JOHN DEWEY AND THE FUTURE OF COOPERATIVE EDUCATION[1]

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> *I believe that the best and deepest moral training is precisely that which one gets through having to enter into proper relations with others in a unity of work and thought.* (Dewey, 1897)
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> *The kind of vocational education in which I am interested is not one which will "adapt" workers to the existing industrial regime; I am not sufficiently in love with the regime for that. It seems to me that the business of all who would not be educational time-servers is to . . . strive for a kind of vocational education which will first alter the existing industrial system, and ultimately transform it.* (Dewey, 1915)

When justification is needed for the practice of cooperative education, John Dewey's educational philosophy is resurrected to validate experiential learning and cultivate acceptance among skeptics and detractors within what is referred to as higher education's "mainstream," meaning the traditional currents of liberal education (Heinemann and DeFalco, 1990, Ad Hoc Committee, 1988). Dewey's honored place in the mythology of the profession remains firmly secure for the simple reason that what he had to say about education and experience supports the belief that the workplace, in conjunction with the classroom, serves as an arena in which significant learning takes place. A recent and overdue full-scale analysis of Dewey's social theory and a recent article attempting to demonstrate the relevance of Dewey's educational philosophy for co-op and higher education present an opportunity to re-visit the meaning of Dewey's thought for cooperative education.

Robert Westbrook's (1991) monumental biography of Dewey presents a detailed analysis of Dewey's educational, social, philosophical, and political thought. The importance of this study lies in Westbrook's ability to provide the historical context for Dewey's ideas as well as systematic interpretation stressing his role as 20th century America's pre-eminent democratic theorist. Dewey's philosophy emerged during the late 19th and early 20th century at a time when the root assumptions of Anglo-Saxon social theory challenged the selfish individualism, social dislocation, and cultural fragmentation associated with

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industrial capitalism. Technological innovations and economic aggregations fueled the discovery of increasing interdependence of individuals and institutions. This in turn fostered notions of social organicism whereby individuals achieved self-realization (and, therefore, true freedom) when they saw themselves as social beings related in a unity of purpose and interest or a common will. The best means for realizing this self-actualization and organic community was through participatory democracy. As Westbrook explains, it was Dewey's belief "that democracy as an ethical ideal calls upon men and women to build communities in which the necessary opportunities and resources are available for every individual to fully realize his or her particular capabilities and power through participation in political, social, and cultural life." (Westbrook, 1991, p. xv)

Dewey realized that such empowerment could have radical consequences for individuals, organizations, and society at large. It is the far-reaching implications of this democratic ideal that has particular relevance for educational theory and cooperative education. Dewey envisioned an industrial democracy (not merely civil or political democracy) whereby workers must have control of their work if it was to contribute to self-realization. This implicitly challenged the social relations of capitalist production and called for the kind of education that Dewey maintained would "first alter the existing industrial system, and ultimately transform it." (Westbrook, 1991, p. 170) Dewey staked out this position amidst debates over industrial education in the decade before World War I emerging as the most vocal opponent of proposals for a separate system of public vocational education. As an alternative, he advocated integrating vocational education into the public school curriculum, thus fostering the organic unity of work and thought, theory and practice.

Appropriating the development of Dewey's educational argument to this point it would appear that the foundations are in place upon which to erect the structure of cooperative education. Thus, Harry N. Heinemann and Anthony A. DeFalco in their essay *Dewey's Pragmatism: A Philosophical Foundation for Cooperative Education,* draw on Dewey's writings during this debate to present an educational model whereby experience evolves into learning, the dualism between vocational and academic learning vanishes, and "strong philosophical and pedagogical rationales for cooperative education" are gratefully discovered. They focus on the professionally innocuous dimension of Dewey's contribution to educational theory, for who would dispute either the value of the unity of thought and action or the need for cooperative education to claim philosophical coherence by riding the coat-tails of Dewey's respectability.

