

Turning resistant students into allies: governing young people through adult learning

Jayne Bye
University of Western Sydney
j.bye@uws.edu.au

Abstract

This paper uses Foucault's concept of governmentality (1991) to explore the ways in which young people are governed through education and training. It is within the governing milieu of neo-liberalism, with its concern for the production of the entrepreneurial self, that young people in education and training have become the targets of government today. Specifically, this paper is concerned with the means by which neo-liberal governmental agendas concerning education and training participation and the shaping of responsibilised identities become part of the daily lives of students and teachers. The central question of '[w]hat makes government possible'? (Rose 1999, p. 47) is explored by examining the teaching and learning practices at a senior college in a metropolitan area of NSW and asking how they function to keep young people in education and training. Specifically, the appeal to adult learning at this site will be viewed as a governing strategy through which a complex interplay of both enticement and regulation operates to enable a range of students to engage with what the College has to offer. Through the process of translation, adult learning operates as a powerful shaper of conduct, particularly in the areas of self-regulation, self-direction and responsibilisation, the "authoritative norms" (Miller & Rose, 1990, p. 18) most often associated with adult learning. Essentially, although ill-defined and contested, adult learning represents a large body of expert knowledge that purports to know about the needs of adults in teaching and learning contexts. As such, it exerts the authority of expertise which can serve the purpose of aligning subjects with the goals of government (Rose & Miller, 1992).

Introduction

It is within the governing milieu of neo-liberalism, with its concern for the production of the entrepreneurial self, that young people in education and training have become the targets of government today. The central role of problematisation in the governing process is revealed in the youth transitions literature where anxiety around school to work transitions, education and training participation rates and employability is evident in the production of expert knowledge about the needs of young people. This paper is concerned with the means by which these broad, neo-liberal governmental agendas become part of the daily lives of students and teachers. The central question of '[w]hat makes government possible'? (Rose 1999, p. 47) will be explored by examining the teaching and learning practices at a senior college (hereafter the College) in a metropolitan area of NSW and how they function to keep young people in education and training.

Using Foucault's concept of governmentality (1991) and its understandings of the means by which conduct is shaped, allows new perspectives on the complexities of schooling and its implication in the production of the responsibilised, neo-liberal subject. Specifically, this paper takes up the notion that government takes effect through indirect means and relies on processes of translation in which "a multitude of connections are established between the aspirations of authorities and the activities of individuals and groups" (Rose & Miller, 1992). It then argues that certain approaches to teaching and

learning in evidence at the College can be seen as part of this translation process by working to produce adult identities in young people which are consistent with governmental objectives. To achieve this, an overview of the College will be provided and then the process of translation will be briefly described and applied to the College through the presentation and analysis of two classroom observations.

The College

The institutional site at the centre of this paper is a senior college in NSW (hereafter called the College), which offers a post-compulsory general education curriculum (Years 11 and 12) alongside vocational studies. The College offers what might best be described as an integrated approach to general and vocational curriculum. Students are able to undertake a post-compulsory program of study which allows them to complete the NSW Higher School Certificate (with or without an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank) while also studying for a TAFE certificate chosen from a range of vocational areas including Retail, Information Technology, Media and Performance, Design and Hospitality. Students also participate in industry placements one day per week related to their vocational studies. At the time of the College's inception 15 years ago, this approach to the provision of general and vocational education on the one site was seen as experimental due to its hybrid nature and also the fact that NSW, unlike other states and territories in Australia, had no established senior college model of post-compulsory provision.

The underpinning philosophy of the College's teaching and learning approach is the provision of an adult learning environment where students are responsible for themselves and it is this feature of College life that is of interest in this paper. The most immediate signs of the adult learning approach at the College can be seen through its no bells and no uniform policies. Teachers are referred to by their first names and students freely enter and leave the College premises as their timetables allow.

