Democratic Education: Aligning Curriculum, Pedagogy, Assessment and School Governance

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M atthew Lipman claims that the community of inquiry is an exemplar of democracy in action.[1] To many proponents the community of inquiry is considered invaluable for achieving desirable social and political ends through education for democracy. But what sort of democracy should we be educating for? In this paper I outline three models of democracy: the liberal model, which emphasises rights and duties, and draws upon pre-political assumptions about freedom; communitarianism, which focuses on identity and participation in the creation of political ends; and deliberative self-governance, whereby citizens deliberatively shape their collective lives in public forums—at various levels of government and in different political and social arenas.

I argue that some kind of deliberative democracy is defensible as a preliminary justification for how citizens might shape their lives, and therefore compatible with other forms of democracy, insofar as they can result from democratic deliberations. Acceptance of such a view raises further questions about the purpose or aims of education consistent with this conception of democracy. I contend that it requires an educational model that is committed to aligning curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and school governance to produce a

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1. See Matthew Lipman, Ann Margaret Sharp and Frederick S. Oscanyan, *Philosophy in the Classroom*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980); Matthew Lipman, *Philosophy Goes to School* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988) and *Thinking in Education* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

transformational environment that will inform our structures—a commitment to democratic education and not merely education for democracy. Lipman goes part of the way to achieving these ends, but learning how to be proficient at democratic decision-making is like all tasks children and adolescents learn to perform. It involves action, understanding, and awareness of what counts as doing the task adequately.

Liberal Citizenship: Rights and Duties

To speak of citizenship is to speak about group membership, or more specifically, membership of a political community, which involves a set of relationships between rights, duties, participation and identity.[2] Competing theories of citizenship place different emphasis on these components of citizenship.

Citizenship in the classical tradition of modern liberal thought is a legal status, bound up in pre-political notions of liberty, the private domain, and consumer rights, to the neglect of the public sphere as the location of citizenship. While much of contemporary debate on citizenship has focused on a return to the substantive dimension of citizenship, the relationship of citizenship to democracy has not been the focus of discussion in liberal debates. Instead, 'citizenship is reduced to a formalistic relationship to the state as one of rights and duties'.[3] Margaret Thatcher's statement, 'there is no such thing as society, only individuals', sums up the lack of a substantive dimension to citizenship. With the arrival of neo-liberalism[4] and the emphasis on decentralisation, deregulation, and privatisation, the concept of citizenship has once again become strongly

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2. Gerard Delanty, *Citizenship in a Global Age: Society, Culture, Politics* (Philadelphia, PA: Open University Press, 2000).
3. *Ibid.*, p.22.
4. See F.A. Hayek, *New Studies in Philosophy, Politics, Economics and the History of Ideas* (Melbourne: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), and Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, 1974).

linked to the market. In sum, by denying the social in favour of individual consumers, neo-liberal versions of citizenship have relegated citizenship to the realm of the market and/or the sphere of the state.

In modern liberal-democracies, popular participation in decision-making is restricted. The power of electors is formally limited to voting, and decision-making restricted to elected representatives. The longer these representative groups stay in power, 'the more their interests become identified with the survival of the state'.[5] Although it can be argued that regularly held elections enable citizens to participate in decision-making, the outcome is similar to that of the referendum, there is no significant way that the majority participates in framing policy. The introduction of the citizen initiative as a supplement to regularly held elections seems to be a way of avoiding some of the pitfalls of representative democracy and the impracticability of direct democracy. However, the difficulty facing contemporary liberal theorists is how to reconcile the notion of individual liberty with the constraint on the government elected by the people. Liberal arguments reason from the *value of liberty* to imposing *limitations on the state*, whereupon constitutional mechanisms define and delimit the powers, rights and duties of the executive, other government institutions and the citizens, in order to restrict government interference with private liberty. The crucial question that modern democratic theorists need to address concerns not so much the extent of popular control, but how such control might be exercised. The answer will depend on the practical applicability of competing liberal theories, insofar as assessing 'the relative strengths and weaknesses of theories considered as proposed solutions to the problem of the relation between representation and participation'.[6] Critical to the assessment of competing theories is whether a solution requires a move away from traditional conceptions of liberalism or the influences of social democracy on liberalism. A viable solution will also

