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ABSTRACT

A proposed expanded conception of liberal education embraces occupational study by adopting Aristotle's idea of intellectual virtue. Liberal study in Aristotelean thought recognizes the significance of both theoretical and work-related knowledge. Contemporary career preparedness programs undermine the cognitive component of intellectual virtue, erode liberal educational ideals, and threaten student agency in these five ways: (1) most omit potentially important areas of relevant content on labor union history or organizing human rights, cultural and environmental impact, and other criticisms of present global economic practices; (2) most portray existing social, economic, and labor market conditions in an ahistorical context and lack any implication that students have a legitimate democratic right to critique material circumstances affecting their lives and transform the conditions; (3) objectives consistent with developing attitudinal changes among students are improperly classified as generic employability skills to avoid providing sound ethical arguments for their curricular inclusion; (4) scope of critical thinking, problem-solving, and other cognitive competencies is limited to identifying the best means to arrive at presupposed ends; and (5) lifelong learning merely encourages students to take personal responsibility for occupational retraining in the face of unstable labor market conditions. Concrete proposals are suggested to reform career education programs to address these concerns. (Contains 32 references.) (YLB)

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Liberalizing Career Education:
An Aristotelean Approach to Occupational Study

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Abstract

Liberal and vocational education have traditionally been cast in incommensurable terms. This paper proposes an expanded conception of liberal education that embraces occupational study by adopting Aristotle's idea of intellectual virtue. Although liberal study generally applauds its lineage to the intellectual virtue of theoretical wisdom, it virtually ignores the essential role played by productive wisdom within Aristotelean thought. An analytical framework respecting intellectual virtue and liberal learning ideals is applied to various international career education programs to highlight areas of required reform. Two central questions emerging from this analysis are addressed by the paper: 1) how can career preparedness programs be integrated into secondary school curriculum without corrupting student agency and democratic citizenship? and 2) how can secondary school career preparedness programs better prepare students for the demands of contemporary vocational life? The final section of the paper offers concrete proposals to reform career education programs to achieve these objectives.

consideration must be given to the question, what constitutes education and what is the proper way to be educated. At present there are differences of opinion as to the proper tasks to be set; for all people do not agree as to the things that young people ought to learn, either with a view to virtue, or a view to the best life . . . whether the pupils should practice pursuits that are practically useful, or morally edifying. (Aristotle, 1996, p. 168)

Introduction

The debate over targeting appropriate educational aims continues to reflect the same sharply divided opinions identified by Aristotle some twenty-five hundred years ago. Leaders of industry, governments, social efficiency advocates, some parents and students demand increased occupational relevance in public schooling while liberal and critical educators attempt to insulate schools from what they consider another vocational education onslaught. This enduring disagreement was evident at last decade's World Conference on Education For All where some delegates viewed education as "the crucible for democracy and liberty", while others encouraged development in "skills for living and increasing national economic growth" (Spring, 2000, p. 4).

Although traditional liberal education embraces the Aristotelean intellectual virtue of theoretical wisdom, or the search for truth claim on curriculum, it generally ignores productive wisdom, or the capacity to engage cognitively a craft or vocation. The neglect of occupational study by liberal educators typically means this curriculum area is governed by those emphasizing social efficiency at the expense of critical educational aims. Falling victim to the longstanding dichotomy between liberal and vocational studies, for example, most current career preparedness policies and programs advance entirely instrumental occupational objectives; work is depicted as objective, students as future workers are objectified, and virtually no consideration is given to the context of current labour market conditions. Portraying existing economic and labour market

conditions in an ahistorical context through career education may undermine student agency and democratic citizenship, however, by obviating critique of the forces shaping contemporary vocational experience. Liberal education is similarly harmed by this traditional dichotomy since it remains unnecessarily aloof from the practical concerns of students and others. As a result, it is increasingly considered elitist and archaic. Instead of deeming occupational studies *ipso facto* illiberal, then, this paper proposes re-designing secondary level career preparedness curricula to reflect both the cognitive dimension of intellectual virtue, and the breadth of understanding and critical acumen consistent with liberal education. Indeed, by combining the Aristotelean intellectual virtues with fundamental liberal ideals vocational study can secure a proper role in academic inquiry without impacting deleteriously on the agency and democratic citizenship of students.

