

Community Media as a Teaching Tool

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A community media project aimed at fostering personal and social growth can significantly benefit from the integration of [John Dewey's](#) and [Jean Piaget's](#) theories of cognitive development. Their insights into active learning and cognitive structuring can be pivotal in creating content that not only engages the community but also stimulates intellectual and social development.

In terms of designing a community media project, a Deweyan perspective might emphasise reflection, transformative experiences, and active participation and self-direction by learners. A Piagetian perspective might emphasise the constructivist approach and a learner-centred approach. Both perspectives can inform the design of a community media project by incorporating opportunities for reflection, transformative experiences, active participation and self-direction, and a learner-centred approach.ⁱ

1 Developmental Perspectives

The Deweyan and Piagetian perspectives in education have some key differences:

1.1 Deweyan Perspective

John Dewey emphasises the importance of reflection and transformative experiences in learning. He believes that learners should be active participants in their own learning and that their experiences and worldview are critical to problem-solving education. Educators and tutors should therefore focus on the needs, experiences, and abilities of students, while emphasising appropriate democratic relationships in the classroom setting. Dewey was an advocate for a progressive approach to education that focuses on the whole child and not just the teacher or the curriculum.

- **Reflection:** Dewey believed that reflection helps learners extract meaning through intellectual organisation. Reflection can help learners connect their experiences with the content they are learning, leading to transformation.ⁱⁱ
- **Transformative Experience:** Dewey's pragmatic aesthetics and application of learning to everyday life and experience of the learner can lead to transformative experiences. Learning has the potential to enrich and vitalise school experiences and provide aesthetic satisfaction that could lead to transformation of everyday experience.ⁱⁱⁱ

- **Active Participation and Self-Direction:** Dewey believed that active participation and self-direction by students are imperative, and learner's experience and worldview are critical to problem-solving education. The contents of the child's experience are more important than the subject-matter of the curriculum.^{iv}
- **Child-Centred Approach:** Dewey's approach to education is truly child-centred. He believed that education should reflect the child's interests and backgrounds and that their social and cultural worlds are important.^v
- **Broader Curricular Programs:** Dewey advocates that broader curricular programs are needed, and emphasis should be placed on the total development of the person as being equally important as the intellectual and the academic.^{vi}
- **Democratic Abilities:** Education is an important part of building democratic abilities. Dewey believed that recognising and embracing differences might help pupils broaden their horizons and open up to new ways of thinking rather than closing themselves off to their own views and habits.^{vii}

Dewey's theory of education and cognitive development emphasises the importance of hands-on learning, reflection, transformative experiences, active participation and self-direction, broader curricular programs, and democratic abilities. Dewey's approach to education is truly child-centred, and he believed that education should reflect the child's interests and backgrounds and that their social and cultural worlds are important.^{viii}

1.2 Piagetian Perspective

Jean Piaget's emphasised the constructivist approach to children's development, holding that learners must work through a process of constructing their own knowledge based on their experiences.^{ix} Piaget believed that education should facilitate the naturally developing tendencies and potential of the child by focussing on the role of cognitive reaction to the environment in intellectual growth. Followers of Piaget advocate for a child-centred educational philosophy that emphasises developmentally appropriate education.

Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development explains how a child constructs a mental model of the world. According to Piaget, cognitive development is a process that occurs due to biological maturation and interaction with the environment.^x Children's ability to understand, think about, and solve problems in the world develops in a stop-start, discontinuous manner (rather than gradual

changes over time).^{xi} Piaget's theory proposes that humans progress through four developmental stages:

- I. **Sensorimotor Stage:** This stage occurs from birth to around two years old and is characterised by the child's understanding of the world through sensory experiences and motor actions.^{xii}
- II. **Preoperational Stage:** This stage occurs from around two to seven years old and is characterised by the child's ability to use symbols to represent objects and events.^{xiii}
- III. **Concrete operational Stage:** This stage occurs from around seven to eleven years old and is characterised by the child's ability to think logically about concrete events.^{xiv}
- IV. **Formal operational Stage:** This stage occurs from around eleven years old and beyond and is characterised by the child's ability to think logically about abstract concepts and hypothetical situations.^{xv}

