



**Collaborating across the researcher-practitioner divide:
introducing John Dewey's democratic experimentalism**

Journal:	<i>Journal of Organizational Change Management</i>
Manuscript ID	JOCM-03-2016-0054.R2
Manuscript Type:	Research Paper
Keywords:	democratic experimentalism, researcher-practitioner divide, rigor, relevance, knowledge co-production, Dewey's pragmatism

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1. Introduction

The debate about the practical utility of academic research has been the subject of numerous articles, books, and special issues in academic journals (e.g. Journal of Management Inquiry, Vol. 6, No. 1; British Journal of Management, Vol. 12, Special Issue; Organization Studies, Vol. 31, No. 9-10; Management Learning Vol. 43 No. 4, Special Issue). The subject has been debated on both sides of the Atlantic, being the focus of three presidential speeches at the Annual Meetings of the Academy of Management in 1997, 1998, and 2000 and one keynote speech at the European Academy of Management in 2009. In the UK, the need for research to be useful to practice has been clearly articulated by the Research Excellence Framework (2014) under the banner of “impact”.

Central to this debate is the divide between researchers and practitioners. Although knowledge generation by academics often claims to be inspired by real-life management problems, it has been seen by many as an endeavour separate from the practical knowledge held by practitioners (Jarzabkowski et al., 2010; Kelemen and Bansal, 2002). Van de Ven and Johnson (2006) identify two ways to frame this divide: one that involves the *transfer of knowledge* from academia to practitioners; and another that considers theory and practice as distinct yet complementary kinds of knowledge, conceiving the divide as a *knowledge production* problem. In line with the latter interpretation, many scholars have suggested that researchers should collaborate with practitioners in pursuit of knowledge that is both robust and relevant (e.g. Aldag, 1997; Mohrman et al., 2001). The argument is to bridge the researcher-practitioner divide by bringing them together in a joint effort of producing knowledge. Thus, a variety of new forms of scholarship in which academics and practitioners

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3 co-produce knowledge have emerged. These include (amongst others) Mode 2 of knowledge
4 production, design inquiry, engaged scholarship, relational scholarship, evidence-based
5 management and dialogical models of knowledge production.
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11 These forms of collaborative knowledge production provide suggestions about the
12 mechanisms that make successful collaboration possible, including communication strategies
13 and conflict management and resolution. In so doing, they emphasize strategies of
14 collaboration but they do not engage with the principles that should guide the *relationship*
15 between researchers and practitioners during the act of collaboration. In other words, they
16 put forth different modes of collaboration for producing knowledge, in which concrete
17 actions are suggested, but forget the relational aspect of those actions. One is left wondering,
18 how practitioners and researchers should behave toward each other during such common
19 endeavour?
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31 We contribute to filling in this gap by introducing John Dewey's philosophy of
32 democratic experimentalism. This is an experimental model for knowledge production that
33 makes a two-fold contribution. It not only enables the production of rigorous and relevant
34 knowledge, but it also places democratic relationships between academics and practitioners at
35 the heart of knowledge co-creation processes. Dewey's work (1925[1981], 1927[1991],
36 1932[2008], 1938[1991], 1939[1988]) sees knowledge as deeply intertwined with experience
37 and inquiry, and argues for a democratic form of collaboration between those who participate
38 to the production of knowledge as a means of advancing theory that has practical
39 consequences for humanity.
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52 The article begins with a short review of the various forms of academic-practitioner
53 strategies of collaboration before making the case for Dewey's democratic experimentalism
54 as a distinct mode of knowledge co-production. It then proceeds with a discussion of the four
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3 principles which underpin democratic experimentalism, before concluding with a discussion
4 of potential limitations and criticisms and the opportunities the model offers to the
5 management field.
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9 10 11 **2. The relationship between academics and practitioners in knowledge co-** 12 **production: a review and synthesis** 13 14

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16 In this section, we provide a review and synthesis of various attempts to develop
17 mechanisms for connection and collaboration across the academic and practitioner
18 communities in their joint efforts to create new knowledge. These include, among others,
19 collaborative forms of knowledge production, design inquiry and dialogical models (for a
20 more detailed review see Kieser et al., 2015). Our literature review suggests that, with few
21 exceptions, existing debates overlook the central role played by the relationship between
22 academic and practitioners in the production of knowledge. Bartunek (2007) is amongst the
23 few who argue that we must change the way we think about bridging academic-practitioner
24 gaps by taking into account academics' relationships with practitioners in ways that go well
25 beyond research per se. In addition, the need for democratic relationships between co-
26 producers of knowledge is hardly acknowledged in the management literature. This is why
27 Dewey's contribution is relevant and timely to our field.
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42 43 **2.1. Collaborative forms of knowledge production** 44

