

# **Reconstruction in Philosophy Education: The Community of Inquiry as a Basis for Knowledge and Learning**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The ‘community of inquiry’ as formulated by CS Peirce is grounded in the notion of communities of disciplinary-based inquiry engaged in the construction of knowledge. The phrase ‘converting the classroom into a community of inquiry’ is commonly understood as a pedagogical activity with a philosophical focus to guide classroom discussion. But it has a broader application, to transform the classroom into a community of inquiry. The literature is not clear on what this means for reconstructing education and how it translates into schooling practices. Integral to the method of the community of inquiry is the ability of the classroom teacher to actively engage in the theories and practices of discipline-based communities of inquiry so as to become informed by the norms of the disciplines, not only to aspire to competence within the disciplines, but to develop habits of self-correction for reconstructing those same norms when faced with novel problems and solutions, including those in the classroom.

A perennial consideration for any democracy is what educational structures fit democracy and indeed support it. Because democracy has both a political and social dimension, this has given rise to not only different ways of teaching it, but also different ways of approaching it. My approach in this paper will be to treat democracy as *primarily* a process. By this I don’t mean the legal or political processes, but democracy as a way of being, a way of thinking and communicating on important life-matters, and as an associated form of living that is inherently inclusive but requiring the cooperation of others. In doing so, I am not expressly ignoring the political dimensions of governance, systems, and organisations. These matters are important, but I consider them to be subsidiary to the social dimension of democracy—at least where education is concerned. Nevertheless, what binds both the political and social dimensions is that democracy is a form of inquiry. Our task as educators in a democracy is to develop the skills, capacities, and dispositions to facilitate the kinds of relationships that support democratic ways of life. Because learning to think is at the core of educational aims and practices, the kind of support that education can offer is to facilitate the development of critical thinking necessary to living in a democracy but also to thinking about democracy.

Of particular interest to me is the potential of philosophical inquiry as an effective educational strategy for enhancing democratic ways of life (Burgh, 2003, 2008; Burgh, Field & Freakley, 2006). In particular, because democracy is a certain kind of community, or at least it is a way of life practised in communities, that necessitates thinking as a form of inquiry, I will focus my attention on inquiry-based learning which has become a major part of educational discourse. Specifically I will explore the idea of communities of inquiry writ large. The term ‘community of inquiry’ has a long history that dates back to Charles Sanders Peirce, whose original formulation is grounded in the notion of communities of disciplinary-based inquiry engaged in the construction of knowledge. However, its current usage as a productive pedagogy owes much to Matthew Lipman who placed it at the centre of his Philosophy for Children curriculum. The community of inquiry is a collaborative, inquiry-based approach to teaching and learning through philosophy; a teaching methodology in the tradition of reflective education in which good thinking and its improvement is central. Alongside the educational rhetoric of ‘learning to think’ as the core of educational aims and practices and the emphasis on constructivist pedagogy, the community of inquiry has gained attention from both scholars and classroom teachers alike. However, teaching philosophically presupposes an ability to think philosophically; being able to not only deploy thinking tools, but to deploy the right

thinking tools at the right time, as well as the application of methods, approaches and other devices used by philosophers. This challenge is compounded when we consider that the notion of a 'community of inquiry' functions in two different kinds of ways—as a disciplinary inquiry and as classroom pedagogy (Seixas, 2003; Sprod, 2001; Gregory, 2002; Pardales & Girod, 2006).

In this paper I will, firstly, describe how the community of inquiry as pedagogy, to which I will refer as the narrow-sense conception of the community of inquiry, is informed by disciplinary communities of inquiry as originally described by Charles Sander Peirce. Next, I will argue that the narrow-sense conception of the community of inquiry is a method of teaching for classroom practice, but its effectiveness requires that it must be driven by the pedagogy that underscores the wide-sense of the community of inquiry. Subsequently, both the narrow-sense and wide-sense conceptions need to be conflated if Lipman's educational aims are to be achieved in practice. I follow this with a discussion on the dual role of the teacher as inquirer in mediating between the two conceptions of the community of inquiry. Finally, I look at three different interpretations of Dewey's educational theory and practice which underpins Lipman's educational philosophy. I conclude that without an understanding of the relationship between the two conceptions of the community of inquiry to guide the larger aims of an education that supports democratic ways of life, the role of the teacher remains unclear.