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5. James C. Walker, 'Education for Democracy: The Representative/Participation Dualism', *Educational Theory*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (Summer 1992), p. 318.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 316.

hinge on the practical applicability of an educational pedagogy for the teaching and learning of the relevant democratic procedures that is compatible with liberal-democratic principles. Communitarian critiques of liberal political philosophy have modified liberalism to produce liberal communitarianism.[7]

Communitarian Models of Democracy

Unlike the liberal tradition, which appeals to the individual as the foundation of civil society, communitarian versions of citizenship locate civil society in community. Emphasis is on identity and participation rather than on rights and duties. Communitarians reject contract in favour of community, extending citizenship to the domain of politics, although the concept of politics does not extend to democracy.[8] However, there are also marked differences in the ways communitarians treat identity and participation.

In reaction to liberal-conceptions of politics, liberal communitarians stress the importance of citizenship as participation in a political community, but it is also about identity specific to a particular community. What is rejected is a notion of self as an abstract and universal entity, replaced by a culturally specific, and therefore, socially constructed and embedded self. According to Charles Taylor the fundamental issue is the integration of self and other, which is an essential feature of social life.[9] The encounter between self and other is embedded in a shared language, and crucial to this encounter is a discourse of recognition at a public level. The concept of community in communitarian discourse, which has its foundations in the politics of recognition, is the community of the dominant culture recognised by the state. Since political community rests

7. Delanty, *Citizenship in a Global Age*, p. 25.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
9. Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

on prior cultural communities, minorities and incoming groups must adapt to this community in order to participate as citizens in the political community.

Conservative communitarianism also focuses on identity and participation. However, identity is allied with the notion of the nation or civil society, and participation with civic responsibility. In its most conservative form it is likely to 'stress family, religion, tradition, nation and what in general might be called cultural consensus'.[10]

Civic republicanism is a radical form of liberal individualism that places emphasis on public or civic bonds, rather than on moral communities as is the case with communitarianism in general. Participation in public life occupies a central space and is the essence of the public bond, and is equivalent to but far more pronounced than the emphasis given to identity in liberal communitarianism. Proponents of civic republicanism include Jean-Jacques Rousseau,[11] Hannah Arendt,[12] and Benjamin Barber.[13] In republicanism we find a commitment to public life, whereas the liberal formulation emphasises self-interest or personal autonomy. Any connection to privatism and negative liberty, which are hallmarks of liberalism, is denounced over an explicit political conception of citizenship, positive liberty, and a self-governing political community.

Republicanism challenges the liberal presupposition that a self-governing community is incompatible with representative democracy. Whereas liberal democracy has an historical connection to constitutional monarchy, civic republicanism, according to its more radical proponents, is a much more compatible companion for representative democracy. The challenge for civic republicanism lay in relocating, or wrestling, politics from the state into the public forum. The

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10. Delanty, *Citizenship in a Global Age*, p. 29.

11. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Other Discourses*, trans. and intro. by G.D.H. Cole (New York: Everyman's Library, 1973 [1762]).

12. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

13. Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

main concern of republicans generally is that of popular sovereignty over a particular relationship between monarch and parliament. The irony of the Republican vs. Monarchy debate in Australia, which resulted in a referendum in favour of the status quo, is that the debate on whether or not to maintain any existing ties between monarch and parliament remained superficial to the detriment of any open and informed public discussion on the question of shifting power from parliament[14] to the public forum.

