

Assessment Task Cover Sheet



Unit Co-ord./Lecturer	David Moltow	OFFICE USE ONLY Assessment received:
Tutor:(if applicable)	Paul Cutler	
Student ID	078395	
Student Name	Emma Salisbury	
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<p>I declare that all material in this assessment task is my own work except where there is clear acknowledgement or reference to the work of others and I have complied and agreed to the University statement on Plagiarism and Academic Integrity on the University website at www.utas.edu.au/plagiarism *</p> <p>Signed <u> </u> E.Salisbury Date 03/04/2016</p>		

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Assessor's feedback:

Assessor: *David Moltow & Paul Cutler*

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that every child has the right to education, however it does not specify what type of education. Every teacher will have their own view on the aim of education. Consequently, teachers have an ethical responsibility to consider the type of education they will be providing as they have the power to influence the lives of the students and a major impact on the kind of society we will be living in (Marples, 2010).

The aim of education is a contentious subject with many opposing views. The debate involves a duality or dichotomy of ideals. On one side of the debate is the Liberal education view and on the other side the Vocational education view. Within the Liberal view, the aim of education is to serve the individual and to develop the mind so a human can flourish. Whereas the vocational view has a practical outlook, and places the focus on obtaining skills in order to obtain employment and contribute to society.

The Liberal view is about creating capable and cultivated human beings and the pursuit of truth (Mill, as quoted by Marples, 2010) and espouses that education's principle concern should be the development of the mind for its own sake (Marples, 2010). The Liberal view of education centres around the idea that knowledge is valuable for its own sake and may not necessarily have any instrumental value in life; that some knowledge is just worth knowing and that the ability to appreciate knowledge for knowledge's sake contributes to our human-ness. Many supporters of the Liberal view of education believe that it is these principles that allow the individual to flourish in life, not to simply exist. Education allows humans to develop maturity of intellect and obtaining knowledge and developing reason will allow humans to make informed decisions and to question rather than accept. Knowledge is not general, it is specific and has nothing to do with getting on (Bennett, 2006).

Marples also argues that Liberal education rests on the hidden assumption, even though the value of knowledge is for its own sake, that knowing things has its own intrinsic benefit to fulfil a flourishing life in society.

There are many objections to the Liberal view of the aim of education. Mainly these are espoused by supporters of the vocational view of education, who often do not appreciate the value of knowledge for knowledge's sake, and commonly complain about the usefulness of the knowledge being taught (Pring, 2004). The origins of the vocational view of education stem from the oppressive class system of the industrial revolution (Ngang & Chan, 2015), where vocational education was for the lower classes and liberal education was for the future leaders of men, leading to the view of liberal education as elitist (Marples, 2010). Another criticism of the Liberal view of education is the relevance of such an education. Mainly from the vocational camp, which prizes relevance of education, comes the criticism that the liberal view may lead to an enlightened existence and flourishing, however it does not 'butter the parsnips' (Marples, 2010).

The vocational view of education, originally developed as an alternative education during the Industrial Revolution for the poorer, working classes, centres on the practical side of education. Its aims are to equip people with the skills and knowledge to enter an occupation to be able to survive financially, to help improve the society in which they live and for the nation's prosperity (Becker, Hornung & Woessmann, 2011). This is a view which is common in the wider community, and there is a belief that going to school is simply a stepping stone or passport to a good job. It is equated with a good salary allowing humans to be happy (Marples, 2010). As stated previously, the centre of this aim is the betterment of society and education for the greater good of a society or nation. This view can also be seen referred to within parts of government legislation, such as the Melbourne declaration for the educational goals of young Australians. As stated on page 13, the curriculum in Australia is designed to develop a range of generic and employable skills that have application to the world of work (Barr, Gillard, Firth, Scrymgour, Welford, Lomax-Smith, & Constable, 2008).

The vocational view insists that if education is to have relevance in the world, it has to prepare people for the real world and employment whereby they can earn a salary. Some philosophers also agree that having a source of income and meaningful work allows an individual to contribute to the society in which they live, and acts as a component of fulfilment in itself (Norman, as quoted by Marples, 2010, p. 40).

