded as a written record of the process and result of observation, examination, and normalizing judgment, which often takes the form of archives or record books. In Foucault's lecture (1973f, Mar, 14th), he said that workers in the 19th century had to present their record books in order to find jobs, and if they wanted to change jobs, they had to retrieve their record books from their previous employer and give them to their new employer. Without their record books, workers could not claim their due wage and would even get arrested for vagrancy. Having possession of their workers' record book, factory owners could keep them if the workers ended the contract early (Foucault, 1973f, Mar, 14th). The owners could also keep all the warnings, penalties, and offences on the workers' record, which accumulated for future employers to see, which also included the workers' job history and wage (Foucault, 1973f, Mar, 14th). In this way, the records made each individual both a writing case and an object of power knowledge (Foucault, 1995). More importantly as a technology of discipline power, presently, the accumulation of penalties in documentation, like those in the record books for the 19th century workers, can give the recorded individual pressure when unable to find a job, thus becoming a subjectified object who is more docile when encountering their employers' discipline.

Docile Bodies in Public Secondary Schools in China: Deconstruction of Certain Quotidian Activities

Daily Timetable

China has a centralised education system, and the state government controls the entire public education system, which means that public primary and secondary schools[1] across the country are generally similar in many aspects (Wu, 2016), including their intensive timetable. An example of this intensive scheduling was provided by Sum (2010, Appendix 2), for Shuiping Primary School. Sum (2010) explained that the students have to wake up at 6am, with only ten minutes to clean up. At 6:10am, they must appear on the sport grounds to do morning exercises for 20 minutes, followed 40 minutes of self-study. Then they have four periods of classes in the morning, and a *guangbo ticao*[2] in between their second and third class. In the afternoon, they have

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[1]The common duration of study in primary schools in China is five or six years, while the duration of study at public secondary schools, as a junior, is four or three years, depending on how long the student was engaged in primary education. In total, the length of study at primary and junior secondary school level should be nine years. After graduation from junior secondary school, those who plan to attend university are required to proceed to senior secondary school, which they attend for three years, in preparation for the "*gaokao*."

[2] *Guangbo ticao*, which translates as radio gymnastic group exercise, has a half-century long history and it is an activity for students from preschool to senior secondary school, required and designed by the Education Bureaus across China (Sum, 2010; Liu and Tobin, 2017). It is often conducted during a class interval in the morning, when the students gather on the school sports grounds to conduct a sequence of body postures with the music

three classes and five minutes of ocular gymnastics[3]. Each class is around 40 minutes long, and there is a ten-minute break between each two. Therefore, apart from breakfast, lunch, and dinner breaks, and a two-hour noon nap, the students' time is fully arranged, one short section after another, in either study or organized exercises until 8:20pm. By then, they should be ready to sleep. At 8:40pm, according to the timetable, all lights should be off.

Gu, Ma and Teng (2017a) cited the example of a timetable of a junior secondary school student, Xiaoyang, who commuted between his home and an typical secondary school (see Appendix 2). Similar to the primary school students in the previous paragraph, Xiaoyang also needed to rise at 6:00am and have breakfast and wash before arriving at school at 7:00am. The student had two classes, from 8:00am to 9:40am, followed by a 20-minute *guangbo ticao*, and a Chinese national flag raising ceremony. The fourth and the fifth classes were from 10:10am to 11:50am, followed by a five-minute ocular gymnastics session. At noon, the student had lunch, followed by an hour-long midday break from 12:30pm to 13:30pm. In the afternoon, there were also four classes, but in Xiaoyang's timetable, he had a class meeting in the first class, and a student society meeting in the fourth class. China has a long tradition of class meetings that originated in The Rule on Moral Education Work in Primary and Secondary School, stipulated by the National Education Committee in 1998, requiring all schools to guarantee time for class meetings, school meetings, and meetings of the communist youth league (Gu, Ma and Teng, 2017a). According to Gu, Ma and Teng (Gu, Ma and Teng, 2017a), Xiaoyang's class meetings, which were led by the head teacher, were often organized every Monday, and concerned issues relating to moral education and class discipline. Student societies are organized by the school once a week, are scheduled in place of an afternoon class, and provide time for students to participate in activities, depending on their interests; in Xiaoyang's student society, he participated in a wood carving group (Gu, Ma and Teng, 2017a).

