Closed- Circuit Television Camera : From its Definitions and the Power of Surveillance to Body Discipline. 1

Lalinthip Kongpanichakul 2, Ketthawa Boonprakarn 3

1. This article is part of the thesis “Closed-Circuit Television: Negotiation Space in School”, Master of Arts, Prince of Songkla University
2. A master student, Prince of Songkla University, Hat Yai Campus
3. Assistant Professor Doctor, Prince of Songkla University, Hat Yai Campus

Abstract

The purposes of this research article were to study 1) definitions of a close-circuit television camera in school context and 2) body discipline of teachers under the coverage of a closed-circuit television camera. This qualitative research was conducted in Hatyai City Kindergarten school (Na Suvanwongse) where there was closed-circuit television coverage. Data was collected by interview, and surveillance through closed-circuit television cameras. Fifteen interviewees including school administrators, teachers, students, parents and general public who live around the school participated in this research. Conceptual frameworks to guide the data analysis were the concept of power, the concept of space and the concept of modernity. The data was being analyzed while data validation was being conducted at the same time.

Research results indicated that each group offered different definitions of closed-circuit television. The general public viewed a closed-circuit television camera as the school strong point. The school administrators and teachers viewed a closed-circuit television camera as control mechanism. Students viewed it as a tool that helped bring them and their parents closer whereas the parents viewed it as a symbol of modernism. It was also found that teachers displayed body discipline that helped build trust in parents in accordance with policy of school administrators.

Keywords : Closed-circuit television camera, Definition, Surveillance, Body Discipline
Background

It is a widely held view that closed circuit television cameras can provide security, effective surveillance and other benefits in terms of prevention and examination. Should any unusual event occurs, closed-circuit television cameras can detect, alert the security guard to respond on time and record the event for future replays. Mindful of these benefits, Thailand has utilized closed-circuit television cameras to deter crimes especially in three southernmost provinces plagued by violence. The Thai government has planned to install a lot of closed-circuit television cameras in these violent areas since it cannot fully protect the citizen against terrorists. Consequently, closed-circuit television cameras become indispensable to crime prevention in these three southernmost provinces. Apart from these violent areas, closed-circuit television cameras are widely used in such places as banks, casinos, airports, military grounds, shops, factories, among many others. (Monthee Aporiman, 2009)

Usually, closed-circuit television cameras are installed in violence-prone areas. However, nowadays, closed-circuit television cameras are installed in schools to prevent violence among students and undesirable behaviors in school premises. For example, the Ministry of Education of South Korea has utilized closed-circuit television cameras in schools all over the country to tackle bullying among students which is considered a serious problem. 1 in 5 Korean students admit that they have fallen victims to bullying. Each year, a lot of Korean students commit suicide because of this problem. In Thailand, closed-circuit television cameras are installed to deter fighting among students. Mom Rajawongse Sukhumpan Boriphat, the governor of Bangkok, held the meeting with school administrators from 453 schools in Bangkok and assigned them to implement “Safety Policy” to discourage quarrels among students. He called for strict enforcement and to enforce the policy more effectively, closed-circuit television cameras are installed covering every area of the schools. (Monthee Aporiman, 2009)

According to the aforementioned, closed-circuit television cameras are not only installed in crime-prone areas but also in schools which are considered a safe environment. The aim of closed-circuit television cameras in school is to lessen undesirable behaviors leading to quarrels among students. Never before is a closed-circuit television camera installed in a classroom. However, Hatyai City Kindergarten school, Muang, Songkhla, the first school in the south employing closed-circuit television cameras, is also the first to install closed-circuit television cameras in schools. (Monthee Aporiman, 2009)
cameras in classrooms to observe teaching and learning activities of teachers and students. This also provides opportunity for parents to observe their children online. The phenomenon of using closed-circuit television cameras in classrooms prompted the researcher to question how the parties involved defined closed-circuit television cameras and how closed-circuit television cameras influenced the teachers being observed. The answers to these questions will help us to understand the views of the parties involved on the definitions of closed-circuit television cameras and how teachers behave once they appear before the cameras.

Research questions

1. What are the definitions of closed-circuit television cameras used in school context?
2. How do closed-circuit television cameras affect teachers being observed?

