

Introduction

This paper is concerned to locate a discussion regarding the mutually-related responsibilities of business and education to individuals and the community within an analysis of debates concerning the present nature of society. In questioning the increasing inter-penetration of business and education, it sets out an agenda for the education of business, while cautioning against the business of education as a means of achieving the creation of the 'collective entrepreneur' - a paradoxical prerequisite for the emerging Knowledge Economy.

Living in Uncertain Times

We live in an age of change, confusion, and anxiety. A time in which, perhaps paradoxically, the state of knowledge is simultaneously expanding and diverse - and also suspect. Beck (1992) has given academic expression to this by writing of Risk Society as constituting a situation in which,

“with the growing capacity of technical options - grows the incalculability of their consequences”. (1992:22)

Here one has the paradox of knowledge - and by implication the challenge laid down for education - the greater the pursuit and attainment of knowledge, the more one becomes aware of gaps, problems, and deficiencies. The concept of knowledge has itself become problematic. It is in this sense that the contemporary era, and the various descriptive and emotive concepts which have been used to label and define it, have themselves become the subject of analysis, debate and controversy.

Whether one chooses to conceptualize the present time as being indicative of either Reflexive Modernity - courtesy of writers such as Beck (1992) and Giddens (1990, 1991) - or Postmodernity, viewed through the writings of such commentators as Lipovetsky (1994) and Bauman (See e.g. 1993, 1995, 2000) one is struck more by the similarity of their concerns rather than by their oft-commented epistemological differences. Writers of both Schools share a desire to account for the current nature of Western society, the nature of knowledge - in terms of its creation, utilization, and consequences - and the implications of this for the individual and society. In this respect, both Schools provide their various adherents with a 'grand narrative' in that they both provide theoretical - albeit differing - accounts, and images, of contemporary social life and what it means to be an individual in today's society. Both theoretical perspectives symbolize and give expression to the heightened consciousness of uncertainty confronting the individual.

True, one can contend that postmodernists challenge the very validity of the concept of the 'individual' by notions such as the 'decentred' and the 'multiphrenic' self (See e.g. Gergen, 1991, 1999; Anderson, 1997; Schragg, 1997). But it is difficult to deny that however ostensibly disinterested or relativistic postmodernist writers appear to be, and however much they may appear to question the meaning and substance of the concept - they express

a concern for what one might term the human condition, or in ethical terms, how one should live one's life (See e.g. Bauman, 1993, 1995)

In this respect, they are at one with their ostensible epistemological competitors, Beck and Giddens in that they give voice to concerns about the quality of social life and the implications of this for people, and the ontological insecurity confronting the individual (Giddens, 1991) faced with both a plethora of choice and diverse forms of guidance regarding what to do, how to behave, and who to be.

Both reflexive and post modernist writers provide contrasting expressions of shared concern regarding the quality, meaning, and purpose of life in an age of uncertainty. These are focused around three interrelated areas of interest. Firstly, the question of the role, and effects, of the free market economy in a society where previously geographical and national boundaries appear to be coming both increasingly permeable and problematic, characterized by the 'global marketplace'. Secondly, if the market heralds the triumph of individualism, it has also occasioned concern that it has in turn altered the very nature of personhood such that according to Bellah et al, many people have come to accept the, 'market maximiser as the paradigm of the human person'(1992:91).

The concern here is whether the encouragement of competitive individualism and an emphasis upon self-interest and image is either supportive or injurious to the pursuit of the good life (See e.g. Wolfe, 1989; Plant, 1992; Stivers, 1994).

Thirdly, reflecting the above concerns, there is the question regarding the nature of the individual and self-identity in uncertain times. How does one make sense of one's life in an era when one is simultaneously confronted not only with the certainty of ongoing change - with all its concomitant uncertainties - but also with a choice of contrasting lifestyles, and an apparent plethora of theories, models, and schema by which to make sense of it all? To paraphrase an elderly Chinese gentleman from the film 'Gremlins', with choice, comes much uncertainty - and a degree of anxiety.