There are however, shortcomings and criticisms of the vocational view of the aims of education, mainly relating to the restrictive nature of the education and the undervaluing of curiosity and expression. Another serious criticism is that it places importance on the development of attributes such as obedience and deference, which does not allow the individual to flourish. Vocational education also receives criticism regarding its implementation. While the goal is to prepare individuals for the workforce, what would such preparation entail? (Marples, 2010). The skills being taught may not evolve quick enough to be taught in schools.

While the different viewpoints seem contradictory, Pring argued for a resolved view in what he calls 'Vocationalising the Liberals', taking into account both perspectives. Pring argues that these two stand points are not mutually exclusive, and that while, in principle, they may be very different views, they may not be so different in practice (Pring, 2004). My own view takes this stand point into account.

My own view of the aim of education is that it is for the development of individuals so as to enable them to make informed choices and to contribute to society. I believe that the aim of education is to create questioning individuals, who are able to form their own opinions, based on facts and data, and not just accept the views of others. The ability to question or challenge is a life skill and allows the individual to contribute to a democratic society. The overall aim of developing young minds is to create autonomous individuals with freedom of self-determination, and an ability to question.

This educational aim stems from the liberal side of the debate surrounding education, and I believe having a liberal educational system is the only way to develop these questioning minds. Liberal education, as stated previously is about delivering all knowledge, regardless of its 'usefulness'. My argument against the vocational aim relates to who makes the judgement of usefulness or worthwhile-ness (Hand, 2010). I believe all knowledge is worth knowing. Whether it is practical or even just enjoyable in its own right, it is still useful for the individual and enriching for their lives. By focusing solely on a vocationally aimed education, you are developing individuals with specific sets of skills or capabilities for doing a task, potentially closing the door on ideas, challenges, questioning and expression. From Plutarch, The mind is not a vessel that needs filling, but wood that needs igniting, and

instils the desire for truth (Kidd, 1992). Liberal educators may believe that asking the question ‘What is the aim of education?’ is to acknowledge that education is a means to an end. However, I believe asking this question promotes students to question and challenge the value they place on education and to critically examine their own beliefs. Great minds think differently.

The main ethical implication of my own personal view of education is that I, as a teacher, have a profound influence on the students I teach and I have the power to influence and change lives. I have an ethical obligation to believe that what I teach is worth the students learning it. As a teacher, I have an ethical obligation to value my own view of education and be prepared to model and portray it to the students (Warnock, 2004). The enthusiasm I have for my own personal view of the aims of education is essential to be able to inspire the students to value education and knowledge for knowledge’s sake. To develop critical thinking, teachers must be prepared to question their own practice and teaching methods and allow collaboration between teachers and students in regard to what is being taught and how (Hand, 2010). My own aim of education, to develop questioning individuals, encourages the students to critically appraise what they are told, including by the teacher. A further ethical obligation, that stems from my own view on the aim of education, is to be socially aware of the view of my students and the wider community. While also promoting my own view of education, I have an ethical responsibility to be constantly mindful of other views of education and respect that many members of society hold a more vocational view of the aims of education.

Teachers need to develop morality within their students by modelling and leading by example (Starratt, 1991). Warnock believes the first priority in moral teaching is to teach by example, and students need teachers who speak up in defence of honesty, social justice and fairness. While it is often thought that teachers should not express an opinion and remain neutral, neutrality is easily interpreted as indifference (Warnock, 2004). If teachers have an ethical obligation to develop critically thinking and questioning individuals, they must lead by example. Teachers have an ethical obligation to display their own morality and opinions to their students allowing them to question and develop their own beliefs, morality and opinions. While it is important to have and express these opinions as a teacher, it is important to

do this in a way which furthers thoughts and exposes the students to different points of view. Students need to be encouraged to think and develop their own opinions. If the teacher exposes the students to a single point of view, mainly their own point of view, the teacher has failed in their ethical obligations to that student.

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