An Aristotelean Framework for Career Education

When crafting his philosophy of education more than two thousand years ago, Aristotle (1996) also confronted conflicting perspectives on the primary role of schools. Aristotle's mentor, Plato (1973), believed that ultimate knowledge, that is, knowledge of the Good, is only achieved through an arduous educational search seeking to grasp truth through reason. According to Plato, knowledge, as opposed to conjecture or belief, is only achieved by understanding the non-empirical, non-physical world, an epistemological position metaphorically reflected in the Allegory of the Cave. The allegory supposes that the primary function of education is to lead students from the darkness and deception of the cave toward the world of reason and enlightenment through a lifetime dedicated to learning. Education becomes a matter of conversion from the world of appearance and conjecture to intelligible reality. This Platonic view of education, or "search for truth" claim on curriculum, exacts profound influence on the Western education tradition, and is most notably reflected in the aims, methods and content of traditional liberal study (Egan, 1998).

Opposing Plato's "search for truth" emphasis, but also influencing Aristotle's views on education, Isocrates (1929) advocated a more pragmatic form of Athenian schooling whose educational goals focused on enhancing social, political and occupational efficiency. Unlike his

more contemplative adversary, Isocrates repudiated instruction in theoretical philosophy viewing it as a waste of valuable educational resources. Rejecting Plato's conviction that achieving epistemic certainty was a worthwhile educational aim, Isocrates argued that knowledge derived from some Archimedean vantage point was simply unattainable. Similar to contemporary social efficiency advocates, Isocrates believed that education should emphasize instrumental objectives from which students derived immediate practical benefit rather than struggle with potentially unanswerable metaphysical questions concerning the nature of reality.

The dichotomy between the aims of liberal educators and the instrumental objectives of contemporary career preparedness curricula finds its theoretical source in the disagreement between Plato and Isocrates. Reflecting the influence of both predecessors, Aristotle's philosophy of education seeks some point of resolution, or *golden mean*, between the Platonic and Isocratic positions. Aristotle prioritises the search for truth claim on curriculum advocated by Plato, but remains pragmatically attached to the practical elements of education identified by Isocrates. This paper does not advocate a wholesale application of Aristotle's philosophy of education, but submits that the intellectual virtues offer valuable insight into how the present curricular divide between vocational and liberal study, not entirely unlike that affecting ancient Greek education, might be successfully bridged.

According to Aristotle (1996), an education fostering individual and social well-being must provide students with the productive competencies to secure the material conditions that sustain human life. The intellectual virtue of productive wisdom identifies the reflective action necessary to satisfy fundamental human needs. The ability to produce, in Aristotle's view, represents a defining human characteristic on which dignity depends, practical necessities are provided, and accords individuals both vocational fulfilment and leisure opportunities. Although ultimately concerned with manufacturing or the provision of services, productive wisdom also involves a cognitive dimension that qualifies it as an intellectual virtue.

Aristotle (1985) emphasizes the cognitive dimension of productive wisdom during his discussion of crafts when he syllogistically reasons that,

building is a craft, and is essentially a certain state involving reason
concerned with production; there is no craft that is not a state

involving reason concerned with production, and no such state that is not a craft, Hence, a craft is the same as a state involving true reason concerned with production. (p. 152)

During the cognitive phase of productive wisdom, various conceptions regarding possible size, shapes and configurations of the objects produced are considered. More to the point, the cognitive dimension suggests that career preparedness programs respecting productive wisdom must provide students with more than mere mechanical competencies for instrumental application. In Aristotle's view, the development of entirely mechanical capacities in the absence of the reason and reflection consistent with intellectual virtue absorb and degrade the mind. On his account, mechanical capacities degrade the mind by limiting targeted ends to those chosen by others and hence fostering only means-to-end, or instrumental, reasoning.

