'We are helpless, we are not the authority': Colonial governmentality in a Sri Lankan transnational education institution

Abstract:	This study examines colonial governmentality in a Sri Lankan partner institution of University of London (UOL) through semi-structured interviews with students and faculty. UOL began administrating colonised educational spaces in the 19th century, and now governs approximately 80 partner institutions throughout the global South. Its governmentality structures an arterial topology of power that grants limited inclusion to students while excluding their lecturers from formal recognition. Faculty at partner institutions do not assess students. Instead, assessment consists of annual British examinations, effectuating rote pedagogies that centre European knowledge. This extraction of faculty authority shapes delegitimated and disempowered subjectivities. The same process augments UOL's expertise on Southern educational spaces, contributing to a broader project of universalising Western epistemology. The findings suggest a need for further research that examines colonial governmentality in international education, and particularly its mechanisms of epistemic extraction.

1

'We are helpless, we are not the authority': Colonial governmentality in a Sri

Lankan transnational education institution

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Biographical note

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2

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This study examines colonial governmentality in a Sri Lankan partner institution of University of London (UOL) through semi-structured interviews with students and faculty. UOL began administrating colonised educational spaces in the 19th century, and now governs approximately 80 partner institutions throughout the global South. Its governmentality structures an arterial topology of power that grants limited inclusion to students while excluding their lecturers from formal recognition. Faculty at partner institutions do not assess students. Instead, assessment consists of annual British examinations, effectuating rote pedagogies that centre European knowledge. This extraction of faculty authority shapes delegitimated and disempowered subjectivities. The same process augments UOL's expertise on Southern educational spaces, contributing to a broader project of universalising Western epistemology. The findings suggest a need for further research that examines colonial governmentality in international education, and particularly its mechanisms of epistemic extraction.

Keywords: higher education, international education, governmentality, subjectivity, neoliberalism, colonialism

Introduction

Neoliberal governmentality has become an influential field of research in higher education

studies. Scholars identify increasingly pervasive mechanisms of performativity, audit,

marketisation, and public-private partnerships that govern research and teaching in universities

(Olssen and Peters 2005; Shore 2008; Brown 2015). Governmentality mechanisms translate

neoliberal institutional objectives into governing rationalities, which are instilled within

'individual or collective subjects faced with a field of possibility in which several conducts,

several reactions, and various modes of behavior can take place' (Foucault 2007, xxiv).

Neoliberal governmentality and its transformation of subjectivities has been principally analysed

in the context of universities of the global North. Despite neoliberalism's origins in

developmental relationships through which policy experiments were conducted in the global

South, 'in education policy studies there is a clear gap in research that adapts governmentality to

a non-Western context' (Fimyar 2008, 12). This study accordingly examines governmentality in

a Sri Lankan partner institution of University of London (UOL).

UOL is a British collegiate university that currently enrols over 50,000 'distance

learning' students, most of whom study at approximately 80 higher education institutions in the

global South (UOL n.d.-a). After its founding in 1836, UOL became instrumental in colonial

education, administering examinations for higher education institutions in Nigeria, Uganda, West

Indies, and other British territories. Many such institutions, including Ceylon University College

(CUC), dissolved their partnerships with UOL around independence to become the first

postcolonial universities in their respective countries. Although UOL's partnership with CUC

enabled teaching and research on locally focused disciplines such as Sanskrit, Pali, Sinhala,

oriental studies, philosophy, and various social sciences, 'educational nationalists' called for

4

CUC's decolonisation since 'external examinations conducted by British universities were a poor substitute for a real university education in an indigenous university' (de Silva 2005, 514). To gain autonomy from UOL, CUC was reconstituted as University of Ceylon in 1942. UOL education returned to Sri Lanka in the 1990s, when UOL partnered with a for-profit higher education institution in Colombo that I will call London Institution of Higher Education (LIHE).

LIHE enrols approximately 1,000 undergraduates, most of whom are UOL students. Approximately 80% of the UOL degrees conferred at LIHE are in business or British law, reflecting the desocialisation of academic disciplines in the neoliberal university described by Baltodano (2012). A three-year UOL degree at LIHE costs 25,000,000 Sri Lankan Rupees (15,000 Euros), over 18 years of income at the country's median per capita income (Department of Census and Statistics 2016), with roughly half that amount comprising UOL tuition. Around 90% of LIHE lecturers are part-time, while 10% are full-time administrative faculty. As is typical of private institutions in Sri Lanka, LIHE omits the word 'university' from its name to eschew state regulation of its educational activities (see Fielden and Varghese 2009). Since UOL is the sole governing actor, LIHE is exemplary of nonstate governmentality in higher education. UOL governs by providing subject guides of 150-250 pages and conducting annual examinations that constitute the entirety of student assessment. These minimal interventions structure the 'field of possibility' for an expansive domain of student and faculty conduct (Foucault 2007, xxiv).

