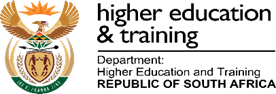
**Advanced Diploma**

**Technical and Vocational Teaching**

# **Philosophy of TVET Education**

Department of Higher Education and Training

**Department of Higher Education and Training**

Advanced Diploma: Technical and Vocational Teaching

**Module:** Philosophy of TVET Education

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Table of Contents

[Philosophy of TVET Education 1](#_Toc128746603)

[Acknowledgements iii](#_Toc128746604)

[Acronyms and Abbreviations v](#_Toc128746605)

[Programme introduction vii](#_Toc128746606)

[Approach to learning vii](#_Toc128746607)

[Relating theory to practice viii](#_Toc128746608)

[Reflective practice and the use of a learning journal viii](#_Toc128746609)

[Use a learning journal ix](#_Toc128746610)

[Active learning ix](#_Toc128746611)

[Thinking activities ix](#_Toc128746612)

[Linkages across modules ix](#_Toc128746613)

[Access to readings ix](#_Toc128746614)

[Assessment ix](#_Toc128746615)

[Module Overview 1](#_Toc128746616)

[Module purpose 2](#_Toc128746617)

[Module outcomes 2](#_Toc128746618)

[Module structure 2](#_Toc128746619)

[Module credits 3](#_Toc128746620)

[Module time (notional hours) 3](#_Toc128746621)

[Unit 1: Academic Education versus Technical and Vocational Education and Training 5](#_Toc128746622)

[Unit 1 outcomes 5](#_Toc128746623)

[The ‘great divide’ between vocational and academic 5](#_Toc128746624)

[The vocational educational path: from family learning to formal TVET 7](#_Toc128746625)

[The academic educational path 15](#_Toc128746626)

[Tension across the great divide 22](#_Toc128746627)

[Conclusion 32](#_Toc128746628)

[Unit 2: Integrating Academic and Vocational Education 33](#_Toc128746629)

[Introduction 33](#_Toc128746630)

[Unit 2 outcomes: 34](#_Toc128746631)

[A liberal, vocational education as the path to individual freedom 34](#_Toc128746632)

[Vocational education to change and transform society 47](#_Toc128746633)

[Conclusion 58](#_Toc128746634)

[Model Summative Assessment 59](#_Toc128746635)

[Summative Assessment Rubric 63](#_Toc128746636)

[Unit 3: Education for Domination and Democracy in South Africa 65](#_Toc128746637)

[Introduction 65](#_Toc128746638)

[Unit outcomes 65](#_Toc128746639)

[The development of academic and vocational education in South Africa before the democratic era 65](#_Toc128746640)

[Philosophical responses to the weaponisation of education for domination 78](#_Toc128746641)

[A philosophy of education for a democratic South Africa 83](#_Toc128746642)

[Conclusion 92](#_Toc128746643)

[Model Summative Assessment: Making the new knowledge in this module yours 95](#_Toc128746644)

[Summative Assessment Rubric 96](#_Toc128746645)

[Discussion of the activity 97](#_Toc128746646)

[References 99](#_Toc128746647)

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# Acronyms and Abbreviations

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| AdvDip TVT | Advanced Diploma: Technical and Vocational Teaching |
| ANC | African National Congress |
| BCE | Before the Common Era |
| DBE | Department of Basic Education |
| DHET | Department of Higher Education and Training |
| HEI | Higher Education Institution |
| IKS | Indigenous knowledge systems |
| SAHO | South African History Online |
| SKAV | skills, knowledge, value and attitudes |
| TVET | Technical and Vocational Education and Training |
| Unisa | University of South Africa |

# Programme introduction

The Advanced Diploma in Technical and Vocational Teaching (Adv. Dip TVT) programme seeks to provide a structured professional learning pathway for current and aspirant technical and vocational lecturers/teachers. The Diploma will equip them with the knowledge and competences to implement and manage teaching and learning in their TVET colleges effectively and in alignment with national goals.

This module is one of a set of modules that contribute to the Advanced Diploma programme. The overall purpose of the Advanced Diploma is to engage lecturers working in the TVET sector in conversations about what it means to be a quality teacher in a TVET college. Each Module in the programme explores this from a different angle, but for every module the foundational concept is about the type of teacher you want to be. We all know that the relationship between teaching and learning is interrelated, so in order to understand the type of teacher you want to be you will need to engage with what learning means in a TVET context.

We often think about vocational and technical or craft knowledge as different from theoretical knowledge. However, there is increasing recognition of the power of vocational and theoretical knowledge coming together to develop the skilled craftsperson whether it is in plumbing, baking, even mathematics and physics. This integration of theory and vocational knowledge is equally important in teaching as well. Teachers are constantly needing to make informed decisions and judgements as they select what to teach and how best to teach the specific content, concept or skill.

This leads to a question about how different forms of knowledge and skill are brought together and balanced in the curriculum and in teaching and learning.

Approach to learning

To answer the question above in this diploma programme, a framework has been developed which is referred to as *know how*, *know it* and *know that*, or the HIT framework. This framework is introduced, referred to and deepened in different ways all the way through the programme.



**“Know How”** is *procedural knowledge*, “in our bodies” or *embodied knowledge*.

For example, following a bread recipe.

“**Know It**” is *recognition*, the knowledge of what counts as good; wisdom; technical and theoretical judgments.

For example, is this sourdough good quality bread?

**“Know That”** is *propositional knowledge* or

*theoretical knowledge*, the knowledge of how and why, *cognitive knowledge*.

For example, the science of bread baking.

**Figure i: The HIT framework**

Think about your own craft of teaching. The kind of teacher you want to be, is one who knows **how** (the techniques of teaching), knows **that** (the science and theory behind teaching AND learning) and knows *it* (knowing and reflecting on what makes a quality teacher). Such a teacher enables students to actively engage with their learning and to develop their full potential.

If you are interested, click on the link provided to watch a short [video](https://youtu.be/JssDzbjlYik) in which Wayne Hugo discusses the “HIT model” of TVET knowledge and learning.

Relating theory to practice

In this module new concepts are often introduced by developing them from a practical situation with which you are probably familiar. This process, which moves from your experience towards a more abstract level of theory is known as inductive learning. It makes learning easier and is very different from deductive learning, which starts by presenting abstract theories and principles, then requires you to “deduce” practical conclusions and concrete examples. You are encouraged to relate the ideas you learn from the Adv Dip programme to your own context and to try to think theoretically about your practice. In other words, to think about the rationale for your practice.

Reflective practice and the use of a learning journal

One of the Adv. Dip TVT modules is called Reflective Practice, if you are interested, you can access it [here](https://oerafrica.org/system/files/13691/assets/13702/advdiptvtmodulereflective-practice.docx?file=1&type=node&id=13702&force=0) It covers the concept of reflection in the life of a TVET lecturer. Of particular importance is unit 2, which describes various models which facilitate reflection. The simplest reflective model that is discussed in this unit, is that of Terry Borton (1970). It consists of three steps as follows:

**Figure ii: Reflective model (after Borton, 1970)**

The three questions to prompt reflection leading to action:

1. What?

**What** happened? In this step you remember or describe the situation or event you have experienced.

1. So what?

**So,** if that happened**, what** does this show you or teach me?In this step you explore what new insights or knowledge the situation gives you.

1. Now what?

**Now** that I have learnt something new by reflecting on the situation, **what** should I do about it? In this step you think about what to do with the new awareness you have gained – i.e. how to make use of it to act more effectively in future situations.

Throughout the Adv. Dip TVT programme, you are encouraged to reflect on your practices at work in the college so that you can improve how teaching and learning takes place. We have embedded reflective practice throughout the programme, and at the end of most units in the modules you will find a reflective activity to complete. The reflective activity will enable you to make the most of what you have learnt throughout the unit, as well as assisting you to apply your learning in your workplace.

Use a learning journal

Throughout the Adv. Dip TVT modules, we encourage you to use a *learning journal*. You can download a digital template to use for your learning journal. Save it where you can easily find it again. You can also use another template, or use a paper-based learning journal. You will use your learning journal to write notes and reflections and complete activities. Start your learning journal at the beginning of the programme, and keep it regularly updated throughout.

Active learning

Most learning theorists tell us that new understandings and learning depend on, and arise out of, *action*. All the modules in the Adv. Dip TVT programme include activities. Your learning will be more fruitful if you engage systematically with the activities. If you do not do the activities, you will miss out on the most important part of the programme learning pathway.

Thinking activities

At various points in the module you are asked to *stop and think* and to take some time to reflect on a particular issue. These *thought pauses* are designed to help you consolidate your understanding of a specific point *before* tackling the next section of the module. One of the habits many of us develop through a rote kind of learning is to rush through things. Work though each module slowly and thoughtfully. Read and think. This is how we develop a depth of understanding and become able to use the ideas we learn. Try to link the issues raised in each thought pause with what you have read, with what you have already learnt about learning, with your own previous experience, and so on. Think about the questions or problems raised in the module. Jot down your ideas in your learning journal so that you can be reminded of them at a later stage.

Linkages across modules

As you work through this and other modules, you will notice that topics or issues raised in one module may cross refer to the same issue or topic in another module, possibly in more detail. So for example, while there is an entire module dedicated to the investigation of *curriculum,* key issues related to curriculum will also be highlighted and discussed in a number of other modules including, modules dealing with pedagogy, psychology in TVET as well as in the method of teaching engineering and related design and electrical engineering modules.

Access to readings

There are links to readings throughout the activities. We have tried as far as possible to provide links to Open Educational Resources (OER). In cases where this was not possible you will be directed in the activity to access these through your university library. The website link is shown in the reference list.

Assessment

The activities contained in this module and the Adv. Dip TVT programme as a whole, promote a continuous and formative assessment process. This approach is intended to support your ability to relate ideas to practice and to contribute to your development as you work through the various modules of the programme.

You will also notice that each module includes a summative assessment task with the assessment criteria set out in an accompanying rubric. This summative assessment task is a model only, intended to illustrate the kind of assessment tasks that may be set by the university providing this programme.

# Module Overview

Philosophy involves looking into life’s most basic questions and trying to understand the underlying reality and meaning of things. It asks questions like: Why are we here? What is the meaning of life? What is worth living for? What is really real? What is important? Philosophical questions about what knowledge is – and which knowledge is most important – lay the foundation for what we decide to pass on to others, through education. The word ‘philosophy’ comes from two Greek words: *philo*-, which means ‘love’ and ‘*sophôs’*, which means wisdom. The original concept of philosophy is thus ‘the love of wisdom’.

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| Spiritual traditions also consider these questions. But while the spiritual path to answering these questions relies on belief, faith and trust; philosophy relies on reason and logic to arrive at answers. When two philosophers enter into a debate, the philosophical starting point is to acknowledge that neither actually knows the answer beforehand. Each undertakes to listen to the other position with an open mind and then provide reasons and arguments for why their own position makes more sense. Faith and belief cannot be used to build a philosophical argument. By the end of the debate, it is possible for one of the philosophers to concede that they were wrong and accept the argument of the other. Or they may accept *some* of what the other person has said and change their position a little, thereby improving and strengthening their argument. It is also possible that both philosophers come to see weaknesses in their own position and strengths in the other’s position and, together, develop a stronger position that combines the best of both. |

**Philosophy of** Technical and Vocational Teaching **(TVET) education** is a practical (or applied) branch of philosophy concerned with understanding the purpose and goals of education. It identifies the belief and values that underlie education, and debates which of those beliefs and values should be the most important. Philosophy of education questions what the nature of knowledge is in education, and why certain types of knowledge are rated as more important than others. Finally, philosophy of education clearly defines the concepts and terms used in education. This helps academics to speak with clarity about education.

As this module forms part of the Advanced Diploma: Technical and Vocational Teaching (Adv. Dip. TVT), our exploration of the philosophy of education will focus on technical and vocational education. We will explore the aims, values and beliefs that have shaped technical and vocational education in the past, the tension between technical and vocational education on one hand and liberal academic education on the other, and what this means in the South African context. This tension is especially clear around the main purpose of TVET and the type of knowledge it emphasizes.

You will have to become a philosopher of education in this module. First, you will learn about the debate about whether a vocational or academic education is best. Both positions have strong arguments and weak points. Both positions have long histories internationally, in Africa and, specifically, in South Africa. You will need to understand this history to be able to grasp at a deep level, the difference between academic (school/university) education and technical/vocational education and training, and how this connects to broader social, political and economic issues. By the end of Unit 2 you will have all the tools to construct a philosophical argument around vocational education, as well as some contextual and historical information, and this provides a natural end point with a summative activity. However, you will not have full insight into how these debates apply to South Africa. This module therefore provides a detailed extension in Unit 3 for those of you who wish to apply the Philosophy of Vocational Education to a South African context. In Unit 3 you will learn to critically discuss and apply this knowledge to the South African context and explore the value of practical, experiential, problem-based learning that integrates practice and theory – for all education, but especially for TVET.

## Module purpose

The purpose of this module is to enable TVET lecturers to debate and critically reflect on the philosophic principles underpinning technical and vocational education and training.

## Module outcomes

By the end of this module, you will have:

1. Learned to distinguish at a deep level between academic (school/university) education, and technical/vocational education and training, and connect this distinction to broader social, political and economic issues.
2. Grasped the importance of practical, experiential, problem-based learning, integrating practice and theory, for all education, but especially for TVET.
3. Critically discussed approaches to vocational and academic education during the times that indigenous, colonial, apartheid and democratic philosophies of education dominated the South African context. This third outcome relates to the third unit of the module, which is an optional, extension unit focused on the South African context.

## Module structure

## Module credits

This module carries 3 credits. Unit 3 is an extension unit that goes beyond the 3-credit limit to 5 credits.

## Module time (notional hours)

The first two units are equivalent to 30 notional learning hours. It is anticipated that you will take approximately 30 hours to complete these units successfully. An additional 10 notional hours are required to complete Unit 3 as well. The notional learning hours will include contact time with your Higher Education Institution (HEI), reading time, research time and time required to write assignments. It is also expected that at least half of your learning time will be spent completing practice-based activities at your TVET College. This will involve your individual work on the activity and may also require you to discuss these college-focused activities with your colleagues. Each activity in this module indicates the suggested time for completion.

# 

# Unit 1: Academic Education versus Technical and Vocational Education and Training

This unit explores the difference between the TVET and academic educational systems. It starts by investigating how technical and vocational education and training has developed, and why it has taken the shape it has. Then it explores the development of academic education. The philosophical positions that have shaped these two systems – along with political and economic forces – are examined.

## Unit 1 outcomes

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

1. Conceptually define academic education.
2. Conceptually define technical and vocational education and training.
3. Compare and contrast the two.
4. Link this distinction to broader social, political and economic issues.

## The ‘great divide’ between vocational and academic

In South Africa today, higher education is split into two parallel systems: universities and colleges that have an academic focus, and TVET colleges, which have a technical and vocational focus. This is the case in most other countries as well.

Each system has its own kind of organizational structures and ways of working. Its buildings and teaching and learning spaces look different; its students may seem to be different. As a society, we build up understandings, beliefs, values and stereotypes about the differences between these two systems: about the socioeconomic background and intelligence of students, and about their career and life prospects.

What is the reason for having two different systems? Is the kind of knowledge, and the kind of learning, so different? Are they really designed for students of different intelligence and potential? What are the underlying beliefs about knowledge, teaching and learning, and students that create this divide? What are the underlying assumptions about what role work has in helping us to have a productive, meaningful or happy life?

To begin this exploration, we start with an activity designed to engage your knowledge and your own philosophical positions and interests in this topic.

Activity 1: Access your prior knowledge about TVET and academic education

**Suggested time:** 60 minutes

Each student comes to a new topic or course already having some knowledge, skills, beliefs or attitudes about the topic. It is important to recognize and engage with students’ prior knowledge, and not assume that they are starting with a ‘blank page’ or ‘clean chalkboard’ in their heads. In fact, research has found that the way we learn is by taking new knowledge and fitting it together with related knowledge that we already have – sometimes challenging and changing old beliefs or assumptions, sometimes building on them. In this way, students ‘construct’ new knowledge for themselves as active participants in teaching and learning, rather than passively having new knowledge ‘dumped’ on them. It is good practice, then, to help students ‘activate’ their prior knowledge so that they can be actively engaged with constructing new knowledge.

We thus start this module with an activity to facilitate you accessing and activating your prior knowledge about this topic. This activity is quite long, but it is crucial. So, relax, take your time, and try to complete it as thoughtfully as you can.

1. For the first part of this activity, consider the pairs of descriptions in the text box, below, carefully. Which description describes TVET or academic education *as it is now* (not as you think it *should* be) in your TVET context?
2. Then draw a table in your learning journal with 15 rows (the first few rows are illustrated below the text box), allocating words/phrases to each column. For each pair, think about whether one description fits with ‘vocational’ education and the other with ‘academic’ education. If you feel only one description of the pair fits, you may use that and leave the other blank; you may also put one of the descriptions in both columns, or leave a number blank if you think the description is not accurate.

|  |
| --- |
| 1. Goal is for the student to develop their mind / goal is for the student to be fit for a job 2. Focus is on broad, interlinked objectives / focus is on defined outcomes and competencies 3. Focus is on the personal development of the student / focus is on the role the student can play in the development of the economy 4. Content is specific to one area / content is broad and covers many areas 5. Learning about abstract laws and principles / learning about things 6. Curriculum content is driven by workplace demands / curriculum content is driven by tradition 7. Content is presented repetitively / there is little repetition of content 8. Preparing the student to do manual work / preparing the student to do intellectual work 9. Learning to become a leader or manager / learning to become a worker 10. Preparation for life / preparation for job 11. Programme has higher status in society / programme has lower status in society 12. Students are viewed as more intelligent / students are viewed as less intelligent 13. Chosen by families with less wealth / chosen by families with more wealth 14. Good chance of employment after exit / uncertain chance of employment after exit 15. Qualification results in lower pay / qualification results in higher pay |

|  | **Vocational education (TVET college)** | **Academic education (university)** |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

Looking at the table as a whole, write a paragraph explaining the differences between TVET and academic education. Aim for 5 to 7 sentences.

You have made your decisions about which descriptions characterize TVET and which characterize academic education based on the current reality that you see. Now, look at your table through a different lens: how you think things *should* be? Circle the descriptors that you would like to change. Leave some space after your paragraph for another paragraph, as you will come back to this question at the end of the module.

Now draw a new table and fill it in with the descriptors as you would like them to be.

1. Reflect on your decisions. Were there clear reasons or arguments that came to you, or were you motivated by a sense of injustice, anger, sadness, vision, justice? Try to articulate these to yourself.
2. Based on your reflection on your decisions, try to write a brief statement about your philosophy regarding the aims and purposes of TVET education and the approach that should be taken, incorporating the descriptors in the table. Aim for 3 to 7 sentences.

Don’t worry about whether your statements are ‘correct’ or not: you are just getting in touch with some of your underlying beliefs and values about education – your existing ‘philosophy’ of technical and vocational education and training.

1. With 2 or 3 peers, discuss the choices you made in the first table, the changes you made in the second, and your articulation of what the aims and purposes and approach to TVET education should be. Notice anything you find interesting about what your peers share. What do you agree with or disagree with?
2. Add or change anything you would like to in your tables or statement. Leave some space after your statement before beginning the next activity, as you will come back to it at the end of the module.

Discussion of activity

This activity has given you an opportunity to engage with some of the realities – and stereotypes – about the differences between the approaches currently taken to vocational and academic education. These differences are reflected across many countries in the world, although some countries have approaches that vary. Doing this activity helps you to approach the module from a position where you are in touch with some of your own beliefs and values about education and are ready to actively engage and think critically about what you read.

Social learning (or collaborative learning) – where you work together with peers to construct knowledge – has been found to help students build stronger and deeper knowledge. Think about the ‘thinking work’ you did on your own in this activity, and the new things that came to light as you listened to your peers and the resulting changes you made to your own articulations. Do you think working with your peers in this activity, instead of alone, helped you engage with it more deeply than you did on your own?

We will return to this activity at the end of Unit 1, and also at the end of the module, as a way for you to check in on how your knowledge and beliefs may have changed as you have constructed new knowledge while interacting with the ideas presented in this module.

## The vocational educational path: from family learning to formal TVET

The origins of vocational education

As young children, we begin learning knowledge and skills by watching our families, then starting to imitate them. Then we start to participate – with a lot of help, at first, and then less and less help as our expertise grows. Our learning is often initiated by us – by our own curiosity and appetite to be able to do things for ourselves and be part of things with other people.

Very long ago, the first way that humans survived was by hunting and gathering food they found in their environment – before they began to grow food and farm animals themselves. This way of life still exists in some parts of the world and studying these communities gives us an opportunity to see how teaching and learning started before all the formal systems and institutions that we know today existed. As children grow up and become responsible members of the community, they must learn all the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that their community has accumulated to be able to conduct their own lives successfully and also contribute to the wellbeing of others. How does this happen without formal schooling or vocational training, when there are so many different kinds of skills and knowledge a person must have when they are responsible for meeting all of their needs – they can’t just go to the shop to pick up a variety of things produced by others using a wide range of different vocational and technical knowledge bases and skills.

What is evident in these communities is that children and adults learnt mostly informally in their families or close social groups by watching how things are done by others who have more expertise, imitating them and then participating with more and more complex tasks and less and less help. Often it is initiated by the learners, who watch with curiosity then, without being told what to do, begins to try it themselves, with more expert others stepping in when they make a mistake or there is a safety issue. *Learning thus happened in the act of doing something* – not *away* from the activity (in a classroom, for example). Learning happened in the context of action – not in the context of an institution far away from the action.

While these communities are found in very different parts of the world and have very different cultures, researchers have noticed that they tend to have some similarities. The autonomy (right to take decisions and action for oneself) of the child is respected, and so children are often left to follow their own interests in learning, and to choose what and when to learn and how much to practice. After a more expert elder steps in to assist or teach for a moment, they step back again, respecting the child's ability to take their learning forward on their own.

At the heart of this very old way of learning is a fundamental meeting of hearts and minds. When a child sits near an elder and watches them using a bow and arrow, the elder knows the child is watching and adjusts their actions to suit the child. At the same time the child knows that the elder is demonstrating something important and watches carefully. Each is sharing their actions and positions with the other. Each knows what the other is thinking, and both take each other into account. There is sharing of intentions and sharing of goals. In philosophical terms it is called ‘shared intentionality’ and it is one of the most basic things needed in order to learn from others.

We can summarise some of the key features that are useful to our understanding of the philosophy that underlies the ‘original’ approach to human learning. In this approach, learning is understood as:

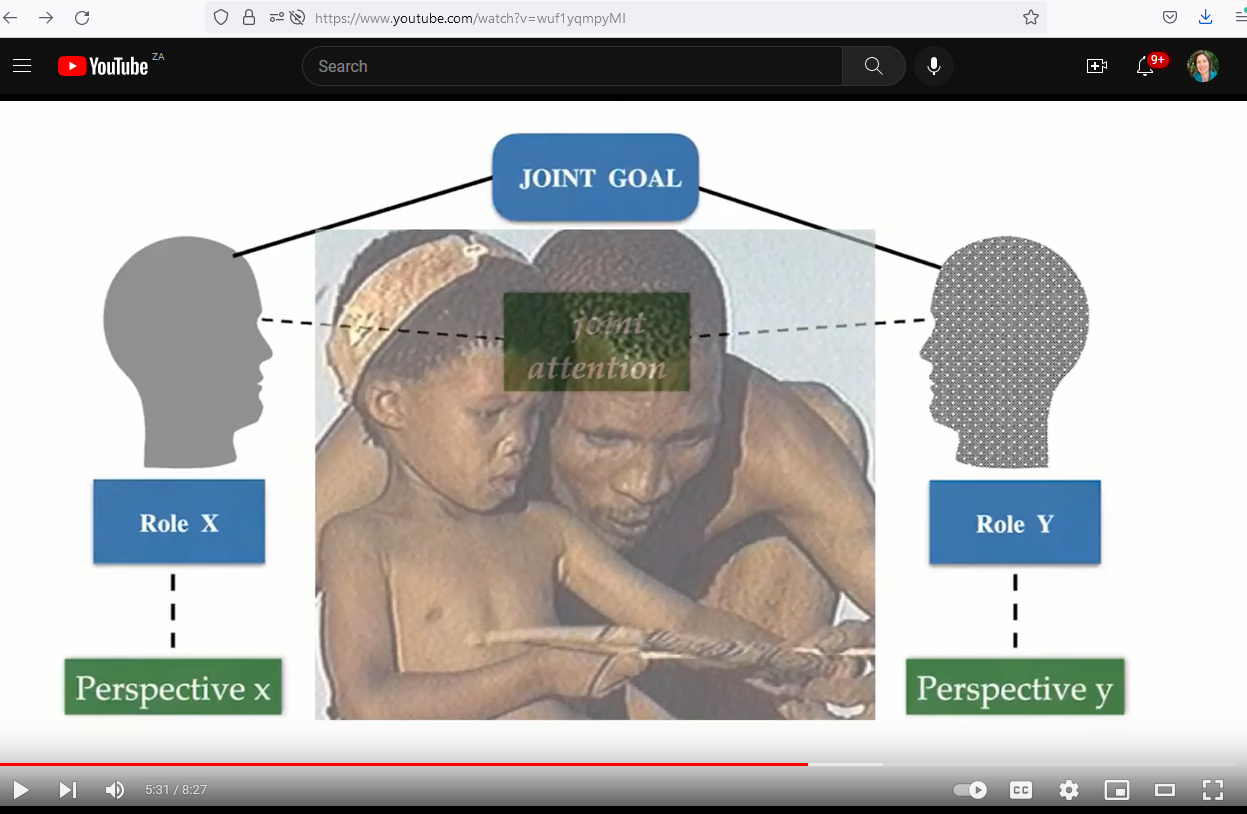
1. **Embodied:** Happening not just in your head but fundamentally in your body.
2. **Participatory**: Knowledge, skills, values and attitudes are not just things you hear about (while listening to a lecture, for example) or passively watch via a demonstration, but these things are acquired by participating more and more until they are mastered.
3. **Contextualised**: Learning happens in the place where the knowledge or skill is used and needed.
4. **Autonomous:** The student is seen as an agent possessing the intelligence and intrinsic desire and ability to learn. They do not need to be forced to learn or given a carefully planned programme; they simply need to have opportunities to be exposed to the things they need to learn as they are happening and be given support as needed in their learning journey.
5. **Based on shared intentionality:** The person who is learning observes and imitates a person with more expertise with the *intention* of reaching the goal of being able to do it her or himself. The more expert person does the activity with the *intention* of enabling the watching learner to observe and imitate, with the goal of them being able to do it on their own.

Activity 2: Exploring the key features of learning in hunter-gatherer societies

**Suggested time:** 20 minutes

In this activity you will have the opportunity to think more about how learning happens through in hunter-gatherer communities and how that may play out in your TVET discipline.

1. Watch the following video Origins of Pedagogy Episode 2 - learning to work together. See link below:



**Title**: **Origins of Pedagogy Episode 2 - learning to work together** [Wayne Hugo CCBY]

**Link:** <https://youtu.be/1TviPYvgF4M> [Duration 8:28]

**Source: Hugo, 2021 (Creative Commons Attribution)**

The video describes learning how to make arrows and bedding through observation and imitation – with shared intention between learner and expert – in an ancient hunter-gatherer community in South Africa.

1. Think of two or three examples of knowledge and skills that you learned from family members or neighbours at some point during your life, where you learned through observation and imitation. This could be something technical or cultural (or both), such as learning to cook a particular dish, changing the tyre on a car, plaiting hair, growing tomatoes – or anything else that comes to mind. Jot these down in your learning journal. For each, think about the five characteristics described above – embodied, participatory, contextualized, autonomous, and based on intentionality – and note in your journal any evidence of each of these for that example. Can you think of attitudes or values or ‘ways of being’ that you picked up and that became part of your identity through your learning experiences in these examples?
2. Now do the same for your TVET context. Think of two or three examples where your students learn knowledge and skills through observation and imitation. Jot them down in your learning journal. For each, think about the five characteristics described above – embodied, participatory, contextualized, autonomous, and based on intentionality – and note in your journal any evidence of each of these for that example. Can you think of attitudes or values or ‘ways of being’ that your students are picking up that are becoming part of their professional identities through their learning experiences in these examples?
3. Now imagine the same skills and knowledge that you identified in Question 3 being taught at a university. Try to visualise how an observation and imitation process would be different or the same. Would there be any differences in terms of whether the learning was embodied, participatory, contextualized, autonomous, and based on intentionality – compared to your analysis of these examples in Question 3? Do you think the context and approach of the university would result in any difference in the attitudes, values or ‘ways of being’ that students picked up through their learning experiences in these examples, or their integration of these into their professional identities?

Discussion of the activity

By exploring the most basic and ‘original’ ways in which humans learn and identifying different components or characteristics of learning experiences, it becomes possible to analyse and compare them. Becoming aware of how shared intent and embodied, participatory, contextualised, autonomous learning happens (or doesn’t happen) in ‘everyday’ learning in our lives and families, as well as in the formal teaching and learning contexts of TVET and universities, and the effects of these elements on the learner, helps us develop our capacity to think logically and clearly about how education works today; and how it could work better.

By using the ‘lenses’ of these five features (and we are not suggesting that there are only five) you may have found that you looked at early learning experiences in your childhood in a new way. Let’s take the example of learning to skip rope. If a person learns how to skip rope, they do so by trying it with their body (embodied) as they watch and then take a turn while others swing the rope (participate). It would be very difficult to learn how to skip rope anywhere other than in the situation where there is a rope swinging for you to jump over (contextualised). No one can ‘spoon feed’ you the knowledge you need – they might shout some advice to you, but you have to be the one who actively engages in trying, and trying again (it is thus autonomous). When you are jumping with others, those swinging the rope and the person jumping must work together to achieve the goal: the people swinging the rope will accommodate the beginning by making sure they are not swinging it too fast. Learning to ride a bike, in contrast, may or may not have involved someone else, and could be learnt without the features of participation and shared intentionality.