### **Two communities of inquiry**

The phrase 'converting the classroom into a community of inquiry' is commonly understood as a particular teaching method with a philosophical focus to guide classroom discussion. But, it has a broader application, namely to transform or convert the entire classroom, or schooling, into a community of inquiry. When Lipman uses this phrase he is, on the one hand, talking about a method of teaching which he articulated as five stages: the offering of the text, the construction of the agenda, solidifying the community, using exercises and discussion plans, and encouraging further responses (Lipman, 1991, pp.241-3). The method has been described variously by different authors (Cam, 2006; Burgh, Field & Freakley, 2006) and has been embellished in practice, but mostly it follows the method of practice set out in Lipman's publications on his educational theory and practice and implicit in his curriculum materials. Briefly, it commences with the students sitting in a circle reading a text, a story, or other stimulus, which is effectively an introduction of a problematic situation to stimulate students to think about what might be puzzling or disagreeable. As a group the students identify problems through the generation of questions based on what each of the students find problematic. Following on they offer suggestions in response to a central question by expressing their opinions, exploring ideas, stating conjectures and generating hypotheses in order to find possible answers, solutions or explanations. This leads to the analysing of concepts and use of reasoning to develop arguments, in order to gain deeper understanding of the problems, issues or topics into which students are inquiring. The teacher's role is to facilitate the substantive discussion through the use of open-ended questioning and the introduction of exercises, discussion plans and other classroom activities that compel students to inquiry further and to connect their questions with the philosophical questions of the tradition. Only after such a thorough investigation is the community of students ready to evaluate their thinking and to bring their deliberations to closure (Freakley, Burgh & Tilt MacSporran 2008, pp.6-7).

Lipman's method of practice is intended to develop the students' capacities for reasoning and logic, as well as their social dispositions, through adult mediation between the culture and the child. But this brings us back to the broader implications of the community of inquiry as a method of teaching to guide classroom practice. Underpinning Lipman's method is his pedagogy; that is, the how and why that guides teaching practice. The two aims of 'converting

the classroom into a community of inquiry', while they can and should be conflated in practice, are quite distinct in the role they play in Lipman's framework of educational philosophy that he developed by extrapolating the pedagogical guidelines implied in John Dewey's writing (to be discussed later). The pedagogy informs the method of classroom practice which is the practice of philosophy. The pedagogy is 'reflective education', in which thinking is understood as a process of inquiry, and where learning to think is at the core of educational aims and practices. This is why the community of inquiry is best described as educational philosophy rather than as philosophy of education; that is, teaching methods and classroom practice are informed by certain pedagogical criteria whereby the practice of philosophy is the methodology of education (Lipman, 2003, pp.6-8).

As we have seen, the term 'community of inquiry' when understood as a method for classroom practice that follows Lipman's basic procedure functions to distinguish it from other approaches to teaching and learning. But the following passage by Lipman clearly suggests that as pedagogy his aims for the community of inquiry are more far-reaching.

Thus we can now speak of converting the classroom into a community of inquiry in which students listen to one another with respect, build on one another's ideas, challenge one another to supply reasons for otherwise unsupported opinions, assist each other in drawing inferences from what has been said, and seek to identify one another's assumptions. A community of inquiry attempts to follow the inquiry where it leads rather than being penned in by the boundary lines of existing disciplines. A dialogue that rises to conform to logic, it moves forward like a boat tacking into the wind, but in the process its progress comes to resemble that of thinking itself. Consequently, when this process is internalised or introjected by the participants, they come to think as the process thinks. (p.15)

This frequently quoted passage has the role of the teacher and the curriculum conspicuously absent (Sprod 2001, pp.152-3). Likewise, a passage by Laurance Splitter and Ann Sharp (1995) on the idea that every classroom can be transformed into a community of inquiry gives a similar impression.

