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Revisiting Cicero in Higher Education Cultivating Citizenship Skills through Collegiate Debate Programs

Annette Holba

Abstract

Higher education is in the midst of a paradigm shift from the Professing Paradigm to the Learning Paradigm approach in pedagogical strategies. The Learning Paradigm privileges a co-producing of learning between the student and the teacher. This essay argues that collegiate debate programs can be one example of the Learning Paradigm engagement that also helps to cultivate the Greek and Roman ideal of citizenship in students. Ciceronian rhetorical theory explains how citizenship skills are developed through collegiate debate practices.

Introduction

Civic engagement is sometimes disconnected from classroom experience in contemporary higher education (Bok, 2003; Rhodes, 2001; Harris, 1998). The Learning Paradigm (Barr and Tagg, 1995) is slowly replacing the Professing or Teaching paradigms that historically prevailed in higher education. Where Professing and Teaching paradigms focused on the telling or teaching aspects of higher education, the Learning Paradigm focuses on assessment and learning that occurs in higher education (Barr and Tagg, 1995). Academic experience within the Learning Paradigm approach invites cultivation of co-curricular and extra curricular activities such as collegiate debate programs, which can ultimately develop and shape the Greek and Roman ideal of citizenship skills in students.

This essay considers what it means to be a citizen through classical and contemporary notions of citizenship. Second, this essay explores how collegiate debate experience, as an exemplar of the Learning Paradigm, is equipped to teach, develop, and cultivate citizenship understanding and skills applicable within our diverse and cosmopolitan world. Third, implications linking academic debate and citizenship development are considered through Ciceronian rhetorical theory. A central component of this paper begins with a discussion on the notion of citizenship.

Citizenship

We can learn a lot about the notion of what it means to be a good citizen or to learn about citizenship skills from the Greeks. Aristotle (2001) described citizenship to be a type of moral training. He argued that in order to be a good citizen, a man must be able to “take part in the deliberation or judicial administration of any state [...] for the purpose of life” (p. 1177-1178). Isocrates’ rhetorical

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cal education advocates the teaching of citizenship (Poulakos, 1997). He argued that good leaders should be good citizens and lead by example for others to follow. Therefore, a rhetorical education should teach what it means to be a good citizen. For Isocrates, citizenship meant political engagement conducted within a framework of social responsibility imbued with temperance and justice (Poulakos, 1997). Isocrates advocated the marriage between wisdom and eloquence as a prerequisite of the ideal citizen. The skills that are the foundation of Greek and Roman citizenship are 1) the ability to engage critical thinking, 2) the ability to speak well, and 3) the development of phronesis (practical wisdom). In this framework, students are invited and encouraged to more fully engage their academic experience.

Greek ideals are helpful as one contemplates what citizenship means but how does one actually learn these ideals? John Dewey (1981) advanced that “experience is pedagogical” (p. 421), which means that citizenship can be learned through doing. Dewey advocated that “the school itself shall be made a genuine form of active community life, instead of a place set a part in which to learn lessons” (p. 459). School is where one learns citizenship, as long as school is not disinterested in civic life (Ewbank and Auer, 1951). School must be actively connected with the community otherwise, the pragmatic aspect of education is lost. Furthering this pragmatic connection to everyday living, Arthur Holmes (1999) suggested that we find citizenship through a liberal education that cultivates understandings, skills, and value development to equip one for a lifetime of living and working with other human beings.

Media ecologist, Neil Postman (1996), asserted that we can learn about civic responsibility today from our ancient roots and he suggested that students can be taught civic mindfulness by giving them a “sense of responsibility for one’s own neighborhood” (p. 100). In other words, get them involved with something in the campus community. By getting them involved, students don’t just play at life but they are actually engaged in life (Thoreau, 1995). Citizenship in its broadest sense is when we are able to respond appropriately to others with whom we live. It is essential that college students recognize this responsibility of citizenship because they live closely among others and they are training to participate in public settings with even more ‘others.’ Campus life provides “essential opportunities” for developing citizenship-like qualities (Katz and Henry, 1993, p. 9). Therefore, as educators, we ought to be teaching citizenship qualities to students through our in-classroom and out-of-classroom encounters with them. Many other scholars and critics of higher education agree that citizenship skills and development ought to be taught in the college or university setting (Astin, 1993; Lawy and Biesta, 2006; Williams and McGee, 2000). Teaching students how to live among and with the ‘other’ is central to teaching citizenship. From contemporary scholarship on citizenship education, the ideal of “responsible citizenship” emerges.