While the secondary school Xiaoyang attended dismissed its students at 5:30pm, similar to the primary school students in the aforementioned example, the students were required to do homework in the evening. According to his timetable, after arriving home at 6:00pm, Xiaoyang followed a strict schedule of finishing his dinner and having a short break before commencing his homework at 7:30pm. While primary school students average between half an hour and one hour daily on doing their homework, junior secondary school students spend between one-and-a-half and two hours, and senior secondary school students spend between two and three hours daily (Gu, Ma and Teng, 2017a).

As a junior secondary school student, Xiaoyang finished his homework at 9:00pm, and went to bed at 9:30pm, while in another report conducted by Gu, Ma and Teng (2017b), Xiaomeng, a senior secondary school student, rose at 6:00am, and went to sleep at midnight during her three years of secondary school. Her daily schedule was typical of a senior secondary school student, and in the third year of senior secondary school, even the student's Saturdays were occupied with classes (Gu, Ma and Teng, 2017b).

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broadcast over a loudspeaker. According to Sum (2010, p. 2), the sequence, which involves "simple movements such as skipping and raising one's hands, lasts for approximately six minutes."

[3] Ocular gymnastics, or eye muscle relaxation exercise, is a five-minute collective activity conducted by both primary and secondary school students during an interval between two classes.

According to Foucault (1973g), schedules in sequestration institutions, such as schools, are intended to ensure that the individuals attending or working in them are kept busy with production, disciplinary activities, or predesigned public pursuits. As is apparent from the two daily schedule discussed above, regardless of whether the actors are primary or secondary school age, from early morning to as late as midnight, students are fully occupied with school activities in the form of study, whether in class or self-study, in disciplinary activities, such as national flag raising and class meetings, or in forms of entertainment, such as student societies, leaving them with very little time to engage in activities unrelated to schooling. The students are subjectified by the timetable designed by the sequestration institution, and any time spent not studying may be deemed to be wasting time, as was evident in the fact that Xiaomeng chose to return to school to study even on Sunday mornings, her only day off (Gu, Ma and Teng, 2017b).

Classroom Space Distribution

In Chinese public schools, students are organized in groups known as *ban*, which are similar to a cohort of students, or a class, in the English schooling system, although *ban* means that the students not only study the same subject taught by the same teacher, but it also refers to the physical classroom they occupy (Liu and Tobin, 2016). In *ban*, each student has a fixed seat, and they cannot randomly change their seat without permission. According to early researchers in the field, the large number of students in each *ban* was problematic as the average number in each *ban* at the time could be around 50 to 60, and in some places could be as many as 80 (Jin and Cortazzi, 1998). In the two decades since these studies were conducted, the problem of large class sizes has continued in many areas of China, although many education bureaus and schools have sought to address the issue. A recent case reported by both Beijing News (22nd August, 2018) and Hebei News (22nd August, 2018) revealed that in a secondary school in Hebei Province, the number of students in a class had reached 90, despite the target maximum being 70, resulting in an extremely crowded classroom, as shown in Appendix 3. While this may be an extreme case, large class sizes restrict the students' freedom of movement; hence, any unauthorized wandering is unlikely to occur. The teachers stand on a high podium in the classroom, and can also walk around the room, so the students have to follow the teachers' instructions, and will be seen by their teacher if they misbehave. Such strict classroom space distribution, with each student allocated a fixed seat resembles the confined spaces in a factory setting. Foucault (1995) described such a setting as a form of space control technology. In the discourse of schools, the students become subjectivities of their teachers as the classroom authority.