In examining the College from an analytics of government perspective, and asking in what ways we might be able to see the College operating through enticement rather than coercion, it would seem that an adult learning environment (whatever this might mean in the College context) must be considered fairly central in terms of the practices aimed at eliciting conduct more in tune with governmental objectives of such sites. One way to see this in operation is through an analysis of the notion of learner identity made possible through 'adult learning'. It should be acknowledged, that in the academic literature, the 'adult learner' is an ill-defined, problematic, and controversial concept. The conceptual frameworks which have historically underpinned concepts of the adult learner, such as Knowles' andragogy (1973), and self directed learning have attracted commentary and critique (Fenwick 2001; Foley 2004). Nevertheless, the formulation of the adult learner as having a particular set of characteristics which can be described, or even prescribed, has had surprising longevity in some practice contexts. For example Millar and Saddlington's (1993) commentary on the emergent 'adult learner' indicates still widely held beliefs about the need for autonomy, the drive to self-direct and a willingness to take responsibility for learning. The consonance of these values of adult learning and the goals of neo-liberal education are not difficult to see. Rose's (1999) summation of the promise of the neo-liberal subject of education, drawn from a genealogy of schooling, furthers this sense of the possibilities provided by educational interventions:

They dreamed that one could produce individuals who did not need to be governed by others, who would govern themselves through introspection, foresight, calculation, judgement and according to certain ethical norms (p. 78).

Adult learning might simply be seen as a strategic refinement of these goals of schooling, applied to adults instead of children. In the case of the senior college, where resistant identities experience what is often called 'second chance' education, it might be argued that adult learning functions as a more conducive mechanism to assist young people in becoming 'the good citizen,' a second chance for the governmental ends of schooling to be achieved.

Underpinning this discussion is the concept of translation. As Rose (1999) describes it, '[t]ranslation links the general to the particular' (p. 51) and is the means by which government becomes possible through the linking of political rationalities with programs, technologies, practices and people. Government relies upon 'the forging of alignments between political aims and the strategies of experts, and upon establishing relays between the calculations of authorities and the aspirations of free citizens' (Rose 1999, p. 49). This paper asks what this might look like at the local level of the College by examining the purported adult learning practices in play.

Viewing the College as a product of translation as well as a part of the network of translation offers several advantages. If we entertain the idea that 'a plan, policy or programme is not merely "realized"' (Rose 1999, p. 48) in a site like the College, 'nor is it a matter of an order issued centrally being executed locally' (Rose 1999, p. 48), a space is opened to consider the complexity of what occurs here. In this instance, looking at how the programmatic agendas of government have been realized, or indeed resisted, through the 'conduct of actors' (Dean 1999, p. 32) at this site, may illuminate some aspects of the workings of power through specific practices and modes of subjectification.

Classroom Observations

Both of the classes presented below are different in terms of teaching content, teaching style, atmosphere and attitude to meeting objectives. And yet, according to the rhetoric of the College, both provide an adult learning environment. As stated, it is not the goal of this paper to decide whether or not this is a well supported claim. The term 'adult learning' and its product 'the adult learner' are ill-defined and contested at best. Rather, the aim here is to look at the classroom practices and consider the ways 'adult' conduct is being shaped and what the appeal to adult learning achieves in terms of governing the participants. In exploring this, the concept of translation, a key element in the governmental shaping of conduct, can be seen as useful.

In the process of translation of government goals, the process of 'enrolling individuals as allies' (Miller & Rose 1990, p. 18) is seen as central and it is the contention here that, if these classrooms have anything in common, it is an attempt to build alliances between teachers and students and ultimately, students and the curriculum. As also discussed previously, many of the students at the College have experienced difficulties in their educational histories, often citing antagonistic relationships with teachers as part of their problem with school. Even students with less difficult educational histories often cited unsatisfactory relationships with teachers as a concern with previous schooling. Therefore allying themselves with teachers and therefore potentially with the aims and objectives of the curriculum, represents a step away from old ways of being in relation to

learning. It is argued that the classroom scenes presented here demonstrate aspects of this process.

Harry's class – 'Is everybody happy'?

Harry is teaching an HSC Family and Community Studies class in a classroom that has a central work table in the middle and computers around the walls. The class takes place after lunch on a day when he has eight hours of teaching timetabled. Despite this fact, Harry is jovial and energetic. A student teases him about his handwriting on the whiteboard:

Harry – Are you saying my writing is terrible? Well that's my only fault [laughter from students and Harry].

