

Adult education and the 'learning' turn: Towards an entangled historical sociology of education

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Abstract

In the 1990s the terms 'adult education' and 'lifelong education' began to be displaced by a novel discourse of 'lifelong learning'. This learning turn in education policy affirmed 'learning as performance' but also discounted the established world of adult and lifelong self-development. In that moment the meanings of 'adult education', 'lifelong learning' and 'lifelong education' became unclear. But what is being entangled here and with what effects on knowing and doing adult education? I use the concept of 'analytic borderlands' to understand change in global transitions and report on research that traced the learning turn in Australian adult education through historical context. Re-reading empirical case study research, I show how these historical contexts intersected in ways that transformed publicly provided Technical and Further Education (TAFE) into mixed economy Vocational Education and Training (VET). I argue that these three concepts of 'lifelong learning', 'adult education' and 'lifelong education' are historically specific forms of more general political rationalities, institutionalised spaces and necessary utopias.

Introduction

Since the 1990s the term 'adult education' has been displaced by a novel discourse of 'learning' that prioritises learning as performance over the holistic educational formation of a person. The codification of this learning turn produced discourses of 'lifelong education' and 'lifelong learning' that also referenced a 'learning society', 'knowledge economy' and the 'learning self'. The effect of these learning discourses has produced a distinctive learning ethic: 'perpetual learning'. As Johanna Wyn (2012: 1) explains, this learning imperative means 'all stages of life require education and educating, and all areas of life are learning opportunities'.

In this chapter, I ask why this learning turn occurred and with what effects on adult education. I begin by reflecting on the history of adult education in Australia and the shift towards a lifelong learning order that occurred in the 1990s. This example of educational change, I suggest, raises questions and methodological complexities that justify an 'entangled historical sociology of education'. I then outline the concept of 'analytic borderland' and how I approached entangled research through a re-disciplining strategy. I illustrate this methodology by analysing 'adult education', 'lifelong learning' and 'lifelong education' as intersecting cultural material trajectories that mark out particular entanglements: places of contestation and change that also define the limits of the current re-spatialisation of education. I conclude by offering definitions of the three terms and suggesting why they are each significant in the politics of education reform.

From adult education towards a lifelong learning order

Adult education developed rapidly in Australia. The 1788 British settlement of the new Southern colonies immediately confronted a skills shortage and skilled labour was able to 'extract a premium' for their labour (Ryan, 2014). The first apprenticeships began in New South Wales in 1805 followed by a Mechanics Institute in 1827 but, while technical education was a priority in this settler society, there was also a strong liberal adult education tradition that encouraged people towards holistic self-development (Goozee, 1993). The constitutional division of powers when the six Australian colonies federated to form the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901 meant adult education, recognised in 1974 as part of public education, became a responsibility of each State. This 'Technical and Further Education' (TAFE) sector was organised through a bureaucratic-professional institutional design, but with access Commonwealth funding.

But in the 1990s, that historic model of technical and further adult education turned towards 'lifelong learning'. The space of adult education that had developed alongside industrial capitalism and its associated struggles for citizen rights and democratic politics was restructured as a training market and re-cultured by affirming 'learning' rather than education. The State of Victoria committed to five strategic directions for reform:

From TAFE to VET – the maturing of the vocational education and training system, made up of a diverse range of providers which combine competitiveness with co-operative action in meeting the demands of their clients;

From Supply to Demand Driven – emphasis on the needs of our clients and the greater orientation of the system to a more client-focussed culture based on the relationships between providers and their clients. Improved responsiveness in the supply of vocational education and training will be driven by industry, enterprise and student demand rather than past patterns of supply;

From Activity to Outcome – focus on performance, both in terms of efficiency and effectiveness. Best practice will be the goal for all parts of the system and will largely direct where resources flow in years to come;

From Quantity to Quality – our products and processes, in particular curriculum, the skills of teaching staff, and accreditation and regulation are critical to the ongoing relevance of the system. Continual improvement of these is integral to the system's success;

From Control to Devolved System – the strength of our system rests on the responsiveness of providers to their clients. The relationship between individual providers and enterprises and students will be a central focus of the system. This can best be achieved through independent and accountable providers. The management relations of the system must facilitate this, not hinder it.

(State Training Board, Victoria 1994)

These strategic directions for reform mark a significant moment of educational change in the re-making of TAFE as VET. I reference Australia in this chapter but parallel patterns of change also occurred in other places around the world. But why did this learning turn occur and with what effects on adult education?

Understanding educational change

I approached this melting and morphing of adult education from the vantage point of historical sociology, building on Bauman's historical move and using a time dimension to review my detailed empirical research on Australian adult education. This methodological

strategy offered insights into the sociological processes that were un-making and re-making education in Australia but without being locked into either the discourses of public education or lifelong learning. Introducing the time dimension made it possible to trace cultural mediations between social context and social action. While using qualitative research longitudinally made it possible to link big picture social and educational change and ‘detailed *textures* of social life – the subjective meanings and active crafting of social relationships, cultural practices and personal identities and pathways’ (Neale and Flowerdew, 2003: 192, emphasis included).