The liberalism/republicanism debate rests on whether or not constitutional safeguards or popular sovereignty can offer an adequate justification for democracy. Liberals and communitarians have tended to frame this question in terms of seeking foundations for democracy. But does democracy require foundations?

Radical Democratic Encounters of the Deliberative Kind

The relationship between democratic theory and epistemology has always been an uneasy one. The foundations upon which liberal and communitarian theories of democracy are constructed have been eroded by the postmodernist demolition of political certainty. Abandoning the philosophical quest for truth in certainty shifts the emphasis away from epistemological concerns to the politics of democracy. As Benjamin Barber notes, 'The question is not which politics is legitimated by a certain epistemology, but which epistemology is legitimated by a certain democratic politics'.[15]

But what sort of defence may be available for the ideal of collective self-government? Whilst it is difficult to deny that current systems of democracy are less than ideal when compared to their theoretical counterparts, many people today if pressed to defend democ-

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14. I am referring in particular to the current practice of adversarial politics, characterized by government and opposition, party politics, and debate.
15. Benjamin Barber, 'Foundationalism and Democracy,' in Sayla Benhabib (ed.), *Democracy and Difference: Contesting Boundaries of the Political* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 350.

racy would no doubt sympathise with Winston Churchill's defence that 'democracy is the worst form of government except all the others'. Churchill's defence of existing democracies does not rest on Cartesian notions of certainty, on self-evident truths about human nature or politics. Rather, Churchill is saying that all systems of government in practice fail to deliver what they promise in theory, but in spite of these failures, every existing democracy secures more benefits for its citizens than any existing autocratic system. Nevertheless, Churchill's statement fails to articulate what kind of democracy is most justified.

If we abandon the idea of political foundationalism, in the sense that a particular model of democracy can be justified only by an appeal to a self-evident truth about human nature, natural rights or politics, then an adequate theory of democracy needs 'to give reasons in defence of democracy against undemocratic—or less democratic—alternatives'.[16] Justification for democracy must ultimately rest on the practical applicability and outcomes of competing visions of politics without appeal to pre-political or prior goods, or to certain knowledge about justice or right.

According to Jane Mansbridge, there are two conceptions of democracy: adversary democracy and deliberative democracy.[17] The adversarial conception, which is the foundation of liberal-democratic theory, assumes that the interests of individuals will often conflict. Accordingly, political decision-making is geared towards a process of self-regarding deliberation, whereby people negotiate compromises with each other as a way of reconciling the diverse interests to which they are committed. Disagreements are settled procedurally; usually by giving all adult citizens or their representatives one vote each, and letting the side with a majority of votes win. Deliberative democracy is defensible as a preliminary justification for how citizens might

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16. Amy Gutmann, 'Democracy, Philosophy, and Justification,' in Sayla Benhabib (ed.), *Democracy and Difference: Contesting Boundaries of the Political* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 341.

17. Jane Mansbridge, 'Democracy and Common Interest,' Social Alternatives, Vol. 8, No. 4 (January, 1990), pp. 20-24.

shape their lives—a way of provisionally settling disputes that 'would be compatible with respecting many moral and cultural differences within and across societies'.[18] In other words, deliberative democracy assumes that citizens share common interests, but also leaves room for difference. It is compatible with the liberal and communitarian conceptions of democracy, insofar as they can result from democratic deliberations.

Deliberative democracy should not be mistaken for participatory democracy. Liberal-democracies have incorporated various participatory elements into their decision-making procedures in an attempt to fill the gap between liberalism and democracy. The introduction of the citizens' initiated referendum is one such attempt. However, in practice citizens have little or no input into the formulation of questions. Certain conceptions of republicanism are also open to criticism. Whereas participation in the public forum is necessary for a self-governing political community, deliberation as a way of participating in public life cannot be overlooked. Deliberative democracy emphasises deliberation among citizens as a prima facie justification for democracy.

