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I/MLEs and the Uneven Return of Pastoral Power

Introduction

In *Discipline and Punish: Birth of the Prison* Michel Foucault evidenced that educational thought cannot ignore the significant implications of its physical learning environments. More recently Ansgar Allen, in *Benign Violence: Education in and beyond the Age of Reason*, has shown that school architecture and classroom design provoke and complement explicit and implicit processes of examination and self-examination, therefore providing an extreme colonisation of internal space in the formation of subjectivities. For both Foucault and Allen the physical spaces of schooling assist in providing the curricular and practice based means by which disciplinary and pastoral power can be exercised. They argue that the external space of the school and the internal space of subjective consciousness overlap, the former playing a part in shaping the latter. Ian Hunter's *Rethinking the School: subjectivity, bureaucracy, criticism* was influenced by Foucault and an influence on Allen. In it Hunter problematized the effectiveness of radical educational thought in challenging disciplinary and pastoral power through theoretical or practical means. He argued that radical education thought and practice often ends up fulfilling the same educational and social functions of more traditional methods. For Hunter

The reciprocating relations between freedom and supervision, equality and tutelage in this pedagogy have given birth to a remarkable series of pedagogical experiments and innovations. In the wake of the playground we have had the open-plan classroom and the encounter group, the 'learning contract' and the free school, the 'drama experience' and the political empathy lesson, each overseen by teachers who, the less intrusive their presence, the greater their invigilation, and the more egalitarian their bearing, the greater their

pastoral dominion. In short, the egalitarian experiments of radical educators take place within the ambivalent space of the pastoral school where, of course, each attempt to increase freedom is routinely exposed as a subtler form of control. (Hunter, 1994, p. 105)

This paper will argue that the same is true for I/MLEs; examining the spatial expansiveness of disciplinary and pastoral forms of power in terms of learning spaces, their concomitant techniques, and the educational subject. In suggesting the subtle control exercised on illusorily free learning subjects in I/MLEs, the lack of space for students to step back from their learning experience will be compared to, and differentiated from, underfunded and badly design-briefed school buildings in the UK. The first claim of this paper is that whether or not education systems and school buildings are conforming to I/MLE models, the ubiquity of ideologically narrow conceptions of the learning subject are enforced regardless, through subtle or unsubtle means. However, the second claim is that, despite their overarching and unsurprising ideological homogeneity with other more outcome oriented forms of schooling, I/MLEs have the potential to offer a much more substantial formative experience than other schooling systems due to their implicit recovery of traditional pastoral technologies of education.

I/MLEs Championed and Rejected

The definitions given to I/MLEs by the OECD are significant in outlining the broad reach of the concept and its associated processes. I/MLEs are not only – as they predominantly seem to have been understood in New Zealand’s educational policy - to be defined physically (<http://ile.education.govt.nz>). They are not simply dynamic learning spaces, typified by large open spaces and multipurpose rooms with movable furnishings. In fact, these physical qualities of I/MLEs are only one facet of a programme which is predominantly concerned with purportedly ‘innovative’

and ‘modern’ approaches to curriculum and, perhaps especially, assessment. New or refurbished buildings, designed to fit with I/MLE models, are of limited interest to policy makers in the UK, where there are far more economically pressing and almost risibly fundamental issues to address before investing in the development of the physical means to support I/MLEs, even if that were the intention, which it is not. The curricular and assessment-oriented aspects of I/MLEs, despite being much cheaper to implement, are nonetheless vehemently rejected in recent UK government policy. While I/MLEs embrace methods over outcomes, the UK government has explicitly rejected this approach, instead stating in the recent white paper, *Educational Excellence Everywhere*, that ‘outcomes matter more than methods’ (2016, 1.17). The white paper also makes clear that ‘that ‘the teaching profession is no longer forced to conform to an orthodoxy on teaching methods through national strategies, or an ‘Ofsted preferred teaching style’’ (2016, 2.2).¹ However, this rejection of the principles common to I/MLEs goes much further, especially in terms of the physical limitations of the *Baseline designs for schools: guidance*, where there is not a single mention of the pedagogical implications of the limitations imposed on building size and design (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/baseline-designs-for-schools-guidance>). This contrasts dramatically with the New Zealand Government’s guidance which is framed in terms of ‘Designing quality learning spaces in schools’ and school trustees ‘must comply with Designing Quality Learning Spaces (DQLS) guidelines as a part of creating Innovative Learning Environments’ (<http://www.education.govt.nz/school/property/state-schools/design-standards/flexible-learning-spaces/designing-quality-learning-spaces>). While, in the UK, the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) has felt obligated to challenge the government’s building policy in their recent publication *Better spaces for learning* (RIBA 2016). Although it is a rich and persuasive document, it is clear that they are starting from a very low bar in terms what the government budget and design guidance have heretofore allowed. One of the main recommendations is a plea to increase the stipulations for

