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Liberalizing Career Education: An Aristotelian Approach

Liberal education is traditionally defined in opposition to vocational study. This article proposes an expanded approach to liberal education that encompasses contemporary career preparation programs by implementing an Aristotelian intellectual virtue framework. Although liberal study typically reflects its lineage to theoretical wisdom, or sophia, it virtually ignores the fundamental role played by productive wisdom, or techne, in Aristotelian thought. By applying the intellectual virtue framework to various career education programs, areas of required reform are identified. Two central questions are addressed by the article: (a) how can career education be integrated into secondary school curriculum without compromising student agency and democratic citizenship? and (b) how can secondary school career education prepare students more effectively for the challenges of contemporary working life? The final section offers a series of proposals in response to these two key questions.

L'on définit traditionnellement les études en arts libéraux par opposition aux études professionnelles. Cet article propose une interprétation élargie d'une éducation libérale qui englobe les programmes contemporains de formation au choix d'une carrière et ce, en appliquant un cadre aristotélicien de vertu intellectuelle. Bien que les arts libéraux reflètent typiquement leur lien à la sagesse théorique, ou sophia, ils font essentiellement abstraction du rôle fondamental que joue la sagesse productive, ou techne, dans la pensée aristotélicienne. L'application du cadre de vertu intellectuelle aux divers programmes de formation au choix d'une carrière fait ressortir des domaines où la réforme s'avère nécessaire. Cet article aborde deux questions fondamentales : (a) comment les programmes de formation au choix d'une carrière peuvent-ils être intégrés au curriculum du secondaire sans compromettre l'autonomie des élèves et la citoyenneté démocratique? et (b) comment de tels programmes peuvent-ils mieux préparer les élèves au secondaire à faire face aux défis contemporains que pose le monde du travail? La dernière section de l'article propose une série de réponses à ces deux questions clés.

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

Current debates on public education continue to reflect the same sharply divided opinions identified by Aristotle some 2,500 years ago. Leaders of industry, governments, social efficiency advocates, and some parents and students demand increased occupational relevance in public schooling whereas liberal and critical educators attempt to insulate schools from what they con-

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sider another vocational education onslaught. This enduring disagreement was evident at last decade's World Conference on Education For All where some delegates deemed education "the crucible for democracy and liberty," whereas others viewed it as development in "skills for living and increasing national economic growth" (Spring, 2000, p. 4).

In Canada this curriculum conflict often appears in the contrasting views advanced by institutions such as the Conference Board of Canada (CBOC) and social activists like Robertson (1998) and Kuehn (1997). The CBOC initiated a study during the early 1990s to identify the labor force skills required by Canadian workers, subsequently drafting the *Employability Skills Profile (ESP)*, an extremely influential list of generic competences employers supposedly demand in their workers. According to the CBOC (1992), "The *Employability Skills Profile* is a generic list of the kinds of skills, qualities, competencies, attitudes and behaviours that form the foundation of a high quality Canadian workforce both today and tomorrow" (p. 3). Seven million copies of *ESP* were distributed among Canadian schools and businesses following its publication in 1992 (Bloom, 1994). In Alberta and Ontario numerous public education initiatives are based entirely on CBOC recommendations. Taylor (1998) reports that Alberta's 1996 *Framework for Enhancing Business Involvement in Education* borrows exclusively from CBOC and corporate-sponsored initiatives. In British Columbia, secondary school students are expected to master the generic skills identified by *ESP* in both *Career and Personal Planning* (Ministry of Education, 1995) and *Business Education* (Ministry of Education, 2000).

