

TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON PHILOSOPHY FOR CHILDREN IN EAST LONDON SCHOOLS

A report of research funded by Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain and carried out by Dr Joanna Haynes, University of Plymouth.



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PROJECT SUMMARY

This document reports on a small-scale qualitative research project exploring school teachers' perspectives on Philosophy for Children, a teaching approach that seeks to foster collective philosophical enquiry, thinking and dialogue.

The Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain (PESGB) gave a grant towards the costs of conducting the research. The Society for the Promotion of Philosophical Enquiry and Reflection in Education (SAPERE) approved the project, also enabling the initial introduction to head teachers from a network of East London primary and secondary schools. Philosophy for Children had been introduced in these schools, as part of a coordinated scheme involving funding for training and resources.

Over a two-year period, at regular intervals, conversations were audio recorded with those teachers who had volunteered to take part. The initial interviews explored the teachers' wide ranging motivations for engaging with this curriculum initiative and their varying conceptions of 'philosophy' in Philosophy for Children. The teachers expressed the view that this approach was suitable for children and young people in their school communities. There was an implicit sense that teachers felt schooling should 'broaden horizons', both intellectual and social, and that children would benefit from having critical thinking in their armoury of skills for the future. The teachers also gave constructive feedback on the Philosophy for Children approach they had encountered in training, based on their experience, and related to their perceptions of needs and constraints in their schools.

Subsequent conversations provided some insights into the ways in which teachers

were enacting this particular approach in their various settings. Teachers spoke of ways in which they were taking ownership of, and creatively developing the practice of philosophical enquiry as they adapted it for their classrooms and made links across the curriculum. Teachers clearly articulated what they valued about Philosophy for Children as a time for open exploration and thinking 'together': an explicit opportunity to learn from each other's knowledge and experiences. They made associations between Philosophy for Children and independent thinking, something that could be creative, both playful and serious. The practice was characterised by some as 'organic', something that, once embedded, could become 'spontaneous' 'naturalised' and 'seep out' beyond dedicated sessions. P4C enquiries varied to reflect the composition and different interests of each group of students, or world happenings. These lessons were contrasted with 'routine' teaching.

Teachers generally valued the professional development that came with Philosophy for Children training and their own practice. In some cases, they articulated a strong shift from seeing philosophy as something 'abstract' and 'distant' to arguing that philosophy is for everyone. They felt that Philosophy for Children is philosophy. The teachers in the study expressed appreciation for opportunities provided by the research interviews to reflect on ideas and practice. They expressed a strong desire for continuing dialogue and support.

INTRODUCTION

Each year, a charitable organization, the Society for the Advancement of Philosophical Enquiry and Reflection in Education (SAPERE)¹ introduces philosophical practices to hundreds of teachers, through training and support in Philosophy for Children (P4C). Figures published in the organisation's annual report for the year 2017-2018, for example, showed that 280 Foundation Level One courses had been run for a total of 4,191 teachers (SAPERE Bulletin Edition 2, 2019).

Philosophy for Children is intended to be a collaborative, participatory and deep approach to thinking and dialogue with others about philosophical questions that matter both to those involved and in the wider world. The Philosophy for Children programme was originally developed in the 1970s by Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp.² A range of practice, informed by Lipman and Sharp's initiative, has since grown in popularity and reach because of its beneficial intellectual and social effects and the positive value attributed to P4C by people in educational communities: children and young people of different ages and backgrounds, as well as their families and their teachers.³

P4C theories and practices are diverse and there is considerable variation in emphasis and approach to training and support for teachers in different countries around the world. In the UK, philosophy is not part of the official curriculum⁴, philosophy of education hardly features in initial teacher training courses⁵, and very few teachers have been formally educated in philosophy. It is not really known how teachers new to P4C (nor indeed those

who are experienced practitioners) conceive of 'philosophy', 'philosophical enquiry', 'child' or 'children as philosophers'. The research project reported on here set out to address this gap in knowledge and to understand more about teachers' conceptualization and enactment of P4C and the community of enquiry pedagogy, in their particular settings.

In 2015, SAPERE embarked on a three-year curriculum development project to introduce philosophy for/with children (P4C) in partnership with two secondary and nine primary schools in Tower Hamlets, East London.

My research project took advantage of the opportunity provided by this educational initiative to engage with teachers in critical dialogues about philosophical and educational questions generated by the introduction of P4C in their schools. A grant from the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain (PESGB) enabled me to conduct a small-scale qualitative study based on periodic dialogues with some teachers in the East London P4C Going for Gold schools.