The discipline of history is helpful because the time dimension defines the relation between history and historiography as a methodological choice about the boundaries of inquiry. Historical writing is premised on a methodological rupture between what is past, which is dead and gone, and the present, where the process of producing historical writing occurs. This intellectual movement between past and present creates a space for inquiry, which is filled by ‘recapitulating the past as a form of knowledge’ (de Certeau, 1988: 5). Research develops as the researcher is recruited into a particular place, takes up analytical procedures, and engages in inquiry. The process of writing is the intellectual, scientific, work that produces knowledge as a text, which embodies the research narrative that is triangulated between ‘place, procedure and text’ (Spiegel, 2007: 6).

The idea of ‘historical entanglement’ provides a point of departure when making decisions about these methodological choices by also spatialising time and social relations as historical contexts. As Burson (2013: 3) explains,

The notion of historical entanglement is the manner in which an “object” of historical study (for example, a concept, discourse, or identity) is constituted at the meeting point or intercrossing among various historical contexts as opposed to its being considered in only one isolated discursive context. Entanglement may be considered to operate on at least three levels: multicultural entanglement (the intercrossing of synchronous cultures); transdiscursive entanglements (the intercrossing of theological, scientific or ethico-political debates, for example); and diachronic entanglement (the arguably inevitable way in which scholarly analysis interjects itself into, and alters, the past by the very process of attending to the first and second entanglements).

The historical entangling of space, time, social relations, institutional and discursive practices, and their materialisation as agency and effects complicates research on contemporary educational change. But once the principle of entanglement is recognised it becomes possible to delineate the tangles that will be addressed in a particular project. Codifying the entangling dimensions provides an entry points to more detailed sociologies of locality where macro-micro relations can be interrogated. I approach this contextual research through the study of specific ‘analytic borderlands’. From this perspective, it is possible to identify three distinct historical contexts that each locate socio-material trajectories and intersect in ways that constitute the learning turn.

Analytic borderlands

The idea of ‘analytic borderlands’ gives historical sociology a tangible focus relative to space, time and social relations. It is a concept that pushes back against the idea of globalisation as an ever increasing fluidity or borderless space which, in education, sits behind the learning turn and its ethic of perpetual learning. Instead, the borderland reveals ‘place’ as an intersection; not essentialised relative to a particular system of representation (eg. presuming education to be intrinsically national, or for children) but, rather, as an analytic moment

tensioned between two or more systems of representation, such as global-national discursive orders.

Seeing the borderland in terms of an intersection means it is possible to hold open the border for purposes of analysis, rather than letting the border collapse into itself as a single dividing line. Treating the border as a borderspace or boundary zone cuts through the assertion of a single narrative about lifelong learning and re-surfaces discursively constructed silences and absences. As Sassen (2003: 169) argues,

... analytic moments when two systems of representation intersect ... are easily experienced as spaces of silence, of absence. One challenge is to see what happens in those spaces, what operations (analytic, of power, of meaning) take place there ... these spaces of intersection [are] what I have called analytic borderlands. Why borderlands? Because they are spaces that are constituted in terms of discontinuities; in them discontinuities are given a terrain rather than reduced to a dividing line.

Sassen (2003: 169; 2007) explains that giving discontinuities a terrain shows how intersections pivot on tangible 'circuits for the distribution and installation of economic operations'. These circuits are made up of a wide range of workers, activities, cultural understandings and authority relations that sometimes seem to occupy centre stage and, other times, simply disappear with the narrative of globalisation. In a similar way, the narrative of lifelong learning centres attention on the 'learner' while simultaneously occluding the 'teacher' or treating teachers as mere infrastructure: delivery mechanisms with more or less quality, efficiency and necessity.

Focusing on the discontinuities in borderlands offers researchers a means of stepping outside narrow mainstream definitions and hegemonic portrayals of 'the' economy or education. It makes it possible to see how visible and invisible circuits of labour that install economic or educational activity contribute to the making and re-making of a particular place, such as the educational space-time of 1990s reform when TAFE was re-made as VET. I approach this process of making futures from a perspective anchored in historical sociology.

Researching contexts

My interest in contexts began when I came to Australia. As a newcomer facing an unfamiliar context, I turned to history and sociology focused through theories of the state to understand Australian education. This line of inquiry into the relation between past, present and future led me towards studies of context that, in the 1980s, were tensioned between structuralism and culturalism (Seddon, 1986; 1993). According to structuralist marxism, social contexts determined social action in ways that were mediated by class location but this analytical frame also created insider-outsider methodological problems: how you could know different sociologies if you were just an outsider who could read structures or just an insider who read interactions.