corridor size, arguing that ‘the focus on classrooms ignores the impact that other parts of a school have on learning’ and that

Crowded corridors impede the flow of pupils around a school, creating pinch points that increase stress levels and can exacerbate bullying problems. In addition to social problems, narrow crowded corridors also mean higher maintenance costs through faster wear and tear as pupils are pushed against surfaces. With the pressure on school places likely to increase significantly in the coming years as the growing school age population makes its way through the education system, this is an area that we believe needs urgent reconsideration. (RIBA, 2016, p. 45)

They also make clear that many schools built with government allocated funds then rely on local government funding to widen the corridors, creating unnecessary expense (RIBA, 2016, p. 45). All of this reveals quite how far the UK Government are from implementing any aspect of I/MLEs, whether physical or procedural, into their public schooling system. The only significant – although more theoretical than empirical - similarity between New Zealand’s I/MLE informed structures and processes and the UKs overcrowded schools, is that neither allow much or any space which is not primarily dedicated to learning. In the UK, they refuse to budget for it and in NZ, their educational ideology prohibits it. On the one hand, it would be ‘mad’ to spend money on parts of a school which are not directly concerned with learning, on the other, it would be ‘mad’ to *not* spend money on something that could increase learning potential across the school. Either way, a school is not only a place where learning happens but *learning places* where *not* learning is prohibited physically, economically and perhaps also ideologically. The pupil is to be consumed by their learning. Equally, the teacher is to be consumed with their students’ learning.

The consumption of selves in education is characterised by I/MLEs in terms of the freedom it affords to learning, in a manner critiqued by Allen, who argues that, ‘We do not recognise the

powers imposed upon us during this reign of freedom. We will not admit the artifices upon which our freedom depends, where these artifices are most pernicious precisely where they appear most benevolent' (Allen, 2014, p. 245). Yet, the deceptive freedom of I/MLEs may still be preferable to the education system in the UK, which rejects methods (I/MLEs or otherwise) as well as means (appropriate funding and design of school buildings). Perhaps begging the question of what is worse, a system which educates its subjects to become the vessels for its prescribed personae, or one which does not seem (or cannot afford) to care about the development of personae to any significant degree? Either way, temporally and spatially, students (and their teachers) are consumed by education; compulsorily attending these learning places, where they must passively accept the actions they are forced to exercise. However, without a properly funded and methodologically elaborated pastoral dimension, such as that which is described in the formative assessment strategy put forward by the OECD, outcomes will prevail over methods and any fat will be cut, as exemplified by double-loaded corridors in UK school building design guidance policy. While the UK system allows the means to engage in whatever educational methods are preferred by individual schools – thus potentially subverting what might be conceived as the formation of personae as synecdoche of a dominant ideology – the likelihood is that methods will be reverse-engineered in terms of auditable outcomes. What this then continues to abandon is the traditional pastoral dimension of education, which, notwithstanding their branding, I/MLEs are in the process of attempting to recover.

I/MLEs and new trajectories of pastoral power

As this paper argues, I/MLEs are not the creation of a 'modern' or 'innovative' learning environment but rather the reclamation of an educational technique that was pioneered en masse almost two centuries ago (and based on practices many centuries older than that), where established pastoral methods were key to shaping particularly formed educated subjects. That is to say, it is not I/MLEs

that are moving away from traditional pastoral methods of mass schooling but rather the outcome oriented approach advocated by, for example, the UK government.