The partnership between UOL and LIHE occupies a market space that neoliberal policy previously opened. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund mandated a series of structural adjustment programs in Sri Lanka that restricted public education funding (Chandrasiri 2003). Consequently, only 9% of entrance examinees are admitted into any public university (Liyanage 2014). To capture the surplus demand for higher

education, for-profit institutions often access legitimacy by partnering with Northern universities. This presents market opportunities for UOL (2018), whose largest income sources are tuition fees from 'distance learning' students and contracts with institutions like LIHE. UOL (2014, 13-21) embraces a 'commercial business model', envisioning itself as a 'services business' whose 'core asset' is a 'brand' that generates 'additional income from new customers and new markets' in order 'to increase the financial surplus from service expansion'. In exchange, it certifies graduates and partner institutions, resembling the 'generosity of expertise' that often rationalises education in neoliberal development (Rose 1999, 92). Sidhu (2007) observes that transnational education institutions often employ new developmentalist rationality and its language of expertise to make 'claims of political neutrality and scientific legitimacy'. These discourses conceal the fact that 'their political-epistemic foundations are informed by neoliberal notions of market value and neocolonial ideas about difference, progress, and development' (208). Transnational universities configure 'connections among far-flung sites, shaping what might be called an ecology of expertise' (Ong 2008, 118). In this ecology of expertise, the colonial difference is spatialised as 'knowledge gaps' to be closed by Northern interventions into Southern education (Olssen and Peters 2005, 335). Lönnqvist *et al.* (2018, 5-11) suggest that while Northern universities seek Southern partners for mainly 'altruistic motives', they also benefit by enhancing their 'image and brand' to attract 'new projects and new customers'. Using semi-structured interviews, this study investigates whether UOL's ecology of expertise altruistically develops Southern partner institutions, or whether its relationship with LIHE is extractive like other neoliberal and colonial projects. It intends to 'discern colonial power's point of application, its target, and the discursive and nondiscursive fields it sought to encompass'

6

(Scott 1995, 204). As will be argued, UOL's application of power and its attendant subjectivities

exemplify colonial governmentality in higher education.

Methodology

While teaching at LIHE, I conducted hour-long, semi-structured interviews with LIHE students

and faculty. I asked mostly open-ended questions on experiences and feelings regarding UOL,

LIHE, and how they understood their relationship to each. Interviewees were purposively

sampled for proportional representation of gender and position at LIHE. They comprised of nine

students, four lecturers without administrative duties, three administrative faculty members who

also lecture, and one top-level administrator. 'Top-level administrator' could refer to LIHE's

chairperson, president, or CEO. All interviewees were of Sri Lankan origin except two students.

All faculty had completed UOL undergraduate degrees at LIHE, and often commented on their

experiences as students. Interviewees have been numbered and quoted using the code STU for

students, LEC for lecturers, ADF for administrative faculty, and TLA for top-level

administrators. This research has been reviewed and approved by the FASS-LUMS Research

Ethics Committee of Lancaster University.

This research is also based on my notes and reflections from four years of teaching at

LIHE, which I cite as NOTES. I am an educator of US origin. As the only foreigner to ever teach

at LIHE, my terms of employment were the same as Sri Lankan lecturers. Nevertheless, my

Northern origin sometimes came with advantages. Educators from the global North have held

positions of authority in Sri Lankan educational institutions since the 19th century, when British

and US missionaries founded dozens of schools across the country (Coperehewa 2011). At

LIHE, the rendition of the coloniser as an educational expert was reinforced by UOL's

governance, examinations, and curricula written from an explicitly Western perspective. UOL's privileging of Western epistemology likely benefitted me, even as I attempted to conduct research and teaching against that very privilege. Yet the way in which our educational spaces were governed left me with feelings of frustration, disempowerment, and invisibility similar to those expressed by my colleagues and students. I often internalised UOL's governing rationalities within my own subjectivity, eventually questioning whether we were really lecturers, and whether there was any university at all. I understood that the value of my research was predicated on the extent to which I became part of the faculty at LIHE and taught in a colonised educational space. I did not want to reproduce the colonial aspiration for an outsider's objectivity (Lewis 1973; Mullings 1999). As I will argue, UOL's governmentality of inscription and numbers undergirds its claims to universalist knowledge and expertise on Southern educational spaces. To resist this epistemic injustice, I refused to imagine myself to be collecting 'data' in order to produce objective knowledge, nor did I intend to posit suggestions that could enhance the efficacy of UOL's colonial education. This meant that I favoured comprehensive read-throughs of interview transcripts while limiting my use of coding and other data-oriented approaches. Considering that '*episteme* claims universality; *techné* is closely allied to time and place' (Cortina *et al.* 2019, 502), I focused on the *technés* through which the coloniality of knowledge is reproduced rather than critiquing the content of that knowledge. Therefore, emphasis is placed on grounded experiences and counternarratives that do not register in UOL's globalised and numericised domain of intervention. Sidhu *et al.* (2016, 1509) identify a need for research on 'the textured and grounded transformations in the spaces and subjectivities of globalizing universities'. A salient texture of education at LIHE is one of tension between UOL's governmentality and the counter-conduct of its subjects, and between UOL's discourse and the

8

counternarratives that more critically describe the education that takes place (see Giroux *et al*.

1996).

Conduct at LIHE, the governmentality through which it is structured, and the

subjectivities it forms are analysed by foregrounding the voices of interviewees. The focus is not

on UOL's audit mechanisms detailed in its Teaching Centre Recognition Framework (n.d.-c).

According to LIHE's top-level administrator, UOL audits are 'not valid at all' and amount to

'nothing at all'. UOL cannot be said to govern through an audit culture, but instead implements

'the new "lighter touch" approach [which] now requires that organisations review and police

themselves' (Shore 2008, 281). Yet LIHE conducts 'no academic supervision of lecturers at all'

(LEC3) and does not 'get directly involved with the academic process unless it is about selecting

academics' (LEC2). The governance of UOL education through annual examinations effectuates

a radical self-responsibilisation of students and lecturers, resembling a lighter-touch version of

the 'race for rewards and credentials, within which they are persistently assessed, audited, and

ranked' by mechanisms of neoliberal governmentality (De Lissovoy 2017, 5). In contrast to the

grids of performance metrics that configure neoliberal subjectivities amongst US and UK

teachers (Ball and Olmedo 2013), UOL's lighter-touch governmentality seems to afford more

freedom. However, the freedom of the subject is often the very target of governmentality (Rose

