Mission Transition: Helping Undergraduate Liberal Arts Students Transition from University to the Workplace

Paula Rayo

Western University

Abstract

Ontario is currently faced with a skills mismatch crisis as employers are having difficulty finding the right people with suitable skills to sustain and grow their businesses, while many highly educated youth struggle to find suitable work that align with their skills, training, and education. This is costing Ontario billions of dollars in foregone GDP and it is negatively affecting individual well-being. The Ford government is now making post-secondary institutions more accountable to resolve this issue, as it was announced in April 2019 that the funding universities receive will depend on graduate outcomes (i.e. graduate employment, earnings, etc.). Although some would argue that we should move away from a Liberal Arts education model towards more vocational and applied education, I argue that a Liberal Arts education is needed now more than ever as we prepare students for an uncertain future of work in the 21st century. However, the Liberal Arts curriculum does need to be updated to respond to both student and societal needs. In the end, I propose to embed a career guidance program in the Liberal Arts curriculum. The program is a philosophy course that includes an online learning platform, weekly lectures, and a placement for experiential learning.

"If secondary and postsecondary educators cannot fulfill their economic mission to help grow the economy and help youths and adults become successful workers, they also will fail in their cultural and political missions to create good neighbors and good citizens."

-Dr. Anthony Carnevale

Introduction

Problem of Practice: Skills Mismatch in Ontario

Ask any young undergraduate student in Ontario what they fear most about life after graduation and chances are they will say uncertainty about employment. Ask employers in Ontario what their biggest challenge in recruiting staff is and chances are they will tell you it is finding someone with the proper skills and qualifications. Ontario is currently faced with a situation where employers are having difficulty finding the right people with suitable skills to sustain and grow their businesses, while many highly educated youth struggle to find suitable work that align with their skills, training, and education (Stuckey & Munro, 2013; Sullivan, 2017; Deller et. al., 2018; Tibando & Do, 2018). This is called the "skills mismatch" and it is costing the province a whopping $4.1 billion in foregone GDP, $747 million in federal tax revenues, and $627 million in provincial tax revenues—annually (Stuckey & Munro, 2013). This is significant lost revenue that could be put towards public debt relief, improved infrastructure, and improved economic and social benefits for the people of Ontario. At the microeconomic level, skills mismatch leads to job and wage dissatisfaction, higher turnover rates, reduced productivity, and increased unemployment (Sullivan, 2017). Failing to address this issue will result in continuous consequences for the economy, business performance, and individual well-being (Stuckey & Munro, 2013).

Although higher education does increase job prospects (Dolan, 2017), the concern here is underemployment—working in jobs where one is overqualified for, including having obtained an advanced university degree that is not required for the job at hand. Thus, the heart of the matter is *quality* of employment, rather than *quantity* of people employed in the province. A Parlimentary Budget Officer labour market report revealed that in 2014, 56% of university grads

under the age of 24 were underemployed and 40% of university grads between the ages of 25-34 were underemployed (Fréchette, 2015). This is an 8% increase from 1991 when rates of underemployment were just 32% for those age 25-34. Furthermore, depending on the sector, between 21-52% of employers in Ontario report having difficulty finding people with the right qualifications (Stuckey & Munro, 2013). 82% of the Ontario Camber of Commerce (OCC) members surveyed reported having difficulty recruiting staff in the latter half of 2016 (Sullivan, 2017).

The Root of the Problem

The skills mismatch is a multi-faceted and complex problem involving a variety of stakeholders, including post-secondary institutions (PSIs), students, employers, and the government. First of all, many PSIs are failing to adjust the curriculum to reflect the realities of current and future labour market trends influenced by technological and demographic changes (Stuckey & Munro, 2013). As a result, far too many students are graduating from programs that limits their participation in the economy. PSIs also fail to provide students with key information about employment prospects, supply and demand, income information, and the general labour market trends for specific programs and disciplines, which could influence students' education choices as they follow their chosen career pathways. At best, PSI program websites offer career path information that is too generic and does not reflect the realities of the current job market, which can be misleading to students (Edge, Martin & Mckean, 2018).

Students themselves are not very attentive to labour market trends, which can result in making ill-informed choice about educational pathways and career outcomes (Stuckey & Munro, 2013). This could be due to the fact that undergraduate students generally have a limited understanding of what life after university might involve and only begin to think about their

careers as they approach graduation (Edge, Martin & Mckean, 2018). For those who do think about their future and the career path seems too obscure, they are at risk of losing motivation to complete their degrees, thereby influencing retention rates at PSIs. Students often turn to faculty for career advice, but faculty are rarely prepared to offer such advice as they have limited work experience outside of academia and they lack the knowledge on labour market realities (Edge, Martin & Mckean, 2018). Lastly, students have difficulty articulating their skills and value to employers when the time to look for work comes (Edge, Martin & Mckean, 2018; Deller, Pichette & Watkins, 2018).