Female student – You're in a happy mood today [others – Yeah!]

Harry – Why not? Why not? I'm in the middle of an 8 hour day – why shouldn't I be?

Student – That's the way...

The banter continues.

Harry puts an outline of the lesson on the whiteboard. The theme of the lesson is rights of the child:

Task 1

1. Read article 'Australia's shame'
 2. Highlight ALL GROUPS mentioned
 3. Highlight major issues covered in the report
- Then log on to a computer

The class participants do not all arrive at the same time. There is a gradual filtering in of students over the first hour of the lesson. At the end of the two hours, there are seven students present. This is a feature of most of the classes I observe at the College and each teacher deals with it slightly differently. Harry's approach is to greet students in a welcoming way, often making comments or enquiries about the individual:

Harry - Grab one of those [handouts] as you come in and look at the board, that'd be great. How are you feeling today anyway, Connor?...A bit better?

That's great.

[the student elaborates on forthcoming holiday plans to Jenolan caves].

Harry - How're going Joey?

Joey - [grunts – sound exhausted]

Harry - Grab one of those [handouts]. Look at the instructions up on the board.

Let's get a kick along nice and early. The sooner we read through this, the sooner we can get on with the more exciting things...

Joey - [grunts/groans – as if challenging that the next work will be more exciting].

Harry - What's that? Too much work, still? You cutting it down a bit? [they discuss the amount of part-time work Joey is doing].

The students begin to read the set article which is about conditions under which indigenous children live in Australia. Harry encourages the students to engage with the material spontaneously:

Harry - Well guys, we're working on 2 things at the moment...[refers back to board...] Say things, say things, tell me what you think as soon as you read it.

A female student, Millie, responds quite vociferously about what she has read so far on the issue of Aboriginal children. Another student engages with her on the issue and the discussion continues for a few minutes. As Millie becomes more animated and provoked by the discussion, she works her way up to claiming:

Millie - ...and then they [Aboriginal people] grow up to be murderers

Harry - Millie, that's ...a gross generalisation...and that sort of stereotype...

Millie - They grow up to be really angry and that's why we have Redfern riots and...

Harry - [gently and encouragingly] Well all of the deeply incensed statements that you're making, you're going to have a chance to explore some of the things that one of these groups is saying to the United Nations about such things. So we'll have a chance today to zero in on that sort of stuff and see if we can find some facts behind the emotion which is obviously coming out there. OK – that's where we are going ...

The opening of the lesson up until this point has been animated, friendly (notwithstanding Millie's agitation on the issue), welcoming of all comers who number five at this point, regardless of their disposition. Even the grunting Joey is drawn in through a comment from Harry concerning his welfare in relation to doing too much part-time work and being too tired for class.

Students ask Harry questions about how to approach the task. There is general chat, both on and off the task. Harry attempts to focus the students on the task at hand which is essentially reading and making brief note of key groups mentioned in the article.

Harry - OK guys I'm going to set a time limit on this. Um, pretend this is the rest of your life, sorry the HSC or something, and you've got til five past simply to highlight the issues, Kathleen, five past and its two minutes to two. I'll give you another seven minutes - just scan it pretty quickly. I don't want you to achieve any more than being aware of the groups and try to find,... There's at least four or five issues that one group has submitted to some other group, or is about to. That's what I'm wanting you to achieve at the end of the next seven minutes. Right, put your heads down and I promise not to interrupt. But the world is full of broken promises...

Harry is quiet for about twenty seconds and then starts talking again. The comment is inaudible to me at the back of the room, but the class erupts into laughter and talking again. There is more joking before things quieten down again and then almost immediately more laughter at something Harry has said.

The focus of the lesson turns to a computer-based research activity which involves a series of questions which Harry wants to share out amongst the class. Students are allocated research questions and they quickly move to the computers around the room.

They seem either eager to work, eager to get online or perhaps eager to move from the central table where they have been sitting for the first part of the lesson.