We believe that all subjects can be taught as forms of inquiry, although we do not pretend to understand how this transformation might take place for each individual discipline and domain. Adult researchers, academics and practitioners move in and out of the communities of scientific, religious, historical, literary and artistic inquiry that are associated with their work. What we are proposing is that by redefining teaching and learning as inquiry-based activities, children and teachers can participate in this process. This redefinition is the key to improving thinking in all students. (p.24)

The role of the teacher as facilitator is implied in this passage by Splitter and Sharp and mirrors what Lipman says elsewhere, dispersed throughout his writing. That is, the teachers and the students, like their professional counterparts, can move in and out of various communities of inquiry that are articulated by the key learning areas or curriculum subjects, but whose knowledge base is informed by the knowledge of each accompanying discipline. But, as Lipman points out, it is more than this, because moving in and out of various communities of inquiry is also to gain an understanding of how those disciplines are practised.

The community of inquiry articulated as a teaching method and as pedagogy offers pedagogical guidelines for classroom practice, but when understood together they serve for a better understanding of Lipman's educational philosophy; that is, as both reconstructing education and how it translates into schooling practices. To distinguish between what I will refer to from here on as the community of inquiry as a teaching method and the community of

inquiry as pedagogy, I will examine a distinction made by Tim Sprod (2001, pp.152-6) who refers to the 'narrow-sense' and 'wide-sense' community of inquiry. I have already described the narrow-sense community of inquiry as basically that pattern of inquiry recommended by Lipman for classroom practice, which generally speaking is identified as having five stages. It is a teaching method that can be augmented by other classroom strategies, including cooperative learning techniques such as paired discussion and small group work, and research and writing. The more difficult task is to explain what is meant by the wide-sense community of inquiry. It would be impractical and even ineffective for classrooms or whole schools to be converted or transformed into a community of inquiry if this is taken to mean an approach to education in which communal dialogue is the only teaching and learning technique. To interpret what is meant by the phrase converting the classroom into a community of inquiry in the wide-sense I will need to go back to the origins of the term 'community of inquiry'.

The term 'community of inquiry' as originally formulated by C.S. Peirce is grounded in the notion of communities of disciplinary-based inquiry engaged in the construction of knowledge. It is a self-corrective process where the exploration of ideas and reasoning are publicly displayed and scrutinised, and it is the site for critical discourse in which new hypothesis are generated and subjected to the most rigorous tests the community can devise. When the community comes together in agreement, we can speak of knowledge, truth, and reality as concepts grounded in the community of inquirers *not* in the individual consciousness (Murphy, 1990, p.12). Peirce (1955) rejected the philosophical position that we can be clear and distinct about our own thinking and hence that reliable knowledge could be gained from introspection. The test for truth or certainty is not an individual endeavour "but requires us to stand upon a very different platform than this" (p.228). In the following passage Peirce more than hints at the necessity of community as that 'different platform' from which we can achieve any significant insight or reliable knowledge.

In science in which men come to agreement, when a theory has been broached, it is considered to be on probation until this agreement is reached. After it is reached, the question of certainty becomes an idle one, because there is no one left who doubts it. We individually cannot reasonably hope to attain the ultimate philosophy which we pursue; we can only seek it, therefore, for the *community* of philosophers. Hence, if disciplined and candid minds carefully examine a theory and refuse to accept it, this ought to create doubts in the mind of the author of the theory himself. (p.229)

For Peirce, reliable knowledge results from inquiry which is a rational, scientific process. By scientific inquiry Peirce included all disciplinary-based inquiry (e.g., science, history, mathematics, philosophy). A community of inquiry, by virtue of its logic and method of investigation, sets the standards and the justification for the construction of reliable knowledge. It is the actual community whose members accept the logic and method of investigation that acts as a deliberative jury between doubt and belief about ideas or hypotheses.

