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Edufare for the future precariat: the moral agenda in Australia's 'earning or learning' policy

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Abstract:

This paper considers the educational experience constructed under Australia's policy decision to extend compulsory education by requiring that students must be 'earning or learning' till 17 years of age (Council of Australian Governments, 2009). The discussion draws on an empirical project that explored the moral order operating in classrooms for students retained under this policy in non-academic pathways in high schools and Technical and Further Education (TAFE) colleges across three towns experiencing youth employment stress. It asks how the policy regulating these students' prolonged engagement with formal education plays out in classroom interactions, to what end and to whose benefit. A theoretical lens informed by work by Standing and Wacquant is used to understand the contemporary moment, and work by Durkheim and Bernstein unpacks the moral work implicated in classroom interactions. The analysis describes the light curriculum and the heavy compliance demanded in these 'edufare' programs then argues that in essence the policy seeks to manage the social risk posed by the future precariat. The conclusion reflects on whether this is an adequate policy response to broad generational changes in fortunes and prospects to which education may not have the answers.

Keywords:

Morality, edufare, economization, precariat, compulsory education

1. Introduction

In general there is a tacit assumption that the past and present model will also be the future model - namely, the full-employment society, with its guiding ideas, institutions, economic and political organizations, and cultural identities. When it comes to specifics, then, investigations of late work societies here rest, strictly speaking, upon an unexpressed More-of-the-Same dogma that fails to confront alternative scenarios either empirically, theoretically, or politically. (Beck, 2000, p. 8)

In 2009, all Australian states signed the 'National Partnership Agreement on Youth Attainment and Transitions' (Council of Australian Governments, 2009). This coordination of policy committed each state's particular educational jurisdiction to a uniform effort to increase the number of students participating in schooling till Year 12, training or ongoing employment. The 'new participation requirements' included 'a mandatory requirement for all young people that have completed Year 10 to participate full time ... in education, training or employment or a combination of these activities, until age 17' (p.6). These participation requirements could be fulfilled either at a high school or a Technical and Further Education (TAFE) college. The extension of compulsory education under this policy was reinforced by an aligned change to the conditions for welfare entitlements and income support eligibility for young people and their families. The rationale underpinning this 'earning or learning till 17' policy was 'to increase their life prosperity and wellbeing and to support their productive participation in the Australian labour market' (p.6). Such a response was considered to be

necessary 'particularly during the economic downturn, so that young people do not become disengaged from education, training and the labour market' (p.6). In this way, the policy blurred the distinction between two rationales: improving life chances through educational achievement, and mitigating the effects of predictable unemployment.

On one hand, the palatable political explanation (Merson, 1995) for such a policy suite could be construed as prudent social investment aimed at increasing the skills base to sustain a post-industrial knowledge economy, by investing in education and training rather than welfare. This logic would suggest new curricular priorities or 'new basics' as demanded by the changing nature of work (Kalantzis, Cope & Harvey, 2003), and more conscious effort to disrupt traditional curricular settlements (Morgan, 2011; Foundation for Young Australians, n.d.) in line with the new economic conditions. In the absence or demise of such curricular innovation (Lingard & McGregor, 2014), this policy explanation could be critiqued for having failed to recognise the increasingly uncertain and precarious nature of work available to school leavers, or to reimagine the curriculum. In this light, the policy would seem to offer a specious educational solution to a growing economic problem by invoking job prospects that may not eventuate. At the same time, the associated change in welfare entitlements will impact most severely on the poorer, more welfare-dependent families who are already exposed to, and absorbing, these changes in the labour market. These flaws and distortions invite further consideration of the intent behind the policy.

This paper probes the moral order operating in the classrooms constructed under this policy and its resonance with larger shifts in the moral order of post-industrial, post-welfare societies. The argument proceeds in six further steps. Firstly, extending compulsory schooling is presented as a recurrent policy lever used across time and place in response to the individual and social risks of economic downturn. The changes underway in the broader moral landscape are then conceptualised with reference to Standing's concept of the precariat, and Wacquant's description of the punitive side to neoliberal governance. Next a lens on moral ordering in classrooms is developed and applied to moments of moral correction observed in seven classrooms serving 16 years old in non-academic pathways. The strong default of seeking narrowly circumscribed compliance identified in the moral ordering of these classrooms is then related to the narrowly conceived design of economized education policy, to argue that the light curriculum and heavy compliance demanded in these 'edufare' programs essentially seeks to manage the social problem posed by the future precariat, rather than the private trouble of students' transition to work and adult citizenship.