There are, however, other implications for cooperative education. In the debates over vocational education, Dewey's opposition to a dual system, besides the fact that it violated the tenets of unified theory and practice, was based upon

the view that such a system would simply perpetuate "the prevailing social order by preparing students for their roles determined largely by their class, race, sex, and ethnicity." (Westbrook, 1991, p.437) Equality of opportunity meant, for Dewey, that all members of society would be provided with the means of self-realization. This was true for education, whether it was in the classroom or the workplace. Self-realization at work meant participation in the activities of the workplace. Even as Dewey forcefully advocated joining experience and education, he suggested that the kind of participation necessary to make the work experience truly educational was severely limited when "the animating motive is desire for private profit or personal gain." (Westbrook, 1991, p. 179) What was needed was not merely an education that linked academic study to experiential learning, but an education that would foster the transformation of the work experience.

Dewey protested any policy that "took for granted the perpetuating of the existing industrial regime, and whose inevitable effect is to perpetuate it, with all its antagonisms of employer and employed, producer and consumer." (Dewey, 1914, p. 95) He was contesting the social meaning and political consequences of the vocational aims of higher education so that the "social and democratic factors" were "supreme in industry" instead of "pecuniary" interests (Dewey, 1916b, p. 143, Barrow, 1990, p. 174-75). He recognized, too, that the difference between his transformative educational philosophy and a vocationalism that would bolster the current economic system was "not so much narrowly educational as it is profoundly political and social." (Dewey, 1915, p. 412)

> There is the standing danger that education will perpetuate the older traditions for a select few, and effect its adjustment to the newer economic conditions more or less on the basis of acquiescence in the untransformed, unrationalized, unsocialized phases of our defective industrial regime. Put in concrete terms, there is a danger that vocational education will be interpreted in theory and practice as trade education: as a means of securing technical efficiency in specialized future pursuits. Education would then become an instrument of perpetuating unchanged the existing industrial order of society instead of operating as a means of its transformation (Dewey, 1916a, p. 326)

It was this transformative emphasis in the debate over vocational education to which Dewey returned in the 1920's and 30's. Rather than arguing for a certain model of education, Dewey emphasized a critique of capitalist culture in which association and participation were stifled, individuals were socially and intellectually underdeveloped, and those involved in productive labor, he claimed in 1930, "have no share - imaginative, intellectual, emotional - in directing the

activities in which they physically participate." (Westbrook, 1991, p. 435) With their intellects and imaginations deadened by work, individuals' participation in a common life essential to both self-development and social welfare was undermined and stunted: The workplace became an obstacle to true learning, not a pedagogical haven.

If we want to revive Dewey as the pre-eminent educational philosopher of learning theory connecting school and work, as Heinemann and DeFalco do, then we should also include his radical critique of the political economy that Westbrook would like reemphasized. What needs to be considered are the consequences of a truly Deweyan method for the future of cooperative education. Dewey noted that if one conceives that a social order different in quality and direction from the present is desirable and that schools should strive to educate with social change in view by producing individuals not complacent about what already exists, and equipped with desires and abilities to assist in transforming it, quite a different method and content are indicated for [education] (Westbrook, 1991, p. 502).

If we follow Dewey's philosophical path - an educational theory entwined with social theory - then the kind of education we pursue must not be merely integrative but transformative. It will not be enough to strengthen the rationale or the practice of linking academic study to work experiences to lead co-op into the educational "mainstream." Education at co-op institutions will have to encompass two overarching goals: 1) integration of classroom and workplace learning, and 2) education that will provide students with the tools to transform the workplace into an environment that fosters complete self-realization. Co-op education will have to include not just what happens at work but what is taught in the classroom will also have to count toward the ultimate educational value of the work experience. Simply to learn at work will not be enough. Students need to be educated about what produces the quality of work and what it takes to improve that quality. Students will need to be provided with an understanding of the cultural, social, economic, and political barriers that limit direct participation in control of the work they are and will be engaged in. They should be taught the theoretical underpinnings as well as the cultural and social consequences of free-market capitalism. They should be equipped to participate in dealing with issues they will encounter as working adults - power relations in organizations, job discrimination, leadership and management styles, pay equity, family leave policy, profit sharing, among others. The curriculum for co-op students should include history, sociology, psychology, economics, law and political science courses that focus on workplace issues. Or, as Dewey put it, the kind of education needed acknowledges the full intellectual and social meaning of vocation and would include instruction in the historic background of present conditions; training in science to give intelligence and initiative in dealing with