The more general role of productive wisdom in Aristotelean thought is furnishing the necessary material conditions and the leisure opportunity they afford to pursue theoretical wisdom. Aristotle's (1985) philosophy of education recognizes that unless practical needs are first met the opportunity to pursue theoretical wisdom and achieve the *eudaimonia*, or happiness, it provides will be unavailable. Although appreciating the necessary connection between education and production, then, the final aim in Aristotle's philosophy of education extends beyond productive concerns. Rather than comprising the end of education, productive capacities in Aristotelean thought supply a necessary condition to achieve a certain type of human happiness.

The intellectual virtue of practical wisdom involves reflective action within the ethical and political realms of human experience. Practical wisdom yields a necessary condition for human flourishing at the individual, domestic and community levels of action. Achieving practical wisdom requires an appreciation for what is good and bad at all levels of human ethical and political life, and gauges action based on its ultimate contribution to a particular conception of the good life. Aristotle's discussion of practical wisdom in the Nichomachean Ethics suggests that the virtue is developed through the rational principle, or right rule, that dictates deliberative human action.

Practical wisdom involves a certain kind of excellence at deliberation that minimally

requires the capacity to reason toward achieving some desired end. Indeed, the individual possessing practical wisdom must be effective at instrumental reasoning. This initial capacity, however, merely affords a necessary rather than a sufficient condition for practical wisdom since instrumental reasoning alone provides no guarantee of intellectual virtue. The ability to deliberate in this particular manner, as Aristotle recognizes, is equally compatible with human folly or wickedness:

There is a faculty which is called cleverness; and this is such as to be able to do the things that tend towards the mark we have set before ourselves, and to hit it. Now if the mark be noble, the cleverness is laudable, but if the mark be bad, the cleverness is mere smartness; hence we call even men of practical wisdom clever or smart. Practical wisdom is not the faculty, but it does not exist without this faculty. (Aristotle, 1985, p. 169)

Practical wisdom does not merely involve managerial expertise enabling individuals to achieve any conceivable objective. Consistent with the teleological focus of Aristotelean ethics, practical wisdom requires successful deliberation to achieve those particular ends contributing to human excellence. Practical wisdom is more than managerial expertise since mastering the former also requires targeting and achieving appropriate objectives contributing to the achievement of a good life.

Practical wisdom entails an important implication for career preparedness education pursuing an Aristotelean intellectual virtue framework. Since practical wisdom is not merely concerned with managerial expertise directed toward the achievement of preordained objectives, but with evaluating how these objectives contribute to the good life, it requires evaluation of assumptions and ends as well as means. Minimally, this compels career preparedness programs to encourage student deliberation about the ethical implications of prevailing labour market conditions and workplace structure. Within our existing social context, these elements might be evaluated on whether they respect the ideals and values consistent with democratic life.

While neglecting the role of productive wisdom as a necessary condition for its achievement, the intellectual virtue of theoretical wisdom and the rationality dimension it

embodies is central to the liberal education tradition. The lineage between Aristotle’s concept of theoretical wisdom and popular conceptions of liberal education is widely accepted. Gregory (1983) observes, for example, that liberal academics typically define their role by arguing that the purpose of education is developing the rational capacities identified by Aristotle. Scheffler (1995) distinguishes the concept of education from mere mechanical applications of knowledge, or training, by arguing that the intended outcome in the former is not restricted to the simple acquisition of particular abilities for specific and narrowly construed application: “Education typically implies a certain breadth in intended outcome. It is thus implicitly contrasted with training, construed as concerned with skills having a narrow scope, or with information lacking an interpretive base of understanding”(p. 82).

It is worth considering what Scheffler means by an interpretive base of understanding since this requirement reflects the most valuable epistemic ideals and dispositions associated with liberal education. Students require two essential qualities to develop an interpretive base of understanding: 1) they must be introduced into a discipline of inquiry by attaining comprehensive knowledge about the particular subject in question; and 2) they must develop a disposition for critical thought. In combination, these two requirements are intended to promote student engagement with the subject matter, rather than simply encourage their passive acceptance of pre-determined information. Scheffler (1995) explains:

The educated person is one who has been initiated into appropriate disciplines through teaching, not merely drilled or indoctrinated. The path to become an educated person is the process of having been taught, that is having been treated after the manner associated with teaching, as an agent in a rational exchange. It is such exchange in the process of teaching which constitutes the vehicle of the critical spirit. (p. 88)