2. Extending compulsory schooling, again.

Prior to the 2009 National Partnership agreement, all Australian education systems, had legislated gradual increases in the years of compulsory schooling over time, like systems elsewhere (see for example, Oreopoulos (2009) re US state laws; Norris (2007) re the UK history; and Fang *et al.*, (2012) re China's Compulsory Education Law). With each statutory increase in the school-leaving age, parliamentary debates in Australia have rehearsed the same essentially opposed arguments: on one hand, the poor fit between mainstream schooling and the students who are compelled to attend; and on the other, the poor labour market outcomes for those who leave school early. As examples, in 1965, conservative Senator Edgar Prowse in the Australian Senate disputed the wisdom of raising the school-leaving age beyond 14 years:

these vital years of education are being cluttered up increasingly by young people who are compelled to remain at school. I do not believe that compulsion to attend school after the age of 14 achieves very much with a scholar. You can lead a horse to water but you cannot make it drink.ⁱ

In 1973, Charles Mathews, a Labor Party member of parliament, was equally sceptical of attempts to extend secondary schooling for working class communities:

We need to be warned by the example of the United States against artificially prolonging adolescence and economic dependence. Our secondary schools must not become glorified child-minding centres simply because an increasing majority of their students are not interested in an academic education at the time it is offered to them.ⁱⁱ

In 1975, Labor Senator Don Grimes, questioned the value of 'watered down versions' of academic curriculum experienced by more and more students, 'aggravated, certainly in my own State, by the raising of the school leaving age to 16 years.'ⁱⁱⁱ In 1997, Labor Member of Parliament, Jennifer Macklin, acknowledged that 'finishing year 12 does give young people the best chance in life and the best chance of taking up further education and getting into jobs that provide rewarding careers and decent wages', but argued against the linking of more compulsory schooling to restricted welfare entitlements:

forcing a young person to endure up to two years of doing something that they are neither willing nor suited for will not improve their prospect ... Telling these young people that they will have their income support withdrawn will not get them to stay at school if they do not want to. We have to work with these young people and not threaten them.^{iv}

In 2002, the Queensland Labor Premier, Peter Beattie highlighted the changing world of work in his campaign to lift the state's school-leaving age:

What we do not want ... is our young people in the 15- to 17-year-old bracket simply sitting at home watching *Days of Our Lives*. ... I urge all Queenslanders to participate in this debate. This is not just about schooling. This is about learning. This is about earning. This is about the very future of Queensland.^v

The unresolved friction between the two arguments points to an incapacity or unwillingness to re-imagine schooling despite significant social change, thus delivering what Beck (2000) terms 'More-of-the-Same dogma'. Singh and Harrevelt (2014) similarly highlight the recurrent policy solution of more schooling for this student group and its inherent shortcomings:

There is a tendency for governments to renew and even expand classroom-centric schooling policies and practices. Schooling is reimagined and reworked as the sole vehicle for addressing the intersecting problems confronting young adults ... nevertheless, corrective reforms to classroom-centric schooling cannot solve problems that are not primarily caused by schooling ... Nor can classroom-centric schooling mitigate problems inherent in schooling. (p.37)

The search for educational solutions to economic problems is becoming more common, as global forces restructure local economies and national governments are left with few policy levers at their disposal to mitigate growing uncertainties. Spring's (2015) analysis of the 'economization' of educational policy points to the increasingly popular common-sense of treating 'education as an economic enterprise' (p.2). Such arguments would embrace: the application of neoliberal rationales to education sectors (Connell, 2013); the instrumental thinning of the humanist curriculum to concentrate on preparing human capital for labour markets (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010); and the erosion of previous bedrock assumptions protecting public education's status as a public good (Martin, 2015). However, the policy premise that more education will ease youth's transition to employment seems lopsided if not naïve. It relies on an unexamined logic of priming the job applicant for a predictable and receptive job market, and thus avoids more difficult conversations around the changing nature of the job market. In particular it fails to acknowledge: the loss of manual/manufacturing work in first world economies (Weis, 1990; Weis & Dolby, 2012); the casualization and contingencies of much work under employer policies of 'flexible' staffing (Therborn, 2013); the impact of national austerity campaigns on the least skilled (McDowell, 2012); the impact of technology on low skill labour forces, and the growing practice of off-shoring work, including knowledge work roles (Brown, Lauder, & Ashton, 2008).