Piaget believed that children construct an understanding of the world around them, experience discrepancies between what they already know and what they discover in their environment, and then adjust their ideas accordingly.^{xvi} The goal of the theory is to explain the mechanisms and processes by which the infant, and then the child, develops into an individual who can reason and think using hypotheses.^{xvii} To Piaget, cognitive development was a progressive reorganisation of mental processes as a result of biological maturation and environmental experience.^{xviii}

Piaget's theory of cognitive development explains how children construct their own knowledge based on their experiences, and shows how their ability to understand, think about, and solve problems in the world develops in a stop-start, discontinuous manner through four developmental stages. Piaget's model follows two main processes:

- **Constructivist Approach:** Piaget's constructivist approach emphasises that what people gain through sensation and cognition makes up the individuals' knowledge. The purpose of education is to facilitate the naturally developing tendencies and potential of the child. This process is one in which tendencies are lifted and replaced by the process of habits gained with the help of external interventions.^{xix}
- **Learner-Centred Approach:** Piaget's approach emphasises the need for a learner-centred approach in the 21st century classroom. Learner's experience and worldview are critical to problem-solving education.^{xx}

Approaching a community media project from a Deweyan or Piagetian perspective can lead to different transformational considerations. A Deweyan perspective emphasises reflection, transformative experience, and active participation and self-direction, while a Piagetian perspective emphasises the constructivist approach and a learner-centred approach.^{xxi} Both are valid for different settings and circumstances, and the educator or tutor has to decide what are the appropriate concerns related to the desired outcomes and goals that are socially favourable.

1.3 Pedagogic Model – Individual Agency

Using a combined and integrated pedagogic model, that brings together the theories of Dewey and Piaget, when applied to community media projects, can significantly bolster a sense of individual agency and empowerment. Some of the core benefits realised include:

- **Skill Acquisition and Enhancement:** Individuals have the opportunity to acquire and hone diverse skills such as digital literacy, media production, communication, and critical thinking. These skills can empower them to effectively express their ideas, contribute to societal discourse, and possibly explore new vocational or avocational avenues.
- **Self-Efficacy:** Engaging in hands-on projects can foster a sense of self-efficacy as individuals witness their capabilities in action, achieve goals, and make tangible contributions to their community. This sense of accomplishment and capability can significantly enhance individual agency.
- **Reflective Practice:** The model encourages reflective practice, enabling individuals to learn from experiences, evaluate their actions, and grow intellectually and emotionally. Reflective thinking fosters a deeper understanding of one's actions and their impacts, which is crucial for personal empowerment.
- **Active Participation:** By promoting active participation, the model allows individuals to play a meaningful role in their community, thereby experiencing a sense of agency and belonging. This active engagement can translate to a heightened sense of responsibility and a proactive attitude towards community development.
- **Voice and Representation:** Community media projects provide a platform for individuals to voice their perspectives, concerns, and aspirations. Having a platform to express oneself and represent one's community is empowering and augments individual agency.
- **Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving:** Engaging with diverse perspectives and complex community issues within such projects can sharpen critical thinking and problem-solving skills. These are essential competencies for informed decision-making and effective agency.

- **Collaborative Learning and Peer Support:** The collaborative nature of community media projects fosters a supportive environment where individuals can learn from each other, share knowledge, and build confidence in their abilities.
- **Lifelong Learning Culture:** The pedagogic model fosters a culture of lifelong learning, where individuals are motivated to continuously explore, learn, and grow. This culture of continuous learning is empowering and prepares individuals for adaptive and proactive engagement with the world.
- **Democratic Engagement:** By fostering informed discourse and civic engagement, the model supports individuals in exercising their democratic rights and responsibilities, further enhancing their sense of agency.
- **Community Impact:** Seeing the real-world impact of their contributions through community media projects can be highly empowering for individuals, reinforcing their sense of agency and the belief in their ability to effect change.

Through these avenues, the pedagogic model facilitates a nurturing environment where individuals can evolve into empowered agents, capable of articulating their views, collaborating with others, and contributing meaningfully to their communities and beyond.

1.4 Experiential Learning

Dewey posits that education should be based on the principle of learning through doing. In a community media project, this could translate to involving the community in the creation and dissemination of media content. Through interactive workshops or collaborative projects in radio, video, and blogging, individuals can learn by doing, which might deepen their understanding and engagement with the media content produced.

Dewey also emphasises reflective thinking as a means to derive meaning from experiences. Community media projects can encourage reflection by creating content that provokes thought and discussion within the community. Furthermore, providing platforms for community discussions or feedback can foster a culture of reflective thinking and continuous learning.