Robertson (1998) condemns the CBOC and other similar corporate initiatives by arguing that the objective of such programs is to train a docile labor force lacking any critical social perspective. She views the corporate assault on Canadian schools as one strategy in a carefully orchestrated conspiracy designed to reduce the role of public education to that of ideological manipulation. Kuehn (1997) similarly maintains that the current public school emphasis on preparing students for work violates the basic tenets of personal choice and freedom in democratic societies:

Perhaps the worst part of all the current emphasis is that it crowds out all the traditional and valuable functions of education in a democratic society. It pushes to the side the social and cultural and ethical goals. It makes central a view of students sitting in our classes as human capital to be prepared for globalization. (p. 71)

The contrasting views held by the CBOC and social activists such as Kuehn and Robertson represent distinct perspectives on the purpose and implications of career education. In this article I suggest that Aristotle's philosophy of education, and the intellectual virtues it embodies, can help strike a more reasoned balance between these two conflicting viewpoints.

To avoid confusion, it is necessary to distinguish between the two types of virtues present in Aristotelian thought. The *moral virtues* are primarily a function of imitation, practice, and habit, whereas the *intellectual virtues*, the foci of this article, contain a crucial deliberative component and are primarily developed through education. Liberal education traditionally embraces the intellectual virtue of *theoretical wisdom*, or *sophia*, what Egan (1998) refers to as the "search for truth" claim on curriculum, but ignores *productive wisdom*, or *techné*,

the necessary cognitive dimension of any meaningful vocational experience. The intellectual virtues of *sophia*, *techne*, and *phronesis* (practical rationality) all share this crucial cognitive dimension and meaningful forms of work, on Aristotle's account, involve more than simple mechanical, or means-to-end, reasoning. Nussbaum (1990) elucidates this aspect of intellectual virtue by explaining that, "Aristotelian deliberation does not confine itself to means-end reasoning. It is concerned as well with the specification of ultimate ends" (p. 75). In Aristotelian thought, intellectual virtue is necessary to achieve *eudaimonia*, or human happiness, because the natural function of persons resides in the exercise of their natural cognitive faculties, the most important being that of reason. So according to Aristotle, happiness consists of activity in accordance with reason. In an intellectual virtue framework, then, to deny career education students the opportunity to reason is to deny them both humanity and happiness. Unfortunately, mechanical reasoning, or technical rationality, dominates contemporary career education programs.

Rather than simply embracing the traditional challenge to career education by deeming it necessarily illiberal, and hence a threat to liberal democracy, I propose redesigning secondary-level career education to respect the cognitive dimension of intellectual virtue and the breadth of understanding and critical spirit consistent with traditional liberal study. I argue that respecting the rationality of intellectual virtue can secure career preparatory programs a legitimate place in liberal education without having a deleterious effect on student agency or democratic citizenship. Indeed, when properly conceived and organized, career education can provide students with the same interpretive base of understanding and critical acumen that lies at the heart of liberal study. This article targets two particular audiences. First, I hope to enhance appreciation for the relevance of career studies among those educators who believe they are pursuing a liberal framework simply by rejecting such subject matter; and second, I wish to highlight the democratic importance of respecting student rationality to those designing contemporary career education programs.

An Aristotelian Framework for Career Education: The Intellectual Virtues

When crafting his philosophy of education more than 2,000 years ago, Aristotle (1996) faced conflicting perspectives remarkably similar to current polarized views on the primary purpose of schooling. Aristotle's mentor, Plato (1973), believed that ultimate knowledge, that is, knowledge of the Good, is only achieved through an arduous educational search that seeks truth through reason. Knowledge, as opposed to conjecture or belief, is attained only after understanding the non-empirical, non-physical world, an epistemological position metaphorically reflected in Plato's Allegory of the Cave. The allegory supposes that the primary function of education is to lead students from the ignoble darkness and deception of the cave toward the world of reason and epistemic enlightenment through a lifetime dedicated to learning. Education is 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, exerts profound influence on the Western education tradition and is most notably reflected in the aims, methods, and content of traditional liberal study (Egan, 1998).

Although challenging Plato's "search for truth" emphasis, Isocrates (1929) also influenced Aristotle's views on education by advocating a pragmatic form of Athenian schooling focused on enhancing social, political, and occupational efficiency. Against his more contemplative adversary, he repudiated instruction in theoretical philosophy, viewing it as a waste of valuable educational resources. Isocrates rejected Plato's conviction that achieving epistemic certainty was a worthwhile educational aim by arguing that knowledge derived from some Archimedean vantage point was simply unattainable. Like contemporary social efficiency advocates, Isocrates believed that education should emphasize instrumental objectives from which students derive immediate practical benefit rather than struggle with unanswerable metaphysical questions concerning the nature of absolute reality.