The crack opening between the naïve design of such educational solutions and the grimmer realities of 21st century labour markets for school leavers has fuelled moral panics about risky populations of 'disengaged' youth. In the UK and Australia, the acronym NEET is now used to categorise young people 'Not Engaged in Education and Training' (Hodgson, 2011, p. 123) and to voice concern about young people at risk of 'becoming NEET' (Siraj, Hollingworth, Taggart, Sammons, & Sylva, 2014, p. 7), that is, of falling into the crack. While such discourse steers a careful path treating NEET status as both a private trouble for the young person and a larger public issue, another public discourse of 'feral' youth in the wake of the UK riots in 2011 (McDowell, 2012) constructed these young people and their disengagement as a public issue and threat to public safety. Francis (2006, p. 191) similarly noted the development of 'an increasingly sour note' in the UK's policy discourse that demonized 'failing boys'. Fuelling this distrust, the global rash of Occupy movements mobilised '*the marginalized, the excluded and the indignant*' (Langman, 2013, p. 511, original emphasis) in protests challenging the legitimacy of market ideology that briefly unsettled the status quo. Against this backdrop, Australia's 'earning or learning till 17' policy could be interpreted as a strategy to manage or contain the social problem of potentially risky populations, as much as a strategy to address the private trouble of young people's transition to employment.

Extending compulsory schooling invites a rethinking of curriculum for the body of students who would not have remained in school otherwise. Lingard and McGregor (2014, p. 92) unpack 'curriculum' as 'what students ought to learn and what students ought to become'. These normative questions recur whenever and wherever the school-leaving age is lifted. In 1972 when the school-leaving age was raised to 16 in England, the opportunity was taken for a courageous experiment to rethink how curriculum might 'meet the needs of adolescent pupils of average and below average academic ability' (Stenhouse, 1968, p. 26). Rather than more of the academic same, The Humanities Curriculum Project took the opportunity to craft an ambitious, engaging and demanding educational experience: 'If we wish students to be able to adequately meet important human issues, these issues must themselves be the stuff of the curriculum, thus contributing to the making of the future citizen' (p.27). The design of 'discussion teaching' (Stenhouse, 1971, p. 158) took teachers out of

their disciplinary and pedagogical comfort zones, to help students explore divergent positions with purposeful connections between the issues raised and the students' challenging contexts.

Australian states have had a similar opportunity to rethink the curriculum for 'reluctant stayers' (te Riele & Crump, 2002, p. 253) in the recent extension to compulsory schooling, but these are very different times (Connell, 2002), now saturated by the 'economised' ideology of human capital: 'Go to school to learn the skills that will get you a job' (Spring, 2015, p.146). In this vein, the curriculum designed specifically for these 15 to 17 years olds in non-academic pathways has been conceived and labelled as 'prevocational', legitimated by notional relevance to nebulous job prospects (Doherty, 2015a) though there are 'relatively poor linkages to employment' (Murray & Polosel, 2013, p. 241). Similarly, the European Union's concern over 'tackling low achievement in basic skills' (Dunne, Patel, & Souto-Otero, 2014) demonstrates a narrowing conceptualisation of what curriculum could or should be, and what students ought to become. There is thus a stark contrast between Stenhouse's earlier design for active, questioning citizens suited to a pluralist democracy, and the contemporary 'prevocational' or 'basic skills' design.

Of greatest concern, the constellation of complications associated with retaining resistant students in non-academic pathways is rarely spread across society, but rather tends to pool disproportionately in disadvantaged communities with high welfare dependency and poor employment opportunities, served by residualised public sector schools (Thomson, 2002; Vinson, Rawsthorne, Beavis, & Ericson, 2015). These communities and these schools carry the burden of such policy moves on behalf of other communities and other schools, managing larger proportions of students with little stake in the future in more-of-the-same settings.

3. Moral dimensions beyond the classroom

To contextualise the National Partnership agreement, this section considers the moral tone and agendas shaping the contemporary macro context of such social policy. Beck (2000) argues that income-generating work has become the 'core value and mode of integration in modern societies' (p.11) by providing an anchor for 'moral being and self-image' (p. 10). The flipside to this is a 'mistrust of idleness' (p.12). The work of Standing and Wacquant helps to further illuminate the new moral climate emerging as labour markets in developed first world economies change.

Standing (2014a, 2014b) has identified the recent emergence of a new social stratum of people with a loose attachment to the world of work or any career paths that might build such anchored identities with some stake in the economy and society more broadly. He argues that their precarious situation is the product of widespread neoliberal economics privileging the interests of mobile global capital and flexible employment regimes. He terms this stratum the 'precariat' given their lack of any 'anchor of stability' (2014b, p. 1) and considers their insecure status to be one of 'denizens' (2014a, p.4) rather than citizens, given their restricted or shrinking access to the social protections and entitlements accorded others. Standing changes the concept to the verb 'to precaritize', and its passive form, 'to be precaritized' (p. 29), to characterize the corporate processes eroding labour market conditions and job security, which contribute to a short-term, alienated, and necessarily opportunistic mindset amongst the precariat.