Employers are known to have weak ties with PSIs, which limits their ability to communicate their labour market needs or to provide students with experiential learning opportunities (Stuckey & Munro, 2013). The government has struggled with collecting and sharing relevant labour market information with PSIs, students, and businesses. Lastly, the government has failed to provide PSIs with significant funding towards developing key educational initiatives that would help students make smoother transitions from school to the workplace, such as experiential learning programs (Stuckey & Munro, 2013). Each one of these stakeholders holds responsibility for preparing the workforce of tomorrow and are all urged to take immediate action.

Financial Pressures

The Progressive Conservative government of Ontario is already taking steps to apply pressure on PSIs, as it was announced on April 2019 that funding for universities and colleges will depend on graduate outcomes, including "graduation rate, graduate employment, graduate earnings, experiential learning, skills and competencies, research funding and capacity, and community impact." (Jones, 2019). The proportion of funding linked to institutional performance

was only 1.4% in recent years but it will rise to 60 per cent in the next five years. Starting in the 2020-21 academic year, 25% of provincial grants will be tied to outcomes performance, gradually increasing 10% each year until 2024-25 when it peaks at 60% ($3.04 billion) (Crawley, 2019). Merrilee Fullerton, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, stated that these new metrics are intended to encourage PSIs to actively move towards improving outcomes for their students. Above all, this tactic is intended to ensure that the funding received by these institutions is being managed effectively and efficiently.

Liberal Arts colleges should be most concerned with this new policy as the outcomes of their graduates are bleakest. Edge, Martin & Mckean (2018) explain,

> "Thousands of students graduate from Canadian post-secondary institutions each year with an undergraduate degree in the social sciences or humanities (SSH). While most go on to a wide range of rewarding careers, many face challenging career transitions as they struggle to define their career paths and expectations and establish themselves in the labour market. These transition-related challenges have led some to argue that SSH graduates lack the skills needed to be successful in the labour market and too often end up in low-paying, low-skilled jobs. They argue that post-secondary education (PSE) programs should focus on developing the applied skills required for specific careers." (p. ii).

It is known that that upon graduation, SSH graduates are more likely to earn less; be overqualified for their jobs; and work in jobs unrelated to their degree compared to other undergraduate grads as a whole (Edge, Martin & Mckean, 2018). However, the data suggests that the career outcomes of SSH graduates do improve over time, particularly as they progress into more senior positions later on in their careers where non-applied skills (i.e. critical thinking) are

needed most. Therefore, LA colleges should be focusing their resources on initiatives that help students make timely and smoother transitions into the workplace immediately after graduation.

The pressure is coming not only from the government, but also from the public. With the rising costs of higher education and increasing economic pressures, students and parents are demanding a higher return on investment for post-secondary education. Student expectations have changed over time from 1966 when only 42% of freshmen "placed a high value on financial success as one of their desired outcomes of a college education" (p. 71), compared to 73% by 2006. The amount of students who "placed a high value on developing a meaningful philosophy of life" (p. 71) dropped from 85% to 46% during that same time period (Logan & Curry, 2015). This is not an unreasonable demand from students and parents as Carnevale (2016) explains, "it's hard to be a lifelong learner if you're not a lifelong earner. Those who are not equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to get and keep good jobs are denied full social inclusion and tend to disengage from the mainstream culture, polity, and economy." (p. 4)

It is not uncommon to hear about arts and humanities departments closing down or merging with other programs due to low enrolment (Logan & Curry, 2015; Edge, Martin & Mckean, 2018). The rate of enrolment in humanities programs in Canada dropped 13.5% between 2005-06 and 2014-15 (Edge, Martin & Mckean, 2018). This is despite the fact that undergraduate enrolments as a whole have increased 22.1% during that same time period. It is the applied-skills programs such as engineering, health, and business that are benefiting most from these enrolment increases.

While some would argue that LA degrees are useless and are creating the greatest proportions of skills mismatches in the province, others argue that LA graduates are needed now more than ever as we move towards the 21st century. In this paper, I argue that LA degrees

continue to have value as they prepare students for work in the 21st century, which is characterized as an increasingly globalized and technologically advanced world full of uncertainties. However, for LA colleges to survive economic and social pressures, it is absolutely necessary that they update their curriculum to meet the needs of their students and of society. I propose a career-oriented curricular program to help undergraduate students make well-informed and intentional career choices, thereby helping them transition more smoothly from university to the workplace.