The ranks described by Foucault (1995) as a form of space control technology are also evident in many public secondary school classrooms. Many teachers publish the rankings of their students' overall scores after certain examinations (Gu, Ma and Teng, 2017a), such as the monthly, mid-term, or final examinations. Some teachers then arrange their students' seating according to their scores, with higher-ranking students able to choose to sit near the teaching podium, and those with lower scores left sitting in a far corner of the classroom. Although the majority of the major media outlets currently choose not to report this issue, as an insider of the Chinese education system, I am aware that this phenomenon still occurs, and is also evident in many education bloggers' personal webpages, such as Star Teaching (30th August, 2018). The seating allocation creates a tangible score hierarchy, just like the *tableax vivants* described by Foucault (1995) as a

form of space control technology. This seating position hierarchy subjectifies the students, as their score determines their seating position, and the students have no choice but to accept it.

Examinations

In Chinese public-school education, exams are compulsory, and the most important part of the system. Students face many exams during the first year of primary school, as exemplified by Xiaoyang's experience: "[S]ince his first day at school, he has sat through numerous dictations, weekly and monthly quizzes for each course, as well as mid-term and end-of-term tests year after year" (Gu, Ma and Teng, 2017a, p. 35). While Xiaoyang was at a junior secondary school, he would face even more high-stakes exams once he was at senior secondary school. Alongside the range of exam experiences he underwent at primary and junior secondary school, at senior secondary school, he would encounter a unified examination at the end of year two[4], which is a diagnostic test that assesses whether the students have mastered all the material taught at senior secondary school, along with three mock exams, emulating the *gaokao* style, at the end of each round of review planning[5] (Gu, Ma and Teng, 2017b). The final examination that all senior secondary school graduates are required to sit is the *gaokao*, a national competitive high-stakes examination for entering university. The Chinese regard the *gaokao* highly, not only because of its competitive nature for achieving a university place (Wu, 2016), but also because the *gaokao* score creates different tiers at university which is the starting point of the division of social classes (Luo, Guo and Shi, 2018).

As Foucault (1995) observed, having constant examinations seeks to create docile students in the face of the pedagogical discourse. Indeed, the students become docile, and are subject to their teachers' authority, relying more on their teachers than on themselves. As Xiaomeng noted, "in the end, everyone became numb to any type of exam." Students take examinations for granted, but they know they should "closely follow their teachers and study hard to complete each learning task and not to put all their hope on independent preparation" (Gu, Ma and Teng, 2017b, p. 61).

Guangbo Ticao

It is customary that students in public schools in China participate in *guangbo ticao* during a relatively long class break every morning (Sum, 2010). The idea that conducting *guangbo ticao* is beneficial to students' health is so deeply engrained in the beliefs of both teachers and students that they do not question it. For example, when Liu and Tobin (2017) asked a group of kindergarten students about *guangbo ticao*, the students' responses generally employed the language and the understanding of the discourse giving the following reasons:

It exercises the body.

It is good for the body.

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[4] By year two of senior secondary school, teachers complete all the necessary teaching, leaving year three for students to focus on their *gaokao* preparation.

[5] There are three rounds of *gaokao* review planning in year three of senior secondary school, with each round concluding with a mock examination.

It makes the body healthy.

It makes the body stronger.

It keeps the body from easily getting sick.

It helps fat people lose weight…

We still need to do *guangbo ticao* in elementary school because if you don't exercise for a long time, your body will get weaker and weaker. (Liu and Tobin, 2017, p.20-21)

Clearly, these responses did not originate from the kindergarten students themselves, but rather from the representation of the related order of discourse obtained from sources such as their teachers or media. Indeed, the study conducted by Sum (2010) found that the notion of participating in *guangbo ticao* for the students' own good was repeatedly stressed by the teachers to reinforce their students' habit of exercising every day, without the teachers' supervision. This repetitive activity acts as a kind of self-surveillance of the students' own behaviour, which mimics the effects of the Panopticon as a disciplinary power technology (Foucault, 1995).