Democracy and Education

Whether or not justification for democracy can be found in liberty and rights, identity and participation, or in deliberation, the promotion of democracy has educational implications. Modern democracies are confronted with the challenge of providing education that is responsive to an increasingly complex world, and responsible to the differing needs of students.[19] In order to explore some of the theoretical and practical implications of introducing democratic reform in schools, a distinction shall be made between what hereafter will

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18. Amy Gutmann, 'Democracy, Philosophy, and Justification', p. 344.
19. See Gilbert Burgh and Mia O'Brien, 'Philosophy and Education: Integrating Curriculum, Teaching and Learning,' *Critical & Creative Thinking: The Australasian Journal of Philosophy for Children*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (March 2002), pp. 45-58.

be referred to as democratic education and education for democracy. It is my contention that education for democracy may serve political leaders in modern democratic societies, who have a vested interest in promoting the essentially pre-political conception of citizenship, 'a means for enabling individuals, organisations, and nations to meet the challenges of an increasingly competitive world to the neglect of involving people in a continuing process of education aimed as self-actualisation and a learning society'.[20] Deliberative democracy, on the other hand, is more attuned to the procedural concerns of democratic education.

Democratic Education as Self Governance

Democratic education refers to the view that schools should embody decision-making structures that facilitate and foster meaningful participation by all members of the school community. Although, in practice, restructuring efforts have been more rhetorical than real, democratic education not only provides opportunities for people to participate in decision-making, it also purports to enhance their cultural experiences through learning and sharing. As the history of progressive education has shown, some schools heavily emphasised social reform within a framework of participation in school-governance while others were less permissive, leaving administration mainly to professionals with varying degrees of input from students and parents.

A.S. Neill's Summerhill exemplifies a very permissive self-governing school.[21] The community of students and staff make their

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20. Gilbert Burgh, 'Democratic Education: Engaging in Self-Governance,' *A Community of Inquiry on Education*, 12th Annual Philosophy in Schools Conference, Federation of Australasian Philosophy for Children Associations, Brisbane, Queensland, 28-30 September 2002, p. 1.

21. A.S. Neill published twenty books, as well as other material, describing his views on education and, in particular, the activities of Summerhill. See esp. *Summerhill* (New York: Hart, 1960); *Summerhill, A Radical Approach to Child Rearing, foreword by Erich Fromm* (New York: Hart, 1960); Albert Lamb (ed.), The New Summerhill (Penguin, 1992).

own laws, which pertain to situations that arise from community life. Neill shared Rousseau's belief in non-interference (although he insisted on not having read Rousseau); that freedom exists only where students govern themselves in an environment where they are able to learn and play at will. In addition to Rousseau's framework, Neill added a Freudian dimension. He postulated that freedom was desirable not only because it enabled children to be natural, it also was therapeutic, empowering children to escape repression, hostility and guilt.

Currently, there is a diversity of educational approaches among alternative schools in which students are involved in planning and decision-making. A current example of schooling that acknowledges the importance of student participation in the governance and administration of the school is Brisbane Independent School.[22] Typically, the school community commences the day with a group or whole-school meeting, usually run by the students who swap the chairperson role each day. These meetings allow students and staff to share in the planning of the daily activities, to voice problems or concerns, and to vote on issues that need resolving. Students also establish their goals for the day, organise materials and arrange teacher time for individual activities.

Since the forming of the initial Brisbane Independent School Society in 1967 and subsequent establishment of a committee to administer its affairs, many state schools and other non-government schools have made attempts to become more open and child-centred. Whilst the differences in teaching practice have become less acute in recent decades, the emphasis on a student-centred curriculum, and the degree of student and parental involvement in school governance continue to be salient differences between the underlying philosophy of BIS and that of their State school counterparts.

