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Philosophical inquiry and the advancement of democratic praxis

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Abstract: In a time of advancing neoliberal educational practice globally (e.g. Roxborough, 1997, McCafferty, 2010), in the provision of public sector education as well as in assumptions regarding public educational purposes and curriculum development; this paper looks to a broader definition of education (e.g. Biesta, 2009). The authors argue that pedagogical proposal of the Community of Philosophical Inquiry as in the work of Matthew Lipman (e.g. 2002) and Ann Sharp, a model of educational praxis existent in over 60 countries world wide, can enable the advancement of a vision for deliberative democracy (Lipman, 1998) and social justice and contribute to educational theory and practice in ways which develop communicative rather than individualistic notions of autonomy (Code, 2006, p.170.). Philosophical inquiry, especially as discussed in this paper with adolescents, equips students with the tools to become more critical, to develop a more social and global awareness and consequently enable them to make more reflected moral judgments (Hannam & Echeverria, 2009, p.114). Drawing on practical examples from the direct experience of the authors in the UK and Mexico, as well as building on 40 years of research world wide, an argument is developed for embedding philosophical thinking into all educational environments as a means of forming transformative intellectuals (Giroux, 1988) and enabling a raising of awareness with regard to the consequences of the tacit acceptance of neoliberal educational policies. Furthermore, drawing on the writing of Hannah Arendt (1998) a view is advanced which suggests that deliberative and participatory democratic structures can be developed in our societies where the opportunity for careful thinking as well as conscious action taking can take place.

Key words: community of philosophical inquiry, dialogue, self regulation, thinking

Introduction

In this paper, we make a distinction between the neoliberal practice of increasing market orientated educational reforms and consequent commercialisation of the funding of schools by governments for their people, and the advancement of neoliberal pedagogical practice, for example through the decentralisation of the training of teachers and expansion of profit and market-led educational publishing which enables the public acceptance of restructuring to continue. For at least the past 30 years there has been a steady shift away from centralised provision of maintained education to the decentralisation and fragmentation of national systems. This has frequently been argued for by reference to older libertarian ideals of the virtue of advancing individual liberty and autonomy. In the UK this has manifest itself practically in the reference to 'parental choice'. Most recently in England, government proposals to amend the national curriculum are taking place at the same time as a programme of privatising the management of maintained schools themselves as well as significant changes to the initial training of teachers. In this paper we focus on pedagogy and assert that philosophical praxis, if developed by the teacher with the children and young people in her class, may offer the possibility for the development of a kind of critical and creative thinking which could work to counter neoliberalism by forming transformative intellectuals (Giroux, 1988, p.151) through building the capacity for questioning conventions of all kinds. In so doing we open for consideration some of the educational assumptions about knowledge, which underpin neoliberal advancement and inform curriculum development, in order to open up the other questions we consider in this paper.

In the emerging neoliberal curriculum models a particular view of knowledge as being 'cultural capital' (see e.g. Hirsch, 1988; 1996) frequently dominates. Hirsch's work is informing UK government policy developing curriculum in England and supports an elitist approach to knowledge and hence to individual student educational progression also. The English education system is moving away from a skills-based curriculum model towards one centred around knowledge transfer and this paper argues for a third way. The concept of cultural capital has also been explored by Bourdieu (see for example Grenfell & James, 1998) and despite some similarities, Bourdieu's work takes off in a different direction allowing for different political interpretations of the issues associated with the concept of cultural capital. The key political distinction between Hirsch and Bourdieu lies in their consideration of the nature of democracy. In this respect, Bourdieu's work much more closely resembles that of Dewey working in the tradition of the North American pragmatists. Bourdieu's theory brings a political critique

to the discussion on knowledge in terms of power structures in relation to economic and cultural issues; a critique when drawn into an educational discussion brings possibilities for us to challenge more effectively some of the assumptions of neoliberalism in relation to education in a democracy. Lipman was building on Dewey's work in respect of his understanding of how we as human beings come to know and understand our world. Lipman's position was consistent with the Pragmatist view, knowledge is acquired through the process of inquiry, it is fallible and contingent; dialogue in community is critical to this. (Burgh, Field, & Reakley, 2006, p. 88)