The current dichotomy between the aims of liberal educators and the instrumental objectives of contemporary career education finds its theoretical source in the disagreement between Plato and Isocrates. Aristotle's philosophy of education seeks some point of resolution, or *golden mean*, between the Platonic and Isocratic positions by emphasizing human rationality while also embracing practical schooling objectives. Although I do not advocate a wholesale adoption of Aristotle's philosophy of education, I suggest that the reasoning dimension embodied in the intellectual virtues offers valuable insight into how the present curricular conflict, not entirely unlike that affecting ancient Greek education, might be successfully resolved.

According to Aristotle (1996), an education that fosters individual and social well-being provides students with the productive competences required to sustain human life. The intellectual virtue of productive wisdom refers to the creative planning and action that addresses these fundamental human needs. The ability to produce, in Aristotle's view, represents a defining human characteristic on which dignity and happiness ultimately depend. The capacity to meet practical necessities accords individuals both vocational fulfillment and subsequent leisure opportunities. To reiterate, although ultimately concerned with manufacturing products or providing services, productive wisdom, or *techne*, also embodies a crucial cognitive dimension that distinguishes it as an intellectual virtue.

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

Productive wisdom implies that career education respecting an intellectual virtue framework must offer students more than mere mechanical competences for instrumental application. Students should also be encouraged to consider the justification and implication of the various skills they acquire. They should be afforded the opportunity to influence the conditions of their vocational experience and help shape the products they create and the services they provide.

Unfortunately, many career education programs encourage students to adopt abstract *employability skills* without inviting critique of their potential

implications. In the CBOC's (1992) *ESP*, for example, under the heading Teamwork Skills, students are expected to "understand and work within the culture of the group" (n.p). The ability to cooperate effectively with others offers an indispensable capacity in many different occupations. Group work models that advocate working in group culture above all other objectives, however, may also undermine the cognitive dimension of intellectual virtue by encouraging individual acquiescence in the face of rational disagreement. From an education perspective concerned with fostering democratic citizenship, the crucial criteria for meaningful collaboration is not securing general consensus or individual submission to prevailing viewpoints, but engaging in a continual process of inquiry, multi-logical exchange, and potential transformation.

In Aristotle's view, the practice of mechanical capacities in the absence of reason and reflective action, or *praxis*, operate to degrade the intellect. Mechanical capacities such as abstracted employability skills lack the deliberative component consistent with human rationality. Such skills limit targeted ends to those chosen by others, and hence permit only means-to-end, or instrumental thinking. Aristotle (1996) emphasizes the crucial distinction between productive wisdom, or *techne*, and mere mechanical labor by arguing that the latter is appropriate only for slaves, not for free persons.

The intellectual virtue of *practical wisdom* involves reflective action in the ethical and political realms of human experience. Practical wisdom is a necessary condition for human flourishing at the individual, domestic, and community levels of action. Aristotle's (1985) discussion of practical wisdom in the *Nicomachean Ethics* suggests it 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 requires the capacity to reason toward some desired end. Indeed, the individual possessing practical wisdom must be effective at instrumental reasoning. This initial capacity, however, provides only a necessary rather than a sufficient condition for practical wisdom, because 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. (p. 169)

Practical wisdom does not merely involve the managerial expertise that would enable individuals to achieve any conceivable objective. Consistent with the teleological focus of Aristotelian ethics, practical wisdom involves deliberation to achieve those particular ends that contribute to human excellence. Practical wisdom is more than mere managerial expertise, then, because it targets those objectives identified through reason that contribute to a broader conception of a good life.