1999). In coloniality, the subject is governed not only through its enclosure within a governable

domain, but also through inscribed forms of partial exclusion (Pesek, 2011). This mechanism of

colonial governmentality, which I will refer to as arterial inscription, shapes subjectivities by

delimiting and displacing authority. This study focuses on subjectivities formed around UOL's

governmentality to 'evaluate practices in terms of the extent to which they accord those caught

up within them the capacity to judge, accept or transform the practices that subjectify them'

(Rose 1999, 97). Agency 'cannot overcome these prior and constituting dimensions of social normativity' (Butler 2016, 19), yet subjects often find agency in contact with and resistance to governmentality. What forms of agency and authority does UOL govern in its Southern partner institutions? What subjectivities are engendered amongst faculty and students when neoliberal governmentality operates across the colonial difference? These questions seek decolonial resonance in Rose's call for governmentality research:

> What is to be destabilized, what we are to try to think beyond, are all those claims made by others to govern us in the name of our own well-being, to speak for us, to identify our needs, to know us better than we know ourselves. (Rose 1999, 59)

UOL's governing rationality projects a global and developmental need for its examinations. It also structures practices and subjectivities throughout UOL's transnational education system, of which LIHE is a component.

Findings & Discussion

Arterial inscription

UOL arranges partner institutions, lecturers, and students into an arterial topology using differential inscriptions. Rose (1999, 37) sees inscription as 'material techniques of thought that make possible the extension of authority over that which they seem to depict'. In neoliberal governmentality, inscription is a microtechnology that operates at a 'capillary level of power' (Foucault 1980, 39) to materialise connections between governing actor and subject. Cooper (1994, 1533) states that 'power in colonial societies was more arterial than capillary— concentrated spatially and socially, not very nourishing beyond such domain'. Colonial

governmentality employs arterial power to inscribe subjects with disparate governing rationalities. Pesek (2011, 46-7) recommends that studies of governmentality within colonial contexts address this heterogeneity of subjectivities because in conceptualising capillary power, 'Foucault is rather assuming that governmentality is characterised by the accomplishment of [a] single or at least a dominant political rationality'. This section will discuss the differential governing rationalities that UOL (n.d.-a) mobilises by inscribing students as 'external', classrooms as 'local teaching centres', and withholding inscription from lecturers altogether.

UOL inscribes students as 'external' to dislocate education from the classroom. Students enrol with UOL for its inscription, which signifies 'recognition. Having a UOL degree is a pass for us to many jobs' (STU8), leading some to believe that 'the UOL degree I have is the only thing that matters' (ADF1). As typical in neoliberal higher education, 'students do not pay to be taught a discipline by professionals who have proven expertise and subject knowledge based on professional criteria. Instead, students pay for the end product of education' (Lorenz 2012, 622). Inscribing students as external suggests that LIHE and its lecturers are not a source of education, but instead 'a means to an end. We want the degree, but we have to put up with LIHE' (STU4). UOL's end product is a distinctly colonial inscription, which resonated with many student-customers' 'colonial upbringing. We have a high regard for anything British' (STU8). LIHE brands itself accordingly, as evidenced during a graduation speech in which its top-level administrator explained that UOL's colonial history with CUC contributes to LIHE's prestige (NOTES). UOL (2014, 7) similarly justifies its 'Worldwide' interventions with British cosmopolitanism: 'While our roots are in London, we have a national and global reach through our academic work and have a brand that is the envy of others'. This aspirational envy motivates students who UOL localises in a peripheral imaginary: 'Wherever you are in the world, you can

gain a valued qualification' by studying at a 'local teaching institution' dispersed throughout

'every corner of the globe' (University of London, n.d.-b). Ferguson and Gupta (2002, 988) note

the irony that 'the agents of localization were precisely those entities . . . that claim for

themselves geographies and interests that are national and universal'. They therefore identify a

'transnational governmentality' through which spaces are ordered hierarchically through

verticality and encompassment. A similar spatial inequality reinforces that 'UOL is much bigger

than LIHE could ever be. I think it's a symbiotic relationship, but it's one that certainly favours

UOL more than LIHE' (LEC2). The inscription of 'external' UOL students dislocates them from

their 'local teaching centres', marking them as recipients of British knowledge rather than

participants in classroom education.

Students often felt dislocated from UOL despite their matriculation. Many expressed that

since UOL 'only deals with the study material and the exams, you definitely feel removed from

UOL' (STU1) and 'very disconnected. We're basically just a franchise, like McDonald's'

(STU4). They 'sometimes forget that I'm a UOL student' (STU3), although many 'would like to

be a UOL student. I don't want to be an LIHE student' (STU4). Despite their aspirations, UOL is

not 'actually helping you in any way other than just giving you your certificate. You depend

more on your LIHE lecturers than whatever material UOL gives you. You don't really feel a part

of UOL' (STU6). Students often saw UOL's role as limited to inscribing certifications. When

asked if they felt like a UOL or LIHE student, one responded, 'neither. My goal is to just finish,

get my qualification, and start working' (STU7). Many felt distant from their education, even

while regularly attending classes. UOL (2018, 9) inscribes 'distance education' upon students to

establish that although they attend a 'Teaching Centre', their classrooms are not learning spaces,

and their educators are not really educators. The inscription of distance arrogates educational

12

authority to UOL while obscuring that 'the contact our lecturers and students have with UOL is just administrative, not academic' (TLA). Distance is applied not as an educational model, but rather as a governing rationality that delegitimates lecturers and their classroom teaching.