Learning to build a concrete path – in an apprenticeship or vocational training programme –would likely include the elements of being embodied (trying it yourself, using your body), being participatory (a few people working together, with the lecturer, to master the skill) and/or learning in the place where the skill happens (where the path is to be built). It may be less autonomous (driven by the student) but will involve shared intentionality, where both student and teacher work together to achieve the learning. Learning to build a concrete path in an engineering programme at a university, however, may not be embodied or participatory: it may involve a lecture about how to determine the strength of concrete needed, with the student taking notes. It also may not be contextualised, but happen in the classroom, and is unlikely to be autonomous, but strongly directed by the lecturer. There would be a degree of shared intentionality, where the lecturer would demonstrate the process on the board and monitor students’ understanding and success with mastering the knowledge and skills.

Notice that these origins of learning did not happen in Europe, but in Africa – and, specifically, in Southern Africa. Often, when the history of learning and education is written, the starting point is in Europe around five thousand years ago. But the history of learning, and education, actually began in Africa hundreds of thousands of years ago. Also notice that the origins of learning and pedagogy are very practical and hands on, rather than abstract and academic. So, learning and pedagogy not only began in Africa, not Europe, but it also began with the learning of practical skills, not academic learning.

Most hunter-gatherers lived in small groups and moved frequently to find new resources, especially when seasons changed. While there are places where this family-based way of living and working still exists, things did not stay this way in most of the world.

As people began to settle down in communities that grew into villages and then towns, it became possible for different kinds of work to be done by different people. People could specialise in specific knowledge and skill that made them valuable and needed in a community. At first, families tended to specialise, and so learning continued to happen through participation in what those around you were doing. But over time, specialisations began to formalise, and children in a family could decide to learn a vocation different from that of their family.

While family-based vocational learning has persisted until today, an apprenticeship model of teaching came into existence. This meant that the older apprenticeship type of learning that happened informally through observation and imitation had to become more institutionalised and more formalised. Apprenticeship shifted from an informal mode of learning to a more formal and institutionalised educational practice.

The apprenticeship model

Apprenticeship involves training that happens under a legal agreement for a specified time between a master and an apprentice. This model of vocational education has been used across the world over the centuries. In the ancient kingdom of Babylon, which existed in part of what is today the country of Iraq, a collection of laws and rules called the Code of Hammurabi was put into force in the 18th century BCE (more than 3 800 years ago!) which mandated that artisans must teach their crafts to the next generation. In some societies in ancient times, many of the craftsmen were slaves. In many societies, women were not allowed to enter into occupations.



**Figure 1: The Code of Hammurabi** [Source](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Code_of_Hammurabi_replica_stele_REM.JPG)

The carving shows the laws being given by a god to the king; below this carved image, the laws are carved around the pillar in Akkadian, an ancient language.

Zhang and Cerdin (2020: 187-188) describe apprenticeship in ancient China:

*The educational model was divided into three stages: education, training and empowerment. First, the apprentice observed his master’s practice and learned the necessary skills. The master then used a variety of training methods to ensure that the apprentice had practiced the new skills well enough. Finally, in the “Zen” element of this process, the master “isolated” his apprentice to empower him with more autonomy and room for creativity . . . The “spirit of craftsmanship” was based on precision, patience and perfection. The constant pursuit of perfection took a large amount of time and effort, so that every detail was taken care of.*

Masters served as teachers and advisors, but also as father figures – in fact, the apprentice called the master ‘father’ – carrying authority, wisdom and responsibility; the master-apprentice relationship could extend outside of the work context into other aspects of the individuals’ lives.

The key term to understand in this historical account is CRAFT. It means an activity that uses hands in a skilful way to make something. The word has strong associations with being able to make something complex and useful in an expert way. A craftsman is proud of what he does, pays attention to quality, and makes sure that the whole thing is well made and meets the expectations of the customer. A craftsman does not only have one skill, or a low-level set of skills. A craftsman has a number of different skills, all of which are needed to make a complex thing. His workshop has a number of specialist tools dedicated to the craft. These experts were increasingly in demand and began to organise themselves into powerful organisations called guilds.

Craft guilds began to be used in Europe in the 13th century. A guild is a group of skilled workers in the same trade who organise themselves together and protect each other. Master craftsmen controlled the guild and supervised the work conditions, methods used and did quality assurance for each occupational group in the town. The master worked at home with his apprentices and assistants; after the apprenticeship of about seven years was completed, the apprentice became a member of the guild. Apprentices often began at the age of ten to fifteen and their parents would enter into an indenture with the master. The apprentice would live in the master’s house. The master-apprentice relationship thus became a sort of artificial family relationship. This type of relationship is still much respected and admired within the technical and vocational space.

Apprenticeship has undoubtedly taken many different forms in all the contexts in which it has been used around the world over the centuries, and we must be careful to not over-simplify it to seem more alike than it probably was. However, Billet (2021) argues that mimesis – a combination of observation, imitation and practice – seems to form the basis of apprenticeship, with less emphasis on actual teaching or guidance. In fact, in Japan the terms used for this way of learning even suggest that the apprentice ‘steals’ the knowledge from the master, or glances to see how things are done when no one is watching. In other words, the apprentice is the one actively driving the learning process, and ‘apprehending’ the learning – which, in fact, is the word from which ‘apprentice’ derives, as well. Billet (2021) says that through this process, the apprentice will “generate increasingly mature approximations of the activities which have been modelled and observed.”

Stop and think

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| How does the apprenticeship model compare to the ‘original’ learning model discussed in the previous section? In what ways is it similar? In what ways is it different? |

During the 1700s and 1800s, the idea of work playing a central role in the meaning and value of life became more important in public thinking in the West. The word ‘vocation’ related to being called by God to do a particular kind of work (‘vocatio’ means ‘to call’ in Latin). The labour that a person engaged in daily was thus seen as part of a person’s purpose in the world, and a way to shape the world according to God’s will. Work is thus a key way that a person reaches fulfilment in this. This came closer to the liberal ideas of doing something for personal development, enjoyment or fulfilment than to the idea of a worker being a tool to meet the needs of the nation, of industry, or of profiteers. Personal achievement through work was imbued as having spiritual significance. This perspective was a far cry from the experience of work as alienating, ‘soulless’ and without meaning. Notice that this meaning of vocation, as a calling to do an occupation that is meaningful and important to you, is very different to vocational education, which is about taking a course to learn how to do a specific occupation. The first meaning is all about passion, excitement, personal commitment, and fulfilment of a desire to do something that is worthwhile for you and society. The second meaning is about learning a specific set of skills needed for an occupation, and making sure the correct skill level is attained so that the job can be effectively done.

Division of labour and the Industrial Revolution change craft

In the mid-1700s, a period of rapid change began in Europe that lasted for around 70 years: The Industrial Revolution. New technical inventions resulted in a huge leap forward in terms of the kinds of tools and mechanical processes available. Machines were developed that were able to do things that humans had always done by hand since the dawn of time.

This moved production away from the intimate community of master and apprentices in a home environment, to a new arrangement where many workers gathered to operate machines in factories. Instead of workers with complex sets of intellectual and technical skills capable of producing high quality work, unskilled workers were needed to operate machines and a smaller number of skilled workers were needed to design, manage and repair the machines.

As the production of goods began to be broken down into smaller parts, work became more specialized, with a worker developing skills in a specific area of production, rather than covering the whole range of the occupation. Workers began to feel cut off from the way the work was organized and had less control over how they did the work, or responsibility for the product. Karl Marx called this ‘alienation’, and it is a vital concept to understand in the philosophy of technical and vocational education. In a craft where the skilled master produces a complete thing, he can see himself in his work. The useful and complex object that he makes expresses his own skill and usefulness and gives him a sense of worth and ownership. Factories demanded that workers laboured day and night on only a small part of the completed product and were then only paid a wage for their labour. This factory process alienated workers from what they were making, made them lose a sense of product ownership, and deskilled them, forcing them to contribute only a repetitive part of the production process. The stronger focus on profit, as capitalism grew, shifted dynamics among workers from working in cooperation with each other to working in competition with each other. Workers became more like the machines – or parts of the machines – that they operated, as their expertise, work collaborations and work processes became fragmented.

In quite a short period of time, the family-based approach to vocational education that had existed for so long was overturned in industrialising countries.

Apprenticeships still survived but were increasingly used to train skilled craftsmen who had a higher status than factory workers. Trade unions were formed to control how recruitment was done and to manage entry to skilled trades – protecting the jobs of members – and to control quality.

In the final section of this unit, we will see how this ‘fracturing’ of the work process and the vocational identity went even further as movements such as Taylorism sought to increase profit for businesses by increasing the productivity of workers and by breaking down the work process, and the expertise of workers, even further.

Activity 3: Informal hunter-gatherer apprenticeship compared with formal craft apprenticeship

**Suggested time:** 30 minutes

1. In your learning journal, draw a table with 3 columns, like this:

| **Aspect** | **Informal hunter-gatherer apprenticeship** | **Formal craft apprenticeship** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Controlled and directed by …? 2. Purpose of learning? 3. How do the teachers view their learners? 4. Who are the teachers? 5. What is the curriculum? 6. How is competence assessed? |  |  |

Make it big enough to fill a page.

1. Using the headings in the leftmost column, consider each of these questions for each approach and write a short answer (word or phrase) in each column.
2. Who controls and directs vocational education: think about individual, family, master, the trade/industry, or the government?
3. Who is the learning for: The individual, society, profit of the business owner?
4. How is the learner viewed by the teacher: As someone who is part of the community, or as a pupil needing to be trained in a specific skill?
5. Are the teachers just more knowledgeable elders, or masters of a craft within a workshop?
6. Is there a defined curriculum – a comprehensive and complete body of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values set out that needs to be learned, or a more informal set of skills needed to survive within a community?
7. How is it determined that the needed skills have been learnt?

Discussion of activity

Your analysis highlights the contrast between learning in the ‘original’ hunter-gatherer approach compared to learning in the craft apprenticeship approach. Control over the process shifted from the individual to a master and, eventually a guild and then the government. The aim of learning shifted from the individual choosing to master a skill, to society securing enough craftspeople to produce the products and services it wants, or a businessperson seeking skilled labour to maximize profit.

We now turn to the development of the academic form of education found in universities today.

## The academic educational path

We have looked briefly at how learning was deeply embedded in *doing* from ancient times until the past couple of centuries. Now we turn to the development of academic education and explore its philosophical foundation in terms of what knowledge is, the value of knowledge, who should have access to it and its place in our lives.

As more complex societies and economies evolved, social systems developed with different classes: rulers and wealthy elite at the top, workers doing manual forms of work below them, and often slaves forming the bottom of the system. Across the world, from Africa and Europe to India and China, social systems tended to follow this hierarchical division of labour. Rulers and their bureaucrats were at the top, and they needed reading, writing, mathematics and general education to manage the state. They were protected by soldiers on a second level who needed a more physical and military training. Third were craftsmen and traders, who had specific in-demand skills and were educated using the family apprenticeship model. Then came farmers and labourers lower down, often with some type of slave in the lowest position.

For the elite, an education system was needed that captured the breadth of theoretical knowledge that society had developed and took it forward to new heights. This knowledge was not only a collection of ‘information’ but the means to think critically and broadly – ‘wisdom’ for ruling and directing the development of the state and the activities of those in the lower classes. While workers needed knowledge that was specific to their task and trade, these rulers and leaders needed knowledge that was abstract and could be applied across all of society to address complex problems. It is in this development of a general education for elite men that we have the origins of a split between vocational and academic education.

Mind above matter: the ancient Greek philosophy of education

In Europe, during the third and fourth centuries BCE, a group of philosophers in Athens, developed ideas about the purpose and structure of education that have continued to shape the formal, western-based approach to education, which is used in much of the world now. Today, Athens is the capital of Greece, but 2,300 years ago, Athens was a city-state (a city which, with the surrounding area, forms an independent country).

Athens had established the first known democracy in the world. The Athenian definition of ‘citizens’ was also different from modern-day citizens: only free men were considered citizens in Athens. Women, children, and slaves were not considered citizens and therefore could not vote. It was a direct democracy, however: all citizens were required to take an active part in the government. This involved making laws and controlling and running the state. Five hundred citizens took their turn to serve actively each year, and when laws were drawn up by those in active service, all citizens in the state were called to vote on it. If a citizen did not fulfil their duty, they would be fined (and sometimes marked with red paint!). This meant that citizens, as a social group within society, needed to develop their knowledge and thinking capabilities to be able to make good decisions for the whole society. This brought about a need for a kind of education that was not focused on making things (with one’s hands), but on working adeptly with ideas (with one’s mind).

Plato was one of three very influential philosophers who lived in Athens. (The other two are Socrates, Plato’s teacher; and Aristotle, one of Plato’s students). Plato had a vision for what a perfect government would be like. He also had a vision for the ideal way to design education to produce a person capable of being an excellent citizen and leader. Plato’s ideas were so powerful that they continue to shape the way we do education, and our educational institutions, to this day.

Plato believed that underlying everything that exists in the world is an essence made up of pure ideas, and the world we see around us is only a reflection of its true conceptual nature. Working on this belief, he divided the world into material things and immaterial things. Material things were objects that you could touch or feel, or things that had been made – such as products, drawings and writings. He saw material things as being subject to change and imperfection. For example, a square drawn on a piece of paper was a physical thing. If examined carefully, it might turn out that the corners of the square had not been drawn at exactly 90 degrees, or the sides of the square were not exactly equal. A material square was thus subject to error and imperfection. It was also impermanent – it could be erased, or the paper could be burned or thrown away. Immaterial things, on the other hand, were pure concepts that couldn’t be altered or diminished in any way. They were thus permanent, certain and perfect. In contrast to the material square drawn (perhaps sloppily) on a piece of paper, the actual concept of a square is immaterial and perfect. The square, as a concept, always has sides of equal length and corners that are exactly 90 degrees. Nothing can damage or corrupt that immaterial square.

Plato saw the purpose of education as freeing the mind from the error of seeing the material world as real. Knowledge based on rational reflection on abstract concepts was seen as valuable and superior. A subject like geometry was useful because it used material forms (for example, the square that was drawn by a teacher or student) as a way of exploring immaterial truths (the ‘perfect’ concept of the square).

Practical knowledge was of less value because it involved working with matter, making choices between things in the physical world (materials, tools, etc.), solving material problems, and adapting to physical conditions. All of this was impermanent and imperfect – he considered knowledge that was applied to action, mere ‘opinion’ – which was far from the unchanging, eternal ‘truths’ of theoretical knowledge. He therefore believed the “lowest form of education to be for those who worked with their hands and not with their minds” (Billet, 2014).

Plato believed that the work of artisans was of little value and that citizens should not engage in these occupations. He believed that artisans were not capable of generating new ideas by themselves. However, there were types of practical work that demanded more abstract thought – the professions. In ancient Greece these were doctors, lawyers, and architects, who were able to find solutions to new problems and needed some abstract thought to get things done. The military, especially the generals, also needed to solve problems using abstract thought. However, these were still practical professions and not on the same level as the ruling elite. A clear hierarchy was thus established between the ruling elite, then soldiers and the professions, and then craftsmen and farmers. Plato put this into a myth where the elite were born with gold in them, soldiers with silver, and craftsmen with bronze, and based on the type of metal you had inside of you, so were you destined to either be a ruler, soldier, or craftsman.

Plato still called it a city of brothers (to keep unity), where God has “mixed some gold into those who are adequately equipped to rule, because they are the most valuable, silver in those who are auxiliaries and iron and bronze in the farmers and craftsmen”. Anything that is applied, and productive, is thus ‘impure’ to some extent. An education for the rulers should be pure, with no link to work. He saw that it was necessary for some people to produce goods to meet human needs – and therefore the trades were needed, but they were the proper work of ‘lower’ people – thus keeping the ‘higher’ people free for ‘purer’ pursuits. Plato (370 BCE) explained that:

More plentiful and better-quality goods are more easily produced if each person does one thing for which he is naturally suited, does it at the right time, and is released of having to do any of the others.

There is a clear understanding of the importance of a division of labour and how it results in a more efficient state with higher productivity, but this is tied to a natural order with some born to be rulers and others born to be workers; with rulers receiving a broad, academic, liberal education of universal reach; and craftsmen getting specific training limiting them to one kind of activity in a local space.

Stop and think

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| Can you see how, in ancient Greece, what kind of family you were born into determined what kind of education you received, and what work you were destined to do? If you were born a free man, then you were destined to receive a liberal education that prepared you to participate in a limited democracy by engaging in debate and reasoning, as well as developing general rules on how to run the state effectively. If you were born into a craftsman’s family, then you were destined to learn the craft at home whilst actively doing the work needed for the craft. This division of labour fundamentally ‘divorced’ practical learning (and work) from theoretical learning (and work). |

Ancient Greece was not the only state to adopt this way of organizing society, work and education. It was actually common for most groups shifting from hunter-gatherer to agricultural economies to develop more hierarchical structures. Hunter-gatherers had very communal, participatory and democratic systems, where everyone shared. This can still be seen today with the Sān people and other contemporary hunter-gatherers (like the Hadza in Eastern Africa). With the development of extensive farming, there was a massive increase in the quantity of food being produced. This surplus of food allowed many people to stop farming and develop other skills and expertise. This surplus also had to be counted, stored, and distributed, and those able to gain control over this surplus had enormous power, which they protected through paying soldiers to guard them and the surplus. Those in power ensured they kept this power in their family and their networks. A key weapon to do this was education. By educating their own children with the liberal and general education needed to manage the surplus and forcing children from craftsmen and farmer families to use an informal apprenticeship model to make and grow things, they ensured that control of power remained in their own families. Different groups of people were allocated different types of work, with different statuses and different types of education.

For example, in India, a hierarchical society began to develop even earlier than in ancient Greece. India developed a caste system, with four main castes:

1. Brahmins were the highest and most esteemed caste, with a general education focused on religious control. Priests and teachers were the two main groups in this caste. These were the intellectual and spiritual leaders of society who conducted important rituals and ensured that cultural and religious knowledge was carried from one generation to the next.
2. Kshatriyas were the warrior caste in times of war, and the ruling class in times of peace. Their function was to protect, administer, and ensure the distribution of surplus products to the society. Their education combined a military and physical element as well as a more general education (writing, reading, mathematics, culture) to enable the administration of a complex society. These first two castes (Brahmins and Kshatriyas) formed the ruling class.
3. Vaishyas consisted of craftsmen, traders, merchants, and farmers responsible for the production and making of goods. Depending on what kind of craft your family did, you would belong to different sub-classes of the caste and be trained in your family to take on that specific craft.
4. Shudras were manual labourers, doing hard, low-skilled work. They worked for all the other castes, basically doing all the hard labour to keep the system going. Their education was minimal.

There was also a large group of people called ‘untouchables’ (now called ‘Dalits’) who were not considered to be a part of any caste and were destined to do the dirtiest and most undesirable types of work (like cleaning toilets).

In both the ancient Greek and Indian systems, we clearly see how those in power managed to hold onto power through allocating a general academic education to themselves, and protecting themselves through a military class who were also educated in the principles of rulership. Craft-based education was allocated to those lower down the hierarchy and limited to the skills needed to do the craft. High levels of reading and mathematics were considered unnecessary and even dangerous for those near the bottom of the hierarchy.

We can see this history in the term ‘academic’. Where did it come from?

In 387 BCE, Plato founded a school of philosophy called The Academy. Although it was actually just named after the place where it was built, it is from this first educational Academy that our use of the words ‘academy’ and ‘academic’ come from – which is a small example of how massive and enduring Plato’s influence on education has been. The Academy was the first institution of higher learning in Greece and was effectively the first university to exist in Europe – and it continued to operate for 900 years.

The Academy was dedicated to exploring the nature of the universe and knowledge, with the goal of ultimate truth. The subjects taught included philosophy, mathematics, natural sciences, politics, astronomy, and geometry. Plato taught his students using the question-answer method, argument, and discussion, with some lectures.

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| Aristotle is the most famous of Plato’s students, because he went on to make significant contributions to philosophy himself – including the philosophy of education.  Aristotle joined the Academy at the age of seventeen. He went on to found his own educational institution, the Lyceum. While he shared many of Plato’s ideas, he was more interested in studying the physical world (which Plato believed was merely an imperfect ‘reflection’ of true, perfect concepts) and developed the scientific method of inquiry that is still the foundation of scientific research today. Aristotle divided the sciences into productive, practical and theoretical sciences. The productive sciences were those that produced a physical or non-physical product; such as engineering or law. The practical sciences were those that guided behaviour, such as ethics and politics. The theoretical sciences had no product or practical goal, but involved the pursuit of knowledge as its own end; these included physics, mathematics and theology. To some extent, in our universities today, we can see the impact of Plato’s philosophy on the way ‘liberal arts’ and ‘social sciences’ programmes are designed, and Aristotle’s influence on the ‘hard sciences’. However, the strong emphasis on empirical research at universities today – and the fact that we speak of ‘social *sciences*’ today, where we study human behaviour using the scientific method – shows the influence of Aristotle on our education system today. |

Schofield (cited in Hyland, 2018) describes the enduring impact of Greek philosophy, and how it led to the development of the ‘liberal’ education that has characterised academic institutions ever since, reinforcing the idea of different kinds of education for different classes:

*The passing of time merely emphasised the distinctions which Plato made. Studies which were valuable in themselves, especially the Classics, became associated with the privileged class or elite in society. They were directly related to the concept of a courtier, a gentleman, a man of affairs, and later the public schools. Liberal education always carried with it a suggestion of privilege and privileged position, of not needing to work for one's living.*(Hyland, 2018: 151-2).

Knowledge as its own reward: The tradition of liberal education

As we have seen, the purpose of the kind of education developed by Plato was to cultivate the minds of ‘free’ citizens – who were not slaves and who were free from having to do manual work – to work with ideas and be able to determine for themselves what was good and true. This idea of education for ‘free’ humans came to be called a ‘liberal education’ (liberal comes from the Latin word ‘liber’ which means ‘free’). It continued to be designed for the elite – whose lives were focused on leisure rather than purposeful work – as it made no attempt to equip a person with the expertise to be able to do ‘useful’ (practical) work. An education for productive work thus continued to hold second place.

This non-specialised, non-vocational form of education forms the basis of the liberal education that characterised higher education in Europe from the 11th and 12 centuries. Liberal education focused on the classics and Ancient Greek and Latin – again, pursuits that weren’t purposeful for ordinary people for employment and thus was for the elite. With European nations colonising much of Africa, North and South America and parts of Asia, this model of higher education was exported around the world for the education of the colonists who formed the elite class in the colonies. Higher education institutions in the colonised world thus were formed on this model and remain the legacy of education in those countries even today, after the end of colonialism.

In the 1850s, John Henry Newman, an English academic, philosopher and theologian (among other things) who was heavily influenced by Plato and other ancient Greek philosophers, put forward ideas about what a university should be that argued strongly for a liberal education. He believed that the focus should be on the students, not the studies; and if an education focused on ‘usefulness’ (playing a productive role), then it is not really about the good of the student, but about using the student that has been educated as a tool to achieve another end.

Newman (1905) clearly articulated the great divide between vocational and academic education:

*You see, then, here are two methods of Education; the end of the one is to be philosophical, of the other to be mechanical; the one rises towards general ideas, the other is exhausted upon what is particular and external.*

He explains that a liberal education is:

*opposed to servile; and by "servile work" is understood […] bodily labour, mechanical employment, and the like, in which the mind has little or no part […] liberal education and liberal pursuits are exercises of mind, of reason, of reflection.*(Newman 1905)

Like the Greek philosophers, he acknowledged that practical work was necessary – and maybe gave it more value than they did – but felt that the knowledge involved in vocations was of a lower kind. This was because vocational knowledge tended to focus on particular skills needed in a specific situation, and because of this, was limited to only that situation:

*Let me not be thought to deny the necessity, or to decry the benefit, of such attention to what is particular and practical, as belongs to the useful or mechanical arts; life could not go on without them; we owe our daily welfare to them; their exercise is the duty of the many, and we owe to the many a debt of gratitude for fulfilling that duty. I only say that Knowledge, in proportion as it tends more and more to be particular, ceases to be Knowledge.* (Newman 1905)

He thus articulated, like Plato, a ‘higher’ knowledge which conditions the mind in a general way, and is not tied to a specific job or skill. Higher knowledge does not have a direct purpose, it is not done for a specific job, it is done because it is intrinsically interesting and worthwhile:

*Knowledge, as one of the principal of these, is valuable for what its very presence in us does for us after the manner of a habit, even though it be turned to no further account, nor subserve any direct end.* (Newman 1905)

He explained how ‘instruction’ (training) dedicated to vocational ends does not engage the mind, while ‘education’ shapes the character of the individual. Training for trades involves repetitive practice using simple rules that must be applied in specific situations, whereas education has a higher purpose to make us better, freer, more rational and more open human beings. It develops our minds rather than our bodies:

*We are instructed, for instance, in manual exercises, in the fine and useful arts, in trades, and in ways of business; for these are methods, which have little or no effect upon the mind itself, are contained in rules committed to memory, to tradition, or to use, and bear upon an end external to themselves. But education is a higher word; it implies an action upon our mental nature, and the formation of a character; it is something individual and permanent and is commonly spoken of in connexion with religion and virtue.*

*When, then, we speak of the communication of Knowledge as being Education, we thereby really imply that that Knowledge is a state or condition of mind; and since cultivation of mind is surely worth seeking for its own sake, we are thus brought once more to the conclusion . . . that there is a Knowledge, which is desirable, though nothing come of it, as being of itself a treasure, and a sufficient remuneration of years of labour.*(Newman 1905)

He also hints that such an education can only be for the elite, because this pursuit of knowledge is not to make our lives more comfortable and enjoyable in any way, but he says that it is only when our physical and political needs are met and we have no duties, we are in a place for "desiring to see, to hear, and to learn".

His vision of the university was of people being conditioned by an intellectual atmosphere where the common pursuit of knowledge (and ultimately, truth) has an impact on them greater than any one subject that they study. University is not about learning how to do a job, it is about becoming a better, more informed, more open, more flexible, human being who has developed connections with other informed human beings:

*An assemblage of learned men, zealous for their own sciences, and rivals of each other, are brought, by familiar intercourse and for the sake of intellectual peace, to adjust together the claims and relations of their respective subjects of investigation. They learn to respect, to consult, to aid each other. Thus is created a pure and clear atmosphere of thought, which the student also breathes, though in his own case he only pursues a few sciences out of the multitude. He profits by an intellectual tradition ...* (Newman 1905)

He was clear on the purpose of such a liberal education that would be achieved by these means, and how this was different from forms of education that happened outside of the university:

*A habit of mind is formed which lasts through life, of which the attributes are, freedom, equitableness, calmness, moderation, and wisdom; or what [...] I have ventured to call a philosophical habit. This then I would assign as the special fruit of the education furnished at a University, as contrasted with other places of teaching or modes of teaching. This is the main purpose of a University in its treatment of its students.* (Newman 1905)

So, what is it that the student takes away from the university? For Newman it was knowledge for knowledge’s sake, not for the purpose of getting a job. University should develop you into a more complete human being with stronger potentials and connections, not a person looking for a job with specific skills to make specific things:

*[I]t has a very tangible, real, and sufficient end, though the end cannot be divided from that knowledge itself. Knowledge is capable of being its own end. Such is the constitution of the human mind, that any kind of knowledge, if it be really such, is its own reward*.

(Newman 1905)

Activity 4: Liberal education compared with vocational education

**Suggested time:** 30 minutes

1. In your learning journal, draw up a table with two columns to contrast how Newman viewed academic education and vocational training. Write ‘academic education’ as the heading of one column and ‘vocational training’ for the other.
2. Read through the quotes by Newman in the text preceding this activity again, and play close attention to contrasts between his views of academic education and vocational training. After each quote, stop and think about it.
3. After each contrast write down your own thoughts and feelings about the contrast, for example: Is this characterisation accurate? Is this characterisation fair?
4. Discuss the following questions in your learning journal or in a small group with 2 or 3 classmates:
5. Why would students today choose a liberal education at a university focused on developing their potential as a human being rather than a vocational education that enabled them to develop a specific set of skills for a specific occupation?
6. Is it valuable to get a general academic education to develop the flexibility of your mind in our context today?

Discussion of the activity

Newman drew strongly on Plato’s philosophy of education, bringing its influence to bear even more powerfully in the modern world. Newman wanted education to develop the minds of students to their fullest potential, and he did not want the demands of the world of work to shape or limit the space or the way in which education happened. While we might all wish this for our students, his vision, like Plato’s was undemocratic: this kind of self-development could only be possible for the few, while he felt it had to be accepted that the majority focused their efforts on labouring to make a living.

The power of the ideas of Plato and other ancient Greek philosophers is evident in all of our academic institutions today. In Athens itself, where Plato’s Academy existed for 900 years, a modern Academy of Athens was founded in Greece in 1926. It is named after Plato’s Academy and built in the neoclassical architectural style (after the classical style of the time of Plato). It operates on Plato’s principles and is the highest research institution in the country.



**Figure 2: The Academy of Athens in Athens, Greece. A statue of Plato is on the left and a statue of Aristotle is on the right** [Source](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Academy_of_Athens_by_ArmAg_(7).jpg)

The enduring influence of the ancient Greek philosophy of education in modern times is not only found in Greece, however, but throughout the world where the western education tradition has had influence. Sarah Baartman Hall at the University of Cape Town and the Great Hall at the University of the Witwatersrand, for example, reflect this influence in their neoclassical design.

