The Case for Philosophy For Children In The English Primary Curriculum

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ABSTRACT: The introduction of the new National Curriculum in England, was initially viewed with suspicion by practitioners, uneasy about the radical departure from the previous National Curriculum, in both breadth and scope of the content.   However, this paper will suggest that upon further reflection the brevity of the content could lend itself to a total re-evaluation of the approach to curriculum planning in individual schools.   This paper will explore how, far from creating a burden of extra curriculum content, Philosophy for Children (P4C) can in fact be a driver for the whole primary curriculum. With the renewed focus on Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development (SMSC) in England, it will investigate the potential for P4C to engage and enhance these areas, which often are neglected or side-lined in the primary curriculum. It will consider the benefits to a class, and indeed school, of creating communities of enquiry and how they can influence school ethos, values and vision.

The paper will also share reflections on my own practice as a new trainer with SAPERE over the past two years of training student teachers, colleagues at the university as well as local primary school teachers and head teachers. In addition it will share examples of good practice from three schools where Philosophy for Children has been successfully integrated in a variety of models across the whole school curriculum.

Key Words: Philosophy for Children, P4C, curriculum, community of enquiry, primary, education, democratic

FIGURES

Fig. 1 Statutory requirements of spoken language KS1 & 2 (DFE, 2013:17)

Fig. 2: Excerpt from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 2012)

INTRODUCTION

Rationale

In my role as Senior Lecturer in Teacher Development at Winchester University, I am constantly questioned by both students and teachers about the practicality of fitting yet another subject into the primary curriculum. This provided the impetus for this paper, in order to be able to articulate to both students and teachers the case for P4C in the primary curriculum, with specific examples of how P4C links with the National Curriculum and how this might look in practice in a Primary School.

The introduction of the new English National Curriculum was initially viewed with suspicion by practitioners (Edwards, 2013; Hannam, 2013; Mackinlay, 2014), uneasy about the departure from the previous National Curriculum (NC), in both breadth and scope of the content. This paper will explore how, far from creating a burden of extra curriculum content, P4C could in fact be a driver for the whole primary curriculum. It will consider how P4C might effectively and with integrity link to the aims of the new NC (DFE, 2013), whilst also acting as a driver for values education; oracy skills and inclusive practice, as well as a focus for Pupil Voice and democratic classrooms. With the renewed focus on Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development (SMSC) in England (DFE, 2014), the paper will also investigate the potential for P4C to engage and enhance these areas, which often are neglected or side-lined in the curriculum (Peterson, Lexmond, Hallgarten, & Kerr, 2014).

The paper will share reflections on my own practice as a new trainer with SAPERE over the past two years of training student teachers, colleagues at the university as well as local primary school teachers and head teachers. It will also share examples of good practice from three schools where Philosophy for Children has been successfully integrated in a variety of models across the whole school curriculum.

The questions I aimed to investigate were –

- *Can P4C be effectively linked with the Primary Curriculum?*
- *What potential benefits might result from this?*
- *What objections might be posed to this?*
- *What issues have arisen in reflecting on my professional practice in teaching student teachers and teachers about using P4C in their practice?*

SETTING THE SCENE

The movement known as P4C/PwC was first developed in the late 1960's in the USA by Matthew Lipman (Fisher, 2013). Building on the work of Dewey, Lipman (2003) developed the P4C programme where children form a Community of Enquiry (CoE) to collaborate in their search for meaning and understanding. P4C is perhaps the most widely known PwC programme and will be the term I use to cover all aspects of philosophy for/with children. In P4C children are encouraged to question, to think, to reason and to make connections between philosophical concepts and their own experiences (Murris, 2000), as well as to generate their own questions as a focus for the enquiry.

Central to P4C is the aforementioned CoE, this pedagogical approach has been well-researched (Fisher, 2007; Murris, 2008) and is crucial to the success of P4C. There are key features of the CoE, ranging from the physical eg. pupils sit in a circle to encourage a feeling of equality, to the more intangible - within the CoE, pupils develop a sense of security, which encourages them to share their opinions honestly, but also to collaborate towards a shared purpose (Jenkins & Lyle, 2010; Splitter, 2014). Certain dispositions or attitudes are encouraged in the CoE; although the ability to reason is crucial, so too is being open to be reasoned with, coupled with a willingness to consider other opinions (Splitter, 2014). These dispositions are often referred to as the '4 C's of P4C' – namely Collaborative, Critical, Caring and Creative attitudes towards thinking and being (Fisher, 2013; Splitter, 2014; SAPERE, 2015; Ward, Allsopp, Shergill, Yates & Smith, 2015).

LITERATURE REVIEW

A decision was made to focus the paper specifically on the more holistic attributes or benefits of P4C, as this was what had made an impact on my teaching career and on the children I taught. This area has generated limited research, possibly due to the current focus in schools on data or performance, which can lead to a fixation on the impact of P4C being 'measured', meaning that academic attainment is rated above more philosophically informed outcomes such as self-esteem, empathy, equality and inclusion (Haynes & Murris, 2011b; Murris, 2008). The area of Critical Thinking, or P4C as a Thinking Skills' programme has been extensively researched (Topping & Trickey, 2007; Trickey & Topping, 2004), similarly much research has been undertaken to examine the positive effects of P4C's dialogic approach to teaching and learning, (Cassidy & Christie, 2013; Fisher, 2007; Jenkins & Lyle, 2010; Splitter, 2014), and the decision has been made to limit discussions pertaining to both of these areas to where it has wider curriculum relevance.