Through the 1980s, these two sociologies (Dawe, 1970) were turned through cultural and historical research. Cultural sociology examined how social relations were mediated through cultural practices (Sapiro, 2011). The idea of a text-context relation was interrogated by scholars such as Lukács as a form of text analysis anchored in collective consciousness or social networks. Political sociology focused on the study of social conditions that showed how specifically articulated institutional-individual forms mediated governing practices through the production, distribution, circulation and reception of cultural products (Gramsci 1971). These debates surfaced the cultural politics of education and their deep embedding within social and political orders.

Systematising these analyses revealed the spatialising effects of social organisation and how spaces of reproduction and possibility emerged within social fields (Bourdieu, 1998). For example, Raymond Williams (1965: 145) troubled the notion of education as a simple context for students' learning and teachers' work. He questioned the idea of 'education' as 'a fixed abstraction, a settled body of teaching and learning ... as if the only problem it presents ... is that of distribution'. Instead he argued that education was an effect of conscious and unconscious choices about 'organisation' and 'content' that constituted education as an institutionalised space that realised 'an active shaping to particular social ends'. Education acts as a 'context' for learning because that space entangles organisation and content, the 'particular selection' from culture', in ways that are designed as means to ends, where the end is making identities that materialise futures.

Historical sociology extends and grounds this contextual perspective on social action as a way of understanding change. Re-reading social and cultural trajectories through the temporal dimension in human affairs showed how action unfolds on the basis of antecedent civilizational complexes: those 'forms of society, culture, polity, religion and economy that ordinarily envelop human beings through out their lives' (Mandalios 2003: 65). This social and cultural infrastructure meant that all action occurred in a 'context': a particular social 'milieu, institutional matrix and medium of meaning' (Seddon 1993: 6). History is therefore made and re-made as an effect of 'what people do in the present as a struggle to create a future *out of* the past, of seeing that the past is not just the womb of the present but the only raw material out of which the present can be constructed' (Abrams, 1982: 8). This sociology of becoming recognises that people make history but in different circumstances, from different positionings, and through different networks and narrativity.

Struggles to make futures unfold through space-times as individuals, networks and collectivities engage in bordering and ordering social spaces and their temporalities. This unfolding makes worlds as humans express their forms of gregariousness that take on 'various colourations according to time, space, symbolism, corporeality, affect structures and long-term social learning processes' (Mandalios 2003: 65). The challenge in these diverse processes of making spaces for living and expression lies in coordination and cooperation. To address these challenges societies of all types and scales generate forms of state and develop particular practices of governing. This means every social order also generates its own political order: a social organisation of knowledge and authority that sediments explicit institutional rules and social conventions. These arrangements frame the exercise of coercive, discursive and enabling forms of power (Allen 2003).

Spaces of governing

I approach analytic borderlands through these practices of governing that colour everyday patterns of coordination and cooperation. From this perspective, a 'context' is a space of governing: a unit of reference that establishes a structural frame within which action and subjective experience unfolds. Practices of governing border and order spaces, making specifically spatialised identities-entities, relationships and cultures (Massey, 2005) as effects of symbolic and social boundary work.

Symbolic boundaries are conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize people, practice, and even time and space. They are tools by which individuals and groups struggle over and come to agree upon definitions of reality... Social boundaries are objectified forms of social difference manifested in unequal access to and unequal distribution of resources (material and non-material) and social opportunities. (Lamont and Molnar 2002: 168).

I use three motifs to elaborate this analytical framework:

Space is relational because it is made through the effects of boundary politics that are anchored by specific material conditions and social relations of domination-subordination. In this respect a 'relation' is a relation of power that systematically frames and forms historical contexts, social organisation and subjectivities; it is not just interactional processes that play through relationships between people. The idea of a 'class relation' or 'gender relation' is an analytical concept that rests on a methodological choice to reference specifically spatialised historical phenomena that binds disparate and seemingly disconnected events together. In this way class and gender are not 'structures', nor 'categories' but something that becomes visible and happens in human relationships.

We cannot have love without lovers, nor deference without squires and labourers. And class happens when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests between themselves, and against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed) to theirs (Thompson, 1980: 9)

Social space is made through the practical mediation of worlds constructed through representations and the materialities of 'real space' (Lefebvre, 1991). This interspace is lived intellectually and practically through a trialectics of space that is tensioned between the space of representations; our perceptions of material space; and lived space that is experienced, felt, known subjectively and affectively. Massey (2005: 9) summarises her case for space in three propositions. First, space is 'the product of interrelations' and is constituted through interactions, 'from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny'. Second, seeing space relationally means recognising many forms of interaction, multiple voices, logics' and directions. Spaces therefore locate 'multiplicity in the sense of contemporaneous plurality', 'co-existing heterogeneity' and 'distinct trajectories'. Finally, space is always under construction. 'Without space, no multiplicity; without multiplicity, no space ... Multiplicity and space as co-constitutive'.

Analytic borderlands are 'the sum of the stories-so-far' (Massey, 2005: 9) and 'place' is the specific space-time or moment where those stories intersect, are contested and contribute to making futures.