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46 *Mode 2 research* (Gibbons et al., 1994) was introduced to the management field by
47 Tranfield and Starkey (1998) and Starkey and Madan (2001). The core feature of Mode 2
48 research is to increase the practical utility of academic research by bringing together varied
49 stakeholders, including academics and practitioners, to solve practical problems. The strategy
50 of collaboration here is to carry on the knowledge production process through contextual
51 consensus as to what counts as appropriate methodology, research questions and modes of
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3 engagement (Huff and Huff, 2001). In this process, Mode 2 calls for an interest in concrete
4 and particular processes and issues rather than having a mere interest in theoretical
5 contributions in the form of general, unifying principles (Gibbons et al., 1994).
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10 Compared to Mode 2, *engaged scholarship* (van de Ven, 2007; van de Ven and
11 Johnson, 2006) provides more concrete recommendations about how to carry out the
12 collaborative process in terms of formulating research questions, forming a collaborative
13 learning community of scholars and practitioners, employing multiple models and methods,
14 and framing the research and its findings. The essence of the strategy of collaboration in
15 engaged scholarship is to connect academics and practitioners in a common endeavour of
16 arbitrage. Arbitrage is defined here as a strategy of making the best out of differences
17 between the knowledge held by scholars and practitioners vis-a-vis a problem of interest.
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22 *Relational scholarship* (Bartunek, 2007) is an enhanced version of engaged
23 scholarship. It questions the plausibility of true collaborative research involving academics
24 and practitioners, as scientific systems differ considerably from practitioner settings in terms
25 of communication and problem solving activities (Kieser and Leiner, 2009). This is the only
26 model that points out that existing modes of collaboration fail to guide the academic-
27 practitioner relationship in collaborative knowledge production. However, it does not go far
28 enough in providing specific guidelines. Its recommendations remain general, stating that
29 academics and practitioners need to foster positive and mutual relationships, which require
30 them to enter and understand each other's worlds and modes of knowing, as well as
31 empathize with and appreciate the complexity of each other's experience and knowledge.
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36 *Evidence-based management* (Rousseau, 2006, 2007; Rousseau and McCarthy, 2007;
37 Briner et al, 2009) aims to close the gap between research and practice by "translating
38 principles based on best evidence into organizational practices" (Rousseau, 2006, p. 256).
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Rousseau (2006) argues that evidence based management is a useful decision making tool for managers: instead of drawing on personal opinions and unsystematic experience, they must use the best available evidence to support their actions and decisions. However, the concepts of evidence and fact are highly disputed in the management field by both academics and practitioners. While medicine and other disciplines have been successful in making evidence based practices the norm, our field lags behind. One reason is that evidence-based management does not address the relationship between researchers and practitioners in a direct and distinct way. It only seeks to ensure through various mechanisms that practitioners understand and embrace the language of research when they go about their day to day practice (Rynes et al., 2007).

2.2. Design inquiry

Another stream of work that has interrogated and, to some extent, challenged the ability of management studies to deliver relevance to practice is rooted in design science. Design science is defined as a “body of intellectually tough, analytic, partly formalizable, partly empirical, teachable doctrine about design process” (Simon, 1969, p. 58). While some commentators embrace the view that management research is a design science (van Aken, 2005), others suggest that design science offers a rather narrow perspective on management as a field of study (Pandza and Thorpe, 2010) because of its emphasis on prescriptive outcomes in management.

Despite existing controversies, two design approaches have become central to the debate about academic-practitioner gap in management: the human-centred design and the science-based design (Pascal et al., 2013). Human-centred design focuses on engaging both user-practitioners and researchers in the design process. Similar to the collaborative forms of knowledge production presented above, scholars from this perspective have put forth