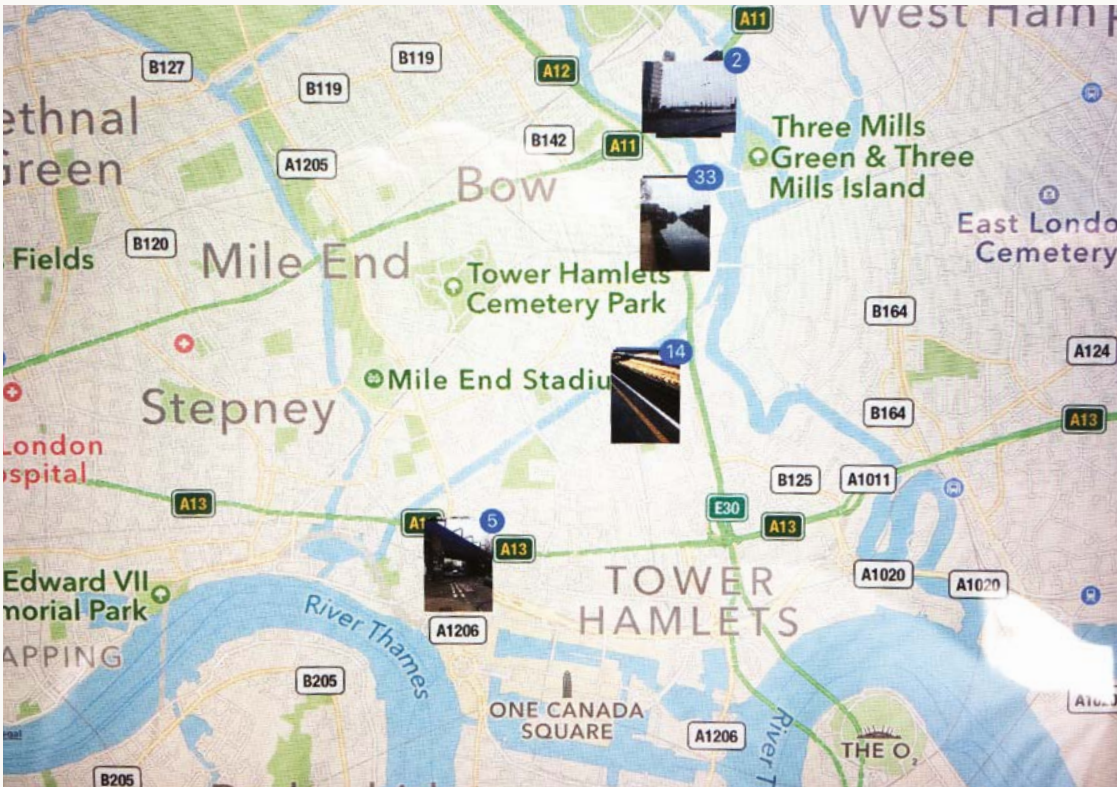
¹ <https://www.sapere.org.uk/about-us.aspx>

² *Philosophy in the Classroom*. By Matthew Lipman, Ann Margaret Sharp, and Fredrick S. Oscanyan. Upper Montclair, N.J.: The Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children, Montclair State College, 1977.