While Standing's critique exposes the amorality of global capitalism and its break with the social contract of past industrial settlements, he also describes the 'ethical vacuum' (p. 35) of survival for

the precariat: 'we do what we can get away with, acting opportunistically, always on the edge of being amoral' (p. 37). Standing warns that this condition of vulnerability with nothing to lose makes the precariat a potentially dangerous 'class-in-the-making' (2014b, p.11) which is yet to form and mobilize any collective consciousness. However, in the meantime, the precariat pose a risk to themselves and others: 'It is dangerous because stress, economic insecurity and frustration can lead and are leading to social illnesses, including drug-taking, petty crime, domestic violence and suicide' (2014a, p. 32). The polarization of life chances structuring the 'tiered membership' model of society (2014a, p.10) breeds further mutual distrust. While the more flexible work conditions and austerity stringencies that have defined the precariat have been legitimated and sponsored by the state to profit the middle class and business elite, Standing argues that 'the state treats the precariat as necessary but as a group to be criticized, pitied, demonized, sanctioned or penalized in turn, not as a focus of social protection or betterment of well-being' (2014a, p.21). Their surplus labour works to everyone's advantage except their own.

This argument aligns closely with Wacquant's (2009) analysis of the burgeoning US penal industry as the dark side of neoliberal economic policies. Wacquant documents the double-handed nature of neoliberal governmentality evident in state sponsoring of economic deregulation on one hand, and increasingly punitive regimes of 'workfare' and 'prisonfare' on the other to 'bend so-called problem populations and territories to the common norm' (p.1). He argues that the stigmatization of 'castaway categories' (p.4) such as unemployed youth allows the post-welfare state to separate the problem of superfluous labour from its causes in economic restructuring, and to defuse more general anxiety about an increasingly insecure world. The precariat are thus useful as scapegoats. While the US penal industry is unique in its extremism, the hardening of the post-welfare state's provision and support for disadvantaged populations is an increasingly common phenomenon under neoliberal reforms (Jamrozik, 2009; Tomlinson, 2005). Wacquant points to state strategies of greater disciplinary intervention and supervision of the disadvantaged 'to anchor precarious wage work as a new norm of citizenship at the bottom of the class structure' (p. 11). This agenda is achieved through the '*carceral-assistential net* that aims either to render them "useful" by steering them onto the track of deskilled employment through moral retraining and material suasion, or to warehouse them out of reach' (p. 12, original emphasis).

This analysis could equally accommodate a concept of 'edufare', being compulsory attendance in formal education or vocational training as a legislated condition of welfare eligibility. Under Wacquant's description of the double-handed nature of neoliberalism, neoliberal policy in the education sector accounts for both the championing of market freedoms and choice for some, and the more punitive conscription of others who are less able to prosper in the market conditions. In exactly this vein, Brown (2015) adds edufare to Wacquant's workfare and prisonfare as a third penal state modality designed to manage poor youth in the US, in particular, African American girls.

Though highly relevant, these kinds of larger analyses that understand educational solutions to economic problems as more than benevolent gestures on the part of a beneficent state, are yet to be applied to Australia's 'earning or learning till 17' policy. Such theorisation invites a more sceptical reading of the extension of compulsory schooling for young people who can't find a start in the labour market. The work of Standing re the precariat's dangers both to themselves and to others, and that of Wacquant re the punitive strategies of neoliberal state to manage risky populations

expose changes underway in the social fabric of post-industrial, post-welfare states and their moral footings. The next section turns to focus on the cultivation of moral order within the classroom.

4. Moral dimensions within the classroom

Wuthnow (1989) conceptualises moral order as both a state and the process necessary to achieve and sustain that state:

definitions of the manner in which social relations should be constructed, then signals concerning these definitions need to be sent – signals that social relations are indeed patterned in the desired manner and that actors can be counted on to behave in expected ways. (p.145)

At the heart of the sociology of education, Durkheim's lectures on morality in education (Durkheim, 1925/1973) established the institutional role of schools as pivotal in this work, instilling shared moral principles, norms and ideals appropriate to the times and context. This moral work is understood to be 'implicated in every moment' (p.125) of schooling, not just carried in lessons devoted to morality. For Durkheim, morality 'consists in the sum of definite and special rules that imperatively determine conduct' (p.33). These rules and the moral force produce regularity and predictability underpinned by a collective authority and 'spirit of discipline' (p.31) in 'pursuit of impersonal ends' (p.58) such that the individual will 'feel ... a force unqualified by his personal preferences and to which he yields' (p. 34). The constraints of morality's prohibitions are understood to ultimately be enabling in that they establish shared norms which make a cohesive society possible. Durkheim was particularly concerned with the historical moment in France when state education sought to instil a 'rational' (p.12) secular morality as part of the national character, but his theory argues more generally that moral education always works in response to changing times and social demands: 'the educator ... must, in addition, help the younger generations to become conscious of the new ideal toward which they tend confusedly. To orient them in that direction it is not enough for him to conserve the past; he must prepare the future' (pp. 12-13). For Durkheim, the point of moral education is not just the management of classroom moments, but rather the deeper formation of habits and dispositions that the student will carry into their life beyond the school setting (see p. 173). For the sociologist of education, the empirical question at different times then becomes 'what ways of behaving are approved as moral and what are the characteristics of these modes of behaviour?' (p.55). With the scale of economic and labour market change underway, Durkheim's questions are worth revisiting.