Over the last three decades interest in P4C has grown, provoking an ongoing debate into its relevance and appropriateness for children and how it might fit into the curriculum (Haynes & Murris, 2011; Gaut & Gaut, 2013). P4C has advocates amongst teachers, academic philosophers and teacher educators, however the challenge of how or if it can become part of mainstream education, which values individual, often academic achievement almost exclusively, remains (Murris, 2008). Approaching the National Curriculum in a philosophical way means looking beneath the surface, to the questions and concepts that interest children (SAPERE, 2015). Daniel and Auriac (2011) and Haynes and Murris (2011b) suggest that P4C is an approach that goes beyond taught P4C lessons, with connections possible to all areas of the curriculum, this has been challenged though, with authors suggesting that the specific skills and disciplines of philosophy would be best served in discrete subject sessions (Splitter, 2014).

A key objection towards P4C centres around the question of whether children are actually able to philosophise (Fox, 2001; Murris, 2001; Haynes & Murris, 2011). Often citing Piagetian cognitive theories of development, the argument is that young children are incapable of abstract, philosophical thought, seen by many as only developing in secondary aged children, sometimes as late as 15 or 16 (Fox, 2001). This objection is firmly rebutted by advocates of P4C, who contest that young children are indeed capable of thinking abstractly, considering concepts such as bravery, fairness, goodness and evil, but associated with their own experiences and everyday life (Egan, 2011; Murris, 2001).

Another common misconception amongst critics of P4C is that they compare child philosophers with adult ones (Murris, 2001). The first argument to that objection is to make a distinction between *academic philosophy*, where one studies philosophers and their ideas and *practical philosophy*, eg P4C, where children are encouraged to philosophise (Cassidy & Christie, 2013; Murris, 2000). P4C is a prime example of a Socratic view of philosophy, where it is a way of life and a way of being and doing (Murris, 2001). In addition, P4C practitioners would concur that young children do not enquire philosophically like academic philosophers, but neither do they approach mathematics like academic mathematicians, yet we still encourage them to learn maths (Murris, 2001), likewise many other areas of the curriculum.

NATIONAL CURRICULUM LINKS

The National Curriculum (NC) (DFE, 2013) arose out of 'a desire to drive standards and raise expectations' (HCC, 2014:2). No longer a prescriptive document (Mackinlay, 2014), schools have the freedom to design their own programmes, including other subjects or topics of their choice (DFE, 2013). The NC document highlights explicit skills and content expected to be taught to children at different key stages; a selection of these skills will be examined for their links to P4C.

In English for example, teachers are expected to teach children to speak with clarity and confidence, they should "learn to justify ideas with reasons; ask questions to check understanding; develop vocabulary and build knowledge; negotiate; evaluate and build on the ideas of others; and select the appropriate register for effective communication" (DFE, 2013:10), as well as having the ability to challenge and amend misconceptions. These skills are seen as crucial for pupils to be able to take their future place as members of society and are used across the curriculum to support their social, linguistic and cognitive development. These oracy skills have been shown to improve with introduction to P4C; Trickey and Topping (2004) found P4C to be the cause of children showing significant improvements in their communication, confidence, participation and social behaviour in just 6 months of P4C input.

The statutory requirements for S & L (DFE, 2013:17) (seen in Fig.1) lay out specific skills that must be taught across KS1 & 2. The italic sections demonstrate skills that research has argued can be developed by P4C (Colom, Moriyón, Magro, & Morilla, 2014; SAPERE, 2013; Topping & Trickey, 2007; Trickey & Topping, 2004):

Statutory requirements

Pupils should be taught to:

- *listen and listen and respond appropriately to adults and their peers*
- *ask relevant questions to extend their understanding and knowledge*
- use relevant strategies to build their vocabulary
- *articulate and justify answers, arguments and opinions*
- *give well-structured descriptions, explanations and narratives for different purposes, including for expressing feelings*
- *maintain attention and participate actively in collaborative conversations, staying on topic and initiating and responding to comments*
- *use spoken language to develop understanding through speculating, hypothesising, imagining and exploring ideas*
- *speak audibly and fluently with an increasing command of Standard English*
- *participate in discussions*, presentations, performances, role play, improvisations and debates
- *gain, maintain and monitor the interest of the listener(s)*
- *consider and evaluate different viewpoints, attending to and building on the contributions of others*
- *select and use appropriate registers for effective communication.*

Fig. 1 Statutory requirements of spoken language KS1 & 2 (DFE, 2013:17)