Practical wisdom entails an important consequence for career education programs conducted in an Aristotelian intellectual virtue framework. Because 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 involves some evaluation of ends as well as means. This compels career education to encourage student deliberation about the ethical implications of prevailing labor market conditions and workplace structure. In our existing context, for example, these elements could be evaluated on whether they respect the ideals and values consistent with our collective social democracy. Most current career education programs have the unfortunate tendency to present prevailing social, economic, and labor market conditions in an ahistorical ideological context that precludes critical evaluation. The ends are generally depicted as given, and students are simply expected to conform to the prevailing conditions. When socialization is restricted to technical rationality, the deliberative element of *phronesis*, or practical wisdom, is openly violated.

Although neglecting productive wisdom as a necessary condition for its mastery, the liberal education tradition embraces the intellectual virtue of theoretical wisdom and the rational dimension it embodies. The lineage between Aristotle's concept of theoretical wisdom and popular conceptions of liberal education is widely accepted. Gregory (1983) observes that liberal academics typically define their role by arguing that the purpose of education is to develop the rational capacities identified by Aristotle. Liberal education enthusiasts have historically condemned any attempt, regardless of format, however, to dilute traditional academic content with vocational study. Bestor (1956), for example, launched a scathing attack on vocational education reform in the 1950s by arguing that students should not take vocational courses for academic credit, nor should such courses be available to students under age 17. He deemed vocational programs the product of corporate power politics and condemned them as intellectually paralyzing, existentially limiting, and contrary to sound educational philosophy. Bestor argued that vocational programs were unlikely to generate any original or worthwhile thinking in students who would be crippled by an education that "generates in the student the belief that he cannot deal with any matter until he has taken a course in it" (p. 79). Unfortunately, Bestor and other similar critics of vocational study failed to realize that liberal education is more a particular pedagogical approach than it is a limited body of knowledge.

Although emphasizing the rational element of theoretical wisdom, the traditional focus of *artes liberales*, or that education befitting a free person, typically rejects those disciplines directly related to productive wisdom. This rejection is partly the result of Aristotle's own 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 labor. To exclude career education from liberal study on this hierarchical basis, however, reflects an anachronistic application of Aristotle's general position on education. The distinction between vocational and liberal education is often supported by appeals to Aristotle, but there is nothing in his philosophy that renders career studies ipso facto illiberal. Rather, the determining factor in whether career education qualifies as liberal hinges on whether it respects student rationality in its pedagogy and depictions of work.

A Review of Career Education Programs

There are essentially two fundamental criteria that secondary level career education programs must satisfy to respect the cognitive dimension of intellectual virtue. First, to avoid technical rationality, or simple mechanical reasoning, students must be treated as subjects in a communicative exchange rather than the mere objects of teaching. Second, it is impossible for students to reason effectively about vocational knowledge if they lack the interpretive base of understanding to assess information adequately. It is of dubious value to afford students the opportunity to critique subject matter when they lack the necessary background knowledge, contextual understanding, and habits of mind to render informed, reasoned decisions. As illustrated below, career education programs require a significant increase in the scope of information provided to students and a shift away from their ahistorical context to satisfy these fundamental requirements.

International secondary school career education is currently 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, 2000; *Guidance and Career Education*, Ontario, 2000; *Career and Industry Awareness*, Western Australia, 2000a; *Work Studies*, Western Australia, 2000b), but most programs reveal consistent aims and content. The programs listed above represent a considerable cross-section of international and domestic trends, and hence offer an appropriate framework for policy analysis. The general aim of career education is to prepare students for occupational success in rapidly changing labor market and economic conditions. Rather than supplying students with precise technical abilities that address specific job needs, however, these programs emphasize generic employability skills designed for inter-occupational application. Unlike technical skills, employability skills are not job-specific, but supposedly 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 general aim of secondary school career education, then, is preparing students for a rapidly and perpetually changing labor 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 also a general consensus on the kinds of skills students require for success in the current labor market. Workplace competences are typically subdivided 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* (2000), for

example, occupational competences are divided into the categories of basic academic skills, thinking skills, and personal qualities.