The language of I/MLEs is of course different to that of the nineteenth century moral training school but its methods and its outcomes are uncannily similar. However, critiquing I/MLEs for this historical illiteracy, or marketing-ployesque sleight of hand, is not the same as dismissing them. To the contrary, there is much to suggest that a return to a more pastorally informed system would benefit students and the state in a variety of ways, from social development to mental health. Equally, the UK government's white paper presenting itself as advocating *any* method which reached the desired outcomes, has an upside in terms of the (possible) freedom afforded to schools in terms of their methods.

In a sense, I/MLEs could be seen as rejecting and recovering from the greatest threat to the pastoral methods of education: over-burdensome and outcome-oriented systems of accountability. In Foucauldian terms, overly visible systems of accountability hark back to the traditional means of wielding power, while less visible systems of examination operate with a much more effective form of disciplinary power. Older, pre-disciplinary forms of power were 'what was seen, what was shown, and what was manifested and, paradoxically, found the principle of its force in the movement by which it deployed that force' (Foucault, 1991, p. 187). This power is, then, not dissimilar from heavy handed and oft-implemented high-stakes summative assessment, from which it is possible to hide, or 'remain in the shade' (Foucault, 1991, p. 187). Remaining in the shade, in this sense, would mean not giving oneself up to the explicit examining techniques associated with academic success, instead rejecting school and its systems of examination for any variety of reasons. This might result in academic failure but also, perhaps more profoundly, educational failure. That is to say, there is a failure to educate individuals in outcome oriented education systems because the emphasis is on an education *for* summative assessment rather than an education to be measured *by* summative

assessment, even if the latter is the proclaimed intention. As such, education fails in two ways: firstly, it fails those who, despite the emphasis on summative assessment, still do not do well in them; second, it fails those who actually do well, by providing them with an education entirely unfit for purpose in terms of developing an employable persona. This crude form of outcome-oriented education has none of the subtleties of an education more clearly constituted by disciplinary power, which is 'exercised through its invisibility' and also the 'compulsory visibility' of its subjects (Foucault, 1991, p. 187), both of which are even more successfully executed when matched with the pastoral techniques.

In recent years it is certainly the case that many major public schooling systems, perhaps especially in the UK, have emphasised the highly visible bureaucratic and outcome-oriented aspect of educational experience. However, another way of reading this straying from the invisibility of disciplinary power in education, and its pastoral complement, might be that this has allowed for a somewhat liberating gap between the lives of individual pupils and their performed educational selves. In contrast, the student in an I/MLE is no longer able to be invisible but rather must remain visible at all times, so as to be most effectively subject to disciplinary and pastoral power. As Foucault explains, it is the constancy of the pupils' visibility that allows them to be effectively disciplined:

In discipline, it is the subjects who have to be seen. Their visibility assures the hold of the power that is exercised over them. It is the fact of being constantly seen, of being able always to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection. And the examination is the technique by which power, instead of emitting the signs of its potency, instead of imposing its mark on its subjects, holds them in a mechanism of objectification. In this space of domination, disciplinary power manifests its potency, essentially, by arranging

objects. The examination is, as it were, the ceremony of this objectification. (Foucault, 1991, p. 187).

I/MLEs are designed to perpetually examine their subjects, requiring them to always be learning, individually, collaboratively, or competitively. Pastoral and disciplinary power are the sine qua non of I/MLEs and, in turn, they are the exemplum optimum of pastoral and disciplinary power. Foucault shows that while pastoral power originated in Christian institutions, with the aim of the eternal salvation of its subjects, its more recent function in public schooling, for example, is to produce a rather worldlier salvation (Foucault, 1981, p. 784). He gives examples of the markers of this worldly salvation as being 'health, well-being (that is, sufficient wealth, standard of living), security, protection against accidents' (1981, p. 784).