The Value of a Liberal Arts Education for the 21st century

For the majority of human history, the purpose of education was a utilitarian one—to train people for jobs and tasks that enables the survival of the individual and the community (Zakaria, 2015). It was not until Ancient Greece when a new governing model of democracy came about that an entirely different type of education was developed to empower citizens from the perils of ignorance and tyranny. The transition from oligarchy to democracy meant that the power was shifting from the hands of a select few to the citizens of the state. As such, citizens needed a broad education that would allow them to participate fully in the political arena and ultimately run their own societies properly. This broad education is what we now call the Liberal Arts (LA). The term was coined by the Romans to embody what this type of education represented: *"of or pertaining to free men".* (Zakaria, 2015, p. 27).

Critical thinking has always been the cornerstone of a LA education as it is critical thinking that initiates improvement and further progress in any society (Marber & Araya, 2017). Critical thinking is defined as "the ability to think clearly and rationally about what to do or what to believe. It includes the ability to engage in reflective and independent thinking" (Lau & Chan, 2015). In Ancient Greece, critical thinking was achieved by mastering the seven fundamental

literacies comprised of both arts and sciences: grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy. Today, critical thinking is endorsed by studying the depth and breadth of a prescribed course of study, thereby expanding the powers of the mind, as well as storing it with knowledge (Marber & Araya, 2017). Marber and Araya (2017) describe LA in the following way,

> …the liberal arts are much more than a setting or a curriculum; rather, they comprise an educational philosophy that fosters critical thinking and rational judgment, emphasizing discursive reasoning across all disciplines. In the liberal arts tradition, discussion and debate, rather than technical or vocational training, provide the foundation for collaboration and social problem-solving. (p. xiii)

Although LA originated in Europe, with time it slowly started fading away and by the 19th century, it was replaced with a more utilitarian type of education—the vocational model. The vocational model follows a mono-disciplinary track, which focuses on technical skills training for specific trades and professions. In this model, students must choose a trade or profession to study from a very young age and follow a singular educational path all the way through to employment. The vocational model has remained the predominant post-secondary education for most of Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America. In North America, however, LA remains a significant tradition of higher education (Marber & Araya, 2017).

One could argue that adopting the vocational model would alleviate the skills mismatch problem because it provides students with a direct pathway to well-paying jobs that are in demand by employers. While this may in fact be a short-term solution, the vocational model cannot withstand the long-term effects of an unpredictable and rapidly changing job market of

the 21st century as jobs and tasks are becoming increasingly automated. Edge, Martin, and Mckean, (2018) explain,

> While applied skills can easily become outdated or obsolete with the advent of new technologies, SSH skills are durable; they help individuals work with and relate to one another, adapt to new circumstances, and remain flexible in the face of change, which is increasingly important in an environment when workers are changing jobs more frequently. (p. 5).

We would be failing students if we were to only offer vocational model of education at the expense of the skills to "deal with change, to learn new things, and to persevere mental balance in unfamiliar situations" (Harari, 2018, p. 378). To navigate the complexities of the 21st century, students will need to learn how to reinvent themselves again and again (Harari, 2018).

The critical thinking skills that are inherent to a LA education are perhaps the most vital survival skills in any era of constant disruptive change for both individuals and society as a whole (Marber & Araya, 2017). Marber and Araya (2017) explain, "We are currently preparing students for jobs that don't [yet] exist, using technologies that haven't been invented yet, in order to solve problems we don't even know are problems yet." (p. i). LA grads will be needed most when we are presented with pressing societal issues unique to the 21st century, such as how to deal with the effects of political polarization or determining ethical guidelines for big data collection. They will be needed most when technology calls for innovative solutions to improve our world (Edge, Martin & Mckean, 2018).

Additionally, unlike the vocational model, a LA education encourages students to explore a wide range of subject areas while providing the space to change and grow. This enables students to gradually develop self-understanding, which is key to making career choices that will

lead to more rewarding career outcomes (Arnett, 2004). It could be argued then that liberal arts education is needed now more than ever to prepare students for the 21st century.

There is evidence that business employers do in fact prefer LA grads over grads from vocational programs for managerial and executive positions (Nicholson, 2016). This is because they are known to have a broad understanding of the world, which helps them make important decisions. They also have the necessary critical thinking skills to further progress in their organizations. Nicholson (2016) explains it as "an education that allows them to grow, adapt, and contribute as citizens—and to build successful careers" (p. 2). LA grads therefore generally enjoy better long-term career opportunities than graduates from vocational-focused programs, but they also struggle more to break into entry-level positions (Nicholas, 2016).