Students in each group ask each other 'So what are we doing?' – apparently having a low grasp of requirements after very lengthy instructions from Harry. However, students seem quite focused after Harry moves around to make sure they've all found the website they need. Harry asks a student – 'Have you had those eyes tested yet?' And then:

Harry - Is everybody happy?

The general consensus is that they are, or at least none of the students reveal that they are otherwise.

As the time moves towards the halfway point of the lesson and an expected ten minute break, Harry gives a time call and focuses students on where they should be up to prior to the break and the reporting back that they will be doing after the break, plus:

Harry - You've been working really well today. That's absolutely *fantastic!*

After the break, the conclusion of the activity is instigated by Harry gathering the class back around the central table. Students are to report back on their findings from the internet research activity. The girls are slow to rejoin, seeming tired and less motivated than previously.

Harry - Now are we going to try 'I want to be 1st, I'll get it over with' or I'll just randomly choose you? Anyone want to volunteer to be first? Or what we might do is just go through the order that's in the sheet. Why don't we do it that way? [Student – that's a good idea]... Yep thank you. A democratic decision,...as long as you do it my way. OK, um so let's just go through...All that we want from you at the moment, you can just give us a bit of a summary of what the issue is you were looking at. It may not exactly fit the headings you've got here, so just give us a bit of a background and the general things that you've discovered ...[Harry goes on...reiterating the task...] OK who did number one – the right of equality regardless of race, colour, sex, religion or nationality? That was you Sally. [Sally blanches]. Now I can see we're going to do a rapid summary in your head of some of the points. You don't have to be fully comprehensive, just give us a couple of points.

Sally - Um...

Harry - Did this group question anything about that? About the rights of equality for Australian kids for example?

Sally - [mumbles something inaudible]...I don't know what I've done.

Harry - Do you want to hold on that and come back to you? Would you prefer that?

Sally - Yeah.

Harry - [To Sally and also more generally...] Be part of here so you know what's going on. So you're going to have a go but I'll give you a bit of time to ruminate...Did anyone else need a couple of minutes to check what you're going to say, or are you pretty right? OK, what about number two, the right to a name and a nationality? Good on you Stevie.

Stevie – [the girl who was on the chat site] I found, I went on this website and I

found this thing that's a ...

She is confident in giving her response but is a bit limited in her understanding of the information she has found and Harry has to draw out an example of an adopted child not knowing its nationality. Harry makes all of the discussion here.

During this discussion another female student eats an orange, gets up and puts peeling in bin then applies hand crème.

At this point Harry returns to the first student, Sally, to report back. She reads from the report she has been asked to use to find her answers and shows no ability to synthesize the information into an answer that relates to her specific question. Harry takes over and brings the main point together and tells students what to write and where to note it on their handouts. After he has finished, he attributes his elaborated and detailed point back to the student:

Harry - So that's the main point Sally has got out of her material there.

As the lesson draws towards its end, there is a sense that some students are distracted. They are not being disruptive but they are 'zoning out' and Harry seems aware of it. In the final ten minutes of the lesson, Harry stirs interest with a 'provocative statement' – his term. He has picked up on a comment from a student about the new fad of children's parties for girls being held with themes that apparently seem better suited to more mature individuals.

Harry - This business of going to kids parties at 11 and having facials and whatever, it is silly, OK or wrong? [Students interject] Stop, not all at once. Silly, OK or wrong? Think about it personally. Half minute of silence and I want you to justify your opinion. Just think before you speak, you can jot down ideas if you want to.

This topic and process seems to energise the class again. Students relate stories about growing up too quickly, others become more engaged. Interestingly, the students seem more engaged by other student talk. They are also engaged more when he directly asks their opinion on the issue that has caused the interest. Students clamour to jump into the conversation and want to give their opinions. Harry has to almost referee the discussion. Students exchange ideas and opinions – this is the most animated they have been. Harry draws the focus back to making a note on the handout that is relevant to the points they have been making. The class ends after this discussion and Harry's final comments.