Piaget's theory of cognitive development underscores a constructivist approach to learning, where individuals build their knowledge through interaction with their environment. A community media project can embody this principle by designing content that prompts individuals to interact, question, and form their own understanding of the topics presented.

2 Stages of Cognitive Development

Understanding Piaget's stages of cognitive development can help in tailoring content to suit different age groups and cognitive levels within the community. This can ensure that the media project is inclusive and appeals to a broad spectrum of the community.

2.1 Foundational Stage

- **Engagement:** Encourage community members to engage with the project by providing a platform where they can share stories, experiences, and ideas. This stage mirrors Dewey's emphasis on experiential learning and Piaget's emphasis on interaction with the environment.
- **Skill Development:** Offer workshops and training sessions in radio, video, blogging, photography, and social media to equip individuals with the necessary skills.

2.2 Exploration Stage

- **Project Participation:** Enable community members to participate in various roles within the project, from content creation to technical support, mirroring Dewey's idea of learning by doing.
- **Collaborative Learning:** Foster a collaborative learning environment where individuals can learn from each other's experiences and perspectives, reflecting Piaget's constructivist approach.

2.3 Reflection Stage

- **Discussion and Feedback:** Create forums for discussion, feedback, and reflection on the content produced and the processes involved. This aligns with Dewey's emphasis on reflective thinking.
- **Assessment:** Implement a form of assessment to help individuals understand their learning curve and areas of improvement.

2.4 Advanced Development Stage

- **Advanced Training:** Offer advanced training and workshops for individuals keen on honing their skills further, ensuring continuous learning and development.
- **Mentorship:** Encourage experienced community members to mentor newcomers, fostering a culture of shared learning and expertise.

2.5 Community Impact Stage

- **Community Initiatives:** Launch initiatives that address community issues or needs, enabling individuals to apply their skills in real-world scenarios.
- **Evaluation and Adaptation:** Regularly evaluate the impact of the media project on the community and adapt the pedagogic structure based on feedback and changing community needs.

2.6 Dissemination Stage

- **Sharing Beyond:** Encourage the sharing of content and learning experiences beyond the community to foster a broader societal dialogue.
- **Networking:** Facilitate networking opportunities with other community media projects and relevant organisations to expand the scope and impact of the project.

Throughout all these stages, the emphasis should be on creating an inclusive, interactive, and reflective learning environment that not only values the contributions of each individual but also nurtures a collective sense of purpose and growth. This multi-stage pedagogic structure can be a robust framework to inform the development and growth of individuals engaged in a community media project, allowing for a comprehensive approach to learning and community building.

3 Scaffolding and Social Interaction

Drawing from Piaget, scaffolding or providing support that helps learners move toward new skills or concepts can be integrated into the community media project. This support can be in the form of guidance, resources, or platforms that enable individuals to explore, create, and share their media content, thereby fostering a culture of learning and development. Both Dewey and Piaget acknowledged the importance of social interaction in cognitive development. Community media, with its inherent social nature, can serve as a platform for these interactions, nurturing a collective learning environment.

In synthesising these theories into a community media project there lies the potential to create a rich, engaging, and educative environment that promotes personal and social growth. Through a carefully designed project, individuals may not only consume content but also become active participants in their learning and in the broader social discourse fostered through the community media platform.

3.1 Multistage Approach

Incorporating a multi-stage pedagogic structure within a community media project, drawing from the theories of John Dewey and Jean Piaget, can be a nuanced approach to fostering developmental and growth opportunities for individuals engaged in the project. Here's a suggested model that could serve as a roadmap. Creating a robust framework for evaluation and tracking in a community media project is essential to ascertain the levels of learning, personal growth, and collaborative engagement.

3.2 Define Objectives and Indicators

- Clearly define the learning objectives, personal growth goals, and collaborative engagement targets for the project.
- Develop specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) indicators for each objective to track progress.

3.3 Baseline Assessment

- Conduct a baseline assessment to understand the initial knowledge, skills, and attitudes of participants.
- Collect demographic information and other relevant data to have a point of comparison for later assessments.

3.4 Continuous Monitoring

- Use digital analytics tools to track online engagement metrics such as page views, shares, comments, and participant contributions.
- Establish regular check-ins or feedback sessions with participants to understand their experiences, learning, and challenges.