The narrow-sense community of inquiry is restricted to classrooms practice, and differs to the professional communities of inquiry referred to by Peirce, as they are conducted over global sites through a combination of many activities which do not always involve communication between members of the community and in some cases require work to be done in isolation before consulting again with the community. These inquiries are conducted by international communities of experts whose tasks include keeping abreast with research, e.g., working in small research teams engaging in solitary experimentation, attending conference, and consulting with other experts in the field as well as allied fields. Yet, it cannot be ignored that the social aspect is also vital to such an inquiry. Sprod (2001) highlights this in his description of scientific inquiry.

What we call 'scientific objectivity' is not a product of the individual scientist's impartiality, but a product of the social or public character of scientific method; and the individual scientist's impartiality is, so far as it exists, not the source but rather the result of this socially or institutionally organized objectivity of science. (p.154)

There are also other products of such a community of inquiry, e.g., methodologies, conventional standards, conceptual schema, and interpretations of mathematical formalisms. These products are the results of communications in which other experts in the profession are able to potentially participate, which include raising questions, suggesting and exploring alternatives, exploring flaws in data, methods and analysis, giving reasons, identifying assumptions, and other procedural aspects of inquiry, which all happen informally in the form of conferring with colleagues, and formally at conferences or in journal publications. Nevertheless, the narrow-sense conception of the community of inquiry as applied to the classroom and the professional communities of inquiry referred to by Peirce both share the communal and deliberative aspects that are vital to the inquiry process.

The community of inquiry in both cases sets the standards and the justification for the construction of reliable knowledge. Taking these similarities into consideration, Splitter and Sharp could be interpreted as alluding to a wide-sense conception of the community of inquiry described as students moving between the classroom community of inquiry and the disciplinary-based inquiries of "adult researchers, academics and practitioners", and thus converting the classroom into a community of inquiry by redefining teaching learning as inquiry. An effective way to deal with the seemingly tension between the two senses of the community of inquiry is to apply the distinction I made earlier to the community of inquiry as a teaching method and as pedagogy. The wider-sense conception is a statement about education, which has its foundations in Lipman's educational theory and practice, and therefore contains preconditions which act as pedagogical guidelines for teaching methods and classroom practice. These educational preconditions are grounded in an epistemology of community as reflective equilibrium. This equilibrium is suitably described as fallibilistic because the community is constantly open to new ideas, to revision, to improvement, and most of all to self-correction. Rejected in practice is the search for foundational knowledge and absolute truth, replaced by the interplay between equilibrium and disequilibrium that is necessary to dialogue. In terms of usefulness as a description of what teachers should be striving for in classroom practice it serves the purpose of giving us a broader understanding of dialogue as a collaborative, reflective process, with reconstruction as its outcome.

Similarities notwithstanding, the significant differences between the two communities of inquiry cannot be ignored. Peter Seixas (1993) points to the limits of the analogy between what he calls scholarly communities of inquiry and school-based communities of inquiry (p.306). To conflate the two, he says, would be unwise. Whereas scholarly inquirers are engaged in the construction of disciplinary knowledge arising out of their own set of problems embedded within specific contexts and history, students are not able to do what scholarly inquirers do and thus the flow of knowledge can only be unidirectional (p.313). In order to achieve the necessary abilities to engage in scholarly inquiry, students must "learn, value and begin to practice a common set of procedures and activities that are typical of a community of inquiry" (Pardales & Girod 2006, p.308). Thus, school-based inquiry has a different focus than that of scholarly inquiry. Unlike scholarly inquirers students are not engaged in inquiry voluntarily, they are not necessarily practised inquirers before they enter school, and they do not, at the outset, represent the shared values of scholarship and participation. In virtue of its function as an educative activity, school-based community of inquiry emphasises teacher-facilitated inquiry where mutual respect and concern for all

participants are paramount, and progressively “as the community becomes more skilled and begins to gain confidence, the teacher takes a less active role in the inquiry” (p.304). In other words, student-based inquiry is a precondition for engaging in scholarly communities of inquiry.