## Tension across the great divide

In the previous sections, we have seen how academic education has been given much higher status than vocational education in societies influenced by the philosophical traditions of western Europe. And also, how access to this academic education has been restricted, to a large extent, to those with the most power in society: to the wealthier classes, to the dominant race, and to men. It therefore has a very elitist history. Billet (2014) writes:

*[T]he sentiments and practices from [ancient]* *Greece appear to be influential and enduring to this day in terms of the standing of occupations described as being performed by artisans, and beliefs about the limited capacities of workers engaged in low status occupations. Certainly, sentiments associated with occupations based on the use of hands (i.e., manual) as being inferior to activities to those relying more on the mind (i.e., mental) have long endured in Western societies (Lodge, 1947; Sennett, 2008).*

In 1974, Goldthorpe and Hope introduced a scale in the book *The Social Grading of* Occupations (Billet, 2014)that ranks the status of different occupations very similarly to the ideas put forward by Plato over 2 300 years ago.

**Table 1: The Hope-Goldthorpe Scale showing the social desirability of different occupations in 1974**

(Billet, 2014)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Class** | **Occupations** |
| Class I | High-grade professionals, managers, administrators and large proprietors |
| Class II | Lower grade professionals and managers, and higher grade technicians |
| Class III | Routine non-manual workers |
| Class IV | Small proprietors and the self-employed |
| Class V | Lower-grade technicians and supervisors of manual workers |
| Class VI | Skilled manual workers |
| Class VII | Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers |

Note that ‘routine non-manual workers’ are ranked as class III, three classes above skilled manual workers, showing the strong bias against manual work.

This division between academic and vocational education and occupations, with vocational education and occupations seen as inferior, continues to create tension within education – and puts education in tension with the democratic ideals of equal opportunity for self-development and for work that has dignity.

We now look at two ways this tension has played out: where education is used in the service of the economy, and where education is used in the service of social justice.

Education in the service of the economy

Earlier in this unit we saw how, with the arrival of the Industrial Revolution and the factory model, the work process and workers’ expertise began to be dismantled into parts, with less and less control over the process by the worker – in order to raise productivity, and thus the profits of the owner.

Frederick W. Taylor, born in 1856, took this direction to a completely new level. His story is fascinating on many levels of the issues we have been looking at, as he moved back and forth between academic and vocational spaces and had strong views on these. His father had studied law at a prestigious university and, at the age of eighteen, Taylor was accepted at Harvard, one of the most prestigious universities in the world, to study law as his father had. He was on the path for a classic elite liberal education. But instead of going forward with his education at Harvard, he suddenly changed to a vocational path and became an apprentice patternmaker and machinist for a pump-manufacturing company owned by family friends. After a 4-year apprenticeship he was promoted quickly up the ranks.

While on the job, Taylor noticed that workers were not operating the machines as quickly as they could, which was losing money for their company. He began to study how they could work more efficiently. He studied workers’ body movements and made calculations for the exact amount of time that was needed to complete each movement. He broke down jobs into small components and timed each one to the hundredth of a minute. Based on his studies, he developed ways to increase productivity many times over. He standardised the way jobs were performed and maximized productivity.

Taylor set out to make a clear separation between mental work (planning) and manual work. He gave more control of the work process to managers and less to workers. Workers were made to do things in an exact and identical way. Each was selected, trained and developed according to the scientific methods developed by Taylor: there was no self-directed learning from peers or masters whatsoever. He explained his vision for the ‘scientific management’ of industry as follows:

*[In the old system it was] necessary for each workman to bear almost the entire responsibility for the general plan as well as for each detail of his work, and in many cases for his implements as well. In addition to this he must do all of the actual physical labour. The development of a science […] involves the establishment of many rules, laws, and formulae which replace the judgment of the individual workman and which can be effectively used only after having been systematically recorded, indexed, etc. The practical use of scientific data also calls for a room in which to keep the books, records, etc., and a desk for the planner to work at. Thus all of the planning which under the old system was done by the workman, as a result of his personal experience, must of necessity under the new system be done by the management in accordance with the laws of the science; because even if the workman was well suited to the development and use of scientific data, it would be physically impossible for him to work at his machine and at a desk at the same time. It is also clear that in most cases one type of man is needed to plan ahead and an entirely different type to execute the work* (Taylor, 1911: 37-38).

His ‘scientific management’ approach – which became known as ‘Taylorism’ - reduced the need for workers to have skills. They only needed to be able to do one simple task, over and over. They were not allowed to use their own ideas about the best way to do something: they had to do it in the way they were instructed and within a certain amount of time allotted for the task.

This increased productivity which, in turn, increased the profits of the employer.

Taylor said that workers would be happier in such a system. However, it separated workers from the full work process, as they were involved with only one small aspect. They no longer had any opportunity to make decisions, to be involved in the design of the product or the end result of the production of the product. Workers were thus pushed to become like machines in factories to an even greater extent than how this had already happened through industrialization. In reality, workers often resented his system being introduced.

Taylor did recognize that the ‘dumbing down’ of the job to one repetitive task would cause boredom and frustration for some workers. His solution was to choose less intelligent workers for the manual jobs and more intelligent workers for management. He wrote the following about selecting a worker to lift large pieces of iron (called ‘pigs’ of iron, in the industry):

*One of the very first requirements for a man who is fit to handle pig iron as a regular occupation is that he shall be so stupid and so phlegmatic that he more nearly resembles in his mental make-up the ox than any other type. The man who is mentally alert and intelligent is for this very reason entirely unsuited to what would, for him, be the grinding monotony of work of this character.* (Taylor, 1911: 59).

Taylorism thus further stripped workers of the dignity and meaning of work. Industry leaders embraced his ideas, however, as it brought them greater profits. Managers at one car manufacturer bragged that there was no job done by anyone in their factory that could not be learnt in 15 minutes. But the concept of the occupation itself, occupational knowledge, expertise, craftsmanship, and occupational identity that had developed around vocational work over the centuries were dismantled as personal interest and identification with the work were eroded. This resulted in reduced creativity and satisfaction. Billet (year?) comments that this compromised the ability of workers to learn new skills when needed.

#### Stop and think

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| Compare Taylor’s philosophy of work and worker with the philosophy followed in the early apprenticeships, which often took seven years of working alongside a master day by day to learn all of the complexities of the work, from design to completion. How do you think a person’s sense of themselves, their work and their lives would differ, spent in the same general occupation but following the master-apprentice system or Taylorism? |

Educational institutions soon came under pressure, too, to adopt his ideas. The resulting trend towards assessment, monitoring and accountability, standardised processes, performance evaluation, competition, and targets and outcomes in education – both academic schooling and vocational education, has shaped education as we know it today.

Gibson (1992) writes about engineering education and the problems that exist as a result of the influence of Taylorism – which include problems with efficiency, which may seem surprising:

*I hold that Taylorism continues to be a major obstacle in our path to manufacturing efficiency, and that it must be replaced as the central element of our engineering educational philosophy as well.*

Gibson (1992) explains that workers are trained to accept that they do not have a say in setting specifications for the design object, or in how the product may be manufactured. They are trained to see design as ‘value-free’, with no sense of responsibility for how the final product will be used.

*One of the primary features of Taylorism is insistence on a* rigid separation of thinking from doing*. Taylor prohibited participation by production workers in the organization, planning, and direction of the manufacturing process. Taylor required his workers to do exactly as they were told to do and no more. This authoritarian stance is carried over into engineering education through its rigid exclusion of students from participation in the planning, organization, and direction of the education process. We all learn by example, and this is one of those debilitating attitudes engineers learn without being conscious of it.*

*[…] We begin with the simplest mechanisms and equations, then proceed step-by-step to more complex devices and mathematics, in a bottom-up manner. Thus, the budding engineer is taught without words to accept engineering reality as susceptible to decomposition into simpler sub-units best handled in isolation, a hierarchical management approach with professors as ‘bosses’ who ‘think’ and students as ‘workers’ who ‘do’, and an absence of discussion of goals, except for questions that are meant to elicit what the boss wants.*

#### Stop and think

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| Taylor earned worldwide recognition for this and was awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Science and ultimately became a professor. Having rejected a prestigious liberal education at one of the most elite universities for the vocational path, he came back to the academic world with prestige. Yet he firmly believed in keeping ‘thinkers’ and ‘doers’ separate in the workplace and not engaging those producing, in intellectual pursuits. What do you make of this? |

As we have seen in this unit, proponents of a liberal education – Plato, and later Newman – believed that this kind of ‘higher knowledge’ needed to be engaged for its own sake and for the personal development of the student. Knowledge – and the student – should not be made a tool of the world of work. This kind of ‘pure’ liberal education is thus reserved for those who don’t have to think about work. As we have also seen, however, a value and appreciation for manual and practical work as a meaningful, and even spiritual pursuit, has also been a philosophical thread that has wound its way through history and is a value held by many today. To be called a craftsman today is not an insult – it is a sign of having a complex set of skills directed at making a desirable product of high quality. And as democratic ideals have led to efforts to open the doors of education to all – and of the university to as many as possible – the need to be employable in a world driven by capitalism and competition has become a key concern of the families and students who are considering a liberal education. An education focused on broad ideas without a specific set of skills that match a specific need in the workplace leaves graduates of universities uncertain about their futures.

Both vocational and liberal, academic streams of education are thus being forced to deal with the pressures that are brought to bear by economic conditions.

Education in the service of social justice

While the ancient state of Athens considered itself a democracy, only certain people who lived in Athens were counted as citizens. Citizens owned slaves who were excluded from equal participation in their society, as were women. We have seen that the philosophy of education of Plato and some of the other philosophers of his time saw a liberal, intellectual education as being appropriate for the elite – those with the most power, privilege and leisure in society ­– and education for manual work as being appropriate for everyone else (or sometimes just men). The way education was structured thus mirrored and extended social, political and economic inequality, as access to the ‘better’ kind of education was restricted to those who were already at the top of the social, political and economic hierarchy.

At the same time, access to an education that promotes critical thinking could empower students to become critical of such a system and use their power to change it. This raises the question: what kind of education best supports social change to achieve social justice?

Democracy as an ideal has continued to spread, but often taking twisted forms where certain individuals were included, while others were excluded.

The United States is another country that claimed to be a democracy from its foundation but also limited citizenship to the privileged few for many years. The original, native people of the country were not allowed to vote for many years; neither were women. White citizens could own Black slaves (who were not citizens), only free males (almost only White) could vote. Many of the elite Whites relied upon Black slave labour to build their wealth and support their lifestyle of gentlemanly leisure.

Around 1900, two Black American intellectuals who were both working for the same purpose - to help Black Americans overcome, the terrible economic and social conditions that slavery had brought; the poverty and racial discrimination that impacted their access to health, education and other rights; and to gain equal social and economic status as free American citizens - both saw that harnessing technological developments could be key to achieving this.

Booker T. Washington was a Black American who was born in a slave hut to parents who were slaves in America in the mid-1800s (around the same time as Frederick Taylor). He became the most influential spokesman for [Black Americans](https://www.britannica.com/topic/African-American) between 1895 and 1915 and as an educator his philosophy of education had a broad impact – even impacting the development of education in South Africa. When his family was freed from slavery while he was a child, they were too poor to send him to school. At the age of nine he began to work as a manual labourer. He worked in a salt furnace and in a coal mine. He was determined to get an education, and eventually enrolled in an agricultural college, working as a cleaner to pay for his studies. He later went to a seminary, and then worked as a lecturer at the college he had attended. Johnson and Watson (2004) write:

*Washington was a Southerner who harboured deep suspicion about the Black intellectuals who dwelt in the northern cities or attended the southern colleges that he never attended. He dismissed their arcane knowledge as too much from books and too little from life.*

Washington’s primary aim was to help Black Americans achieve social, economic and political equality in America. However, he believed that the prejudice and segregation that existed in America after slavery was still so strong that it was impossible to achieve that quickly. He believed that instead of fighting for Black Americans to be integrated into White society and attend White universities, a more successful path would be to work hard to improve their situation on their own through a vocational path, and accept the injustices of society until they won the respect of White society, and racism and prejudice gradually disappeared on its own. He believed that the only way that Blacks could achieve success under the still very racially prejudiced and segregated society at the time, would be to become such skilled labourers that the American economy would become dependent on them. His ‘self-help’ philosophy was that under the existing system, which was still so unjust, Black Americans should focus on creating their own enterprises and supporting each other’s enterprises until their ability to take care of their own needs as a community, and build themselves up economically without help, gained them respect.

From this philosophical position, Washington believed that education for Black people should equip them to fit the lower end of the occupational structure and accept this role, lower than Whites in society. He saw it as important that Black people gain access to the same liberal education that privileged Whites enjoyed, but believed this should be a secondary goal that could be pursued after the vocational strategy had achieved its goals. In a famous speech in 1895 he said:

*Our greatest danger is that in the great leap from slavery to freedom we may overlook the fact that the masses of us are to live by the productions of our hands and fail to keep in mind that we shall prosper in proportion as we learn to dignify and glorify common labor, and put our brains and skill into the common occupations of life; shall prosper in proportion as we learn to draw the line between the superficial and the substantial, the ornamental gewgaws of life and the useful. No race can prosper till it learns that there is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem.*

*[…] The wisest among my race understand that agitation of social equality is the extremist folly, and that progress in the enjoyment of all the privileges that will come to us must be the result of severe and constant struggle rather than of artificial forcing. No race that has anything to contribute to the markets of the world is long in any degree ostracized. It is important and right that all privileges of law be ours, but it is vastly more important that we be prepared for the exercise of these privileges. The opportunity to earn a dollar in a factory just now is worth infinitely more that the opportunity to spend a dollar in an opera house.*(Washington 1895)

Washington thus urged Blacks not to fight for political equality and integration, but to accept the unjust conditions temporarily. Whites who wanted to keep things as they were, liked Washington’s views. Many wealthy Whites began to give funding to educational institutions that took on this vocational approach, while they withheld funding from institutions that offered an academic education to Blacks.

In the 1880s, Washington established the Tuskegee Institute, which became the best-known educational institution for Black Americans in the country and was considered the best example of industrial education, using the best methods of training (Johnson & Watson, 2004).

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, born in 1868 (also right around the same time as Washington and Taylor) was the son of a white French father and Black American mother. Unlike Washington, he had a privileged liberal education: he earned two bachelor’s degrees (one at Harvard) and was the first African American to earn a PhD at Harvard. Washington’s passion was to help Black Americans achieve equality in society. However, Du Bois disagreed completely with his views of how this should be done. Du Bois studied the experiences of African Americans who had attained different social status and became convinced that the only way African Americans would be able to achieve equality in society was by elite African Americans leading the way. He spoke of the ‘talented tenth’ – the intellectual brightest and best who he thought would raise the status of the Black community. Du Bois summarized the ideological debate between himself and Washington as follows:

*I believed in the higher education of a Talented Tenth who through their knowledge of modern culture could guide the American Negro into a higher civilization. I knew that without this the Negro would have to accept white leadership, and such leadership could not always be trusted to guide this group into self-realization and to its highest cultural possibilities. Mr. Washington, on the other hand, believed that the Negro as an efficient worker could gain wealth and that eventually through his ownership of capital he would be able to achieve a recognized place in American culture and could then educate his children as he might wish and develop his possibilities. For this reason, he proposed to put the emphasis at present upon training in the skilled trades and encouragement in industry and common labour.* (Johnson & Watson 2004: 69).

**Figure 3: W.E.B. Du Bois** [Source](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:WEB_DuBois_1918.jpg)and **Booker T. Washington** [Source](https://nypl.getarchive.net/amp/media/booker-t-washington-educator-c325b3)

Activity 5: Comparison of the arguments of Booker T. Washington and

W.E.B. Du Bois

**Suggested time:** 30 minutes

Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois engaged in a debate that spanned years and evoked the interest of people across the United States and also abroad. While they both had the same goal, of Black Americans, who had formerly been slaves, gaining an equal place in American society in every area of life, they had very different ideas about the role of education in achieving this.

In this activity you will read two short essays arguing for or against Washington and Du Bois’ positions. The first argues that Booker T. Washington’s ideas about a vocational education for Black Americans in the period after slavery were stronger than Du Bois’ ideas that a small number of Black Americans should get a liberal education. The second essay argues that Du Bois’ ideas on education were stronger than Washington’s.

1. Read both essays carefully and make notes about where you agree or disagree with each position. Also notice where new ideas come to mind – either from what you have read or your own original ideas.

**Essay 1: Washington’s position on education was stronger than Du Bois’**

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| *W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington were two of the most influential figures in the early 20th century in the fight for racial equality in the United States after the end of slavery. While both men believed in the importance of education as a way for Black people to achieve freedom and equality in a racist society, their approaches to education differed significantly. In this essay, I will argue that Washington’s approach was stronger.*  *Washington believed that education should focus on providing practical skills and training that would allow Black people to succeed in the workforce. He believed that this approach would help Black communities to gain economic independence from white businesses and services and that would enable them to improve their social and economic status on their own terms.*  *In contrast, Du Bois believed that education should focus on providing a well-rounded, liberal education that would allow Black people to develop their intellectual abilities and through that they would be able to influence society to become more democratic. He believed that a Black elite with a liberal education would be able to challenge the racism and discrimination in society and gain democratic freedom and equality for all Blacks.*  *In my opinion, Washington’s approach to education was more realistic because it recognized the importance of providing practical skills and training that would allow Black people to succeed in the workforce. By focusing on this approach, Washington's approach would help black people to gain economic independence and to improve their social and economic status. In contrast, Du Bois' approach of a small number of Black people getting a well-rounded, liberal education so they could influence society didn’t provide a way for the majority of Black people to overcome the economic and social conditions that they faced at the time through their own efforts. Without the practical skills and training they needed to succeed in the workforce they would not have a means to improve their social and economic status.* |

**Essay 2: Du Bois’ position on education was stronger than Washington’s**

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| *W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington were two of the most influential figures in the early 20th century in the fight for racial equality in the United States after the end of slavery. While both men believed in the importance of education as a way for Black people to achieve freedom and equality in a racist society, their approaches to education differed significantly. In this essay, I will argue that Du Bois’ approach was stronger.*  *Du Bois’ approach to education was that a small minority of Black Americans – the Talented Tenth’ – should get a well-rounded, liberal education that would enable them to develop their intellectual abilities and to participate fully in society. From this position, he believed they could actually challenge racism and influence society to become more democratic and equal. This approach aimed at a liberal education for a smaller number of people, but the result it aimed for would be to change the political and social conditions under which everyone lived, rather than just having success on a personal level in one’s vocation under conditions of inequality and racism.*  *In contrast, Washington's approach, failed to recognize the importance of providing a well-rounded, liberal education to Black people. By focusing solely on providing practical skills and training, Washington's approach risked limiting the opportunities for Black people to develop their intellectual abilities and to participate fully in society. It also failed to address the racism and discrimination that Black people faced, and it failed to provide them with the tools and knowledge they needed to challenge and overcome these obstacles.*  *In my opinion, Du Bois’ approach would have a broader impact on society and thus benefit everyone, while Washington’s approach focused only on individual success and did not equip individuals to challenge the unjust system in which they lived. Du Bois’ approach to education promised greater impact and lasting change, and was therefore stronger than Washington’s.* |

1. Now, read the notes you have made and carefully consider your own views. Write an essay to critically discuss and compare the educational ideas of Booker T. Washington and W.E.B Du Bois and how they tried to use vocational and liberal types of education to improve the lives of Black people in America after slavery. Clearly state each of their views and give reasons for why you find specific parts of their positions more or less convincing. Identify strengths and weaknesses in each of their positions. Then argue your own position. You may agree with one or the other, argue for a third (different) position, or combine (synthesise) their approaches in some way. Your essay should be about 1 typed, single-line-spaced page in length (about 600 - 800 words), although it may be longer if there is more you would like to say.

Discussion of activity

Both Washington and Du Bois thought deeply, and cared passionately, about education and its role in individual’s lives as well as its impact on society. Both wanted the same results – for Black Americans to be able to experience freedom and success in their personal lives and equal respect and participation in society. Their ideas about the strategy that would most effectively achieve this differed. As you wrote your essay, you may have come to the conclusion that one strategy would have been more successful than the other. Or you may have thought of a different strategy – or a way to combine their strategies – that you think could have been more effectively. By engaging in this kind of thinking and comparing, you expand your own critical thinking abilities and develop your capacity to engage with philosophies of education.

So, what was the outcome of Washington and Du Bois’ approaches?

Johnson and Watson (2005) write that in the early 1900s, Washington had more influence among the White elite than Du Bois, and that the Tuskegee Institute had a very strong reputation; however:

*Educationally, vocational training was a failure: It not only failed to prepare Blacks to move up in society, but it also guaranteed that they would move down. The emphasis on manual training and the trades served to destroy the educational aspirations that had been aroused during Reconstruction and wiped out the hope that education could provide a way out of poverty. By 1930, industrial education was seen as a “cynical political strategy, not a sound educational policy”, and proved to be the “great detour” for Blacks from which they are just beginning to return.*

Du Bois’ approach, however, also did not yield the results he had hoped for. After many years as a writer and scholar, he began to believe that the Black elite whom he had put his hopes in, had failed in their responsibility to lead the Black American masses to a stronger place in society. In the 1960s, he renounced his American citizenship and moved to Ghana, where he became a citizen. He died there two years later.

Washington and Du Bois’ strategies may not have achieved the aims they had hoped for given the social and political conditions at the time. Their ideas, however, were powerful, and had a broader influence in America and even abroad. We will engage with their ideas further in Unit 2 and, in Unit 3, you will see how Washington’s ideas had an impact on education in South Africa.

Activity 6: Reflection on the unit

**Suggested time:** 90 minutes

For this final activity of Unit 1, we return to Activity 1, where you explored your existing ideas about the differences between vocational and academic education and attempted to put your philosophy of education into words. In this activity, you will reflect on the different philosophical positions you’ve learnt about in this unit and reflect on your own position.

1. Return to Activity 1, at the beginning of this unit, and to your responses in your learning journal. Review your responses to questions 2, 3, 5 and 7.
2. In Question 3 of Activity 1, you articulated your understanding of the differences between TVET and academic education as it currently exists. Consider the subsequent perspectives you engaged with during the unit, one by one, and ask yourself if there are any new insights you have gained that would change, or add to, your articulation of the differences between TVET and academic education as it currently exists:
3. Hunter-gatherer ‘original’ approach to learning
4. Craft apprenticeship approach
5. Plato
6. Newman
7. Frederick Taylor’s ‘scientific management’ (‘Taylorism’)
8. Booker T. Washington
9. W.E.B. Du Bois

Revise your paragraph to reflect new insights you have gained. (You can write it over or make additions to it.) Try to either use a different colour pen or highlight your changes, as you will come back to this activity one more time at the end of the module and compare your initial perspective with your perspective now and your perspective at the end of the module.

1. In Question 5 of Activity 1, you made a table characterising vocational and academic education as you think it *should* be. As in Question 2 above, consider this table in light of the different philosophical positions (a – g). Have any of your ideas changed or expanded? Make additions or changes to the table to reflect how you see this now. (Again, try to use a different colour or highlighting to mark your new thoughts.)
2. In Question 7 of Activity 1, you wrote a brief statement about your philosophy regarding the ais and purposes of TVET education and the approach that should be taken. Again, consider this through the ‘lenses’ of the different perspectives you have engaged with in the unit (a – g in Question 2 above). Has your position changed in any way? Rewrite your statement based on your current position.

Discussion of the activity

This activity should have helped you to draw together the range of philosophical perspectives you have engaged with during this unit and make your own judgements about the differences between vocational and academic learning and education, and what TVET education *should* be like. In this unit, you have developed your ability to analyse learning and education as it occurs in different historical contexts to be able to extract and compare the philosophical ideas that underlie them. You will continue to develop this skill further as the module progresses.

## Conclusion

In this unit, you have been exposed to a debate that has run through history and still has relevance today. What kind of education is most worthwhile: an education for a definite occupation that provides particular skills to enable you to make specific things; or a general education to develop and expand the mind to enable you to become a flexible and open human being?

A vocational education has a long history extending back to our hunter-gatherer days where we observed and imitated the skills of others in a community; to more formal crafts guilds that trained an apprentice by attaching him to a master for a number of years; to a fragmentation of skills through the development of factories with a division of labour. This split workers into two groups: those working in factory production lines using low level skills in a repetitive way, and those doing professions or highly valued crafts with increasingly lengthy and academic education requirements.

An academic education also has a long history, going back to the development of hierarchical agricultural societies where the upper-classes used an academic education to enable themselves to rule effectively. This academic education started to be available to people outside of the elite with the extension of democracy to more and more people. Democracy needs citizens who can think critically and engage productively with the problems of the day. This meant that the liberal education initially reserved for rulers in a hierarchical system had to be expanded to all citizens in a democracy.

However, these citizens also had to be the professionals, craftsmen, farmers, and workers in society. It was not possible to completely split off vocational and academic education based on your family or class position – everyone within a democracy needed to be both engaged citizen and productive worker. This leads us into the second unit where we explore how philosophers of education have attempted to synthesize vocational and academic education and show how both needed each other to be whole.

# Unit 2: Integrating Academic and Vocational Education

## Introduction

In Unit 1, we saw that the liberal education tradition has its roots in the ancient Greek city states, where the purpose of education was seen to be to equip citizens with intellectual abilities to rule in a democracy – but the ideas of ‘citizen’ and ‘democracy’ were only extended to the elite. While concepts and ideas were seen as ‘pure’, the physical world was seen as always changing, and therefore imperfect and unreliable. Physical work – while being necessary to produce the things that the elite wanted – was thus seen as inferior to intellectual thought, and to be avoided. This created a historical bias in Western culture that valued a liberal, intellectual education over an education focused on developing knowledge and skills to be applied to physical work.

We saw that before, and alongside, the development of an intellectual, liberal education, vocational education happened in the context of the family trade or apprenticeships, where theory and practice were integrated together in a process of a person developing expert craftsmanship – a rich and deep set of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that included a range of intellectual and physical abilities. However, the industrial revolution brought a new way of doing work that divorced the higher-level thinking aspects of work – such as design, innovation, reflection, adaptation, problem-solving ­– from the physical aspects of work. The higher-level types of work became the domain of managers, while hard labour was the domain of workers doing repetitive work, somewhat like the machines they operated. This ‘dumbing down’ of technical work was encouraged by theorists like Frederick Taylor, who believed that every aspect of the work process should be shaped to make the greatest profit for the ‘boss’ – the capitalist who owned the business and who employed the workers. This loss of the meaning and intellectual challenge of craftsmanship reduced the status of physical work in society even further.

By the end of the 1800s, vocational training was focused on producing workers fit for the job. The liberal education provided at universities couldn’t have been farther from this. It still focused on developing the individual’s potential for their own self-fulfilment by exposing them to a range of general subjects that would develop their mind and cultivate a general capacity to think, argue and engage. However, even at the height of this liberal kind of education, there were highly rated abstract and technical subjects in the Sciences that were more focused on application – like Physics, Chemistry, and the Biological Sciences. This would lead to some practical vocations developing a higher status than others, eventually becoming high paying professions – like Accounting, Engineering, and Law.

John Dewey, considered by many to be America’s greatest philosopher, entered this scene as an educationalist whose ideas continue to have influence around the world today. Born in 1859 (three years after Booker T. Washington and Frederick Taylor), Dewey lived in the context of these industrial and social forces. He was passionate about democracy but, unlike the Greek philosophers, who restricted participation in democracy to a group of elite men, Dewey believed in democracy for everyone. And he did not want just political democracy – the right to vote and to run for election - he envisioned a social democracy that took seriously how human beings could live and work together in fair and equal ways.

Dewey believed strongly that the main purpose of education was to **promote democracy.** On the individual level, he believed that education should enable all individuals – not just the wealthy – to **develop themselves to their full potential.** He believed that at the heart of a meaningful life was a person’s vocation – work that they did with intelligence and skill. (This individual level is the focus of the first half of this unit). On the level of society, Dewey was fiercely against unequal forms of education, especially where rich people received a liberal education and poor people were trained for low paying jobs. He fought against an education system that shaped working-class people to do harder manual work to **support the lifestyle of the elite** and **enrich the capitalist “captains of industry”**, and thus, play a part in **reproducing the inequalities and injustices of society**. He believed that education could develop all individuals to be able to contribute to **the well-being of society, building a healthy democracy characterised by social justice**. (This societal level is the focus of the second half of this unit.)

To achieve this kind of democracy, Dewey believed that liberal **education** and **vocation** training needed to be integrated into a new kind of **vocational education** that equipped people from all backgrounds to live full, meaningful lives and contribute to the development of a more democratic society.

In this unit, we will explore Dewey’s ideas for a ‘vocational education’ and the ideas of others who have engaged with the idea of an integrated education. The unit is structured around these two key aims of Dewey’s vocational education for democracy: individual’s self-fulfilment (the liberal ideal of free individuals) and individuals as agents for the well-being of society.

It may seem to you that focusing on educationalists who lived over a hundred years ago in America does not have much relevance to your context and challenges at TVET colleges in South Africa. However, the essential philosophical ideas of these individuals both were **shared** by other individuals around the world and **influenced** them. As you encounter Dewey’s ideas, you will notice that many of the ‘new’ concepts that are being talked about in education and packaged as ‘21st-century’ education – were being promoted by Dewey a hundred years ago. In Unit 3 we will explore how similar tensions and debates exist in South Africa.

## Unit 2 outcomes:

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of Dewey’s concept of vocational education.
2. Discuss the role of vocational education in a student’s personal development and fulfilment.
3. Discuss the role of vocational education in developing a democratic society.
4. Critically discuss Dewey’s attempt to integrate vocational and liberal education.

## A liberal, vocational education as the path to individual freedom

In Dewey’s day (in America), more young people were going to high school than had in the past. High school had traditionally only been for the rich and privileged, and was heavily based on a liberal education programme of doing subjects that introduced the student into a broad understanding of the world. School subjects were not directed at specific training for a job, but rather to enrich a learner’s appreciation of the world. Mathematics provided the most universal, abstract language possible, Physics dealt with the laws governing the universe, Chemistry explained how physical and chemical elements combined, Biology the rules of life, Geography showed how the physical world worked, History gave an account of how human beings had lived, and English introduced the student to key cultural achievements and how to write elegantly.

Many people in elite groups in America (and the rest of the western world) were afraid that if this kind of liberal education was provided to everyone, they would eventually lose their privileged position. So, in addition to the liberal, intellectual view of education, other schools of thought emerged about what kind of education should be provided to everyone else – the masses.