3.5 Feedback Mechanisms

- Create open channels for feedback from participants and stakeholders.
- Use surveys, questionnaires, and interactive forums to gather insights on the learning and collaborative processes within the project.

3.6 Peer and Self-Assessment

- Encourage participants to engage in peer and self-assessments to reflect on their learning and collaboration.
- Develop rubrics or guidelines to facilitate constructive feedback among peers.

3.7 Formative and Summative Evaluation

- Conduct formative evaluations at different stages of the project to understand ongoing learning and engagement.
- Implement a summative evaluation at the end of the project to measure overall achievement of objectives and individual growth.

3.8 Documenting and Sharing Learnings

- Document the learnings, successes, and challenges faced during the project in a structured manner.
- Share these learnings with participants and stakeholders, promoting a culture of transparency and continuous improvement.

3.9 Reflective Workshops and Discussions

- Organise workshops and discussions that allow participants to reflect on their experiences, learnings, and collaborations.
- Use these sessions to also gather feedback on the evaluation and monitoring processes, and to brainstorm ways to improve them.

3.10 External Evaluation

- If possible, engage external evaluators to assess the project, as they can provide an unbiased view of the achievements and areas of improvement.

3.11 Adaptation and Improvement

- Use the insights gathered from the evaluation and monitoring processes to make informed decisions for the adaptation and improvement of the project.

This framework can serve as a comprehensive approach to evaluating and tracking the progress of a community media project in terms of learning, personal growth, and collaborative engagement. It allows for a cyclic process of assessment, reflection, and improvement, aligning well with the pedagogic underpinnings inspired by Dewey and Piaget, and ensuring the project remains dynamic and responsive to the needs and growth of the participants.

4 Integrated Learning Practices

Integrating developmental learning practices within community media projects like community newspapers, radio stations, blogs, social media sites, or video channels can yield manifold benefits, contributing to both individual and communal growth. Here's a breakdown of the advantages:

4.1 Individual Empowerment

- **Skill Development:** Individuals can acquire new skills in media production, digital literacy, communication, and critical thinking. This skill development can enhance personal efficacy and possibly open new vocational pathways.
- **Personal Growth:** Through engaging with diverse perspectives and experiences, individuals may undergo personal growth, developing a more nuanced understanding of their community and the wider world.

4.2 Community Engagement and Cohesion

- **Inclusivity:** Community media projects promote inclusivity by providing a platform for a diverse range of voices, particularly from individuals or groups who might otherwise be marginalised or overlooked.
- **Community Building:** By working together towards common goals, community members can foster a sense of belonging and solidarity, crucial for building social cohesion.

4.3 Democratic Participation

- **Civic Engagement:** Community media can act as a catalyst for civic engagement by encouraging discussions on local issues, thereby fostering a more informed and active citizenry.
- **Public Dialogue:** It provides a platform for public dialogue, facilitating open discussions and debates which are fundamental to a democratic society.

4.4 Educational Value

- **Informative Content:** Community media projects can serve as important educational resources, offering locally relevant information and learning opportunities.
- **Lifelong Learning:** The continuous engagement and various learning avenues within community media encourage a culture of lifelong learning among participants.

4.5 Local Culture and Identity

- **Cultural Preservation:** Community media can play a pivotal role in preserving and promoting local culture, traditions, and languages.

- **Community Identity:** It aids in fostering a strong community identity by celebrating local achievements, histories, and narratives.

4.6 Economic Benefits

- **Local Economy:** Community media projects can stimulate the local economy by promoting local businesses, events, and initiatives.
- **Job Creation:** They could also contribute to job creation and volunteer opportunities within the community.

4.7 Innovation and Creativity

- **Creative Expression:** Offering a platform for creative expression, community media projects can nurture innovation and artistic talents.
- **Problem-Solving:** Through collaborative efforts, community media can foster a problem-solving ethos, leveraging collective intelligence to address local challenges.

4.8 Transparency and Accountability

- **Community Oversight:** By reporting on local governance and institutional activities, community media can contribute to greater transparency and accountability within the community.

4.9 Networking and Collaborations

- **External Collaborations:** Community media projects can establish networks and collaborations with external entities, expanding the community's horizons and bringing in additional resources and expertise.

4.10 Digital Inclusion

- **Online Literacy:** In the digital age, community media projects that operate online can play a significant role in promoting digital literacy and inclusivity.