Most career education programs include the employability skills of lifelong learning and adopting a "positive attitude" toward labor market uncertainty. Under the heading *Managing Change*, for example, the working document for Indiana's *Business Services and Technology Program* advocates "Understand[ing] the need and/or value of lifelong learning as it relates to career success" (Indiana Department of Education, 2000, n.p.). Although the concept of lifelong learning has a long history in education, work competence programs, consistent with human capital precepts, typically depict the quality in instrumental and/or inter-occupational terms. Barrow and Keeney (2000) worry that lifelong learning has become little more than a rallying cry for industry to help answer the question: "Given the 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 the new economic order" (p. 191). Contemporary career education programs seemingly reduce lifelong learning to a discursive ideological apparatus that prepares learners to assume personal responsibility for continual retraining in the face of employment instability. Consistent with the cognitive demands of productive wisdom, the dispositional component of lifelong learning must not be reduced to that of mere labor market adjustment. Instead, lifelong learning consistent with intellectual virtue involves an ongoing critique of labor market and vocational conditions with continual consideration given to their potential transformation.

Many career education programs categorize attitudes, values, and dispositions as skills, thereby obscuring the crucial distinction between the contentious area of values education and skills instruction. The CBOC's (1992) *ESP*, for example, promotes the personal characteristic of "coping with uncertainty" under the subheading of "adaptability." When valuative objectives are classified as abstracted skills, the important differences between attitudes and skills are obscured. This error in concept taxonomy advances a pedagogy that violates practical wisdom by subverting student agency in the realm of value formation. The shaping of attitudes under the guise of employability skills is condemned by Hyland (1992) because it reflects a mechanistic strategy in which teaching certain values and attitudes becomes a means of ensuring that students develop personal characteristics favorable to industry. Attitudes are not skills in any conceptual sense, and categorizing them as such merely circumvents the cognitive dimension of practical wisdom by failing to consider reasons for their moral appropriateness.

The Indiana (2000) *Business Services and Technology Program* reflects the approach adopted elsewhere in career education by depicting 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.). British Columbia's (Ministry of Education, 2000) *Business Education* program advances a similar critical thinking model: "Critical thinking is an important aspect of all courses. Instruction should include opportunities for students to justify positions on issues and to apply economic and business principles to

particular circumstances" (n.p.). Such restricted approaches to critical thinking in career education assume that the only remaining issue in career and business decision-making is determining the most effective means to arrive at predetermined ends. Clearly an approach to critical thinking consistent with intellectual virtue must encourage students to evaluate social, economic, and vocational ends as well as means.

Although similarities outnumber differences in various career education programs, there are some noteworthy exceptions. Western Australia's (2000b) *Work Studies* offers a far more comprehensive approach to career education than that adopted by its North American counterparts. In British Columbia, for example, *Career and Personal Planning* (Ministry of Education, 1995) makes no mention of labor organizing or history, and there is only a brief passing reference to the issue of workers' rights. Ontario's *Guidance and Career Education* (2000) 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 subsections on arbitration and conciliation, work determination, trade union and employer organizations, government regulations and industrial laws, human rights and the labor market, and the legal rights and obligations of individuals and interest groups in a democratic society.

Western Australia's (2000b) *Work Studies* also includes a curriculum unit that encourages students to analyze the entire world of work. Students are asked to consider current and future occupational trends and discuss how these trends might affect their vocational experience. They are encouraged to evaluate the effectiveness of present organizational structures, management styles, and entertain "creative and well-reasoned" (n.p.) solutions to various structural problems related to work. By advocating this type of structural analysis, *Work Studies* avoids the mechanical employability skills approach adopted by other career education programs. The program respects an intellectual virtue framework by considering a range of perspectives on vocational experience, encouraging critique of these viewpoints, and generally affording students an opportunity to influence the conditions that shape their vocational lives.