Sharing Aristotle’s concern, then, liberal education generally eschews mechanical forms of schooling associated with training and pursues the cognitive dimension of learning identified by Scheffler. Indeed, there is a crucial conceptual distinction to be drawn between education on one hand, and training, or mere mechanical applications of knowledge, on the other. Similarly, there

is a fundamental pedagogical distinction between career education that respects the cognitive requirements of intellectual virtue and that which emphasizes instrumental, or mechanical, reasoning alone. Liberal education has captured the cognitive dimension of theoretical wisdom, but has unfortunately ignored the reflective elements in productive wisdom and their potential to shape a educational program in occupational study.

The curriculum focus of *artes liberales*, or that education befitting a free person, then, traditionally rejects those disciplines or subject areas directly related to vocational pursuits. This rejection may be partially derived from Aristotle's own outdated view that liberal education was the exclusive domain of privileged male Athenians, not something for slaves, women or other individuals whose lives involved a significant measure of manual labour. Excluding occupational studies from the realm of liberal education on this hierarchical basis, however, obviously reflects an anachronistic application of Aristotle's views on education. Although the distinction between vocational and liberal education is often supported by appeals to Aristotle, there is nothing in his philosophy that renders career studies *ipso facto* illiberal. Indeed, the deciding factor in determining whether career education qualifies as liberal hinges on whether such study respects the cognitive dimension and critical ideals consistent with the intellectual virtues in its pedagogy and depictions of work.

A Review of Career Preparedness Programs

There are essentially two fundamental requirements secondary level career preparedness education must satisfy to respect the cognitive dimension of productive wisdom and liberal education. Initially, students must be treated as subjects in a communicative rational exchange rather than the objects of teaching. Minimally, this means avoiding mechanical and indoctrinatory approaches to learning that, according to Aristotle, operate to degrade the mind. Non-mechanical learning approaches characteristically provide students with good reasons to accept curriculum content while simultaneously inviting critique of those reasons based on evidence and argument. The first necessary condition for practising productive wisdom in career preparedness education, then, protects student agency by treating learners as subjects in learning, rather than mere objects of an instrumental schooling process. Second, it is impossible for

students to evaluate effectively the knowledge claims they encounter if they simply lack the interpretive base of understanding to assess adequately the information in question. It is of dubious value to offer students the opportunity to critique curriculum content if they lack the necessary background knowledge, subject understanding and habits of mind to make informed decisions. Many career preparedness programs require a significant increase in the scope of information provided to students and a shift from their ahistorical presentation of context to address these elements in any adequate fashion.

International secondary level career preparedness programs are conducted under a range of headings (Cross-Content Workplace Readiness, New Jersey, 2000; California School-to-Career State Plan, California, 2000; Career and Employability Skills, Michigan, 2000; Business Services and Technology Programs, Indiana, 1999; Guidance and Career Education, Ontario, 2000; Work Studies, Western Australia, 2000; Career and Industry Awareness, Western Australia, 2000), but these various programs reveal identifiable patterns in aims and content. The generally expressed aim of career preparedness programs is preparing secondary school students for occupational success in rapidly changing labour market and economic conditions. Rather than supplying students with precise technical abilities designed to meet particular labour market requirements, however, these programs generally emphasize generic employability skills designed for inter-occupational application. Unlike technical skills, employability skills are not job specific, but are intended to cut horizontally across all industries and vertically across all job levels. Buck and Barrick (1987) define employability skills as “the attributes of employees, other than technical competence, that make them an asset to the employer” (p. 29).

The ubiquitous aim of secondary school career preparedness curricula, then, is preparing students for a rapidly and perpetually changing labour market, and for an increasingly competitive global economic milieu. The State of California’s School to Career Plan (2000) observes, “New world-class education standards must be developed which are uniformly high and comparable to the best standards of other industrialized nations”(n.p.). The Ontario Guidance and Career Education (2000) curriculum considers its primary aim to play “a central role in secondary school by preparing students for a complex and rapidly changing world” (p.1). There is a general consensus on the kinds of employability skills students supposedly require for

success within the current labour market. The identified workplace competencies are typically sub-divided into three major categories: academic skills such as basic numeracy and literacy; higher order thinking skills such as critical thinking, communicating, creativity and problem-solving; and personality traits such as demonstrating positive attitudes toward change and work, the willingness to work cooperatively with others, and developing a propensity for lifelong learning. In New Jersey's Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards (2000), for example, occupational skills are divided into the categories of basic academic skills, thinking skills and personal qualities.