A further argument for developing a pedagogical proposal for the inclusion of philosophical praxis schools is to include children and young people themselves in the discussion of what constitutes educational goods. Democracy requires more than a collection of autonomous individuals and the lived shared experience of life in democracy must also be supported and other educational 'goods' such as the advancement of justice and equity. An educational system which does not include young people in discussions of the key concepts necessary for maintenance of democratic life, for example justice and equity, runs the risk of being anti-democratic. In fact we would also regard it as impossible to conceive of a reasoned discussion regarding education in the public sphere of a democracy, even one advancing neoliberal ideas, that did not give due consideration of the concepts of justice and equity within the educative process themselves. It follows from this that a discussion about curriculum and classroom practice in a plural democratic context must also be dialogical space where these concepts can be opened up and explored. The key point therefore asserted in this paper is that every element of educational practice must be informed by the concepts of justice and equity. The model of classroom practice known as The Community of Philosophical Inquiry open ups possibilities for doing so.

Introduction to the Community of Philosophical Inquiry (after Lipman and Sharp)

One pedagogical proposal that aims to open an educational space where concepts such as justice and equity can be critically and creatively explored, as well as being itself an educational process advancing the principles of justice and equity through modelling democratic participation, is the 'Philosophy for Children' programme first developed by Lipman in the United States. Philosophy for Children is now present and organised locally, in over 60 countries world wide. Lipman (e.g. 1988; 2003) in developing the Philosophy for Children programme in the 1970's suggested that introducing

children to the tools and procedures of ethical inquiry is, in effect, to prepare them to engage in reasoned moral practice (Lipman, 1988, p.79) and further can help develop the capacity to make informed and well reflected moral judgments. We argue that in a plural democracy, where there are different understandings and social realities, developing the capacity for inquiry through our education systems will be essential in order to value and live with plurality and difference where there are differing views regarding how people should live.

Ann Sharp and Laurance Splitter were close collaborators of Lipman and argued that when we form our classrooms into 'communities of inquiry' there are advantages for all compared to when we simply think out a problem alone (1989, p.16). There must be a close connection with inquiry in community and sound reasoning. The teacher in this situation becomes a facilitator of the child's reasoning, helping them to follow the direction of the conversation and pushing for depth of thinking. The proposal is that bringing the 'community of inquiry' (as envisaged by Dewey) together with philosophy itself, an important pedagogical proposal can be advanced. Sometimes we can make mistakes along the journey of our inquiry which originate in mistakes in our reasoning. Supporting the use of skills of philosophical reasoning the teacher can be alert to the possibility of mistaken reasoning while at the same time recognizing the importance of creative as well as critical thinking in accepting and developing new and different ideas. Working together with others in communities of inquiry brings more opportunity to developing the checks and balances necessary for Self-correction and encourages cooperative thinking. Through coming to be more receptive to others disagreement and agreement with our own thinking, we can be more reflective of our own ideas and open to listening to, and taking into account, the ideas of others. How much more powerful for the adolescent if new ideas come from another member of the class group and not just the teacher; how much more likely is a young person to change their mind influenced by the critical but caring reasoning of their peers in a carefully facilitated community of philosophical inquiry. In this way the community of inquiry becomes a kind of metaphor for democratic life, where the uniqueness of each individual is respected and their points of view listened to.

In the community of philosophical inquiry the questions discussed come from the students themselves and therefore are questions which are relevant to the young people's interests. In its original form Lipman developed a series of novels that would enable consideration of various philosophical themes (Hannam & Echeverria, 2009, p.111) developed in a progressive curriculum aimed at 4-17 years. This programme has been

translated into several languages and used world wide today. In the UK the starter for the children and young people's questions is usually at the discretion of the teacher; however, the questions always come from the children and young people, so once the questions are generated, the thinking and reasoning advanced in the exploration of the philosophical questions will be the same in both cases. Reasoning includes such things as defining, giving examples and counter examples, comparing, contrasting and making distinctions. By reasoning though, we do not only mean logical reasoning. The teacher becomes skilled at advancing creative thinking and hypothetical, counterfactual and inferential reasoning, for example. Being able to identify and suggest valid inferences as well as thinking hypothetically (what if...) are important aspects of our shared inquiries, with the role of the teacher changing to become a facilitator of young peoples' conversations. No longer does the teacher hold the knowledge or the answer to the closed question. Knowledge is co-constructed and understanding is developed in collaboration with others. The teacher's role becomes one of guidance, supporting young peoples' inquiry into questions of the community's choosing.