**Social efficiency** was a movement that looked to use scientific principles to change education and society. Subjects were designed to mirror jobs with the aim of funnelling most learners (those from working-class or poor families) into occupational programmes that trained them for existing jobs. Vocational training programmes were developed – separate from schools and universities – to meet the needs of industry.

The **progressive movement**, with Dewey as its leader, believed that schools should be centred on the needs, personal development and life goals of *all* students and that teaching and learning should be rooted in their own experiences, rather than the job environment where they would later work. He saw schools as a microcosm of society, and believed if democracy could be modelled in the way schools work, learners would take democratic ideals out with them into the world and influence society to become more democratic. He felt that the separation of vocational and liberal education was dangerous to democracy and could deepen the social divisions in society. This disagreement between the social efficiency and progressive movements is explored more in the second half of this unit.

Dewey wrote many important books on his philosophy of education, which included how education should be designed and how teachers should be educated. Some of his key works are *The School and Society* (1899) and *Democracy and Education* (1916). Chapter 23 of Democracy and Education focuses completely on vocational education, and you will see that many of the times he is quoted in this unit are from this book (quotes that cite ‘Dewey, 1916a’ as the source). However, Dewey’s philosophy of an integrated-mind-and-body education that promotes personal fulfilment and societal well-being runs through most of his work.

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| **Key works by John Dewey** | |
| My Pedagogic Creed (article) | 1897 |
| The Primary-Education Fetish (article) | 1898 |
| The School and Society (book) | 1899 |
| The Child and the Curriculum (book) | 1902 |
| Schools of To-morrow (co-authored with his daughter, Evelyn Dewey) | 1915 |
| Democracy and Education (book) | 1916 |
| Experience and Education (book) | 1938 |

The liberal tradition does not lead to a life of freedom and purpose in the world

Dewey considered both the liberal tradition (that did not engage with a person’s vocation) and the increasingly stripped-down vocational training (limited to fitting the worker to the work) as dead-end approaches, both for individuals and for societies. He believed that to have a meaningful life, a person should be prepared through a well-rounded education – both intellectual and technical – to engage in a vocation that would enable a person to express their power and intelligence in the world in a satisfying, fulfilling way.

Stop and think

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| As you read the arguments for synthesising vocational and liberal education into a better and fuller type of education, ask yourself if you agree with these arguments and why you agree or disagree. |

While Dewey shared Plato’s and Aristotle’s interest in developing the individual’s mind and thinking capacity, he strongly rejected the idea of this being restricted to an elite group that ruled society. He also strongly rejected Plato’s views of thinking about ‘pure ideas’ as being better than physical work and that a life without physical work was a more meaningful life. He saw the result of not being deeply engaged in meaningful work as not intellectual purity, but meaninglessness and failing to experience life fully. He also saw wealthy people who didn’t contribute to society through their work, as dependent on those who do meaningful things – going so far as to suggest a person who lived this way was a ‘parasite’ – feeding off of others:

*The opposite of a career is neither leisure nor culture, but aimlessness, capriciousness, the absence of cumulative achievement in experience, on the personal side, and idle display, parasitic dependence upon the others, on the social side.*(Dewey, 1916a: 452)

This is a very powerful criticism of living in the world without positively contributing to it. Imagine if you had your whole life in front of you but didn’t have any kind of daily work (paid or unpaid): you had nothing to do all day but hang out with your friends, listen to music and eat whatever you wanted. Initially this might sound attractive, but as the years passed your life might feel quite empty and you might find that you don’t feel much respect for yourself.

Forty-five years later, in 1961, another (less famous) American philosopher of education, Sing-Nan Fen (who was born in China in 1916, the year Dewey wrote *Democracy and Education*), wrote a paper called Vocational and Liberal Education: An Integrated Approach. Like Dewey, he rejected the idea that either a liberal or vocation education could have value on its own. He argued that while a liberal education claims to offer the democratic aim of ‘freedom’ to the individual through the development of their mind; in the context of real life, where economic concerns are dominant, this becomes meaningless on its own – apart from engagement with the world, and reality, through a vocation:

*A discussion of the comparative merits of liberal education and vocational education can be fruitful only if we have a clear idea of the meaning of a liberal education. As the very name tells us, a liberal education is one that can help free us, liberate us. Whatever its content or emphasis, the final judgment of a liberal education program has to be based on whether it helps the individual to be free.*

*[…] In democratic countries, economic stability rather than individual freedom is the chief consideration. Individual freedom has scarcely a chance when it is presented as an alternative to security, economic or otherwise… What can be more helpful to an individual's freedom than an education that faces reality and makes vocation the focus of learning?*  
(Fen 1961: 210–211)

For Dewey, the liberal approach to education was so narrow and focused on the internal state of the individual, that it gave the student no means to engage with the world around them:

*Traditionally, liberal culture has been linked to the notions of leisure, purely contemplative knowledge and a spiritual activity not involving the active use of bodily organs. Culture has also tended, latterly, to be associated with a purely private refinement, a cultivation of certain states and attitudes of consciousness, separate from either social direction or service.* (Dewey 1916a)

Fen (1961) agreed that the liberal approach to education can fill a student with knowledge that is ‘somehow’ supposed to be important, but with no real way to use this knowledge meaningfully. He claimed that a liberal education thus does not actually produce an educated person, because they are left without a way apply to apply the knowledge they have gained powerfully to an area of life that interests them:

*[E]ducation cannot afford to be useless under the pretence of mysterious importance. An activity is worthy of the name of education only if it helps the individual develop his life interest. No man is educated unless he achieves self-realization in a pursuit of his own choice. An educated man is not one who is stuffed with mere book knowledge, but one who has the self-knowledge that comes from the test of his personal power. He realizes his power and discipline in the pursuit of an appropriate vocation. Hence, the importance of education for an individual's vocation.*(Fen 1961, p. 207)

Fen (1961) thus argued that a liberal education leaves the student ‘powerless’ if they haven’t been equipped with knowledge that they can apply to an area of life that interests them, in the form of a vocation. He argued that while supporters of a liberal education claim that the mark of an educated person is ‘general intellectual power’, instead of ‘vocational efficiency’, this argument is proved worthless as many graduates of a liberal education in more recent times struggle to find employment and thus have no opportunity to exercise their ‘intellectual power’.

Over the past century, the need for work has become even more central. Fen (1961) warned that this would become an increasingly powerful factor:

*In all contemporary civilized societies, the pursuit of a vocation is a cultural necessity for individuals. The more advanced a society, the more earnest this pursuit.* (Fen 1961: 210-211)

Activity 7: Are there still benefits to a liberal education?

**Suggested time:** 15 minutes

We have discussed how a liberal, academic university education has had higher status than a vocational education for a very long time in the western tradition of education – all the way back to the ancient Greek city states. Because of this status that a university education has in our society, we may not stop to question the value of a university education. Considering the arguments of Dewey and Fen in our discussion of the liberal tradition, answer the following questions. [This activity can be done as a discussion in pairs or small groups, or by writing in your learning journal.]

1. Thinking of the original meaning of the ‘liberal’ education as intended to ‘free the mind’ or ‘liberate’ the person’s intellect and agency, are there any ways in which people who have the opportunity to get a university education become more ‘free’ or ‘liberated’ through their experience at university? Do they gain greater freedom to operate in society, freedom in their careers, or freedom in their ways of thinking about themselves or the world?
2. Would your answers for question 1 be the same for a TVET education? Why or why not?
3. If you answered, ‘yes’ to question 1, what do you think are the key aspects of a university education that help students develop this ‘freedom’?
4. Do you think a university education is overrated in our society today, or is it truly the ‘best’ form of higher education that exists? Why or why not?

Discussion of the activity

Part of developing your ability to engage philosophically with education is to learn to question assumptions that are held widely in society, and critique things for yourself rather than holding the opinions or perspectives that were ‘handed down’ to you without question.

Vocation, in its full sense, is what gives a person’s life freedom and purpose

In terms of the vocational tradition, Dewey also rejected Plato’s idea of the majority in society doing work that involved little meaning or intellectual effort, to produce goods consumed by an elite minority – an idea that had been reinforced by industrialism and influences such as Taylorism. Dewey described how, in the apprenticeship and artisan approach that was the norm before industrialism, individuals had had intellectual and physical control of their work, and the great inequality in the thinking work done by ‘boss’ and ‘worker’ didn’t exist in the same way:

*Under the old regime all workers in a craft were approximately equals in their knowledge and outlook. Personal knowledge and ingenuity were developed within at least a narrow range, because work was done with tools under the direct command of the worker*.  
(Dewey 1916a)

He was keenly aware of how vocational, practical or manual work had been stripped of agency and creativity and direct connection between artisan and client, through industrialism, and amplified by Taylorism – to the point where workers had almost become slaves to their machines, rather than their masters:

*Now the operator has to adjust himself to his machine, instead of his tool to his own purposes.* (Dewey 1916a)

Dewey (1916a) saw it as vital that vocation be understood in its full, powerful sense – related to purposeful engagement in the world, not just the pursuit of income on a personal level or to further the aims of industry:

*[I]t is necessary to define the meaning of vocation with some fullness in order to avoid the impression that an education which centers about it is narrowly practical…. A vocation means nothing but such a direction of life activities as renders them perceptibly significant to a person, because of the consequences they accomplish, and also useful to his associates.*

Dewey thus argued having a vocation means directing your life to do something constructive and worthwhile, both for yourself and others.

Fen (1961) also argued that all humans – not just the powerful and rich – have the same drive to develop their personal potential and power, and that that it is through vocation that all individuals can apply their intelligence and skill to something meaningful and enjoy their lives, fully realising their own potential:

*Vocation is important to individuals, not only because they depend on it for their livelihood, but because they depend on it to enjoy the full meaning of human life. The importance of vocation for extraordinary men, especially artists or scientists, is evident. A man of distinction is a man whose work, whether it is work of the head or the hand, is distinctive. Among ordinary men, the drive for self-realization is as powerful as among extraordinary men, though the pursuit of the ordinary man may be less distinctive, and he may need the help provided by formal education. […] Is it not true that we enjoy life most when we are absorbed in work that gives us self-discipline as well as self-confidence? Our life is human to the extent that we live according to a plan of our own choosing. Vocation, in the broadest sense, is such a plan. An individual who lives with a vocation of his own choice is a man living his own life. […] [S]elf-realization need not be the privilege of a few.* (Fen 1961: 206-207)

Like Dewey, Fen thus made the case that for freedom and self-realisation, education must be vocational:

*Since the natural channel of self-realization is a cherished vocation, education that serves individuals must have a vocational emphasis*. (Fen 1961)

In fact, Fen argued because it is vocation that brings personal freedom, a vocational approach to education is the only approach that can truly be considered a valid liberal education today!

*Any educational program, regardless of its name or function, that frees the individual is liberal. If this is what is understood by liberal education, then vocational education is not only compatible with the idea of liberal education but also the only liberal education conceivable today.* (Fen 1961, p. 210)

Doing work that is meaningful and useful is what liberates us, not having endless free time to do nothing.

Dewey cautioned that a vocation must never be seen as one career choice that an individual makes and must stick with for the rest of their lives. He argued that each person can have many vocations and should not be defined by a single one. Our vocations may change throughout our lives, directed by calling and interest. Defining a person’s vocation as a single, narrow area of activity would confine them to a place where others have power over them. Instead, a person should be constantly open to adapting, reorganising and reinventing the way they engage meaningfully in the world:

*When educators conceive vocational guidance as something which leads up to a definitive, irretrievable, and complete choice, both education and the chosen vocation are likely to be rigid, hampering further growth. In so far the calling chosen will be such as to leave the person concerned in a permanently subordinate position, executing the intelligence of others who have a calling which permits more flexible play and readjustment. […] If even adults have to be on the lookout to see that their calling does not shut down on them and fossilize them, educators must certainly be careful that the vocational preparation of youth is such as to engage them in a continuous reorganization of aims and methods*. (Dewey 1916a)

In this passage, Dewey advises against trying to get students to commit to only one career in one specialisation with one set of skills, as if this was their only choice and chance in life. This would condemn these students to work for others who have a wider and more flexible set of interests and skills. This is one of the key arguments for a liberal education: it is important for students to develop a wide and flexible set of interests and capabilities, so they can intelligently adapt and respond to life and work demands, surprises, and opportunities.

This is not the only point Dewey takes from the liberal education point of view. He also argues that the concept of vocations must not be limited to manual and physical types of work where things are made and produced. Life demands that people become skilled and expert in different areas, and this allows one to negotiate challenges and opportunities with flexibility. He argues that restricting students’ areas of learning to one specialisation does not match with the demands of real life, and also makes that specialisation less meaningful to do:

*Such restricted specialism is impossible; nothing could be more absurd than to try to educate individuals with an eye to only one line of activity.* ***In the first place****, each individual has of necessity a variety of callings, in each of which he should be intelligently effective;* ***and in the second place*** *any one occupation loses its meaning and becomes a routine keeping busy at something in the degree in which it is isolated from other interests*. (Dewey 1916a) [emphasis added]

Dewey is saying something really interesting with both points. In the first point he highlights that none of us are limited to one skill: we all have multiple abilities and interests and can do a variety of skilful things in our lives. In his second point, he argues that if you do only specialise in one thing, it is going to become boring and limiting, because it needs other things to add flavour, interest, depth and complexity. Imagine trying to only be good at the skill of on-line lecturing, without engaging with other colleagues, without being interested in sport, culture, politics, music, business and industry. A good lecturer is also an interesting and engaged human being with skills in other aspects of life, and all these other things actually add interest and richness to his or her teaching.

Dewey elaborates on this point by warning against defining a person’s vocation by what they currently do for work:

*No one is just an artist and nothing else, and in so far as one approximates that condition, he is so much the less developed human being; he is a kind of monstrosity. He must, at some period of his life, be a member of a family; he must have friends and companions; he must either support himself or be supported by others, and thus he has a business career. He is a member of some organized political unit, and so on. [...] [W]e should not allow ourselves to be so subject to words as to ignore and virtually deny his other callings when it comes to a consideration of the vocational phases of education*. (Dewey 1916a)

As a human being, you are not destined to have one vocation defined by the job you do. To live a rich and fulfilled life means extending expertise and skill to how you are a father or mother, a friend, a business partner, a citizen. To try and limit the development of expertise to just your job is to miss how people meaningfully and skilfully engage with life on multiple levels and dimensions. A worthwhile and useful person is skilled in a number of areas, not just the work they do, and these other skilful areas actually add to the insight and depth with which they do their work.

Dewey also argued that our ability to engage in one vocation with intelligence and skill and meaning is linked to our engaging fully in our other vocations:

*A person must have experience, he must live, if his artistry is to be more than a technical accomplishment. He cannot find the subject matter of his artistic activity within his art; this must be an expression of what he suffers and enjoys in other relationships - a thing which depends in turn upon the alertness and sympathy of his interests. What is true of an artist is true of any other special calling*. (Dewey 1916a)

He thus argued that the vocation for which education must prepare us is the vocation of ‘living’: if things get narrowed down to one function in life it may make the person machine-like in their work – or bring them to the point of hating it – where there is no longer satisfying intelligent engagement with what they do:

*The dominant vocation of all human beings at all times is living - intellectual and moral growth. In childhood and youth, with their relative freedom from economic stress, this fact is naked and unconcealed. To predetermine some future occupation for which education is to be a strict preparation is to injure the possibilities of present development and thereby to reduce the adequacy of preparation for a future right employment ... [S]uch training may develop a machine-like skill in routine lines (it is far from being sure to do so, since it may develop distaste, aversion, and carelessness), but it will be at the expense of those qualities of alert observation and coherent and ingenious planning which make an occupation intellectually rewarding*. (Dewey 1916a)

In Unit 1 we explored some of the ideas of W.E.B. Du Bois, who advocated for a more liberal education instead of a strictly vocational education. Writing in 1902 – 14 years before Dewey wrote Democracy and Education, which we have been discussing – Du Bois also warned against a form of education aimed at preparing a student to perform a narrow function in industry, rather than a broad engagement with the world, as such:

*All true learning of the head or hand is practical in the sense of being applicable to life. But the best learning is more than merely practical since it seeks to apply itself, not simply to the present mode of living, but the larger, broader life. ... The ideals of education, whether men are taught to teach or to plough, . . . must not be allowed to sink into sordid utilitarianism. Education must keep broad ideals before it, and never forget that it is dealing with souls and not dollars.* (Du Bois 1902)

A key philosophical term in the quote is ‘utilitarianism’. This refers to deciding if something is right or wrong based on the outcome it achieves, not on how that outcome is achieved. In this view, if there is some ‘bad’ along the way, it is justified if some ‘good’ is achieved in the end. So, if education provides a job for a learner (dollars) then that would justify a skills-based training type education, rather than a broader, more human, more soulful education. By focussing on ‘sordid’ (dirty, grubby, slimy) reasons to do with money and jobs, rather than broader human reasons to do with living a good life in a fulfilled way, education can lose its way and lock learners into a limited future life.

Stop and think

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| Do you agree with Dewey? It is also possible to argue that it is really inefficient and wasteful to keep education open and allow students to make many choices and do many things. Especially in countries with limited resources, might it be better to get proper training in one occupation, rather than to explore and experiment with lots of options and land up unemployed with no useful skills at all? |

Activity 8: The outcomes of early specialisation

**Suggested time:** 30 minutes

In this activity, we consider a more recent perspective on the idea of specialisation and different vocations at different times in one’s life, from David Epstein’s 2019 book ‘Range: Why Generalists Triumph in a Specialised World’, in light of Dewey’s views on this topic.

1. Read the following two-point summary of Epstein’s book. After each point look back at what you have read in this unit and write down the points that are similar.

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| People who specialise in a specific job early in their lives often quit their jobs early as well, whereas people who only specialise later in life tend to earn more in the long run. If a person dabbles in a number of subjects and areas, they tend to get a better sense of what vocation is best for them, and so, when they do finally start their careers, they tend to do well in that career and quickly catch up and start to earn more than people who specialised early and are bored and unhappy in their career. These early specializers tend to quit their jobs far more frequently than late specializers. Epstein argues that this is much like dating. It is risky to marry the very first person you find interesting (although it could work). Rather date a little while so you can get a sense of what your options are and who you really like. |

Look back in this unit for a quote where Dewey or Fen argued for something similar. Write it down and explain why you think it is similar and if you agree with the argument.

1. People who specialise in a vocation early start off making more money ***but*** are less adaptable in our modern working conditions, whereas people who specialise later, start off earning less ***but*** have broader knowledge, can adapt to situations more flexibly, and solve problems better. Although students who focus on training for a specific job tend to get hired more quickly and also make more money early on in their careers, they have a hard time adapting to change. Often the skill set they have trained in gets outdated, and then time has to be spent reskilling. A person who specialises later has a wider range of experiences and tends to be more able to problem solve and adapt to complex situations. This can result in them quickly being promoted into higher positions that demand more complex problem-solving skills.

Look back in this unit for a quote where Dewey or Fen argued for something similar. Write it down and explain why you think it is similar and if you agree with his argument.

Discussion of the activity

There are many different factors which can impact a person’s choice of a vocation and their experience. Early on, choices may be made because a certain trade promises more income, status, or freedom. Later a person can begin to feel that another vocation might be more meaningful for them in the broader context of their lives. Sometimes a change of career can be forced, rather than chosen. Understanding that a student might want to – or need to – change to a different kind of work, or advance to broader levels of decision-making in their field, can help you as a lecturer to advise and help them to be prepared for the wide range of opportunities and challenges they may encounter in the future, and not only for the immediate job they may have in mind now, so that they can craft a meaningful career for themselves and not be locked into a single trade, with no other options.

An additional complexity in our fast-accelerating world - with the increasing automation of jobs and explosion of Artificial Intelligence applications - is the need to develop soft skills around critical thinking, communication, and working collaboratively together. These soft skills, on their own, do not have a strong effect on finding work, but when combined with harder skills of the specific job, become incredibly valuable.

The case for an integrated vocational education that develops the full person

Dewey believed that the kind of education that was needed for *all* individuals was one that both developed their minds (the aim of a liberal education) and prepared them with the knowledge and skills for the work they wanted to do (the aim of vocational training). This would enable a person to develop themselves and exercise their freedom (on the personal level) and to be able to make a positive contribution to the development of a healthy, democratic society where everyone had agency and freedom (on the social level). He thus believed that both kinds of education should be brought together: that alone each was incomplete and flawed, but that merged together, they could provide a whole education for a whole human being.

While supporters of Dewey’s vision for an integrated vocational-liberal education continue to advocate for this approach, there remain separate ‘mainstream’ systems in many places today.

Kathleen Knight Abowitz, a professor of educational philosophy in the Department of Educational Leadership at Miami University, USA, argued in a 2006 article that the liberal and vocational traditions need each other in order to provide a complete education to students. Abowitz is a scholar of education and democracy and looks at how to teach students to become active and engaged students in democracy. She is also past president of the John Dewey Society and the Ohio Valley Philosophy of Education Society. She is thus very familiar with Dewey’s philosophy and supports it being incorporated into education today. In her 2006 article, ‘The Interdependency of Vocational and Liberal Aims in Higher Education’ she argues:

*This segregation of liberal and vocational aims defies the holistic nature of what it means to live a fulfilled human life in which paid work occupies a central but not exclusively defining role. While vocational studies focus on the world of work, liberal studies focus on the problems, experiences, and questions of being human. And surely inquiry into the human condition, including questions of purpose, value, and meaning, is not less important than questions of vocation. Indeed, one’s work and professional identity formation are infused and shaped by the broader, exciting questions of meaning and existence. […] Our teaching and curricula need to reflect the connected nature of the vocational and the liberal, two differing but interrelated aims in higher education. […] [A]ll educators [should] aim to help our students more purposefully bind together the falsely separated spheres of liberal education and vocational education.* (Abowitz 2006: 17)*.*

Stop and think

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| Do you agree with Abowitz? What could it mean to help students ‘bind together’ liberal and vocational education? |

The characteristics of an integrated vocational education

This vision of a more holistic type of vocational education has strong implications for **curriculum design** (what is taught and how the teaching of content is organised) and **pedagogy** (how the actual teaching-learning dynamic is crafted in the interaction between lecturers and students. Let’s look at each of these.

**Curriculum.** An integrated vocational education involves a curriculum that is broader than the narrow scope of vocational training.

Fen (1961) explains that having students engage with the traditional liberal education subjects (like **history, literature, writing, philosophy, sociology, psychology and creative arts**)helps them to develop their ability to think critically and insightfully and evaluate situations, interactions and things effectively, while engaging with practical subjects. This helps a student develop a sense of responsibility and commitment in the way they manage themselves in their vocation and in their other roles in life. Busby and Graham (1994) write that Dewey “felt strongly that **vocational, technological, and business** courses develop in all students **sequential and creative thinking skills** as well as a **knowledge of and insight into the manufacturing, transportation, and business sectors of society**” [emphasis added] which would benefit all students, regardless of which vocational path they chose.

Stop and think

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| To what extent does the curriculum for your programme include more liberal components – such as history, literature, writing, philosophy, sociology, psychology and creative arts? To what extent to do they include technological and business courses, in addition to technical courses? Do you agree, or disagree, that these courses would help develop students’ thinking skills and insight into different sectors? |

Fen (1961) proposes that broadening the curriculum to be both vocational and liberal means building in opportunities for students **to learn about all the different sides, or implications, involved when they make a particular choice**. This must not just include considerations within the vocational task or context, but also consider connections between the vocation and the outside world. By helping a student learn about the internal aspects of their vocation, they also explore what they could potentially achieve within their vocation. By helping a student learn about the interaction of their vocation with the world, they explore how they can use their agency to impact the world through their vocational role and expertise.

Abowitz (2006), who advocates for a vocational education that gives questions of purpose, value, and meaning the same level of importance as specific vocational questions by including subjects like philosophy and ethics, cautions that the transformation to this more holistic kind of education is not easy:

*[R]estructuring programs to balance technical, specialized vocational education with the broader, more liberal aims in vocational education may require relinquishing cherished courses or content in favor of different courses and content of a less specialized and technical nature. Higher education is, among many other things, a preparation ground for the world of paid work. To prepare our students for that world, we must not handicap them with a technical and narrow sense of their future vocation. Rather, in helping them to explore connections between their work and the larger questions of life involving meaning, purpose, and values, we can educate rather than train — and thus enhance their entire growth and development rather than simply the aspects directly related to a specific vocation. The effects will likely result in a greater commitment to and understanding of one’s vocation.*(Abowitz 2006:22)

Stop and think

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| What do you think about Abowitz’ comment that some specialised, technical courses might need to be sacrificed to make way for courses focusing on purpose, value and meaning? If you had to sacrifice courses, which ones would you select and what would be the ‘cost’ to students? Do you think that courses on philosophy and ethics, for example, would benefit your students in terms of their personal development? Would the benefits gained outweigh the costs of the technical courses that were sacrificed? Could there be another way to include more engagement with purpose, value and meaning – where it happens during – and embedded in – working with technical problems? |

**Pedagogy.** With regard to pedagogy, Dewey summarised his approach as ‘learning by doing’. The student learns through the experience of engaging with an issue, problem or task and working out how to deal with it. Dewey believed that the approach of giving students content, telling them to learn it, and then testing their understanding was dangerous and inappropriate, as it did not respect their capacity to think and evaluate and taught them to rely on simply doing what they’re told.

Some of the main ideas in Dewey’s approach to pedagogy have been ‘repackaged’ today as ‘21st century’ skills, or education. They may seem like the ‘new thing’ in education, but this is because, although Dewey and others have been advocating for them for a long time, they still aren’t fully integrated into mainstream education. Over the years, research has been done on many of these aspects, providing stronger and stronger evidence that they are not just ‘one point of view’, but that they get to the way people really learn and grow. Let’s look at some of these concepts briefly, using terms that are used in education today that you are probably familiar with.

**Critical thinking** refers to thinking that is initiated and guided by the person (not someone else) that involves reasoning in a complex, careful and fair way. Critical thinking both relies on a person using their agency and taking initiative (and acting with autonomy) and helps to build their ability to act autonomously. Critical thinking means not just adopting the opinions or perspectives of others (your family, friends, or even your lecturer) but thinking things through logically on your own to check if you reach the same conclusions or find flaws, or maybe notice new connections or possibilities. In teaching and learning, critical thinking cannot be taught or learnt by the lecturer ‘dumping’ content on students who are expected to memorise it. Rather, students need to be given opportunities to work independently and together on challenging problems that require them to use lots of complex thinking – not just remembering and repeating but evaluating, comparing, analysing – in order to develop their critical thinking capacities.

**Constructing knowledge from prior knowledge and experience.** While educators in the past have sometimes viewed students as ‘empty containers’ that they were to fill with knowledge, Dewey recognised that every student comes into a new learning experience with relevant past knowledge and experience that should be recognised and worked with. Encountering new concepts introduced by the lecturer in a learning experience, the student will draw on their previous knowledge and experience to compare, take apart their previous ‘model’ for understanding the concept and rebuild their understanding to be more deep and complex. In this way they **construct new knowledge for themselves** through a learning experience, rather than have the lecturer’s knowledge ‘dumped’ into their ‘empty’ minds.

**Growth mindset** is the perspective that people can develop their intelligence and abilities with effort over their lives. A fixed mindset, on the other hand, is the perspective that people were born with a fixed intelligence and potential and this cannot change. Dewey believed that everyone had an inherent (inborn) capacity to develop their minds and skills throughout their lives and should have work that engages their intelligence and also should have a role in making decisions for society. He detested the idea of an elite group of people being seen as entitled to think and decide for everyone else, while the masses took orders from these rich rulers and bosses and worked mindlessly with their hands to produce things that the elite would consume. In teaching and learning, a growth mindset involves recognising that each student has the potential to raise their level of intelligence and ability if they work hard. It erases the idea of ‘pegging’ some students as ‘slow’ and others as ‘bright’ and puts the responsibility on the lecturer to find ways to engage each students’ intelligence and motivate the student to develop themselves. From a growth mindset, a student making a mistake or getting an answer wrong – or asking the lecturer for clarification – are not signs of stupidity or failure but are learning experiences, as the feedback helps the student construct new knowledge and grow.

**Experiential and project-based learning.** Dewey believed that new knowledge is best generated through action (learning by doing) as a student makes repeated attempts to solve problems and learns through this cumulative experience. The role of the lecturer is thus to create learning experiences (such as projects) for students and facilitate or coach as they grapple with the experience – in other words, allow the student to take the initiative to see what they need from the lecturer as they problem-solve, rather than the lecturer dictating how the student should solve the problem. ‘Problem-posing education’ is a related idea developed by the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire in the 1970s, where a teacher or student poses a problem and the class collaborates to find solutions. This again relies on the view that students’ prior knowledge is important and that they have inherent intelligence. It also sees the possibility that the lecturer will learn with the students as they grapple with a problem together.

**Lifelong learning.** Connected to the ideas of a growing intelligence and capacity, and the understanding that we learn by continually employing our prior knowledge to grapple with new concepts to construct new knowledge, Dewey stressed the idea of ‘lifelong learning’ which is a concept that is mentioned frequently today. Lifelong learning recognises that a person doesn’t only learn in a formal context when they are working toward a formal qualification (such as a matric, or an Advanced Diploma in Technical and Vocational Teaching), but that learning is – and should be – ongoing throughout one’s life. As much as we are going to learn from our life experiences whether we like it or not, those who consciously use their agency and self-discipline to reach out for new knowledge and take on new challenges to solve are likely to grow much more. In teaching and learning, a perspective that lifelong learning is important has implications for both the lecturer and the students. Dewey believed that a teacher needed to have passion and curiosity about their subject matter and how it should be taught. He also believed that a teacher should make a lifelong commitment to keep studying the subject matter and their students, and to continually look for ways to improve their teaching. A lecturer who is committed to their own lifelong learning keeps up with what is happening in their vocational field as well as in education, explores with curiosity new ideas about teaching and learning and researches new ways to construct learning experiences. For students, a lecturer who is committed to lifelong learning will help students develop a sense of their agency to keep looking for knowledge and expertise that will help them outside of the formal education context, and to see themselves as people who will continue to learn and grow throughout their career and their lives.