More generally, contemporary career education programs undermine the cognitive dimension of intellectual virtue, erode liberal education ideals, and threaten student agency in at least five ways:

- most programs omit potentially important areas of relevant content on labor union history and/or organizing, human rights, cultural and environmental impact, and other available criticisms of present economic practices;
- most programs portray existing social, economic, and labor market conditions to students in an ahistorical context and fail to suggest that students have a legitimate right to critique the material circumstances that affect their vocational lives and, if desired, to transform those circumstances;
- objectives consistent with developing attitudinal changes among students are classified as generic employability skills to avoid providing sound ethical arguments for their curricular inclusion;

- the scope of critical thinking, problem-solving, and other cognitive competences is often limited to identifying the best means to arrive at presupposed ends or technical rationality;
- lifelong learning merely encourages students to take personal responsibility for occupational retraining in the face of labor market instability.

Recommendations for Reform: Respecting Intellectual Virtue in Career Education

Central to an intellectual virtue framework is a fundamental respect for student reasoning and agency. Career education threatens both of these criteria when it naturalizes existing labor market, economic, and social conditions to students as inevitable or beyond reasonable dispute. When a socially constructed context is naturalized to students, it restricts future options by imposing artificial limitations on the possible parameters of social reality. The fundamental difference between social and natural reality could be conveyed in career education by distinguishing *social facts* from *brute facts* (Searle, 1995). 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 12 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 present labor market conditions demand worker flexibility. The construction of social reality may be influenced by naturally occurring phenomena, but social facts do not identify situations that human agency cannot transform. Consistent with the deliberative component of practical wisdom, students need to understand that prevailing workplace, labor market, and economic conditions are social facts subject to human evaluation and democratic reform.

Cognitive competences such as critical thinking and problem-solving are often reduced in career education to the mechanical reasoning condemned by Aristotle for degrading the intellect. When conceived in a manner that respects the deliberative component of intellectual virtue, critical thinking may actually enhance students' understanding of the various forces shaping vocational experience and of how these forces might be mitigated. Knoblauch and Brannon (1993) provide an example of a lesson in thinking critically about global labor market conditions. This particular lesson, entitled *The Pervasiveness of the Global Market*, considers the practical and ethical implications of international and domestic labor market practices. The lesson begins simply by asking students where their shirts or shoes are made, who made them, and why they were made there.

Students are asked to consider where their clothing is manufactured to reveal the human benefits and costs associated with contemporary global market practices so that they can evaluate these practices accordingly rather than merely conform to them. Other related areas for research and discussion might investigate the impact of international trade agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) on international labor market and workplace conditions. Students might consider ways to improve these conditions and submit their suggestions in writing to government authorities or corporations. This form of direct student political engagement following critical deliberation fosters the *praxis* consistent with practical wisdom by translating knowledge into social action. By critically considering the

connection between international trade agreements and working conditions, students will understand that globalization is not an uncontrollable juggernaut. Career education would be accorded the fundamental democratic task of creating politically informed subjects in the social construction of reality rather than the mere objects of a mechanical learning enterprise.

Simon, Dippo, and Schenke (1991) propose a number of critical approaches to career education that foster students' participation "in determining the practices that define their working lives" (p. 8). They believe that current programs that emphasize technical skills merely pit students against one another and neglect broader social reforms to enhance vocational experience. Simon et al. suggest assigning students the task of interviewing long-term employees at various places of business to promote their 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? What have these changes meant generally to themselves and their colleagues, and how have these changes influenced their personal lives as well as their working environment? Collecting this type of data provides students with a knowledge base that promotes more informed and critical decisions on labor market structure.

In Plato's Allegory of the Cave, the educational journey required to grasp the Form of the Good involves a lifetime of learning to free oneself from the shadows on the wall that metaphorically represent prevailing dogma and conjecture. Dewey (1916) also considered education a lifelong process directed toward continual intellectual, social, and vocational development. Career education, however, typically characterizes lifelong learning as an instrumental disposition that encourages self-regulated student adaptation to unstable labor market conditions. An approach to lifelong learning that respects intellectual virtue not only invites students to adjust to occupational change, but also to critique and influence the material conditions that affect their working lives. When focused on occupational retraining, lifelong learning violates the reasoning dimension of intellectual virtue by advocating uncritical acceptance by students of existing employment and labor market instability. Given this socially reproductive outcome, lifelong learning might become an instrument of ideological subjugation rather than a vehicle for intellectual, social, and vocational growth.