material and agencies of production; the study of economics, civics, and politics, to bring the future worker into touch with the problems of the day and the various methods proposed for its improvement (Dewey, 1916a, p. 328).

Dewey's transformational vision - his counterhegemonic paradigm - asserts an educational ideal that would fuel progressive social change. This model, however, bears little resemblance to the practice of cooperative education today. To understand why that is requires a reexamination of the intellectual roots of cooperative education and its founder, Herman Schneider. The reason that we cannot recognize Deweyan reforms in Schneider's cooperative plan is that the two men had debated and arrived at mutually antagonistic solutions to industrial education. The distance that Dewey's ideas are removed from Schneider's scheme of education is indicated most blatantly by the fact that references to Dewey's ideas are noticeably absent from Schneider's writings on educational reform. This evidence alone should direct attention to a much needed examination of Schneider's educational ideas and the wider cultural context in which they emerged. Within that context we need to explore issues of the relationship of scientific technology to corporate capitalism, and the relationship of both to higher education.

An important beginning of this inquiry was begun by David Noble in his *America By Design: Science, Technology, and the Rise of Corporate Capitalism* (1977), a book, incidentally, largely overlooked by the cooperative education community. Noble's contribution is to show, first, how engineering education in the early years of the century underwent reforms "geared to habituate engineering students to corporate life," (Noble, 1977, p. 170) and, second, to indicate the wider implications of these reforms on higher education since engineering education "constituted the vanguard of reform in higher education as a whole." (Noble, 1977, p. 170) Thus, the "cooperative movement," combining academic and industrial training, was one manifestation of an educational apparatus created to meet the needs of the capitalist production process. Cooperative education, as conceived by Schneider, forged a link between the university and corporations effecting "the transformation of engineering education into a unit of the industrial system." (Noble, 1977, 169) Noble explains that professional engineers in the new science-based industrial corporations "sought to bring both the form and the content of that education in line with what they perceived to be the immediate personnel needs of industry and the long-range requirements of controlled corporate development." (Noble, 1977, p. 169)

Cooperative education, then, was one facet of educational reform far removed in its methods and goal, from Dewey's conception of the vocational aim of higher education. Dewey thought it necessary to protect the relative autonomy of the university to keep it as free as possible from the encroaching values of

capitalism (Barrow, 1990, p. 174-74), to avoid modeling "itself upon the automatic repetitiousness of machines" (Dewey, 1916b, p. 143), and to act as a counterforce leading to the transformation of the corporate ideal of industrial society. In contrast, those who formed the cooperative movement brought the universities and corporations into a partnership whereby the modern university assumed the industrial responsibilities of the corporations. This fundamental difference over means and ends of industrial education allows for distinctions to be made between Dewey's version of vocational education and Schneider's program of cooperative education. For Dewey, "to understand the *educational* issue is to see what difference is made in the schools themselves according as we take the *improving* of economic conditions to be the purpose of industrial training" (Dewey, 1917, p. 146). Schneider, to the contrary, argued that, "the aim of the course (cooperative education) is not to make a so-called pure engineer, it is frankly to make an engineer for commercial production." (Noble, 1977, p. 186)