Speaking and listening are fundamental skills, not only for developing intelligence (Cassidy & Christie, 2013; Fisher, 2013; Jenkins & Lyle, 2010), but also for our ability to communicate and thus form relationships. Research shows that the quality of classroom talk has the power to enable or inhibit cognition and learning (Alexander, 2006; Fisher, 2007). Additionally, schools who embedded P4C into their Literacy curriculum with the aim of improving S & L found that incorporating philosophical enquiry also improved the quality of children's writing (Ward et al., 2015); the opportunity to initially orally articulate their thinking impacting on their subsequent written tasks. In Mathematics, the NC requires children to 'reason mathematically by following a line of enquiry, conjecturing relationships and generalisations, and developing an argument, justification or proof using mathematical language' (DFE, 2013:99), whilst encouraging pupils to also appreciate, enjoy and be curious about the more aesthetic side of mathematics' beauty and power. In Science, again the importance of spoken language is reiterated, enabling children to share their thoughts with clarity and precision. Pupils must be taught to experience, be curious and ask questions – exemplification given 'Is a flame alive? Is a deciduous tree dead in winter?' (DFE, 2013:151) – arguably carries a philosophical dimension. In Art and Design and Design and Technology, the NC (DFE, 2013) advocates creativity as well as criticality – two of the 4 C's of P4C (Fisher, 2013; SAPERE, 2015). This focus on creativity is encouraging as initially the draft curriculum raised concerns that the emphasis was on knowledge acquisition to the detriment of creativity (Mackinlay, 2014). In Geography, teachers are called to 'inspire in pupils a curiosity and fascination about the world and its people that will remain with them for the rest of their lives' (DFE, 2013:187). In this subject there is great scope for P4C due to the underpinning philosophical concepts – for example: ownership, place, responsibility and sustainability to name but a few (SAPERE, 2015). Similar links with P4C skills can be seen in many other curriculum areas of the NC document (DFE, 2013).

In addition, the idea of enquiry-led learning promoted in the NC (DFE, 2013), is also an integral element of P4C; which trains teachers to facilitate philosophical enquiries with rigorous reasoning at its heart (Colom et al., 2014). This is supported by Haynes (2014) who states that this enquiry-led approach needs to be embedded across the curriculum and Fisher (2007), who writes that children 'need to be exposed to and involved in enquiry with different voices, ideas and perspectives' (p616), as through this dialogue they will start the process of making meaning.

USING P4C AS A DRIVER FOR OTHER AGENDAS

It might therefore be claimed that P4C can be integrated into many different areas of the curriculum, including helping to achieve the aims and statutory requirements of the NC (DFE, 2013). However there are also arguments for using the pedagogy to promote a range of different initiatives; SAPERE (2015) documents examples across the world where P4C is being used for agendas as varied as democracy, social improvement and values/morality. As Murris (2008) writes, the education climate currently is such that many who would endeavour to include P4C in Primary schools are validating their arguments by 'highlighting its compatibility with a number of current agenda items for education—raising standards, teaching thinking skills, creativity, citizenship, inclusion and emotional literacy' (p672). Haynes and Murris (2011b) warn however that 'in order to get a foot in the classroom, PwC practitioners often justify the inclusion of PwC in the curriculum by arguing that it will produce more 'skilled' thinkers, readers, writers, team-players, selves or citizens' (p289). Their fear is that considerations of how P4C can enrich education can be lost in the need to justify target-driven initiatives.

P4C As A Values Driver/Moral Education

The temptation for P4C to be linked to different agendas or initiatives might be seen as understandable as many of the holistic effects of the programme can be seen to enhance other areas, sometimes referred to as the *hidden curriculum* (Kirk, 1992), which traditionally are seen to be unintended lessons, values or norms that are side effect of the taught programme . Working within a CoE helps instil and perfect cogitative, emotional and behavioural habits in children, as they are constantly being reminded of, or referred to, the dispositions or 4 C's of P4C (Critical, Caring, Collaborative and Creative Thinking) (Fisher, 2013; SAPERE, 2015; Splitter, 2014; Ward et al., 2015). The intention of teaching children in this way is to help them make better judgements, and to take into account their emotions and those of others, one of the aims of the NC (DFE, 2013).

P4C is being increasingly used as a platform or driver for *Values or Moral Education*. Education is in favour of teaching children to become active and responsible citizens (Costello, 2013; DFE, 2013) with opportunities highlighted in the NC (DFE, 2013) e.g. in the PE programme of study it stipulates that children are exposed to situations that 'build character and help to embed values such as fairness and respect' (p198) and in Design and Technology pupils need to learn to 'solve real and relevant problems within a variety of contexts, considering their own and others' needs, wants and values' (p184).

Intrinsic to the P4C pedagogy are values such as tolerance and respect. Differences of opinion between people are welcomed for the opportunities to learn from each other, constructing new collaborative meaning in the process (Murris, 2008). In the CoE, characteristics such as 'empathy, agreeableness, cooperation, attentiveness, and so forth, become non-cognitive factors systematically fostered' (Garcia et al., 2002 in Colom et al., 2014: 55), helping to develop both children's thinking and their moral and social development (Haynes & Murris, 2013). An example of this can be seen in Rokeby School (a community secondary school for boys, located in the London Borough of Newham), where P4C is credited for the transformation of behaviour (Ward et al., 2015). The school claims that P4C is core not only to the academic progress at the school but also supporting behaviour. They have seen the CoE strengthening the community of the school, leading to an increase in team spirit and respectful behaviour.