Dewey was not the only educational philosopher to argue for a more active, project-based, type of pedagogy. In Unit 1, when we explored the philosophical ideas of Booker T. Washington supporting a vocational education, we contrasted this with W.E.B. Du Bois’ argument that a liberal education for the Black elite would be a more effective way to achieve a more democratic society. However, Washington’s vision for a vocational education was not narrow trade-based training, but an integrated education that focused on the development of critical thinking and agency as well. In fact, Washington was implementing these at the Tuskegee Institute decades before Dewey started to speak and write about these ideas.

Stop and think

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| Why do you think Dewey is much more widely known for his ideas about an integrated vocational education than is Washington? You may be able to think of several reasons. Consider the socio-political context in which Dewey and Washington lived. |

Washington believed that students’ **personal, lived experience** should serve as the basis for their education. To connect theoretical and abstract academic ideas with the students’ social and economic environments, he based education on **real world projects**. Students engaged in real world projects in building, construction and farming, where they used what they were learning in their theoretical subjects (like mathematics, history, geography, chemistry, and physics) to be able to successfully complete the project. In one example, students at Tuskegee were tasked with building a concrete walkway between the campus buildings. The project threw up real-life challenges that they had to solve. This involved **active problem solving** using a combination of vocational skills with some academic content. The students thus used their developing knowledge to design something that they would use and benefit from on a daily basis. This is very different to solving an abstract problem that has no direct value in real life, where students solve the problem only to demonstrate that they have actually learnt the abstract knowledge of the subject.

Beth Holland (2019), in an article for *Getting Smart*, wrote:

*Washington believed that education best occurs when students learn in a progression from the familiar to the abstract; they use multiple modalities to actively explore content and ideas; and the learning experiences feel deeply personal. As such, he designed the Tuskegee Institute to equally value both academic theory and practical experience.*

Activity 9: Key aspects of a student-centred pedagogy

**Suggested time:** 30 minutes

In this activity you will explore how the concepts highlighted in this section relate to your current approach to teaching and learning as well as to the current divide between vocational and liberal education.

1. In your learning journal, address each of these concepts one at a time:
2. Critical thinking
3. Constructing knowledge from prior knowledge and experience
4. Growth mindset
5. Experiential and problem-based learning
6. Lifelong learning
7. For each concept, consider whether you work with this in your pedagogy currently. If so, where did you learn it? Jot down examples of how you use it or, if you don’t currently use it, how you could incorporate it in the future.
8. For each concept, think about whether this is an integral part of the way teaching and learning is understood at a) a TVET college and b) a university. If you notice a difference, see if you can account for (think of reasons to explain) the difference.
9. Discuss your responses with two of your classmates and compare notes. Did anything your classmates shared surprise you, or help you see something you hadn’t thought of on your own? If so, jot this down in your notes.

Discussion of the activity

The activities in this module are designed to help you engage with new concepts and construct new knowledge, building on your prior knowledge, just as you have been learning about. In your interactions with your students, you have unlimited scope to use your own creativity and critical thinking abilities to design interesting, challenging learning experiences that help them develop their agency and critical thinking capacities as they construct new knowledge. Do you experience these ideas as positive, or threatening, or have any other thoughts or feelings about them? Critically interrogate where these thoughts or feelings may come from. Does it sound exciting to move education further away from ‘chalk and talk’ and rote learning? Does it sound intimidating and exhausting to have to think of new ways to engage students? Paying attention to your responses to new ideas and knowledge helps to build your self-awareness, and thus your agency. You may realise that you find your current approach a bit boring (or you may realise that your students do!) or that you have wondered if what you are doing is really equipping your students for a changing world. Or you may feel overwhelmed by the admin requirements you already face, and the idea of having to ‘think fresh’ about how you do teaching and learning, instead of just taking out your notes from last semester and doing everything exactly the same, makes you feel even more overwhelmed. From this place of self-understanding, you can decide how you *choose* to respond based on your beliefs and values about education.

In this first half of Unit 2, we have explored Dewey’s idea of an integrated vocational education being important for the individual student’s development. In the second half, we look at the value of an integrated vocational education for society.

## Vocational education to change and transform society

Dewey saw the purpose of education as promoting democracy on both personal and societal levels. In the first half of this unit, we looked at the role of education to promote the aims of democracy at the **individual** level. This focused on individuals’ agency to fulfil their own potential and goals for their lives. Dewey argued that neither a traditional liberal education nor a narrow ‘training-based’ vocational education could achieve this. Rather, the best of both traditions needed to be woven together in an approach that engaged students actively in developing a broad and deep range of intellectual and technical abilities (as well as important values and attitudes). In the second half of this unit, we look at how education can promote the aims of democracy on the level of the **society**. This focuses on individuals who have developed their capacity to think and act, along with democratic values, exercising their agency together to develop a society where everyone enjoys personal freedom and can live a meaningful life that contributes to the common good.

Dewey’s critique of society

Dewey believed strongly in democracy for **all** – poor, rich, male, female. He did not accept Plato’s idea of a small group of male citizens ruling the state as a democracy. His idea of democracy also was not limited to political democracy: where everyone can vote for leaders and no one is excluded from participating in government based on their race, gender, wealth, or other characteristic. He believed that a true democracy must also be democratic in the way people interact in society:individuals must be able to use their agency and access opportunities for education, work and other aspects of society without encountering barriers or bias on the basis of the wealth or history of their family, or any other factor**.**

Dewey (1916b) defines this kind of social democracy asfollows:

*[A] state of social life where there is a wide and varied distribution of opportunities; where there is social mobility or scope for change of position and station; where there is free circulation of experiences and ideas, making for a wide recognition of common interests and purposes, and where utility of social and political organization to its members is so obvious as to enlist their warm and constant support in its behalf****.*** (Dewey, 1916b)

While we saw, in Section 1, that Dewey argued that both liberal and vocational traditions had narrowed to the point that they did not connect the **individual** to a meaningful life, he also argues that class division has resulted in a loss of meaning for both workers and their bosses on a collective, **societal** level. When employees did not have agency, meaning or intellectual challenge in their work, they stopped caring about anything but their wage. While employers were using their minds for more challenging work and had greater power and agency, when this was directed only at making a profit and not connected to broader social issues, they ultimately had a meaningless life focused on money, too.

At the same time that this divide existed, Dewey noticed that the public was becoming less tolerant of those who didn’t work (whom Dewey called ‘parasites’ – like ticks on a cow’s back) and there was a greater sense of the dignity of work and individuals’ duty to contribute to society.

*[T]here is an increased esteem, in democratic communities, of whatever has to do with manual labor, commercial occupations, and the rendering of tangible services to society. In theory, men and women are now expected to do something in return for their support - intellectual and economic - by society. Labor is extolled; service is a much-lauded moral ideal. While there is still much admiration and envy of those who can pursue lives of idle conspicuous display, better moral sentiment condemns such lives. Social responsibility for the use of time and personal capacity is more generally recognized than it used to be*.  
(Dewey 1916a)

Dewey believed that society did not have to be so unequal, or for manual worked to be looked down on or feel less meaningful. He wanted to change society, and he was clear about what this change would look like. Each person should be able to do work that they chose and that benefitted society. Each person should be free to do work and have work that engages their intelligence.

Dewey believed that the way to achieve this was through an integrated liberal-vocational education for all. Just as separate liberal and vocational educations did not allow full individual development, it also restricted the development of democracy at the level of society.

Activity 10: Compare and contrast views on democracy and education

**Suggested time:** 30 minutes

This activity is intended to help you articulate your own view of democracy and relate this to the ideas you are learning about.

1. In your learning journal, write a statement explaining your own understanding of democracy. This doesn’t need to agree with, or imitate, what you have read about Dewey’s views on democracy. Consider the following:
2. What is an ideal society, in terms of the power that different individuals and groups have with relation to each other?
3. Do you think some people have a right to make decisions for others on the basis of the family they were born in?
4. Do you think there are certain roles in society, or occupations, that should be restricted to certain groups or individuals (on the basis of race, language, religion, cultural identity, sex, gender identity, or any other factor)?
5. Pay attention to any questions or feelings that have arisen for you while reading about Dewey’s ideas (for example, a feeling of surprise, or resistance). Examining these can help you to identify your pre-existing ideas about democracy.
6. Think about the ideas around who has a right to power that exist in your family and culture. Are these democratic? Do you agree with these ideas?

Write a paragraph of about 5 to 7 sentences. However, if you’d like to write more, you may do so.

1. Now consider the following questions and write your responses in your journal:
2. How does our society (South African society in general, or your own community) tend to view people who are wealthy and do not work?
3. How is physical work viewed?
4. Where do you think these views come from? Do culture, religion, and history (e.g., apartheid) play a role?
5. Do you share the views of society/your community? If not, how are your views different?
6. Do you believe there is a relationship between democracy and education? Should education serve the aims of democracy? Does democracy affect the potential outcomes of education?

Write your thoughts about this in another paragraph.

1. Can you identify any differences between your view of democracy and education and Dewey’s? Explain these in a final paragraph.

Discussion of the activity

There are no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers to these questions. By exploring your own assumptions and beliefs, and those of the society around you, and comparing these to an external set of views, you can work with them more consciously and be aware of how new ideas impact or change your thinking. You may notice that while we talk about living in a democracy, there are some social realities or cultural practices that are not very democratic which we accept and do not question. By comparing and contrasting, and ‘wrestling’ with new concepts, you also engage with them more actively than if you simply read the text and continue. This can deepen your learning. In fact, this is the active learning that Dewey advocates for: where students start with their own experience and construct new meaning by bringing new ideas into their existing framework and deciding what to keep and what to change. This develops one’s capacity to think critically and independently. You can use this approach – through a class discussion, small group discussions or written reflections ­– to help deepen your students’ engagement and learning, too. We are going to explore Dewey’s ideas further in the following sections. By ‘activating’ your thinking in this activity, we hope that you will be able to engage more deeply with these ideas as we go forward.

The inadequacy of liberal education and vocational training for developing a democratic society

Dewey felt that the existing liberal education had become so focused on learning facts that it no longer fulfilled the original function of ‘freeing the mind’: developing students’ ability to be able to reflect, think independently, and consider what was true and best for society. Liberal education actually just trained students to accept the existing political and social structures without questioning or challenging them. Thus, liberal education was not producing a group of people who would be committed to changing society to make it more just.

Dewey felt that keeping liberal and vocational education separate was dangerous, because it would keep alive the class differences in society, where those with money and social status – and a liberal education – viewed themselves as better than the rest of society, with a right to live elite lives of wealth at the expense of others. They could continue to see their liberal education as a ‘passport’ to the ‘top’ in society, with no focus on contributing to the world in a meaningful way. Dewey believed that keeping vocational and liberal education separate could actually deepen the social divide within society over time.

Dewey’s vision for an integrated vocational education was opposed by those who wanted to keep liberal and vocational education systems separate (as we will see later in this unit). As a result, his ideas were not implemented during his lifetime (and still have not been widely implemented). Thirty years after Dewey’s writing, Martin Luther King, Jr., an activist for democratic change in America made this comment:

*I too often find that most college\* men have a misconception of the purpose of education. Most of the “brethren” think that education should equip them with the proper instruments of exploitation so that they can forever trample over the masses. Still others think that education should furnish them with noble ends rather than means to an end.* (King 1948)

[**Note:** *\**in the American context university is often referred to as ‘college’, and King is referring to universities here.]

Despite the fact that Dewey’s vision for a democratic education that imbued students with a spirit of equality and concern for a just society gained international attention, in the American context, at least, it was still ‘business as usual’!

Stop and think

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| Do you see any of your peers, or leaders in South Africa today, sharing the views of the ‘brethren’ that King described 75 years ago? |

While Dewey argued that liberal education was ineffective at promoting democracy, he believed that the narrow approach to vocational training also failed to contribute to a more democratic society, as it trained workers to fulfil manual functions in an industrial context where they had little agency.

In 1979, Kōnosuke Matsushita, the Japanese industrialist, management philosopher and billionaire (born in 1894) who founded Panasonic, a multinational electronics company, gave this cutting criticism of how the western approach of separating the intellectual and manual aspects of work in order to increase efficiency, actually undermines industry itself:

*We are going to win and the industrial west is going to lose out; ... the reasons for failure are within yourselves. Your firms are built on the Taylor model. Even worse, so are your heads. With your bosses doing the thinking while workers wield the screwdrivers, you’re convinced deep down that it is the right way to run a business. For the essence of management is getting ideas out of the heads of the bosses and into the heads of labour. We are beyond your mindset. Business, we know, is now so complex and difficult, the survival of firms so hazardous in an environment increasingly unpredictable, competitive and fraught with danger, that their continued existence depends on the day-to-day mobilisation of every ounce of intelligence.* (Hill 1994: 220)

Stop and think

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| Matsushita criticises the captains of western industries as having heads built on Frederick Taylor’s model, characterised by believing that bosses should do the thinking and workers should execute physical tasks. What do you think he means by ‘the essence of management is getting ideas out of the heads of the bosses and into the heads of labour’? When he claims, “We are beyond your mindset”, what do you think he means? Do you agree that in today’s complex industrial context, companies should make use of “every ounce of intelligence” – engaging the ideas and creativity of those doing physical work, not just managers? |

An integrated vocational education for the well-being of society

Earlier in this unit, we explored how Dewey’s vision for an integrated education that combines vocational and liberal elements could help individuals to achieve personal democratic freedom in their lives. Dewey also believed that through an integrated vocational education, educational institutions could serve to spread democracy through society. If democratic principles were used and taught in the way education was done, students would go out into society carrying these values with them – as well as the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to live and act with intelligence and agency. Let’s look at two aspects of how Dewey thought this democratic liberal-vocational education could impact society positively:

* Individuals with democratic values acting innovatively and expertly in their various vocations would develop society in a more democratic direction.
* Educating people from the working-class to work intelligently and independently would empower them, reducing the divide between the powerful elite who ‘worked with their heads’ and the working-class who were expected to ‘work with their hands’.

Fostering personal agency to act as an intelligent agent of democracy in society

Firstly, Dewey believed that by providing individuals of all classes with an integrated vocational education, their minds and personal agency would be developed to be able to act in their vocational capacity as leaders and thinkers, not just as followers with a narrow training for an industrial function. By developing their vocational expertise, and training their minds to work with imagination, they would be equipped to act resourcefully, innovatively and expertly in a complex society.

Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote that he felt that many educated people did not have the ability to think for themselves and thus were not well equipped to navigate the flood of views they encounter in society which may be unreliable or biased, and be able to make sound judgements and decisions.

*To think incisively and to think for one’s self is very difficult. We are prone to let our mental life become invaded by legions of half-truths, prejudices, and propaganda. At this point, I often wonder whether or not education is fulfilling its purpose. A great majority of the so-called educated people do not think logically and scientifically. […] Education must enable one to sift and weigh evidence, to discern the true from the false, the real from the unreal, and the facts from the fiction*. (King 1948)

This emphasis on disciplined, logical thinking ties in with the priorities of the ancient Greek philosophers. But it is sobering to think just how much the amount of information that a person encounters in their life has multiplied from Plato’s time to King’s, and from King’s to ours. Today, students are fed content constantly on their phones and TVs, much of which is designed to sway them in one direction or another on social issues, cultural phenomena and political events, and they need to develop the ability to discern the agendas and reliability of the sources they encounter and choose which to integrate into their own understanding of the world and which to reject. In Dewey’s (and Plato’s) terms, a democracy relies upon its citizens having well-developed and grounded minds that can find their way through the many competing interests and agendas being advocated, to choose and act for the well-being of society.

Empowerment of the working-class

The educational aim of industrialists was to fit workers to the job. Compliant workers, who followed instructions without questioning authority or challenging how things were done, were preferred. Dewey, however, wanted all workers to be politically aware, to be able to analyse how their industry was organised, to have their own opinions and ideas about what their industry should be like, and to use their agency to influence and change it:

*[T]here is a great difference between a proficiency limited to immediate work, and a competency extended to insight into its social bearings; between efficiency in carrying out the plans of others and in one forming one's own.*

*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 timeservers is to resist every move in this direction, and strive for a kind of vocational education which will first alter the existing industrial society, and ultimately transform it*. (Dewey 1915: 42)

Dewey thus believed that a worker needed to develop a deep knowledge of their industry, rather than just the skill to do the job, as otherwise they would be condemned to being extensions of the machines they operate.

Activity 11: Engaging with the characteristics of a vocational education for social democracy

**Suggested time:** 45 minutes

In the first part of this unit, you engaged with characteristics of Dewey’s student-centred and ‘learning by doing’ approach to an integrated vocational education for the development and freedom of the *individual*. In this activity, we look at the curriculum and pedagogical implications of an integrated vocational education that aims to develop students as agents for social democracy.

1. Take a moment to bring to mind the breadth of the curriculum in your vocational programme and the range of teaching and learning experiences you create to teach this. Consider the content, skills, thinking abilities and values and attitudes you want your students to learn.
2. Now think of the workplace environments where your students are likely to be employed in the future, and where they may do work-integrated learning currently.
3. With these two contexts in mind, consider the following statements by Dewey and two current educationalists (the bold has been added by us to draw your attention to different key ideas):

Dewey writes that this integrated vocational education would hold

*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 own industrial fate*. (Dewey 1916a)

Abowitz, writing in 2006, argues that:

*Vocational education is more than trade education if we teach a sense of* ***historical****,* ***political, cultural, and ethical context for the occupation****.* (Abowitz 2006)

She goes on to explain that this means that students understand the **historical underpinnings of the occupation**, the **cultural conditions in which the occupation is set**, and the **current pressures (political, economic, social, and so on) that affect its current practice**.

*Vocational education is more than trade education if we* ***fully explore the questions surrounding what it means to serve others****, whether through studies of cultures, literature, philosophy, poetry, the arts, or similar humanistic inquiry*.(Abowitz 2006). [emphasis added]

Billet (2011) writes:

*[B]y designing learning experiences which allow our students to* ***examine and theorize about the nature of social problems****, they will stand a better chance of ultimately transforming and transcending them.*

*(Note: Stephen Billet is a professor of adult and vocational education in Australia who writes and consults on vocational education internationally. He has written numerous philosophical and practical books on vocational education and practice-based learning. As part of your lifelong-learning practice, you may want to explore his work.)*

1. In your own experience of TVET as a student and/or lecturer, think of examples where you have learnt or taught about:
2. The historical underpinnings of the occupation.
3. The cultural conditions in which the occupation is set.
4. Examining and theorizing about the nature of social problems.
5. The pressures (political, economic, social, etc) that affect the practice of the vocation currently.
6. What it means to serve others through one’s vocation.
7. Jot down the examples of specific experiences in your learning journal.

Discussion of the activity

Developing students’ understanding, knowledge and skill for working with how their vocation interacts with other sectors and with political, social and economic forces – in addition to developing their ‘inward-facing’ vocational competence (skills, knowledge and values for doing work to a high degree of technical excellence) may help them to engage with their careers and their environments more insightfully and powerfully and equip them to be more resilient if there are changes or shocks in their industry. Do you think it makes sense, in South African TVET education, to try to incorporate these aspects into vocational subjects and training, or do you think this is a waste of time, given the struggle to develop basic skills?

Dewey’s ‘education for democracy’ is challenged by ‘education for social efficiency’

Not everyone liked Dewey’s ideas.

At the beginning of this unit, we mentioned that alongside Dewey’s views about education for democracy (the new progressive movement), were other philosophies of education. Social efficiency was a movement that opposed Dewey’s vision of a liberal-vocational education for all.

Around 1910, David Snedden, the Commissioner of Education for the state of Massachusetts in the United States, took an opposing position to Dewey. He believed that liberal and vocational education should be kept separate.

In 1914, Snedden gave a speech in which he argued that the world was changing, and education must change with it (Labaree, 2010). He argued that a liberal education was not very useful to the majority, whose lives were focused on their jobs. He believed that a liberal education served a role for the upper-classes, as it prepared them to be ‘utilizers’ of the products made by the working-class. The general public – destined to be ‘producers’, needed a vocational education that was grounded in science. He was also critical of liberal education as it wasn’t based on scientific principles, which he believed a vocational education could be.

Snedden also argued that learners should be categorised into different ability groups and tested to see which career would be most suitable for them, then channelled into vocational programmes to prepare them for them. Dewey rejected this idea: he argued that channelling young people into narrow trade would trap them in specific vocations and social and economic positions in society and they would not be able to move out of these easily, later in their lives.

Stop and think

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| What do you think of Snedden’s idea of young people being channelled into vocations very early? How does this conflict with Dewey’s idea that a person needs the freedom to have multiple vocations in their life?  What about grouping learners or students according to ability? Is this useful? Is it democratic? How does this idea fit with the idea of a ‘growth mindset’ rather than a ‘fixed intelligence that we explored earlier in the module? |

Snedden rejected Dewey’s idea of an integrated education. He argued that vocational preparation needed to be done in separate schools where students did practical work many hours every day, with theoretical instruction. He believed that vocational institutions should get rid of any trace of similarity to academic institutions, and be as similar as possible to the workplace.

While Snedden’s ideas aimed to raise the quality and effectiveness of the technical aspect of vocational training, it focused on this narrow scope of preparing workers highly suited to the workplace, with no aim to develop the individual’s own interests, agency, intellectual abilities, or to understand and work with the role of the vocation in society.

Dewey and Snedden entered into a sort of debate where Dewey published two articles in response to Snedden’s speech, Snedden responded to Dewey’s article in another article, and then Dewey responded to Snedden’s response in yet another article.

In Dewey’s reply to Snedden, he said:

*I object to […] the identification of education with acquisition of specialised skill in the management of machines at the expense of an industrial intelligence based on science and a knowledge of social problems and conditions. I object to regarding as vocational education any training which 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 own industrial fate.*

*… a separation of trade education and general education of youth has the inevitable tendency to make both kinds of training narrower, less significant and less effective than the schooling in which the material of traditional education is reorganized to utilize the industrial subject matter – active, scientific and social – of the present-day environment* (Dewey 1915: 38-39)*.*

At the time, there were many who supported Snedden’s views. Soon after this debate, a new law supporting separate vocational education, and a key government report came out, which were in line with Snedden’s views. His ideas thus were put into effect and shaped the education system for the next 100 years, while Dewey’s ideas were not implemented widely in schools or colleges – although they have been used in some experimental educational programmes.

Activity 12: Compare and contrast Dewey and Snedden’s views on education

**Suggested time:** 2 hours

In this activity, you will compare and contrast Dewey and Snedden’s views, and then respond with your own position.

1. Read the two essays below. The first argues that Snedden’s ideas of vocational education were more pragmatic (practical and realistic) than those of Dewey, who was too idealistic. The second essay argues that Dewey’s ideas on vocational education were more insightful and worthwhile than Snedden’s, as they aimed to develop all students to participate fully in society.

**Essay 1: Snedden’s ideas on vocational education were more pragmatic and useful than Dewey’s and deserved to become the dominant position in America after their debate**

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| *David Snedden was an American educator who was influential in the development of the social efficiency movement in education. The social efficiency movement emphasized the need for education to provide students with the practical skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the workforce and to contribute to the economy. John Dewey was an American philosopher and educational reformer who, in contrast to Snedden, believed that education should produce individuals with personal agency who can participate on all levels of society in a democracy.*  *While both men believed in the importance of vocational education, their approaches to it differed significantly. Snedden believed that vocational education should be a separate and distinct part of the education system and should focus on providing students with the practical skills and knowledge they need to succeed in specific careers. In contrast, Dewey believed that vocational education should be integrated into the broader education system and should provide students with a well-rounded, liberal education that would allow them to develop their intellectual abilities and to participate fully in society.*  *In my opinion, Snedden's views on social efficiency and vocational education were more realistic and useful than Dewey's idealistic ideas about vocational education and democracy. Snedden's emphasis on providing students with the practical skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the workforce was more practical and realistic given the economic and social conditions of the time. His focus on vocational education as a separate and distinct part of the education system was also more practical and useful in terms of providing students with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in specific careers.*  *In contrast, Dewey's emphasis on providing a well-rounded, liberal education may have been idealistic and impractical given the economic and social conditions of the time. His focus on vocational education as an integral part of the overall education experience may not have provided students with the practical skills and knowledge they needed to succeed in the workforce and to improve their social and economic status. Overall, Snedden's views on social efficiency and vocational education were more pragmatic and useful than Dewey's idealistic ideas about vocational education and democracy.* |

**Essay 2: Dewey’s argument that vocational education is important for democracy was stronger than Snedden’s position of social efficiency**

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| *John Dewey and David Snedden were two American educators who had different approaches to vocational education. While both men believed in the importance of vocational education, their approaches to it differed significantly. Dewey believed that vocational education should be integrated into the broader education system and should provide students with a well-rounded, liberal education that would allow them to develop their intellectual abilities and to participate fully in society.*  *In contrast, Snedden believed that vocational education should be a separate and distinct part of the education system and should focus on providing students with the practical skills and knowledge they need to succeed in a specific career. He believed that this approach would help students to gain economic independence and to improve their social and economic status.*  *In this essay, I will critically argue in favor of Dewey's approach to vocational education and against the social efficiency approach of Snedden. I will argue that Dewey's approach is more practical and useful in terms of providing students with the skills, knowledge, and dispositions they need to succeed in the workforce and to participate fully in society.*  *One of the key reasons why I believe that Dewey's approach to vocational education is more practical and useful is because it provides students with a well-rounded, liberal education that allows them to develop their intellectual abilities and to participate fully in society. By integrating vocational education into the broader education system, Dewey's approach ensures that students have access to both academic and vocational education opportunities. This allows them to develop their intellectual abilities and to gain the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the workforce.*  *Furthermore, Dewey's approach to vocational education is more practical and useful because it recognizes the importance of providing students with the skills, knowledge, and dispositions they need to think for themselves, to act independently, and to make their own decisions. In a participatory democracy, individuals are expected to engage in public debate and decision-making, and to take an active role in shaping the policies and institutions that govern their lives. Dewey's approach to vocational education provides students with the skills, knowledge, and dispositions they need to do this.*  *Additionally, Dewey's approach to vocational education is more practical and useful because it recognizes the role of social and cultural factors in shaping individual agency. By providing students with a well-rounded, liberal education, Dewey's approach ensures that they have the skills, knowledge, and dispositions they need to overcome the social and cultural barriers that limit their ability to think for themselves, to act independently, and to make their own decisions.*  *In contrast, Snedden's approach to vocational education is less practical and useful because it focuses on providing students with the practical skills and knowledge they need to succeed in specific careers. While this approach may help students to gain economic independence and to improve their social and economic status, it may limit their opportunities to develop their intellectual abilities and to participate fully in society.*  *Furthermore, Snedden's approach to vocational education is less practical and useful because it does not recognize the importance of providing students with the skills, knowledge, and dispositions they need to think for themselves, to act independently, and to make their own decisions. By focusing on vocational education as a separate and distinct part of the education system, Snedden's approach may not provide students with the skills, knowledge, and dispositions they need to engage in public debate and decision-making and to take an active role in shaping the policies and institutions that govern their lives.* |

1. Now write your own essay, using the two examples provided above. Critically discuss the views of Dewey and Snedden on how vocational education should be used to improve society. In your first section set out Snedden’s argument on how to use vocational education for social efficiency. In your second section set out Dewey’s argument on how to use vocational education for social democracy. In your third section set out your own views. Your essay should be at least 1 ½ typed, single-line-spaced pages (about 1 000 words) in length.

Discussion of the activity

As you have worked with Dewey and Snedden’s positions on education and considered your own, you have had to weigh up different priorities. It is clear to us today, that in a democracy we should not be developing the thinking capacities of only some learners, and the capacity for practical work for everyone else. Also, considering different educational approaches, even if you agree on the aims, involves trying to realistically imagine the outcomes of your approach. Sometimes a new approach is implemented, and it doesn’t have the desired outcomes. An example of this was Outcomes-Based Education, which was introduced in South African basic education (in 1997) for excellent reasons but could not achieve its aims under the social conditions of the time and had to soon be abandoned.

The problems – and solutions – that Dewey and Snedden debated did not go away, however. Around 60 years later, in 1977, this debate remained pertinent. An American journal featured the debate between Dewey and Snedden, saying that both sides of the debate had emerged again in the 1970s.

The debate continues still – with many educationalists favouring Dewey’s views and many independent or experimental educational programmes trying to implement Dewey’s ideas. Billet, writing in 2011, challenges us:

*If we wish to continue to uphold the principle of equality of educational opportunity for all […] then we have to support Dewey's arguments that academic and technical-vocational schools must not be separated, that academic and technical-vocational leaning programs must be made to complement and enhance one another.*

Abowitz (2006) describes how we can implement Dewey’s philosophy in the context of liberal and vocational education today:

*Dewey’s view of vocational education calls us to soften the hardened categories of liberal education and vocational or professional education in higher education. Liberal education should become more vocationalized in the sense that liberal education should have social relevance and purposes in mind. Vocational education should be liberalized in that any vocational course of study should have larger, holistic humanist aims and purposes in mind.*

Abowitz (2006) notes that bringing about change to the existing system will not be easy, however:

*Liberalizing the current technical, instrumental forms of vocational education requires a great deal from faculty. […] Certainly, not all students have had experiences with such environments, and constructing these environments across our campuses will require time, commitment, and resources*.

Stop and think

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| Do you agree with Abowitz’ views? What do you think a ‘liberalized vocational campus’ would be like? What time, commitment and resources would be needed in your context to achieve this? |

# Conclusion

This module focuses on philosophical arguments and debate on the topic of vocational education. The first unit looked at how liberal education and vocational education developed differently, while this unit looks at how some educational philosophers have tried to combine and integrate liberal and vocational education into a synthesis that keeps what is best of both types of education. Educators today continue to debate whether it is best to keep vocational and liberal education separate or synthesise them – or whether a liberal education is actually better than a vocational education for everyone.