Purposes of study

1) To study the definitions of closed-circuit television cameras in school context
2) To study the ways teachers display body discipline when being in front of closed-circuit television cameras

Conceptual Framework

This study employed the framework of power-oriented relationship proposed by Foucault (1972). Foucault wrote many books but two most important books of all are The Order of Things (1970) and Archaeology of Knowledge (1972). Foucault argues that surveillance can alter behaviors. He proposed the model of discipline-mechanism inspired by Jeremy Bentham’s architecture “Panopticon”. Panopticon is a circular building which is divided into cells imprisoning patients, the deranged, criminals, laborers or students. Each cell has two windows. One window faces the tower situated in the centre of the premise to allow scrutiny by an observer who remains unseen. The other window faces the outside of the premises to allow sunlight to enter the cells so that an observer in the tower can observe those in the cells. In contrast to dark
prisons, Panopticon uses light and good visibility as a control and surveillance mechanism (Saipin Suputthamongkon, 1999:36). Therefore, the inmates feel that they are watched all the time regardless of the absence of an observer. This is in accordance with the research “Prisoner Communication through Letters: the Analysis of Power and Maintenance of Prison Discipline” by Chanchai Nimsomboon (2007). The research results indicated that letter monitoring made inmates felt being controlled all the time through the censorship from the guards. Therefore, the inmates must have strategies in communicating through letters in order to express their identity. Because of this power of surveillance, those who are watched try to display appropriate behaviors. During the classical period between the 17th century and 18th century, according to Foucault, it was found that human body was the target and object of power. Myriad evidences from that period suggest that great attention was given to human body which could be manipulated and molded. The center point of the body is docility which helps transform a body into a docile body. The docile body is defined as one that maybe subjected, used, transformed and improved. The docile body is controlled in terms of pathomechanic including movement, manner, gesture and agility. We can call this as “Discipline”. Real discipline first appeared in the history once the techniques concerning human body were established. These techniques are used not only to either improve body skills or impose more body control but also to create a kind of relationship that allow the body to be controlled. The more the body is controlled, the greater the benefits.

Saipin Suputthamongkon (1999) conducted a study “Prison and Human : Power and Resistance” to investigate whether the resistance to power by the commoners was possible. She used a prison - where dominance of power and power mechanism especially discipline-mechanism is prevalent- as her research site. In a prison, the mechanism aims to deter misbehavior through the use of timetable, rehabilitate misbehaving inmates, and maintain the mentioned mechanism effectiveness by first determining inmates’ social, economic and educational background including their offences and then place them in appropriate areas under the appropriate divisions. This is in accordance with the use of closed-circuit television cameras which allows administrators and parents to monitor teachers. This mechanism prompts teachers to display appropriate body discipline in order to maintain good image in the eyes of administrators and parents.
Apart from the concept of power, the concept of space proposed by Lefebvre is also of use. He argues that social space subsumes things produced and encompasses their interrelationships in their co-existence. He believes that social space is where social production interacts with social reproduction. Social space production has three processes which may supplement or contradict one another (Lefebvre, 1991). These three processes are as follows:

1. Representation of Spaces includes schools, prisons, hospitals, bars, among many others.

2. Representational Spaces includes holy places, recreational sites, restricted areas, danger zones, beautiful areas, among many others. This process is more than just merely construction. These meanings or codes are produced to direct space use (i.e. What can be done in this area?) and set up rules (Who can use this area? When? and How?).


Khachonchob Kusumawalee (1999) emphasized that the meaning production in a space owned by the state repels those who cannot define themselves accordingly in their fight for social spaces. According to Kusumawalee, the designation of Wihan Phramongkhon Bophit as a historical site exemplifies this phenomenon. The designation attaches to the site the meanings of a place of memories, holiness, national identity and national history. This leads to the right of the state to control the site both physically and socially which, in turn, renders villagers invisible in their social space. To survive in this “new-defined social space”, the villagers have to redefine themselves accordingly and create new social action by welcoming visitors, providing safety to visitors, improving the scenery not to look deserted, redefining themselves as worshippers of Luangpho Phramongkol Bhophit Buddhist image and taking the view that Luangpho bring incomes to the community. In contrast, scholars view Luangpho as merely one of ancient objects. It can be seen that the villagers’ recreation of “new” self represents more of national treasure protectors than the state. This new definition of self helps villagers live in the site comfortably.

Although physical areas are just social objects, they are full of meanings by people fighting in power-oriented relationship to occupy space. “Human beings” play a vital role in creating meanings of space. Therefore, social space is filled with myriad layers of meanings with different conditions across time and groups of people or social institutions participating in the fighting to create meanings to their advantage which lead to social actions that exploit the space.
Similarly, those involve with the use of closed-circuit television cameras have their own definitions of the cameras so that they can exploit the space comfortably.

The concept of modernity by Giddens (1991) was used to analyze the research context. Modernity was well known in European societies during 19th century and later spread globally. The influences of modernity in some countries were evident while others were not. Not until the advent of 20th century that human societies all over the world entered into the new Age of Modernity when many things has been radically transformed especially information. Generally, modernization is understood as associating with westernization characterized by capitalism, industrialization and urban development.