UOL (n.d.-c) regards faculty as 'lecturers/teachers' while inscribing them with no formal UOL affiliation. At LIHE, most worked without contracts due to a 'legal issue', according to one administrator. Despite their formal exclusion, most faculty saw themselves as UOL lecturers. When asked if they felt like a UOL lecturer, one responded, 'I do, in the sense that I'm very familiar with the course material, the examiner commentary, what kind of ideological bent they have towards certain subjects' (LEC3). Another specified, 'I'm part of UOL, which teaches in Sri Lanka . . . I would be comfortable saying I'm a lecturer for UOL International Programmes' (LEC2). Most faculty felt 'not closely integrated with LIHE in any way. As a visiting lecturer, you usually come after hours. The office is closed. You do your lectures and go' (LEC3). Rawolle, Rowlands, and Blackmore (2017) examine the neoliberalisation of Australian universities as a case study, concluding that contractualism erodes academic community. At LIHE, informalisation posits lecturers as even more institutionally external. Without formal contracts or recognition, the lecturers who educate UOL's students are invisibilised at the periphery of its arterial topology.

UOL's arterial inscription gave many students and faculty the perception that their university is fragmented or absent. A university 'is a community, whereas here, people do not know each other. They come for lectures and they go', since 'they have no facilities for them to stay' and 'no opportunity for lecturers to get professional advancement' (TLA). Interviewees diverged in describing LIHE as a 'university' (STU8, LEC4), a 'college' (STU4, STU7), or a

'tuition' provider (LEC3, TLA). Most interviewees had nonetheless expected a 'real university experience' from LIHE. One elaborated:

> I've heard a lot of my friends who I've studied with at LIHE, or even my students, refer to LIHE as 'university'. They say, 'I know him from uni. He was my lecturer at uni'. If you think of 'university' as a place where you got your degree, absolutely. (LEC4)

LIHE sometimes appears as 'just a tuition centre . . . because we don't provide any of our own material when it comes to the education. We just take the material that's been sent by London School of Economics (LSE) and reproduce it for our students' (ADF2). In Sri Lanka, 'tuition' refers to private supplementary courses that typically use rote pedagogies to prepare grade-school students for examinations (Subedi 2018). Yet LIHE, the only place where students have contact with educators, is not supplementary. Thus, another administrator insisted, 'we do not function as a tuition. We say that we are almost a university. The only difference is that we do not mark our own papers' (ADF3). Characterised by their lack of authority, 'colonial universities both were and were not European universities; they aspired to be but were not quite' (Mignolo 2003, 99). LIHE 'provides most of the elements of a university without being a university', resembling 'a vessel that's occupied' by UOL (LEC2). Faculty at the occupied university educate UOL students without assessment authority or formal affiliation. UOL, the occupier, inscribes this education as its own to expropriate higher educational legitimacy.

Colonial governmentality structures an arterial topology by selectively bestowing and withholding inscriptions. UOL's (n.d.-a) partner institutions are delegitimated through their inscription as 'local teaching centres'. This designation precludes research activity, cosmopolitan purpose, and university status, all of which UOL secures and markets as its own. It imparts that

'if the university is UOL, then LIHE must be not the university' (LEC 4). A similar exclusion

operates by withholding from students the inscription of LSE, who designs UOL's business and

social science programs and conducts their examinations. Instead of LSE degrees, students

receive UOL degrees that read, 'having registered with UOL and passed the approved

examinations conducted by LSE'. LIHE advertises in newspapers its 'academic direction of

LSE', and students often call themselves 'LSE students' (STU3, STU5, NOTES). Scott (1995,

197) observes that colonial governmentality delineates 'whether or not and by what sign of

difference power included or excluded portions of the native population'. UOL's arterial

inscriptions demarcate inequalities between global university and 'local teaching centre', UOL

faculty and informal 'lecturer/teacher', LSE student and 'external' UOL student. Another sign of

difference, 'distance education', displaces educational authority from the Southern classroom.

These differential inscriptions exclude Southern educational spaces from the legitimacy

associated with authorised lecturers at real universities. Annual examinations secure authority

within British institutions at the interior of UOL's arterial topology, far from LIHE.

The power of the single examination

UOL's usurpation of authority renders Southern institutions and faculty incapable of educating

students, a deficit of expertise to be ameliorated by British examinations. UOL partner

institutions like LIHE could therefore be included in what Aikman *et al.* (2016, 318) call

'"deficit" groups', which are populations that deficit discourses define by their need for Northern

guidance. Escobar (1995, 37) challenges developmental conceptions that characterise the global

South with deficiency, stressing that while expertise on Southern spaces has consolidated 'new

knowledge and capabilities, it also implied a further loss of autonomy and the blocking of

different modes of knowing'. UOL examinations maintain the primacy of British knowledge

within colonised educational spaces. They constitute the numerical component of the

'technologies of inscription and control through numbers, calculations, and accounts' that typify

colonial governmentality (Kalpagam, 2000a, 434). Raaper (2016) similarly investigates the

standardisation of student assessment in a UK university as a technology of neoliberal

governmentality. However, while numerous assessment regulations characterise the performative

neoliberal governmentality of Northern educational spaces (Ball 2012), UOL governs partner

institutions with a singular metric.

UOL programs at partner institutions consist of year-long courses assessed through a

three-hour examination. Questions vary between short-answer, essay, and multiple choice. LSE

centrally marks examinations and conveys results through a single number without written

feedback, indicating that they are governmentality mechanisms rather than pedagogical tools.