Bernstein's (1990) theory of pedagogic discourse builds from these Durkheimian principles (see Moore, 2013). Bernstein distinguishes between the instructional and regulative discourses that together constitute pedagogic discourse as a relay of both knowledge and moral dispositions, and thus a means of symbolic control shaping and legitimating knowledges, norms and identities. The instructional discourse refers to the discourse of skills or knowledge that is being taught (the what); the regulative discourse refers to the discourse of social order for the pedagogic setting (the how), more particularly, to 'the forms that hierarchical relations take in the pedagogic relation and to expectations about conduct, character and manner' (Bernstein, 2000, p. 13). The regulative discourse is understood to be the dominant discourse establishing and regulating the moral order on which the transmission of any instructional discourse depends. This articulates with Durkheim's premise that the moral work of schools infuses every moment. This theory can take an analysis into the heart and minutiae of classroom interactions to expose the work to establish and maintain a

moral order under particular policy regimes. The following section outlines the methodological design and analytic vocabulary developed to investigate the moral work underway in the classes constructed under the 'earning or learning till 17' policy.

5. A methodology to characterise moral order

With a theoretical lens on morality in education as part of society, and the wider problematic in the disjuncture between naïve educational solutions and unravelling labour markets, this study was concerned with understanding the moral order constructed and sustained by the regulative discourse operating in classrooms for students retained under Australia's 'earning or learning till 17' policy. The empirical research involved classroom ethnographies of 8 teacher/class combinations in 5 sites (2 government high school settings, 2 Technical and Further Education (TAFE) college settings and 1 hybrid school/TAFE setting). One of the TAFE settings worked on a self-paced curriculum, producing very different classroom interactions, so this teacher/class combination has not been included further in this paper's analysis. The sites were sampled in 3 Queensland towns experiencing high youth unemployment (see Doherty, 2015b). Following Watson-Gegeo (1988, 1997), my approach to classroom ethnography sought a holistic perspective on teacher-student interactions through extended observation and repeated interviews. Following Hammersley (1990, 2006), my approach was also alert to how social order was achieved or contested in situ through the parties' interactions. Each class was observed over 3 or 4 weeks of their timetabled contact (a total of 100 hours of lessons across all sites). Classes were also audio-recorded to allow more detailed analysis later (except one class in which a student had asked that classes not be recorded: detailed notes kept a track of classroom interactions whenever this student was present). This data was augmented with repeated semi-structured interviews with teachers over the observation periods reflecting on events observed and their approach to the extended compulsory phase for their students, plus interviews with some students in each class group (a total of 15 Student interviews and 17 Teacher interviews). It should be noted that the teacher in the hybrid setting was observed working with two different class groups, thus accounts for two of the eight teacher/class combinations.

Across the settings, the curriculum was very similar, concentrating on basic skills and 'prevocational' knowledges considered relevant to the immediate lifeworlds of the students. The recorded classroom interaction was first analysed in terms of the sequence of instructional discourse topics (being the content or subject matter being presented for learning moment to moment), and the intended regulative discourse designs (being the kinds of classroom activity staged, for example, group discussion, individual book work, teacher-led questioning, and so forth). Then, closer analysis of classroom interactions identified moments of classroom trouble. These were conceptualized as 'regulative flares' (Doherty, 2015c), being moments when teachers interrupted the flow of the lesson to correct student behaviour and reassert the intended regulative discourse. In other words, regulative flares are those moments when teachers explicitly exerted moral force to try to re-establish how students should be participating. These empirical moments as exemplified in the analysis captured the overt 'signals' (Wuthnow, 1989, p.245) about what conduct was being endorsed and reinforced.