“Responsible citizenship” is a couplet used by Eugene Lang (2000) who suggests that as an active ethical agent, it can breathe new life back into a liberal arts mission. Lang argues that “citizenship, social responsibility, and community are inseparable” (p. 140). Therefore, an “educated citizenry” (p. 140) is neces-

sary for responsible social interactions among other human beings. In Lang's (2000) critique of American Liberal Arts Colleges, he advocates in order to remedy some of the challenges facing liberal arts institutions today, that new vitality can be added to their life by explicitly excavating the notion of responsible citizenship as a discrete and specific undergraduate dimension. Colleges and universities have an interminable connection to society because citizens of tomorrow are trained in these institutions. It is then essential that citizenship education be an explicit part of the education of all students. By teaching citizenship through academic debate programs focus shifts away from civic 'separateness' to a more connected and harmonious relationship to others through shared ideas and concerns in a public forum. This shift lends to the positive outcomes of the learning paradigm.

Collegiate Debate and the Learning Paradigm

The Learning Paradigm can cultivate the ideal and lived experience of citizenship to students in higher education. In comparison to the Professing Paradigm or Teaching Paradigm, the Learning Paradigm focuses on the assessment of learning of the students. The idea of teaching as an 'end' is a mistake of the two earlier paradigms (Barr and Tagg, 1995). The Learning Paradigm ends the privilege of the lecturer experience and focuses on the learning experience, which does not end outside the classroom. This is a more holistic approach to learning in higher education.

In the Learning Paradigm students and faculty are co-producers of learning at two levels, the individual level and the organizational level [the self and the other] (Barr and Tagg, 1995). So the aim of an institution that cultivates the Learning Theory concept suggests that knowledge should not just be transferred (as in the old paradigms) but the institution itself "creates environments and experience that brings students to discover and construct knowledge for themselves, to make students members of communities of learners that make discoveries and solve problems" (Barr and Tagg, 1995, p. 15). This is the bridge that invites the engagement of both the student and the professor. The connection to a community of learners and the critical attributes that cultivate one's ability to discover and solve problems is key to the development of citizenship. Collegiate debate experience provides the opportunity for that connection to emerge and be a fruitful experience for both the community and the student. In collegiate debate, participants discover and work toward solving real local and global community problems. This attention to learning, discovery, and contribution to the public good is demonstrative of how citizenship skills are developed in debate participants.

Students engage and learn by embracing the "different" (Terenzini, 1999, p. 34). Without the notion of "the different" there is a risk to negotiate the world through scripts or patterns that cultivate laziness and lack of discovery. In "the different" a student can reflect and become involved in situated learning which is social and interactive learning – the opposite of disinterestedness. The Learning Paradigm allows for an encounter with "the different" that is not necessarily

part of a particular body of knowledge. The encounter with “the different” is what helps to cultivate citizenship ideals because one encounters the other and learns ethical civic responsibilities in that engagement. Therefore, a co-producing of learning occurs in the moment and over time because the ‘engagement’ is privileged not the body of knowledge – as a canonical experience. A look at a real world example of the experience of collegiate debate can help to offer evidence of the main claim that the co-producing and co-sharing of learning, which is inherent in the Learning Paradigm, cultivates citizenship in students.

Citizenship and Academic Debate

Cultivating citizenship ideals and skills in the classroom emerges out of the Learning Paradigm. This section considers how collegiate debate programs, as instruments of the learning paradigm, enable students to gain praxial insight to understanding what it means and how to be a ‘good citizen’. The process of debate or argumentation provided a significant contribution to the establishment of our country (Ryan, 1985). The history of collegiate debate in our country tells us that students formed literary societies that met outside the classroom to discuss issues that fell outside of the faculty-approved reading list. Often these debates addressed relevant ethical and social issues of the historical moment (Ryan, 1985). As history reveals, collegiate debate found a home in many institutions of higher education as an extra-curricular activity, often with no supporting or related courses within the curriculum. However, the skills learned through participating in collegiate debate can be utilized in almost every other discipline and industry. These skills include critical thinking, articulate speaking, and phronesis (practical wisdom) in general. All of these skills are the foundation of the Greek and Roman ideal of citizenship. We learn about these skills from one of the most well known Roman orators who enlightens the centrality of academic debate for participants in the 21st century.

Cicero, Oratory, & Citizenship

Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 B.C.) is known by many to be the greatest forensic orator to have lived (Fausset, 1890). Cicero’s critics give him that same distinction when they consider his temptation of ethical borders, as they “reserve praise only for his superlative mastery of tactics and techniques” (Volpe, 1978, p. 118). Known for his famous defenses in forensic oratory, Cicero was a Roman statesman, orator and letter writer who was significantly influenced by Greek orators. While academic debate generally engages policy or deliberative oratory, Cicero’s ideas set the theoretical framework for the ‘ideal’ orator in any setting.