Herein lies the crux of the problem, once again: although the LA education has tremendous value for preparing students for the 21st century, these institutions need to do more to assist students with transitioning from university to the workplace immediately after graduation. This does not mean replacing what is traditionally taught in a LA curriculum with vocational education, but rather it is about helping students recognize and articulate what they want out of a career and how to develop the skills they need through these LA programs. It also means providing students with more opportunities to apply those skills in both academic and non-academic contexts through experiential learning (Edge, Martin & Mckean, 2018). Edge, Martin & Mckean (2018) state,

> By ensuring SSH students have access to comprehensive career development programming and experiential learning opportunities tailored to their disciplines, PSE institutions and SSH faculties and departments can help ensure the continued vitality of

these disciplines and create greater understanding of the valuable social, cultural, and economic contributions of SSH graduates. (p. ii)

Proposed Recommendations

It has been found that the most effective initiatives for SSH disciplines combine experiential learning with career management skills, which would encourage students to successfully identify a personally rewarding career path, to navigate the workplace over their lifetime, to understand the labour market, and to apply their skills in non-academic environments (Edge, Martin & Mckean, 2018). The same researchers also found that integrating such initiatives into the curriculum is most effective.

"Career Mapping: Applied Philosophy" course

I designed a second year for-credit course based on the research and I propose to implement it at a small Liberal Arts college as a pilot project. The course is called "Career Mapping: Applied Philosophy" and the syllabus can be found in Appendix A. It is necessarily a second-year course because according to the qualitative research, Stuckey and Munro (2013) found that students prefer to be exposed to these initiatives at the beginning of their education. This allows them to have more time to reflect and build upon their experiences, as well as more time to plan their academic trajectory accordingly. Ideally, this would be a compulsory course for all undergraduate students as it has the potential to help students successfully transition into the workplace from university.

This course would fall under the discipline of Philosophy as it introduces students to a variety of philosophical ideas that incite reflection on what it means to have a rewarding career path and how to navigate that path for life. Some topics include meaning and purpose, free will, identity, developmental life stages, authenticity, self-actualization, and so on. It is considered

applied philosophy because students are encouraged to apply the theory they learn in class to the lab work, their placements, and life in general.

It is designed as a full-year course to allow enough time for both philosophical and applied components. In the first term, students must attend weekly lectures followed by lab work where they complete the exercises in the Career Mapping platform (https://rayopaula.wixsite.com/career-mapping). The exercises are designed to offer scaffolding learning, as one exercise builds on the other. On the "Explore" level, students are tasked to search for the best suited local placements that will match their needs for skills development.

Throughout the second term, students attend their placements while making weekly reflections as part of the experiential learning component. By the end of the course, students must build a road map which includes a mission statement, an indication of where they are now, where they want to be in 5 years, and actionable steps they need to take to get there. This will be handed in with a final report.

The Tyler Rationale

I used the Tyler Rationle to develop this program as this method effectively determines how curriculum should be designed to fulfill both student and societal needs (Tyler, 1949). The method asks four fundamental questions:

1. What educational purposes should the school seek to attain?
2. What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?
3. How can these educational experiences be effectively organized?
4. How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained?

In the following section, I answer these questions related to the problem of practice and by doing so, I explain how the curricular program works.

What educational purposes should the Career Mapping seek to attain?

The main purpose for this program is provide undergraduate students with better career guidance to help them transition into the workplace immediately after graduation, thereby reducing the skills mismatch in Ontario. This includes helping them identify a personally rewarding career path, navigate the workplace over their lifetime, understand the labour market, and apply their skills in non-academic environments. The underlying purpose of this program, however, is to humanize higher education. That is, to provide students with education that enables them to identify and express their unique capabilities, also known as self-realization. As a result, students will feel more empowered to face the world of work head on.

John Dewey (1902) wrote "The Child and the Curriculum" to critique American education for failing to recognize the student at the center of curriculum development. Dewey (1902) explains the problem in the curriculum as he refers to the student, "He goes to school, and various studies divide and fractionize the world for him...Facts are torn away from their original place in experience and rearranged with reference to some general principle" (p.5-6). According to Dewey (1902), the problem with American education is that the curriculum is often composed of irrelevant facts and information that is of little use to students who are each having their unique lived experiences. This is especially relevant today as the climate of the 21st century can make facts and information obsolete within a matter of days, making it even more useless to the student.

Instead of enlightening the student with insight to make sense of his/her lived experience, this type of education fragments the student. Krishnamurti (2007) was another contemporary philosopher who identified this problem in American education,

> In our present civilization we have divided life into so many departments that education has very little meaning, except in learning a particular technique or profession. Instead of awakening the integrated intelligence of the individual, education is encouraging him to conform to a pattern and so is hindering his comprehension of himself as a total process. (p.4-5)

Dewey's curriculum development theory was influenced by the rapid immigration that was flooding American society in the 19th century (Null, 2003). Due to the wide-ranging cultural diversity he observed, Dewey wanted to find a curricular formula that would fit the diverse needs of students but still remain relevant and educative. This is especially applicable today as university student bodies across Canada are becoming increasingly diverse. Dewey rationalized that although we all have many individual differences; we all have the desire to achieve self-realization. Thus, he concluded that the goal of education is self-realization, as he contended, "Not knowledge or information, but self-realization, is the goal" (Dewey. 1902, p. 9).