Foucault returned to the themes of security and the pastorate in his later lectures, in particular those published as *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the College de France 1977-1978*.² His seventh lecture in this series argues that the pastorate, in its sixteenth century Christian form, was the prelude to what he defines as 'governmentality' in two ways. First, 'it does not purely and simply put the principles of salvation, law, and truth into play, but rather, through all these kinds of diagonals, establishes other types of relationships under the law, salvation, and truth' (Foucault, 2009, p. 184). Second, 'through the constitution of a specific subject, of a subject whose merits are analytically identified, who is subjected in continuous networks of obedience, and who is subjectified (*subjectivé*) through the compulsory extraction of truth' (Foucault, 2009, p. 184-185). These pastoral dimensions of governmentality have been inherited by education systems and its 'diagonal' features are clearly on display in the mechanisms utilised in the conceptualisation of I/MLEs. As well as the relationship between the pastorate and governmentality, Foucault also uses these lectures to explore the shift from the more prescriptive aspects of 'discipline' to 'security'. This shift - and its relative 'lag' in some parts of various educational establishments, such as in the UK - is

exemplified by the prescribing logic of I/MLEs. In the second lecture Foucault describes the 'apparatus of security' as

standing back sufficiently so that one can grasp the point at which things are taking place, whether or not they are desirable. This means trying to grasp them at the level of their nature, or let's say - this word not having the meaning we now give it – grasping them at the level of their effective reality. The mechanism of security works on the basis of this reality, by trying to use it as a support and make it function, make its components function in relation to each other. In other words, the law prohibits and discipline prescribes, and the essential function of security, without prohibiting or prescribing, but possibly making use of some instruments of prescription and prohibition, is to respond to a reality in such a way that this response cancels out the reality to which it responds – nullifies it, or limits, checks, or regulates it. I think this regulation within the element of reality is fundamental in apparatuses of security. (Foucault, 2009, p. 46-47)

While these apparatuses of security still display many of the features of discipline, the 'diagonal' techniques associated with the pastoral (and governmentality) have now come to the fore. The success of an I/MLE might therefore be defined in terms of its capacity to nullify, limit, check and regulate the 'nature' or 'effective reality' of its subjects without any obvious prohibition or prescription. It is precisely the deployment of a relative physical and intellectual freedom, as well as a focused sensitivity towards individual 'natures', which allows I/MLEs the capacity to most thoroughly regulate the effective realities of those 'free' individuals. As a pastorally inflected apparatus of security, an I/MLE relies on the freedom of its constituent individuals to be able to regulate effectively. In this sense I/MLEs are much more complex and possibly pernicious vehicles for the technology of power than school which articulate themselves through more traditional forms of disciplinary power (Foucault, 2009, p. 49).

Formative environments

Ansgar Allen elaborates on the pastoral approach to schooling, as well as its relation to the disciplinary approach, arguing that ‘the history of examination is a history of the relationship between [them]’ (2014, p. 27). While this may be the case, the principles underpinning I/MLEs imply that the pastoral dimension of schooling has been subsumed by its more obviously disciplinary counterpart and might benefit from being reclaimed. Helpful towards locating the specificity of the disciplinary rather than pastoral approach is Allen’s reticence to over prescribe the effects and reach of Foucault’s concept of disciplinary power, which he argues has been excessively misunderstood and almost voided of critical significance:

Scholars have claimed to find ‘disciplinary power’ everywhere. It has been depicted as a ubiquitous feature of modernity that has plagued us ever since it was developed in the early nineteenth century. Its fossilised structures are said to still influence schooling today. From this perspective, anything mechanical or reductive in appearance can find itself labelled as ‘disciplinary’. Disciplinary power is in danger of becoming a vague cipher of a form of subjection we are no longer able to identify precisely, because it has been applied to so many contexts in so many ways. It has become a promiscuous concept. (Allen, 2014, p. 28)

Allen’s reading primarily takes the form of a critique and is useful for the purposes of this paper in terms of the distinctive characteristics he provides for disciplinary power in education. Overburdensome and explicit outcome-oriented educational practices *do not* seem to conform to definitions of pastoral power, and instead present the tropes of more typical and blunt forms of pre-disciplinary power, or disciplinary power outside of its relation to pastoral power. Although Allen does not make this claim, formative assessment - one of the major tenets of I/MLEs - is explored by

Allen in the context of pastoral, rather than disciplinary, power ('Here, again, pastoral power is recast for our late modern context') (Allen, 2014, p. 238). He argues that 'Formative assessment involves far more than feedback from the teacher. It requires that teachers instruct pupils in the techniques of formative assessment itself' (Allen, 2014, p. 238) and that 'Self-assessment is considered to be the foundational activity in a regime of formative assessment, allowing pupils to develop a constructive and active approach to their own enhancement' (Allen, 2014, p. 239).