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3 different strategies of collaboration for an effective design process (Bate and Robert, 2007;
4 Hatchuel, Lemasson and Weil, 2006; Plsek, Bibby and Whitby, 2007) and for the design of a
5 collaborative team (Hodgkinson and Healy, 2008). This approach emphasizes the need to
6 include both practitioners and researchers in an interactive and collaborative sense-making
7 process. Science-based design (Hatchuel, 2001; Romme, 2003; Van Aken, 2004, 2005, 2007;
8 March and Storey, 2008) is inspired by John Dewey's pragmatist platform. However, it limits
9 the implications of Dewey's philosophy to the relationship between reflection and action,
10 which are seen as intertwined (Dalsgaard, 2014), and to the ultimate objective of research
11 which is to produce knowledge that can be used in designing solutions to field problems. This
12 explains why the approach has been critiqued for its narrow understanding, poor exploration
13 and application of pragmatist leanings (Avenier, 2010).
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28 Further distinctions are postulated in the design literature between explanatory
29 sciences and design sciences (van Aken, 2004, 2005), or between social science and design
30 (Romme, 2003), which have been translated as the distinction between Organizational
31 Theory and Management Theory (van Aken, 2004, 2005), or between the laboratory model
32 and the field model (Hatchuel, 2001). Such distinctions are neither helpful to guide the
33 relationship between academics and practitioners in knowledge co-production nor beneficial
34 to bridging the gap between them, since they aim at separating the quest for universal truth
35 (explanation and prescription) from the research objectives that are practice oriented.
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47 In the 1970s, we witnessed a backlash against the narrow definition of design sciences
48 with Rittel and Webber (1973) arguing that essential design problems are in fact "wicked
49 problems" and they require much more than a scientific methodology, namely, political,
50 cultural and social awareness and skills. Consequently, a *science of design* emerged that
51 aimed to refine and advance existing design sciences (Avenier, 2010). Sciences of design
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3 suggest bringing different research participants together to construct knowledge in an
4 explicitly ethical and rigorous manner. But how this is to be achieved remains unexplored.
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8 **2.3. Dialogical models**

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10 Dialogical models are also inspired by the philosophy of pragmatism. In line with
11 sciences of design, they explicitly deny the separation of theory from practice, arguing that
12 these two arenas are deeply intertwined. Through inductive reasoning, conceptual
13 generalization can identify meta-relations between categories; through abductive reasoning, it
14 can also develop plausible explanations for the similarities and disparities between the
15 various instances of the phenomenon studied (Avenier and Parmentier Cajaiba, 2012).
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25 With regard to the knowledge production process, these models do not deal with the
26 academic-practitioner relationship, but emphasize dialogues between academics and
27 practitioners as the mechanism for collaborative production of relevant knowledge. Drawing
28 on pragmatic constructivism¹, Avenier and Parmentier Cajaiba (2012) propose a dialogical
29 model for developing academic knowledge for (and from) practice, with a focus on how to
30 develop research questions that help to enhance research relevance for practice. Their
31 dialogical principle proposes that the tension between different interests of participants be
32 continually maintained during the dialogue, for this very tension enables heterogeneity and
33 homogeneity to blossom. In a similar vein, Lorino et al. (2011) develop the dialogical
34 mediated inquiry, a research method based on pragmatism, Vygotsky's theory of mediated
35 activity and Bakhtin's concept of dialogism. Inquiry, as described by Lorino et al. (2011),
36 brings together logical thinking, narrative thinking and experimenting, while dialogism
37 conceptualizes the production of meaning through the interactions of actors in a situated