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22. The BIS curriculum is individualised, allowing children to learn at their own pace and to have a direct say in what and how, they learn. For more information *see: see* http://bis.primetap.com/

Education for Democracy

By contrast, education for democracy has as its primary goal the achievement of an educated citizenry competent to participate in democratic societies. This is to be achieved *not* through participation in school-governance, but through enabling students to deliberate and to think carefully and critically, in order to help them articulate and support their views. What is crucial is that education develops in children and adolescents, and in the population generally, a sufficient degree of social understanding and judgment so that they have the capacity to think intelligently about public issues.

Philosophy for children,[23] with its commitment to the community of inquiry, is considered by many of its proponents to be invaluable for achieving desirable social and political ends through education for democracy. The community of inquiry is, according to this view, an educational tool for the cultivation of democratic character in students and the fostering of a sense of community, which are both pre-conditions for active participation in democratic societies. [24] Lipman is quite clear that the community of inquiry is an exemplar of democracy in action. It represents what he describes as 'the social dimension of democracy in practice, for it both paves the way for the implementation of such practice and is emblematic of what such practice has the potential to become'.[25] In short, the community of inquiry provides a model of democracy as inquiry, as well as being an educative process in itself.

23. Philosophy for Children (upper case P and C) in its early stages referred to a particular methodology, curriculum, syllabus or program founded and developed by Lipman, and later to a discipline with its own set of materials, in which Lipman's materials played a significant role. Unless otherwise specified, philosophy for children (lower case p and c) will refer to a sub-discipline of philosophy with its own history and traditions. Note that Nancy Letts also uses a philosophical approach to teaching and learning, which she labels 'Socratic Discourse'. Her approach, while seemingly similar, differs to Lipman's in practice. The term 'philosophy for children' does not apply to Letts's approach.

24. Ann Margaret Sharp, 'The Community of Inquiry: Education for Democracy,' *Thinking: The Journal of Philosophy for Children*, Vol. 9, No. 2, (1991), p. 33.

25. Lipman, *Thinking in Education*, p. 249.

Lipman maintains that education in a democracy requires more than churning out decision-makers. Students must be capable of examining and appraising the principles by which they choose to live, so that not only will they be better equipped to circumvent social crises, but they will have learned how to examine and appraise institutional and social practices that are likely to perpetuate social crises.[26] Conversely, many school-governance schemes (Summerhill is just one example) use self-governance as therapy while neglecting to take into account what Lipman not only takes for granted but sees as necessary to participation in democratic life, that is, developing the democratic character of future citizens. Without such education, students are ill equipped to deliberate on matters that affect themselves and others. Students must first learn how to consider the good of their community along with their own personal good before they can make effective decisions on real issues. That is to say, before they can accept full responsibility of citizenship, students must acquire the skills to integrate their personal goals with the goals of society, to 'habitually weigh the claims of society against those of self-interest'.[27]

Lipman argues harshly against student participation in school-governance, and discounts developmental and therapeutic approaches to education. He prefers philosophical problems as the pedagogical means to cultivating democratic character. His curriculum avoids substantive issues of immediate concern to students by creating a totally artificial environment, rather than one that uses real cases, as the basis for discussion.

Self-Governance and the Development of Democratic Dispositions

A comparison between A.S. Neill's Summerhill and Matthew Lipman's Philosophy for Children highlights the differences between democratic education as self-governance and education for democracy. At one end of the continuum we have a fully democratic school,

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26. Lipman, *Philosophy Goes to School*.
27. Ibid., p. 57.

which fosters self-regulation, freedom and self-government, and at the other, a model committed to the development of democratic dispositions that are requisite for active citizenship. It should be noted, however, that both categories are not fixed, as not all models of progressive education or alternative schooling agree to the context and application of the deliberative process. Indeed, readers might find a considerable degree of overlap between the two categories. To emphasise this point, while Neill and Lipman differ in their approaches to child-centredness, curriculum and other educational matters, both concentrate on the importance of group accomplishments. The reader should, therefore, be aware of the over-simplification of these categories, which are intended to act merely as guidelines to underscore the more apparent differences among proponents of progressive education who hold seemingly opposing views, or to make comparisons between alternative approaches to schooling that focus on collaboration, self-responsibility and decision-making.