Whether one chooses to conceptualize this in terms of Beck's individualization thesis, or Bauman's concern for the liberation of the self, both reflexive and post-modernists appear to agree that the individual is increasingly confronted with the need to take charge of one's own life. Whether one believes this phenomenon to be the result of globalization, deregulation, privatization, post-war affluence, or the decline of community, it would appear that the individual is required to take responsibility for one's own well-being - materially, spiritually, and ethically.

The Flaneur's Promenade - or coping with uncertainty

One interpretation of the above scenario is that of the individual cast adrift in the modern world, required to make one's own way, and do one's own thing in

order to survive amidst the uncertainties of the global economy; a social world in which beliefs in employment security and career progression, have given way to fears of downsizing; delayering; and flexible working.

The business organization, once the embodiment of cohesion and order, articulated the social and material dimensions of production. Set down in metaphorical tablets of stone in the writings of Frederick Taylor - they specified both how to organize production and also one's position in the social hierarchy. The organization of work reflected the belief in both the order and continuity of society. To a considerable extent one was what one did.

Such coherence and permanence has given way to new organizational forms (See e.g. Hastings, 1993; Davenport & Prusak, 1998; Papows, 1999) which are at once both more malleable and intangible - embodying both the challenge and uncertainties of E-commerce. It is as if the blending together of information technology and free market enterprise have conspired to give expression to the concerns of Berger et al (1973) regarding the unintended consequences of modernity's emphasis upon progress, rational thought, and the application of science and technology in that,

'it has not fundamentally changed the finitude, fragility and mortality of the human condition. What it has accomplished is to seriously weaken those definitions of reality that previously made that human condition easier to bear.'
(1973:166)

In Berger et als' concern for the unintended consequences of modernity for the individual one can see an expression of Ritzer's worries regarding the irrationality of rationality (1998: 31) in contemporary society. The attempt to impose order, coherence and control upon society has unforeseen and unsettling consequences.

It is the social and personal consequences of coping with uncertainty that such diverse writers as Lasch (1979, 1984); Bellah et al (1985, 1992); Stivers (1994); Pahl (1995) and Sennett (1998) articulate. For the individual, there is the need to respond to the challenges, opportunities, and uncertainties of change - but there are also costs. Pahl observes that in an increasingly complex, dynamic society the individual is confronted with a variety of images of success on which to model oneself, contending that,

'Faced with conflicting messages, conflicting role models and conflicting sources of social reward, people try to work out a self-identity that will maintain credibility among more than one salient audience.'
(1995:38)

While not necessarily disagreeing with Pahl's observations, Sennett observes that constructing a pliant, bricolage, or collage sense of self identity and image (1998:133) is not the only way of coping with uncertainty. In an organizational world where hard work, loyalty and commitment are no guarantees against redundancy, he suggests that,

'Detachment and superficial cooperativeness are better armor for dealing with current realities than behavior based on values of loyalty and service.'
(1998:25)

In such behaviour one can see Baudelaire's flaneur given contemporary expression - the 'semi-detached individual' who seeks to protect oneself from the uncertainties and human dilemmas of the workplace by pretending indifference and displaying a disinclination to become personally involved in order to reduce the risk of personal injury in terms of either career and/or emotional trauma. Life becomes both game and theatre in which one adopts a variety of roles, images, and identities in order to respond to the conflicting and changing demands of the workplace while simultaneously seeking to manage the resulting tensions, thereby preserving a modicum of personal autonomy. It is here that one encounters the postmodern concern with the status and integrity of the individual.

Is today's individual a social fabrication, a bricolage of images and adaptive responses; a malleable shell enclosing a fraught, uncertain core identity - an individual who constitutes the living embodiment of uncertainty? For some postmodernists such an individual is essentially a social product or artifact; a socially constructed being in which expression of personal autonomy consists of reactive responses to social forces beyond one's control or comprehension. Here the hidden hand of the market is both metaphor and impersonal mentor for the vagaries and uncertainties of life. The freedom, choice, and autonomy offered by the market are really a complex matrix of constraints, both explicit and subtle, which act to construct the social artifact that is today's individual.