Cicero is considered to be the guiding figure of the contemporary procedure of formal collegiate argument and debate (Enos, 1979; Rolfe, 1963). In fact, Cicero has been identified as “our only source for this goal of the academic procedure of arguing” (Powell, 1995, p.133). Cicero is considered a revolutionary because he revolutionized the art of oratory. Invention, arrangement, style, memory and delivery are the five canons of rhetoric that Cicero posits in *de In-*

vention. While he wasn't the first rhetorician/orator to denote these five divisions of rhetoric (Herrick, 2004) Cicero develops these components through several of his primary works making his discussion rich and textured.

Invention, arrangement, style, and memory are all significant in cultivating the citizenship skills of critical thinking and being able to engage and articulate ideas. Through invention one investigates and gathers ideas on all sides of an issue, through arrangement one organizes these ideas in a comprehensible and rhetorical framework, through style one decides upon particular language that will aid the audience in understanding and hold some kind of persuasive appeal, and through memory one will have a wide base of knowledge at her or his reach when needed to respond to particularities. All of these canonical steps cultivate the lived action of the ideal citizen.

Delivery, the last of his five canons is central to the practice of academic debate and cultivation of citizenship skills. Cicero's *De Inventione*, *De Oratore*, *Brutus*, and *Orator* present his primary components and concerns with delivery.

Cicero (2000) spoke least of delivery in *De Inventione*, however, he did lay the groundwork for future texts by defining what he meant by it. He referred to delivery as, "[t]he function of eloquence seems to speak in a manner suited to persuade an audience" (I. V. 6). He defined delivery as a control of the voice and body appropriate to maintain the integrity of the matter at hand. Cicero (1897) also asserted that delivery should be ordered by movement of body, gesture of body, glance, and variation in voice intonation. He also tempered the emphasis of the action of delivery by suggesting that a perfect orator, without acquiring some level of knowledge, can potentially create more problems than good. Cicero admitted a good orator is not only an effective deliverer of speech but also has the knowledge of evidences to support the argument presented. But he also indicated that sometimes delivery can mask empty words as he described his contemporary orator:

In a manner not very different Publius Lentulus covered up his slowness of thought and speech by dignity of bearing; his action was fully art and grace and he possessed a strong and pleasing voice; he had in short nothing but delivery. (1xi.216)

Cicero is not saying that substance is not important but he does suggest that even if the substance is lacking sufficiency the orator can still be effective if the delivery is good.

Delivery encompasses a distinction between styles of oratory. A plain style of delivery is best for establishing proof of something. A middle style of delivery is best used for pleasure or entertainment, and a vigorous style of delivery for persuasion that requires the ultimate virtue of the speaker (Cicero, 1953). Natural talents are good to be born with and it is also good to learn about and know the topic of your speech rather than relying on the action of delivery, however, Cicero (2000) argued:

[the] one who had acquired eloquence alone to the neglect of the study of philosophy often appeared equal in power of speech and sometimes superior [...] such one seemed in his own opinion [...] I am sure that whenever rash and audacious men had taken the helm of the ship of state great and disastrous wrecks occurred. (I. ii.4)

Cicero (1897) called for the orator to exert power of thought, a force of language, and a delivery exercising energy, spirit, and fullness of one's feelings. The orator should embrace oratory and not just use it without truly understanding it. If oratory is done incorrectly the delivery can be a detriment to the appeal of the argument. As an example, Cicero described the oratory style of his contemporary, Sulpicius, "[h]is mode of speaking was quick and hurried, which was owing to his genius, his style animated and somewhat redundant" (c.cxxi). While there is genius behind the argument, if the delivery lacks the qualities the appeal can end up being futile. To further this issue, a critique of Crassus' speech by another citizen claimed "the rapidity of words was such that his oration was winged with such speed, that though I perceived its force and energy I could scarcely see its track and course" (c.cxxxv). In this case, while much energy was emitted the meaning behind the message was lost because the audience was unable to follow it.

Cicero (1897) described traits of a good orator to include, rhythmic breathing; fluctuation of voice at appropriate junctions in the oration; clear articulation and diction; combining body movement and gesture at regular intervals; and ability to crescendo and decrescendo according to emotionality of subject matter. The ability to be a successful orator is often the result of being a naturally gifted speaker – born with the talent itself. This talent includes, "volubility of tongue, tone of voice, strength of lungs and a peculiar confirmation and aspect of the whole countenance and body" can be improved upon (c.cxxv). Additionally, even with these gifts rude orators, regardless of their talents, will never be reckoned as an accomplished speaker.