This instrumentalises 'the power of the single figure' by reducing 'the complexity of experience

to a single comparable, quotable, calculable number' (Rose 1999, 205). UOL examinations

motivate study behaviours, influence classroom pedagogies, delineate important from

unimportant knowledge, inform the hiring and evaluation of faculty, incentivise partner

institutions by rewarding them with marketable metrics, and perform the minimum assessment

necessary to inscribe UOL's legitimacy upon students (ADF1, ADF2, LEC4, NOTES). In

addition to governing this range of conduct, UOL encourages particular forms of 'counter-

conduct', defined by Foucault as 'struggle against the processes implemented for conducting

others' (Foucault 2007, 201). Odysseos (2011) adds that contemporary colonial governmentality

often permits and redirects counter-conduct towards its own ends, which UOL does in multiple

ways.

Studies at LIHE mostly involve analysing past examination papers obtained from UOL's

Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), a strategy known as 'question-spotting'. The reason 'most

of the students question-spot' (STU5) is that 'the questions are very fixed. You can always

predict questions' (STU4). Students generally 'find the pattern in the exam and target, because

it's best' (STU6). In preparing lessons, lecturers 'have already question-spotted for us. That's

how they teach you' (STU4). They 'teach purely for the exam' (LEC4), directing '100 percent'

of classroom time to examinations (ADF3). In an eight-month course, 'we do exam questions

from October until April continuously' (ADF1). UOL ostensibly discourages question-spotting,

which renders it counter-conduct and obscures its predominance. Simultaneously, UOL's arterial

topology invisibilises its lecturers and educational spaces, enabling the rote learning that makes

single-examination assessment feasible. By consistently rewarding question-spotting, UOL

examinations govern counter-conduct to align classroom teaching with British knowledge.

While UOL examinations encourage question-spotting as sanctioned counter-conduct,

they unequivocally discourage critical pedagogies. Learning beyond question-spotting is contrary

to UOL's governmentality because 'students who conform really closely to the subject guide,

who don't read anything else [and] students who've gone above and beyond, always reading

outside the subject guide . . . both sets can do quite well or quite badly' (LEC2). Students often

objected when lecturers taught beyond examination material, in which case they 'leave out what

lecturers teach me, and I study according to the papers' (STU4). When a lecturer asked students

to write a research paper, one student felt that 'we are not supposed to do it. It doesn't affect our

exams' (STU6). Another lecturer taught critical thinking through a rigorous examination-writing

method to earn marks of 'seventy-plus, that so-called "critical awareness space"' (LEC2). They

worried, however, that this neglected 'how much curiosity you have, the will to ask the right

questions. It's very hard to measure that. How are you going to do that with one exam?' One

student was also unsatisfied by this reduction of critical thought to examination writing,

recounting that in class, 'if you don't fit into that structure, you get deeply criticised for it. That

obviously affects you mentally' (STU6). Many interviewees said that the quality and breadth of

their education had been compromised by examinations because 'you're not asked to learn or

explore. It's just a tuition class where a teacher is a transmitter and you're just a receiver . . . It's

like a master-slave sort of thing. You have to obey' (STU4). Some interviewees reflected that

UOL examinations denied them a 'holistic education' (STU3) or liberal arts education 'to

cultivate a full human being' (LEC4). Sidhu (2007, 220) cautions that in transnational education,

'casual teaching staff will be stymied in facilitating the higher order critical thinking skills

associated with university-level study'. UOL examinations enact banking education on a global

scale by projecting ignorance onto Southern educational spaces, which renders critical learning

and teaching as counter-conduct (see Freire 1997). UOL regards students and lecturers as

recipients of knowledge, not creators. With one governmentality mechanism, UOL dislocates

three pedagogical processes: designing curricula, assessing students, and encouraging critical

engagement.

Nearly all interviewees saw LIHE faculty as experts despite UOL's denial of their

pedagogical authority. Lecturers are 'very highly qualified alumni, the ones who got firsts and

did masters' abroad' (LEC3). Faculty 'work at different institutions', most commonly

nongovernmental organisations, intergovernmental organisations, and business process firms

(ADF2). Amongst law lecturers, 'almost every one of them practices law, so they are experts in

their fields,' with some alumni and lecturers working in the Supreme Court (ADF3). Students

commonly cited lecturer expertise as a decisive factor in choosing LIHE. UOL capitalises on

18

Southern expertise while disregarding its value beyond examination preparation. One lecturer

sidelined their own perspective they had developed while completing an MPhil at Oxford: 'I

wouldn't bring that into this. I would teach the one that's in the subject guide, because that's

what the students are going to be assessed on' (LEC3). In neoliberal education, 'teachers'

capacity to make autonomous judgment about curriculum and pedagogy in the interests of their

actual pupils is undermined by the system of remote control' (Connell 2013, 108). UOL's control

across the colonial difference empties expertise from Southern faculty.

Most interviewees criticised UOL's Eurocentrism. In South Asia, British education

institutions have long employed colonial governmentality to orient educators and students

towards Western epistemologies (Shani 2006). British rule permeated Sri Lanka with colonial

governmentality to establish 'a public sphere in which only certain kinds of knowledges and not

others could circulate with any efficacy' (Scott 1995, 209). Likewise, UOL's modules are 'only

focused towards the West and Europe' (STU9), actualising a 'very masculine, white, Eurocentric

approach' (LEC2) that regards Sri Lanka as 'not even a speck on the map' (STU3). One student

saw UOL examinations as 'very European-centred. To get the mark, you could mention Sri

Lanka, but you had to first mention a European country' (STU6). For another group of students,

curricular Eurocentrism was 'the first thing we talked about in our first year at LIHE' (STU1).