Such an inherently conservative, and depressing, scenario of contemporary life is perhaps itself indicative of the contemporary malaise deemed by some to be confronting society - the decline of community; the retreat into instrumentalism, and the privatization of social life (See e.g. Etzioni, 1995; Tam, 1998).

Fortunately, however, there is a more optimistic interpretation that one can accord to postmodern concerns with the individual. Bauman, appears to paraphrase the concerns of writers such as Beck and Giddens regarding the importance of reflexivity in today's society, contending that postmodernity,

'is modernity coming to terms with its own impossibility; a self-monitoring modernity, one that consciously discards what it was unconsciously doing.'
(1991:272)

By rejecting the notion of a radical rupture with modernity Bauman presents the postmodern era as constituting a period of critical re-appraisal and re-articulation of modernity's concern with the acquisition of knowledge and the exercise of human control over the environment (See e.g. Beck, 1995; Lash et al, 1996); a time of questioning, an acknowledgment that existing paradigms and theories are open to challenge; a time of intense intellectual development, controversy, and debate. A time also, to acknowledge the dark side of modernity and question the meaning and nature of humanity's progress (See e.g. Bauman, 1999, 2000). A time of paradox, and the uncomfortable realization that with the acquisition of knowledge comes uncertainty. But along

with such anxieties there also comes opportunity and challenge, and the re-affirmation of human endeavor. In contrast to the conservatism and denial of individual responsibility associated with the charge of relativism, so often laid at the postmodern door, Bauman offers an entirely more optimistic and hopeful scenario for the years to come. In expressing the idea of the liberation of the self he re-affirms the responsibility of the individual to accept that s/he is the arbitrator of their own future development and well-being. Such individual liberation is inherently radical, requiring both courage and determination to challenge the status quo. It also requires the acquisition of knowledge and information in order to make such a critical re-appraisal of contemporary thought and practice a viable prospect. It is in this respect that one can maintain that both reflexive- and post- modernists provide an impetus for critical reflexivity on the part of the individual. It is in pursuit of determining both the nature, and the provision of, such intellectual tools that a discussion of the relationship between business and education becomes relevant.

The Knowledge Economy: markets, consumers, and the individual

The advent of the 'knowledge economy' has given a new lease of life to the free market. It has also however, prompted critics to question the nature, and parameters, of the free market in contemporary society (See e.g. Alexander, 1997; Koch, 1998; Korten, 1999).

In the writings of modern-day social commentators one can see Durkheim's concerns with the danger of anomie in early twentieth-century France. It is just such personal uncertainties and anxieties arising from market-led changes to conventional forms of life and community that writers such as Mestrovic (1991; 1993) and Cladis (1992) contend are so relevant to the problems confronting the individual required to cope with the uncertainties of contemporary life.

The very concept of the 'knowledge economy' is a vivid articulation of Wolfe's (1989:30) concern that in an increasingly market-dominated society the increasing commodification of social life will challenge the necessity to nurture and sustain Durkheim's imagery of a moral polymorphic society. For Durkheim, it was the very diversity and plurality of social life which provided such a diverse mix of social experiences within which the individual both gained experience of life and thereby developed diverse and complex set of moral beliefs. The individual in Durkheim's vision of organic society was far more than the rational, instrumentally calculative being assumed by some economic theorists. In effect, just like Adam Smith, Durkheim believed that economic self-interest should be embedded within a plurality of other, contending, social and moral relationships.