In commenting on the oratory skill of Marcus Piso, Cicero (1953) said, "[h]e possessed a nature acumen which he sharpened by training [...] ill tempered, not infrequently forced and frigid, yet sometimes witty" (ixvii. 236). This means that while a good orator may have a natural ability he still must develop it in order to be most effective. Since body movements are such a significant part of delivery, one needs to be fully aware of the exact movements and their impact upon the oration. Cicero described another contemporary orator, Curio, as reeling and swaying his whole body from side to side in such a manner that the movement itself distracted the message or content of the issue at hand. Cicero used this example to suggest that the action was too overt, which led to it being viewed as a jest or unimportant. In this case, Curio over exaggerated movement and alienated the audience.

One of the greatest orators of Cicero's time was Crassus. In the *Brutus*, Cicero (1897) presents Crassus as an individual who had little natural ability and only a moderate amount of rhetorical training. However, Cicero described Crassus as having disciplined himself through hard work and practical application,

enough to gain respect within the oratory community. Crassus' oratory style can be characterized by a sufficient vocabulary that is not vulgar or commonplace. Crassus carefully arranges the matter of discussion without having to rely upon the potential tricks of the voice or delivery and his entire oration is appropriately uniform.

Aspects of delivery that should be explicitly considered include fluency of language and volubility clearly marked by pause and timed or rhythmic breathing. Cicero (1953) suggested that some orators spend their practice time on smoothness and uniformity or what can be considered cultivating a pure and clear style but other orators practice developing a harsh presentation based on severity of language and an almost gloomy approach to subject matter. This is one way to distinguish between a good and bad orator. In many ways, this test can also be applied to identifying the good citizen. A good citizen cares about issues and intends to contribute in a positive manner that invites ethical responses instead of quelling other voices or initiating negative confrontation.

Regarding the skill in the use of voice, Cicero (1953) stated, "The one who seeks supremacy in eloquence will strive to speak intensely with a vehement tone and gently lowered voice and to show dignity in a deep voice and wretchedness by a plaintive tone" (xvii. 57). By this Cicero connected emotion to voice and delivery. He described the superior orator as being able to know when to modulate or vary voice intonation, with access of a complete scale of pitches. One's emotionality is central to the ideal citizen because according to Isocrates, a good citizen is fully connected to a community (Poulakos, 1997). The superior orator avoids excess, stands erect, and monitor's body movement appropriately. Cicero continued:

As for darting forward, he will keep it under control and employ it but seldom. There should be no effeminate bending of the neck, not widdling of the fingers, no marking the rhythm with the fingerjoint. He will control himself in the pose of his whole frame and the vigorous and manly attitude of the body, extending the arm in moments of passion. (xvii. 60)

Cicero overtly connected voice, delivery, and now gesture to emotion. Cicero placed a standard of commitment to being a good orator and this commitment included time, study, practice, and ultimately the development of skills. Raymond DeLorenzo (1978) states that "Rhetoric is practical knowledge, expressed through precepts and examples, of the techniques of persuasive utterance. The orator utilizes rhetoric" (p. 249). Clearly, Cicero considers the ideal orator as one who uses the breadth of knowledge with techniques in his utterances.

One can ignore or overextend these notions on delivery by demonstrating a lack of calm in speaking, paying no attention to arrangement of ideas, lacking precision, clarity, and pleasantries, and failing to adequately prepare the audience for the forthcoming message. Cicero recognized that his ideas about delivery could be overextended by focusing more upon the rate of delivery than the substance of the argument and the consideration of the audience. Overextending or

misrepresenting Cicero's ideas on oration can impede the cultivation of citizenship. Adhering to his ideas as a foundation for collegiate debate, in a modest way can help to teach citizenship skills through collegiate debate practices.

Cicero's discussion of delivery can be adaptable to forensic, deliberative, and epideictic oratorical situations. In his description and prescription of delivery, Cicero advocates ideals consistent with the Isocratean notion of citizenship because he advocated a reasonable and authentic communicative encounter with others. Additionally, Cicero's teachings cultivate 1) one's ability to critically think and evaluate evidences, 2) develop one's ability to be articulate and influential in a public forum, and 3) permit one to develop phronesis through an active public engagement process. Cicero also warned against being abrasive or alienating one's audience. So, while Cicero's critics might question his perceived use of 'relativism' in forensic oratory, he does advocate integrity imbued in one's communicative messages. By engaging public communication with integrity one is a leader and one provides a good example for others to follow. Additionally, because Cicero advocated 'practicing' oratory and speaking from a knowledge-base (in stead of an off-the-cuff approach) he supported the type of rhetorical education that Isocrates advanced for the development of the good citizen.