As an educator working at an institution dedicated to vocational education, you will have your own views about what is the best kind of education for different students and why. You may have thought about this deeply, or you may have adopted views that you have never really questioned or interrogated very much. As you engage with Dewey’s ideas about combining the best aspects of vocational training and liberal education, you might be thinking that this vision is too optimistic and hopeful. You might be thinking something like this:

*These ideas about combining liberal and vocational education are interesting but it is impractical. Students need jobs, and education should focus on making sure students develop the skills they need so that they can find work.*

While this unit has held up Dewey’s ideas about an integrated vocational education as a positive model for you to engage with, the greater purpose of this module is to develop your understanding of key philosophies of education and your ability to think critically about different approaches to education and reason clearly about how education can best be structured. You are a free agent with the right to your own perspective, and as you develop your knowledge and skill around the philosophy of education, you can make more expert choices about how you design your lessons and courses to incorporate vocational and liberal aims, and how you engage with your colleagues and institution about the purposes, curriculum and delivery of vocational education.

For you to develop your own philosophical positions on education consciously, it is important to notice your own thoughts and reactions to ideas about the best way to do vocational education, and investigate the beliefs or reasons that underlie these thoughts and reactions. Your own beliefs may develop and change to some extent as you engage with new ideas.

# Model Summative Assessment

**NOTE**

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| * *This serves as the summative assessment for this module if you are completing the module at the end of Unit 2. If you are continuing to Unit 3, a summative assessment is provided at the end of Unit 3.* * *You will use your learning journal in the next activity. Please see: Use a learning journal, which is discussed in the Programme Introduction at the beginning of this module* |

Activity 13 Developing philosophical arguments and counter-arguments on *vocational* education

**Suggested time:** 2 hours (1 hour individual preparation; 1 hour small group debate)

The final activity in Unit 2 is designed to help you develop your ability to argue and counter-argue philosophical positions on education by engaging with the overall theme of whether a liberal or vocational education is best or whether they should be combined.

1. Read the following two short essays. The first essay argues that a liberal education is better than a vocational education. The second argues that a vocational education is better than a liberal education.

As you read the essays, note the following in your learning journal:

1. Write down the key points being made
2. Note whether you agree or disagree with the points being made, and why
3. Note down any other thoughts, reasons or arguments that come to mind as you read the essays ­– these may be additional points that have been raised in the unit, or your original ideas.

**A vocational education is better than a liberal education, especially for individuals who do not come from wealthy backgrounds**

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| *Vocational education, which focuses on providing students with the practical skills and knowledge they need to succeed in a specific career, is often seen as being inferior to a liberal education, which focuses on providing a broad-based, well-rounded education. However, I would argue that vocational education is actually better than a liberal education, especially for the working-class.*  *One of the key reasons why vocational education is better than a liberal education is that it provides students with the practical skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the workforce. By focusing on a specific career or industry, vocational education ensures that students are able to develop the skills and knowledge that are relevant and valuable to employers.*  *Another reason why vocational education is better than a liberal education is that it can provide students with more immediate and tangible benefits. Unlike a liberal university education, which may take several years to complete, vocational education can be completed in a shorter amount of time, allowing students to enter the workforce and start earning a salary sooner. This can be especially important for students who do not come from wealthy families, who may need to start earning a living as soon as possible in order to support themselves and their families.*  *Furthermore, vocational education can be more responsive to changes in industries or in the economy. Because it focuses on specific skills and knowledge, vocational education can incorporate new technologies or address new demands in the market. This can help students who do not have a lot of resources to fall back on, to quickly reskill themselves and remain employable if there are changes in the industry or economy.*  *In conclusion, while a liberal education has its own value and benefits, vocational education is better than a liberal education, especially for individuals who do not come from wealthy families. It provides students with the practical skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the workforce, it can provide more immediate and tangible benefits, and it can be more responsive to changes in specific industries or in the economy.* |

**A liberal education is better than a vocational education, especially for individuals who do not come from wealthy backgrounds**

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| *While vocational education, which focuses on providing students with the practical skills and knowledge they need to succeed in a specific career, has some value and benefits, a liberal education is ultimately better, especially for individuals who do not come from wealthy backgrounds. A liberal education, which focuses on providing a broad-based, well-rounded education, has several advantages over vocational education.*  *One of the key reasons why a liberal education is better than a vocational education is that it provides students with a broader range of skills and knowledge instead of focusing on a specific career or industry. This can be especially beneficial for individuals who do not come from wealthy backgrounds, or who may not have the opportunity to go to university.*  *While a liberal, university education can take several years to complete, another reason why a liberal education is better than a vocational education is that it develops important skills like critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills, that will be valuable to students throughout their lives.*  *Furthermore, a liberal education can be more adaptable and flexible than vocational education. Because it exposes students to a wide range of subjects and disciplines, a liberal education can provide students with broader skills and knowledge that can be applied across different types of industries. If there are changes in the economy or industry and specific vocational skills or jobs are no longer relevant, a person with a liberal education may be able to adapt or gain employment in a related industry more easily than someone trained in a specific set of skills for an industry that could rapidly change or move out of the country.*  *In conclusion, while vocational education has its own value and benefits, a liberal education is ultimately better, especially for the working-class. It provides students with a broader range of skills and knowledge, can provide more long-term benefits, and can be more adaptable and flexible to changing economic conditions.* |

1. Review your notes on the two essays. Do you find one essay more convincing than the other? Is it possible that both positions are valid? Or do you feel the need to combine the two positions, as Dewey did? Do you have a different position? Make notes about your thoughts.
2. Now read a third essay, that argues that it is more important to focus on how to use both a liberal and vocational education together to protect and enhance social democracy. As you read it, pay attention to your thoughts and reactions and how they compare to your experience reading the previous essays:

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| *John Dewey, one of the most influential philosophers and educational theorists of the 20th century, believed that education was essential for the success of a democratic society. He argued that education should be designed not only to teach individuals the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in the workforce, but also to prepare them to be informed and engaged citizens who can participate in the political process and contribute to the common good.*  *According to Dewey, a democratic society is one in which all individuals have the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process and shape the policies and institutions that affect their lives. This requires individuals to have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to be effective participants in the democratic process.*  *In order to achieve this, Dewey argued that education should be focused on the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills. He believed that these skills are essential for individuals to be able to analyse complex issues, form well-informed opinions, and engage in productive dialogue and debate with others.*  *In addition to these cognitive skills, Dewey also believed that education should foster the development of certain dispositions, such as a sense of curiosity, a willingness to question and challenge authority, and a commitment to the common good. These dispositions are essential for individuals to be able to actively participate in the democratic process and work together to address the challenges facing society.*  *Furthermore, Dewey argued that education should be experiential and hands-on, rather than solely theoretical and didactic. He believed that individuals learn best when they are actively engaged in real-world experiences and have the opportunity to apply their knowledge and skills in authentic contexts. This approach not only helps individuals to develop the cognitive and dispositional skills necessary for participation in democracy, but also allows them to connect their learning to the broader social and political issues facing their communities.*  *In order to create a truly democratic education system, Dewey also argued that schools must be inclusive and equitable. This means ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their socioeconomic background, race, gender, or other factors, have access to high-quality education that prepares them to be effective participants in the democratic process. This can be achieved through a combination of policies and practices, such as reducing class sizes, providing targeted support for disadvantaged students, and promoting diversity and inclusion within the education system.*  *Overall, Dewey's approach to education for democracy emphasizes the importance of providing individuals with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to participate in the democratic process. This approach not only helps to prepare individuals to be effective citizens, but also promotes social justice and equality within society. By focusing on the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills, fostering dispositions such as curiosity and a commitment to the common good, and providing experiential and hands-on learning opportunities, education can play a crucial role in supporting the success of a democratic society.* |

1. Now put together your own argument on the question:

***Is it better to keep vocational and liberal education separate, or is it more effective to combine the two?***

While this unit has discussed Dewey’s ideas positively, as they align with democratic values, you are free to take any position that you choose.

Prepare to present the following:

1. Reasons for your position
2. Criticisms of the other positions
3. Description of what it would look like, and require, to bring vocational and liberal education in line with your position (in the South African context today).
4. You may bring in the other philosophical positions and arguments raised in Unit 1 and Unit 2 if they are useful to your argument. You may also bring in other sources from outside of this module.
5. In a group of 4, take turns presenting your positions to each other. After each person has presented, take turns questioning each other, trying to expose the weaknesses of your classmates’ positions.

[**Note:** this debate can be done face-to-face or can be adapted for use on an online platform. It could also be adapted to be done by writing and sharing essays within a small group, and providing feedback and questions to each other, then engaging with these].

# Summative Assessment Rubric

The following rubric will be used to assess your presentation.

|  | **Task** | **Excellent** | **Good** | **Needs development** | **Inadequate** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Oral presentation** | | | | | |
| a. | **Reasons for your position** | You have clearly and effectively presented strong and well-organised reasons for your position. | You have presented adequate reasons for your position and these were organised logically; your presentation was clear. | Your presentation was not clear; or the reasons you to support your position were not strong enough or were not organised logically. | You did not present an organised argument for your position. |
| b. | **Criticisms of other positions** | You have clearly and comprehensively presented your criticism of other positions, giving strong and convincing reasons. | You have presented your criticism of other positions adequately, giving convincing reasons. | Your presentation of your criticism of others’ positions was weak; your reasons were unconvincing. | You did not present your criticism of others’ positions. |
| c. | **Description of SA education aligned to your position** | You have clearly and comprehensively explained what would be required to bring vocational and liberation education in line with your position in SA today. | You have explained what would be required to bring vocational and liberation education in line with your position in SA today. | Your explanation of what would be required to bring vocational and liberation education in line with your position in SA today was weak or covered limited areas. | You have not explained what would be required to bring vocational and liberation education in line with your position in SA today. |
| d. | **Effective use of philosophical arguments from Units 1 or 2 or outside the module.** | You have used a range of philosophical arguments and positions from the module, or other sources, effectively to support your argument. | You have used philosophical arguments and positions from the module, or other sources, to support your argument. | Your use of philosophical arguments and positions from the module, or other sources, is inadequate or does not support your argument. | You have not used philosophical arguments and positions from the module, or other sources, to support your argument. |
| e. | **Thoughtful engagement with peer’s positions** | You engaged actively with your peers’ presentations, effectively identifying weaknesses in their arguments and asking insightful questions. | You engaged with your peers’ presentations with well thought-out questions and comments. | You responded to your peers’ presentations with few questions and comments; your questions and comments were weak. | You did not ask relevant questions or make comments in response to your peers’ comments. |

Discussion of the activity

Trying to defend a philosophical position against another position gives you the opportunity to sharpen your logical thinking and look more closely at the ‘pros’ and ‘cons’ of the different positions on an issue. Throughout your career as a TVET lecturer, your own philosophy regarding what the relationship of vocational and liberal education should be will come to bear on different situations. While you may not be able to single-handedly restructure higher education in South Africa to line up with your philosophy, your views can have a very direct impact on the education your own students receive. You can incorporate elements of liberal education into your course design and lessons – or carefully limit your focus to teaching and learning of immediate technical value. You can debate and influence your college and your programme when issues of curriculum design, time allocation, use of resources and other aspects come up, where there could be opportunities to either integrate or separate the vocational and liberal aspects of your programme. And over the course of your career, you may advance to more influential positions where you can impact the college – or even the sector – as a whole.

In the first unit of this module, we explored the differences between a liberal and vocational type of education. This second unit has presented Dewey’s argument that liberal education and vocational training should be combined into a stronger, more active and engaging type of vocational education that has benefits both on the level of individuals’ lives and on the level of society. On the individual level, Dewey argued that an integrated vocational education was needed to develop individuals’ agency and ability to think critically, to empower them to lead a free and meaningful life both through their jobs and through other paid or unpaid pursuits. This was the main focus of the first part of this unit. Dewey also argued that an integrated vocational education was needed to develop a more democratic society, with less inequality in the workplace and with empowered individuals influencing society through their vocations and other activities.

*Units 1 and 2 have given you the basics of how to approach questions around vocational education in a philosophical way. Together, they serve as a standalone, three-credit module. However, it is useful to embed these philosophical debates within the South African context. Unit 3 takes these philosophical questions and insights to our own context – higher education in South Africa – and shows how similar issues have played out. Unit 3 can be excluded if your syllabus does not allow time for it; it can be included to make a five-credit module; or it can be used as a resource for extension activities.*

# Unit 3: Education for Domination and Democracy in South Africa

## Introduction

We have explored how education can be a powerful force to change and enable individuals’ personal life courses as well as the character of society. We have seen that this has resulted in conflict over who should control education and what its purposes are. Education has been used as a political weapon to secure the power of the wealthy over the poor, to give one racial group more power and status than another, and to give men more power and status than women. Education can also be used as a powerful tool to address these inequalities in society and bring about a more democratic society.

In this extension unit of the module, we turn to the South African context. South Africa has had a difficult and complex history. Education has played a key role in this history – used by groups who have undemocratically taken power to secure their control, and also used to address this injustice with an aim to bring about equality in a democratic society. We start by considering the traditional, indigenous approach to education in southern Africa. We then look at the philosophical approaches and aims of education that drove colonial education and, later apartheid education, and the role of technical and vocational education and training in this approach. Thereafter, we consider philosophical responses to the damaging effects of colonial and apartheid education and the philosophical positions that have guided the approach to education since 1994, in the democratic era. Finally, we consider key philosophical questions that need to be engaged in the development of TVET education going forward.

## Unit outcomes

1. Analyse the philosophical basis of technical and vocational education in South Africa in traditional/indigenous education, colonial and apartheid education.
2. Understand the South African government’s current philosophical position on higher education
3. Engage with key philosophical issues for TVET in South Africa going forward and clarify your own position.

## The development of academic and vocational education in South Africa before the democratic era

Each person taking this course probably has some level of understanding of the history of European colonialism and apartheid in South Africa. You may have your own observations and arguments about how these have shaped education as it exists in South Africa today. You, as an educator, have to deal with some of the lasting effects every day.

In this section, we look at the philosophies of education and approaches to teaching and learning that existed in southern Africa *before* colonisation and the philosophy of education that accompanied Europe’s conquest and domination of southern Africa (and much of the rest of the world), as well as the philosophical positions that shaped education during apartheid.

Traditional indigenous education in South Africa

The saying that ‘history is written by the victor’ makes the point that those who gain power over others often control what information is passed on about events that happen and the way the story is ‘spun’ to put them in a positive light, and those they have dominated in a negative light. Over the many centuries of European domination in southern Africa, the European narrative was broadcast, published, legislated, funded and enforced, while the African narrative was silenced, erased and confined. However, while the traditional African philosophies of education were challenged and dominated by European colonisers, they have continued to exist in some forms today, often practised by African families in their homes or communities alongside the westernised, formal systems of education that exist, and this gives us some insight into the approaches to education that existed in South Africa before colonisation.

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| **Indigenous** or **native** refers to things which originally came from the place where they are found – including people (along with their knowledge and customs), plants and animals. Indigenous knowledge systems (sometimes referred to as ‘IKS’) are thus systems of thinking and doing that work with the resources of the place where they develop. As new conditions arise in the environment and as people have new insights and ideas, these knowledge systems continue to develop and adapt. The ‘systems’ aspect is important: many things work well, or make sense, within the context of other things that have developed together. Taken out of the system, they may no longer work well or make sense |

In ancient times in southern Africa, people initially lived in smaller groups and followed a hunter-gatherer way of life. In Unit 1 we looked at the ‘original’ approach that humans who followed a hunter-gatherer way of life used for teaching and learning – observing how others with more experience do something and participating in what they are doing. In Unit 1 we explored some of the key characteristics of traditional hunter-gatherer approaches to learning. It was participatory (the one who is learning does not just passively watch or listen, but actively joins in); embodied (learning happening in your body, and not just your head); learning is contextualised (learning happens where the skill is used); learning is quite autonomous (the learner initiates participation and, thus, learning); and the one who is learning and the one they are learning from *share an intention* that learning will result.

In a hunter-gatherer society each individual needs to have strong agency and expertise. This tends to produce less extreme differences in terms of wealth and poverty, the power of one gender over another, or the power and status of leaders over others, or adults over children. The teaching-learning dynamic is less authoritarian – obedience is not emphasised, and children do not receive physical punishment. Children are taught that it is important to be cooperative rather than competitive, humble rather than self-promoting. More experienced elders (the informal teacher) tend to respect the learner’s individual moods and personalities. As children learn by watching the adults, they have control over the extent to which they choose to participate.

Whenever people began to settle down in large numbers in towns and cities, it became possible to specialise: one family or group of people engaged in one kind of activity to meet the needs of their community while they relied on other families to produce their other needs. Craft groups and apprenticeships developed to pass on specialised skills quite differently from the hunter-gatherer way. There was enormous cultural diversity, which produced different knowledge systems and approaches to education. However, scholars have noted that there are some common elements which tend to be found in traditional African education.

**Aims of education:**

* **A sense of responsibility for the common good of the community is a key aim of education.** The one who is learning is taught to be sensitive to the needs of the community and put these needs ahead of their personal needs. Personal status in the community comes from a person’s contribution to the community.
* **Reproducing culture is a key aim of education.** By learning to do well what the generation before has mastered, the society remains stable, and needs are met.
* **The development of character is a key aim of education.** This involves handling relationships and responsibilities well. This aspect focuses on personal development – but in service of the larger society.
* **Integrated competence is an aim.** A person’s knowledge, skills, values and attitudes are not seen as separate things. They need to develop together and work together for a person to be regarded as a person of good standing in their community.
* **Curriculum:**
* **To achieve this, education is holistic, integrating intellectual development, practical activity, character building, religious instruction and physical education.**
* **There is no distinction between ‘academic’ and ‘vocational’, or ‘theoretical’ and ‘practical’ – all knowledge relevant to a particular aspect of life is taught in its context.** The curriculum covers all aspects of life – there are not some things taught in the home/community, some in school, and some in ‘extra-curricular’ activities. The curriculum is everything you need to know to live successfully and contribute to your society.
* **What is taught to** **girls/women is often different from what is taught to boys/men.**
* **Pedagogy:**
* **Education is informal and occurs in the context in which it is used**. The one who is learning does not ‘go off to school’ or to college – children learn where the activity is happening, while it is happening. Theory and practice are not separated, and education is not undertaken in isolation from social realities. Learning happens through close observation, participating, gaining experience and active discovery. Learning usually relates to a practical need. If a learner does something wrong, it might be addressed with more formal instruction.
* **The teaching approach in traditional African education tends to be more authoritarian and one-directional than in hunter-gatherer communities.** The one who is learning may be regarded as a container which elders need to fill with knowledge and skills, rather than someone already possessing some knowledge to build on. Learners may be expected to listen and internalise what they are told, and are not encouraged to ask questions.

Activity 14: Comparing a general African approach to education to the approach taken in our current education system

**Suggested time:** 20 minutes

Respond in writing to the following questions in your learning journal.

1. There is a very large number of cultures and indigenous knowledge systems in Africa which vary widely, and those mentioned above are only very general commonalities that will not always hold true. Is there anything specific you could add to describe African education that you have experienced or witnessed or learnt about elsewhere?
2. In terms of our exploration of the separation or integration of academic education and technical training, how would you describe the traditional African approach (from the discussion above and from your own experience)?
3. What are the key philosophical differences between the indigenous African approach to education and the way that the learning of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes is approached in a TVET programme, that stand out for you?

Discussion of the activity

By the 1500s, when Europeans arrived in the southern region of Africa that is South Africa today, many different kinds of societies existed – including those organised primarily around hunting and gathering (the Sān), or around the farming of animals and crops (the Khoekhoe and Bantu societies). These different modes of living (hunter-gatherer/pastoral) tended to develop different indigenous knowledge systems, including different cultural and belief systems and approaches to education.

The indigenous African philosophies about education and approaches to teaching and learning were challenged, and then threatened and dominated, by the Europeans who arrived on the shores of southern Africa. For the next several centuries, these indigenous knowledge systems were prevented from developing in a healthy way and responding on their own terms to new challenges and opportunties. As we explore the way that academic and vocational education was shaped in South Africa through the colonial and apartheid eras, and into the current democratic era, it is important to remember that indigneous approaches to education based on different philosophies already existed here, and still have political and practical relevance. These perspectives deserve consideration in any philosophical discussion of how best to design and deliver academic and vocational education.

Europe builds global industries with labour from Africa and raw materials from the Americas

By the 1500s, population growth in Europe had resulted in bigger towns and cities which, in turn, had resulted in higher levels of societal organisation (government) and vocational/technical specialisation. European technology had advanced to the point that it was possible to explore the globe in ships. Kings and queens sent out explorers to find out about foreign lands and map the world.

European explorers encountered societies and cultures very different from their own in Africa, the Americas and Asia. These explorers discovered valuable resources, and opportunities, in the foreign lands they visited, which they did not have in Europe. Their technological advancements enabled them to successfully gain control of these resources against the will of the people who lived there. European settlers (colonists) began to arrive in these places to establish and run industries based on local resources, and establish towns for themselves and systems of government to rule over the people who lived there – against the will and rights of these people.

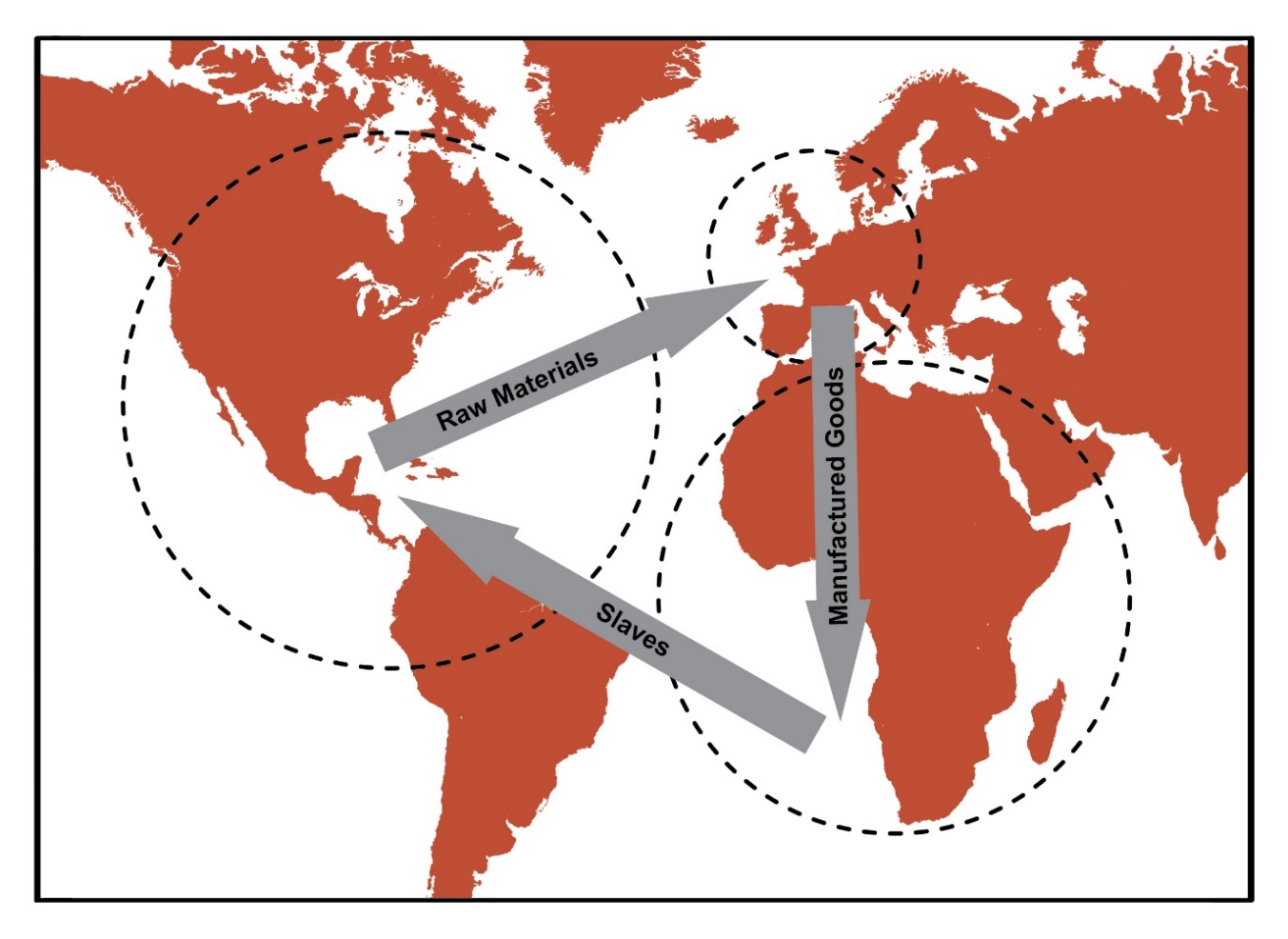
The Europeans who arrived to explore or colonise other lands generally viewed themselves as superior to the people that lived there. Some believed they were superior because their society was more technologically advanced and this led them to conclude that they were more intelligent or that these foreign people were a ‘lower’ type of species. Despite their rapid technological development, Europeans’ scientific development had not yet reached the point where they were able to verify that people of different groups shared the same human potential. Their philosophical frameworks were inadequate for them to properly understand the differences between their society and the societies they encountered. They did not fully understand that rapid and dramatic technological development in Europe had resulted from urbanisation and would eventually happen in other societies too. They also tended to believe that their religion (Christianity) had given them a superior way of life (enabled them to discover and develop where others had not), whereas they saw other societies as being trapped in the ‘darkness’ of their beliefs. Some believed that if people from traditional societies converted to Christianity and adopted a western way of life, they had the potential to become the ‘equals’ of Europeans. According to this view, education in Christianity and the Bible could thus serve as a path to people from other societies to become equal to Europeans. Others believed that Europeans (whites) were *racially superior* – i.e. that white people were genetically more intelligent than other races. Thus they believed that equality was impossible. For them, education could provide the means to skill these ‘lower’ races to fulfil their lesser potential by efficiently serving the ‘master’ white race as labourers.

In the new colonial settlements in South Africa and in other parts of the world, the small number of Europeans who had taken control were surrounded by larger numbers of indigenous people who generally didn’t want them there. While the Europeans would have liked to use them as servants and cheap labour, the indigenous people did not welcome the attempt of foreigners to rule over them. Europeans responded with various strategies: kill them, enslave them, or neutralise their resistance through converting them to Christianity (with the idea that they would then accept the European way as God’s way and follow the leadership of the Europeans willingly) and educate them to think and act like Europeans.

As the Industrial Revolution in Europe rapidly expanded the possibility for production of new goods, a global system was established by which European countries took the resources – and, in the case of slavery, the people – of other lands that were of use to them to manufacture goods, and then sold these goods back to people in these countries. European ships collected slaves from African slave traders (who had usually captured the slaves from rival tribes) and took them to the Americas. Ships full of slaves often stopped at the tip of Africa (where Cape Town is today) before crossing the Atlantic.

In the Americas, slaves (most of whom were kept as relatively unskilled labourers) were used to produce raw materials, such as cotton, sugar, tobacco, gold, silver and fur. These raw materials were then taken to Europe, where skilled craftsman used them to produce products like cloth, processed foods, jewelry, metal tools and machinery, which were then sold back in the African ports and American colonies on the next voyage.

The image below shows this in a simplifed way:



**Figure 4: 18th Century trans altantic triangualr trade**

**Source:** Public Domainredrawn: Columbian excahnge and trangular trade

European countries used the labour of African slaves and resources of the Americas to build industries with a global market. This enabled Europe to become vastly powerful and wealthy in the world at the expense of other lands – the results of which we still see today. This expanded European industries and vocations in a way that had heavy moral implications.

Activity 15: Engaging critically with the political and economic context of industry

**Suggested time:** 45 minutes

1. Reflect for a moment: When you look at this diagram, which provides a simple model of how European industries exploited the world, what response arises? Reflecting on things that have happened, and making connections with our own lives, is key to engaging with the world critically and responsibly.

Let’s pause in our investigation of the development of industries ­and vocational/industrial education in Africa for a moment and consider these same questions in the context of the TVET industry in South Africa today. Today when we talk about ‘industry’ in the TVET context, we know that supplies (e.g. equipment, parts) essential to the industry come from various sources which may be local or far away. An industry’s markets for final products may also be local (domestic) or international. Think about this in the case of your vocational/technical area. What has the historical development of the industry and products been? What is the industry’s current global ‘footprint’ and impact? This does not only apply to industries working with raw materials, but also with more administrative, managerial, and business oriented occupations. For example, big investment firms and hi-tech companies have a global reach, but much of the low skill labour is done in historically poor and developing countries for very low wages. The top level management offices, however, are located in the major developed capitals of Europe and America.

Consider the following specific aspects of this question. Write your answers in your learning journal and share with your classmates online or in small groups:

1. **Supplies/low level skills**

* From where are the supplies (parts, equipment, materials) or low level skills for your industry or workplace sourced – locally and/or internationally?
* Are any of these supplies/low level skills obtained by exploiting people in other parts of the world or the natural resources where they live?
* Does any part of the work process in your industry harm the environment or the local communities?
* What are the work conditions like at different locations in the industry (production of materials or parts, sales, distribution, etc.)?

1. Do you think it’s important for people working in this industry (including your students, who are being prepared to play a role in this industry) to think about these things, and know the history and global impact of the industry? Why, or why not?
2. Do you think people in your industry (including your students) have a moral or ethical responsibility to not always put ‘market demands’ (or profit) first but to consider the human and environmental impact of industrial practices and work to make the industry operate in ways that are not harmful?
3. Do you think, with the huge problems of unemployment in South Africa, that questions about environmental impact and exploitation of workers should play a secondary role to simply finding work and getting paid?
4. Is an exploration of these issues included in the syllabus of any course that you teach? Have you engaged your students about these issues outside of any curricular requirements?