More recently, writers such as Gray (1998) have similarly warned that an unregulated free market poses dangers for social stability and human well-being, contending that its effects act to weaken the viability of those traditional institutions on which it has historically depended - such as the family. By its

very nature, the free market mechanism questions and challenges traditional thought and practice. It privileges the pursuit of individual choice over concerns for community well-being. It is the combination of free-market philosophy and practice, as articulated during the Thatcher and Reagan era of the nineteen seventies and eighties, with the potential of information technology that has resulted in the dynamic momentum towards the creation of the knowledge economy - the globalisation of information and communication, and the commodification of knowledge. Echoing the historical concerns of Durkheim and Baudelaire, and the anxieties of Mestrovic (1991) that the concept of anomie resonates with a contemporary relevance that is only partially expressed by concerns regarding the uncertainty and disorder of the effects of a postmodern lifestyle, Gray, writing of 'free markets' warns that,

'They set a premium on novelty and a discount on the past. They make of the future an infinite rerun of the present. The society they engender is antinomian and proletarian.' (1998:38)

The 'freedom' afforded to the individual through the commodification of social life is not without cost. By making the individual synonymous with the consumer the individual becomes both agent and product of the market; a self whose social identity is both expressive of, and responsive to, the vagaries of the commercialization of life. Through the following of fashion and style, and the projection of a multiphrenic self, the individual is infinitely adaptable - but also prone to uncertainty and anxiety.

It is the combination of the cash nexus and lifestyle that epitomizes the apparent shallowness, superficiality, and uncertainty inherent in so much of contemporary life. The anomic individual confronted with social and human costs arising from the predominance of the amorality of the market economy.

It is this commodification of individuality that presents itself as both challenge and opportunity to both business and education.

Business and the Individual: the flaneur as employee

For business, there is both the challenge and the need to make more effective use of the individual as a factor of production. Paradoxically, it has become increasingly recognized that this may be accomplished only by humanizing the individual, recognizing the diverse range of human and social attributes that reside within the person. The fragmentation and dehumanization of the individual articulated in mechanistic approaches to organizational design and management has given way to a more holistic approach to valuing and developing the individual. The increased need for organizations to achieve efficiency, effectiveness and competitiveness, whilst simultaneously displaying creativity, innovation, and flexibility, has necessitated a re-evaluation of the individual organizational member as a human resource. The imagery of the knowledge worker reflects the transition from conceptualizing the individual as a 'hand' - a piece of 'human machinery' to be directed and controlled by

management - to that of entrepreneur - an autonomous, responsible, creative, and trustworthy member of the organization.

The avowal of the Enterprise Culture (See e.g. du Gay, 1991; Keat & Abercrombie, 1991) while celebrating the importance of the entrepreneur as symbolizing the primacy of the individual within 'market society' presented a challenge to organizational management to harness such individuality for the collective good of the enterprise. Self-interest and need for collective enterprise do not necessarily make compatible bed-fellows.

One response can be seen by the interest in recent years with the concept of 'organizational culture' and possibility of its 'management' viewed as a means of accessing and directing the collective abilities of organizational members while also facilitating an increased responsiveness and adaptability to the uncertainties of the market. The attraction of exerting a greater degree of control upon the complexity and uncertainties of the organization's cultural milieu as a means of achieving competitive advantage in an equally uncertain market, was given added legitimacy by Ray (1986) who contended that the organization could also become the focus for the individual's need for commitment, identification, and feeling of belonging. In other words, the organization could provide the fulcrum for a new sense of community. The organization-as-employer provides a solution to anomie.

Dahler-Larsen (1994) in criticizing Ray's vision of the organizational community for being overly simplistic, draws attention to the changing nature of business activity and organizational structures. The increased value attached to both individual and organizational adaptability, creativity, and innovation indicates that the desire for employee cohesion and uniformity is no longer desirable, or practical, in the era of the network organization and the knowledge economy.