Philosophical inquiry, adolescence and the importance of learning to think for yourself

Critical to a pedagogy seeking to enable young people to think for themselves with others, is going to be one that takes young people's ideas and points of view seriously. Furthermore it will be one which supports young people taking each other seriously and enables young people to 'visit' (Sharp In Hannam & Echeverria, 2009, p. x) and listen carefully to points of view which are new or different from their own. Adolescence is a period of many changes. Cognitive, physiological and emotional changes, in addition to the formation of identity, are an important part of this stage in life. The community of philosophical inquiry can play an especially important role during this stage of development. From early, middle and late adolescence, the decisions and choices young people make might very well set the stage for what will happen to them for the rest of their lives. In the space of the community of philosophical inquiry students are enabled to develop their capacity to inquire critically about themselves and their traditions along with their peers. This requires to put what one says to the test of solid reasoning and to develop gradually the ability to reason logically and to make good judgments. They have the opportunity to think about other cultures and other human beings as part of a wide social network and to feel empathy towards their situations and problems through the development of moral imagination. The

kind of education promoted within the framework of the community of philosophical inquiry has as one of its aims to “....help students activate their capacity for argumentation and logical coherence and in this way enable them to justify their moral decisions through a careful examination of their own traditions” (Nussbaum, 1977).

Citizens so educated will help generate a solid democracy, based on a community that reasons about problems in a reflexive and deliberative manner through dialogue. This is some of what Nussbaum mentions as three of the most important competencies to be addressed in what she calls a liberal education.

It is Dewey, however, who since the 1930’s talked about the need for the development of critical thinkers to be able to sustain intelligently the psychological and emotional manipulation of the mass media over the majority of the population. The power of the mass media makes it unlikely, if not impossible, to have any kind of democracy based on a rational consensus or in individual and thoughtful decision making. Old individualism, as Dewey portrays it, encouraged effort and perseverance against all kinds of adverse circumstances. It meant the capacity to push forward our projects and dreams, but within the framework of a community, where all helped each other and solidarity was a more prevalent value than competition; where creative energy offered the opportunity for the putting into practice of initiative and risk taking. Right now what we find is rather “....a perversion of the entire ideal of individualism in order to adjust to the mores of a culture of money” (Dewey, 1930).

Buying becomes an economical obligation so taken for granted with the times right now as saving was during the times of the old individualism. If people don’t buy, the system collapses, so the whole machinery of neoliberal capitalism rests in the turning of all individuals into obedient consumers; and the way to do this is through mass media and publicity. What happens now is that everyone and especially young people are bombarded with advertisements that encourage them to buy and to feel dissatisfied with the products they already have, because there is a new and more modern one in the market. No wonder corporations pay millions of dollars in publicity. Because it works, and it works because we have not been able to provide our students with an education that allows them to be critical and see through the manipulation and deceit of the neoliberal system. The community of philosophical inquiry is a space where schools can provide students with the tools necessary to shield themselves from consumerism. Logical thinking and the identification of reasoning fallacies, plus the encouragement to develop social consciousness and moral imagination are just some of these tools. Only thus will we form citizens able to function in a deliberative democracy.

So, why philosophy? As Lipman tells us, philosophy is a discipline over-

flowing with ill formed but highly meaningful and controversial concepts like truth, justice and freedom, each lacking a satisfactory definition but essential to that state of affairs that democracies promise to be. Philosophy as an educational force enables the formation of reflective citizens, the teacher relentlessly nudging the student to more complex and interconnected thinking. The dialogical aspects of philosophy in the form of philosophical communities of inquiry, aims not just at consensus of opinion but to a reasoned settlement of controversy opening the door to the making of good judgments (Lipman, 1998).

The role of the teacher in a community of philosophical enquiry is very different from the traditional role where it is the teachers' responsibility to transmit information and knowledge to the students. In the community of philosophical inquiry the teacher is a facilitator or mediator of the activity and it is the students themselves, with their participation and discussion of philosophical concepts that construct knowledge socially. The zone of proximal development that Vygotsky talks about (Vygotsky, 1978, p.86) is manifest in a very clear way here. The teacher still has the responsibility to ensure that the atmosphere of the classroom is one of respect and listening to each other. Disagreements are welcome, especially because they provoke cognitive dissonance and this as well leads to cognitive growth. But disagreement must be expressed in a respectful manner through the giving of reasons, offering of examples, contextualizing where relevant and trying to understand the points of view of others in the classroom.