The next analytic layer sought to make sense of the variety of moral forces explicitly invoked in these classrooms. A typology of moral forces was developed to distinguish between the invocation of moral expectations that were highly contextualised (for example, between teacher and student as

individuals, or rules for that particular classrooms), and those expectations that were more universal, or decontextualized (for example, referencing the world of work or notionally universal expectations of politeness). This gradient was termed 'moral gravity', defined as 'the degree to which the moral order invoked and legitimated in the regulative discourse pertains to the particular local context, or to a broader sense of social context' (Doherty, 2015c, p. 60). Strong moral gravity pulled the moral frame down to the immediate interpersonal relation (G++), or the immediate classroom context (G+). Weak moral gravity referenced a de-contextualised moral frame that would apply regardless of context (G--), or contexts beyond the immediate classroom or school setting (G-). Table 1 presents the coding schema describing five relational levels of moral gravity with data excerpts of regulative flares that exemplify each of the levels.

<< Insert Table 1 >>

The typology is not meant to be exhaustive, but serves to illuminate how moral forces can flow from different relationships and nested frames. An interpersonal relationship (G++) accrues certain expectations about how parties can and should treat each other. A classroom setting with its asymmetric relations and teacher's authority creates highly contextualised expectations (G+) of students to which they are held accountable while class is in, but cease to apply once class is dismissed. Under this contextualised moral order, talking loudly may warrant intervention, where that behaviour would not be problematic in another context. The school as the larger institution can exert yet another layer of moral forces (G) in terms of school rules that teachers can invoke or circumvent if they so choose. Then, of particular interest to the student in extended compulsory education, there is the possibility of teachers invoking moral expectations premised on the larger world of work to which their programs aspire (G-). Students' behaviour could be guided and evaluated by such workplace expectations. Finally, there is another diffuse layer of morality (G--) that is understood to apply to anyone and everywhere, in terms of everyday politeness and respect.

With this typology, classroom interactions and their underlying regulative discourse can be understood to be potentially permeated by a variety of moral forces that stem from different contextual horizons. The analytic vocabulary of degrees of moral gravity helps to distinguish and characterise these layers, and their relative weight in classroom interactions. For a policy that extends schooling in order 'to increase their life prosperity and wellbeing and to support their productive participation in the Australian labour market' (Council of Australian Governments, 2009, p.6), it might be expected that the weaker, less contextualised gravity forces (G-, G--) would be purposefully foregrounded, to encourage students to project themselves into the moral frames of other more adult life contexts. The next section reports on how moral moves in the observed classroom interactions were distributed across the moral gravity levels.

6. Moral patterning in edufare

The profiles of the teacher/class combinations and their differences are reported in more ethnographic detail elsewhere (Doherty, McGregor & Shield, 2016). The analysis here focuses on drawing out the more general patterning in the overt moral moves within and across the sampled classrooms, and what such patterning might reveal about how the enactments of this policy construe and manage this population of young people.

In terms of the instructional discourse, the observed programs included 'Prevocational Maths', 'Prevocational English', 'Society and Community Studies', and 'Personal Finances'. These subjects were of a status that did not contribute to a university entrance score, but could serve as prerequisites for TAFE college courses. Some of the observed sites offered school-based apprenticeships, so these students came and went from the more generic school programs according to requirements of their placements. The observed classes all relied on teacher-created resources that used examples or topics deemed relevant to the students' lifeworlds. There was no expectation of homework and no use of textbooks or extended independent reading. Another teacher (in the BT site) ran a more integrated project-based curriculum incorporating numeracy and literacy tasks into planning a fund-raising event. Curricular content was presented in everyday language, typically avoiding the use or cultivation of any technical or disciplinary register. For example, a maths teacher (in the ASM site) described how she adjusted her language for these students:

I have to change the terminologies a bit and make it like...we always use the word "Times" in this class ... Which is really a "No, No" for me ... because it's always 'multiply' but this is what these kids understand. Things like 'times' and 'take' instead of 'minus' or 'subtract' you know?

Copying answers from the whiteboard or the computer display onto a teacher-prepared worksheet or notebook later served as evidence of learning in the students' portfolios for assessment purposes. Across the set of sites, I would characterise such curriculum as 'thin' in terms of the low intellectual demands made of students, the common sense everyday knowledges that were presented, and the minimal assessment applied.

In terms of the intended regulative discourse, the planned lessons overwhelmingly involved teacher-centred whole class instruction driven by the triadic discourse (Lemke, 1990) of initiation-response-evaluation interactions and quick individual seatwork tasks. Minimal use of group work, and no student-centred learning or independent enquiry were observed. For one group (ASE), some of the classes were held in a computer laboratory to allow students to draft highly scaffolded texts for an English task under teacher supervision.

In terms of the enacted regulative order, the majority of these classrooms rarely ran to plan. Firstly, there was a high degree of unexplained absenteeism, making it difficult for any curricular sequence to build. For the students that were present, their classroom interactions were typically volatile or resistant, demanding ongoing effort by all teachers to manage and re-direct student behaviours. Sites AT11V and AT11W sampled in the hybrid school/TAFE program (involving the same teacher working with different class groups) were the exception in this regard, with more settled and productive lessons observed, that is, with students more engaged and on-task. However, that teacher's instructional talk was continually peppered with quick interventions correcting student behaviour.