The internalisation of effort (and perhaps guilt) for formative and self-assessment is a key function in I/MLEs, especially as defined by the OECD. An entire chapter of the OECD text on I/MLEs, *The Nature of Learning*, is dedicated to formative assessment. In 'The role of formative assessment in effective learning environments', Dylan William determines five 'key strategies' for formative assessment in innovative learning systems:

1. Clarifying, sharing and understanding learning intentions and criteria for success.
2. Engineering effective classroom discussions, activities and tasks that elicit evidence of learning.
3. Providing feedback that moves learners forward.
4. Activating students as instructional resources for one another.
5. Activating students as the owners of their own learning. (2010, p. 154)

This chapter and the other chapters in *The Nature of Learning* went on to inform the more recent OECD publication, *Schooling Redesigned: Towards Innovative Learning Systems*, where seven 'learning principles' are outlined:

- *Learning Principle One*: Make learning central, encourage engagement, and be where learners come to understand themselves as learners.
- *Learning Principle Two*: Ensure that learning is social and often collaborative.

- *Learning Principle Three:* Be highly attuned to learners' motivations and the importance of emotions.
- *Learning Principle Four:* Be acutely sensitive to individual differences including in prior knowledge.
- *Learning Principle Five:* Be demanding for each learner but without excessive overload.
- *Learning Principle Six:* Use assessments consistent with these aims, with strong emphasis on formative feedback.
- *Learning Principle Seven:* Promote horizontal connectedness across learning activities and subjects, in- and out-of-school. (OECD, 2015, p.18)

All of these principles sit comfortably with Ian Hunter's points raised in the introduction to this paper and are helpful in illuminating the context expected of I/MLEs, both in terms of what is included and what is excluded. These superficially 'soft' but ultimately subtle and effective forms of control, focusing on the full range of the students' educational experience, such as the emotions, help teachers utilise (and be utilised by) pastoral power in I/MLEs to develop the personas of their students in a manner that clumsier forms of disciplinary power (and outcome-oriented approaches) fail to do to the same extent.

Notably, there is not a single mention of physical structures, design or layout in these principles. The sixth principle, however, strikes up the familiar theme of formative assessment. This principle is expanded later in the text in a manner that suggests an intensely method-over-outcome orientation. However, the method is itself part of what shapes the learning environment and, concomitantly, the student in the development of their persona:

The learning expected to be achieved and the evidence that is being achieved need to be highly visible, in ways that are shared and understood by learners, educators and all other

members of the learning community. The assessment strategies need to be consistent with and contributing to such expectations so that assessment is in the service of learning rather than inimical to it. This is true at all levels, so that learning systems as well as environment come increasingly to be formative, using extensive learning evidence at critical junctures and creating more demanding learning and teaching environments. (OECD, 2015, p. 31)

This description is completely in line with Allen's argument that 'for self-assessment to be effective, pupils must be told what they are expected to achieve; they must be made aware of their learning goals. This is a display of professional openness on behalf of the teacher that appears intrinsically democratic' (Allen, 2014, p. 239). All of which is simply to set the scene for a 'deeper agenda of self-assessment' which enhances 'personal performance *within a logic that is externally set*. Pupils learn to perform work on themselves according to an external design, whether this be the logic of the school or of the wider social order into which they are included' (Allen, 2014, p. 240). Through formative assessment they 'learn to commodify themselves through repackaging and upskilling. They are taught how to improve their chances of employment and promotion through self-analysis and self-help. Trained to assess their current position in the market, they make adjustments to realise what are deemed to be their realisable goals' (Allen, 2014, p. 240). Finally, in a key example of pastoral power in formative assessment,

Pupils are trained in the techniques of cheerful and cooperative rivalry. They learn to compete in apparent harmony with one another, each involved in personal formative cycles, occupied in unison within individual feedback-action loops. They learn to become industrious self-improvers, accepting and implementing external goals. Competition is humanised and disguised and thereby intensified by this formative technology' (Allen, 2014, p. 240).