Some gave justifications from colonial history: 'Sri Lankan law is based on UK law, so

ultimately you're teaching some [Sri Lankan law] as well, but not directly' (ADF3). Many,

however, were unsettled by UOL's colonial dynamics:

> If you are in a system of power where British education is well-regarded, it becomes almost silly to
>
> resist from a pragmatic sense. In a principled sense, this is not great. Many decades after colonialism,

you're still looking to a British-centric system of education . . . They still don't really acknowledge

colonialism . . . As a postcolonial state, that is not ideal. (LEC3)

In UOL subject guides, 'the Eurocentrism is there. Sometimes you read it and you're like, "but

we don't feel that way"' (STU5). One UOL subject guide introduces international development

by stating that 'the ideas featured here predominantly originated within Western traditions of

thought. We make no apology for this' (Forsyth *et al.* 2011, 19). In response, a student suggested

that UOL include non-Western theorists like Sun Tzu, since 'you can't understand an Eastern

country through the same framework' of European thought (STU3). Eurocentric curricula

reproduce what Gamage (2016, 10) calls the 'captive mind' of internalised colonial oppression,

which necessitates in South Asia 'an indigenous Sociology—or for that matter Social Sciences—

that enable us to comprehend our own problems and [devise] solutions'. This effort is impeded

by UOL's colonial governmentality.

Almost all interviewees desired other forms of assessment. Many saw UOL examinations

as 'cruel' (LEC2) and 'psychologically' (LEC1) strenuous, causing 'a lot of crying'. Students

grew 'stressed out and depressed' because one examination 'will decide your future. It's not fair

. . . The system needs to be changed' (STU8). For one student, not having 'assignment-based

assessment is the one regret I have with UOL, 100 percent. I regret even joining UOL' (STU4).

Another student who took loans to move to Sri Lanka and study at LIHE said that if they had

known about UOL's single-examination assessment, 'I would have stayed back home and just

paid UOL and not gone to lectures, done self-study' (STU9). Lecturers also wished UOL was

'less marks-oriented' because 'students aren't focused about learning the subject' (LEC4). Other

forms of assessment such as 'assignments and a project would . . . give you a good understanding

of the whole theory' (STU4), enable 'a more personal connection' with lecturers (LEC1), help

20

students 'learn to write papers' (LEC3), and UOL education 'would definitely be less Eurocentric' (STU1). Additionally, 'if there was constant grading and papers handed in, like you would have at a normal university, they would have an incentive to study throughout the year' (LEC4). LIHE, as an abnormal university, is governed away from such pedagogical diversity.

UOL continues its single-examination assessment despite nearly a century of calls for alternatives. The CUC Administration Report of 1927-1928 criticised that UOL examinations served to 'stifle initiative and originality in the student', causing a 'bias in the curricula that resulted in the retardation of the indigenous languages and scientific development in the country' (Warnapala 2011, 42-61). The principal of CUC expressed concern that in regard to economics and history, UOL 'examinations naturally do not, nor are they ever likely to include any reference to local history, conditions, or circumstances in either subject' (57). Students saw CUC 'as a mere coaching institution where students purchased instruction' on UOL examinations (47). In 2011, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education found that UOL examinations involved 'little formative function', regarding which many students had 'commented unfavourably' (18). More recently, LIHE requested from UOL that LIHE lecturers assess students, 'but they said no because it is their exams. Their examiners are doing it. What they expect is only that we conduct their lectures' (TLA). UOL continues its extensive colonial history of dispossessing authority from Southern faculty.

UOL examinations dilute classroom teaching and make attendance unnecessary. Students frequently disclosed that 'my close friends and I haven't gone for lectures in months' (STU1), or 'I've gone for zero lectures this year. I went for only one lecture last year' (STU4) because 'there is no need to go to LIHE' (STU9). During a faculty meeting, a top-level LIHE administrator blamed low attendance on their lack of assessment authority and 'ownership' of the students

(NOTES). Another administrator said many students 'drop out', meaning 'they're still enrolled at LIHE, but they don't end up going for lectures and they do it by themselves' (ADF1). Some lecturers encouraged this practice: 'I start every class, every year, by saying this is a self-study program' (LEC4). UOL requires that partner institutions report students with attendance lower than 80 percent, which would disqualify them from examinations. However, LIHE administrators report almost no students because 'it was not really 80 percent we looked at. Something really bad, like maybe 20 percent attendance' would be reported to UOL (ADF2). Their counter-conduct was justified because students 'spend a lot on their education, and it's not fair for them to be removed'. By limiting attendance reporting requirements to students below a threshold, UOL divests itself of responsibility for the disintegration of classroom learning that results from its retention of assessment authority. Like question-spotting, the underreporting of low attendance is counter-conduct that UOL invisibilises to legitimate its education.

UOL examinations distil Sri Lankan academic expertise into British examination expertise. Lecturers become 'experts in making sure you get through' (STU6) whose 'job is more like filtering these materials' according to importance for examinations (LEC2). LIHE's encompassment by broader circulations of examination expertise imperils its profitability, particularly when lecturers provide individual tuition classes. One interviewee discussed a friend who 'had to sell land to pay UOL, LIHE, and a tuition class' taught by an LIHE lecturer (STU8). During a faculty meeting, a top-level administrator described tuition classes as the 'curse' of Sri Lanka and asked lecturers to identify their tuition-providing colleagues (NOTES). Their frustration reflected UOL's decoupling of assessment authority and expertise from institutions and lecturers, which threatens LIHE's purpose entirely. UOL transmutes higher education into examination expertise, a numerable and extractable resource.