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54 ¹ In pragmatic constructivism, knowledge generation aims at conceptualizing researchers' understanding of their
55 flux of experience about the phenomena they investigate. More precisely researchers attempt to develop
56 principles for organizing in an intelligible fashion the regularities they perceive in their flux of experience
57 (Avenier and Parmentier Cajaiba, 2012).
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3 context. In dialogical mediated inquiry, meaning-making is made through dialogue which
4 serves to manage tensions and diversity between researchers and practitioners. Thus, one
5 potential problem is that researchers engaging in a dialogical model of doing research tend to
6 be more attracted towards solving pressing practical problems and hence, drift away from
7 building conceptual knowledge (Avenier and Parmentier Cajaiba, 2012).
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12 From the discussion above, it is apparent that the landscapes of management
13 knowledge production provide a rather limited understanding of the nature of the *relationship*
14 between researchers and practitioners during the collaborative knowledge production process.
15 Joint research fosters academic-practitioner collaboration in some instances, but it is not a
16 necessary or sufficient condition for developing joint relationships in which academics and
17 practitioners truly learn from each other and develop both rigorous and relevant knowledge
18 (Bartunek, 2007). In line with Romme et al. (2015) it is our contention that relational
19 encounters between academics and practitioners are at the heart of successful collaborative
20 projects that can integrate effectively multiple ways of knowing and practicing, establish
21 common grounds (at least temporarily) among differing interests as well as a shared sense of
22 purpose and responsibility. It is therefore important to extend our understandings of
23 academic-practitioner collaboration more broadly. This requires a clearer understanding of
24 the guiding principles that foster a mutual relationship in producing rigorous and relevant
25 knowledge. These principles are the “tall and thick poles to prop up a big tent shielding us
26 from the charge of poor rigor, low relevance, and consilience deficits” (Gulati, 2007, p. 779).
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49 In what follows we make the case for John Dewey’s democratic experimentalism.
50 John Dewey was renowned for being one of the most controversial philosophy professors of
51 his generation. He wrote extensively on many different subjects including philosophy,
52 psychology, political science, education, aesthetics and the arts and has been described by
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3 many commentators as a ‘man ahead of his time’ or indeed, as a man ‘still ahead of his time’
4 (Jones, 1999). His views and ideas are as pertinent today as they were a century ago and
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6 indeed, some of his concepts are so ground-breaking that certain scientific establishments are
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8 reluctant to engage with them.
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12 Dewey’s democratic experimentalism aims to product rigorous and relevant
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14 knowledge through experimental inquiry; it also sees the relationship between researchers as
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16 practitioners as one of cooperation and coordination based on four principles: 1) organized
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18 intelligence (which emphasises equality among researchers and practitioners), 2) an attitude
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20 of openness toward the new, 3) democratic communication, and 4) a general willingness to
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22 let experience decide. Table 1 below summarizes the different ways researchers and
23
24 practitioners collaborate with each other across the approaches reviewed above and how the
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26 perspective of John Dewey contributes to this debate in a distinctive way.
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38 **3. John Dewey’s democratic experimentalism**