We can now link our discussion back to the use of the phrase ‘converting the classroom into a community of inquiry’. We have seen that students cannot really engage in the kind of community Peirce spoke of until they learn, value, and begin to practise a common set of procedures and activities that are typical of a community of inquiry. It would be reasonable, therefore, to favour an interpretation of the community of inquiry as a place to build the skills of inquiry which act as a foundation for disciplinary inquiry whereby content is “enlivened and enriched by the ongoing process of inquiry” (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p.24). It is a place to initiate students into the knowledge, skills and dispositions, which are predetermined by the practitioners of the disciplinary areas, that get transformed into the school curriculum so that they come to appreciate that these disciplines are themselves forms of inquiry and “interconnected in various ways, not entirely unconnected—as the traditional school timetable would lead them to believe” (p.25). This is closer in approximation to the scholarly community of inquiry outlined by Peirce.

One last word before we move onto the next part of our discussion on the dual role of the teacher in inquiry. Sprod (2001) also cautions against conflating the narrow-sense and wide-sense conceptions of the community of inquiry. The conflation of the meaning of the term converting the classroom into a community of inquiry to mean, on the one hand, “a specific method for fostering philosophical discussion and critical discourse”, and, on the other hand, the “ideal for the transformation of education”, he says, “is a confusing and unnecessary one” (p.156). His caution deserves consideration in terms of retaining the meaning of the narrow-sense community of inquiry as a teaching method, but the teacher must not fear such a conflation in terms of pedagogy, i.e., as an ideal for transforming education.

### **The dual role of the teacher as inquirer**

The wide-sense conception of the community of inquiry could be viewed as both an organising or regulative principle for disciplinary inquiry and an educational ideal aimed at reconstructing schooling. As an educational ideal it is a reflective pedagogy aimed at fostering communities of inquiry in school that engage in practices that are similar to those of professional, discipline-based communities of inquiry, for the purpose of integrating curriculum for the improvement of teaching and learning. It is a constructivist pedagogy, which has as its core authentic learning as self-correction.

The classroom community of inquiry is an example of constructivist pedagogy, which makes the empirical claim that these kinds of educational objectives, as well as traditional, counter-oriented objectives, are better achieved by engaging students in processes of inquiry in which they construct their understanding of a topic by means of investigation, application, experimentation, and most importantly, through dialogue with teachers, experts, and other students. (Gregory, 2002, p.400)

It is a constructivist pedagogy that rests on immersing students in problematic aspects of their experience as a basis for guiding students to construct knowledge, skills and dispositions that enable them to engage more meaningfully with these experiences. Put another way, by activating students’ interest in learning through their own active intelligence in developing and testing their own ideas and hypothesis as a group, and engaging in self-correction, their experiences, including their habits of thought, feelings and actions, are reconstructed as more meaningful.

As constructivist pedagogy the community of inquiry requires a skilled philosophical facilitator who is procedurally rigorous and prepared to appreciate the philosophical implications of students' philosophical discourse (Gregory, 2008, p.9). The overall task of the teacher is that of philosophical facilitator who is sensitive to the immediate concerns of classroom practice, but also aware of the interplay between classroom practice and the methodologies and other practices of the professional disciplines. Such thinking requires a redefinition of teaching and learning. For an effective model of inquiry we need look no further than to Dewey's educational theory and practice. In fact, given that Dewey was heavily influenced by Peirce's notion of the community of inquiry, particularly its emphasis on pragmatic considerations of fallibilism and self-correction, and that the pedagogical guidelines contained within his educational theory and practice were influential on Lipman's own theories and curriculum, it is a necessary starting point.