It is simply not possible to read Dewey into Schneider's educational philosophy. Even Dewey's attempts to overcome the dualism of labor and learning, thought and action, theory and practice, mental states and the world, cultural and vocational education, were not Schneider's goals. While on the surface Schneider's juxtaposition of work and academic study seems concerned with breaking down false dualism, his educational scheme would link the university and corporation to perpetuate dichotomies in the corporate realm. Dewey proposed education that would "make equality of opportunity a reality for all" (Dewey, 1916a, p. 304) and "to equip individuals to control their own future economic careers, and thus help on such a reorganization of industry as will change it from a feudalistic to democratic order." (Dewey, 1917, p. 150) Schneider, alternatively, saw the "real test of education's worth" as measured by the degree to which it would "train the leaders to do sound building." (Schneider, 1912, p. 339) Schneider's engineers would perpetuate the corporate managerial function without altering the industrial system or the social and economic divisions it created.

To understand adequately the status of cooperative education within American higher education requires more serious study of its founder and its intellectual roots. Schneider's educational writings need to be analyzed in the context of the educational debates of which they were a part. Additionally, his associations should be investigated to see what they imply about his educational philosophy. For example, his membership in organizations such as the National Association of Corporation Schools (NACS) can provide insight into his educational thinking. Schneider was an early member of NACS, which originated in 1913 as an organization that coordinated the activities of in-house training programs established by corporate industry. His involvement in NACS is

illuminating because its educational work focused on the concept of having education guided by the edicts of modern corporate management, seeking to influence established educational institutions favorably toward corporate imperatives. It was those "corporate-minded educators in the engineering schools," men like Schneider, asserts Noble, "who enjoyed the closest contact with the industries, were the first to attempt to close the education-industry gap from the education side." (Noble, 1977, p. 183)

"Educational plans," claimed Schneider, "should tend to increase individual efficiency of workers." (Schneider, 1909, p. 51) Dewey challenged such notions, and objected to regarding as vocational education any training that does not have as its supreme regard the development of such intelligent initiative, ingenuity, and executive capacity as shall make workers, as far as may be, the masters of their industrial fate (Dewey, 1915, p. 411).

Industrial education meant increasing, "the industrial intelligence and power of the worker for his own personal advancement, not "simply that laborers are to have their skill added to the profits of employers." (Dewey, 1917, p. 147) Schneider was involved with the development of the concept of higher education, notes Noble, as a "vital function of corporate management" and was one who saw in education "the key to corporate prosperity and stability; by means of education they sought to eliminate the problems of 'labor turnover,' 'labor troubles,' and 'lack of training' to bring about greater productivity and industrial efficiency." (Noble, 1977, p. 180) Dewey, to the contrary, in pushing for university autonomy to attack the false dichotomy between cultural and vocational training, argued "against every proposition, in whatever form advanced, to separate training of employees from training for citizenship, training of intelligence and character from training for narrow industrial efficiency" (Dewey, 1913, p. 102).

In arguing for relating theory to practice within the realm of a liberal education to condition social relations in the workplace, Dewey presented an instrumentalist educational philosophy. He stressed the role of education as independent from the structure and content of jobs while advocating an organic relation between thought and action, classroom learning and work, through education that would be instrumental in altering the social relations of production in a market capitalist economy. He had in mind education that would foster equality of opportunity and promote democratic values and expectations of equality and participation. Education was intended to pierce restrictive social dichotomies to become a process of life, not merely preparation for a living. This, of course, meant that the purpose of education was not to simply produce more efficient workers, but to educate in ways that opposed the perpetuation of hierarchical, oppressive workplaces. Students would learn what they needed

to transform the capitalist system; they would be agents of progressive social change. Dewey favored an educational system combining theory and practice that was dysfunctional to capitalist development, creating contradictions in the social relations of production, thereby altering the work process.