As an indication of this 'typically unsettled', 1346 overt regulative flares were observed, recorded and transcribed across the seven classrooms pertinent to this paper. Each of these efforts to redirect classroom behaviours was coded against the five levels of moral gravity. From these codings, each teacher's explicit moral work could be characterised by the distribution of their regulative flares across levels of moral gravity. Then the broad nature of the operative moral order in these pre-vocational programs could be characterised by their aggregated distributions. While this quantitative summary may not reflect typical reporting of ethnographic research, its distillation of patterns in

descriptive statistics helps to build a more nuanced description of each classroom and the nature of such classrooms in general. Table 2 presents the raw distributions of each teacher's set of observed regulative moves across the moral gravity levels.

<< Insert Table 2 >>

The table reveals that the vast majority of regulative moves made by the teachers referenced and reinforced the behavioural expectations of the classroom setting (G+), and exerted moral force stemming from that immediate institutional context and its constituent roles. These moves included asking students to stay on task, to sit or move appropriately, to stop talking, and to stop swearing. The focus was thus on behaviours that were deemed problematic only because of the immediate context of being in the classroom setting. The empirical dominance (64.3% of the total) of this highly contextualised moral work across all seven teacher/class combinations indicates the concerted effort in these programs to demand compliance within the asymmetric teacher and student relation in the here and now. I suggest that this tight constraint serves as the default moral order imposed on students in these sites of extended compulsory schooling.

Across the data set there were some regulative moves observed in each of the other moral gravity levels. Of particular interest given the policy discourse of promoting employment prospects, there was negligible mention (1.7% of the total) of moral premises explicitly referencing other institutional settings (G-) such as the world of work. While still highly reliant on G+ moves, Teacher BT was the exception to this rule to some degree. This teacher was working with a group of young people whose various behaviours and educational needs had excluded them from mainstream school. This prevocational program operated in a TAFE College, in which most programs were post-compulsory courses devoted to trade training and vocational certification, thus in a setting strongly oriented to working futures. This teacher, more than the others in the sample, invoked criteria of conduct that explicitly referenced expectations that, by her account, applied in the world of work. These included moral obligations such as: to account for one's absence, be punctual, take direction without answering back, avoid language that wouldn't be acceptable in the workplace. Her more frequent referencing of this type of moral force distinguished her classroom from the other teachers, including the teacher sampled in the hybrid school/TAFE college program (AT11V, and AT11W). While the high needs of the BT students may have made their capacity to win work less likely, her practice still sought to transition and socialise these students into the expectations of a broader moral order beyond the classroom and school.

Notwithstanding the BT teacher's efforts, the dominant moral agenda evident in these classrooms would appear to be about coaching the students in institutional compliance, with little attention to helping them grow towards becoming a self-managing worker in the world of work, or an autonomous self-regulating citizen in broader society. Even the BT teacher's invocation of the world of work painted a picture of hierarchical workplaces, with the students projected into positions with little control or autonomy. The dominant moral order constituted and communicated within these classrooms is thus understood to subjugate the students, and demand compliance first and foremost. The degree of overt and repetitive regulative work however suggests that these efforts were far from successful or resolved. The constant effort teachers' devoted to regulating student behaviours meant their capacity to systematically transmit an instructional discourse of curricular knowledge or skills was often compromised, disrupted or displaced by student non-compliance. This

begs the question of what these volatile classes, and their characteristic friction between students and teachers, were achieving in the larger scheme of things. To this end, the final section situates the findings in the larger context and moral climate of precarious labour markets.

7. Edufare for the future precariat

This paper has queried the intent of the 2009 Australian National Partnership Agreement which extended compulsory schooling under the slogan of 'earning or learning till 17'. This policy was situated in its broader context with regard to: crumbling youth labour markets in post-industrial economies; Standing's argument re the emergence of the precariat as a population viewed as a social problem; and Wacquant's thesis of a harsher moral economy that legitimates heavy handed, more punitive approaches to some groups in society. Raising the school leaving age was understood as a common and recurrent policy response by governments to economic challenges in which both doubts over the value of compulsion, and opportunities to rethink the curriculum arise. The current policy moment was understood to favour 'economized' policy with a narrow instrumental vision of curriculum.