However, the disciplinary function of *guangbo ticao*, namely body control, is often hidden from students, as the discourse of guangbo ticao to a large extent only permits its benefits to health to be said. Liu and Tobin (2017, p. 12) summarized the pedagogy of teaching *guangbo ticao* as follows: "from *daowei* to *zhengqi* to *jingshen*." The literal meaning of *daowei* is "to a certain place," denoting conducting a posture accurately, as required in *guangbo ticao*. In order to enable their students to carry out *daowei* correctly, their teachers perfect every movement by showing them demonstration videos, followed by teaching and drilling the students in every movement in succession (Liu & Tobin, 2017). Meanwhile, *zhengqi* denotes the importance of behaving collectively and uniformly, as the students must synchronize the pace of their movements with others so that the entire group affects the exact same posture concurrently.

To achieve this, the students must be aware of their peers beside them (Liu & Tobin, 2017). Finally, *jingshen* denotes conducting an activity with vitality and high spirit; Liu and Tobin (Liu & Tobin, 2017., p. 15-16) claimed that this is also true of *guangbo ticao* to a significant degree as it involves "mov[ing] and carry[ing] the body in ways that are aesthetically pleasing and suggest[s] moral integrity." From a Foucauldian perspective (1995, p. 137), these three stages of *guangbo ticao* exercise can be seen as an infinitesimal power controlling the students' bodies, through which the students' bodies are not seen as a complete biological unity, but rather, they are perceived to utilize the body separately, mechanically, and subtly in "movements, gestures, attitudes, and rapidity." Applying Foucault's (1995) theory, these stages are a form of discipline technology that can work meticulously on the body of an individual, rendering them useful and docile. Thus, *guangbo ticao* is nothing like playing football or jogging or brisk walking, which gives its players freedom to choose their preferred pace and styles.

Face Recognition Technology

Foucault (1995) claimed that the Panopticon symbolized that a society has already developed from being a spectacle to a surveillance, which implies that the Panopticon may not have existed only in the time of the Bentham, but as Foucault (1995, p. 207) predicted: "The

Panopticon schema, without disappearing as such or losing any of its properties, was destined to spread throughout the social body; its vocation was to become a generalized function." Echoing Foucault's prediction, many societies including China nowadays have mounted CCTV in almost every street and alley as well as every school classroom and corridor. The existence of CCTV is seen by Gao (2018) as a simplified version of the Panopticon because as long as CCTV is in operation, no special architectural design is needed to guarantee that the indoor situation is monitored.

However, what amazes this author is that in Chinese secondary schools, the function of CCTV has been upgraded to include facial recognition technology. As reported by Jamal（2018, May, 21st), in a public secondary school, the Hangzhou No. 11 High school, in China, facial recognition technology was launched using CCTVs in every classroom, and it is said that every half minute the camera scans the students' faces to check their attendance and to determine their emotional condition. Hangzhou No.11 calls this system the "Smart Campus," and schools like this are proud of such technology because they symbolize their cutting-edge technology (Gao, 2018). People in a monitoring cabin can observe the students and the teachers at any time, which makes them constantly introspective about their behaviour. Citing a student's reflection from an interview, Jamal records the following（2018,   May, 21st）: "Previously when I had classes that I didn't like very much, I would be lazy and maybe take naps on the desk or flick through other textbooks. But now I don't dare be distracted after the cameras were installed in the classrooms. It's like a pair of mystery eyes are constantly watching me."

The facial recognition technology using the common CCTV system makes sure discipline is automatically respected at the schools. However, students under such omnipresent observation hide their individual characters by exhibiting a façade of themselves; however, as Gao (2018) warned, the killing of an individual character hinders the development of creativity and innovation, which is expected by *suzhi* education.

