

Philosophy of Education

AN INTRODUCTION TO P4C

WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY FOR CHILDREN?

Developed by Matthew Lipman 1970
Moving towards dialogic talk
'Community of enquiry'
Links to key skills

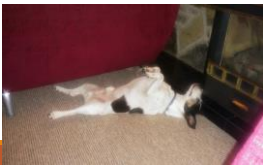
A reliable thinking skills programme would do more than enable children to deal effectively with immediate cognitive tasks, such as problems to be solved...the aim of a thinking skills programme...is to help them become more thoughtful, more considerate and more reliable individuals.

Matthew Lipman (Philosophy for Children)

Links to skills frameworks

- Asking questions
- Giving reasons
- Making connections

CATS MAKE BETTER PETS
THAN DOGS?



So what are we doing?

- You were:
- Giving reasons for your views
- Justifying your opinions
- Appealing to evidence or experience to support your judgements
- Recognising there is no one right answer
- Negotiating differences between you
- Perhaps changing your mind

How can we make this more philosophical

- Are some animals more important than others?
- Why do we think it's alright to eat some animals and not others?
- Are some animals eaten and kept as pets?
- What's the difference between a domestic animal like a cow and a pet?
- What is the difference between a wild animal, a domestic animal and a pet?

The Role of the Teacher

- | | |
|-------------|--------------|
| Question | Defining |
| Speculating | Reasons |
| Examples | Distinctions |
| Connections | Implications |
| Intentions | Criteria |
| Consistency | Summarising |

A dialogic classroom

- Collective:** children and teachers address learning tasks together, whether as a group or a class, rather than in isolation
- Reciprocal:** teachers and children listen to each other, share ideas and consider alternative viewpoints
- Supportive:** children articulate their ideas freely, without fear of embarrassment over 'wrong' answers; and they help each other to reach common understandings

Cumulative: teachers and children build on their own and each others' ideas and chain them into coherent lines of thinking and enquiry

Purposeful: teachers plan and facilitate dialogic teaching with particular educational goals in view

Does it work?

Clackmannanshire Research Project

University and Educational Psychologists systematically reviewed the evidence of Philosophy for Children in schools in Clackmannanshire

Results:

Children's IQ was raised by 6.5 points

Summary of the results

Pupils increased level of participation in classroom discussion by half as much again

Pupils doubled their occurrence of supporting their views with reasoning

Teachers doubled their use of open-ended questions

After primary school despite no further enquiry opportunities their improved cognitive abilities were sustained 2 years into secondary school

Pupils and teachers perceived significant gains in communication, confidence, concentration, participation and social behaviour

Key Conclusions Gorard et al (2015)

There is evidence that P4C had a positive impact on Key Stage 2 attainment.

Overall, pupils using the approach made approximately two additional months' progress in reading and maths.

Results suggest that P4C had the biggest positive impact on Key Stage 2 results among disadvantaged pupils (those eligible for free school meals).

Analyses of the Cognitive Abilities Test (a different outcome measure not explicitly focused on attainment) found a smaller positive impact. Moreover, in terms of this outcome it appears that disadvantaged students reaped fewer benefits from P4C than other pupils.

Continued...

It is unclear from the evaluation why there are these differences between the two outcomes.

Teachers reported that the overall success of the intervention depended on incorporating P4C into the timetable on a regular basis. Otherwise there was a risk that the programme would be crowded out.

Teachers and pupils generally reported that P4C had a positive influence on the wider outcomes such as pupils' confidence to speak, listening skills, and self esteem.

These and other broader outcomes are the focus of a separate evaluation by the University of Durham

Key principles of P4C

Proper valuing of each person's interests and questions

Acknowledgment that each person's experience is unique

Proper valuing of knowledge, along with the recognition that no one is all-knowing or all-wise

Appreciation of different ways of interpreting and thinking

How does this work in school?

There should be both formal and informal time for children to raise questions that help them to make sense of their experiences.

Children will need support in formulating questions.

Teachers need to focus on listening to children, as well as modelling the language and discipline of philosophical enquiry.

Whole group sessions have a special value in encouraging children to learn with others and from others

What skills will the children develop?

To respect the differences of other people's opinions.

To develop understanding and good judgement through critical examination.

To develop the virtues of thinking, e.g. reasonableness, open mindedness and patience.

To develop a sense of community.

To use thinking time effectively.

Hafod Primary School In Swansea had an excellent inspection where Philosophy for Children was praised. Examples of outstanding features include, 'a consistent focus on pupils' thinking, reasoning and philosophical skills'. 'In philosophy classes at both key stages all pupils discuss a range of important issues respectfully and sensibly and this is a beacon feature of the school.' 'In philosophy classes teachers very effectively implement the school's focus on developing pupils' thinking and critical skills. They give pupils many purposeful opportunities to collaborate on developing pupils' personal and social skills and enhancing their self-esteem. These are exemplary features of teaching.'

Estyn Inspection report on Hafod Primary School, December 2008

Relationships

People’s emotional experience is significantly affected by the quality of their relationships at school

The quality of relationships – between pupils, between pupils and staff, between staff colleagues, and between staff and management – is the key to success in school

Granny and the Goldfish

<https://youtu.be/CkeEjZVaEqk>

References

Gorard S, Siddiqui N & Beng Huat See (2015) Philosophy for Children Evaluation Report and Executive Summary July 2015 Durham: Durham University

Sapere Level 1 training for Philosophy for Children