According to Dewey, democracy is an associated form of life. He viewed school as a cooperative society on a small scale. The school is to be an agency to restore community by being the centre of community life. In order to experience the social value of education and its interdependence with society, schooling should engage students in real-life problems to solve in order to connect with home and social life. This means that the teacher takes on a dual role as classroom practitioner and as a professional engaged in the problems, both epistemological and methodological, of the scholarly community in which they belong, and as facilitator to construct through a process of dialogue and intellectual self-correction the experience and knowledge of students into a form that is meaningful so that they become experts. To these ends the teacher needs to engage students in rich tasks that involve discussion, investigation, and experimentation (depending on the disciplines), as well as practical service learning that involves an exchange between proponents of new beliefs and the rest of the community most directly affected by the social problem in a caring, communal inquiry so as to actually reconstruct the problem.

Similar to Sprod, Maughn Gregory acknowledges the asymmetry in the positions of the participants in each of the inquiries, specifically the pedagogic role of the classroom community of inquiry absent in its professional counterpart. However, contrary to Sprod's position that it is unnecessary to conflate the narrow-sense and wide-sense communities of inquiry, Gregory (2002) argues that the solution is to call "for teachers to mediate between communities of students and communities of experts, but being active participants in both" (p.403). He begins with pointing to the similarities: (1) the teacher's role like the expert is to construct the experience and knowledge of others into a meaningful experience, (2) there is a dialogue between the participants over new ideas, (3) both the teacher and the experts listen to and are open to the ideas of others, (4) the participants must follow the argument to where it leads, (5) the inquiry is a form of meta-level inquiry or meta-dialogue, and (6) summative evaluation is used to preserve the standards of the norms that remain intelligible and valuable (pp.403-7).

To reconcile the problem of the teacher's role in constructivist pedagogy education with education toward disciplinary-based standards, Gregory argues in favour of learning as "an appropriation of predetermined standards that involves student self-correction and self-verification" (p.407). This requires first and foremost that constructivist pedagogy in the form of the community of inquiry is seen as an apprenticeship in self-correction, in which students become increasingly informed in the norms of the discipline through a process of constructing and verifying new knowledge for themselves. However, this relies on teachers who are not only skilled philosophical facilitators, but also active participants in disciplinary communities of inquiry. Without care for both it would not be possible to mediate between the two communities. To ensure that the standards of the disciplinary community are met and that the classroom inquiry proceeds in the same manner as scholarly or disciplinary inquiry, the teacher must develop the skills of the group for "collective self-evaluation by students of both the outcomes and procedures of their inquiry" (p.408).

### **Progressivism, reconstructionism, and pragmatism**

An understanding of the wide-sense conception of the community of inquiry as both an organising or regulative principle for disciplinary inquiry and an educational ideal aimed at reconstructing schooling relies on a certain interpretation of Dewey's general theory of education. His theory, laid out in his famous book *Democracy and Education*, has been variously interpreted as progressivism, reconstructionism, and neo-pragmatism (Englund, 2005). In what follows, I will briefly outline the three interpretations, in order to develop my argument for the idea that converting a classroom into a community of inquiry makes sense only if Dewey's general theory of education that informs the pedagogy of the community of inquiry is taken to have elements of reconstructionism and neo-pragmatism.

Progressivism is underpinned by the belief that the aim of education is to change school practice. While the seeds of progressivism can be traced to such notables as the French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau, the Swiss educational reformer Johann Pestalozzi, and the German educator Friedrich Froebel, the most influential was John Dewey. Although he was an early proponent of progressive education, he never aligned himself to the movement, and in fact distanced himself from it. But it was his principles that schools should reflect the life of the society and that the process of upbringing and teaching is an end in itself that shaped the progressive movement. This is expressed in his dictum: "since growth is the characteristic of life, education is all and one with growing; it has no end beyond itself" (Dewey, 1916, p.58). In practice progressivism advocates a curriculum that follows the interests of students and emphasises active learning and deep understanding. While it can be loosely said that Dewey advocated some sort of progressivism, its theoretical underpinnings, especially the relationship between education and democracy are too vague to make any judgment.