John Dewey, I think, blurs the distinction between practice and education, i.e., between democratic education and education for democracy. His educational ideals were like Rousseau's, in that he placed child-centredness at the heart of education, which he reinforced with study directed to practical problem solving. Dewey was himself involved with experimental schools and educational reform. He believed that the classroom should be a social enterprise in which all children have the opportunity to contribute, and all are engaged in communal projects. Between 1896 and 1903 he was involved in the Laboratory School at the University of Chicago, where, in Dewey's own words, students experienced a 'miniature community, an embryonic society'.[28] While eloquently written, this description was in some ways exaggerated. Students did not have the same freedom or influence as teachers over matters of curriculum and the structure of the school. They were, nevertheless, encouraged

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28. John Dewey, *The School and Society*, 2nd rev. ed. (Chicago, Il: University of Chicago Press, 1956 [1915]), p. 18.

to engage in collective deliberation and decision-making. Regular classroom council meetings were held, and younger students were given the responsibility of carrying out important tasks. Dewey was elusive over which internal democratic structures corresponded to those of a democratic society. For example, teachers had much more authority than democratically elected representatives.

Gutmann describes the Laboratory School as a model of democratic education. However, she argues that Dewey's characterisation of the school, as a miniature democratic community, is misleading. While the school's internal democratic structures were more democratic than almost all schools in the U.S.A., it was an 'embryonic democratic society because it elicited a commitment to learning and cultivated the democratic virtues among its students, not because it treated them as the political equals of its teachers'.[29] Democratic schools need not be democratic in the same way as democratic societies. Indeed, they cannot be, since schools by their very nature also *prepare* students for democratic citizenship. Students cannot expect to have the same citizenship rights as adults, but it would be inconsistent with democratic practice if they were denied 'both individual and collective influence in shaping their own education'.[30] While young children in particular are not ready for full citizenship, they, like all students, have to be prepared for citizenship, or more precisely, *practice* citizenship. For democratic education to be not contrary to democratic practice, a considerable degree of democracy within schools is desirable, if not necessary. Just how much is a moot point, as there is a lack of evidence as to the impact of internal democracy on the cultivation of participatory virtues among students.[31] What is certain is that a reluctance to experiment with internal democratisation of schools can only inhibit what I consider to be a significant part of a necessary movement towards democratic reform. Invariably, people cannot become competent at self-gover-

29. Amy Gutmann, *Democratic Education* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 93.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 94.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 92.

nance without *actual* participation in decision-making.

Many critics of democratic education are either cautious or antagonistic, in particular, of school-governance schemes that employ direct-populist models, in which students of all ages are equally entitled to participate in all matters of education and school activities. For example, Mark Weinstein, an exponent of critical thinking and philosophy for children, finds problems with school governance schemes like Dewey's Laboratory School. What seems clear to Weinstein is that children have neither the responsibility nor the deliberative competence for making actual decisions on school policy. Not surprisingly, his solution recommends philosophy for children 'with its commitment to the community of inquiry',[32] which requires that students engage in deliberation as equals. However, he, too, shows a reluctance to extend the deliberative process to areas such as policy-making. Students must learn deliberative strategies not through participation in school-governance, but by focusing on issues in such a way that enables them to learn, and that is not to their disadvantage. In addition, Weinstein not only has reservations about bringing democracy into the classroom, he seems to find a limit for the community of inquiry and what he sees as rational deliberation in the wider context of public decision-making.[33]

I concur with Weinstein that democratic education cannot, and should not, be a miniature democratic society in action. Lipman is correct to say that the fostering of democratic dispositions is necessary to democratic life, more so than the preparation of so-called good decision-makers.[34] But I certainly do not believe that students should not in some ways participate in school-governance. My con-

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32. Mark Weinstein, 'Critical Thinking and Education for Democracy,' Resource Publication, Series 4, No. 2 (Upper Montclair, NJ: Institute for Critical Thinking, 1991), p. 16.