There are objections voiced towards this approach, with concerns that a focus on promoting tolerance, understanding and respect can lead to criticality being lost, and an ensuing reluctance to challenge opinions or beliefs (Haynes & Murris, 2011b). Gardner (1996) would argue however, that skilful facilitation by the P4C teacher ensures that enquiries are not 'mere conversation', rather push at all times for depth and progress towards truth (p102). Respectful dialogue is at all times non-negotiable in P4C, yet crucially there is the understanding that ideas, practices and opinions must be justified and critically examined (Haynes & Murris, 2011b).

Hayes (2014) states that in his view children have little to contribute to philosophical issues, that typically, 'their insights come down to the banalities' (online). This objection is both patronising and belittling towards children. Children should be encouraged to care about social justice, to make judgements about beliefs and opinions of themselves and others, but most importantly, be open and ready to amend their opinions as necessary, as Splitter (2014) suggests, ' we should always allow room for that small voice that whispers to us, even in the face of our strongest convictions, "Yes, but I might be mistaken"' (p105). This theme is examined further in the reflections on my professional practice.

Using P4C to Enhance SMSC

Closely linked to the area of Values is Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development (SMSC). Clearly stated at the start of the NC as part of the aim for a 'broad and balanced curriculum'(DFE, 2013:5), SMSC is intrinsically linked to a more holistic primary curriculum. SMSC, although present in education documentation since the 1980s, is experiencing a renewed focus in recent Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) inspections (DFE, 2014). One of the challenges that schools face is how to make SMSC a meaningful part of their curriculum, rather than a reaction to the Ofsted agenda (Peterson et al., 2014). Peterson et al. (2014)'s report found that the majority of schools paid either cursory attention to SMSC or attempted to fit it in everywhere, leading to superficial coverage at best. They reported that the key area of neglect concerned Spirituality. This is possibly due to the indeterminacy of meaning, as well as teacher discomfort and lack of confidence around the 'teaching' of spirituality. Rowson (2014) argued that the term 'spirituality' lacks clarity because it is so wide-ranging; 'our search for meaning, our sense of the sacred, the value of compassion, the experience of transcendence, the hunger for transformation' (p18). All of these are fundamental features of humanity and as such vital that they are shared and explored in a safe way with children (Peterson et al., 2014; Rowson, 2014). Central to the definition given by Ofsted for Spirituality (DFE, 2014), is reflection – this is built into the CoE, and therefore is perfectly attuned to the demands of SMSC. Themes or concepts which are dealt with in P4C (such as truth, beauty, morality, wisdom, reality, goodness etc.) are also those that lie at the heart of SMSC and children should be encouraged to think about and reflect upon their importance in both their lives and in that of society (Splitter, 2014).

Democratic Classrooms/Pupil Voice

One of the arguments for embedding a P4C pedagogy into the Primary curriculum is centred around the idea of democratic practice in schools – sometimes referred to as Rights Respecting Education, strongly linked to the UN Charter, and issues of Pupil Voice (Fisher, 2007; Murris, 2008; Haynes & Murris, 2013). Murris (2008) highlights this, positing that democracy is understood to include 'moral principles such as freedom and equality of opportunity and implies that schools make space for children to actively participate as citizens in contexts that are meaningful to them' (p670). This is a significant epistemological shift as education is traditionally undemocratic, with children obliged to attend and with little choice, particularly at Primary level, over what they study (Haynes & Murris, 2011b). For schools this may mean a re-evaluation of current structures as, if this is to be more than mere lip-service to democracy, it will mean creating space for children's voices to be heard on wide ranging issues, not only in the classroom, but also regarding wider decision making, such as curriculum and ethos (Haynes & Murris, 2011b). The P4C approach to education strives to move away from the traditional classroom of the authoritarian teacher, towards a dialogic environment, where children's voices are listened to and dialogue is key to their development as learners (Fisher, 2007; Jenkins & Lyle, 2010; Haynes, 2014). This approach to teaching also supports United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child articles 12 – 14 (UNICEF, 2012) as seen in Figure 2, italics indicating potential links with P4C.

Figure 2: Excerpt from the summary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 2012)

Traditional teacher-centred approaches have been criticised, due to their limitations for children to have either the space to voice their own ideas, or to respond to those of others (Jenkins & Lyle, 2010). P4C and similar approaches change the power structure in the classroom, creating new classroom dynamics, where the children's voices aspire to have equal weight to that of the teacher (Haynes & Murris, 2011a). Fisher (2007) states 'They [the children] need to be given a voice, a voice to question, to challenge, to construct and deconstruct the meanings around them' (p620). This redressing of the balance of authority in the class, where children have equal right to participate and for their views to be heard, (Haynes & Murris, 2011b) is not without issue. Some teachers see this as a lack of control, or a diminishing of the role of the teacher (Haynes, 2014), rather than an empowering of the children (Lyle & Thomas-Williams, 2011; Splitter, 2014). It is important to note however, that this right to participate does not become an insistence that all participate; contrary to the implication by Ecclestone and Hayes (2009) that children who do not respond are seen to be 'repressing feelings and concealing inner trauma' (p43), coercion has no place in the CoE, children are free to participate as and when they feel comfortable to do so (Haynes & Murris, 2011b).

