

## ON THE TRAINING OF TEACHERS

This paper will be concerned with two things: the training<sup>1</sup> of teachers in Philosophy for Children and the training of teacher-trainers in Philosophy for Children. The first topic has a long and problematic history. The second topic has a history just as long, but the problematic can be dated from October, 1987.

Philosophy for Children is not monolithic. If one looked around the country or around the world, one would find a wide variance in the amount of training teachers have received in Philosophy for Children. Some teachers consider themselves trained if they have read some brochures and have purchased one of the novels. Other teachers attend an awareness session and their training consists of that. Others take a three-day course, a two-week course, a residential month-long course, a semester-long course, an academic-year-long course, and a two-year-long course.

Variety, everything else being equal, is a nice thing. Still, the variance among models does make many of us in the Philosophy for Children community quite nervous. To look, simply, at the extremes, surely, given the complexity of the disciplines involved--philosophy and logic--it would be odd if adequate training consisted in the reading of a brochure and the purchase of a novel. On the other hand, a training program that demanded two years of a student's life might prove too cumbersome for widespread application.

In practice, what has happened in the United States at least, is that most centers and most teacher-trainers have opted for some variant on the IAPC model of teacher training.<sup>2</sup> Spaced out in different ways (year-long, two-week residential, and so on), the model typically put students through 120-150 hours of instruction, modelling and practice teaching. In the course of those hours, the student, immersed in the community of inquiry, would work through one or two of the novels and, if things went well, would learn how to do philosophy with children using the novels and their attendant manuals.

Then around 1985-86, as Philosophy for Children grew in stature and popularity, and as Philosophy for Children became a member of The National Diffusion Network, a demand for newer and more economical (temporal and financial) models of instruction was felt. If Philosophy for Children was to compete with other educational programs, it would have to stream-line its training program. In response to this demand, IAPC began implementing<sup>3</sup> training programs that cut or seemed to cut<sup>4</sup> the amount of hours spent in such training by, at least, one-half. This--the reality and the perception--caused a great deal of concern among many teacher-trainers. The claim, made by many teacher-trainers was that if 140 hours was barely adequate, then 70 hours was woefully inadequate.

The problem with the training of teacher-trainers, as mentioned previously, is of more recent vintage. Until 1987, the trainer of teachers was a person with a Ph.D. in philosophy or an Ed.D. who had a background in philosophy, and who had been trained at IAPC. At the Fort Worth conference, it was agreed that the Ph.D.-Ed.D. rule kept some competent people from becoming teacher-trainers. So, it was argued that there should be exceptions to the rule. Practice, alas has shown that while the old rule may have been based on faulty criteria, the new one has, at best, fuzzy ones.

The historical context, then, puts us in a position where it is incumbent on us to develop criteria for both teacher-training and the training of teacher-trainers. There are, it would seem a number of things that need to be done:

Ist: A statistical analysis of various models should be performed. In general, one very obvious question needs to be answered--Which model produces the greatest number of trained teachers?

2nd: A qualitative analysis of various models should be performed. Which model gives a student the clearest picture of community of inquiry? Which model puts an adult in a position where he/she can best do philosophy with children?

3rd: A development of a list of "essential elements" that all models should exhibit should be formulated. What, for example, should the teacher know about the historical and philosophical antecedents of the ideas of the characters in the novels.

4th: A questioning of the univocal nature of Philosophy for Children methodology should be begun. Is it true, for example, that training in Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery adequately prepares one to teach, say, from Elfie?

In the past, we have looked to IAPC to do what needs to be done. It seems to me (and, I would assume, to the writers of "The Menucha Letter") that something does need to be done, and that the magnitude of the task suggests that it would be unfair to burden IAPC with it.

My suggestion, at heart, is a very simple one. There is an existing organization, The International Council For Philosophical Inquiry With Children (I.C.P.I.C.), made up of members from around the world, most of whom have a long and extensive acquaintance with Philosophy for Children. I.C.P.I.C. could and would sponsor the sorts of analysis mentioned above and, through its Bulletin and through Analytic Teaching, would be in a position to disseminate those results.

Again, very simply, it seems to me that we in the Philosophy for Children community are presented with a number of choices:

1st: We can rely on IAPC to set all standards. This option, it seems to me, would put an impossible burden on IAPC.

2nd: We can rely on individuals to do what needs to be done. Dewey might say, and I would concur, that this is tantamount to abandoning a methodology.

3rd: We can form a new organization to perform the task. In many ways, this is what the writers of the Menucha Letter had in mind. This strikes me as an interesting avenue, but the difficulty that the writers of that letter have found in giving birth to their organization gives one reason to pause.

4th: One can use an existing organization that has widespread human, if not financial, resources to perform the needed tasks. I would urge this route primarily because if change is to be made in an orderly and reasonable fashion, if we are to make and consolidate progress, some stable organization will have to facilitate that. I suggest that ICPIC might serve as that organization.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> In fact, we are talking about education and not training. However, since "training" is usually used, I will continue to do so in this paper.

<sup>2</sup> IAPC, in fact, has always presented a number of different models. Here, I am talking about the prevalent model which, I say this with fondness, assumed that exhaustion was a

necessary condition for adequate training.

<sup>3</sup> As mentioned in note 2, IAPC has always offered a number of different models.

<sup>4</sup> The N.D.N. model, in fact, was not the drastic change it originally appeared. In practice, it yields 90-100 hours.