So how can progressivism inform our understanding of the phrase converting the classroom into a community of inquiry? If we trace back to the understanding of the wide-sense conception of the community of inquiry as both a regulative principle for disciplinary inquiry and an educational ideal aimed at reconstructing schooling, we are given some indication. This could be interpreted simply as pedagogy for changing school practice. But this is hardly informative, except that if one of the specific criteria for such change rests on Dewey's dictum that education has no end beyond itself, we land ourselves in the difficult position of having to offer a justification without recourse to other criteria underscored by alternative interpretations of Dewey. It is due to this reason that I now turn to reconstructionism.

Both progressivism and reconstructionism share a concern for education as change. Whereas progressivism is directly aimed at schooling practices and curriculum to develop individual capacities, reconstructionism uses democracy as the reference point for schools to develop the participatory capacities and dispositions in students as a way to ensure on-going development of society. Seen in this way reconstructionism views schooling as making a contribution "to the development of pupils' interest in societal questions by focusing on possibilities for everyone understanding the kind of issues involved in such questions and opportunities for discussion of controversial questions offering" (Englund, 2005, p.137). It advocates education as an instrument for change; a view that can be traced back to Dewey's fundamental concern that schools and civil society needed attention to strengthen democracy. Democracy in its fully fledged form as a way of life could only be obtained through a civil society comprised of citizens with the capacity for fully-formed opinion. Dewey (1916) highlights this in the following quotation: "Since education is a social process, and there are many kinds of societies, a criterion for educational criticism and construction implies a *particular* social ideal" (p.105). In other words, reconstructionism is concerned with the reconstruction of civil

society as the root of democracy, which has its beginning point the transformation of student thinking.

If we revisit the notion of the converting the classroom into a community of inquiry, we get a better indication if we apply the criteria of reconstructionism. To convert the classroom into a community of inquiry is to foster in students the capacity to form opinions about democratic ways of life; to encourage experimental intelligence and plurality as a way of transforming or reconstructing society. The method to bring this about is the narrow-sense community of inquiry, but the pedagogy that underscores this method is one of reconstruction. Reconstructionism, therefore, brings the two kinds of community of inquiry closer together insofar as they share in the aim of transforming society, albeit one emphasises the educational role of developing the appropriate capacities and dispositions. However, to fully appreciate what it means to convert the classroom into a community of inquiry we need also to incorporate a pragmatist interpretation.

Following from his own words in the quotation cited earlier Dewey says: “The two points selected by which to measure the worth of a form of social life are the extent to which the interests of a group are shared by all its members, and the fullness and freedom with which it interacts with other groups” (p.105). According to Thomas Englund (2005), from a neo-pragmatist perspective, these words emphasise the importance of communication (p.137). I will take the liberty to embellish on Englund’s claim, and emphasise collective communication to stress the importance that Dewey placed on communication as communal dialogue. Democracy is just one side of the Deweyan educational coin; the other is to be accomplished through effective communication, not just among its citizens but also among experts and political representatives. This is achieved through education as communication because social life is communicative, or as Dewey (1916) put it: “Not only is social life identical with communication, but all communication (and hence all genuine social life) is educative” (p.8).

Neo-pragmatism is best understood as emphasising Dewey’s attention to dissolving dualisms, of which an important one is the private-public distinction, to the relationship between language and a sense of community, and to his epistemological justification for democracy as a form of communal deliberation. The neo-pragmatic Dewey arose from an analysis of his close historical connections to Peirce and William James, the focus on communication and interaction in the work of the pragmatist George Herbert Mead, and the accentuation by Richard Rorty of the linguistic turn as a background for an analysis of how language for Dewey aims as a sense of community, as well as Richard Bernstein’s emphasis on Dewey’s attempts to dissolve the dualisms linked to the public-private in order to create a public philosophy (Englund, 2005, p.138). I will not elaborate on the arguments here, other than to say that the revival of pragmatism or what is generally referred to the pragmatic renaissance has placed emphasis back on the pragmatism of Dewey and highlighted the importance of his predecessors, especially Peirce. But my argument does not rely on the details of neo-pragmatism, especially the emphasis on postmodern linguistic analysis.