P4C as Inclusive Practice

Inclusiveness is a fundamental principle of P4C (Cassidy & Christie, 2013). Its primarily oral nature enables all pupils to participate, giving an equal voice to less academically able students, excluded from much of the curriculum biased towards writing (Alexander, 2006; Murris, 2008; Ward et al., 2015). Additionally, it practises and develops these oral skills which are essential for pupils to participate confidently in society (DFE, 2013). Benefits of P4C have also been shown to include aspects such as increased self-esteem, gains in literacy and numeracy, significantly in those less able; transformed attitudes towards learning and more thoughtful and reflective responses across the wider curriculum (Topping & Trickey, 2007). Increasingly English schools are seeing P4C as a potential approach for helping disadvantaged children to close the attainment gap, often reporting changes noted after only a few P4C enquiries. Children, whose voices previously were rarely shared, demonstrating willingness to participate in the CoE, surprising themselves and others with their depth of thought, consequently boosting self-confidence across the curriculum

(SAPERE, 2015). Topics such as death, bereavement, image, fears and friendship can be explored collaboratively, within the safe philosophical space created by P4C, enabling children to explore areas not often covered by the curriculum, but also have their opinions heard and validated by others (Ward et al., 2015).

BENEFITS OF P4C

As mentioned in the Introduction, the focus for this paper was enquiring into the more holistic benefits of P4C. Ecclestone and Hayes (2009) are vociferous critics of P4C as an example of what they see as 'therapeutic education', which seeks to encourage empathy, self-esteem and emotional literacy; leading in their opinion to 'the debasing of education' (p151). They claim that P4C is easily hijacked into indiscriminating advancement of 'emotional well-being' at the expense of criticality, logic or reason (p33). Ecclestone and Hayes (2009) claim that there is a lack of challenge from teachers over the content of the dialogue, with 'all views accepted unconditionally' (p33). Whilst this might occur with inexperienced facilitators, these objections can be refuted as they concern incorrect application of P4C rather than the pedagogy itself, which will be explored subsequently in more detail.

In addition to the many holistic benefits of P4C already discussed, one significant benefit is that of the collaborative nature of P4C. Many theorists expound on the benefits of working collaboratively (Burke & Williams, 2008). The inherent structure of P4C provides an opportunity for genuine collaboration, where the process of learning itself is a shared one (Cassidy & Christie, 2013). The CoE is set up to facilitate collaborative learning, the principle that together the community is moving towards a new, shared understanding of the question at hand (Haynes & Murris, 2013).   The collaborative nature of P4C provides children with opportunities to hear different points of view, alternative insights and ways of thinking as well as the opportunity to critically analyse and judge the reasoning behind the thinking and thus change their mind.

Examples of Good Practice from Three Schools

The first school I visited is a small village primary school (4 – 11 year olds) with approximately 100 children on their roll, where P4C was introduced in 2011. Initially trialled in one class, the motivation for introducing P4C was to try to raise the level of questioning in Religious Education (RE) from the typical 'teacher-led' question/answer to genuine dialogue, led and progressed by the children, with the teacher as a mere 'facilitator'. The curriculum for RE in Hampshire is centred around both concepts and enquiry and therefore seemed to be a natural partner for P4C. After introducing P4C the change made to the class' dialogue was marked, not only that, but the school reported that within weeks of it being introduced to this class they experienced an unexpected impact in the behaviour of the children. Although not previously a class that had great behavioural issues, the lunchtime support staff noticed two significant impacts – firstly that the children were not needing adult intervention to help them to resolve their conflicts, and secondly that when the children were resolving their conflicts, their language had changed – they were using the language they had been introduced to in their P4C lessons, to help them to disagree respectfully and courteously and to be able to reason with each other. This impact led to the whole school – teaching and support staff - being trained in P4C. Although primarily used to enhance RE, the school reported that they found it was a perfect method to explore their values as a school and subsequently it has been embedded across the curriculum. The school was chosen to feature on Ofsted's (the School Inspection service) good practice website, where it was mentioned that 'the school has effectively integrated 'Philosophy for Children' (P4C) within RE, as a result, RE has

been a catalyst for wider developments in teaching and learning across the school.' Within a year the school was inspected by SIAS (the church school's inspection service) where the provision for RE was rated Outstanding, with specific reference made to the impact of P4C, and in particular the skills of questioning, thinking and reflection, they saw used throughout the curriculum.