For some, there is the concern that what is required would appear to be the achievement of Wolfe's market society,

'- for a specifically capitalist society, in which market freedom will serve as the moral code defining every form of social interaction.'
(1989:30)

Such an outcome however, would serve to re-emphasize the concerns of writers such as Lasch, Sennett, and Bellah et al. regarding the dangers of an excessively market-oriented individualism for both the community and the individual - and, as indicated above, for the business enterprise too. The contemporary Flaneur does not readily comply with the needs of business for teamwork, commitment, and collective enterprise. One cannot achieve the creative synergy's and commercial advantages that today's markets require of business organizations through the practical articulation of the concept of the 'collective entrepreneur' if one is employing a collectivity of detached, self-absorbed, individuals who display an essentially pragmatic and instrumental approach to work. One is confronted with the realization that the desire to extend the power of the market through the commercialization and

commodification of the individual is contradictory in that it results in the creation of an individual who, in terms of behaviour and attitude, is inimical to the needs of the enterprise. A Marxist might contend this is an example of a good 'old-fashioned' cultural contradiction of capitalism. Writers such as Beck, Giddens, and Bauman, while not ignoring concerns with the effects of the market economy upon the individual, express their concerns differently. The perceived need now is not the 'overthrow of capitalism' but rather the regulation and modification of the free market system and the redesign of organizational structures and management systems to enable a fuller development and expression of human potential. Here one can see the possibility of Beck's individualization thesis and Bauman's liberation of the self being given concrete and practical expression through the impetus to reconfigure and reconceptualise the manner in which work is both organized and experienced by the individual.

Education, the Market, and the Individual: creating the knowledge worker

We live in an era of mass higher education (Scott, 1995). The pursuit of efficiency, effectiveness, and competitiveness is no longer the sole prerogative of the business enterprise. The extension of the market into other social spheres of activity has resulted in the increased commodification of both information and knowledge - and hence education. The provision of education has become a commodity to market, a source of income and profit, and a means of achieving competitive advantage, both nationally and at the level of the individual educational institution.

Paradoxically, just as business has come to question the efficacy of the machine metaphor, higher education has been required to become more 'business-like' in both its organization and management, as a means of enabling a mass higher educational provision. The implications of this for staff is that professional autonomy has become increasingly difficult to defend in the face of pressures for rationalization and moderation of courses by both internal and external auditors. The increased numbers of students and courses, combined with the effects of cost-saving measures have created an ongoing process of work intensification which depersonalizes the teaching experience for both staff and students. One no longer simply teaches the McDonalization thesis, one experiences it at first hand (Parker & Jary, 1995).

Here too, a culture of enterprise has come to be seen as the way forward (McNay, 1995). Academics, administrators, and managers within the higher educational sector increasingly speak the language of business. Students are customers, departments and faculties are cost and profit centres, and like their business counterparts educational enterprises are increasingly concerned to respond to the uncertainties arising from the globalization of the educational marketplace through the development of partnerships and alliances.

The creation of the knowledge worker for today's labour market is fraught with challenge. Today's customer, whether undergraduate, postgraduate, or corporate client, is no longer the compliant supplicant craving insight and learning from an academic community who both legislate and prescribe the nature and content of knowledge while also adjudicating the level of student performance. Just as du Gay & Salamon (1992) contend that 'caring for the customer' has been used as a means of exerting more control over employee performance within business organizations, so too within the educational enterprise. The 'cult(ure) of the customer' reflects the increased demands and uncertainties within the educational marketplace. The implications arising from the emergence of Risk Society and individualization (Beck, 1992) is not merely a theoretical concept - it is experiential. One does not only teach entrepreneurship - it is experiential.

Just as the business organization is confronted with the need to overcome the potential limitations of 'flaneur-like' employees, higher educational organizations are confronted with the danger that - amidst the perceived need to develop entrepreneurial skills and activities in-house - what will emerge in contrast will be the academic flaneur. There is a danger that amidst the desire to create a mass higher educational facility - providing the 'raw material' for the realization of the knowledge economy - the emphasis upon efficiency, regulation, commercial competitiveness, and the pursuance of 'quality' will have the opposite effect. The traditional collegial nature of the academic community, while potentially offering a template for the current needs of business is being undermined by the imposition of an out-dated and prescriptive approach to the organization and regulation of the workplace.