Extracting authority

Single-examination assessment enables UOL to accumulate expertise through an extractive relationship with Southern spaces. Many faculty saw UOL as a 'heavily-marketed and profit-oriented . . . revenue-making venture' (LEC4). At faculty meetings, LIHE administrators often criticised UOL's commercial business model and capture of LIHE's revenue (NOTES). Alongside fees from students and partner institutions, UOL extracts intangible resources like knowledge, legitimacy, and expertise that maintain its global authority. Mignolo (2003, 97-110) situates the 'corporate university' within the colonisation of knowledge production, arguing that 'the accumulation of money cannot be detached from the institutional accumulation of meaning and knowledge at the university . . . "epistemic dependency" runs parallel to economic dependency'. The authority to produce knowledge is secured within Northern institutions, structuring epistemic inequalities that rationalise Western 'technical expertise and universalist discourses of education and technology transfer' (Appadurai 2001, 24). Accordingly, this section traces the extraction of authority from subjectivities at the periphery of UOL's ecology of expertise into its calculative centre, where it is appropriated as the coloniser's universalist knowledge.

Just as 'neoliberalism is experienced and perceived in the classroom and in the soul' (Ball and Olmedo 2013, 90), faculty often internalised the diminishment of their expertise. Some extended their loss of assessment authority to other pedagogical areas: 'If you're trying to do right by your students, if you have no control over the exam, I don't feel like you should be messing around too much with what you're teaching' (LEC3). They responsibilised themselves, rather than British colonial education, for reproducing a culture of rote learning:

I always go on the principle that lecturers should be unimportant. I tell my students all the time, especially . . . before the exam: If this is not useful for you . . . stop coming for class, don't waste your time. I think it's just an unfortunate fact of how teaching happens in Sri Lanka in primary and secondary school. Lecturers become very important here simply because students are not used to working without guidance. You have to deal with that kind of socialisation, cultural aspect of it. (LEC3)

Lecturers often saw themselves in terms worse than a necessary evil: as an expendable one. Their expendability was underscored in a meeting between UOL representatives and LIHE lecturers about a project to overhaul and expand the VLE. The representatives warned that lecturers 'cannot do the same things as they have before'. Lecturers would now merely 'add value' to VLE content through its 'localisation' (NOTES). One interviewee recalled that while the UOL representative assured lecturers that their jobs were safe, they 'gave a little wry smile, didn't they? That bastard' (LEC4). Another observed that 'they're pushing out the institutions and their lecturers. Institutions are kind of pushing back, but I don't know how much you can. At the end of the day, the power is completely with UOL' (ADF1). A top-level administrator similarly reported that when UOL visits LIHE, 'there is no point in dialoguing with them' because 'we are helpless, we are not the authority' (TLA). LIHE faculty experienced UOL's dispossession of their authority as profound disempowerment.

By expropriating faculty authority, UOL augments its claim to expertise. For some students, LIHE's lack of assessment authority indicated a lower quality education and produced 'this lingering feeling that you get: Is my course as good as a course that LSE teaches?' (STU5). They questioned whether they were 'as good as the students who are studying with universities',

24

meaning real universities. Their 'insecurity' stemmed from a lack of 'contact with the

professors', meaning professors vested with pedagogical authority. Some wanted to be taught by

British 'lecturers who have written the books' (STU9) because the 'study guide authors . . .

probably know the background better. It would be directly from them, so much better' (STU2).

Similarly, one lecturer reasoned:

> Since they have the right to set the guide, set the standards, set the requirements, then the
>
> corresponding obligation seems that they ought to mark it. They have the best grasp of it. There's the
>
> advantage of aggregation, the fact that these people have access to so many papers. I might have only
>
> two or three students sometimes, whereas these guys might have a full list of hundreds, if not
>
> thousands, of students. (LEC2)

Authority is established not through the education of students, but rather through the

accumulation of inscriptions. UOL expropriates the authority generated through assessment by

relegating its uninscribed lecturers to an external, extractive domain of governance. Connell

(2018, 3) indicates that 'the global South is as vital a source of raw materials for the knowledge

economy as it is for the material economy. It yields data' that is aggregated in Northern

institutions. This means 'intellectual workers in the global periphery are pushed towards a

particular cultural and intellectual stance'. UOL's extractive ecology of expertise secures

epistemic and practical authority within British institutions, governing Southern faculty to align

their teaching with European ways of knowing.

UOL's encompassment and inscription of Southern educational spaces reproduces the

universality of its expertise. Rose understands inscription to be essential to the establishment of

'centers of calculation':

> Events must be inscribed in standardized forms, the inscriptions must be transported from far and wide
>
> and accumulated in a central locale, where they can be aggregated, compared, compiled and the
>
> subject of calculation. Through the development of such complex relays of inscription and
>
> accumulation, new conduits of power are brought into being between those who wish to exercise
>
> power and those over whom they wish to exercise it. (Rose 1999, 211)

The inscription of examination results constitutes the currency that circulates UOL's 'economy of merit and fault' (Foucault 2007, 173) and enriches its calculative centre. UOL is one of many Northern institutions that govern Southern education by creating 'an illusion of research and intellectual reasoning through their multitude of data from different sources' (Dahlstrom 2009, 169). Numbers and capital often define the objectives of Northern interventions upon Southern education, resulting in a 'neoliberal superficiality' that overrides 'individual and institutional needs for narrative space and agency to be able to interpret what is happening beyond the surface' (170). UOL reduces higher education to a single numerical inscription and governs faculty according to 'UOL's requirements of form over substance' (LEC2). Kalpagam (2000b, 44-7) posits that in colonial governmentality, 'statistical narratives render both Western sciences and these practices universal', and therefore represent 'the most important language in the narrative legitimation of modernity, that is, for telling stories about progress, of accumulation of wealth, control of nature, the wellbeing of humanity'. Although its role is 'just administrative, not academic' (TLA), UOL brands itself as an education provider to disguise its extraction as developmental benevolence. LIHE's top-level administrator thus described UOL:

26

without using the word 'colonial', but it has those characteristics, yes. They are the academic

authorities. Well, it's more than an academic authority. It is not only a regulator. They are running

their own program here. We just have to deliver the program, that's all. (TLA)

UOL accumulates its universalist expertise through an extractive occupation of Southern

institutions like LIHE. It empties these spaces of the agency and authority required to produce

original knowledge, which rationalises its colonial intervention.