The second case study was a large Church of England Junior School (7 – 11 year olds), with a school roll of approximately 240 children. As a SAPERE Silver Award P4C school, all members of staff have completed SAPERE level 1 P4C training, in addition they also employ an experienced P4C Facilitator (who is also an accredited SAPERE trainer) for 1 ½ days/week to lead P4C, aiding with planning, facilitation, training and supporting teachers etc. In this school P4C, although used across the curriculum, is primarily seen linked with English and in particular to support and improve writing. They have found that through P4C enquiries the children have become more engaged with stories, poems and literary texts; in addition to developing the skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening. Through engaging with the text in a deeper way, the children are subsequently more able to ask questions, think and talk more deeply about important issues in life, and in response their writing has more purpose. Moreover as the children have the chance to articulate their thinking about concepts, sharing their ideas through philosophical enquiry, they then transfer these ideas to their writing (Allsopp, 2015). On a learning walk around the school it was clear that P4C had a high status, with displays in every classroom, including the writing resulting from the philosophical enquiries (one of the class questions here was 'Could you survive on your own?' – all tied in with a stimulus about the Mars space programme).

The third case study school was a large urban community primary school (4 – 11 years) with approximately 210 children on their books. As with the previous case study, all teaching staff were trained in P4C to Level 1 with SAPERE. The teacher I spoke to reported how P4C had changed how they worked as a school. P4C was now so much part of the school's ethos that it was apparent in all parts of school life and had inspired a move to genuine democratic practice throughout the school. As well as carrying out full P4C enquiries in class, the school used the P4C approach to make all of the decisions in the school, with the children actively involved in all decision making – from the topics that they study each half term, to the furniture in the library, to the colour of the bathroom walls! One teacher told me that making decisions without involving the children would be unthinkable.

Questioning is at the heart of the school's curriculum, which was evident in the displays around the school. The skills learnt through P4C are utilised in all areas of school life, whether evaluating the topics they have just studied, choosing the learning values for the school, or engaging in dialogue around the charities they want to support that year. The teacher explained how dialogue had become a central feature of the school, with children confident to engage in both partner, small group and whole group dialogue, with emphasis on Pupil Voice, where everyone has a right to have their opinion heard. The teachers at this school felt that P4C had significantly impacted on their teacher identity, particularly identifying how they felt they not only listened more to the children now, but also that *how* they listened to the children had changed: previously they had been listening for a particular response, now they felt that they were genuinely listening to what the children were saying, also they felt they were now confident to push for more depth from children's answers.

Brookfield (1995) suggests reflective practice can help challenge certain assumptions, some of which resonated with regard to P4C. One assumption that he contests, is the idea that students do not like or need to have didactic lectures. He discusses the importance of grounding in a subject area before students are able to engage critically with new ideas/thinking. This is reassuring as my introduction to the P4C module is very theoretical, explaining the pedagogy behind P4C as well as its background. Another assumption that Brookfield (1995) raises, concerns seating students in a circle. This is central to P4C, suggestive of democratic principles and practices, however Brookfield suggests that for less confident students, the circle can be 'a painful and humiliating experience' (1995:9). He defends this position by expounding that the circle, whilst a place of safety to many, on the contrary can remove privacy; demand performance and become oppressive. I found this quite disquieting to read as it challenges all the theory I have so far read about the benefits of circles (Lang, 1998; Splitter, 2014) and will continue to reflect on Brookfield's warnings in my own practice. However, this reinforces the importance of the CoE as discussed previously (Cassidy & Christie, 2013; Haynes & Murris, 2013). Only once the community is built, will all participants feel confident to speak out, to disagree and to allow their thinking to be challenged (Splitter, 2014). Brookfield (1995) continues that the group power dynamic can reflect inequities and that in order to combat this the teacher must model both respectful disagreement as well as constructive criticism, or critical and caring thinking in P4C terminology (Fisher, 2007). In one module with students, one member of the community made a joke at another student's expense. Although meant (and taken) in fun, I felt it was important that it was challenged, as it directly contradicted one of the 4 C's - *Caring Thinking* (Fisher, 2007; Splitter, 2014) and potentially could deter less confident students from participating.

Preparing Students/Teachers to Facilitate P4C

Burke and Williams (2008) found that a crucial element to the success of their work on critical thinking in schools was the preparation of the teachers, advocating the use of modelling to enable teacher confidence. Whilst I too would support this, their strategy was to use videos of good practice, whereas for me part of the ingredient for a successful course is that the teachers/students can see the trainer's genuine enthusiasm/belief in what they are training – it remains open to question whether a video would be as successful at conveying this element. Burke and Williams (2008) advocate ongoing support throughout the initial training process. I agree that support needs to continue until the practitioner is fully confident, however in my observations of practice in schools occasionally too much support has been provided. This can have a detrimental effect as teachers can come to rely on it, without taking the risks, which inherently lead to furthering expertise and practice.