Self-realization is defined in the dictionary as "the act of achieving the full development of your abilities and talents" and "fulfillment by oneself of the possibilities of one's character or personality" ("Self-realization", n.d.). The idea is that to live a meaningful and fulfilling life, one must get to know one's authentic self and use this self-knowledge to achieve one's ultimate potential, which is unique for each individual. In career development, no other task is more important than this. Hence, paving the path towards self-realization is the ultimate goal of the Career Mapping program.

What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?

If we begin with the assumption that every student has unique but latent capabilities waiting to be unleashed and our job as educators is to help students discover that, then the

Socratic method is perhaps the ideal pedagogical method for our purposes. The Socratic method takes its name from its founder Socrates who claimed that the human mind is not an empty vessel or blank slate waiting to be filled with knowledge, but rather it is already full of profound ideas waiting to emerge (Malloy & Lang, 2016). The job of the educator then is to act as a sort of midwife by helping students give birth to those ideas within, which can empower them and lead to self-realization. This is done by asking directed questions and probing the student until he/she reaches those insights on his/her own. As a result, students will feel a sense of ownership over those insights and be intrinsically motivated to move their ideas along forward.

The Socratic method is echoed by Dewey (1902), as he suggested that instead of developing curriculum that focuses on the subject-matter irrespective of the student's experience, we should develop subject matter that begins with the student's experience at the centre of curriculum development. The subject-matter should be designed as a tool to guide the student's unique experience in the world, just as a map guides a traveler through the terrain. The job of the educator should be to achieve a synthesis between the student's experience and the subject-matter with an emphasis on the student's experience (Dewey, 1902).

You will notice that the Career Mapping platform is designed as the analogy of a journey and students are asked to develop the tools to guide them on that journey. It was purposely designed this way to encompass the Socratic teaching method and to resemble Dewey's analogy of the curriculum as a map for the terrain. Although students are probed throughout all the levels, it is "My Compass" and "My Road" exercises that encompass the Socratic method the most and I believe it is these two exercises that will benefit the students most.

The basis for the "My Compass" exercise is the Ikigai chart (https://rayopaula.wixsite.com/career-mapping/my-career-map). "Ikigai" is a Japanese word

whose meaning translates roughly to a reason for being, encompassing joy, a sense of purpose and meaning and a feeling of well-being (Rouse, 2016). The word derives from iki, meaning life and kai, meaning the realisation of hopes and expectations. On the website, I changed the terms slightly so that it relates to career development. Students are asked to make weekly reflections and fill in each of these circles throughout their placements. The "your needs" circles require plenty of self-reflection, whereas the "community needs" circles require research on the labour market and what the community values. Links are provided in each circle to guide students along. When enough data is collected for each circle, students are asked to write a vision statement that encapsulates the intersecting information from all four circles.

Evidently, this exercise uses the Socratic method as it does not prescribe a career path for students, but rather it draws ideas out of them by encouraging self-reflection and research. Self-reflection is quite arguably the most important aspect of career development as it informs students the kind of work they should seek so it aligns with who they are as a person. Being cognizant of one's interests, stable personality traits, knowledge, talents, strengths, etc. makes it easier to choose a career path that is best suited for oneself (Galles & Lenz, 2013). Dolan (2017) explains, "employers hire the best people for the job, not the people with the best degrees" (p. 5). Successful career selection and identity development takes time as it requires active exploration, evaluation, and practical identification (Samide et. al., 2011).

The "community needs" circles in this exercise aims to provide students with robust and frequently updated information on labour market trends so they can research that which aligns with their unique strengths and interests. Stuckey & Munro (2013) emphasized this recommendation to PSIs so that students can make well-informed decisions that will not lead them to any surprises by the time they graduate and are ready to enter the workforce. This

exercise takes it one step further, however, by teaching students to also research what the community values as these values can turn into monetary value, thereby instilling entrepreneurial thinking. Lastly, this exercise teaches students that it's okay (and expected) for change to happen, whether it's change in the labour market, community values, strengths, or interests. This is important to learn early on in response to the rapidly-changing markets that are predicted to occur in the 21st century.