Conclusion

Despite frequent feelings of disempowerment, LIHE students and faculty engaged in multiple

practices of counter-conduct against UOL's colonial governmentality. Many challenged UOL's

educational authority by expounding numerous critiques of UOL examinations and engaging

with knowledge beyond their Eurocentric subject guides. Interviewees often rejected UOL's

arterial inscriptions like 'Teaching Centre' and 'distance learning' by calling LIHE a university,

regarding lecturers as faculty, and locating higher education within the classroom. The struggle

over epistemic authority takes place in educational spaces governed by inscriptive and extractive

technologies that render students and educators as unauthorised, inauthentic, and subordinate.

The evacuation of epistemic authority engenders subjectivities of precarity and resistance. Butler

(2016, 18-22) understands vulnerability as 'a deliberate exposure to power' in which the subject

makes themselves 'vulnerable to a certain name-calling from the start' with the intention of

resisting that same definitory power. Governmentality studies hold promise for grounded

analyses of 'the way vulnerability enters agency' and the resultant tensions between subject and

power, resistance and dependency (25). Research in international education should further

investigate the technologies, practices, and discourses of transnational governmentality that often

include yet marginalise Southern students and faculty. Such research could attend to the agentic politics that are contested when subjects seek arterial inscriptions to access power, thereby enabling resistance to epistemic dependency through counter-conduct, counternarratives, and critiques.

LIHE instantiates a dispossession of educational authority that has been vital to the modern/colonial project of centring and universalising Western epistemology. UOL's colonial governmentality reflects the ongoing significance of Stein's (2017, S28) postulation that 'modern Western universities were not autonomously formed in Europe and then simply exported to colonies; rather, conquest and enslavement were integral to the formation and growth of these institutions in both locales'. Through these extractive relationships, Northern universities maintain the dominance of modern Western epistemology, which 'is oriented toward the pursuit of universal reason and totalizing accounts of reality, and treats knowledge production, accumulation, and mastery as a means of describing/containing the world in order to control/determine it' (S41). UOL secures its universalist expertise by inscribing and encompassing Southern educational spaces as its external yet governable domain in which it takes no educational role. Its governmentality obstructs the pedagogical processes through which students and faculty could produce original and critical knowledge. UOL thus exemplifies Mignolo's (2002, 81-2) theory of 'coloniality as constitutive of modernity . . . not only is such a historico-structural dependency economic or political; above all, it is epistemic'. UOL's universalist expertise is constituted by the extraction of epistemic authority. Southern universities are governed as 'colonial surrogates . . . [in] that critical scholars, scientists, and intellectuals trained in the universities of colonial, third world, or emerging countries will not fail to recognize their position vis-à-vis Western universities' (Mignolo 2003, 99). UOL's arterial

28

inscription and arrogation of assessment authority reproduce its colonial claims to epistemic and

institutional superiority.

By marginalising students and faculty, colonial and neoliberal governmentalities may

diminish the capabilities of Southern higher educational spaces to empower democratic subjects.

In many Northern universities, subjects are dismembered by the multiplicitous functions that

neoliberal governmentality demands from higher education (Shore, 2010). Conversely, UOL's

colonial governmentality ascribes little value to partner institutions and faculty, leading many

interviewees to doubt whether there is any university at all. In Northern universities, the

'increased use of casual academic labor . . . and neoliberal governance erodes research-faculty

control over curriculums, degrees, and major requirements, the last force within public

universities potentially sustaining the ideal of the well-educated citizen' (Brown 2015, 194).

UOL's colonial governance effaces faculty authority entirely, dispossessing Southern

universities of their role in developing critically-minded citizens. At LIHE, students do not

'know what the university community is because they have never experienced that. They can't

even expect it because they don't know what it is', since they would 'have to know what is

beyond only the tutors' (TLA). Colonial and neoliberal governmentalities converge upon the

democratic subject to uproot its constitutive practices:

> Why would peoples want or seek democracy in the absence of even its vaporous liberal
>
> democratic instantiation? And what in dedemocratized subjects and subjectivities would
>
> yearn for this political regime, a yearning that is neither primordial nor cultured by this
>
> historical condition? (Brown 2015, 18)

29

By governing its students and lecturers as external, UOL excludes them from the university as a

democratic space in which demands could be formulated and change could be effected.

Research on governmentality should consider its colonial dimensions, and particularly

the subjectivities shaped by arterial power. Neoliberal development introduces new articulations

of universalist expertise to the epistemic dependency that has been instrumentalised by colonial

governmentality for centuries. Transnational education institutions inscribe gradations of

inclusion throughout global networks of legitimacy, delineating an arterial ecology of expertise.

At this topology's extractive periphery, subjectivities may reflect the liminality experienced

within coloniality (Bhabha 2004) and the poverty of knowledge projected by developmental

schema (Escobar 1995). UOL's colonial governmentality instils within 'external' students that

their lecturers are not quite lecturers because they cannot conduct assessment, and that their

university is not quite a university because it cannot govern itself. This suggests that Northern

governing actors sometimes secure their authority and legitimate their interventions by inscribing

deficiency and incompleteness onto Southern subjectivities. Further studies should explore

governmentality, conduct and counter-conduct at sites like LIHE to situate the neoliberal

knowledge economy within colonial projects of epistemic extraction.

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