My emphasis is on Dewey’s notion of communion, which is present in his educative ideal of communal dialogue as being identical with social life. If we take into account both the reconstructionist and the pragmatist interpretations of Dewey’s theory of education then the phrase converting the classroom into a community of inquiry becomes more informative. I reiterate my previous claim. To convert the classroom into a community of inquiry is to foster in students the capacity to form opinions about democratic ways of life; to encourage experimental intelligence and plurality as a way of transforming or reconstructing society. But it is also accomplished through education as effective communication which is exemplary in communal dialogue. The method to bring this about is the narrow-sense community of inquiry, but the pedagogy that underscores this method is a combination of reconstruction and pragmatism. It is an educative ideal that moves between the classroom and civil society. This

perspective explains social integration as a “communicative and argumentative consensual process” (Englund, 2005, p.139) that is an on-going educative process. It also explains the pedagogical directive of the wide-sense community of inquiry in relation to the narrow-sense community of inquiry, insofar as they share in the aim of transforming society through communicative action. Both senses of the community of inquiry have as their requirement an educative role, albeit the role of the facilitator in the narrow-sense conception of the community of inquiry rests with the teacher to cultivate the dispositions of the students, whereas in civil society the task is distributed among all citizens. This also applies to the professional and expert communities of inquiry where the community also has an educative role to play, including scientific and other scholarly communities in which dialogue itself allows open communication among professionals and between professions, as well as with the greater community.

Accordingly, for this account of the community of inquiry to be effective it must integrate practical learning with communal inquiry in order to facilitate learning outcomes which may lead to social reconstruction. Practical learning approaches vary, and might involve scientific experiments, productive labour, or some kind of service learning, usually work experience or community service activities. But these must also fully facilitate the meaningful practice that they intend, and must therefore include the identification of problems in order to develop and implement real solutions to them (Bleazby, 2007, p.1). Such an account of practical learning is congruent with a pragmatist conception of the community of inquiry, which emphasises communicative and deliberative capabilities, and is consistent with Dewey’s conception of communal inquiry as a process of constructing and applying ideas that aim at real social change. Whereas Dewey argued that common and productive activity through school occupations, properly used, would connect students to the school curriculum and engage them in communal activities via firsthand experience, practical learning with an emphasis on social reconstruction has the potential to incorporate student participation in community development projects, as well as social and political activities to facilitate an understanding of the process of self-governance,<sup>1</sup> and therefore it has the potential to bring about social change. By applying their inquiry skills to actual situations students purposefully reconstruct their social-cultural environment (Bleazby, 2004, 2006). In this sense education has the potential to extend beyond the classroom and the school. It requires members of the school community to understand the connection between themselves as active members of the community, the school of which they are a part, the greater community, and responsible decision-making. The school and the community to which it belongs becomes a microcosm of a greater deliberative democratic community.

## **Conclusion**

I have argued in this paper that the community of inquiry in both its narrow-sense and wide-sense conceptions need to be conflated if Dewey’s, and hence Lipman’s, educational aims are to be achieved in practice. The narrow-sense community of inquiry, which is the methodology of education, must be driven by the pedagogy that underscores the wide-sense of the community of inquiry. By the wide-sense community of inquiry I mean the pedagogical guidelines that drive the community or inquiry as a teaching method. Without these to guide the larger ambitions of an education that supports democratic ways of life, whereby education as communication is seen as identical with social life, the role of the teacher as mediating between communities of students and communities of experts, but being active participants in both, remains unclear.

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<sup>1</sup> Self-governance, as the term is used here in relation to social reconstruction, is not to be confused with school-governance. Rather, it is engagement with the design and implementation of solutions to social problems that affect not only the members of the class, but also members of the greater community.

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