The "My Road" exercise also uses the Socratic method of teaching, as students take the vision statement they came up with in "My Compass" as the guiding principal to "build their road". Building the road means that they have to describe where they are now, where they want to be in 5 years (according to their vision statement) and what are all the actionable goals they need to take to get there. This method was modeled after the "Designing Your Life" course from Stanford University taught by Bill Burnett and Dave Evans. This course uses the design thinking methods to help student design their vocation at Stanford ("Designing Your Life", n.d.). They write,

> Life design is the way forward…Designers imagine things that don't yet exist, and then they build them, and then the world changes. You can do this in your own life. You can imagine a career and a life that don't exist; you can build that future you, and as a result your life will change (Burnett & Evans, 2016, p. xxi)

The course was researched to understand the difference it was making for students and it was found that those who took this class were "better able to conceive of and pursue a career they really wanted; they had fewer dysfunctional beliefs…and an increased ability to generate new ideas for their life design" (Burnett & Evans, 2016, p. xxii). The course was so successful that the instructors wrote a book to help not only Stanford students but all adults in general.

Although the book includes guiding principles for applying design thinking to career development, I believe it would be more powerful to develop a visual interactive game of some sort to apply design thinking, which is what I made for the "My Road" exercise.

In addition to Socratic teaching methods, students also need experiential learning opportunities to be exposed to the workplace and to develop their skills sets. I have included the placement aspect in the second term. It is in the "Explore" exercise where students can search for and connect with potential employers and organizations, depending on what suits their needs. Experiential learning is without a doubt the top recommendation as it was mentioned on every single report that was found on the problem of practice (Stuckey & Munro, 2013; Sulivan, 2017; Tomlinson & Holmes, 2017; Edge; Edge, Martin & Mckean, 2018). Experiential learning is learning through hands-on approaches, which gives students direct experience with the job or project at hand.

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce Panel recommended that Ontario commits to "ensure every student has at least one experiential learning opportunity by the time they graduate post-secondary education" (Sullivan, 2017, p. 11). Although universities and colleges can offer several forms of internal experiential learning opportunities, these institutions should seek to form stronger partnerships with local, provincial, national, and even international partners to provide students with a full range of quality experiential learning opportunities. This is what the Career Mapping platform aims to provide in "Explore" section.

The most obvious benefit of experiential learning is that students are able to develop work-related experience and skills, such as technical skills, professionalism, business etiquette, and professional references (Stuckey & Munro, 2013). Experiential learning also provides networking opportunities and insights into possible careers and what is required to prepare for

them. By experiencing work situations first-hand, students can decide whether they like the job and if they can see themselves doing that job in the future on a day-to-day basis before fully committing to a long-term career path that may or may not suit them. This is especially important for the overly romanticized and competitive occupations that hold certain prestige but require many years of training. This is why I also offered a virtual library of "a day in the life of" videos depicting people in various professions and fields of work.

How can these educational experiences be effectively organized?

This course is divided in three parts: lectures, lab work, and placements. In the first term, students attend weekly lectures and complete lab work (Career Mapping exercises) right after class to prepare for the placements in the second term. Throughout their placements in the second term, students are asked to make weekly reflections in preparation for the capstone project. Details of the organized structure can be found on the course syllabus.

The idea behind the Career Mapping platform itself is to act as a game with 5 levels to accommodate for its scaffolding nature and to engage students digitally through the power of play. If students can learn through play, it will be an important lesson for them to learn that work can (and should) feel like play and this is the type of work they should seek out in their career paths. What kind of adults would these students become if they broke through the cultural myth that work and play are two separate things? Eisenstein (2007) describes the possibility,

> That play can actually be productive without consciously directing it at productivity rarely occurs to us, and when it does we assign it to the province of those lucky few, artists and geniuses, who get to do what they love. But actually the logic is backwards. Genius is the result of doing what you love, not a prerequisite for it. The problem, of course, is discovering what that is. (p. 70).

The Career Mapping platform was designed as a safe and contained space for students to explore their curiosities, unique characteristics, strengths, and interests as much as they want until they find out what they love doing. The organization of the exercises on Career Mapping can be found on the website.

How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained?

I think the best way to determine whether these purposes are being attained is to do longitudinal studies. The research would look at the outcomes of the students who took this class in the first few years after graduation. The measures would have to include the criteria put out by the Ford government as to what constitutes successful graduate outcomes (i.e. graduate earnings, type of employment, etc.), in addition to measures of well-being. It would also be interesting to analyze the congruency between students' "My Road" maps with their actual chosen career paths.

References

Arnett, J. J. (2004). *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road From the Late Teens Through the Twenties*. New York, New York: Oxford University Press.

Burnett, W., & Evans, D. J. (2018). *Designing your life: Build a life that works for you*. London: Vintage Books.

Carnevale, A. P. (2016). Credentials and competencies: Demonstrating the economic value of postsecondary education.