Discussion of the activity

Dewey’s ideal for post-school education and training was that it should engage students in thinking deeply and critically about the political, economic and other aspects of the greater context of their industry or vocation so that they could become agents of democracy – making good choices that bring about a more just and equal society. If your students are only learning how to replicate (reproduce) the status quo (the way things are), they are likely to replicate the current injustices that exist in our world – maybe even taking them to more harmful levels in the future as resources become more scarce and the pressure to ‘grow the economy’ increases. However, if you help your students develop a broader and deeper understanding of the forces interacting in their industry, and their agency to be able to make complex decisions that weigh-in on important issues beyond corporate profit, you will be empowering them to show leadership in moving towards more just and democratic ways of working. However, with the huge unemployment rate in South Africa, there is a justifible response from students whose first priority is to simply secure a job, no matter where, or how. This is a complex ethical debate within TVET and needs to be continuously and sympathetically engaged with.

A colonial philosophy of education

To fully understand how technical and vocational education works in South Africa it is vital to grapple with our colonial past. The colonial philosophy of education developed to support a programme of European domination over others. The purposes of colonial education were sometimes different for different interest groups, but the various agendas involved can be identified as follows:

* Equip the European minority to lead, direct and rule over the indigenous majority.
* Equip European youth for highly-skilled technical and vocational jobs (to be captains of industry).
* Teach the African majority, European knowledge systems (Christianity, reading and writing, cultural and lifestye practices) and encourage them to abandon their indigenous practices:
* To benefit them (because Christianity was the only true belief system or because everything European was better);
* To make them less scary and ‘unpleasant’ to their European masters; and
* To get them to ‘buy in’ to the idea that Europeans were superior to them and it was appropriate for the Europeans to rule over them, so that they wouldn’t resist or revolt.
* Train African youth to be efficient and obedient manual labourers. This gave European masters maximum benefit and profit for their industries and also kept the energies of African workers occupied with toil, reducing the likelihood of revolt.
* Ensure African youth do not acquire higher technical and vocational skills (other than as educators, so that they can educate African children) so they cannot compete with Europeans for jobs.
* Design African education for rote learning of skills and restrict the development of critical thinking and analysis which could lead to resistance and revolt against colonialism.

Education was thus effectively turned into a primary weapon (‘weaponised’) for colonists to dominate and control indigenous Africans – breaking the power of their existing knowledge systems and colonising their minds with a belief in their inferiority.

As colonization advanced and was eventually replaced by apartheid in the 1940s and 1950s, 19 separate higher education departments eventually co-existed in the apartheid government’s complicated programme of keeping everything separate for four different racial groupings. That is a long and complex history to explore! We will not delve into it here – but is worth studying on your own. Here we will look at just a few key instances and examples to help us track the philosophy of education that unfolded.

**Education as a tool for Dutch enculturation at the Cape.** The Dutch were the first Europeans to establish a colony in southern Africa. A base was set up in the Cape in 1652 by a trading company under the Dutch government (the Dutch East India Company) to grow produce for trade. This company effectively was responsible for colonizing the Cape in the early years. The Dutch East India Company instructed the colonists to convert the indigenous people at the Cape to Christianity and make them members of the Dutch church. To become a member, a person had to be able to read the Bible and write their name. For the approximately 150 years that the Dutch controlled the Cape, they embarked on educating the Dutch settlers, the local indigenous people, and slaves they captured in other countries and brought to South Africa, to read and write for the purpose of church membership.

Stop and think

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| It may seem strange that the Dutch took other humans captive and then forced them to become Christians like themselves and go to church. How do you think this benefitted the Dutch? How do you think they reconciled their actions with their beliefs?  As a slave is, in effect, a worker who is forced to forever be at work, all efforts directed at modifying the cultural and religious behaviour of slaves could also be considered to be vocational education, as its aim is to produce a more efficient and effective worker. |

The Dutch farmers (called ‘Boers’) forcefully took land that was occupied by the Sān hunter-gatherer societies and Khoekhoe pastoral (farming) societies in the Cape. (Bantu nations were living to the north and east of the Cape). The Khoesān peoples resisted Dutch domination and this resulted in many battles. In these battles, the Dutch farmers often killed the adults, but captured the children to keep as slaves. They taught them to speak Dutch and to practice the Christian religion. This system was known as ‘apprenticeship’. Over time, as the settlers took over the resources on which the Khoekhoe and Sān relied, and destroyed their way of life, many of the latter were forced into slavery. At the Slave Lodge School, children who were slaves were taught by adult slaves to read and write Dutch, as well as the vocational attitudes and values required for their vocation – such as obedience and respect of the master.

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| You can learn more about the Slave Lodge School and these events on South African History Online (SAHO) (www.sahistory.org.za), a historical resource started by Omar Badsha, a renowned photographer, anti-apartheid activist and historian. SAHO exists to promote a critical understanding of the past and change the biased way in which South Africa’s history and cultural heritage is often represented in education, by developing ‘people’s history’ – instead of the history written by victors, a history written by the oppressed, excluded, and poor whose stories are not usually told. You can use resources like this to engage your students to look at the history and context of their TVET discipline in the world. |

By 1800, the British had taken over the Cape Colony from the Dutch. By this time, around 60 000 slaves had been brought to the Cape from Ghana, Angola, Batavia, Madagascar, Mozambique, India, Malaya, Indonesia and other countries. This represented a wealth of indigenous knowledge systems that had been passed on to the enslaved individuals through the indigenous education systems in their homelands, but these were not valued by the colonisers – again, their programme was to strip slaves of prior education and educate them to become Christians who followed European cultural practices as much as possible. Cut off from the home environment and society, it was difficult for them to use their knowledge systems in the new environment, or to pass them on through informal education to their children, who could be sold by the slave master to other colonists. These slaves became an integral part of South African society, and many mixed-race South Africans today can trace their roots back to these individuals of diverse origin.

In the 1800s, as the governance of the Cape Colony shifted from the Dutch to the British, missionary organisations from various parts of Europe and North America began to come to South Africa. They tended to view the spiritual practices of the indigenous people as evil, and their practices with regard to clothing and dwellings, as immoral or inferior, and, like the colonists, set about to convert and ‘re-educate’ them to adopt the ‘better’ European values and ways of living. The missionary schools, however, began to teach not only Christianity and reading and writing to support religious participation, but also basic mathematics, and trades such as carpentry, masonry, wagon-building and agriculture with a view to enabling native Africans to establish a European way of life. They also founded several colleges to train African students in the vocations of teaching and evangelism. These included Lovedale College (which later provided the seed for the University of Fort Hare) in the Eastern Cape and Adams College (now a high school). Lovedale College had a trades department, and also taught printing and bookmaking. Adams College eventually offered teacher’s training, a high school programme, theological training, industrial training and music education.

The British government realised that if they financially supported black education at the mission schools it could enable them to control the native Africans by directing their energies into work that was useful to white society instead of into dissent, and by ‘training’ them to live in the ‘civilised’ way expected by Europeans.

Statements by government officials promoted this view. For example, Matthew Blyth, Chief Magistrate for the Division of Transkei, presented his vision for an education for Black children which focused on trade skills to the Cape Parliament as follows:

*More large schools with European masters, where trades could be learnt and discipline enforced, are wanted in every district, so that there may be more thoroughness about the education. The expense would be large, but it is a matter of vital importance to the Colony that the young may be so trained that they can take their places worthily as members of a civilized and industrious community.*(Cape of Good Hope 1880).

However, underlying this pretence of having the best interests of the non-European population at heart, the agenda of colonial aims, at whatever cost was necessary, was not far below the surface. The Governor of the Cape Colony, Sir Bartle Frere, stressed the value of industrial training as a means to focus Africans’ energies away from opposing colonial interests. In his message to Parliament in 1884, he said:

*Nothing can more surely prevent future (border) wars than the multiplication of Institutions like those of Lovedale and Blythswood, especially if they extend their industrial training so as to include agriculture*. (Warneck 1888).

In the context of the Colony of Natal, James Stuart (1859) wrote:

*In the opinion of the Commissioners it is cheaper, it is infinitely preferable, to train the young Kafr now, than to exterminate him hereafter; one or other must be done*. (Stuart 1859: 26)

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| European colonists followed similar approaches in many of their colonies around the world to remove indigenous people from their indigenous knowledge systems and re-educate them to think and act like Europeans and develop skills useful to building the colonial society. In the United States, the indigenous Native American population (who are often called ‘Indians’ because European explorers who sailed to the Americas for the first time thought they had reached India) was subjected to a colonial philosophy of education based on a similar view that it was cheaper to neutralise the resistance of Indians through educating their children to accept European domination than to engage in war with them. This philosophy of education was articulated as ‘*kill the Indian in him, and save the man*.’ In the late 1800s, at the very same time that this colonial philosophy of education was shaping educations provided by colonists to Africans in South Africa, many thousands of Indian children and young adults in the United States were forced to live in boarding schools where they would be ‘protected’ from the influences of their culture and communities. They were not allowed to speak their languages and had to dress and act as Europeans. They were trained in vocational skills and gained work experience by providing cheap labour to Europeans, with children as young as nine often required to do hard labour. Many children died at these schools and their families never saw them again.  Luther Standing Bear, a member of the Lakota Indian nation, born in 1868, wrote about his experience of being taken and sent on a train to Carlisle Indian Industrial School, where he was sure he would die:  *At the age of eleven years, ancestral life for me and my people was most abruptly ended without regard for our wishes, comforts, or rights in the matter. At once I was thrust into an alien world, into an environment as different from the one into which I had been born as it is possible to imagine, to remake myself, if I could, into the likeness of the invader.* (Luther Standing Bear, 1933: 375).  Luther Standing Bear survived his experience and went on to become an educator and philosopher whose writings influenced government policy and are often taught in university history and philosophy courses in the United States today. |

The effect of South Africa’s industrial revolution on vocations and training

Large deposits of diamonds and gold were discovered in South Africa in the 1870s and 1880s. The wealth generated by mining these resources sparked an industrial revolution in South Africa accompanied by huge political, economic and social changes. An upper-class of wealthy White mine-owners and financers developed. Next was the middle-class, made up of White engineers, lawyers, shopkeepers and businessmen. After this came the White working-class, made up of White skilled workers. And, at the bottom, was the vast majority; the Black working-class, made up of unskilled workers.

The demand for specialised skills for mining and the many other new industries required a new approach to education. Technical education systems, usually based on the apprenticeship model, began to emerge to train artisans; new universities offered higher-level engineering and scientific training. Specialised education for skilled jobs (as managers, technicians, office clerks) was reserved for Whites, while manual labour and other forms of non-specialised work were open to Blacks. Indian immigrants, who had initially arrived in South Africa during the 1860s to work in the sugar industry, worked in industry, growing vegetable produce, fishing, and working as clerks, in the postal service or as court interpreters, but were banned from working in the mines.

The influence of Booker T. Washington on Black education in South Africa

In Units 1 and 2, we explored Booker T. Washington’s philosophy of education and his belief that vocational education was key in the strategy for the liberation of Black Americans from White oppression. The model he had implemented at the Tuskegee Institute focused on building Black Americans’ capacity to be self-reliant by building industrial and manual skills. Washington believed this would be the path for black Americans to liberate themselves from Whites; others, like W.E.B. DuBois, criticised this strategy on the basis that without a broader, deeper academic education Black people would remain in lower positions in society than Whites.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, Washington’s ideas began to influence thinking around Black education in South Africa – amongst Black educationalists, as well as White missionaries and White colonial administrators of education who were tasked with solving the ‘problem’ of landless Africans who were growing increasingly dissatisfied.

John L. Dube was born in 1871 (just 15 years after Washington) at an American mission station in Inanda (near Durban). He was born to royal lineage within the Zulu nation (Qadi tribe), but as his father had converted to Christianity and was a minister at the mission, he did not take up leadership in the tribe. Dube attended school at the mission and went to Adams College. Dube then studied in the United States, where he was exposed to Washington’s ideas. In 1900, he founded the Ohlange School in Inanda (in what is now KwaZulu-Natal) based on the Tuskegee model of education for self-reliance. (Dube became a notable philosopher, educator and writer. He also became the first president of the South African Native National Congress – which later became the African National Congress (ANC) – and was the first person to receive an honorary doctorate from the University of South Africa (Unisa.)

In 1901, Washington published *Up from Slavery,* a book in which he presented his arguments for a vocational education. A Swiss missionary in South Africa obtained a copy of the book in 1902 and began to implement Washington’s ideas at Lemana College, a higher educational institution in what is today, Limpopo. Maurice Evans, Under Secretary for Native Affairs in South Africa and a member of the Council for Native Affairs, also became a supporter of Washington’s views. In 1912, he attended a conference at the Tuskegee Institute in the US, where he became even more convinced that the model should be used for African education in South Africa.

***The dispossession of land and impact on education***

To further protect and promote the interests of the White minority, the White-dominated parliament passed a number of laws which put most of the country’s land under White ownership and forced the majority of Blacks to become a vast pool of cheap labour for the mines and for White-owned farms and factories. The most far-reaching of these laws was the Land Act of 1913, which allocated just 7% of the country’s land to black South Africans and forced many Blacks living on White-owned farms to leave the farms and move to the land reserves that had been established. Legislation was also introduced which closed skilled and semi-skilled jobs to Blacks and reserved them for Whites. Education was used to prepare White children for skilled jobs and ensure that Black children did not become qualified for skilled positions. To achieve this, education was made compulsory for White children and a more formal curriculum was developed, extending technical education for White children and introducing industrial and agricultural training programmes for the White working-class. Private institutions such as Lovedale, which were training Black students in trade skills, were seen as a threat to this plan.

Charles Loram, who held a range of high-level positions in the colonial education system over his career, was tasked with engaging with these issues. The government offered Loram a scholarship to pursue a PhD in educational administration at Columbia University in the United States. There he spent time with leading educationalists, including John Dewey. As we saw in Unit 2, Dewey’s philosophy of education supported an integrated education where all students developed their vocational interests and technical expertise on a base of strong critical thinking abilities and understanding of society and the aims of democracy from different perspectives (the strengths of a liberal education). His opponents, however promoted a differentiated education, where a liberal education was not appropriate for the masses who needed preparation for a variety of different life roles based on their intelligence and ability. Loram came from a colonial perspective where there was a clear distinction between the highly skilled and rewarded work of the colonizer, and the lower level skills and poorly paid work for the colonized, but within this context, he still wanted to make a difference and improve Black education. In 1915 he arranged to visit Washington’s Tuskegee Institute, to study Dewey’s model. The approach of the Tuskegee Institute resonated with the ideas already circulating in Natal.

In 1918, Loram was appointed to the new position of Chief Inspector of Native Education, which enabled him to start implementing his vision for a vocational education for Africans influenced by the Tuskegee model. He believed that agriculture was the only way that the majority of Africans could make a living and that the first aim of education for Africans should thus be to improve their agricultural skills so that they could more effectively farm the small amount of land they had been restricted to. Without this, rural Africans would begin to flood urban areas in search of work and would thus compete with Whites for jobs. Loram felt that an academic education would do Africans more harm than good.

Under the influence of Loram, new curricula were introduced into Black schools which were designed to prepare Black children for low-skilled jobs industrial, agricultural and domestic workers. Far more government funding was provided for White education, resulting in an inferior education for Black children. Education was increasingly developed in different directions for different groups of South Africans, based on race, with the purpose of securing White wealth and power over the country.

Apartheid education entrenches the unequal positions of different racial groups

In 1948, the National Party came to power with its policy of apartheid. The primary aim of apartheid was to ensure that Whites remained in control of the country and its resources. The National Party made some attempts to appear democratic, but as had been done before, the apartheid government used education to keep economic and political power in White hands by providing a quality education to White children and a vastly inferior education to all other children in South Africa. [Note: we use the apartheid racial designations of ‘White’ ‘Black’ (or ‘Bantu’), ‘Coloured’ and ‘Indian’ in this section as these separate racial designations drove all government policy and the separate development of education for the population.]

The government argued that Blacks did not need a high-level academic education in their rural, village lives while Whites did, because they were living in the wealthier urban areas. One politician, JN le Roux (1945), stated: “We should not give the Natives any academic education. If we do, who is going to do the manual labour in the community?" (South African History Archive, 2023).

Hendrik Verwoerd, the Minister for Native Affairs (and later, Prime Minister), speaking about his government's education policies in the 1950s, stated:

*There is no place for [the Bantu] in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour ... What is the use of teaching the Bantu child mathematics when it cannot use it in practice? That is quite absurd. Education must train people in accordance with their opportunities in life, according to the sphere in which they live.* (Lapping 1987)

The Bantu Education Act of 1953 ensured that Black education was restructured in terms of the apartheid policy which gave Black people no permanent status in ‘White’ South Africa. Outside the Black homelands (the 7% of the country allocated to blacks), black people could only expect to find employment as unskilled labourers. `Bantu Education’, as it came to be called, was designed to give Black children only the limited kind of education which would fit them for this role. For example, mathematics and physical science were not offered as key subjects in Black schools.

The idea of a ‘people’s education’ – an education developed by and for the common people, not the powerful oppressor (like the ‘people’s history’ mentioned earlier) began to form. In 1955, the ANC described the purpose of 'People's Education’ as follows:

*It will be Democratic in control, organisation and purpose . . . It will be Liberatory in object because its main objective will be to equip the people and the youth to fulfil their historic task of liberating themselves.* (Hyslop 1987).

As the government’s programme of apartheid education continued to roll out, resistance to apartheid education took many forms, including protests by teacher organisations, parents boycotting government schools, and learner and student protests. The Black Consciousness Movement, which was an important part of the resistance movement, believed that black people could only become free from the sense of inferiority that had been instilled through colonialism and apartheid by freeing themselves.

On 13 June 1976, the Soweto chapter of the South African Students’ Movement decided to hold a mass demonstration against the enforced use of Afrikaans and to demand the end of Bantu Education. The Soweto Students Representative Council (1976) stated,"We shall reject the whole system of Bantu Education whose aim is to reduce us, mentally and physically, into **'hewers** of wood and drawers of water'." This expression referred to the apartheid government’s intention of using education to restrict Black people to work as manual labourers.

The government responded by making some symbolic changes. The Department of Bantu Education was renamed the Department of Education and Training. More money was put into Black education, and some ‘showpiece’ schools and colleges were built. Some of the restrictions on categories of jobs were lifted, allowing Black students to train for a broader range of occupations. It would be nearly twenty more years, however, before resistance to apartheid, and the damaging consequences of the apartheid policy to South Africa’s economy, brought formal apartheid to an end. The European settler vision of a ‘democracy’ in which a small elite made up of White citizens made decisions on behalf of a large, disadvantaged non-white population, was over.

Activity 16: Academic or vocational education for liberation?

**Suggested time:** 20 minutes

In the discussion of colonial and apartheid education, we have seen an education for leadership and highly skilled technical work for Whites pitted against training for low-skilled manual work for Blacks. This was driven by an active intent to prevent Black people from learning skills that would enable them to compete with Whites, and also, to ensure that their exposure to training, did not encourage the development of critical thinking and agency, which could lead to more critical analysis of the inequality of the system and active organising against it.

We have also seen that the ideas of Booker T. Washington, which came out of his conviction and philosophy that strong vocational skills would enable Black people who were in an oppressed situation to become self-sufficient and thus escape some of the effects of racism, were embraced by racist administrators in the South African colonial context and used to direct Black South African education away from an academic education in order to control their dissent and their participation in the economy.

Try and meet with a few colleagues from your college /class and discuss the following question:

Where is the ‘line’ between a vocational education that serves to empower and liberate people in a disempowered position in society, and a vocational education that serves to further disempower and control people in this situation? If vocational education in South Africa had not been driven by the colonial agenda of domination, how would it need to have been designed to have a liberating effect on students?

Discussion of the activity

It is clear that knowledge and skills – and education – are not neutral or straightforwardly ‘good’ but can be shaped and used in ways that increase people’s agency and democratic freedom or diminish these.

## Philosophical responses to the weaponisation of education for domination

We have traced a very broad outline of how colonial and apartheid governments weaponised education to gain and secure control over the indigenous and “non-white” population of South Africa. This was combined with the philosophical positions about human value, equality and the purpose of education that underpinned colonial education. We have barely touched on the broad-ranging forms of resistance that were mounted by South Africans from every sphere of life – with significant contributions by learners, students and educators. These are worth exploring on your own. Here we touch on some of the philosophical perspectives that informed the resistance to the use of education to create inequality rather than to promote democracy. Persistent inequality raises the question of how education has to focus on overcoming domination as a key requirement for creating and sustaining a democratic society.

Franz Fanon and Steve Biko: Tthe psychological damage caused by colonialism and the need for anti-colonial education

Franz Fanon has been a very influential thinker because of his insights and criticisms of power—particularly in the context of the dynamic of coloniser and colonised. Fanon was born in 1925 on the Caribbean Island of Martinique. His parents were descended from African slaves, indentured Indians, and Europeans. Fanon became a doctor and a psychiatrist; he was also a philosopher. Much of his writing about colonialism focused on the experience of ‘blackness’ in societies dominated by Europeans through colonisation. His ideas impacted Africans in their struggles for liberation from colonialism and continue to impact the thinking of people engaging with how to create an equal and democratic society in places which were formally colonised, including South Africa.

Fanon analysed colonialism from a psychological perspective. He viewed it as a project that affected every part of a colonized person’s identity. In his classic book, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon explores the deeply traumatic impact of colonialism on the individual, the community and the nation. Remember the saying ‘history is written by the victor’? Fanon analysed how colonialism destroyed people’s indigenous knowledge systems and identities and also stole from them their history:

*…Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native’s brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it.*(Fanon 1963: 210-11)

In *The Wretched of the Earth,* Fanon (1963) argued that indigenous peoples around the world — most of whom had been subjected to European colonisation for a period of their history — need education that is **anti-colonial**. He argued that imperialism “leaves behind germs of rot which we must clinically detect and remove from our land but from our minds as well.” (Fanon, 1963). By this he meant that education after liberation from colonialism must interrogate the way colonial education has affected the way people think and see themselves and make this visible. Colonial education systems, and the philosophies driving them, should not be left intact or superficially modified, but should be fundamentally challenged and dismantled.

Fanon was deeply influential on one of South Africa’s key thinkers, Steve Biko (Bantu Stephen Biko). Biko was a South African anti-apartheid activist who was born in 1946. He was a leader in the Black Consciousness Movement, which sought to empower Black South Africans and to end the apartheid system of racial segregation and discrimination. Biko was influenced by Fanon’s ideas about the psychological impact of colonialism and racism, and he incorporated these ideas into his activism. He believed that the Black Consciousness Movement should focus on empowering Black South Africans by raising their awareness of their own potential and encouraging them to take control of their own lives. He argued that the apartheid system of education was designed to maintain the status quo and to keep Black South Africans in a state of subservience. He believed that the Black Consciousness Movement should focus on creating alternative forms of education that would empower Black South Africans and help them develop a sense of pride in their identity and culture. Biko did not specify in his own writings what a decolonial type of education would actually look like, but his political and psychological writing has served as an inspiration to current theories of decolonizing education.

Activity 17: Engaging with anti-colonial and post-colonial philosophies of education

Whether you are studying online or at a contact university, you are strongly encouraged to form small groups of 3 to 4 classmates and to discuss the questions that follow in each section, as each of the questions asked tend to generate passionate responses.

Activity 17a: Engaging with decolonisation

**Suggested time:** 20 minutes

1. Decoloniality and the need to decolonise education are topics receiving significant attention in South Africa and around the world today. If you search for Fanon on the internet, you will see that there are many current publications discussing his ideas in relation to the ongoing need to address the legacy of colonialism in many parts of the world. What do you know about these ideas? Do you have opinions supporting or opposing them, or ideas about how they can be achieved?
2. To what extent do you think South Africans who were discriminated against during colonialism and apartheid *still* internalise the negative and inferior views of themselves that the South African government and the White dominant class generated during that period? Do you see evidence that this affects students that you teach, even though they may have been born after the official end of apartheid? How could you engage them through teaching and learning in ways that could help to liberate them from these internalized views?
3. It is interesting that there is not much published research on decolonizing education in the TVET space. Much of the debate around decolonizing education has happened in the school and university space, with not much debate or protest within the TVET sector. Alexa Nicole Anthonie argues that this is because TVET colleges do not fit in with the status associated with higher education and are therefore missing from public consciousness and debate. TVET colleges exist in an almost hidden and ambiguous place between schools and universities and therefor tend to slip out of the debates on decolonizing education (Anthonie, 2019). Do you agree with her that decolonization debates have not been prominent in TVET colleges? And, if so, why do you think it is the case? Her article is freely available in Progressio, an open access journal and you can access it with the following link - <https://unisapressjournals.co.za/index.php/Progressio/article/view/5656>

Paulo Freire: A ‘culture of silence’, the ‘banking model’ and ‘critical consciousness’

Paulo Freire was a Brazilian educator and philosopher who was born in 1921. His theories built on and extended those developed by Fanon. Freire’s family was very poor during his high school years, and he fell behind in school; from this he drew important insights in the relationship of poverty and learning, and social class and knowledge. Freire also had some very important insights and ideas about the psychological impact of domination by one group of another group and the role of education in liberating the latter.

**Culture of silence.** Freire argued that when society is dominated by a powerful group the individuals in the group that has less power tend to internalise the negative views which the dominant group hold about them. They lose their sense of agency and feel helpless and powerless, but also may not really be able to clearly see how they have been disempowered. Ultimately, most of them buy into the system, believing that they deserve to be poor and powerless because they are inferior. This causes them to fall silent about their oppression. Without a voice to express and discuss what is happening to them, people begin to lose the ability to analyse and critique the unequal systems they are caught in. As a result, they do not confront their oppression.

Freire believed that the education system is one of the main tools which the powerful race or class use to maintain its dominance. The ‘culture of silence’ is embedded into education, where it prevents students from exploring the lines of thinking that could enable them to develop a *language of critique*. Instead, students from poor backgrounds attempt to mimic the behaviour and cultural norms of the dominant, wealthier students.

**The banking model.** Freire called the system of education developed by the powerful to educate the oppressed a ‘banking’ model of education: students are viewed as empty ‘bank accounts’ which educators ‘fill’ with knowledge. He described the ‘banking’ process like this:

*Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiques and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. This is the "banking" concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits.* (Freire 1993)

The knowledge that students already bring to the classroom from their other life experiences is ignored. The educator is seen as giving a generous gift to students, who have nothing to give. Freire argued that this way of teaching prevented students from thinking critically and ‘owning’ what they learnt (making it their own). He argued that the goal of this kind of education was to turn students into

*... adaptable, manageable beings. ... The more completely they accept the passive role imposed on them, the more they tend simply to adapt to the world as it is . . .*

*The result was that education helped to keep the poor poor and the powerless powerless.*(Freire 1993)

Freire believed that oppressed people were prevented from talking about their oppression and developing a critique of it, and eventually this resulted in them internalising (accepting and believing) the views the powerful held of them that they were inferior, and it was therefore acceptable and normal that they should be poorer and have less power, while it was acceptable that the dominant group were wealthier and more powerful because they were inherently superior.

**Critical consciousness**

Freire believed deeply that education could be designed in such a way that it could empower people by helping them explore and develop their agency, instead of serving as a tool to silence the oppressed to the benefit of the dominant class. Students needed to develop a **critical consciousness**: a deep understanding of the world that would enable them to see and expose the underlying contradictions in society — for example, where the education system was actually designed to oppress even though its stated aim was to empower them. With this critical consciousness they would be able to see that the culture of silence exists and has been created to oppress them. This critical consciousness would help them recover their agency so that they could take action against the oppressive elements in their lives as they began to be able to see them. He called the process of developing this critical consciousness **conscientisation**.

Freire developed a model for education that was designed to help students develop critical consciousness. He called this ‘problem-posing education’. In this model, the educator and the students each bring their existing knowledge to the classroom and listen and dialogue together to solve problems presented by the teacher. This is based on understanding that knowledge is built up from each person’s individual experiences and that the world around us can be changed by us. This process develops learners’ ability to think critically about their world. As they develop this ability, they begin to be able to see how oppression is caused and what options they have to shape their reality and liberate themselves from oppression. The outcome which Freire envisioned for students who experience problem-posing education is that “through taking transforming action they could create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of fuller humanity” (Freire, 1993).

Activity 17b: Engaging with Freire’s philosophy of education

**Suggested time:** 25 minutes

Discuss the following questions in your small groups.

1. Do you think the education system in South Africa under apartheid promoted a ‘culture of silence’? If so, how? Do you think the education system in South Africa today still promotes a ‘culture of silence’ around the inequality and injustice which still exists in our society today? If so, who do you think stands to benefit from this culture of silence?
2. Freire promoted ideas of critical thinking, constructivism, acknowledgement of prior knowledge, and problem-based education half a century ago. Today, many of these ideas are promoted as a ‘21st-century education’ approach, yet often they are still talked about more than they are implemented. Freire did not intend that these ideas should be used exclusively in universities. He worked with illiterate farmers. He believed that everyone needed them. Do you think these ideas are implemented more often in universities or in TVET colleges? Explain your reasons for your opinion.
3. Relate Freire’s ideas to Dewey’s idea of education for democracy for both personal development and democracy in society (also consider ‘the characteristic of an integrated vocational education’ in Unit 2)
4. What power (agency) do you have, as a lecturer, to incorporate Freire’s ideas into your teaching?

While Freire lived all of his life in South America, his ideas have influenced – and still influence – South African thinkers who are interested in how education can help people build agency to liberate themselves. The Paulo Freire Project at the University of KwaZulu-Natal is dedicated to engagement with Freire’s ideas, working with dozens of other institutions around the world committed to this focus.