The FOCUS 1 Head Ring

In 2019, a brain-science-based technology, called the "FOCUS 1 head ring," was introduced into the classrooms of Xiaoshun Village Central Elemental School in Jinhua of Zhejiang province. In their neighboring city, Yiwu, the experiments using such a head ring in the classrooms of primary and secondary schools were also under the way (Yiwu Jiaoyu Zhisheng, 2019, Jun, 27th). The ring was invented by a company named BrainCo, and it is claimed that the ring can catch and analyse the Electroencephalogram to monitor minute changes inside students' brains (Kepuchina, 2019, Nov, 14th). Simply by putting the ring on the heads of students during class or when doing homework, teachers will receive data and monitor if the students are focused, which helps teachers to fine-tune their lessons and quickly get reports on their students after class (Yiwu Jiaoyu Zhisheng, 2019, Jun, 27th). Yi Yiwu Jiaoyu Zhisheng (2019, Jun, 27th) claimed that the head ring data can result in more "accurate teaching" and may also increase students' motivation to study technology. However, what seems terrifying is that the students' internal brain activities are exposed to the control of others, which seems to achieve the effect of discipline to literally take control an individual's soul. In this way, students have to focus their minds to follow the teacher and avoid any distraction. The head ring can be seen as a realistic version of the ring prison similar to facial recognition technology.

Through this biotechnology, the students' personal thinking has become an object of brain science knowledge. Furthermore, the recording and analysis of the personal thinking can also produce data for schools to further discipline students. The ring can be seen as an advanced Panopticon. Although the experiment and use of this memory ring were later suspended by the local education authority due to potential safety concerns and the scientific immaturity of the technology (China Plus，2019，Nov，1ˢᵗ), the rings can still be purchased online. If the product continues to be sold, it is possible that Fukuyama's "tyranny of the majority" will come true：the spread of biotechnological products can maximize the governmentality in society. By using such technology, anyone, including governments, parents, teachers, and schools, can control others' behaviour to accord to their will (Fukuyama, 2002).

The Student Leaders

Almost every public elementary, secondary, and tertiary school in China has groups of student leaders. In line with Foucault (1995), the student leaders take the responsibility to monitor their classmates as part of the hierarchical observation. An example comes from the Chengxi New District School in Ruoqiang County of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, where a student leader of a group named "red scarf"[6] played the role of observation and also normalizing judgment:

> The Red Scarf Supervisory Post … are composed of young pioneers of grades 4 to 6 who are both good in character and academics. They have strong working ability and can actively participate in the daily management of the school and lead by example. The supervisory posts take turns on duty in teams of two, using morning, after lunch breaks and extracurricular activities to 'patrol' the campus every day to inspect and supervise hygiene, discipline, etiquette, and road teams. If they notice bad behavior on campus, they will promptly dissuade and educate offending students … The supervisory post dynamically monitors the campus every day, implements quantitative scoring once a week, and issues 'mobile red flags' to classes with high scores to encourage teachers and students throughout the school to strive for excellence. (my translation)（Ruoqiang County Government Website, 2015，Oct，20ᵗʰ).

Another example is from Zhengdong Primary School affiliated with Henan Experimental School. They uploaded a rule for the student leaders on duty in their website (Zhengdong Primary School, 2012, Mar, 16ᵗʰ, Appendix 4 is an adapted excerpt). According to the regulation, the student leaders should use the standard to monitor students and make a normalizing judgment on students to add or deduct behavior points. In this way, eyes are placed on every classmate both on and off campus, enforcing the possibility of students being corrected or recorded at any time.

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[6] A primary school pupil, age between six to 11, wearing the red scarf is a symbol of being a member of young pioneers of China, who should play a pioneering role among all other students in obeying the rules and offering help to others. The red scarf epitomizes a corner of the national flag of China.

The Student Status File

Similar to the record books of the workers described by Foucault (1973f, Mar, 14th) in the previous paragraphs, a student status file is kept for all Chinese students from the beginning of junior high school. The file follows the student to high school and then to university, including records of graduation exams, and is then added into their career archives for employment and promotion, including applying for social insurance and pension (Gaosanwang，2017， Oct，22nd). This file contains information such as resumes, various school test scores, medical history, comments from teachers, political review reports, and all punishment and reward records (Gaosanwang，2017， Oct，22nd). Individual students cannot hold the file during any school change or job change; instead, it has to be retrieved and transferred directly by and between sequestration institutions such as schools or factories. Therefore, if a student does not perform well during school, negative results in the file will accompany the individual throughout their life and affect their future. In this way, the student-status file like any field of documentation produces detailed and written knowledge of the student. The file presents itself as the final execution of all the disciplinary power techniques. Because of its existence, students have to always carefully control their behavior for fear that any disobedience will be recorded in their file.