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40 Along with Peirce and James, Dewey (1859 – 1952) was one of the most prominent
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42 classic pragmatist thinkers and pioneers (Bernstein, 2010). His pragmatist approach is
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44 distinguishable from others being usually referred to as “instrumentalism” or
45
46 “experimentalism”. Dewey’s concern with democracy can be traced back to his work on “The
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48 public and its problems” in 1927. His account of democratic experimentalism has two
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50 prominent features that differentiate it from current modes of collaborative knowledge
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52 production: 1) it advances a notion of experimental inquiry which is embedded in an
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54 epistemology that transcends theory and practice and bridges the researcher-practitioner
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3 divide, and 2) it upholds a democratic spirit that permeates the entire research process.
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6 First, democratic experimentalism rejects the idea that science can access reality
7 through a special method. Scientific method and the way in which we gain knowledge in our
8 everyday lives are similar to each other (Dewey, 1938 [1991]). Dewey stresses that scientific
9 inquiry and common sense inquiry share the same pattern, and that there is both
10 methodological and content continuity between science and common sense inquiry. Materials
11 for questions and criteria of judgment that are legitimate for knowledge production are
12 available in ordinary experience.
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22 Therefore, research and practice are practices on their own which have different
23 possibilities and limitations, but must inform each other (Biesta and Burbules, 2003).
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25 Universal inclusion of academics and practitioners in experimental research is essential
26 (Anderson, 2006). The purpose is to combine theoretical and practical knowledge in a unified
27 whole, so that theories become relevant to organizational practice and practice becomes the
28 starting and ending point of theorizing. In other words, the relationship between research and
29 practice is one of cooperation and coordination, rather than one of application dictated by the
30 dichotomy between organizational practice and organization research (Biesta and Burbules,
31 2003).
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43 The starting point in experimental inquiry is a problematic situation emerging from
44 our everyday life (Dewey, 1938 [1991]). This is because science does not have its own access
45 to reality; it always has to go back to the immediate qualitative experience (Biesta and
46 Burbules, 2003). In experimental inquiry, academics and practitioners solve problematic
47 situations together by developing an experimental strategy in order to investigate the situation,
48 thereby identifying the problem and hypothesising its possible solutions. In dealing with
49 unfamiliar situations, their point of departure is always a hypothesis about what might be the
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3 case. They then undertake certain operations of experimentation that “modify antecedently
4 given existential conditions so that the results of the transformation are facts which are
5 relevant in solution of a given problem” (Dewey, 1938 [1991], p. 498). These acts make
6 changes, which reveal previously unperceived qualities and properties of the objects. An
7 experiment represents the execution of one out of a number of alternative conceptions as
8 possible plans of action. It results in consequences, which are observed within observable
9 limits to serve as tests of the validity of the hypothesis acted upon (Dewey, 1938 [1991]).
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20 From experimental inquiry, conclusions are reached in the forms of generalizations.
21 Generalizations are of two forms: there are those which institute “a relation of including and
22 included kinds”, and there are those which institute “*if-then* hypotheses and theories” (Dewey,
23 1938 [1991]). The contents of abstract generalizations are determined in view of their final
24 applicability when an occasion actually comes up. However, they are mere working
25 hypotheses, not programs to be rigidly adhered to and executed. They are provisional in a
26 Deweyan democracy because “*they will be entertained subject to constant and well-equipped
27 observation of the consequences they entail when acted upon, and subject to read and flexible
28 revision in the light of observed consequences*” (Dewey, 1927 [1991], p. 131).
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40 Deweyan experimental inquiry is fundamentally local. He writes: “the local is the
41 ultimate universal, as near an absolute as exists” (Dewey, 1927 [1991], p. 218). Thus, the
42 conclusions of the experimental inquiry must be brought back to practice to be verified
43 (Dewey, 1917[2000]). No scientific report would get a hearing if it did not describe the
44 mechanism and procedure by which experiments were carried on and results obtained. The
45 purpose is not to worship that process, but to tell other researchers how they work to get
46 results. As the results may agree or disagree in their experience with those previously arrived
47 at, the mechanism and procedure employed in the democratic experiment helps explain why
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3 they confirm, modify and rectify the latter (Dewey, 1925[1981]). For Dewey, to verify a
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5 hypothesis means that the relation between actions and consequences specified in the
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7 hypothesis has actually happened, it does not mean to establish a statement that reality as
8
9 hypothesized is indeed as reality is (Biesta and Burbules, 2003). Moreover, the widest
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11 possible range of application offer the best possibility for the deepest verification, because
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13 verification is repeatedly conducted in the new contexts in which the hypothesis is being
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15 tested or applied.
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20 Second, the relationship between researchers and practitioners during the research
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22 process is seen as necessarily democratic. In Dewey's ideal, experimental inquiry and
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24 democratic behaviour are intertwined (Gouinlock, 1990). The democratic aspect of
25
26 experimentalism requires appropriate behaviour of participants as well as adequate
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28 interaction and communication between them. Dewey (1916[1980], p. 87) states: "*a*
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30 *democracy is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience.*
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32 *The extension in space of the number of individuals who participate in an interest so that*
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34 *each has to his own action to that of others, and to consider the actions of others to give*
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36 *point and direction to his own, is equivalent to the breaking down of those barriers of class,*
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38 *race, and national territory which kept men from perceiving full import of their activity*".
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44 Democracy is best suited to this process of experimenting for two reasons (Simon,
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46 2011). On the one hand, democracy rejects the mental rigidity that inhibits adaptation to new
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48 experience, rendering conventions vulnerable to re-examination and challenge (Dewey, 1927
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50 [1991]). In experimenting, researchers and practitioners put forth positions based on reasons,
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52 but they also go further to reconsider their claims in light of the reasons suggested by others.
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54 They not only learn from each other about ways of attaining their goals, but also are inspired
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56 to consider and reconsider their goals. On the other hand, democracy encourages and takes
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3 into account a broad range of evidence and perspectives. As such, the process of
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5 experimenting maximizes the range of views and alternatives in formulating and solving
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7 problems. Democracy presupposes that our concerns must grow from what is local,
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9 spontaneous, voluntary, and direct (Pappas, 2008). Dewey says: *“I am inclined to believe that*
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11 *the heart and final guarantee of democracy is in free gatherings of neighbors on the street*
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13 *corner... and in gatherings of friends in the living rooms of houses and apartments”*
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15 (1939[1988], p. 227).
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18 19 **4. Democracy as a relational act of collaboration between academics and** 20 21 **practitioners** 22 23