Challenges of Training

A key component of P4C is the centrality of engaging with concepts (Splitter, 2014), therefore it is necessary to dedicate sufficient time with teachers or students preparing them not only to become familiar with concepts, but also how to discuss them, work with them, help children to engage with them and make connections between them. Working with concepts is one of many challenges of training in P4C. A key challenge is philosophy itself. Most teachers or students desiring to train in P4C have no formal background in philosophy (Haynes & Murris, 2011b; Splitter, 2014). This can cause tensions in the philosophy community, with some members insisting that a knowledge of academic philosophy, and in particular logic, is crucial for teachers

to help children make progress (Haynes & Murris, 2011b; Murris, 2008). Splitter saw a danger that if students were not engaged in genuine inquiry, grappling with concepts on a philosophical level, their thinking could potentially be stuck at 'the level of the purely experiential and anecdotal' (2014:96). SAPERE (2013) suggest that as P4C involves practical philosophy not academic philosophy, qualifications in philosophy are not necessary, however trainers do need to provide at least a philosophical overview, in order to help teachers to facilitate appropriately (Haynes & Murris, 2011b; Splitter, 2014). The necessity of philosophical rigour can cause anxiety for teachers, leading to concerns that they will not be capable of enabling the children to form philosophical questions (Haynes & Murris, 2011b), indeed this was my own fear when I was introduced to P4C, which thankfully was proved unfounded – thus reinforcing Splitter's (2014) belief that children can deal with very complex philosophical concepts as long as they are suitably presented.

Another significant challenge for trainees is the shifting power roles in the P4C classroom. In my experience this is greeted with enthusiasm by student teachers, keen to foster a democratic, child-centred classroom; equally some experienced teachers embrace this opportunity to encourage the child's voice. However other teachers take a more traditional view of power in the classroom, confident in their role as the authority figure, their inclination is 'to anticipate and correct, respond and direct an answer toward the goals of the lesson' (Haynes & Murris, 2011b: 287). For these teachers, the unpredictable nature of P4C, 'the questioning and democratic nature of the community of enquiry can be demanding and unsettling [...] presenting unaccustomed challenges and moral dilemmas' (Haynes & Murris, 2011b: 285). Equally, the fact that the enquiry cannot be planned to the last detail is disconcerting to some teachers. With student teachers it is necessary to give them 'permission' to move away from the traditional lesson plan, learning objectives and success criteria, to follow a more fluid enquiry that is genuinely led by the children – something that again can cause disquiet in certain experienced teachers who prefer the more 'controlled' classroom. Teachers have commented to me that initially the freedom of the enquiry can feel threatening and requires an element of trust in the pupils and the community. One such teacher subsequently reported that this has invigorated not only her teaching, but herself as an educator. This new vision of themselves as facilitator is crucial for the success of the community, with the two key roles; firstly to enable the pupils to engage in the community's dialogue, and secondly to encourage them to engage critically – by constantly seeking pupils to give reasons, challenge assumptions and provide examples (Splitter, 2014).

One common misconception amongst trainees concerns the 'safety of the community' (Haynes & Murris, 2011a: 295). When discussing this fundamental feature, whereby the CoE becomes a place where children dare to share their emerging thoughts and opinions, it is important to clarify that this is not to encourage permissiveness. The erroneous product of the idea that there are no right or wrong answers in philosophy, is a belief that ideas cannot and should not be challenged, potentially leading to 'intellectual complacency' (Haynes & Murris, 2011b; Murris, 2008; Splitter, 2014: 92). Haynes and Murris (2011b) suggest that this misunderstanding results potentially in a lack of rigour. They suggest normalising disagreement in the CoE, where each participant is listened to courteously, with their views considered, however with criticality present, where 'some contributions can still be treated as invalid, incorrect or irrelevant by the community of enquiry' (Haynes & Murris, 2011b: 295). This can prove disquieting for teachers anxious to promote a harmonious classroom, the idea that disagreement can be positive and provide critical learning opportunities for children should be explored with trainees, otherwise it can lead to teachers deliberately avoiding potentially controversial topics for enquiry (Murris, 2008).

In my experience of training both students and teachers in P4C, I have found that these challenges conversely become positive, causing educators to reassess both their philosophy on education as well as their personal philosophy as teachers. This is supported by Haynes & Murris (2011b) , who discuss the idea of 'recurring moments of disequilibrium' (p291); moments of experience that are troubling or disturbing for [student] teachers. Murris (2008) adds that although these moments highlight the challenges for trainees, it also emphasises the rich opportunities that P4C can bring to the classroom and to the teacher. As the trainee (and indeed the class) learn how to become a CoE through active participation, their practice will be shaped, informed, renewed and potentially transformed (Murris, 2008);

> 'Disequilibrium is a positive force that opens up a space in which educators need to reflect upon their values, their beliefs about learning and teaching, and ultimately encourages educators to rethink their own role' (Murris, 2008: 667).

Reflections on Training Students

Considering Brookfield (1998)'s lenses of reflective practice, all four lenses seem applicable when training students. Firstly my own experience of being trained in P4C is something I draw on constantly in my sessions, ensuring I share with them my experiences – both positive and negative, to help them to develop their facilitation. Reflection opportunities from the students are timetabled in throughout our seminars, discussing their growing understanding of the theory, but also sharing their own experiences as they start to practise in schools, with a final module evaluation at the end. Again this is modelling practice (Burke & Williams, 2008; Lyle & Thomas-Williams, 2011), as reflection is built into P4C enquiry – individual, collective and facilitator. Brookfield (1995) emphasises the benefit of reflection to avoid the risk of continually making potentially poor decisions/bad judgement calls.

