

**Governing youth through education and training**

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the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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## CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ORIGINALITY

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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## ABSTRACT

Young people in post-compulsory education and training are targeted by a range of interventions designed to turn them into employable, socially responsible, active citizens. The fact that this group is viewed as problematic and transitions from school to work are seen as increasingly risky means that the interventions have become more inventive and more strategically directed. This thesis uses Foucault's concept of governmentality (1991) to ask questions about the nature of these interventions and to explore the ways young people are governed through education and training.

The concept of governmentality provides a critical tool that allows us to see the ways neo-liberal agendas work through education and training to produce the desired autonomous, entrepreneurial adult subject. It reveals the inventiveness of neo-liberal government in its response to points of failure in the education system. It also sheds light on the complex web of expert knowledge that works to create the "problem" of youth in transition, "know" the target group and diagnose its needs.

Specifically, the thesis focuses on a senior college in New South Wales. At its inception, the College represented a novel addition to the range of education and training provisions on offer. Students at the College engage in a mix of general, vocational and workplace learning within an adult learning environment. The governmentality perspective frames the following research questions to explore this site: How can the existence and features of the College be understood in the wider context of neo-liberal education agendas? In this temporal and geographical context, what makes an education and training intervention such as the College possible? What types of practices occur at this site to shape the conduct of these young people and what sorts of conduct are aspired to? What types of identity/ies are valued and therefore open to young people at the College? Finally, how do young people at the College shape themselves and regulate their own conduct in this context?

Through an analysis of the problematising literature on youth transitions, the policy context of post-compulsory education and training, classroom observations and interviews with staff and students, the networks of neo-liberal government will be observed as they shape the conduct of students at the College.