The teacher needs to be pedagogically strong, but philosophically 'self-effacing'. This means that it is his or her main responsibility to see that students take turns to talk, listen to others, and are respectful in terms of how they express disagreement. And philosophically self-effacing implies that there is no place for indoctrination. Even if the teacher disagrees with a position being espoused by some of the students, his or her role is to bring to the fore the arguments people have in favor of that position and also those arguments against. The students will have to decide what position to adopt after having heard the different positions. They are responsible for developing their own view with the help of their other classmates in a context where knowledge is constructed socially.

Falibilism is another characteristic of the way knowledge is understood in the community of philosophical inquiry. This means that I hold my view about a variety of contestable concepts or topics, and I am able to offer good arguments in the community to support those views. However, if it so happens that another student during our discussion offers good reasons that challenge my position, I am able to modify it or transform it. In the community of philosophical inquiry it is ok to say at one point: "I used to think this

way about his issue, but after hearing what you and you had to say, I realize that I was wrong.” And this is also true for the position of the teacher in the dialogue. The way knowledge is understood is not as subjective or objective but inter-subjective, relational and embodied. And all the work done in the community of philosophical inquiry is guided by values we can find in a deliberative democracy. Respect for others, a concern for the development of and alertness to greater social responsibility commensurate with the increased capacity for wise moral judgement, preoccupation with social justice and for the care of the earth upon which we depend. And for the gradual development of a social and personal project, where the student and teacher alike can begin to respond to and answer the questions of the kind of person I want to be and the kind of world I would like to live in, and leave for other coming after me.

The teacher in the community of philosophical enquiry doesn’t have many answers but knows how to make very good questions. Through this questioning students are enabled to examine their own views and values and contrast them with those around them. As they do this, they also practice and develop reasoning skills like giving reasons, predicting consequences, analyzing alternatives, putting themselves in the place of another, etc. And gradually become more analytical, reflexive and careful when making their own judgments.

Examples of Pedagogical Practice with the Community of Philosophical Inquiry in Mexico

In México the community of philosophical inquiry was introduced to children and adolescents in 1979. Especially since the founding of The Mexican federation of Philosophy for Children in the early 1990’s it has been developing slowly but consistently in both public and private institutions throughout the country. Since the end of the last century the ministry of education has put more emphasis on a curriculum that was strong in technical and computational skills, anything that could be needed for the neoliberal system. As a consequence of this the humanities suffered and among other subjects philosophy was removed from high schools. During the past five years there has been a new effort on the part of the ministry of education to include philosophy again, but as a discipline that will help prepare students to function well in a democracy, and not as a bunch of names and philosophical schools to be repeated in an exam. The idea instead is to enable students to develop generic and disciplinary competencies, consisting in the construction of knowledge, abilities and attitudes needed for a citizenry in a wholesome society. This means constructing a reasonable life project, relevant to our present world, mindful of the need for sustainable development, intercultural understanding, and for a democracy with solidarity, liberty and social justice.

The community of philosophical inquiry has been the strategy of choice to achieve this goal and all high school teachers in Mexico will eventually be trained to be able to use it in the philosophy class. More than the disciplinary content of philosophy in terms of names and dates, what will have a priority is the process of philosophical dialogue, along the topics that are of relevance and interest to adolescents. The aim is to prepare them develop in a plurality of contexts, to be able to confront an everyday wider universe of information, to maintain a critical attitude towards the world, develop solutions to new problems, to act in a reflective and responsible manner towards themselves and the world, promote ongoing learning or continuous education, and to be able to live in a diverse world, with solidarity and democracy. Among some of the competencies that students are supposed to develop through the course on selected topics in philosophy are the following:

1. Maintains a personal position with regard to topics of general interest and relevance, considering other points of view in a critical and reflexive manner.
2. Recognize his or her own prejudices, modify points of view when presented with new evidence, and integrate new knowledge and perspectives into own worldview.
3. Examine and argue in a critical and reflexive way together with a variety of philosophical problems related to human action, taking into account his or her own dignity, freedom and self-direction.

There is still a long way to go in terms of enabling teachers to deal adequately with the community of philosophical inquiry. Especially when many of them are used to provide answers more than questions to the students and present themselves as the holders of all correct knowledge. Habits and attitudes are hard to change. But this time the ministry of education is taking a step in the right direction.¹

Examples of Pedagogical Practice with the Community of Philosophical Inquiry in England

Three examples of philosophical practice in the English situation are offered here. Firstly in the regular classroom with young people of varying abilities and interests, boys and girls aged 13-14. In the example here from the north west of England, students were from a largely white secular environment typical of English rural areas. Our experience in this context showed that there was something going on in the community of philosophi-

¹ Some of the ideas above were taken from a working document of the Ministry of middle and high school education (2012, México City).

cal inquiry helping young people develop their willingness to engage with difference in human experience and which can in turn lead to greater understanding. This willingness to engage developed over time through working in together in the community (Hannam, 2010).