As a new trainer in P4C I have been moderated both in training students and tutors. This has provided me with opportunities for reflection through another of Brookfield (1998)'s lenses – that of colleagues' perceptions. My personal reflection post-training, was a concern that I had overloaded the day – however my mentor shared that she felt the day was a good balance of theory and practice. As Brookfield (1998) writes, we can focus on our own perceived 'failings', therefore the affirming feedback of an experienced practitioner was very encouraging. Additionally she was also able to discuss different strategies and approaches she employs in the training, which I will incorporate into future modules. I am aware that Brookfield (1998)'s fourth lens uses theoretical, philosophical, and research literature as a reflection tool. Using literature to support practice is embedded in Winchester's degree programme and as such is incorporated throughout the module. In this way, the students benefit from a level of underpinning with research and theory that is not possible in the commercial 2 day SAPERE course.

Reflections on Training Tutors

Over the past two years over 30 curriculum tutors from Teacher Development at the University of Winchester have undertaken P4C training. The first P4C course I ran was with tutors - the fact that they were my colleagues was daunting and less daunting in equal measures. Daunting because they were all very experienced lecturers at the university and I was apprehensive regarding their response to the course and myself, but equally it was less daunting as I knew they were genuinely interested in P4C and supportive of myself and my plans for the students. I was also nervous due to being moderated by SAPERE, in order to be accredited as a Level 1Trainer. At the end of the

first day the moderator and I shared our reflections - it was useful having an observer, as the intense nature of the day would have made it hard to remember different aspects without their notes! This is similar to the peer observations we participate in at university – in contrast to the often negatively perceived lesson observations in school settings, these are collaborative and informative, intended on highlighting good practice and key reflections. We discussed ways I could improve the session for future courses, particularly trying to break up the quite intense first theory session with a couple of activities to change the pace a little. We also discussed potential amendments to Day 2 as a result of our reflections – for example I decided to add extra detail about the six main branches of philosophy to add more clarity about potential philosophical areas and how this might influence stimulus choice.

Reflections on Training Teachers

The level of experience that the teachers bring to the training is evident in comparison to the students. There are however potentially negative aspects to this, as sometimes the practice of P4C might challenge their own perceptions of education – as previously discussed. In running the first P4C training outwith the university, I had anticipated a level of nervousness due to the fact that this was a commercial course run for the Diocese, in practice I experienced a level of collegiality and enthusiasm equal to the tutors' training. What was particularly gratifying was the fact that the teachers immediately return to schools to use this approach with their classes, meaning the subsequent day's training (one month later) starts with them sharing their reflections from their first enquiries, which is very rewarding to hear and, using Brookfield (1998)'s lens analogy, means that they can benefit from their colleagues' perceptions and experiences to further develop their own.

CONCLUSIONS

Reviewing the Key Questions

The first question was 'Can P4C be effectively linked with the Primary Curriculum?' My response is twofold. Firstly that it should not be seen as an additional curriculum subject. Finding time to include a separate programme would pose difficulties for most schools (Burke & Williams, 2008). Incorporating P4C throughout the curriculum, whether to drive a particular area of focus or embedded in different subjects, has the benefit of incorporating the many P4C skills alongside the curriculum content (Burke & Williams, 2008). Secondly, P4C should not be statutory. Murris (2008) suggests that if P4C was compulsory, it 'may be at risk of losing its philosophical rigour, and critical educational and political agenda' (p676). Whilst remaining convinced of the manifold benefits of P4C, it is one that depends on participants fully embracing both the training and the continuing development.

The second and third questions, concerned the potential benefits of, and objections to P4C. One of Hayes'(2014) criticisms of P4C is that it is akin to therapy. Whilst there can be therapeutic outcomes, P4C facilitators and trainers would insist that this is not an intended outcome (Murris, 2001), rather one of a variety of non-academic benefits. In both my own experience and from those I have trained, teachers often remark that P4C adds a new dimension to their teaching as well as to the way their pupils think (Fisher, 2007).

Finally I examined the question of the issues that have arisen in reflecting on my professional practice in teaching student teachers and teachers about using P4C. Lyle and Thomas-Williams

(2011), reported a concern that the skill necessitated for successful P4C facilitation might preclude inexperienced teachers or students. Certainly training experienced teachers is very different to training students, however in my experience the impact it can have on students' emerging teacher identity can be profound. Last semester's cohort named it as the best module of their degree and unanimously stated that it had impacted significantly on the kind of teacher they wanted to be. Many of them highlighted the democratic principles of P4C as something they wanted to emulate in their future classrooms, seeing the philosophy behind P4C as more wide-reaching than a curriculum approach.

Future Implications

In response to student demand, two Option Modules will be run in P4C in the current academic year. In addition, we have increased the coverage of P4C in the first two years of the BEd programme, meaning all students will receive an *Introduction to P4C* SAPERE qualification. This semester has seen P4C training for both the PGCE Part Time and Secondary Religious Education groups, in response to direct requests – a practice likely to continue. Training for a third group of ITE tutors is planned for the spring, with planned CPD training with the Diocese and Church Schools already timetabled for next year.

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