24 Dewey’s democratic experimentalism sees experimental inquiry relying on four
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26 behavioural principles: 1) organized intelligence, 2) an attitude of hospitality toward the new,
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28 3) democratic communication, and 4) a general willingness to let experience decide.
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31 *Organized intelligence* (Morris, 1999) emphasizes equality among researchers and
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33 practitioners. It is described by Dewey as “a postulate in the sense of a demand to be realized:
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35 that each individual shall have the opportunity for release, expression, fulfilment, of his
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37 distinctive capacities, and that the outcome shall further the establishment of a fund of shared
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39 values” (Dewey, 1932 [2008], p. 350). Organized intelligence is similar to dialogism (Lorino
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41 et al., 2011) to the extent that it honours both the singularity and differences of its members
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43 while at the same time encourages the connection and commonality among them. It
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45 *“provides the only possible opportunity for all to develop rich and diversified experience,*
46
47 *while also securing continuous cooperative give and take and intercommunication”* (Dewey,
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49 1933 [2008], p. 101). Being present in the entire research process, from observation and
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51 hypotheses to testing, reformulation and mutual exchange between participants, it tends to
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53 result in a richer style of collaboration compared to dialogue.
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3 Organized intelligence has a much broader implication than allowing everyone to
4 speak. It acknowledges the unique contribution brought by each individual rather than the
5 group, class, or culture he or she represents. Everyone is encouraged to develop his/her own
6 unique voice and listen in a wholehearted manner, especially to those who speak against
7 his/her beliefs (Pappas, 2008). Dewey writes: “*democracy is concerned not with freaks or*
8 *geniuses or heroes or divine leaders, but with associated individuals in which each by*
9 *intercourse with others somehow makes the life of each more distinctive*” (Dewey, 1919
10 [2000], pp. 46-47). In this sense, organized intelligence requires respect for others “as sources
11 not only of their own values but also of insight for each other” (Weber, 2011, p. 102).
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24 Second, *the attitude of hospitality toward the new* (Pappas, 2008), also embraced by
25 relational scholarship, puts open mindedness and mutual understanding at the heart of the
26 relationship between academics and researchers. Open-mindedness does not mean to blindly
27 accept all ideas without intelligent critique (Rodgers, 2002). It means a willingness to
28 consider different perspectives, together with a tolerance of the “possibility of error even in
29 the beliefs that are dearest to us” (Dewey, 1933[2008], p. 30). As Dewey put it, it is a
30 “willingness to let experiences accumulate and sink in and ripen” (Dewey, 1916[1980], p.
31 183).
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42 Openness and mutual understanding makes it possible to embrace conflict and tension.
43 In the discussion of engaged scholarship, conflict and tension tend to be managed through
44 compromise and bargaining. What Dewey advocates is a deeper interaction. In democratic
45 experiments, researchers and practitioners solve conflicts by discussing their values and
46 interests, thereby re-examining their values and interests in light of those of others. It is more
47 constructive than mere bargaining, where the end is reached through concessions and
48 consensus. Dewey notes: democracy “*bring[s]... conflicts out into the open where their*
49 *special claims can be seen and appraised, where they can be discussed and judged in the*
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3 *light of more inclusive interests than are represented by [any] of them separately”* (Dewey,
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5 1939[2008], p. 56). Pappas (2008) describes Deweyan openness as more than the taking,
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7 adding or subtracting of viewpoints to reach some decision: its ultimate goal is to have a
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9 transformation of the views that participated in the discussion, no one gains at the expense of
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11 others.
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14 Third, *democratic communication* is about communicating experiences and
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16 experiencing communication (Wilkinson, 2012). Dewey’s understanding of communication
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18 diverges from the common understanding of communication as a technique to resolve
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20 disputes and generate transparent understandings and agreements. Dewey understands
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22 communication as a shared social endeavour (Cohen, 2012), being not only a means to
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24 achieve predetermined goals but also a moment of sharing and collaborating. For Dewey,
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26 communication is simultaneously the means and the end of democratic experiments (Pappas,
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28 2008).
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33 Dewey’s conceptualization of communication differs from the communication
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35 techniques promoted in dispute resolution in that he suggests the possibility of participation
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37 in the creation of a collective world; the purpose of speech is thus not limited to simple
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39 production of shared mental understandings and transparent verbal agreements, it is an
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41 “interactive, experiential, and communal practice” (Cohen, 2012, p. 150). Dewey understands
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43 communication as a democratic good and democracy as “conjoint communicated experience”
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45 (Dewey, 1916[1980]).
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50 Finally, to *accept experience as the authority* means researchers and practitioners
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52 believe in the self-sufficiency and potentialities of experimental inquiry (Pappas, 2008). For
53
54 Dewey, experimental inquiry is not a formalized model, but a lived experimental activity
55
56 (Dewey, 1925[1981]). It represents what the researchers and the practitioners do together, not
57
58 what they assert as their findings. In this lived activity, they have to decide what to observe,
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3 what experiments to carry on, and what arguments and lines of reasoning to pursue.