Despite the increasing secularization of Britain, religious education is retained as a compulsory subject in the curriculum from 5 -18 years of age. Since the 1970's with increased migration from the former colonies, and when racial and inter-religious tensions began to be seen in some of Britain's cities, 'religious education' has been considered as being a possible vehicle to advance intercultural harmony. Many had considered that the need for religious education would have faded away with the increasing secularization of Europe. The opposite seems to be the case, however. The 'Religion in Education: A contribution to Dialogue or a factor of Conflict in transforming societies of European Countries (REDCo)' project', funded by the Council of Europe and involving 10 Universities across Europe is seeking to map out educational strategies to facilitate learning from each other rather than perpetuating divisions that may lead to violence. This indicates the seriousness with which European institutions are taking religious education in civic society at this time. The work described here has been developing in a secondary school in the north of England and is beginning to define a new pedagogical proposal for religion education. It is suggested that the kind of dialogue advanced in the community of philosophical inquiry, as originally developed by Lipman and Sharp, can support young people in secular and non secular environments, encounter and develop skills and attitudes which will enable them to engage with plurality.

The second practical example concerns a "school linking" project between an English secondary school and a junior high school in Mexico City. The project, initiated by British Council Mexico in 2001, had an initial vision to develop understanding of Human Rights and Citizenship issues in schools in both nations. The school relationship has been developed through the pedagogical model of the community of philosophical inquiry. Teachers in both schools accessed training in philosophical inquiry through organizations in their own countries. The UK government had been until 2010 encouraging the development of global school linking projects. This has been nurtured by various funding agencies and especially through the Department for International Development (DfID) and The British Council as a branch of the Foreign Office. The linking between Ulverston Victoria High School in Cumbria UK and Secundaria Tecnica 44 in Mexico City developed since 2001 through the themes of Citizenship and Human Rights and Sustainability. Teachers in both schools were concerned to develop a process for working bilingually with these issues and agreed upon using the community of philosophical in-

quiry. Teachers in Mexico accessed the Diploma training offered by the Mexican Federation of Philosophy for Children, and teachers in UK were trained through SAPERE. Every year students and teachers from both schools have the opportunity to meet either in Mexico or in Cumbria UK. During each visit, time has been set aside for philosophical enquiries which develop the themes of the linking. We have found the students to have been changed by these experiences, to become more confident and self-reflective. Some have been able to move on and become involved in the Youth Congress, as discussed below.

The third area of experience introduced here as a case study is the development of an International Youth congress in Chiapas, Mexico. Young people from the UK and Meso-America have gathered for 2 weeks since 2006 for a shared experience around the themes of peace, justice and sustainability. In this congress we adapt the original Lipman approach to 'read' the experiences of the congress as a text. Experience forms the starting point for the inquiry or investigations through each congress. In the Youth Congress the community of philosophical inquiry offers a place where contemporary philosophical concerns of a social, political and environmental nature can be raised, with the ensuing exploration allowing for immense personal development. By working in community, exploring different ways of 'doing philosophy', sharing our ways of thinking and exploring new modes of reasoning, participants in the congress are enabled to reflect deeply and rigorously about the experience of humanity. The international and intercultural nature of the summer Youth Congress, where the focus issues are ones most pertinent to the survival of humanity, frames an opportunity for participants to share across the boundaries of continental perception, to formulate considered positions on these crucial matters. The congress has also given us an opportunity to investigate an educational process aiming to facilitate dialogue across many complex social, economic and cultural boundaries. In so doing new paths can be envisioned to the future. Sharing philosophically reinforces awareness that we all are part of the same humanity, moved by a similar desire for peace, seeking a common fulfillment of our existence. During the congress, we gather most evenings, meeting in a circle to go through the important events of the day. Everyone is invited to develop philosophical questions pertinent to the experiences of the day with a small group of friends. A question is chosen for further exploration in the facilitated inquiry itself. Over the two weeks of the congress these questions build upon each other, they develop, ebb and flow, allowing for an ever deepening reflection on the congress themes. The investigations are facilitated, at least initially, by the coordinators of the event.²

² The findings of these events have been published over the years, see for example the developing website: www.philosophyforchange.org.