Concluding Thoughts

From a Foucauldian perspective, through all the aforementioned technologies, students are subjectified as individuals, and this process tends to engender behavior that is submissive to authorities and rules; students are thus forced to adhere to collective norms and be hardworking, punctual, and efficient; in another words, they are forged into people of docility and utility (Foucault, 1995). When they graduate from school, these habits embedded in them by the sequestration institution, namely their schools, shape their behavior in their jobs and lifestyle. While it can be argued that the characteristics of docility and utility are beneficial for an industrial society that requires labour and productivity (Foucault, 1973h), a probable future derived from this situation renders the students not so much autonomous individuals, but automata, Man-the-Machine, and politically manipulated bodies (Foucault, 1995).

Foucault did not shed any light on an alternative to the probable future that a disciplined education may bring; however, what he did provide was pessimistic leeway of ubiquitous power: an exhortation to care for ourselves, to govern our own subjectivities and be free of the manipulation of power technologies from others (1981, 1982b, 1988). This suggestion was a mere placebo, however; it was never applicable in the curriculum of a postmodern education.

Regarding the external features of postmodern education, Usher and Edward (1994) claim that it has the characteristics of maintaining diversity in goals, forms, processes, curricula, teaching methods, and ways of participation. The streamlined timetable and straitjacket-like classroom that Xiaoyang and other Chinese students experience, as described in the paper, will no longer exist. Under the post-modern educational system, students will be able to choose their preferred time and most comfortable place to be educated. A precondition for such flexibility of schooling is physical and political boundlessness (Usher & Edward, 1994), because, from Foucault's perspective, the aim of controlling students' time, space and body is to serve the political purpose of capital industrial manufacturing. However, in the postmodern future, education will no longer be the control engine for social reproduction or other social endeavors (Usher & Edward, 1994).

The constant examinations that are part of the Chinese educational system, will also be reduced in a postmodern education future, not only because, by then, the curricula will have become more fluid, but also because the goals of education will no longer be outcome-based. And when uniform examinations are no longer the destination of curricula and the goals of education become heterogeneous, education will no longer follow the yard stick of one single authority (Usher & Edward, 1994). A postmodern education also respects cultural diversity (Usher & Edward, 1994), which means that every cultural group can decide what is valuable to them and, therefore, it will no longer be necessary for (in this case) China to strive for its education to be world leading.

However, these are only superficial features of a postmodern education; the essence of postmodern education relies on the interpretation and transfer of the meaning of postmodernity, which is a critical reflection of modernity's dualistic differentiation between soul and body and the distinction between human beings and nature (Griffin, 1988). Dualism, as the spirituality of modernity, arrogantly regards every other living creation in the world except humans as lacking sentience, which legitimizes human beings' exploitation of nature (Griffin, 1988). As a derivation of dualism in modernity, economism also emerges among human beings, rendering human society subordinate to economy, and creating "wealth, material prosperity … the core of social life" (Griffin, 1988, p. 13). Foucault's biopower technologies, including disciplinary methods, aim to sustain such economism by treating humans as walking machines for capitalist industry. This social mode alienates relationships among humans (Marx & Engels, 1968). Differentiation between humans and nature and the alienation among human beings are the side effects of modernity; however, postmodernity has the potential to surpass this and announce an organic unity between humans and nature (Griffin, 1988). Thus, a core principle in any future postmodern education is bidding farewell to dualism and welcoming naturalistic pantheism, facing a momentary and futuristic welfare of human beings and nature (Griffin, 1988).