Discussion - adult learning in Harry's classroom

By most measures, Harry's lesson would not fit the traditional picture of an adult learning environment. Firstly, the lesson is highly structured by Harry. And while the activities could be carried out independently once the materials have been given out, the actual lesson is teacher led. Harry directs the students very closely throughout, to the point of telling them how and when to make notes. The students seem quite dependent on Harry's cues to know how to complete the simple activity. So positioning of the students here does not fit the model of the autonomous, self-directing adult.

The content of the lesson seems to draw students in at times but the most animated discussion happens at a tangent to the knowledge objectives of the lesson. What else might be going on by way of producing the 'adult learner'? The warmth of Harry's demeanour creates a welcoming atmosphere. He seems genuinely happy to be in the

classroom and this sets a positive tone which, despite the challenges of getting these students to meet the outcomes of the lesson, he manages to largely maintain for the duration of the class. His interactions with the students are respectful and personal. The students' individuality is seen and included in the contact that he has with them. He uses his knowledge of students' individual circumstances to connect and also discloses some relevant personal details of his own life outside the classroom to engage student interest. It is also a low risk environment for students – Harry's tasks do not ask a great deal of the students and he is very available to help. No one feels put down for struggling. When one of the students mistakenly uses a website which focuses on Canadian rather than Australian indigenous issues, Harry finds a way to link in the material and draws useful parallels so that the student's mistaken efforts count towards what the lesson is trying to achieve.

In these ways, and others, Harry is undoing the expectations many young people have of the classroom. The students in this class are among the least able HSC candidates. For many of these students, the classroom has been an alienating place but here, it can be different. The success of this strategy can be seen in the enthusiastic way many of the students jump into discussion. What is 'adult' about this and what is the nature of the learning? Importantly it seems, Harry models a respectful, non-antagonistic adult figure which elicits a positive response in the students. Their views are sought and listened to. Harry is the facilitator and he does a lot of the talking but there *is* an exchange and in these moments – see the discussion at the end of the lesson in particular when they talk about children's parties – there is genuine exchange of ideas. This classroom is a place where you might be stimulated to talk and listen with real interest. Harry's classroom functions to form an alliance based on goodwill.

Claire's class – *'I shouldn't have to chase you up, you're an adult.'*

PDHPE 4-6pm

Claire is teaching a Preliminary (Year 11) Personal Development, Health, Physical Education (PDHPE) class, between 4 and 6pm, the last class of the day. The class has been moved from their usual room to a computer room for the purposes of the lesson. Eight students arrive over about five minutes and are asked to sit at computers and log on. The classroom atmosphere is that of a rabble, despite the small numbers.

Claire attempts to begin the formal lesson – repeated requests to have students face the front are met with little compliance.

Claire -[voice quite elevated] Alright guys, if you could all just face this way...for a little bit. Warren included...

More students arrive which interrupts the initial attempt at calling class to order as Claire greets them. There are six boys and three girls at this stage.

Claire -Ah, excuse me. Face round here...Quickly! The longer we take to start, the longer it is before we leave.

In between loud voice announcements Claire is also attending to individuals as they request help and/or arrive - 'Has anyone seen Debbie?'

Claire - Alright can you face this way please. Warren! Don't you understand that?

Jordan? Right around. Jordan! [Yeah?] The whole of your chest facing this way.

A number of the male students – especially Warren and Jordan - appear to have little sense of classroom deportment. Claire's classroom management just to get the class started includes the most basic instructions as to correct or expected posture. The ability to self-manage appears to be not part of the classroom repertoire of some students and yet, Claire persists

Claire -Right all facing this way before we get started...Warren, Warren please! Warren, Warren! I need to get you all started together. The sheet that I've given you is about nutrition. There's still a lot of people not looking this way, if you don't mind, quickly! I'm waiting. Right - this is nutrition and its effect on personal health. We're doing better health for individuals. In the last lesson we looked at the um...A lot of us saw *Supersize Me* and so I'm basing this on some of the work we did on that. We're going to start off together which is about questions one to three [gives an aside to Debbie who arrives – I've put all your stuff up here. You just sit there and face this way for a couple of minutes].

Debbie -I didn't know where everyone was!