The global transformation to modernity has led to intense network of communication between countries. Today, technological advances, transportation and communication networks play a vital in connecting people from different places, time zones and cultures. It seems that the world has become smaller which helps facilitate cultural borrowing and cultural assimilation. This global interconnectedness which promotes cultural exchange led the scholars to coil the word “Globalization”.

Giddens views globalization as a direct result of modernity. Globalization creates universal features as follows:

1. Universal tendency to have more social interaction in the form of capitalism.
2. The obstacles concerning time and distance are overcome. The world becomes borderless. For example, sheep shearers are affected by Japanese fashion “Uruguay Round”.

Giddens (1991) defined globalization as 'the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa'. Giddens emphasizes the stretching of social systems across time and space or, in his terms, “time-space distanciation.” The reason he coiled this term was because of the social transformation from the ways of life and communication limited to their localities to modern societies where people can communicate regardless of time and space through the network of communication. Modern societies can overcome the limitations of border. As a result, people “living” in a particular space can interact with people “absent” in that space. In other words, social interaction in modern societies is “separated” or “lifted out” from the context of localities to form new interaction. This corresponds to the use of closed-circuit television cameras.
cameras in classrooms allowing parents to view their children doing activities all the time even though they live in a different place. This technology is useful in the sense that people in different places can see one another.

Research Methodology

The research methodology of this qualitative research is as follows:

1) Research site
The research site is the area under closed-circuit television cameras in Hatyai City Kindergarten school (Na Suwanwongse). This school provides education from nursery to Pratomsuksa 6 (Grade 6). Every classroom in this school is equipped with a closed-circuit television camera allowing viewers to view online. The reason this school was selected as the research site because it is the first school in the south that incorporates closed-circuit television cameras into classrooms.

2) Subjects
There were 15 subjects in this research. These subjects were divided into teachers, administrators, students and parents who relates directly to the use of closed-circuit television cameras and the definitions of closed-circuit television cameras.

3) Data collection
Data was collected from related research articles and documents. It was also collected from field research by observing closed-circuit television tape to study body discipline of teachers appearing before closed-circuit television cameras. It was also collected by interviewing those involved in the use of closed-circuit television to study the definitions of closed-circuit television in school context.

4) Data Analysis
The concept of power, the concept of space and the concept of modernity were used to analyze the data on how each group defined closed-circuit television cameras. Defining concerns
space exploitation and body discipline of teachers appearing before closed-circuit television cameras, the space where power exists.

**Research Results**

Research result is divided into two sections as follows:

1. Closed-circuit television camera and its definitions

Many groups of people – whether it be the general public or those involved directly to closed-circuit television including teachers, administrators, students and parents – gave their definitions as follows:

**1.1 Creating a strong point for school**

According to the interview, the general public living near school shared the same view that closed-circuit television was used for public relations purpose. Closed-circuit television was a new phenomenon in education field. It was a tool to bring parents and students closer (Pong, interview, 2nd June 2010; Ann, interview, 2nd June 2010). Generally, once the parents sent their children to school, they could not watch their children behaviors in classrooms. However, this school was different since parents could watch their children behaviors in classrooms. The manager of school responsible for surveillance cameras installation (Prayuth Suvanwongse, interview, 13th April 2010) also gave a similar definition by saying that it would help create an advantage and unique identity for this new school. He added if we ran the school similarly to other schools, we could not persuade the parents to send their children to this school. It also served public relation role.

**1.2. Closed-circuit television camera: A tool to exercise control**

Apart from the view of closed-circuit television cameras as an advantage for school, the manager defined closed-circuit television cameras in terms of power and control as a symbol of power. He argued that closed-circuit television cameras prompted teachers to teach better (Prayuth Suvanwongse, interview, 13th April 2010). Therefore it could be seen that the use of
closed-circuit television cameras in classrooms was an exploitation of power to control teachers’ behaviors since they tricked teachers into thinking that they were watched all the time. Regarding to the disadvantages of closed-circuit television cameras in classrooms, the manager argued everything in this world had two sides which were good and bad. It seems that the manager was aware of the negative impacts of closed-circuit television cameras. However, he insisted on installing the cameras since they served as vital tools to exercise power, to control work and to be symbols of school that people talked about. Moreover, Pairoj Chuchuy, the director of school (interview, 11th June 2010), defined closed-circuit television cameras as the tools to control teachers’ behaviors and to communicate with parents. The definition given by the director of school that viewed close-circuit television cameras as effective tools to control behaviors highlights the exercise of power to control through surveillance cameras. This illustrates that the areas in classrooms or other areas under coverage of closed-circuit television cameras are full of power that can control behaviors.