Schneider proposed an alternative model of industrial education, championing a functionalist approach, stressing the functional connection of education to the workplace. From a functionalist point of view, the structure of social relations in the workplace determines how schools will develop social roles for students and the role of education is to develop skills and attitudes to fit the needs of the workplace. Education is intended to reproduce the dominant capitalist relations of production through this mechanistic correspondence between school and work, thus reproducing the unequal hierarchies and unequal class relations associated with a capitalist workplace and society. With his cooperative education plan, Schneider put the workplace at the center of learning whereby students' learning on the job and in school would be molded to a set of predetermined standards derived from workplace norms. In the end, Schneider assumed that it would be the schools that would make accommodations to workplace demands and not the reverse. The notion that this was a "radical" departure from educational norms and that it was resisted among what Schneider saw as colleagues with antiquated educational beliefs (Park, 1943, Barbeau, 1973, 1985) was due in large part to the implicit threat such a model of education posed to the values of liberal education and the recognition that a cooperative plan would present (as it did to one liberal arts professor when co-op was being introduced to MIT in 1907) an assault on the autonomy of the university and the independent life of the mind (Noble, 1977, P. 190).

In other words, even as the values of the larger capitalist culture increasingly influenced the contours of higher education, the cooperative plan was seen as an overt assault on the values of a liberal education and thus fell outside the "mainstream" of higher education, which is where it remains today (Barrow, 1990, p. 175). Educators now face the compounded problem of how to enhance a liberal education while reducing the divergence between schools and the workplace and what to do about an educational system that is increasingly unsuccessful in preparing youth for work. If one solution is to be found in cooperative education - which means cooperative education that adheres to an educational philosophy placing it within the liberal mainstream - then it will have to be a model adhering more to Dewey's beliefs than to Schneider's.

If cooperative education is to play a meaningful role in higher education during the next century, it will have to consciously and deliberately shift its focus away from a structuralist approach and move toward an instrumentalist method of relating theory to practice in education and the workplace. To adhere faithfully to Dewey would mean following a road untraveled in cooperative

education. Conceptualizing cooperative education in a Deweyan framework would require a fundamental reconstruction of the philosophy and practice of cooperative education, including the role of those involved in cooperative education and the kind of educational activities they undertake. When we espouse the pedagogical imperative of connecting academic and workplace learning and stop there, we neglect half of Dewey's educational creed. Co-op universities must reform their academic curricula for worker "preparation" in the broadest and deepest sense of the term - the Deweyan meaning. At co-op institutions, cooperative education needs to enter into the educational "mainstream" in such a way that the mainstream can be directed to teach students to be the fully educated, developed, and participating workers Dewey envisioned. To adopt Dewey's model would mean conceiving of cooperative education as so integrally entwined in liberal education that it would awaken the mainstream to the purpose of intelligent action.

A Deweyan cooperative education scheme would also require conceiving of cooperative education as placed solidly within the scholarly specializations of knowledge at the university, most profitably as an interdisciplinary area of education. If cooperative education were seen as the crossroads of all disciplines as they relate to the workplace, then the deep abyss between academic learning and co-op practice would quickly vanish. This would also require that those in cooperative education embody the education and training of those capable to teach in their discipline and that they would teach academic courses: in a sense, they would not have to enter the mainstream, they would be in the mainstream. Finally, cooperative education research and scholarship would also have to be seen as interdisciplinary in nature and focus on understanding the social relations of production, the work process, and the workplace, as a means of fostering active transformation of the workplace to create incentives to match students' newly formed expectations and behavior (Saltmarsh, 1990, p. 76-86). Dewey and Schneider offered, in their time, competing versions of the best means to achieve "true vocationalism." What we practice today as cooperative education is fundamentally affected by the intellectual inheritance left by Schneider. Only if we better understand the implications of the legacy he bequeathed to us will we more fully appreciate its limitations and recognize the value of Dewey's alternative educational philosophy. An instrumentalist approach to cooperative education would arguably move us out of the current period of self-doubt and soul-searching and into a future where cooperative education can have an impact on both higher education and the world of work beyond the walls of the academy.

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