Probing further, the paper focused on the responsive moral work of schools as articulated by Durkheim and elaborated by Bernstein, then the nature of the moral order evident in the classroom interactions in seven classrooms constructed under this policy. A typology of degrees of moral gravity in teachers' regulative moves helped identify the strong default in moral corrections across the sampled classrooms that was premised on the highly contextualised, asymmetric roles of teacher and student, and a notable lack of reference to moral expectations that might apply in other life settings beyond the immediate context of schooling. From this analysis, these classrooms were understood to pursue a moral order of institutional compliance that does little to equip or transition these students towards their uncertain futures, but rather seek to deliver compliant, obedient workers 'who blindly accept their economic position in life and any economic misfortunes without striking back' (Spring, 2015, p. 149).

Extending compulsory education for young people who cannot find ongoing work asks them to remain engaged in an institution that has largely failed them on the false promise of improving their work prospects in a hostile labour market. By failing to radically reimagine the what and the how of the curriculum, these educational solutions to economic problems merely retain or conscript these young people in 'more-of-the-same dogma' (Beck, 2000, p.8). Student resistance is perhaps highly predictable, but in turn serves to justify and reinforce a heavy-handed regulative discourse. In essence, these edufare programs seek to 'bend so-called problem populations ... to the common norm' (Wacquant, 2009, p. 1). The compliant subjectivity that the students are held accountable to rubs against their truncated prospects as likely future members of the precariat. Wacquant would argue that the temporary warehousing of these students and their 'dangerous' risky potentials stages the spectacle of a responsive government actively managing this disengaged population as a social problem that threatens others. In addition, the minimal resourcing of these programs pools social and economic disadvantage in marginalised communities and services them with an un-reconstructed, myopic curriculum that will neither radically alter the students' skill set nor address the lack of entry level work, thus achieves nothing that might allay the private troubles of the future precariat.

An alternative to such more-of-the-same edufare programs might engage more seriously with the concerns repeatedly raised over the dubious value of compulsion at this stage of life, and how it can curdle any desire to engage with formal education. Public funds spent on warehousing and containing the future precariat might be put to better use by engaging and sponsoring them to participate in the adult world through both paid and unpaid contributions. Such an approach would dignify the private troubles of the future precariat, not just the social problem they might pose for others.

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Table 1: Coding levels of moral gravity

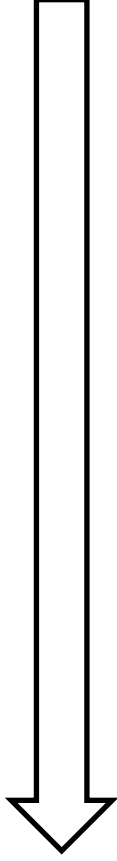
Strength of moral gravity	Code	Ordinal value	Context referenced	Data examples
 <p>Weakest</p>	G--	5	Universally applicable principles and good behaviour codes	'I would like you to show respect.' 'Please push chairs in ... some common courtesy – we'll teach you that at least.'
	G-	4	Relating this context to expectations in other institutional contexts such as workplace or the home.	'You're not going to get a job if you talk like that. You have to think what comes out of your mouth.' 'In the workplace, if you don't follow instructions, bosses aren't going to give you any authority.'
	G	3	The larger institutional context – school rules	'What are you wearing? ... not uniform.'
	G+	2	The immediate classroom setting – classroom expectations	'You're not going anywhere - I'm still talking and I'm not talking over people.' 'You can't come and refuse to work then go on your phone. It's unacceptable.'
	G++	1	The here and now between you and me	'I understand you're tired, but at the same time, you don't need to be rude to me.'
Strongest				

Table 2: Teacher/classroom combinations x moral gravity frequencies and percentages

Teacher/class combination	Moral gravity levels (strongest to weakest)					Number of regulative flares
	1 G++	2 G+	3 G	4 G-	5 G--	
ASE	43 11.6%	266 71.7%	45 12.1%	0 0.0%	17 4.6%	371
ASM	103 26.2%	184 46.8%	74 18.8%	7 1.8%	25 6.4%	393
AT11W	19 15.0%	97 76.4%	6 4.7%	0 0.0%	5 3.9%	127
AT11V	18 15.1%	97 81.5%	1 0.8%	1 0.8%	2 1.7%	119
BSA	6 6.2%	81 83.5%	7 7.2%	1 1.0%	2 2.1%	97
BSB	25 20.8%	66 55.0%	28 23.3%	0 0.0%	1 0.8%	120
BT	14 11.8%	75 63.0%	12 10.1%	14 11.8%	4 3.4%	119
TOTAL	228 16.9%	866 64.3%	173 12.9%	23 1.7%	56 4.2%	1346 100.0%

ⁱ Senate Hansard. (1965). Ministerial Statement: Tertiary education in Australia. [Prowse]. 4 May 1965. Retrieved http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Hansard/Hanssen261110

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