4
5 Moreover, answers for these questions are continually re-considered as the research proceeds.

6
7 They continually have to judge what to do next to reach the conclusion. In other words, in a
8
9 democratic experimental inquiry, as the experiment unfolds, it provides the control and
10
11 direction for further (Pappas, 2008). Accepting experience as the authority presupposes an
12
13 implicit agreement between researchers and practitioners that experience prevails over
14
15 everyone's authority or privilege (Pappas, 2008). Everyone engaged in a process of inquiry is
16
17 not devoted to find out what the majority wants, but to how things really are and to follow the
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19 evidence wherever it leads.
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22 23 **Discussion and conclusion**

24
25 This article started from the premise that the current literature has made a useful
26
27 contribution to bridging the researcher-practitioner divide by suggesting different
28
29 mechanisms for a more effective collaboration between researchers and practitioners.
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31 However, this literature has not addressed the principles based on which we can build
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33 democratic relationship between them. Our paper addresses this oversight by introducing
34
35 John Dewey's democratic experimentalism, a specific mode of knowledge (co) production,
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37 which goes beyond the current literature by advancing four principles for building democratic
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39 relationships between academics and practitioners. In this section, we highlight the
40
41 contributions of John Dewey's democratic experimentalism to management research and to
42
43 other forms of collaboration that take place in organized environments. Avenues to promote
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45 Dewey's democratic experimentalism will also be discussed along with the limitations of his
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47 approach.
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53 The contribution of Dewey's philosophy to the controversy of academic-practitioner
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55 gap is to emphasize how these parties (should) relate to each other in the collaborative effort
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3 of co-producing knowledge. While the current perspectives suggest various mechanisms of
4
5 collaboration, Dewey's democratic experimentalism highlights that when researchers and
6
7 practitioners join a process of democratic experimentation, they all become producers of
8
9 knowledge. There is no longer a separation between researchers' knowing theories and
10
11 practitioners' knowing practical problems. However, democratic experimentation requires
12
13 that we maintain the distinctions between researchers and practitioners in terms of their
14
15 interests, problems, and contributions. Each individual engaged in democratic
16
17 experimentation has a distinct identity and this uniqueness is emphasized and appreciated.
18
19 Respecting and encouraging individuality is key in successful change management initiatives
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21 and models of planned organisational change could benefit from Dewey's democratic
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23 experimentalist ideas (see for example, Young 2009)
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27
28 Dewey's philosophy does not provide a normative solution for how researchers and
29
30 practitioners should behave. Instead it calls for a way of collaboration that "accepts life and
31
32 experience in all its uncertainty, mystery, doubt, and half-knowledge and turns that
33
34 experience upon itself to deepen and intensify its own qualities" (Dewey, 1934[1987], p. 41).
35
36 Dewey believes that "common experience is capable of developing from within itself
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38 methods which will secure direction for itself and will create inherent standards of judgement
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40 and value" (Dewey, 1925[1981], p. 41). Senior managers should encourage forms of
41
42 interaction that allow decisions and judgments to be guided by experimental inquiry. This is
43
44 essential in creating a work environment in which creativity and innovation can flourish so
45
46 that organisations become more pro-active and quick to react to changes in the market. This
47
48 stance could also be usefully applied to the formation of partnerships amongst diverse
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50 stakeholders with opposing agendas where there is a need to resolve conflicts and find
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52 common ground (Fine, 2005).
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3 There are, however, limitations to what can be achieved. Although Dewey's work has
4
5 had a significant impact on disciplines such as public administration, education, political
6
7 sciences, religion and the arts, there has been a great deal of methodological resistance in the
8
9 social sciences to his ideas of democratic knowledge creation (Ryan, 1995; West, 1989).
10
11 Critics have argued that his understanding of democracy is naïve and utopian. He has been
12
13 criticized for his over optimistic view of how democracy can be achieved at a societal level,
14
15 for not seeing power and politics as part and parcel of transformational change, whether
16
17 locally enacted or on a wider scale. His methodological contributions to knowledge
18
19 production have been marginalised due to elitist tendencies that still prevail in the current
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21 scientific culture which tends to elevate academic theory to a supreme position.
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23