Socialities are globalising as historic human relationships embedded in industrial societies melt and morph with effects on social and symbolic borders and orders. Bauman captures this 'seemingly "novel" phase in the "history of modernity"' by referencing the industrial revolution as a means of understanding how this 'liquid modernity' differs from the antecedent 'solid modernity'. He argues that the solids now melting are:

the bonds which interlock individual choices in collective projects and actions - the patterns of communication and co-ordination between individually conducted life policies on the one hand and political actions of human collectivities on the other' (Bauman, 2000: 6).

These effects of globalisation reveal national borders as a privileged classificatory system that defines the space of governing and the infrastructure for imagining within solid modernity. These logics of bordering and ordering produced nation-states that rested on a 'border regime' and presumed particular national knowledge culture and ordering of authority. As these national borders melt and become differently permeable, ruptures and new imaginaries appear. Novel forms of bordering and new kinds of spaces materialise that are now both physical and digitised, as well as spaces in-between (Sassen, 2007). These shifting spatialities and differentially permeable border regimes become aligned in various ways with global webs of borders, which exist alongside national border regimes. Each bordering locates particular forms of authority. Public authority was organised through national state-citizen relations, while forms of supra- and sub-national 'private' authority, materialised as firms,

families, faiths, policy-research networks and social movements. Now these shifting spatialities are de-nationalising national territories, re-culturing national social spaces and dis-embedding the national border regime from historic national networks of interest, mindsets and the institutional carapace that defined nation-states.

Geographies of narrativity arise with social spaces and their practices of governing. The historic engaging of peoples through the formation of nation-states produced particular social organisation (Brenner 1999) and national knowledge cultures and forms of reasoning (Somers, 2008). These geographies manifested through multiplicity of ‘stories-so-far’ that were prompted by the bordering and ordering effects of prevailing geometries of power (Massey, 1993). National stories rested on particular territorial bordering and ordering of narrativity. These narratives realised and materialised social epistemologies: them-us relations and processes of storying that took tangible form with the construction of ‘constellations of relationships (connected parts) embedded in time and space, constituted by causal emplotment’ (Somers, 1994: 616). This distinctive kind of cultural-political work’ is how:

... we come to know, understand, and make sense of the social world, and it is through narratives and narrativity that we constitute our social identities ... whether [or not] we are social scientists or subjects of historical research, but that all of us come to *be* who we *are* (however ephemeral, multiple, and changing) by being located or locating ourselves (usually unconsciously) in social narratives *rarely of our own making* (Somers, 1994: 606).

Somers (1994) identifies four types of narrativity that congeal to create geographies of narrativity. Framed by specific space-times, individuals produce ‘ontological narratives’ as they become individuated identities. ‘Public narratives’ emerge as collective entities (eg. Nations, organizations, inter-subjective networks) construct themselves by storying and claiming their knowledge and practice. ‘Metanarratives’ are produced indirectly, rather than directly, as ontological, public and conceptual narratives circulate through and are appropriated into another ‘de-narrativised’ form a ‘de-narrativised’ form. De-narrativisation occurs when a narrative is disconnected from the terms and conditions of its formation. Popularised for everyday use, the metanarrative can become a master narrative: governing ‘truths’ that regulate the ‘conduct of conduct (Dean & Hindess, 1998).

A conceptual narrative differs from the other three types because it uses abstraction and invokes explanatory schema to generate concepts and vocabularies. Knowledge building processes are disciplined by epistemic communities, their procedures and rules of evidence. These networks are a type of ‘private authority’, whose knowledge-authority orders become integral to forms of state. This is because their forms of narrativity devise vocabularies that ‘reconstruct and plot over time and space the ontological narratives and relationships of historical actors, the public and cultural narratives that inform their lives, and the crucial intersection of these narratives with the other relevant social forces’. (Somers, 1994: 620). Conceptual narrativity informs, sustains and also renews spaces of governing. It is central to the politics of knowledge that currently tensions analytic borderlands.

Re-making TAFE as VET

Currently I am investigating educational boundary politics to understand the shifting practices of governing that are re-making 21st century education (Seddon forthcoming). I have approached this longitudinal qualitative research project by focusing on the 1990s as a decade of major educational reform in Australia and reflectively reviewing my empirical research on changes in adult education policy and practice. This research design means I approach educational spaces and places as analytic borderlands and, on the basis of research in the field of policy sociology, examine how they are tensioned and transformed by the relation between global and national policy-practice trajectories. I focus this work by examining how, to echo

Sassen, circuits for the distribution and installation of educational operations are being re-bordered and re-ordered through these analytic borderlands where people struggle remake practices of governing, work and learning in ways that secure futures.