Claire -Well it's OK, you're here now. The first section we'll do as a group then you're going to be able to go into some internet sites and also some stuff that I've got on the P-drive for biology that's relevant to you. And you know how to look at what nutritional requirements are for a day and what healthy eating is and make some notes on that. And then finally I'm going to have you look at some of the web-pages of the fast food companies and I was amazed that you can set up tray and then find out exactly what is in each of the foods, so that you can actually have a look at and compare say a McDonalds ...And finally you're having a look at what are the consequences of not eating healthy food...

This is the longest piece of task focused instruction that Claire has been able to get through, however all through this there is low level talking and apparent distraction.

Once Claire has introduced the lesson students begin independent work using the computers and Claire attends to individuals.

Claire -Are you doing the sheet or are you just doing your own thing? Come on, get on with it. I shouldn't have to chase you up, you're an adult.

Student -Where is the sheet gone?

Claire -In the workplace they don't ...[unclear]

By this stage there are eleven students – five girls, six boys – present.

By 4.30 most students are on-task, or at least looking like it. The most distracted boys are engaging in some aspects of the work but not focusing enough to complete the work. They have not followed the flow of tasks set out on the sheet.

Claire -Try to follow the instructions and see how much you can get done. Otherwise you're going to be dissatisfied at the end of the lesson.

Interactions between Claire and the students are very varied. It is helpful and focused with some who are trying to achieve the outcomes of the lesson, seemingly unproductive and occasionally nonsensical with the distracted boys.

Student 1 –[Reading from the task sheet] What’s kidney fm?

Student 2 -It’s like a radio station...

Student 1 -[to Claire] What’s kidney what?

Claire - Kidney function. *Fn*. Sorry I did my biology shorthand.

Student 1- Yeah well I don’t do biology.

Claire - I know, I’d forgotten.

Student 1 -That’s where they teach you to grow drugs.

Claire -I don’t teach people how to grow drugs. I teach people the effects of using them.

The drugs comment seems designed to get a rise or a laugh out of the class. I can tell that the student who delivers the comment is waiting for a reaction from both Claire and the rest of the class. However, the comment is not responded to in the expected way. Claire does not get upset and thereby denies the student his laugh.

The lesson continues largely in this vein. Claire continues working around the class, working with individuals and sometimes drawing more students in with discussion points of interest. At one point Fabio takes a mobile phone call in class. Claire tells him to hang up and turn the phone off but he ignores her.

As the class time draws to an end, Claire gives instructions for saving work and/or printing it off. Students are individually finishing, logging off, powering down the computers and leaving.

Claire – I’ll see you guys next Thursday!

At 5.30 the class finishes. There is no formal ending. The last sound on my tape of the observations is the sound of Claire chuckling as she walks towards me.

Discussion - adult learning in Claire’s classroom

Claire’s approach, on the surface, is quite different from Harry’s. From the outset, the tone of the classroom interactions are much more that of a disciplinary classroom. Against the odds, she insists on quiet attention at the beginning of the class. She attempts to gain the attention of all class participants. She wants them facing the front. The fact that these seemingly basic features of classroom behaviour are beyond a proportion of her students leads to her use of a raised voice and the singling out of individual students for correction. The noise, the interjections, the lack of focus, Claire’s raised voice - so far, so typical. This is a scene which is being played out in school classrooms everywhere, often with the resulting alienation of students and frustration of teachers.

Yet there are points in this class where the usual trajectory is interrupted. Old strategies of disruption – smart comments, interjections, physical restlessness - amongst well-practiced proponents of classroom mayhem are dealt with in often unexpected ways. Sometimes Claire ‘doesn’t hear’ the provocative comments and just ploughs on. Sometimes she takes up such comments and uses them to include the student in the discussion. In another lesson I observe with Claire, a student makes a loud, off-the-point comment about a character they are discussing being gay. The comment was designed

to be disruptive and an attempt to make a distracting joke. In this case Claire treated the comment seriously and responded in a way that the student did not expect. Claire took up the issue and the student suddenly found himself unexpectedly participating. A moment was created where you could actually see students being taken aback and having a different type of classroom experience.

