



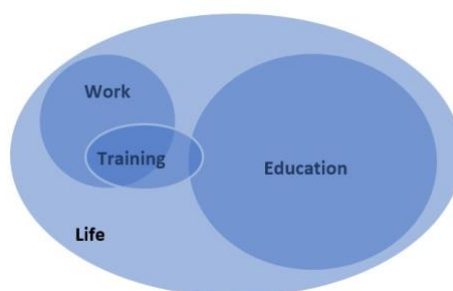
Students' True Purposes and Third Millennium Realities

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Across the millennia, education has been misapplied in the service of particular magical, religious, military, ideological, empire-governing, social justice, ecological, and economic development objectives. Irrespective of how noble the intention – such as rebuilding our relationships with each other, with the planet and with technology – we do our students a serious disservice if we treat them primarily as future adults. It is primarily what they “are” rather than what they may “become” that is significant – and what policymakers should consider in the first instance. Education is not exclusively (nor even predominantly) a preparation for a career, nor for citizenship, nor for life in general, any more than going to the beach or the bowling alley or the cinema is a foundation for something else. Any more than retirement is preparation for death. Education is education.



Education's forthcoming and fundamental transformation, made necessary and possible by contemporary technology, takes full account of the tangible/virtual consciousness duality and of immediate worldwide connectivity. Learners of all ages' essential e-lived existences necessitate and make possible an immersive educational experience that involves integrating and building upon the synergistic coexistence of the online and the face-to-face.

Digital technology offers incredible potential in tertiary practice to develop relationships (though global digital interactions with other learners and teachers), curiosity (through challenging learners through Artificial Intelligence), creativity (through creating virtual reality experiences for peers), and resilience (through exposing learners to a range of learning technologies and flexible learning options): it is a vehicle for inspiring and engaging learners. But EdTech is currently characterised by vast investment, widespread hype and minimal achievement. The underlying problem is one of applying third millennium technologies in second millennium settings: driving a Formula One vehicle along ancient cart tracks; while further not applying EdTech to address learners, teachers, curriculum, governance and technology in systemic and synergistic way.

Assuredly, 'tertiary education' involves vocational training as well as liberal education: let them live in happy harmony. In particular, the colonisation of the lecture hall or laboratory by the workplace must, it is urged, be stubbornly resisted. Undoubtedly, professional criteria must be achieved – but even future doctors, engineers, lawyers and suchlike need no longer to be led by the firm hand along carefully prescribed and meticulously supervised pathways. From secondary onwards, through tertiary and lifelong, we argue that the learner should lead. Tertiary learners should not and need not be unduly directed and restricted in the manner of second millennium novices. At this level a blend of education and training integrated with a multi-disciplinary approach and encompassing the international dimension will enable

learners to plan and contribute to preparing themselves for life (and, to the extent that they may choose, work) in such proportions as they determine.

Our presentation explores how tertiary education may best apply technology and creativity in order to gear itself to the contemporary imperative of universally connected students taking the lead in pursuit of their own purposes and aspirations. By such means may the world's universities and colleges now become true and convivial 21st century settings for the fulfillment of such purposes as the learners primarily themselves may determine.

Keywords: Discontinuities, Education, Training, Purpose, Educational Technology

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