I grasp the analytic borderland of TAFE-VET by analysing ‘hotspots of change’ in the global-national reform trajectory (Dürschmidt & Taylor, 2007). This methodology provides ‘boreholes’ that offer insights into different historical contexts that entangle established spaces and places of adult education. I illustrate this approach in the next section by re-reading detailed empirical case studies that show how the policy-research space of governing was re-made through the discourse of ‘lifelong learning’ and the space of ‘adult education’ in Australia, with effects on the TAFE-VET borderspace, which I illustrate with reference to Streeton Institute of TAFE in Melbourne. Analysing these synchronic entanglements separately and also together in the light of their diachronic effects reveals how boundary politics have effects on the re-making of TAFE as VET.

I use Burson’s codification of entanglements to organise this analysis. First, the trajectory of transdiscursive entanglements produce the novel idea of ‘learning as performance’ that justifies the institutional redesign of adult education and drives change through processes of problematisation and policy learning. Multicultural entanglements shaped how this reform agenda re-contextualised the space of adult education and affirmed ‘learning’ as competent performance that referenced employment more than self-development. These contextual narratives reconstructed discursive surfaces and platforms for action with effects on adult educators and their scope for bounded autonomy. Tracing the diachronic entanglements that played between these terms and conditions created novel spaces and places that textured the remaking of TAFE as VET through its institutional arrangements, vocabularies and meanings. Given constraints of word length, limit historical detail in order to foreground the relation between synchronic and diachronic entanglements.

‘Lifelong learning’: Transdiscursive entanglements

The discourse of ‘lifelong learning’ prioritises ‘learning’ over historic national discourses of ‘education’ and secures it as governing knowledge in debates about social change. This transdiscursive entanglement unfolded as social scientists developed conceptual narratives to account for societal trends. For example, Donald Schön (1971) advocated reflexive learning to address the ‘end of the stable state’. Robert Hutchins (1970) argued for university education that would not prepare people for fixed social orders but encourage more flexible learning processes. This discourse became ‘governing knowledge’ (Fenwick, Mangez, & Ozga 2014) as global policy agencies and governments picked up these ideas to imagine 21st century learning as *The Treasure Within* (Delors 1996).

The discourse of ‘learning’ illustrates this transdiscursive entanglement. The Delors Report, published by UNESCO, report conceptualised ‘lifelong education’ as a ‘necessary utopia’ anchored by four pillars — learning to live together, learning to know, learning to do, and learning to be. As the authors explained:

In confronting the many challenges that the future holds in store, humankind sees in education an indispensable asset in its attempt to attain the ideals of peace, freedom and social justice. As it concludes its work, the Commission affirms its belief that education has a fundamental role to play in personal and social development. The Commission does not see education as a miracle cure or a magic formula opening the door to a world in which all ideals will be attained, but as one of the principal means available to foster a deeper and more harmonious form of human development and thereby to reduce poverty, exclusion, ignorance, oppression and war (Delors 1998: 11).

But this learning turn became the ‘learning turn’ as humanist narratives were recontextualised through economic discourses that referenced the global knowledge economy. These conceptual narratives positioned learning as an economic resource in a re-narrated economic history of the world. For example, an OECD conference on the Knowledge Economy spoke past compartmentalised national histories of firms and forms of education. The argument presented ‘learning’ as the motor of change. The performance of learning was the fundamental ‘spiral movement, where tacit is transformed into codified knowledge, followed by a movement back to practice’ (Foray & Lundvall 1996: 22). This knowledge production constituted innovation when ‘learning’ went hand in hand with ‘forgetting’: the ‘crucial and necessary element in the process of creative destruction. Unless we can forget the old ways of doing things, new procedures will be blocked’ (Foray & Lundvall 1996: 19).

Travelling ideas

Codified ideas like ‘learning’ travel easily, being taken up by different epistemic communities and spread across national borders, but travellings also fuel conceptual and political debates. Recontextualising education as ‘learning’ shifts definitions of the ‘actor’, institutional rules that define a ‘context’, and how those rules create positive and negative sanctions to steer change. Rational actor theory assumes individuals are motivated by self-interest and choose courses of action that benefit them in terms of their desires for economic gain (eg. money, goods, the enjoyment of services) or social acceptance (eg. status, regard, affection, gratitude) (Pettit 1996). By contrast, other social and political theories saw individuals as institutionally grounded and culturally embedded social actors. Their action is not only a consequence of rational choices but also dialogue around historical traditions, loyalties, norms and values that enable the formation of collectives in organised social life (Granovetter 1983).

These policy-research debates introduce two novel ideas: first, ‘competence’ or the tangible effect of ‘learning’ as performance; and second, the possibility of re-imagining rational institutional design (Kuhn 2007). These debates between old and new institutionalisms tensioned different understandings of neo-liberalism as a political rationality that governs the relation between state and market. These debates unfolded through specific geographies of narrativity. As Lundvall (2010) argues, the individualism of Anglo-American market theorists overlooks the significance of institutions and institutional embeddedness. Market individualism presumes a neo-liberal political rationality that subordinates states to individual market choice, while European neo-liberalism pursues the idea of a socially embedded but governable social market (Lemke 2001).