Crawley, M. (2019, May). How the Ford government will decide on university, college funding Social Sharing. Retrieved from https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ontario-doug-ford-university-college-post-secondary-grants-1.5121844

Deller, F., Pichette, J., & Watkins, E. K. (2018). *Driving Academic Quality: Lessons from Ontario's Skills Assessment Projects*. Queen's Printer for Ontario.

Deller, F., Pichette, J., & Watkins, E. K. (2018). *Driving Academic Quality: Lessons from Ontario's Skills Assessment Projects*. Queen's Printer for Ontario.

Designing Your Life. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://lifedesignlab.squarespace.com/dyl

Dewey, J. (1902). The child and the curriculum. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Dolan, S. (2017). Degree of Disappointment: Is Higher Education Failing? CBC News.

Edge, J., Martin, E., & Mckean, M. (2018). Getting to Work: Career Skills Development for Social Sciences and Humanities Graduates. *The Conference Board of Canada*, (February).

Eisenstein, C. (2007). The ascent of humanity. Harrisburg, PA: Panenthea Press.

Fréchette, J.-D. (2015). Labour market assessment 2015. *Parliamentary Budget Officer*, (November). Retrieved from http://www.pbo-dpb.gc.ca/web/default/files/Documents/Reports/2015/Labour 2015/Labour_Market_Assessment_2015_EN.pdf

Galles, J. A., & Lenz, J. G. (2013). Relationships among career thoughts, vocational identity, and calling: Implications for practice. *Career Development Quarterly*, *61*(3), 240–248.

Harari, Y. N. (2018). 21 Lessons for the 21st Century. London, United Kingdom: Jonathan Cape.

Jones, A. (2019, April). Ontario to tie post-secondary funding to grads' employment and earnings. Retrieved from https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2019/04/18/ontario-to-tie-post-secondary-funding-to-grads-employment-and-earnings.html

Krishnamurti, J. (2007). Education and the significance of life. New York, NY: HarperOne.

Lau, J. & Chan. J. (2015). *What is critical thinking?* Available at http://philosophy.hku.hk/think/critical/ct.php

Logan, J., & Curry, J. (2015). A Liberal Arts Education: Global Trends and Challenges. *Christian Higher Education*. https://doi.org/10.1080/15363759.2015.973344

Malloy, D. C., & Lang, D. L. (2016). *Golfing with the enlightened dead: Lessons on leadership and meaning from the pros 2016*. Place of publication not identified: Pneuma Springs Publishing.

Marber, P., & Araya, D. (Eds.). (2017). *The Evolution of Liberal Arts in the Global Age*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Nicholson, L. (2016). Why America's Business Majors Are in Desperate Need of a Liberal-Arts Education.

Null, J. W (2003). John Dewey's The Child and the Curriculum: 100 years later: Lessons for today? American Educational History Journal, 30, 59-68.

Rouse, M. (2016). What is ikigai? - Definition from WhatIs.com. *Tech Target*. Retrieved from https://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/ikigai

Rouse, M. (2016). What is ikigai? - Definition from WhatIs.com. *Tech Target.* Retrieved from https://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/ikigai

Samide, J. L., Eliason, G., & Patrick, J. (2011). *Career development in higher education*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Pub.

Self-realization. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/self-realization

Stuckey, J., & Munro, D. (2013). The Cost of Ontario's Skills Gap, (June).

Sullivan, K. (2017). *Talent in Transition: Addressing the Skills Mismatch in Ontario*. Retrieved from http://www.occ.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Talent-in-Transition.pdf

Tibando, A., & Do, A. (2018). Understanding the Talent Gap: Lessons and Opportunities for Canada. Retrieved from https://brookfieldinstitute.ca/report/understanding-the-talent-gap/

Tomlinson, M., & Holmes, L. (Eds.). (2017). *Graduate Employability in Context: Theory, Research and Debate*. London, United Kingdom: Springer Nature.

Tyler, R. W. (1949). Basic principles of curriculum and instruction. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. Pages 51-59.

Zakaria, F. (2015). In Defense of a Liberal Education. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Appendix A

PHIL 1234E
Fall/Winter 2020-21
Career Mapping: Applied Philosophy

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This experiential learning course introduces students to the art and science of career exploration. In the fall term, we will explore big questions, theories, and philosophies that set the foundation for developing a fulfilling career, including:

- Meaning and purpose
- The free will
- The theology of vocation
- Know thyself & become who you are
- Identity development & life stages
- Ikigai (Japanese philosophy)
- Hierarchy of needs, self-actualization, and authenticity
- Design thinking
- The workforce landscape of the 21st century and disruptive technologies

There is a lab component where we will use the Career Mapping website to complete all exercises related to career exploration. The goal is to self-reflect and research to find a suitable local placement on the Career Mapping website prior to the Winter term.