Since teachers were watched all the time when they were in classrooms or cafeteria, it was impossible for them to escape the power of control. As a result, they had to be very careful with their work. Not only did they have to worry about their teaching as they were watched by school administrators and parents through closed-circuit television cameras, but also they had to be careful when they arranged lunch for students. The teachers defined closed-circuit television cameras as tools to control their behaviors. No matter what they did, they felt they were controlled. As soon as they walked into the school, they had to display appropriate behaviors. This was also the case when they were in classrooms, organized activities in classrooms or took students to cafeteria, among many others (Joy (alias), interview 11th June 2010; Su (alias), interview 15th June 2010). They had to behave appropriately since every action might be watched by administrators and parents. That they have no chance of knowing whether they are watched or not corresponds to the concept proposed by Foucault which concerns the power of surveillance. Foucault mentioned about Panopticon that incorporates a tower central to a circular building. An observer is in the tower observing the prisoners without the incarcerated being able to tell whether they are being watched. Similarly, the teachers under closed-circuit television cameras coverage must display appropriate behaviors because they appeared in front of the cameras all the time. No matter what they did, their behaviors could be watched by parents and
administrators. Once a teacher was caught displaying unpleasant behavior by parents, his/her behavior would be reported to school and school would issue warning to the teacher.

1.3. Bringing the school and parents closer through closed-circuit television cameras

Apart from the general public, administrators and teachers, another group that involves directly to the use of closed-circuit television cameras is a group of students who display their identities all the time. The researcher interviewed a group of students from nursery to elementary level to find out how students under closed-circuit television coverage defined closed-circuit television cameras. The majority of students were aware of the surveillance cameras in classrooms since their parents told them that the parents would watch them doing activities in classrooms through the cameras. These students liked the cameras a lot since the cameras made them felt that their parents stayed close to them. They felt less lonely when they had to walk into school alone (Piglet, interview 16th June 2010; Tonnam, interview 16th June 2010).

1.4. Closed-circuit television: the symbol of modernity

This section presents closed-circuit television cameras in the light of modernity. According to the interview, administrators, teachers, students and parents shared the same view that closed-circuit television cameras represented modernity since they were modern technology rarely incorporated into school setting. Therefore, the use of this new technology helped promote the modernity of this school since in a normal school, parents had no chance of knowing the behaviors of their children once they walked into school. However, parents in this school could view their children doing activities all the time thanks to closed-circuit television cameras that sent live video online. No matter where parents were, they could view their children all the time as if they were in the same place with their children (Pairoj Chuchuy, interview 11th June 2010; Sa, interview 16th June 2010; Taew, interview 16th June 2010; Tuk (Alias), interview 16th June 2010).

2. Body discipline of teachers under the coverage of closed-circuit television cameras
Body discipline of teachers who appeared in front of closed-circuit television cameras is discussed in this section as follows:

2.1. Dressing and body discipline

According to the interview with teachers and administrators, the use of closed-circuit television cameras prompted teachers to have body discipline since they knew that they were watched by administrators and parents. Teachers tried to display body discipline by being dressed nicely, keeping their hair neatly tied, putting on a smiling face and taking good care of students (Jim (Alias), interview 17th June 2010; Rat (Alias), interview 17th June 2010). These behaviors were a part of body discipline aimed to please administrators and parents, and to meet the policy of the administrators who want teachers to behave appropriately in order to build trust in parents.

2.2 Teaching

Apart from body discipline, the observation by administrators and parents also had impacts on teaching. Since parents could observe a classroom all the time, teaching was important if teachers had to convince parents that they were qualified to teach. Therefore, the teachers must be well-prepared and organized interesting activities such as games.

Picture 1-2 Pictures taken from a closed-circuit television camera showing teaching and learning activity
The pictures above show how a teacher managed her class. She had to organize interesting activities to attract students’ attention. Picture 1 and Picture 2 show a group of students who paid attention to a teacher who told them a story.

2.3. Setting camera view angle

According to the interview with teachers, setting camera view angle was very important since the camera angle was fixed and could not turn to follow moving objects. Therefore, the camera angle should be set to capture as much space in classroom as possible since sometimes parents complained that they could not see their children. Before each semester began, teachers had to set proper angle for cameras. The school would look online to check whether the angle was proper so that parents could view teachers and their children clearly.