The translation of these travelling ideas into implementation processes produces three alternative logics of institutional redesign. They unfold through but also entangle Anglosphere and Eurosphere geographies of governing:

Designed markets: Market design orders education using two questions: the supply question, ‘who should deliver training and how’; and the demand question, ‘who should buy training, and why’ (Cooney 2008). These questions apply to market design irrespective of what is traded and simplify design processes by making rational actor assumptions about the way buyers and sellers behave. The challenge in market design is to establish ‘rules of the game’ that establish incentives and sanctions, and account for risk in ways that can secure coordination and cooperation (Karmel, Beddie & Dawe 2009).

Networks and governance: Market design encourages contracts and efficiencies that dictate precise terms and simple products, but contractualism is limited by complex problems (Considine, Lewis, & Damon 2009). Recognising institutional embeddedness shows how institutional redesign is secured through networks, trusted social ties and social capital (Putnam 1993). Organised partnerships permit coordination but depend on cooperation. They offer ‘democratic anchoring’ but also unpredictable effects because, without privileged

authority, cooperation depends on networking multiple voices, considerable cultural diversity and a variety of decision-making centres (Rhodes 1996).

Knowledge-based regulation: Governance frameworks designed to manage complex networks can address limits of market coordination and unpredictable networks (Kickert, Klijn, & Koppenjan 1997). This ‘post-bureaucratic’ design logic secures coordination and cooperation not through command, but agreements where trust and legitimacy are negotiated through open and transparent information exchanges between stakeholders (Maroy 2012). The design of the governance framework materialises knowledge-based regulatory instruments - targets, standards and evidence – and steer work and learning towards specified service, process, and governance and outcomes (Considine et al 2009). This exercise of ‘soft power’ constitutes actionable spaces but also bounds participant’s autonomy within their pre-defined parameters (Lawn 2006).

These transdiscursive entanglements unfold as policy-makers turn problems towards actionable solutions but also diversify as ideas travel across different geographies of policy translation.

‘Adult education’: Multicultural entanglements

The trajectory of adult education shifts from TAFE to VET as transdiscursive entanglements materialise as governing knowledge, reform agenda and institutional change. But governmental discourses come up against multicultural entanglements as different networks deploy epistemic and experiential vocabularies to secure their political interests. ‘Lifelong learning’ became the global-national form of governing knowledge, but these travelling ideas were debated, translated and dispersed by distinct networks anchored in technical education and more feminised further education that occupied the Australian space of adult education and its state-federal politics.

The development of TAFE as a space-time fixed, resourced and cultured a boundary zone tensioned between education and work. Its institutional mandate targeted education and training for younger and older adults who had left school but did not attend universities. It combined manpower planning for economic development and an educational and social approach, which focused on people as individuals, their development with reference to job opportunities, and how education enabled them to earn a livelihood (Fleming 1994: 50). This vision of ‘learning to be’ through practice underpinned TAFE territory and its imagined form of ‘lifelong education’. But in the 1980s, Australia looked to Europe for solutions to global transitions that limited social democratic government.

Remaking educational knowledge

Facing free market Thatcherism, Reaganism and conservative Australia, the Labor Commonwealth government (1983-1996) negotiated an Accord between governments, industry and unions. This corporatist move involved union and industry in a fact finding mission to Western Europe that examined how medium sized vulnerable economies were dealing with the pressures of globalising economies. Supported by Trade Minister John Dawkins, the Commonwealth committed to *Australia Reconstructed* (ACTU/TDC 1987): a consensus-based approach to economic reform, with education implicated through active labour market policies and wages policy.

The National Training Reform Agenda in Australia translated ‘lifelong learning’ into actionable effects through the idea of ‘learning’ as competence. The Deveson Review (1990: 89) into the costs of training defined ‘competence’ as ‘the ability to perform the activities within an occupation or function to the standard expected in employment’. The

element of competence ‘describes what can be done: action, behaviour or outcome, which a person should be able to demonstrate’. The unit of competence is the bundle of elements that ‘make sense to and are valued by employees and employers’. The effect of these definitions was to position ‘skill’, the ‘ability to perform a task’, as pivotal in a social democratic politics focused on economic development that also aimed to secure a social safety net.

This cultural-material nexus between education and training, and industry, wages and social reform made the re-design of education thinkable, but challenged established Australian mindsets. It was tackled through activist government that moved towards a form of network governance through a novel ‘national space’ of education policy (Rizvi & Lingard 2010).

Re-making educational governance

This trajectory of institutional re-design has the effect of linking economic and educational reform through governing knowledge. The idea of ‘competence’, subsequently ‘learning outcomes’, normalised institutional practices, re-cultured common sense and re-made spaces of education. The reform agenda was implemented through knowledge-based regulatory technologies (eg. Australian Qualifications Framework; Australian and New Zealand Standard Classifications of Occupations; and international benchmarking via the Program for International Assessment)..