How then, do Claire's classroom practices be said to manifest the translation process? How is the expertise of adult learning being used to shape conduct? How does this lesson fit into the network of governing influences? Firstly, there seems to be an over-riding sense of a space being created – a space that will allow inclusion even of the most marginal students in terms of challenging behaviour. Claire's expected standards of behaviour are not dissimilar to what might be expected in any classroom. The noise, the restlessness, the distractions are not welcome here but neither are they terminal points in the interaction she is maintaining. No one gets excluded from Claire's class, at least on this day. Claire stated that sometimes she does use more standard approaches of segregation of students who are causing problems but she does this with a keen understanding that exclusion is a powerful tool and one that these students do not like. She understands the paradox of their situation - despite their inability to be in the classroom in ways that are generally acceptable, they do want to be there. They are getting something out of coming to class. Claire even comments that one of the most difficult students has near perfect attendance. Her classroom is a space that allows (or at least tolerates and understands) ways of being in school that would otherwise be unintelligible. Resistance is one of the issues here but it is being read differently in this context. The College, Claire's philosophy of inclusive teaching, the support structures of the College (there is often a 2nd support teacher in the room) engage differently. The impossible subjects (Yeodell 2006) have become intelligible in this room or if not quite intelligible, then at least given a space in which they are held. This in itself promises the possibility of something different for these students. Is this adult learning? Perhaps not in any immediately recognisable form, however, it certainly represents a discontinuity and therefore a space for something else to occur. An alliance has been formed based on Claire's willingness to persist and take these students and their learning seriously.

Conclusion

The theorization of government tells us that government takes effect through indirect means and relies on processes of translation (Rose 1999) in which 'a multitude of connections are established between the aspirations of authorities and the activities of individuals and groups' (Rose & Miller 1992). Central to this process is the role of expertise in rendering the targets of government knowable and then providing the mechanisms, the technologies of government, for acting on the subjects of government. Government is effective at the point where governmental programs become 'consonant with the proliferation of procedures for the conduct of conduct at a molecular' (Rose 1999, p. 51). This paper has tackled the question of what this process might look like at the molecular level and has considered the role that translation plays in achieving governmental ends.

If anything can be taken from these observations, it might be that they reveal something of the nature of the alliances and alignments that must occur to make translation possible. In the transcript excerpts above and the observation notes, this process of the forging of alignments and alliances can also be seen to have operated to produce particular ends. In this case, the engagement of resistant students. In each of the

classrooms, there are students present who would not be in education if it were not for the College. A number of Harry's students are clearly struggling with the literacy requirements of the work at this level and must find the demands of the course quite confronting. Others, such as Joey, who works too many part-time hours, are pulled in many directions other than school. Claire's class contains students whose challenging behaviours would not be tolerated in many contexts, especially in the post-compulsory years. This engagement appears to be shaped by the use of adult learning techniques.

The appeal to adult learning by the College as a governing technique operates in a number of ways. Initially it acts as an enticement. Young people who come to the College find the prospect of being treated like an adult, whatever that might mean to them, appealing. In actuality, it operates as a powerful shaper of conduct, particularly in the areas of self-regulation, self-direction and responsabilisation, the 'authoritative norms' (Miller & Rose 1990, p. 18) most often associated with adult learning. Essentially, although ill-defined and contested, adult learning represents a large body of expert knowledge that purports to know about the needs of adults in teaching and learning contexts. As such, it exerts the authority of expertise which can serve the purpose of aligning subjects with the goals of government (Rose & Miller 1992). Perhaps most importantly in the College context, it has the potential to turn resistant students into allies.

That this might occur differently in different classrooms and with various levels of success, should be no surprise given what we know about attempts to shape conduct and the impact of contingent local practices. As Miller and Rose (1990) state, '[t]he "will to govern" needs to be understood less in terms of its success than in terms of the difficulties of operationalizing it' (p. 190). The observations suggested that adult learning in the College operates as a series of productive refusals, that is, refusal to fall into the (often antagonistic) relations so commonplace in high school classrooms. The classroom practices observed attempted to create a space where alliances between teacher and student and student and educational goals could be built.

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