33. See also Gilbert Burgh, 'Translating Democracy into Practice: A Case for Demarchy,' *Critical & Creative Thinking: The Australasian Journal of Philosophy for Children*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (March, 1996), pp. 14-20, esp. pp. 18-19. In this article I raise some questions about the implementation of the community of inquiry into the wider community.

34. Lipman, *Philosophy Goes to School*, p. 51.

tention is that neither the cultivation of democratic character nor self-governance are sufficient conditions for the development of a democratic citizenry, although both are necessary. Dewey's Laboratory School was a gallant attempt at resolving the fine dualistic line between democratic education and education for democracy. I cannot stress enough that democratic education places no obligation on those seeking democratic reform to introduce measures in the way that, say, A.S. Neill did in Summerhill. Likewise, education for democracy should not condemn the inclusion of student participation in policy decisions. Democratic educational practice requires that elements of both models be incorporated into its definition. That is to say, a balance must be found between the democratic values of active participation in decision-making and of fostering democratic character.

If philosophy for children is, as Lipman maintains, the same as philosophy for adults, insofar as the question of whether or not children have acquired knowledge 'is not to be ascertained by measuring their understanding against an adult standard, but rather by judging how far their knowledge is sufficient to deal with their own world',[35] then, similarly, whether or not children have acquired the ability to make decisions on matters pertaining to situations that arise from community life *should not be ascertained by measuring their ability against an adult standard, but rather by judging how far their deliberative skills and understanding of matters are sufficient to deal with their own world*. Also, part of the democratic education process should be the inculcation of how to deal with matters requiring expertise. Lipman's ideas seem to debar children from such education. Those who accept that there is a philosophical dimension to children's discourse accept that children are active agents who learn by doing and creating. Thus, education should concentrate also on giving children experience in actual democratic decision-making whenever and wherever it is applicable.

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35. Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp, *Growing Up With Philosophy* (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt, 1994), p. 56.

Indeed, if critical deliberation in matters of public affairs is a justification for democracy, or democratic practice, then the preparation of citizens in a democracy *requires* democratic education. We cannot leave democracy outside the community of inquiry. Learning how to be proficient at democratic decision-making is like all tasks children learn to perform. It involves action, understanding, and awareness of what counts as doing the task adequately. To use an example from Lipman and Sharp, we cannot expect children to perform the task of tying shoelaces without them first having an awareness of what accounts as an adequate knot, nor before they have become proficient at lesser tasks requiring the use of similar skills. Likewise, we cannot expect children to make important decisions on matters concerning their education, or, indeed, on matters that pertain to situations that arise from community life, without them, first, having learned the responsibilities of making lesser decisions.

Democratic Education: a Developmental Approach

In practice, democratic education ideally would take into account Lipman's views on reflective thinking as essential to the making of decisions. It would also recognise the importance of participation in school governance, but within a setting that gives students the opportunity to learn deliberative strategies where the degree of responsibility and scope of the decisions would depend largely on the abilities of the students to make such decisions. This would be assessed according to students' deliberative competence within the activities in which they engage. This is necessary for young children especially until they 'mature intellectually and emotionally, and become more capable of engaging in free and equal discussion with teachers and their peers'.[36]

Such an account of democratic education would not only satisfy both Lipman's and Weinstein's concerns, but students also learn that the purpose of critical deliberation is 'to maximise the possibility of

36. Amy Gutmann, *Democratic Education*, pp. 92-93.

recognising what constitutes good lives and good societies by max-imising the available alternatives'.[37] Moreover, the process of practic-ing decision-making allows students to gain a better understanding of the techniques used in the resolution of conflicts (e.g. how to turn competitive situations into cooperative problem-solving efforts), how others approach ethical deliberation (e.g., identifying the rela-tionship between justice and care), and how contextual features can inform ethical choice (e.g. whether certain criteria are applicable in practice to different circumstances).