But Australia was not just a policy borrower. ‘Learning’ became governing knowledge through transdiscursive entanglements that were compounded by mobilities and flows across national borders. One ‘indigenous foreigner’ (Popkewitz 2000: 10), symbolically bridging and normalising global-national entanglements, was Labor Minister John Dawkins. He is identified as a ‘major policy entrepreneur’. As Trade Minister, he participated in the OECD’s 1984 *Competence and cooperation* conference and sponsored the mission that produced *Australia Reconstructed* as a blueprint for reform (Ryan 2014: 8). As Education Minister (1987-91), these global-national entanglements facilitated the generalisation of ‘learning’ across all sectors of Australian education and training (Dawkins 1988; 1988).

But recontextualising educational space with reference to the global knowledge economy rather than nation-states intensifies struggles over implementation of reform. The Commonwealth worked towards a national governance framework through contentious negotiations between industry, unions and State-federal government networks, which thrust government agencies into unfamiliar intergovernmental spaces. Faced with state-federal and industry-education conflicts, and pressures for institutional redesign, States fiercely defended their education systems. A competency-based approach was formalised, along with proposals for participation targets and key competencies, but a 1992 proposal for federal take-over of the TAFE sector failed. Where ‘the Commonwealth pictured its proposal as a technical efficiency enhancement, ... state ministers invoked states’ rights and spoke of “East German style central planning” (Ryan, 2014: 12).

Multicultural entanglements undid the implementation of transdiscursive global-national governing knowledge. Negotiated resolutions meant educational concerns were relayed through State governments within a model of ‘executive federalism’ (Ryan 2014). But each State translated these educational concerns in the light of their own problems in navigating global transitions, and established histories and educational cultures, in which party political alignments were significant. This incomplete governance framework meant TAFE became VET because of pragmatic State and Territory politics, federal funding regimes, and ‘improvement logics’ mainly focused on lifelong economic roles and responsibilities, rather than lifelong long political duties and entitlements (Wyn 2009).

‘Lifelong education’: Diachronic entanglements

The trajectory towards lifelong learning and its incomplete institutionalisation as a governance framework produces an unfinished transition, unstable historical contexts, and persistent pragmatic politics. But these transdiscursive and multicultural entanglements also diversified politics as lifelong learning reforms were relayed and re-imagined by individuals and organisations, such as TAFE Institutes, across Australia. In the State of Victoria, executive federalism combined with an activist Liberal-National (ie. Conservative) Government (1992-1999), creating governing knowledge that drove market reform in the TAFE sector.

At Streeton Institute of TAFE in metropolitan Melbourne, Director Barry Klein faced decentralisation and public sector reform, and intensified demands for competitive market reform and industry responsiveness. Barry address government demands for annual productivity gains by pursuing an aggressively entrepreneurial approach. He adjusted TAFE’s way of doing business by extending the market design imposed by government to Streeton’s internal organisation. It avoided ‘12 staff out the door tomorrow’ by

... empowering the people to do the job ... what it actually means in real life is that we have a contract with each of the departments and divisions in this place to deliver numbers of student contact hours which the government fund. We also allow them to do any business they like in the way of utilising their resources and they keep the profit out of that business. ... Its been successful to the point that each one of the divisions cuts each other’s throat to survive.

Disturbing work

But this market vision challenges the TAFE imaginary of lifelong education and, at Streeton, ‘learning to be’ became a force for collective action. Identity politics coalesced through networks shaped by technical and adult education traditions within TAFE, staff’s own work biographies, and staff learned-through-working to make sense of their workplace, its hierarchies and attitudes to the emerging entrepreneurial culture.

Commercialisation meant changing roles. Harry Urqhart, associate director of Engineering recalled that heads of department used to teach and manage, but the restructure stripped teacherly connections from managerial roles. Harry experienced increased pay, administrative support and status, but Geoff Ingham lost his status as a humanities teacher when the humanities department closed. Harry supported Streeton’s new directions, but Geoff was scathing about the entrepreneurial culture:

... ‘we’re not here because we want to be salespeople. We’re here because many of us want to be *Teachers*. Now you’re asking us to become commercial, to look at the cost-benefits and all that sort of thing - to balance the sheets, and that’s not what we’re here for, that’s not where our mentality lies.

Them-us divisions intensified with market-based redesign and staff read change in the light of their own industry and educational identifications. John Munro worked with a private engineering firm and public research organisation before joining Streeton, but could see how managers and teachers understandings of their work differed.

According to [managers], teachers are a pack of work-shy no-hopers that couldn’t hold down a job in industry. Look, I’ve had it said to me by the director ... at the time, I was running myself ragged at the weekend [and] couldn’t have coped with any more industry work ... but that is their perception of us ... they’re always using that word, ‘teacher culture’ but, to my

mind, there is a teacher culture and [it] is professional. We're here to give education, not training; education to kids, or adults.

Gender divisions institutionalised in TAFE through the 1974 reforms had propelled technical education identities into management, consolidating an influential network. Barry Klein's entrepreneurial culture meant both engineering and art had excess teaching capacity. But the restructure supported Engineering to extend fee-for-service and international work, while permanent art staff faced redundancies. Ursula Norris in Art joked: "There's an engineer. We'll slot him in here. There's an artist - Oh look, no slot! Right. Cut the funding!"