Most career preparedness programs include the employability skills of lifelong learning, and developing a positive attitude toward the change and uncertainty ensuing from current economic and labour market conditions. Under the heading *Managing Change*, for example, the working document for the State of Indiana's Business Services and Technology Program advocates "Understand [ing] the need and/or value of lifelong learning as it relates to career success" (n.p.). Although the concept of lifelong learning has a long history in education, work competency programs, consistent with neo-liberal and human capital assumptions, often depict the quality in instrumental and/or inter-occupational terms. In Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*, of course, the educational journey required to grasp the Form of the Good involves a lifetime of learning to free oneself from the shadows of conjecture, metaphorically representing prevailing dogma and belief. Dewey (1916) also considered education a lifelong process directed toward continual intellectual, social and vocational development. In career preparedness programs, lifelong learning appears reduced to a discursive ideological apparatus that conditions learners to accept passively lives of occupational instability and personal responsibility for constant re-training.

Many work competency programs categorize attitudes, values and dispositions as skills thereby obscuring the crucial distinction between the potentially contentious area of values education and skills instruction. Unfortunately, classifying attitudes and values as skills confuses the conceptual differences between them; fundamental semantic distinctions with significant ethical consequences. Attitudes are not skills in any logical or conceptual sense, and categorizing them as such merely circumvents the preferred process of providing sound arguments for their

curricular inclusion. This error in concept taxonomy advances an ethically problematic pedagogy that potentially undermines student rationality by subverting agency within the area of value formation. Such shaping of attitudes under the guise of employability skills instruction is condemned by Hyland (1992), for example, because it reflects a mechanistic strategy in which teaching certain values and attitudes become a means of ensuring students develop personal characteristics favourable to corporations. What is also largely absent from career program strategies to prepare students for workplace change is conveying any recognition that through labour activism and democratic citizenship, students and workers have a legitimate right to participate in shaping labour market conditions, workplace structure, and the entire socio-economic milieu. Depicting desirable moral behaviours as abstract technical skills violates the moral reasoning requirement of both practical wisdom and liberal education.

Reflecting the approach adopted elsewhere by similar curricula, the Indiana Business Services and Technology program depicts the so-called employability skill of critical thinking as an instrument for effective problem-solving circumscribed by market economy and business principles: “Use critical thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving techniques to promote sound, effective business decisions” (n.p.). The restricted applications of critical thinking commonly encouraged in career preparedness programs reflect the assumption that the only remaining issue to be resolved in curriculum decisions is determining, again in a limited instrumental sense, the most effective means to arrive at pre-determined ends. Lankshear (1997) worries that critical thinking has been reduced to a slogan in contemporary education and portrayed as a “silver bullet” to enhance student success in the competitive global market (p. 41). Illuminating truly critical approaches to learning requires exploring the entire socio-historical context in which the problem to be resolved occurs. One need only recall Freire’s (1970) famous dictum that students must learn to read the word and the world. As Klafki (1995) contends, critical thinking in and about education should cast a very wide net:

critical is best understood in the sense of social criticism, which implies constant reflection on relations between school and instruction on one hand (their goals, contents, forms of organization and methods), and social conditions and processes on

the other. (p.14)

Klafki's construct of critical thinking encourages students to engage the world by examining fundamental assumptions about social and educational objectives rather than problem-solving in situations where acceptable solutions are restricted simply to business, or other pre-existing and entirely instrumental evaluative frameworks.