Acknowledgements

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Appendix 1
Daily schedule of Shuiping Primary school[7]

Time	Schedule
6:00am	Wake up
6:10-6:30 am	Morning Exercise
6:40-7:20 am	Morning Self-study
7:20-8:00 am	Breakfast
8:00-8:20 am	Morning reading
8:30-9:20 am	Class 1
9:20-10:00 am	Class 2
10:00-10:20 am	Exercise
10:20-11:00 am	Class 3
11:10-11:50 am	Class 4
11:50 am -12:20 pm	Lunch
12:30 -2:30 pm	Afternoon nap
2:50 – 3:30 pm	Class 5
3:30 – 3:35 pm	Exercise to relax eye muscles
3:45 – 4:25 pm	Class 6
4:35- 5:15 pm	Class 7
5:30-6:40 pm	Dinner
6:50-8:20 pm	Evening Self studies
8:30 pm	Bed time
8:40 pm	Lights off

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[7] Table adapted from Sum (2010, Appendix 2).

Appendix 2
Schedule of junior secondary school student Xiaoyang[8]

Time	Schedule
6:00	Getting up
6:10	Getting washed and having breakfast
6:30	Leaving for school
7:00	Arriving at school
7:00-7:20	Preparation
7:20-8:00	Morning self-study
8:00-8:45	1st class
8:55-9:40	2nd class
9:50-10:10	Setting-up exercise and flag-raising ceremony
10:10-10:55	3rd class
11:05-11:50	4th class
11:50-11:55	Ocular gymnastics
12:00	Lunch
12:30	Midday break
13:30-14:15	5th class (class meeting)
14:15-14:20	Ocular gymnastics
14:25-15:10	6th class
15:20-16:05	7th class
16:15-17:30	8th class (student social activities)
17:30	Dismissal
18:00	Arriving home
18:30	Dinner
19:00	Break
19:30-21:00	Homework
21:20	Getting washed
21:30	Going to bed

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[8] Table adapted from Gu, Ma, & Teng (2017a, p. 2)

Appendix 3
Photo of an overcrowded classroom reported by Hebei News[9]

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[9] The picture was retrieved on 2 Jan, 2020 from http://yglz.tousu.hebnews.cn/s-126101.html#Cpt_Message-2

Appendix 4
Observation rule for the student leaders[10]

(1) Dining
1. [Student leaders'] Duty time: Breakfast: 7:55-8:25, Dinner: 18:05-18:05 in summer, 17:35-18:05 in winter. 2. Observation target and standards: • (1) [Whether the students are] not making loud noises. • (2) [To make sure the students] do not step on the stand. • (3) [Whether the students are] waiting in line for dinner. • (4) [To make sure the students] don't run. • (5) [To make sure the students] don't waste food. • (6) [To make sure the students] collect tableware as a group and place it gently back in the frame. • (7) [To make sure the students] keep right when going up and down stairs. • (8) [To make sure the students] directly stand in the restaurant and then go outside the restaurant to stand as a team after their meal.   For the above requirements, the first two items should be conducted as a warning upon any student offending the student leader. If one of the remaining six items is not met by any student, 0.1 point will be deducted. If the offences occurred during the breakfast time, points will be deducted from the students' dormitory ranking, and if occurred during dinner time, points will be deducted from the class ranking.
(2) *Guangbo ticao* in the morning
1. [Student leaders'] Duty time: at 7:50-8:25 checking the neatness of the team at the entrance of the restaurant, and at 7:20-8:00 checking other conditions of morning exercises. 2. Observation targets and standards: • [To make sure] all students in each dormitory must have morning exercises at the required time without any excuses. • (2) [To make sure] the students on daily duty should not be retained [for not doing *guangbo ticao*]. • (3) [To make sure] students must move in the designated area, and are not allowed to leave the activity area without authorization, and are not allowed to return to the classroom or dormitory without authorization. • (4) [To make sure] the venue is kept clean and tidy. • (5) [To make sure] after the morning exercises are over, students stand in line and enter the restaurant in an orderly manner.   If one of the above five requirements is not met, 0.1 points will be deducted from the students' dormitory ranking.

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[10] The content is adapted from Zhengdong Primary School (2012, Mar, 16th). It is retrieved on 10th, Sep, 2020, from http://www.hnszdxx.com/newsitem/274236837

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