This system operates with the perpetual question: why aren't you learning more and faster? The responsibility for the answer rests with the student – as does the question, ad infinitum.

As it might then be possible to see, this is not an innovative approach, but rather an updated version of the pastoral methods of institutions such as the nineteenth century moral training school that both Hunter (1994, p. 8-13) and Allen (2014, p. 44-50) investigate, and the public schools which were subsequently influenced by its methods. The moral training now, however, is directed primarily towards perpetual learning, responsiveness, and personal responsibility. In effect, the moral training of a neoliberal citizen. In the same way that the playgrounds of the nineteenth century moral training schools helped to develop the moral personae of its pupils, I/MLEs turn the entire school into a playground for moral development.

Through a reading of David Stow's influential *The Training System, the Moral Training School, and the Normal Seminary*, Ian Hunter argues that 'the purpose of the playground was indeed to make freedom a condition of moral development, but only by making free play into the condition of a new and more intimate form of moral surveillance. The playground formed a part of a pedagogy designed to incite spontaneous conduct in students' (Hunter, 1994, p. 9). The same spontaneity is characteristic of the methods of I/MLEs, so that pupils can be surveilled and formatively assessed. However, in I/MLEs, the development of ones' conscience in terms of anything but learning capability is secondary (or even irrelevant, when compared) to the development of oneself as a particular kind of I/MLE-consistent learning subject. It would also be a mistake to conceive of the moral development of students in I/MLEs as being more benign and less forceful than that of the moral training school, this despite the perfectly understandable contemporary reticence to explicitly religious moral indoctrination. A moral persona educationally prescribed in terms of its desired characteristics and actions is no less of a moral persona if those actions are prescribed by a moral

training school or an I/MLE, it is merely a different kind of persona that is formed. Also, as Hunter argues:

Moral freedom is not opposed to moral tutelage in Stow's pedagogy. On the contrary, he argues it is only through the incitement of spontaneous behaviour that teachers can execute the right kind of guidance. This is the kind that ends in children guiding themselves or acquiring a conscience. Finally, far from being an abstract principle to which the organisation of the school might be held theoretically accountable, this reciprocity between freedom and moral formation seems to be inseparable from the moral and material organisation of the school itself. It is only in purpose-built environments like the playground, says Stow, where 'all is free as air', that the necessary relation between organised spontaneity and unobtrusive surveillance can take place. (Hunter, 1994, p. 10)

In effect, what is 'innovative' or 'modern' about I/MLEs is the moral education they provide *without* explicit moral content. They rely on the 'new pastoral power' that Foucault describes, alongside disciplinary forms of power typified by the examination, to shape the child to become an appropriately educated social being (Foucault, 1982, p. 784). Bringing this to light is not to suggest the return of a more prescriptive form of moral doctrine, but rather to put into question the innovation of a system which pretends it has none. The arguments in favour of this move on the part of I/MLEs are not unconvincing - but ultimately a system which, at least on the surface, emphasises *how* individuals learn far more than *what* they learn cannot easily avoid critique. Especially when it seems as if it is not always readily recognised that this *how* is already a *what*, albeit often – from some political and philosophical perspectives – a *what* of the most vacant and insidious kind. Because of this lack of explicitness in the ideological underpinnings of the formative aims for their pupils, there is also little opportunity to directly challenge or vary the fundamental personal

characteristics that I/MLEs seek to elicit and develop, let alone the intellectual positions from which they arise.

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¹ Ofsted is the Office for Standard in Education, Children's Services and Skills. One of their duties is to inspect schools in England. It is a non-ministerial department of the UK Government. <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>

² I would like to thank one of the anonymous reviewers of an earlier version of this paper for encouraging me to explore the themes in this paragraph.