Although similarities outnumber differences between various career preparedness programs, there are some important and noteworthy exceptions. In particular, Western Australia's Work Studies (2000) offers a more comprehensive approach to career preparation for secondary school students than afforded by its North American counterparts. In British Columbia, for example, the Career and Personal Planning (Ministry of Education, 1995) curriculum makes no mention of labour organizing or labour history, and there is only a passing reference to the issue of workers' rights. Ontario's Guidance and Career Education (2000) curriculum includes a single component on the historical development of labor unions, and advocates some discussion of the collective bargaining process. Western Australia's Work Studies, however, devotes an entire unit to industrial relations including sub-sections on arbitration and conciliation, work determination, trade union and employer organizations, government regulations and industrial laws, human rights and the labor market, and legal rights and obligations of individuals and interest groups in a democratic society. Indeed, this comprehensive content format establishes an important benchmark for career preparedness programs by supplying students with various perspectives on the subject, a practice consistent with liberal education ideals.

In summary, then, contemporary career preparedness programs undermine the cognitive component of intellectual virtue, erode liberal educational ideals and hence threaten student agency in at least five distinct ways: 1) most programs omit potentially important areas of relevant content on labour union history and/or organizing, human rights, cultural and environmental impact, and other available criticisms of present global economic practices; 2) most programs portray existing social, economic and labour market conditions in an ahistorical context, and lack any implication that students have a legitimate democratic right to critique the material circumstances affecting their lives and, if desired, to transform those conditions; 3)

objectives consistent with developing attitudinal changes among students are improperly classified as generic employability skills to avoid providing sound ethical arguments for their curricular inclusion; 4) the scope of critical thinking, problem-solving, and other cognitive competencies is limited to identifying in an instrumental fashion the best means to arrive at presupposed ends; and 5) lifelong learning merely encourages students to take personal responsibility for occupational re-training in the face of unstable labour market conditions.

Recommendations for Reform

Central to the intellectual virtue and liberal education framework adopted by this study is the respect for student agency. Career preparedness policies and programs threaten student agency by naturalizing existing labour market, economic and social conditions as inevitable or beyond reasonable dispute. Naturalizing a socially constructed context is potentially ideological because it limits the social options available to students. The crucial difference between social reality and natural reality might be conveyed to secondary level career education students by adopting Searle's (1995) distinction between *social facts* from *brute facts*. Brute facts are independent of social relationships because they convey empirical truths about the natural world. The observation that ice and snow exist on top of Mt. Everest for twelve months of the year is a brute fact independent of social structure. Social facts, on the other hand, and the social reality they engender, are constructed from conscious human actions. It is a social fact that failure to pay income tax in many countries results in property forfeiture. The construction of social reality may be influenced by naturally occurring phenomenon, but social facts do not describe situations human agency cannot transform. Students need to understand, then, that workplace, labour market, and economic conditions are social facts subject to human evaluation and reform.

Cognitive competencies are often reduced to educational slogans or conveyed as simple heuristic strategies that undervalue the role of adequate background knowledge and a critical spirit of inquiry. When appropriately conceived, however, critical thinking offers students an intellectual approach to enhance their understanding of the forces shaping vocational experience. Knoblauch and Brannon (1993), for example, provide educators with an illuminating example of how a lesson in thinking critically about global labour market conditions might proceed. This

particular lesson, entitled The Pervasiveness of the Global Market, is designed to highlight the practical and moral impact of international and domestic labour market practices. The lesson begins simply by asking students questions such as where their shirts or shoes are made, who made them and why they were made there.

Encouraging research into why clothing is often manufactured in developing countries is intended to provide students with a range of related information on international labour market conditions. Inviting students to consider where their clothing is manufactured may reveal the human benefits and costs associated with contemporary global market practices so students can judge these practices accordingly. Other possible areas for research and discussion might investigate the impact international free trade agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) have on international labour market and workplace conditions. Students might be encouraged to consider ways to improve these conditions and submit their suggestions in writing to government authorities or corporations. Direct political action engages students in the Aristotelean idea of praxis and emphasizes the practical importance of translating knowledge into action. Critiquing the relationship between international trade agreements and working conditions also promotes student understanding that globalisation is not an uncontrollable juggernaut. Conveying this recognition accords secondary level education the fundamental democratic task of creating politically informed students who are subjects in the construction of social reality rather than the mere objects of globalisation.