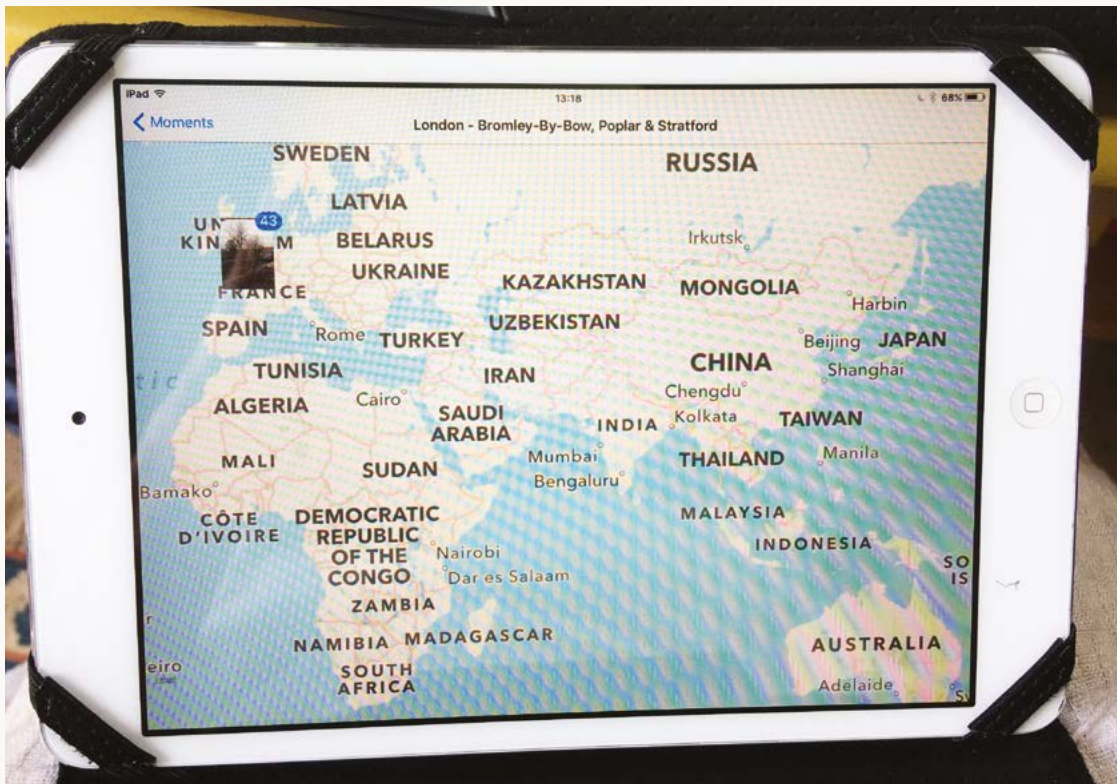
³ A summary of major research studies carried out on the impact of P4C in the UK, with links to full reports, can be found on the SAPERE website <https://www.sapere.org.uk/about-us/P4C-research.aspx> with a brochure that can be downloaded.

⁴ Professor Angie Hobbs, among others, is an advocate of teaching philosophy in schools and actively campaigning for changes to the curriculum to include philosophy.

⁵ Dr Janet Orchard, Bristol University, has been running workshops on Philosophy for Teachers, with colleagues Ruth Heilbronn and Carrie Winstanley. See their paper <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17449642.2016.1145495>



INTRODUCTION



RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY



For the last forty years or so, Philosophy for/with Children has caused a stir among educationalists and academic philosophers alike. There have been debates on issues such as, for example, whether children are 'natural philosophers', the capacities and rights of young children to philosophise, the suitability of philosophy for young learners and school students from different backgrounds; the 'child as philosopher' and 'philosopher as child', and the encounters between childhood, education and philosophy.⁶ Debate about the philosophical and/or educational value of P4C has often been rather polarised. There is scope for further thinking that engages with theories and practices of P4C, and that is grounded in critical perspectives emerging from sustained practice in different contexts and communities. The aim of my research project is to make a further contribution to the rich and varied discussion on philosophy, education and childhood (see bibliography at the end of the report for sources).

6 A list of publications related to these issues can be found at the end of the report.

Critical research on teachers' understanding and perspectives on P4C and their thinking about associated educational philosophies and practices is lacking, in spite of large numbers having taking part in professional

development. Enthusiastic practitioners are understandably inclined to be preoccupied with pedagogical questions and immediate practicalities of how to establish and teach P4C in their classrooms; organisations like

SAPERE, P4C advocates and trainers tend to be concerned with persuading schools to get involved, gathering evidence of 'positive impact' and the removal of obstacles to inclusion of P4C in the curriculum.

The degree of P4C's positive impact on educational attainment or behaviour tends to drive most funding and the focus of attention with respect to empirical research on P4C around the world. The majority of empirical research on P4C addresses effects on children's cognitive, affective or social development.⁷ In the UK there has been growing interest in the various impacts of P4C in the context of policy drivers and public debates on social mobility and 'closing the gap' in attainment. A large national SAPERE/EEF research project has been evaluating the impact of P4C lessons on children's attainment in Cognitive Ability Tests (CATs). EEF is interested in interventions that demonstrate potential to raise the attainment of socially disadvantaged children.⁸ Professor Steven Gorard, who led the EEF evaluation, has been successful in securing further funding to evaluate the impact of P4C on children's social and emotional development (Siddiqui et al, 2017).

Many empirical research studies in the field of P4C have sought to analyse children's interactions as philosophy/not philosophy, to track the 'progress' of their thinking and dialogue skills or to examine the impact of philosophical enquiry on pupils' cognitive, emotional, moral and social development. Little exists in the way of research into teachers' thinking and perspectives on P4C. SAPERE's (2006) summary of the Clackmannanshire study into the impact of philosophical inquiry includes the finding that teachers' use of open-ended questioning doubled during the two-year project in primary schools (see also Trickey & Topping, 2004, 2006, 2007; Topping & Trickey, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c). This note on teacher questioning is the main reference to teacher behaviour in the review. Research studies on students' philosophical thinking seem only to refer to teachers' thinking as something of an afterthought.