Re-imagining knowledge-based regulation

Networks at Streeton created workplace divisions and decentralised centres of power. But the governance framework rested on governing knowledge defined by the competitive market structure and management hierarchy. This historical context meant staff experienced different patterns of bounded autonomy. Streeton's space of realised coordination but complicated institutional cooperation necessary for effective coordination of educational operations.

However, this governance context also unlocked existing relationships and organisation and, through knowledge-based regulatory tools, made novel cultural resources available. Where them-us divisions troubled the legitimacy of teacher and manager networks, some departments found ways of materialising these emergent terms and conditions as workplace innovations. For example, Lisa Gordon, in hairdressing, was enthusiastic because her department had abandoned traditional classrooms and renovated the space as a model salon.

We want it to be like industry. We don't want this insular little classroom where you have twelve little students all doing twelve little things all at the same time. That's not what they're doing on a salon floor. This classroom is as close to a salon as we can humanly get. Its got the noise. Its got the activity. Its got the multi-activity as far as different services going on.

It was funding cuts and reduced staff that prompted innovation in the animal care department. With only three permanent teachers left, most teaching was by sessional staff who also worked in the animal care industry. They had little experience of pedagogy but brought up-to-date industry experience in to the department. Jim Stevens, the assistant head of department, used these epistemic and experiential resources to navigate the restructure as 'an educator ... not an external statistician'. Staff shared educational expertise by computerising teaching resources and assessment strategies, and turned industry expertise to their advantage: opening up pedagogical discussions with sessional staff and identifying opportunities to build relationships with the wider industry. In this way, Streeton's restructure provided an infrastructure for re-imagining lifelong education that reconciled educational and entrepreneurial ethics. A teacher noted, the department

... *has* become a business ... to survive you have to [provide] education to the client who, from a policy point of view, is industry, but from the educator's point of view is the people that come in here on a daily basis. I think it's wrestling with that - trying to keep industry happy but making sure that we treat our customers not as customers or as clients, but ... in a broad sort of educational perspective. I mean, we really do see them as people and, sure, we have to justify our existence under policy, but they are still people with problems, people with issues, and, from an educational perspective, that's just as important as meeting the demands of industry. (Emphasis included)

Towards sustainable lifelong education

In this chapter, I suggest ‘adult education’, ‘lifelong learning’ and ‘lifelong education’ each represents a cultural-material trajectory within the larger politics of social change. These trajectories all occupy space and time, unfolding through relational spaces where networks, forms of reasoning, and patterns of social and cultural boundary work govern the sum of the stories-so-far. It is the entanglements between these trajectories and their boundary politics that establish contexts: platforms for action and infrastructures for imagining that form identities and how they engage with the ongoing work of making educational spaces for the future.

These trajectories are governed by geometries of power. They are anchored by lived histories of class and gender, and processes of social positioning that secure particular ways of knowing from somewhere. These different ways of being frame how, and with what effects, inhabitants manage uncertainties, secure livelihoods and cultures, and realise societies that show radically different opportunities for sustainability and social justice.

Each of these trajectories takes on particular meanings and plays a different part in the re-making of contemporary adult education. Investigating the effects of these trajectories with reference to analytic global-national borderlands, the contemporary form of adult education in de-nationalising nation-states, reveals three concepts as follows:

‘Adult education’ is the institutionalised space of education for adults, where space-time boundaries are contingent on a particular governing-learning regime. Adult education is no longer necessarily national or separated from the world of work but is unfolding as globally distributed spaces of working and learning. The space of adult education operates through standalone organisations and also organisational forms integrated into workplaces, community settings and social webs, through cultures that are increasingly transnational, and manifest at different national, supra-national, sub-national scales.

‘Lifelong learning’ is the political rationality that steers policy problem making and institutional design that distinguishes the late 20th century learning turn in education policy. It emerged alongside debates between rational actor theories and understandings of institutional embeddedness but also morphed as the limits of market design and the methodological discounting of institutional embeddedness became apparent. While rational actor assumptions still prevail in 2015, the locus of governing has shifted away from strict market coordination to also address challenges of cooperation and legitimacy.

‘Lifelong education’ identifies a ‘necessary utopia’ in the realisation of adult education and in politics where political rationalities of institutional redesign are negotiated. The idea of lifelong education articulated through the Delors report seemed to get lost in the negotiations that remade adult education framed by the ‘lifelong learning’ turn in education policy. Instead market imaginaries prevailed and, in Australia, the discursive politics of market individualism made it difficult to surface normative projects.

This entangled history of adult education and its emergent drive for perpetual learning is now forming identities that will make our future. This historical trajectory raises questions about the limits of *educational* space-times: how, to what extent, and in what ways can the necessary utopia of lifelong education shift from the normative project of ‘learning to be’ and still be considered ‘education’?

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