The Ciceronian notion of oratory promotes the idea of a "responsible citizen" through a call for integrity in public speaking which allows the speaker to be an active, ethical agent. When the academic/collegiate debate experience richly supports these ideals of the good citizen it is exemplified by the philosophy of the Learning Paradigm. These skills are experienced in the classroom setting and outside the classroom setting, as the collegiate debate experience is also situated outside a structured classroom setting through debate competitions and the public marketplace. Participation in collegiate debate programs that adhere to Isocratic and Ciceronian rhetorical ideals helps students develop wisdom, by conducting research from multiple perspectives; eloquence, by practicing appropriate delivery style; and emotionality, that connection between the orator and the community, all of which are necessary to be a good citizen.

Implications

In order to participate in a formal debate, students need to be knowledgeable of current and controversial issues, develop a textured understanding beyond the obvious issue, and be able to develop reasoning skills that focus on real issues. This basis of knowledge enables the participant to clearly articulate issues and participate in dialectical exchange for the good of society. Argumentation skills can be cultivated by conducting thorough research, learning argumentation theory, argument construction, and having opportunities to practice speaking in public forum settings. Students gain this insight through a co-producing of learning between the professor/coach of the debate program because the debate coach becomes part of the process as students create, test, practice, and perform their arguments. Often the debate classroom environment is more invitational to the Learning Paradigm because students not only create arguments but they also have to test them in public settings. This function invites particular interested-

ness of the debate coach or professor that is not often present in a traditional classroom setting – there is more at a public risk in collegiate debate performance which invites this co-interestedness that is inherent in the Learning Paradigm. Additionally, the process of debate permits assessment of learning as the public debate is negotiated. Also, if collegiate debate is part of the curriculum and not outside the curriculum, students and faculty have the opportunity to discover emerging and controversial social issues together, focus on emergent issues related to their own campus community, and have legitimate time for class meetings, discussion, and practice for participation in civic-mindedness that is meaningful. This is an interactive learning experience in the “different” (Terenzini, 1999, p. 34). The collegiate debate experience need not be part of any external debate association that privileges competition and win/lose strategies. A collegiate civic argumentation program can be explicitly tied to curriculum and civic responsibility, which in turn, cultivates citizenship ideals and skills in our students to better prepare them to be civic partners in the marketplace. If a collegiate debate program as described here is not feasible for some institutions of higher education, the integration of citizenship into introductory courses can be another means of cultivating these skills. In this experience, students fully and actively participate in the classroom setting.

There are at least two implications that emerge from this discussion. First, citizenship education is a holistic endeavor that should be embraced by faculty, departments, and institutions of higher education themselves, which has the potential to invite further scholarship of an interdisciplinary nature. If citizenship is not being embraced by faculty or individual departments, it could be a result of a disconnect between the discipline and the literature already posited on citizenship education. Showing individual disciplines that citizenship is an important concept that ought to be integrated into a Learning Paradigm can increase the interest in interdisciplinary research into the matter. Further research to support this claim is necessary as we ought to know where collegiate debate programs are situated within the academy. Presently, debate programs are housed within diverse disciplinary departments – encouraging interdisciplinarity of debate programs can enhance future debate scholarship. The second implication is that this discussion allows the tradition of citizenship and the present status of citizenship education to inform how we can continue to retool higher education. Additionally, through faculty involvement in collegiate debate programs, the learning of citizenship skills is not limited to students. Through faculty involvement, faculty themselves can be reminded of the moral and ethical responsibilities of citizenship as well. This is an open-ended project. Learning from tradition and examining present conditions of a situation is a hermeneutical approach that offers unique insight as we continue to look for bridges that will encourage engagement of students and faculty. As we continue to assess different approaches to higher education we realize that we need insight from both past and present so that as we look ahead, we foreground the best possible contributions.

This essay considered how the learning paradigm provides an opportunity to explicitly teach citizenship ideals through academic debate programs. By con-

sidering citizenship ideals based upon Greek ideals, Roman orators, and contemporary philosophers, an examination of the Learning Paradigm, and an explicit connection between citizenship skills and academic debate, this essay offers hope that a reintegration of citizenship ideals in higher education and its continued pursuit can build a bridge that ultimately encourages a reciprocity of engagement between students and their communities. This is certainly an exciting time to be engaged in the conversation integrating the theory and practice of higher education with the teaching-learning of citizenship ideals and skills.

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