In the Winter term, you will start your placement and negotiate with your placement supervisor the skills you aim to develop. Using the Career Mapping website, you will reflect on your experiences throughout your placement. At the end, you will use the data and information you collected throughout the course to create an actionable career road map, along with a final report.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

(1) Understand the theories and philosophies related to self development.
(2) Develop the necessary tools for life-long career development, including self-reflective practices and finding opportunity gaps.
(3) Research labour market and career outcomes.
(4) Articulate and record instances of skills development.
(5) Formulate an actionable plan that can be used as a guide throughout the rest of your education.
(6) Learn how to develop a personal vision/mission statement, as well as SMART goals for your career trajectory.

COMPETENCIES OUTCOMES

By the end of this course, students in good standing will have developed the following competencies:

- Communication: Effective oral, written, and digital communication.
- Critical thinking skills and problem-solving
- Collaboration (with community partners)

- Creativity

SKILLS OUTCOMES

By the end of this course, students in good standing will have acquired the following skills:

- Entrepreneurial thinking
- Research and analysis of information
- Agility and adaptability
- Digital literacy

COURSE MATERIALS

*Selected weekly readings, rubrics and assignment details will be posted on OWL.

ASSESSMENT

The assessment in this course is multi-modal (to reflect the need of multiliteracies in a 21st century society).

Term 1

- Research paper #1 (10%): Choose a role model who inspires you professionally and explain how you think this person is living a meaningful life using the readings from the course to reinforce your arguments.
- Lab work (15%).
- Research paper #2 (15%): Research opportunity gaps and salary prospects in your industry of choice that relate to your skills and interests. Write a report explaining how you could fill in that gap and what skills you are required to do so.

Term 2 (placements)

- (5%)Weekly self-reflections on the Career Mapping website.
- (20%)Placement skills and goals evaluation by placement supervisor.
- (30%) Final career road map with a vision/mission statement, SMART goals, and milestones. To be completed in Virtual Reality and submitted with a short summary report.

FALL TERM

Week	Topic	Lab work	Assignment
Week 1	Meaning and Purpose (Socrates, Aristotle, Frankl)	Intro: tutorial on what Career Mapping is and how to use it.	
Week 2	Free will (Assagioli, Frankl, Nietzsche)	Exercise 1: Tutorial on career fit assessments: "My vehicle"	Submit "My Vehicle" exercise.
Week 3	Know thyself (various) & Become who you are (Nietzsche)	Exercise 2: "My Map"	Submit "My Map" exercise.
Week 4	Identity formation, life stages with a focus of emerging adulthood (Erikson/Arnett)	Exercise 3: "Explore"	Apply to placements.
Week 5	An analysis of the 21st century, Core competencies of the 21st century (Harari)	Exercise 3: "Explore"	**Research paper #1 due**

Week 6	Ikigai (Japanese philosophy), identifying your needs	Exercise 4: "My compass". Skills/interests.	
Week 7	Identifying community needs (CIWB, SDGs, local labour reports)	Exercise 4: "My compass", Research value/demand.	Submit "My Compass" exercise.
Week 8	The theology of vocation	*No lab.*	
Week 9	Design Thinking, self-authoring: Concept, research, practice.	Exercise 5: "My road".	**Research paper #2 due**
Week 10	Hierarchy of needs, self-actualization, and authenticity (Maslow)	Exercise 5: "My road".	Submit placement contracts.

- Lab work that is not completed in the allocated time can be completed on your own time. Submissions of lab assignments will must be submitted no later than Sunday of that week by 11:59 p.m.

- By the end of term 1, you should already have a placement for experiential learning established. Before you start your placement, you need to meet with your placement supervisor to establish the skills set you will develop and your goals to be reached throughout the winter term. You also need to arrange the schedule for when you attend your placement.

WINTER TERM

Week	Activity	Assignment
Week 1	Placement	Weekly reflection
Week 2	Placement	Weekly reflection
Week 3	Placement	Weekly reflection
Week 4	Placement	Weekly reflection
Week 5	Placement	Weekly reflection
Week 6	Placement	Weekly reflection
Week 7	Placement	Weekly reflection
Week 8	Placement	Weekly reflection
Week 9	Placement	Update "My Map" to reflect skills developed and submit.
Week 10	Placement	Submit supervisor evaluations. ***"My road" designs and reports due. Share with class on page forum.***

Students are asked to partake in their placements a minimum of 5 hours per week, totaling to 50 hours by the end of the term. Hours will need to be logged and signed by supervisors.
Weekly reflections should be posted no later than the Sunday of that week by 11:59 p.m.