Based on these concerns, lifelong learning requires reconfiguring throughout career education to reflect Dewey's (1938) conception of personal, social, and vocational development as a lifelong phenomenon. The general purpose of education, by his account, is to create learning conditions that not only stimulate vocational development in the form of evolving technical skills, but generate enduring intellectual growth. This wider schooling objective cannot be achieved, according to Dewey, by merely inculcating technical knowledge and skills in students. Rather, lifelong learning fosters psychological dispositions that encourage students to learn continually and critically 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 auto-

matic 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* by arguing, "The purpose of school education is to ensure the continuance of education by organizing the powers that ensure growth" (p. 51). Lifelong learning does not prepare students to adapt passively to changing labor market conditions, but encourages their democratic participation in shaping the conditions of experience. Consistent with intellectual virtue, this approach to lifelong learning encourages students to chart their own reasoned course to cope with social change and navigate uncertainty to reach an autonomously chosen destination.

With some exceptions, perspectives counter to those of the business community are generally excluded from career education programs. The views of labor, environmental movements and other relevant perspectives on global economics, labor market conditions, and workplace structure are typically ignored. Of the career education programs identified above, only Western Australia's (2000b) *Work Studies* pays any significant attention to alternative viewpoints and concerns. To foster the informed reasoning required by intellectual virtue, career education must present a range of perspectives on work-related issues, including labor viewpoints on labor market structure, global economics, and general working conditions. Following Western Australia's *Work Studies*, programs could provide information on international labor history; domestic trade union and organizing rights; and general content about labor movement assumptions, goals, perspectives, and concerns.

The category error committed when attitudes and values are classified as technical skills threatens student agency in the realm of value formation by undermining the reasoning dimension of practical wisdom. When workplace values are identified as occupational competences or employability skills, rational deliberation on why these characteristics are ethically appropriate may be precluded. The critical deliberation consistent with intellectual virtue and liberal education requires beliefs to be justified by providing impartial reasons, or reasons beyond unsubstantiated arbitrary preferences. Scheffler (1995) employs a code of moral conduct to elucidate this requirement by pointing out that moral reasoning, as distinct from moral training, promotes student evaluation of the values in question.

One model of values education respecting student rationality is found in Thomas's (1993) *delineated options approach*. When using this approach, teachers offer alternative views on how the value under discussion might be interpreted and then examine 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 education respecting intellectual virtue is not difficult to envisage. If students are asked to adopt a positive attitude toward abstract change, they should also consider why occupational, social, and technological change might not always solicit positive responses. Values are not merely conveyed to students as technical capacities or skills that require mechanical assimilation, but are evaluated

on the basis of their assumptions and implications. The delineated options approach and other similar moral education models protect students against values indoctrination by satisfying the cognitive dimension of practical wisdom.

Conclusion

In this article I attempt to alleviate the traditional dichotomy between liberal and vocational study by proposing an Aristotelian approach to career education that combines work-related subject matter with critical learning objectives. The article evolves from a concern that instrumental aims in career education pose a genuine threat to democratic citizenship by undermining student critique of prevailing social circumstances. It also emerges from an equally important concern that liberal education is too often removed from the more immediate and practical needs of students and society. Although Aristotle offers a philosophy of education the ultimate aim of which remains sensitive to the search for truth focus of traditional liberal study, its content and practice also understand the importance of productive knowledge. By employing a broadened Aristotelian framework, career education when properly conceived and implemented can comprise a perfectly legitimate component of liberal education. As Aristotle realized more than 2,500 years ago, the choice is not the traditional bifurcated one between liberal and career education, but between career education that is liberal and that which is not. To satisfy the deliberative dimension of intellectual virtue, however, contemporary career education generally requires significant reform in content, objectives, and presentation.

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