Discussion

A dimension of the community of philosophical inquiry which has the most significant contribution to a pedagogy aiming to counter neoliberal advancements in education, is the capacity to enable those engaged in this kind of enquiry, to begin to think for themselves. However, and most importantly, this is not only in the way of the advancement of personal autonomy. Through the action of thinking together in community and listening to the voice of the other who thinks differently from me, there develops in addition a greater capacity to become also an advocate for 'the other'. In the neoliberal project personal identity and economic liberty are given a high regard and it is a view of personal identity and autonomy which serves to divide people one from another. Furthermore, it is a personal identity based on economic competition and elitism both of which are central to the neoliberal vision and where 'well being' is seen only in economic terms. This has been discussed (e.g. Biesta, 2006) as a negative strand emerging from the enlightenment project, a negative impact of humanism. With Biesta we would argue that this strand of enlightenment thinking has not taken on board fully the vision of freedom which necessitates a deep discussion of human freedom and further which enables humanity to live together politically. In the community of philosophical inquiry we have an interest in embracing the consequences of taking human freedom seriously and in particular looking into how this applies to life in a democracy. The community of philosophical inquiry is therefore a place where self regulation can be experienced and experimented with and various ways of living rehearsed. It is where the classroom community can become a place of transformation and change and where knowledge is understood to be co-constructed, contingent and socially relevant. It is a way of viewing knowledge is in keeping with the thinking and political awareness of Bourdieu and Dewey as discussed above.

In a school situation it is not only the student participants in the community of philosophical inquiry who are open to change; the teachers can also become open to new ways of thinking and intellectual transformation. The possibility for transformation of the teacher is particularly significant, and it is in part for this reason that we understand the community of philosophical inquiry to be a curriculum model of praxis for all who are involved, not just the students. As the process develops we see changes emerging in the teacher herself. From being someone who sees herself in principle as an imparter of knowledge, and all that the knowledge economy entails, we see someone who is herself an active agent in all aspects of her own life, as well as her professional life. There is an opportunity to reflect on the impact that she is having on the students, to see the moment by moment of interventi-

ons in the students thinking and to become more and more responsible for and responsive to that. This ultimately raises the level of respect the teacher has for the rights of the students and the whole classroom community. In order for alternatives to the neoliberal agenda to have an impact in the classroom the teacher must be increasingly alert to the ways in which independent thought is countered by the relentless bombardment of information and so become more and more able to recognise the impact of her pushing for depth in the communities of inquiry.

The setting up of the inquiry from the presentation of the stimulus for the generation of the philosophical questions needs to bring a level of de-stabilisation, or cognitive dissonance, in order for the questioning to begin. This element of discomfort is where we would suggest the educational element of the community of philosophical inquiry begins. If education is to be more than just a repetition of what has gone before, if instead the educational space is a place where new discoveries are made, there must be an element of movement and a time where those involved experience being out of balance. The educational assumptions of the community of philosophical inquiry are that thinking for oneself is an important part of becoming educated. Ann Sharp, a key collaborator in the development of Philosophy for Children with Matthew Lipman, understood the relationship between thinking with others and learning to think for oneself 'In a technological world where individualism and competitiveness are stressed relentlessly, it must be understood that that while thinking for one's self may involve thinking by oneself, it comes as a result of practice (the practice of inquiry) which involves thinking with others. The drive to think for ourselves emerges in proportion to our willingness to discuss and deliberate with others. Why? Because in thinking for ourselves, we need the corrective potential of a collaborative community (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p.16).

Concluding Comments

In conclusion we are asserting that a pedagogy which can inform both curriculum and classroom practice to counter neoliberal approaches to education, has to be about far more than knowledge transmission to be successful. We can look to Dewey's work on democracy and education to help us in developing theory and to the work of the community of philosophical inquiry as developed in the Philosophy for Children programme of Lipman as discussed in this paper. The role of this process in transforming both the student as well as the teacher has been highlighted as significant and several examples from Mexico and England have been used here to support the argument. Education it is argued must have a destabilising action if it

is to be pedagogy of praxis and be responsive to the needs of education in a plural democracy. This will be a democracy capable of resisting the neo-liberalisation of education, an educational approach enabling teachers and children and young people to begin to think not only for themselves but with others in community, respecting the other who is perceived as different.

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