Discussion of activity

In South African today, it is becoming harder to blame existing poor performance of the education system on the Apartheid legacy. Political leaders are also loath to take responsibility for the continued huge disparities in the education system. Pass rates are often inflated in the TVET system, especially with non-exit exams, resulting in huge failure rates when the students reach their final exit exam. Many of the assessments within TVET colleges are highly predictable, allowing students to pass with rote learning. This enables TVET colleges to pretend that effective education and training is actually happening, and to keep quiet about their students leaving the TVET system without the needed knowledge, skills, attitudes or values. This pressure on the TVET system to keep pass rates up also means that problem-based and inquiry-based learning techniques are difficult to establish. Students expect to be taught to the test, and to rote learn, whilst the college management hierarchy has to ensure high pass rates to secure funding. Therefore, any type of teaching that tries to go deep and extend understanding and insight, suffers as these processes are slow and reveal students’ lack of knowledge and understanding. All of this means that a TVET lecturer in the current system will really struggle to implement Dewey or Freire’s ideas.

However, there are strong movements in the South African TVET space to disrupt this rote learning/teach to the test culture. Centres of Specialisation that focus strongly on developing actual skills for the workplace with assessments that rigorously check skill and understanding levels have started to shift this rote learning culture. Professional qualifications, like the Advanced Diploma in Technical and Vocational Teaching, are also specifically directed at challenging this culture, and introducing TVET lecturers to alternative ways to teach and learn.

People’s education: Grass-roots education for democracy

Earlier we looked at the development of the idea of a ‘people’s education’ in the 1950s – education for and by the people, rather than as a weapon of colonial and apartheid forces to dominate the majority. Thirty years later, in the 1980s, these ideas were still informing people’s vision for what education would look like after apartheid. An Education Charter was drafted which articulated the values of People’s Education. These included:

* It must be understood that apartheid education is designed for White domination.
* In contrast, a People’s Education should be democratically controlled: by and in the interests of the majority of the people.
* People’s Education should be both educational AND political: The struggle for education is part of the political struggle for democracy.
* People’s Education should prepare people for full participation in a democratic society and build their organisations for liberation.
* People’s Education must extend beyond formal school and university education. It should address the needs of all South Africans – young or old, urban or rural – for education and empowerment.
* People’s Education is dynamic- changing according to the needs of the people and the conditions of the time.
* People’s Education should not serve the interests of the rich.
* People’s Education should be rooted in the cultural heritage and experiences of the South African people.
* People’s Education should encourage critical thinking and active participation.

Activity 17c: Engaging with people’s education

**Suggest time:** 15 minutes

Discuss the following questions in your small group:

1. How could people’s education connect to indigenous knowledge systems?
2. Relate people’s education to thephilosophical ideas of Freire.
3. Comment on the statement ‘people’s education should not serve the interests of the rich’ in the context of technical/vocational education being aimed to prepare students for working in an industry or company which is very often controlled by wealthy individuals or families. Do you think the interests of those making profits in these industries influence the shape of TVET?

Discussion of Activity 17

This section has given you only the briefest introduction to some of the powerful philosophical ideas engaging with education for liberation from colonialism – both as a political reality and the enduring effects on formal education systems and the internalized effects on the mind. It would be very worth your while to read about these philosophers and ideas more extensively, as their insights remain very relevant to the context of South African education today and continue to be discussed. The ideas and actions of women are conspicuously absent in our discussion – both on the side of coloniser and colonised. This is one area where work is needed toward fuller democracy, where women experience the agency to impact their context and where their impact is acknowledged and engaged with seriously. A people’s history, and educational philosophies for liberation and democracy, must include the perspectives of women.

## A philosophy of education for a democratic South Africa

In Units 1 and 2 we explored the purpose of education for democracy. We saw that there was an individual level to this – in terms of education developing and empowering a person with agency to think and act critically and powerfully, and freedom, to be able to act and live without artificial limits on the basis of race, gender, class, language or other characteristics. We saw that there was a societal level as well – where individuals empowered by education acted together to create a society free of unfairness. In Unit 1 we looked at how the ancient Greek view restricted democracy to an elite group of men. The view of democracy in America did not originally include the indigenous people of America, women, or the people brought to America as slaves. In the South African context, we saw that after colonialism the ‘democratic’ society envisioned by much of the White minority was one in which the indigenous people of South Africa – the vast majority of South Africa’s inhabitants –were excluded from citizenship and from the rights enjoyed by the White descendants of European settlers. At the end of apartheid, in 1994, a transition began to a democracy that did not exclude indigenous or immigrant groups or give them lesser rights or status in education. As the formal education system had been developed by Europeans and had always been structured to privilege the White minority; it was an enormous task to try to transform the education system to support the democratic rights of all of South Africa’s people.

A philosophy of education for transformation

Immediately, in 1994, a number of policy and discussion documents were published engaging with ideas for a new approach to education. The aim was to bring the many different educational systems developed under apartheid into a single system – a National Qualifications Framework – that would remove exclusion from any programme or institution on the basis of race and promote quality education across the system.

In 1997, three years into the new ‘democratic era’ in South Africa, the Department of Education published *Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education.* (A White Paper is a statement of government policy. It is preceded by a Green Paper, which is a draft document for which the government invites feedback and engagement from people inside and outside of Parliament, before the policy is finalised in a White Paper). The White Paper stated:

*South Africa's transition from apartheid and minority rule to democracy requires that all existing practices, institutions and values are viewed anew and rethought in terms of their fitness for the new era. Higher education plays a central role in the social, cultural and economic development of modern societies. In South Africa today, the challenge is to redress past inequalities and to transform the higher education system to serve a new social  
order, to meet pressing national needs, and to respond to new realities and opportunities. It must lay the foundations for the development of a learning society which can stimulate, direct and mobilise the creative and intellectual energies of all the people towards meeting the challenge of reconstruction and development.* (Department of Education 1997)

Stop and think

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| Note that the language ‘creative and intellectual energies of all the people’ points to individual development beyond learning skills for performing a job. However, this is focused on the national project of a just and democratic society. The statement acknowledges the past, and the need to transform the system into something that will be able to cope with change and keep up with other modern societies. The language is forward-facing, aiming to create something new, not return to traditional approaches. |

Merging unequal institutions, restructuring higher education and unifying qualifications systems

Soon after South Africa became a democratic country, three key moves were made to address inequality in higher education:

* Merging of institutions that had been developed for different racial groups during apartheid and had therefore received very unequal investment and development
* Restructuring the position of vocational training to be closer to universities
* Creating a unified framework for qualifications, so that students could move across institutions and programmes with their studies recognised and continue to build their qualifications.

Starting in 2002, the higher education landscape was restructured, merging previously advantaged and previously disadvantaged institutions from the parallel education systems of apartheid with the aim of promoting equality by pooling the resources of the poorer and better-resourced institutions together. The 36 universities, technikons and institutes that had existed at the end of apartheid were reduced over the years to the 26 public universities – designated as ‘traditional’, ‘universities of technology’ (offering vocationally-oriented qualifications) and ‘comprehensive universities (intended to offer a combination of academic and vocational qualifications) – and the 152 technical colleges were merged into the 50 multi-campus TVET colleges that we have now.

In 2009, the Department of Education was split into two new departments: The Department of Basic Education (DBE), dealing with education through matric, and Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), dealing with university and college education. DHET also took on aspects of skills development which had previously been the job of the Department of Labour. This orientated skills-development a little more towards academia. In 2013, the colleges were moved from provincial administration to national administration under the Department of Higher Education and Training, along with the universities.

After many stages of development, in 2008 the current version of the National Qualifications Framework came into effect. It recognises 10 levels of learning achievement and aims to enable students to move between different types of training and education programmes throughout the course of their lives, with each unit of learning recorded in a way that can be carried with them to the next point at which they engage with the system.

Stop and think

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| How have these changes impacted the institutions that have merged? Have they shifted the relationship between academic education and vocational training in South Africa? As South Africa pursues a model of diversified higher education, which institutions in the system do you think are closest to Dewey’s ideal of liberal/academic and vocational/technical aspects of education being integrated in a more holistic, balanced approach to education? |

In 2013, the new Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) published the *White Paper for Post-School Education and Training*. The White Paper describes the lack of democracy at the level of the individual and the level of society still characterising the education system:

*The institutional landscape is still reminiscent of apartheid, with disadvantaged institutions, especially those in rural areas of the former bantustans, still disadvantaged in terms of infrastructure, teaching facilities and staffing. Black students at formerly whites-only institutions have often been victims of racism, and female students have been victims of patriarchal practices and sexual harassment. Poorer students have to fit in with systems that were designed for students from relatively privileged backgrounds. Opportunities in rural areas are far more limited than those in urban areas and informal settlements are also victims of under-provision.*

Stop and think

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| Which of these challenges apply to your students and context? Have you thought of these through the lens of ‘democratic rights’ before? |

Diversification of education into universities, TVET colleges and community college

Central to the government’s philosophy of education is the idea that there should be diversity – a range of different options – within higher education. It identified three main types of institutions but noted that within these categories individual institutions could diversify further through specialisation. The three types of institutions – universities, technical and vocational education and training colleges, and community colleges (a new structure to be introduced into the landscape) were designed to serve different functions. The government’s goal for 2030, set in the 2013 White Paper, was 1,6 million students at universities, 2,5 million at TVET colleges, and 1 million at community colleges (with an additional half million at private institutions). Let’s explore the aims of these three.

**Universities.** The National Development Plan 2030 (National Planning Commission, 2012) identifies three main functions of universities:

* Provide people with high-level skills for the labour market;
* Take the lead in producing new knowledge (through research); and
* Provide opportunities for social mobility (improving wealth or social status) and strengthen social justice and democracy, helping to overcome the unequal legacy of apartheid.
* The White Paper also mentions the following priorities that universities should focus on:
* Conduct research and collaborate with government and private partners to meet the economic and social needs of society. The paper states (DHET, 2013):
* *Such partnerships can lead to a deeper understanding of our social, cultural and political life, our relationships with each other and with other societies. It can also lead to technical innovation and economic advancement that can have a major impact on the strength and effectiveness of our economy. This does not mean that universities should be purely instrumentalist in their approach to research, but that responding to South Africa’s social, economic and cultural challenges should be one of their key tasks.*
* Improving student access, success and throughput rates, especially for those groups whose race, gender or disability status had previously disadvantaged them.
* Development of the scarce and critical skills needed for South Africa’s economic development.
* Build strong partnerships with TVET colleges and other post-school institutions, and also with employers, to expand workplace training opportunities.
* **TVET colleges.** The college sector is the one targeted by DHET for the greatest expansion and diversification. Its main purpose is to train young people with mid-level skills for employment. However, its enrolment has not increased as rapidly as hoped. TVET colleges should:
* **Serve needs of local communities.** While they serve community, regional and national needs, the bulk of their student body should be from their surrounding community, to serve local industry, commerce and public sector institutions. Position themselves in community: as a route out of poverty, and a route for personal and collective advancement, and able to assist with community needs.
* **Meet the needs of workplaces and have strong relationships with employers.**
* **Have strong relationships with universities and community colleges.**
* **Community colleges.** The community colleges are a new type of institution that are intended to cater to the needs of the millions of adults and youth who are unemployed, poorly educated and not studying. This would be a route for people who did not qualify for admission to a TVET college, reskilling for those who have lost their jobs or in areas where jobs are rapidly changing, developing skills to earn an income through the informal market, and providing life-skills training in areas like literacy, healthcare, parenting and childcare and care for the elderly.

Even though there has been both strong reforms and extra money spent on the TVET sector, there is still a strong tendency to push for a university education first and only go to a TVET college if the students’ marks are not good enough for university entrance. Given the large numbers in South Africa’s basic education system, it is imperative that more learners actively decide to pursue a technical and vocational education. This takes pressure off the overburdened university sector, which should not be responsible for taking the majority of students in the post-school education sector. A strong TVET system that effectively educates and skills students for the workplace is therefore a national imperative in South Africa, and one that you as a TVET lecturer doing this course is actively involved in.

Importance of practical training and experience and proximity to employers.

The White Paper also stresses practical training for all institutions. It argues that institutional workshops are important because they enable controlled conditions for practice in line with the curriculum; however, it also stresses that institutions cannot keep abreast with technological change in industry, and it is thus vital for students to learn in the workplace itself. This not only gives them practice with the relevant technologies, but also gives them exposure to real-life conditions where they can learn important skills like teamwork, working under pressure, and working with customers. The White Paper also supports a model of bringing industry into the college, where employers set up services based at campuses, such as vehicle maintenance, restaurants (for hospitality programmes) or beauty- and hair-care services. Rather than focusing this practical aspect on the TVET sector alone, the White Paper turns to university programmes with a long history of successful workplace integration, such as medicine, as models which could be used to promote greater integration for other programmes.

Stop and think

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| The Department of Higher Education as well as the Sector Education and Training Authorities have placed a strong emphasis on extending and improving the quality of practical training and work-based learning. What kinds of interventions and new developments have occurred in your TVET college that have tried to improve the quality of skills development and work-based learning? What are the issues that have arisen when attempting to improve the quality of skills development and work-based learning? |

Heavy on skills, light on integrated competences

In Unit 1, we saw that Taylorism influenced education broadly to focus on measurable outputs. Breaking up teaching and learning into small measurable units can be a positive contribution as it ensures that clear criteria are set, measured and ticked off. This counters the risk of a poor-quality education not really achieving anything and it not getting picked up, but it can also feed into a focus on micro-competences and lose sight of the importance of a person developing a deep, comprehensive competence integrating many different kinds of general and specific knowledge and skill, along with key attitudes and values. If a student takes a long list of courses, but the knowledge and skill are never combined in a way that builds expertise, his or her qualification will not really mean that much. Imagine if you wanted to buy a new car and the dealer gave you the price. You showed up at the dealership, looking forward to driving away in your new car. Then they started bringing out carts full of car parts. When you asked what was going on, they replied, “every single component you paid for is here.” When you say to them, “This is not a car! I bought a car!” they shake their heads and say, “We provide you with every single component of a car. There is not a single piece missing that you will need.” What would you say? What is missing? What is missing is the integration of all the parts into a working whole. This needs careful alignment and calibration. If lecturers simply deliver different parts but don’t engage with the students in integrating them into a whole, the latter may graduate with a piece of paper saying they are an engineer or a teacher, but they may only really have a collection of many bits and pieces that they don’t know how to use together expertly.

A number of thinkers in the TVET sector have engaged with this question. Winch (2017) identifies three kinds of knowledge underlying vocational subjects, which he calls ‘knowing HOW’, ‘knowing IT’ and ‘knowing THAT’. (This is described in the introduction to this module). **Knowing how** is the knowledge that makes you able to *do* something – although you might not be able to explain what it is that you know that someone else doesn’t know who can’t do it. (Riding a bike is an example). **Knowing it** is a bit different. It’s when you are so familiar with something that you can recognise when it’s right and when it’s not. It could be that you are involved with music, and you recognise instantly when someone is exactly on pitch – even if you can’t sing on pitch yourself! You know it’s right or wrong even if you can’t completely explain why. In vocational training that happens only on the job; for example, through apprenticeships, a person may develop very expert ‘know how’ and ‘know it’. But that still isn’t the whole picture. **Knowing that** completes the picture. Knowing that is about understanding how and why something works or is right. It’s about being able to explain, using scientific principles or theoretical models, why something works a certain way. Winch (2017) emphasises that all three types of knowledge are needed at the same time for effective TVET pedagogy to take place. Breaking down skills into isolated and measurable units tends to prevent a deeper and broader understanding of vocational skills. However, breaking skills down into micro competences does allow for simpler teaching, learning, and assessment.

Stop and think

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| Do you feel that in your college or programme, there is too much of a disjointed approach to delivering different skills, rather than working with students to integrate them? Think back to indigenous African education where learning happened in the midst of the thing that was being learned being used, where the student watched an expert actually perform the skill and then practiced on their own with their peers afterwards. Do you think this kind of indigenous African education is still viable in a modern society and economy like South Africa? |

Low status of TVET

Another challenge facing the higher education system in South African is that students demonstrate a preference for university education. While the DHET envisioned a far higher enrolment in TVET than the university sector, this hasn’t happened. Universities are associated with higher status and university graduates are seen as having higher earning jobs, as well as having greater capacity to start their own companies or work for themselves.

Stop and think

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| What kinds of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, or integrated competences, are needed for a person to become self-employed? Are TVET colleges equipping students to be able to start their own businesses if they need to? |

While the White Paper indicates that building up the TVET sector is the Department’s highest priority, lower spending on TVET contributes to the continuing perception that it is ‘second-rate’. While TVET programmes are often promoted using language about how they enable students to develop skills quickly and get into jobs, the reality is that TVET programmes aren’t always well aligned to industry, and students don’t always develop adequate competence to ensure they will get a job.

Some analysts have argued that in higher education today, both universities and TVET colleges are actually vocational. There are few university programmes that completely ignore preparation for a job and focus only on academic thought for its own sake. Thus, a university education is seen as a higher-level vocational education.

Stop and think

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| What other factors do you think contribute to a negative perception of the TVET sector? What would be required to raise TVET to the same status as a university education? After this was achieved, what would be the difference between TVET and university – in other words, is there a possibility of them being equal but different, and if so, what would be the purpose or value of their difference? |

A philosophy of education to guide the future development of academic and technical and vocational education and training

We have seen across this module that education is often used to further the interests of the wealthy (for example, developing their intellectual knowledge while equipping the poor to meet their material needs), secure the power of the powerful (by teaching the elite to think and act powerfully as leaders and agents and teaching the poor to obey), meet national aims for social and economic development, and meet the ‘demands’ of industry. These other agendas may be in competition, or they may be aligned (the wealthy may also be the politically powerful and are very likely also capitalists who stand to profit most from economic growth. Dewey’s philosophy of education argues that students need to be provided with an education that develops their intellectual, moral and technical abilities to be able to engage critically and expertly with a range of paid and unpaid vocations throughout their lives. This is not only important for their personal growth, but also equips them with the agency and understanding to make positive contributions and impacts on society to promote political, social and economic well-being, supporting a democratic society. It is vital that higher education be grounded in an educational philosophy that is clear about who and what education and training is for and ensures that all investments and initiatives are aligned to this and are not hijacked by other interests.

In the South African context, the challenges inherited from the past, along with the challenges of keeping up with a rapidly changing world, require that the philosophy of education constantly be re-examined, to ensure it serves the democratic needs and rights of all, and be kept in focus, to ensure it is truly driving the design and implementation of education and engaging effectively with these challenges. To conclude this module, then, let’s go back to basics and consider three fundamental questions that can be used to inform a philosophy of education:

* What is the purpose of education and training: what – and who – is it for?
* What does a student need to learn (or develop, or become) during their educational experience in order to achieve these aims?
* What is the most effective approach to achieve these aims?

What- and who- is education and training for?

The answer may seem to obviously be ‘the student’. However, in an education system driven by the strong interests of the wealthy, the politically powerful, and industry, facilitating the needs and goals of the student may not really be the top priority.

Stop and think

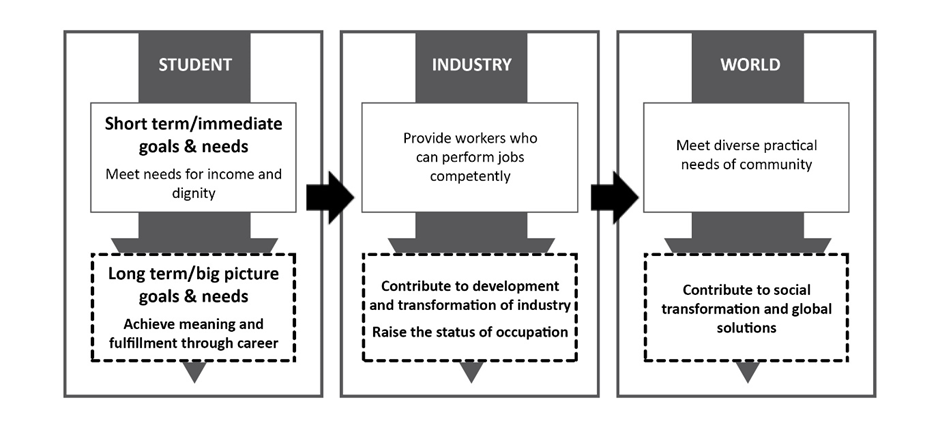
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| Is this different for universities than for TVET colleges? |

In our present context, both vocational and academic education are conceptualised as existing to meet needs and goals at three levels:

1. The student;
2. The workplace/industry; and
3. The greater society (including the local community, national goals, and the world as a whole).

These levels overlap and interact in many ways. A student should not be trained just to satisfy the demand of industry or serve the needs of society: first and foremost, vocational training is about addressing the needs and goals of the student. As they develop the skills, knowledge, attitudes and values (SKAV) that enable them to meet their own needs and goals, they become able to meet the goals and needs of industry. A student with a sound liberal (critical) and vocational education will be positioned to contribute to society on many levels. And, ultimately, industry only exists to meet the goals and needs of society (although behind this often lies the people aiming to profit from the industry).

Each of the stakeholders have short and long-term aims. It is important to keep this in mind, or education can become skewed to only meet a short-term aim and fail to meet a long-term aim, or vice versa. One way to model this could be like this, see Figure 5 below:



**Figure 5: The short- and long-term needs of TVET’s stakeholders (students, industry and society) that TVET is required to address.**

**Source:** Public Domain

In this model, meeting the short-term needs of students (equipping them to get a decent job so they can support themselves) enables them to be able to meet the short-term needs of industry which enables industry to meet the short-term needs of society. Similarly, equipping a student to be able to think and act in the world in all areas of their life (long-term goal) enables them to contribute at a higher level to change and development in the industry, which enables the industry to respond creatively and effectively to issues in the world. It also provides the TVET graduate with opportunities for economic and social upward mobility.

Stop and think

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| Do you think this model reflects Dewey’s ideal of education for democracy at individual and societal levels? Do you think this is how it works now? Should it work like this? Would you model this differently? |

What does a student need to learn (or develop, or become) during their educational experience in order to achieve these aims?

From a decoloniality perspective, we can think without limitations about what will benefit students to learn. The curriculum can be interrogated to see what aims or whose interests it serves and if it is aligned to the educational philosophy driving higher education. Some of the domains that need to be considered are:

* Relevant theoretical and technical knowledge and skills for competence and mastery in the target profession.
* Relevant indigenous knowledge systems.
* Historical understanding of the profession/industry and knowledge of the broader political, economic, environmental and social context.
* Critical and analytical thinking skills.
* Other ‘21st century’ knowledge and skills important for success, in areas such as entrepreneurship, professionalism, communication, collaboration, and lifelong learning.
* Other attitudes and values that support democracy, equality and justice.

Consideration should be given to the fact that competence is more than the ‘sum of the parts’ – in other words, mastering each of the knowledge areas or skills on a list does not result automatically in competence or useful knowledge (like unassembled car parts). Models can be used to do this, such as ‘know how, know it, know that’, or ‘skills, knowledge, values and attitudes’ (SKAV).

What are the most effective teaching approaches to achieve these educational aims?

A broad range of pedagogical approaches can be considered for their effectiveness in facilitating learning of the target ‘content’. Questions and approaches that should be considered, and not assumed, include:

* Will theoretical knowledge be separated from practical skill, or taught and learnt in an integrated way?
* Will learning be separated from the context where it will be used, or will it take place in the context?
* Dewey and Freire’s approaches to teaching and learning to build agency and critical thinking.

What institutional structures would best support *these* educational aims engaging *this* content using *these* approaches?

Again, from a decoloniality perspective we are free to think openly and creatively about discarding or transforming structures that do not serve our aims and our context well and creating new ones that do. Students, curricula and pedagogy should not be constrained by arbitrary structures set up a long time ago; rather, structures should be designed on the basis of what can best facilitate the aims of education, and effective teaching of what students need to learn to meet these aims.

In this module, we have explored in depth the issues around the separation of vocational and academic education, and their possible integration. We have seen several approaches:

1. **Complete separation of vocational training from academic education.** The most dramatic separation of vocational path focused on skills training to meet the needs of industry that emphasises modular learning that is flexible and responsive to changes in industry – allowing a person to upskill, reskill in a focused way with a strong focus on assessment without enrolling for an entire programme (a model aligned with Taylorism and Sneddon); in strong contrast, a liberal education that goes deep into the philosophical basis of disciplines for its own sake, which is not ‘answerable’ to industry and preserves a space for intellectual thought for its own sake, which can provide significant benefits to guide society (like the ancient Greek model). Each approach has merits in terms of what it offers but is also weakened by that it does not offer students what they need.
2. **Combination of theoretical/academic knowledge and practical learning, but separate structures.** In this approach, technical institutions focus on developing students’ practical competencies, but engage seriously with theoretical knowledge and critical thinking about the discipline and the broader context. Universities have a stronger emphasis on liberal subjects and research, in addition to theoretical knowledge and critical thinking, but also ensure that students have the practical skills and workplace learning they need in order to be job-ready.
3. **Integrated vocational/academic education.** This is Dewey’s approach: one, unified approach to education which develops the agency and critical thinking **and** the vocational competencies of all students.
4. **A diversified system** in which different institutions combine academic and vocational learning in different ways.
5. **A grassroots, community-based approach** where the majority of citizens – not just the few who have gotten good exam results – develop vocational competencies along with agency and critical thinking in informal structures led and organised in their communities, with little emphasis on formal assessment or qualifications.

Stop and think

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| These are over-simplified characterisations presented for the sake of discussion. In real life in the modern world, there are few institutions that will fall neatly into one of these categories. However, which one do you think best fits with the current **philosophy** of the Department of Higher Education and Training, based on what you have learnt in this unit? Which one do you think best describes the **reality** in higher learning at present? |

# Conclusion

You have come to the end of this module. Our hope is that as you continue with your career as a TVET lecturer, what you have learnt in this module will enable you to engage consciously and thoughtfully with the underlying philosophies that drive education and the purposes and design of teaching and learning, both in the way you design learning experiences for your students, and in the way you influence your institution.

# Model Summative Assessment: Making the new knowledge in this module yours

**Suggested time:** 3 hours

This activity is designed to give you an opportunity to review all the ideas you have been exposed to in this module and engage with them critically as you consider the philosophical approach to higher education that is most appropriate to the South African context.

1. Review the module, revisiting each key philosophical concept to refresh your memory.
2. Return to your responses to Activity 1 in Unit 1 in your learning journal. In Questions 1-3, you compared descriptions for academic and vocational education as it is *now.* In Questions 5-7 you compared academic and vocational education as you think it should be. Reread your responses and note where your thinking may have shifted over the course of the module. Is there anything you see differently now? Make notes about this in the spaces you left after Questions 4 and 9.
3. Questions 1 and 2 have helped you bring together your knowledge and thinking about academic and vocational education. Now write a statement of your philosophical position for submission as a formal assessment for this module. Use the following headings (which relate to the four questions that framed this section) to guide you:
4. What – and who – education and training is for (Purposes and aims of education)
5. What a student needs to learn to achieve these aims (syllabus/curriculum)
6. The most effective approaches to facilitate this learning (pedagogy)
7. The structures that would best support these aims, content and pedagogical approaches
8. In these sections, make connections to the philosophical approaches (e.g., Plato, Newman, Taylor, Washington, Du Bois, Dewey, Sneddon, indigenous education, Fanon, Freire, Biko, principles of people’s education) and key concepts and you have worked with in this module (e.g., the legacy of colonialism and apartheid, approaches to decolonisation, indigenous knowledge systems, new challenges the world is facing.) You are encouraged to also reference other writers, thought leaders, and issues that you think are relevant.
9. Prepare a Powerpoint presentation to present your position. This should comprise of 5 to 15 slides. Present your position to your classmates, engaging their questions and comments at the end. Your lecturer may also set up the presentations as a debate.

## Summative Assessment Rubric

You will be assessed against the following rubric:

|  | **Task** | **Excellent** | **Good** | **Needs development** | **Inadequate** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Written statement of your philosophy of education** | | | | | |
| a. | **Purposes and aims** | You have identified the stakeholders that education is for, explained why, and described what it should do for them. | You have identified the stakeholders that education is for, explained why, and shown what it should do for them. | You have identified the stakeholders that education is for, explained why, and shown what it should do for them. | You have not identified the stakeholders that education is for and/or shown what it should do for them. |
| b. | **Syllabus and curriculum to support purposes and aims** | You have clearly and comprehensively mapped out the general areas that would need to be taught and clearly shown how it relates to the purposes and aims. | You have mapped out the key areas that would need to be taught and related these to the purposes and aims. | You have mapped out some areas that would need to be taught and made some connections to the purposes and aims. | You have not mapped out the areas that would need to be taught and/or you have not made connections to the purposes and aims. |
| c. | **Pedagogy** | You have clearly and comprehensively described the pedagogical approaches that would best support these purposes and aims. | You have described the pedagogical approaches that would best support these purposes and aims. | You description of pedagogical approaches does not adequately support these purposes and aims. | You did not describe pedagogical approaches to support these purposes and aims. |
| d. | **Structures** | You have clearly and comprehensively described how higher education should be structured to best achieve these aims and purposes. | You have described how higher education should be structured to best achieve these aims and purposes. | Your description of how higher education should be structured is not convincingly linked to these aims and purposes. | You have not described how higher education should be structured to achieve these aims and purposes. |
| e. | **Engagement with key concepts and philosophical approaches from the unit in a-d** | You have engaged deeply with a wide range of concepts and philosophical approaches in a-d. | You have engaged actively with several key concepts and philosophical approaches in a-d. | You have engaged with few key concepts and philosophical approaches in a-d. | You have not engaged with key concepts and philosophical approaches in a-d. |
| **Oral presentation of your philosophy of education** | | | | | |
| 3. | **Oral presentation** | You have clearly and effectively presented your philosophy of education, covering a-e. | Your presentation of your philosophy of education showed adequate preparation and covered a-e. | Your presentation of your philosophy of education was not clear and/or did not cover a-e. | You did not present your philosophy of education. |
| 4. | **Visual (PowerPoint) presentation** | Your slides effectively supported your oral presentation; they were clear and readable and showed careful preparation. | Your slides related to your oral presentation and were neat and readable. | Your slides were not effective in supporting your oral presentation. | You did not have a visual presentation. |

Discussion of the activity

This activity has helped you evaluate the ideas you have been exposed to in this module and integrate your evaluation of them into your own framework of knowledge.

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