2.4 Schedule

Each room had a schedule showing a listed of plan activities. For example, Thai was taught at 9.00 and leisure time at 10.30. During the leisure time, students would watch television. Since the school provided a limited number of movable television sets, each room had to watch television at different time. The teachers would place the television set at the center of the room which was under the coverage of a closed-circuit television camera so that parents could see their children clearly. Moreover, when students did the activities outside classroom, the teachers would place the sign “Outdoor Activity” to inform parents that they could not view their children since they were outside. This measure helped lesson complaint calls by parents which could disrupt teaching (Nueng (Alias), interview 18th June 2010).

Conclusion

The important findings in this research are as follows:

1. It was found that each group had different definitions of a closed-circuit television camera. The general public viewed that a closed-circuit television camera was a strong point of
this school. The administrators and teachers viewed it as a tool to control. Students viewed it as a tool that brought them and their parents closer while parents viewed it as a symbol of modernity.

2. It was found that teachers displayed body discipline when appearing before a closed-circuit television by being dressed nicely, organizing fun activities, taking good care of children and putting on a smiling face. The camera view angle must be set so that parents could view their children clearly and schedule was also set. These policies were implemented by school administrators whereas the body discipline was displayed by teachers who were aware of being watched by administrators and parents.

Discussion

Two important findings are discussed in this part. Firstly, it was found that each group of people had their own definition of a closed-circuit television camera. Each group gave a definition to their advantage which helped them live comfortably in that space. For example, administrators viewed a closed-circuit television camera as a tool to control because they tried to use it to control teachers’ behaviors while teachers viewed it us a tool of control and they tried to escape it. This corresponds to Lefebvre’s statement that even though physical space is a social product. This physical space is full of production and reproduction of meanings by people who want to occupy the space. “Human beings” play an important role in creating meanings for space. Social space is therefore filled with myriad layers of meanings with different conditions across time and groups of people or social institutions participating in the fighting to create meanings to their advantage leading to social actions that exploit the space. This also corresponds with the research by Khachonchob Kusumalee (1999). She mentioned that the state designated the Wihan Phramongkon Bhopit in Phranakhonsriayutthaya province as a holy place and a place of memories. In order to live comfortably with this state-defined area, the villagers had to redefine themselves and created new social actions by redefining themselves in harmony with the “new” definition of the area so that they could live comfortably. Moreover, Umapon Nookiew (2009) mentioned in her study “Communication for the Negotiation of Meaning: An Analysis of Women Singing in Nightlives” that society often associated women singing in nightlives with negativity whereas these women tried to tell the society that they were just singers. Furthermore, Sumalee Tokthong (2006) argued in her study “Women Loving Women’s Self-Definition and
Negotiation in their Married Lives” that women loving women labeled themselves as women. This reflected that even though these women were viewed as having deviant sexual orientation, they accepted other aspects of their status and roles as a Thai woman, for example, their role as a daughter and other social roles. They wanted society to view that they had the right to choose sexual orientation freely. It can be seen that no matter what definitions given to a person, the person always tries to create their own space. For example, the teachers who defined a closed-circuit television camera as a tool to control had to display pleasant behaviors to satisfy parents and administrators. In addition, the fact that parents viewed a closed-circuit television as a symbol of modernity allowing two people who live in different places to view each others corresponds with the concept proposed by Giddens (1991). Giddens viewed that technology allows long-distance communication across time and borders through networks of communication. The modern society therefore is not restricted by border but rather fosters interactions between people who “live” in the area and those “absent” in that area.

Secondly, it was found that teachers displayed body discipline since they were watched by administrators and parents through a closed-circuit television camera. As a result, they were careful with their behaviors. The policy of school administers requiring teachers to display appropriate behaviors to build trust in parents prompted them to be careful with their gestures concerning walking, standing, dressing or facial expression. It may be said that every movement of teachers were controlled through surveillance by administrators and parents. This corresponds to the concept proposed by Foucault (1975) who argues that the power of surveillance can alter behaviors. He also employs discipline as a tool to control behaviors. Foucault views that this technique does not aim to increase physical skills or merely control the body but rather to create the relationship with the view that the more the body obeys, the beneficial it becomes. The administrators employed discipline to control teachers’ behaviors. They used teachers’ body to promote that teachers in this school took good care of their children. This corresponds with Saipin Suputthamongkol (1999) who found that technology could control prisoners’ behaviors and their bodies by relying on timetable and surveillance. As a result, the prisoners behaved accordingly to the prison rules.

Suggestion for future research
1. Apart from school context, future research should be conducted in other settings such as department stores, companies, industries, among many others in order to study how the people in different setting display body discipline.

References


Interviews

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