Simon, Dipppo and Schenke (1991) offer a number of critical approaches to work studies programs designed to strengthen student participation “in determining the practices that define their working lives” (p. 8). They contend that current models of career education underlining the domestic and international competitive importance of technical skills merely pit students against one another and neglect considering social reforms to enhance vocational possibilities. Simon et al. suggest assigning students the task of interviewing long-term employees at various places of business to foster a better understanding of the personal and social impact of changing workplace conditions. Students might ask workers such questions as how their job has changed since they started working for the organization? How have these changes affected their personal lives? What have these changes meant generally to themselves and their colleagues, and how have these

changes influenced the general working environment?

Career preparedness policies and programs typically characterize lifelong learning as an instrumental disposition encouraging student adaptation to unstable labour market conditions. An expanded career education approach to lifelong learning that respects intellectual virtue and liberal learning ideals not only invites students to adjust to occupational change, but to critique and influence the material conditions affecting their working lives. Indeed, when focused on occupational retraining, lifelong learning violates the tenets of intellectual virtue and liberal schooling by advocating uncritical student acceptance of occupational and labour market instability. Given this socially reproductive outcome, lifelong learning might be employed as an instrument of subjugation rather than a vehicle for intellectual, social and vocational development. Barrow and Keeney (2000) suggest that the concept of lifelong learning has become little more than a rallying cry for business and industry to help answer the question: “Given the rapid pace of technological change, the new information age and the globalization of trade, how can we be assured that we are producing competent and qualified workers who are prepared to meet the reality of a new economic order?” (p. 191). Despite the soothing discursive overtones afforded by lifelong learning, they believe it masks an ideological agenda promoting a flexible utilitarianism where employability skills are emphasized at the expense of liberal study.

Based on these concerns, then, lifelong learning requires reconfiguring throughout secondary school curriculum to reflect Dewey’s (1938) conception of personal, social and vocational growth as a lifelong phenomenon. The general purpose of education, on his account, is creating learning conditions not only to stimulate vocational development in the form of evolving technical skills, but to generate enduring intellectual growth. This wider schooling objective cannot be achieved, according to Dewey, by inculcating technical knowledge and skills in students. Fostering lifelong learning requires developing psychological dispositions that encourage students to learn continuously in a more general sense throughout their lives:

Any experience is mis-educative that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience, a given experience may increase a person’s automatic skill in a particular direction and yet tend to land him in a groove or rut; the effect again is to narrow the

field of further experience. (p. 13)

Dewey (1916) conveys a similar perspective in Democracy and Education where he argues, “the purpose of school education is to ensure the continuance of education by organizing the powers that ensure growth” (p. 51). On his account, then, lifelong learning does not merely prepare students to adapt passively to changing labour market conditions, but encourages their democratic participation in shaping the conditions of experience. Indeed, lifelong learning in this wider sense encourages students to chart their own course to cope with social change and navigate uncertainty to reach an autonomously chosen destination.

With some exceptions, perspectives running counter to those of the business community are generally excluded from career preparedness programs. The prevailing approach typically excludes the views of labour, environmental movements and other relevant perspectives on global economics, labour market conditions and workplace structure. Balancing career education program content is necessary to avoid content indoctrination, and hence respect the intellectual virtue/liberal education framework adopted by this study. Content indoctrination occurs when relevant viewpoints on issues are intentionally or otherwise withheld from students. This anti-educational approach is avoided simply by considering alternative viewpoints on work-related matters. Other content relevant to career preparedness might include offering students labour viewpoints on labour market structure, global economics and general working conditions. Although there is a developed history of labour education in the U.S. and Canada, this education has generally occurred outside of public schooling (Altenbaugh, 1990). Following the format adopted by Western Australia’s Work Studies, then, a career preparation program might provide students with information on international labour history, domestic trade union and organizing rights, and general content about labour movement assumptions, goals, perspectives and concerns.