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25 Moreover, in democratic experimentalism, the collaboration between researchers and
26
27 practitioners takes place in a democratic context. Yet, we know that most organizational
28
29 environments (including academia) are anything but democratic. In the scientific community,
30
31 existing research funding and reporting rules make it difficult for practitioners to be equals
32
33 when applying for research grants. Academic writing conventions are highly standardised
34
35 and closely guarded by armies of journal editors to the extent that practitioners' voices are
36
37 excluded completely or to a very large extent from these communication outlets. Processes of
38
39 democratic knowledge creation are seen as threatening by a large majority of academics for
40
41 they imply leaving one's disciplinary paradigm behind and engaging in learning processes
42
43 which may be challenging, time consuming and not valued by the establishment. Powerful
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45 gate keepers are at work to preserve the status quo of the scientific community by
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47 constructing obstacles that make it very hard if not impossible for management practitioners
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49 and ordinary people to be treated as equal to academics in the conversation of research.
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55 **These structural and cultural barriers may need to be addressed by academic**
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57 **institutions in the first instance. There has been a recent trend to employ Professors of**
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Practice (executives turned academics) as a way to bridge management practice and research. These individuals could play a more central role in lobbying university's senior management to ensure that academics and practitioners are rewarded appropriately when they engage in democratic experiments. This will benefit both parties in terms of developing a stronger institutional relationship and with regards of the quality and usefulness of the knowledge co-created. Practitioners will start regarding academia as a welcoming and safe place in which their practical skills and contribution are valued as much as pure research.

Dewey's democratic experimentalism is in search of its own communities of knowing, groups that are comfortable to rely upon and refine this way of working and being in the world. Such communities need to unite various research perspectives by bringing together a variety of actors, and iterating through research phases that utilize diverse research approaches. They may need leader-mediators because there are often language and other barriers that discourage cooperation (Bartunek, 2007). Leader-mediators can be both individuals and organizations, such as the Network for Business Sustainability discussed by Bansal et al. (2012). But importantly, they do not identify themselves fully with either the academic or practitioner community, and have the courage and the interest to treat both groups as of value and as having something to contribute to the other (Bartunek, 2007)

In fact, we see small changes occurring, in that some research councils have started to experiment with allowing practitioners to be co-investigators on research grants (see for example the Connected Communities Programme which in 2014 made it possible for community partners to be co-investigators in the Legacy call) and some universities are funding research centres in which community partners and researchers are equal members (see for example the launch in 2015 of the Community Animation and Social Innovation Centre at Keele University, UK; <https://www.keele.ac.uk/casic/>).

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3 To conclude, while increasing interest in knowledge co-production within the
4 academic community is evident, we feel that more can be done to raise awareness of the
5 possibilities offered by Dewey's democratic experimentalism and its underlying theoretical
6 apparatus to improve the practical utility of academic research and foster democratic
7 collaboration between academics and practitioners. Dewey's ideal of democracy thickens not
8 only the general way of participating in producing knowledge that has been put forth by the
9 current perspectives; it also offers a way of being and acting in the world that could be
10 harnessed by senior managers when embarking on change management programmes.
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Table 1: Mechanisms of collaboration between academics and practitioners

<i>Collaborative forms of knowledge production</i>	Mode 2	Collaboration is based on experience and guided by specifiable consensus as to what counts as appropriate methodology, research questions and modes of engagement. The consensus is conditioned by the context of knowledge application and evolves with it.
	Engaged scholarship	Collaboration is facilitated through arbitrage.
	Relational scholarship	Developing mutual and equal relationships by determining what is fostering positive relationships, the types of difficulties likely to be experienced in accomplishing these relationships, and the facilitating structures.
	Evidence-based management	Building scholar- practitioner teams around the task of identifying, maintaining, and updating summaries of the practice principles that the best available research supports.
<i>Dialogical models</i>	Dialogical model	Maintaining and exploiting tensions and plurality through productive dialogues
	Dialogical mediated inquiry	Maintaining and exploiting tensions and plurality through dialogism
<i>Design inquiry</i>	Design sciences	Users and researchers, who are selected based on criteria to form an effective design team, work together in the design process.
	Sciences of design	Researchers and practitioners join each other to construct knowledge in an explicitly ethical and rigorous manner.
<i>Dewey's pragmatism</i>	Democratic experimentalism	Researchers and practitioners collaborate in experimental inquiry <i>and</i> they interact based on four behavioural principles: 1) organized intelligence, 2) an attitude of hospitality toward the new, 3) democratic communication, and 4) a general willingness to let experience decide.