One could present this as another 'cultural contradiction of capitalism', but to do so would be misguided in that it would misdirect the focus of concern. The necessity is to locate the needs of both business and education within a theoretical context which indicates a way forward, rather than harkening back to past political and theoretical controversies. There is a need to theorize the concept of the knowledge economy in a way which enables one to progress both the clarification of the concept and the practicalities involved in its realization.

The Knowledge Economy and the Collective Entrepreneur: a basis for discussion

The intention in this brief concluding section is to articulate a vision of the knowledge economy as a means of stimulating discussion as to its content, parameters, and intent. In contending that business and education are similarly confronted with the need to change their structures, processes, and outputs in order to respond to the changing tastes and requirements of a fast-changing, complex social and technological environment it is argued that there is guidance to be had from past experiences. Such help cannot adopt a prescriptive approach. As Bob Dylan succinctly expressed it - the times they are a-changing - and consequently one must adapt past thought and practice as a means towards better comprehending the present, thereby helping to achieve one's wishes and desires for the future.

The conceptualization and practical articulation of the knowledge economy cannot be the realization of the market society. Of necessity it must be more than the creation of an instrumental and self-focused individual displaying little comprehension of, or concern for, the community within which one is located. If education becomes focused upon the production of a vocationally-oriented syllabus and educational experience it will ill-prepare the student for a life of change and uncertainty. Education is concerned with the development and provision of knowledge that enables the individual to better understand and cope with the vicissitudes of life. It is concerned to facilitate a better understanding of what it means to be human in a complex social world. What it means to be an individual embedded in a diverse community of others and to whom one has a responsibility of care and concern.

The anomic individual of Emile Durkheim - similar to Marx's writings on alienation - serve as a warning against an over-reliance upon the market economy as the primary mechanism for human and social betterment. Emphasising material acquisition adds the danger that, along with ecological concerns, it creates insular, insecure individuals, with little appreciation of others' needs, or of the energies required to sustain a viable democratic society in which individual freedom requires proactive care and maintenance of the various social collectivities with which one has contact, and which help to create the richness and uniqueness of the individual's life.

Both business and education are confronted with the need to question current beliefs and practices. They share a mutual responsibility for avoiding the resurgence of the flaneur - the well-dressed, fashion-conscious consumer with a detached attitude to life. For business, such an individual represents a problem in that such behaviour and attitude would be a severe obstacle to the realization of the potential promise of the knowledge economy. For education, the flaneur, whether found within the student body and/or among academic staff, represents a denial of education's *raison d'être* - the provision of knowledge in order to facilitate the creation of the self-reflective individual with a desire to contribute to the enhancement of life for both oneself and others. The socially responsible and cognizant individual.

The mutual interests and concerns of business and education are articulated in an elaboration of the concept of the collective entrepreneur. Here one has a paradoxical concept which expresses both the necessity and promise incumbent in a redefinition of the nature of individualism within contemporary society. A concept which, while acknowledging the importance of individual autonomy and freedom of expression as a source of creative innovation, seeks to locate such individuality within a social context which would encourage and facilitate collaboration with others and a recognition that one can best help oneself by helping others.

At the organizational level of analysis such a scenario has been expressed in the concept of the learning organization (See e.g. Argyris, 1990, Senge, 1990), and also in the literature of business ethics. At the societal level there is the concern to restore a sense of community and citizenship (Isin & Wood,

1999) among people as a means of reversing the apparent increase in public apathy and cynicism. Both business and educational organizations share a common interest in helping to give practical expression to such ideas as, to do so is to articulate the nature of the collective entrepreneur and thereby formulate the parameters and values of the knowledge economy.

Locating a discussion of the knowledge economy within an analysis of contemporary society seen through the lens of reflexive and post modernity serves to emphasize the importance of the individual in today's society while challenging the inevitability of an individualism focused upon self-interest. Both business and education in their respective activities are engaged in a re-articulation of the concerns of the Enlightenment - the desire to promote the advance of knowledge, learning, and a critical individual self-reflection about what it means to be an individual-among-others. Such a project can only be enhanced by continued dialogue between the parties concerned.

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