Democratic education can be seen as a cooperative means of raising the level of social and political participation, and as a way of creating a link for students between inquiry in the classroom and deliberative decision-making in society. The rhetoric of democracy recognises diversity, pluralism, and multiculturalism. Because these elements are part of everyday contemporary life, conflict will inevitably persist. It is, therefore, necessary that educators ensure that students acquire the necessary skills for conflict resolution. The com-munity of inquiry, when used both as a means of fostering democra-tic character, and as a process for participating in school-governance, helps students to understand and deal with the problems that face modern societies.

Beyond the Classroom

Both the liberal and communitarian conceptions of politics place emphasis on a prior commitment to the structural principles of existing society. The contribution of education is to educate for democracy, i.e. the achievement of an educated citizenry competent to participate in modern democratic societies. According to Peter Davson-Galle, the philosophy for children approach to education can 'improve the capacity of future citizens to exercise competent autonomy as moral agents', but there is 'no guarantee that it will be

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37. Weinstein, 'Critical Thinking and Education for Democracy', p. 3.

their decision to support any sort of society which we would approve of'.[38] In other words, philosophy for children can have a significant effect on the operations of democracy. The truth of such a statement is, of course, a matter for empirical investigation. In terms of the purposes or wider aims of education for democracy the community of inquiry may not be fully consistent with the liberal/communitarian conception of politics. Davson-Galle acknowledges that indirect forms of democracy are less well aligned with philosophy for children.[39] However, the relationship between education and legitimate forms of power cannot be separated. Elected representatives have an interest in what is taught in schools. If the effects that Davson-Galle refers to are significant enough to have an impact on certain sectional interests within the community, it is unlikely that the practice of philosophy for children will gain support from State education departments, and if the interests of the elected representatives have identified with the survival or interests of the state, it is unlikely to get support from voters and the community.

If democratic societies wish to not suffer from a dearth of civic literacy,[40] it requires a melding of democratic values into educational practice. Aligning curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and school governance is essential for an adequate model of democratic education. Democratic education requires a democratic curriculum free from the pre-political presumptions underlying liberal and communitarian conceptions of democracy. The community of inquiry as an educational pedagogy can, as Davson-Galle speculates, 'have a significant effect on the operations of democracy'. However, my contention is that democracy demands educational procedures that are prior to any substantive claims about democracy itself, and are not an instrument for democracy. My remarks to Davson-Galle should

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38. Peter Davson-Galle, 'Democracy, philosophy and schools,' *Critical & Creative Thinking: The Australasian Journal of Philosophy for Children*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (March 1999), p. 17.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
40. See Benjamin Barber, 'America Skips School,' *Harper's Magazine* (November 1993), Vol. 286, No. 44.

not be seen as a criticism of the effects philosophy in the classroom can have on democracy. Rather, they are intended to open discussion on whether or not proponents of philosophy for children should be seeking to engage with the current educational innovations insofar as integrating curriculum, teaching, and learning, or whether philosophy should remain as a classroom activity for improving students' thinking, and therefore, competency to participate in democratic societies.

I have argued that students should be made aware of the social and political implications of their actions. Moreover, they should be encouraged to make decisions about what affects their daily lives, not only in the classroom, but also in the context of school-wide decision-making and society generally. Of course, as educators we must ourselves show that deliberative decision-making must not take a back seat to technical administrative matters that have little bearing on educational values. Often, the pursuit of efficiency *per se* has overshadowed more important social goals. Equally important, however, is for children to understand that matters of education, like all matters outside the classroom, should not exclude any paicular group or voice. Democratic procedures recognise that education is not an exclusive right of children, and that the education of children does not only affect children.