Incorporating developmental learning practices within such projects amplifies these benefits, creating an environment where individuals and communities can evolve, interact, and contribute towards a vibrant, informed, and cohesive society.

5 Community Media as a Teaching Tool

Community media can be used as a teaching tool in various ways. Here are some ways to use media to enhance teaching and learning:

- **Active learning strategies:** Media can be a component of active learning strategies such as group discussions or case studies. For example, a film clip, a song, a podcast, or a newspaper article can be used to motivate discussions or lock in concepts.^{xxii}
- **Connect learners with events that are culturally relevant:** The use of media sources helps connect learners with events that are culturally relevant. News stories can be used to connect theories taught in the classroom with real-world events and policies.^{xxiii}
- **Hone analytical skills:** Students can hone their analytical skills by analysing media using the theories and concepts they are studying.
- **Create connections with students and alumni:** Social media platforms support educators in various ways from sharing announcements to holding live lectures. Instructors and colleges can meet students where they are by incorporating social media platforms they're likely already familiar with like Facebook or Twitter.^{xxiv}
- **Flipping the classroom:** Video and digital media can be used to illustrate concepts and provide more opportunities for students to engage with the content. When students have access to video content to watch outside of class, class time can be used for comprehension checks, discussion, and reinforcement of content.^{xxv}
- **Global learning:** Digital media literacy in a global era offers more than using technology to do the things that were done by hand before. It now allows easy participation in the sophisticated global experiences and networks that our wired world affords. Educators can help students identify, access, analyse, and evaluate media from around the world, including international news sources that are available in both local languages and English translation.

5.1 Examples of Community Media as a Collaborative Learning Tool

Collaborative community media can be used for research and public engagement. The community media approach can be characterised by three main principles: media systems, platforms, and tools that we now have available to us.^{xxvi} Community media can be used as a teaching tool in various ways, including active learning strategies, connecting learners with culturally relevant events, honing analytical skills, flipping the classroom, global learning, and collaborative community media. There are various examples of community media that can be used in teaching. Here are some examples:

- **Community Radio:** Community radio is a form of media created and controlled by a community, with the aim of serving that community. It can be used to provide information, education, and entertainment to the community..^{xxvii}
- **Films, Television, and Documentaries:** Instructors can use films, television shows, and documentaries to illustrate concepts and provide more opportunities for students to engage with the content. These media tools engage students visually and auditorily, which can help reach students with a variety of learning styles..^{xxviii}
- **Social Media:** Social media platforms can be used to communicate with students outside of class, share resources, and hold live lectures. Instructors and colleges can meet students where they are by incorporating social media platforms, they're likely already familiar with like Facebook or Twitter..^{xxix}
- **News Stories:** News stories can be used to connect theories taught in the classroom with real-world events and policies. The use of media sources helps connect learners with events that are culturally relevant..^{xxx}
- **Student-Created Media:** Students can create their own media, such as video projects, to reinforce learning. Student video projects can be a powerful learning experience..^{xxxi}

Community media that can be used in teaching includes community radio, films, television shows, documentaries, social media, news stories, and student-created media..^{xxxii} Approaching a community media project from a Deweyan or Piagetian perspective can lead to different transformational considerations.

ⁱ <http://pgnursing20.blogspot.com/2011/07/comparison-of-both-theory.html?m=1>

ⁱⁱ https://www.susted.com/wordpress/content/head-heart-and-hands-model-for-transformative-learning-place-as-context-for-changing-sustainability-values_2015_03/

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED533786.pdf>

^{iv} https://www1.goramblers.org/textbook-solutions/files?Academia=John_Dewey_Theory_On_Early_Childhood_Education%282%29.pdf&docid=fus%3A5511

^v <https://aussiechildcarenetwork.com.au/articles/child-development/john-deweys-theory>

^{vi} <https://theeducationhub.org.nz/deweys-educational-philosophy/>

^{vii} <https://www.teachthought.com/learning/pedagogy-john-dewey-summary/>

^{viii} <https://www.cram.com/essay/My-Two-Philosophies-Of-John-Dewey-And/FJ4524YHWU>

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^{xii} <https://www.verywellmind.com/piagets-stages-of-cognitive-development-2795457>

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^{xv} <https://www.structural-learning.com/post/jean-piagets-theory-of-cognitive-development-and-active-classrooms>

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