The category mistake committed by classifying attitudes and values as technical skills threatens student agency within the realm of value formation by undermining the reasoning dimension of liberal education and intellectual virtue. Describing workplace values simply as occupational competencies or employability skills precludes rational deliberation on why these qualities are ethically appropriate. Following Scheffler (1995), the comprehensive understanding

consistent with liberal education requires beliefs to be justified by providing impartial reasons, or reasons beyond unsubstantiated personal and arbitrary preferences. Employing a code of moral conduct as an example, he elucidates this condition by pointing out that moral education, as distinct from moral training, promotes student evaluation of the values in question. The ethical objectives of career preparedness programs can be achieved and indoctrination avoided by employing methods of moral education respecting student rationality and practical wisdom.

One model of values education respecting student agency is described by Thomas (1993) as the *delineated options approach*. In this approach, the teacher provides alternative views on how the matter discussed might be interpreted and then examines the underlying assumptions associated with different perspectives on the issue. As Thomas explains, “The instructor’s intention is to show how different value considerations can lead to different appraisals of the matter at hand, whether or not the instructor divulges his or her own preference” (p. 45). The applicability of the delineated options strategy in career preparedness education is not difficult to envision. If students are asked to develop a positive attitude toward abstract change, they should also be encouraged to consider why occupational, social and technological change might not always solicit positive responses. Values are not merely conveyed to students as technical capacities requiring mere assimilation, but are evaluated on the basis of their assumptions and implications. The delineated options format, then, satisfies the epistemic requirements necessary to protect students against values indoctrination.

Proefriedt (1985) advances a similar approach to values education based on what he describes as a *philosophical solution*. Similar to the delineated options approach, this method of values education underscores the importance of rational inquiry and critical deliberation. Although recognizing rational debate may find itself at odds with instrumental schooling objectives, Profriedt believes moral education requires the freedom of inquiry and open-mindedness identical to other forms of liberal learning. Consistent with the critical aims of this study, he contends “a free, rational person is not one socialized to a given order” (p. 549). In the philosophical approach to values education, then, students are not inculcated with the moral views of others, but afforded the opportunity to assess critically the entire range of values, attitudes and personal qualities they encounter.

Coombs (1988) synthesizes the critical role of rational deliberation in value formation with the demands of democratic citizenship. On his account, there are limited kinds of attitudes whose curricular inclusion can be justified from a standpoint consistent with liberal education in a democratic society: 1) attitudes that are necessary components of acquiring knowledge and understanding; and 2) attitudes that are implicit in the fundamental principles and institutions of our liberal democratic society, that is, regarding all persons as equally deserving of respect, autonomy and opportunity. The first group of attitudes is termed epistemic by Coombs since it includes essential dispositions for acquiring knowledge such as normative expectations on standards that procedures and products of intellectual inquiry must satisfy. The second category is potentially more contentious because it involves imparting certain ethical beliefs to students, but Coombs wisely restricts these attitudes to those necessary for successful participation in a pluralistic, democratic society. Attitudes in this category are fundamentally consistent with the ethical assumptions and principles edifying democratic ideals.

Summary

This paper has attempted to alleviate the dichotomy between liberal and vocational study by proposing an Aristotelean approach to career education that combines the occupational and critical objectives of schools. While Aristotle offers a philosophy of education whose ultimate aim remains sensitive to the search for truth focus of liberal study, its content and practice must also satisfy productive requirements. By employing a broadened Aristotelean framework, then, career preparedness programs, when properly conceived and implemented, can comprise a perfectly legitimate component of liberal education. To satisfy the demands of intellectual virtue from which the very concept of liberal education is derived, however, current programs require significant reform in their content, objectives and general presentation.

The traditional exclusion of vocationally-oriented studies from liberal education negatively affects both forms of schooling. Vocational education often becomes an exercise in job training and moral indoctrination while liberal study remains dangerously removed from practical and productive concerns. A form of study which aims to liberate the mind is constrained by narrow-mindedness and hence increasingly rejected as elitist, archaic or without significant

economic relevance. This study maintains that liberally educated students in the original Aristotelean sense recognize the significance of both theoretical and work-related knowledge. As Aristotle realized more than twenty-five hundred years ago, and this paper seeks to reconfirm, we ignore the inescapable connection between the vocational, political and critical dimensions of experience at our individual and collective peril. In the final analysis, the choice is not the traditional bifurcated one between liberal and career preparedness education, but between career preparedness education that is liberal and that which is not.

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