There have been studies on the wider effects of thinking skills approaches on teachers' behaviour and teaching repertoires (Baumfield 2006; McGuinness, 1999; McGuinness et al 2006). While McGuinness et al describe the collaborative and bottom up processes of working in the project and highlight the change to teachers' classroom practice, their report

does not make any specific recommendations for teacher education. In their systematic review of evaluations of the demonstrable educational benefits of P4C, Trickey and Topping cite two studies that declare that teachers '*need significant levels of ongoing support and development opportunities to sustain cognitive educational approaches on a wider scale*' (2004:377). The implications seem to be that thinking and enquiry based pedagogies are either at odds with more commonly adopted teaching approaches or much more difficult for teachers to put into practice, for a variety of reasons.

There are strong indications in the literature reviewed that sustained practice of philosophical enquiry with children can generate a richness of meaning-making. It has also provoked contestation among practitioners and scholars with regard to the suitability or relevance of teaching contexts and approaches, materials and modes of engagement with young people, and all aspects of the politics of participation and ex/inclusion, the extent to which claims might be made for it being participatory, power sensitive and/or democratic. It appears to be a practice that is generative of potentially valuable questions about teaching and learning. How and where such questions 'land' is important, in order for them to be put to use in teacher development.

The experiences of those involved in researching and/or working with teachers practising P4C indicate that P4C practice can contribute in significant ways to teachers' thinking and professional development, as they listen to and engage with enquiry and dialogue with their students (see for example Michalik, 2018; Scholl, Nichols and Burgh, 2014). In her study of teachers practising philosophy with children in Germany, Kerstin Michalik found that teachers' perceptions of children's capabilities and potential changed for the better and that this went hand in hand with a fresh appreciation of and increased interest their thinking. This had implications for their pedagogy and their conception of themselves as professionals. She reports:

Teachers and pupils doing regular philosophy sessions together also has the potential to transform teachers' understanding of their role by reducing the power gap between pupils and teachers. What teachers particularly value about philosophy sessions is the depth and intensity of the discussion and the authentic "dialogue of equals" (Mi, B33), in which the

7 <http://www.montclair.edu/cehs/academics/centers-and-institutes/iapc/research/>

8 www.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk

traditional role of the teacher as knowledge provider is suspended (Michalik, 2018, page number unavailable).

Michalik found that teachers believed that P4C significantly enriched their personal and professional lives. Teachers emphasised their broadened horizons and changes triggered by the challenges inherent in philosophical enquiry and more particularly by their dialogues with the children and their children's views.

Such broadening and transformative effects on teachers' pedagogical repertoires, through their engagement in philosophical enquiry, were also found by Scholl et al (2014), discussing their experimentally designed study of 59 Australian primary school teachers. They compared effects between one group of teachers trained in philosophical enquiry and another group trained in a thinking skills approach. They argued that those who were involved in facilitation of philosophical inquiry benefited from:

improved pedagogy because it positively impacted teacher thinking and critical awareness and induced reflective practice and active listening to students. In this study, teachers highlighted how their listening to students had enabled the inclusion of student voice and had opened up spaces to articulate and consider students' questions and differing viewpoints, and to problematise and construct knowledge (Scholl et al, 2014:268).

Beyond optimistic research, suggesting that P4C practice can lead to a broadening of teachers' pedagogical repertoires and increased interest in the thinking of their students, some writers have pointed out that teachers' enthusiasm and beliefs in the democratic and inclusive character of P4C can also blind them to ways in which various structural inequalities (for example, of class, race, gender, age or ability) are systemically perpetuated in children's lives at school, in spite of teachers' efforts to listen more attentively to their students. Writing in the Routledge International Handbook of Philosophy for Children (Gregory, Haynes & Murriss, 2017), Darren Chetty and Judith Suissa report on the paucity of writing and discussion on P4C that explicitly deals with race and racism. They argue:

The vigilance and humility required of white educators, then, means reminding ourselves of the moral and political context in which our educational efforts make sense; reflecting on

our own racialized identities and those of the people in our classroom, and thinking about what our choice of pedagogical materials and interventions means for ourselves and for our students (Chetty and Suissa, 2017:p.16).

The authors argue that when the discomfort or shame of racism are avoided by teachers, there is a gap between the ideal and the actuality of communities of enquiry that prevents P4C from becoming genuinely multi-vocal and communal, for all those taking part.

Also in this edited collection of work on P4C, Amy Reed Sandoval and Alain Carmen Sykes (2017:219-226) highlight the issue of positionality and the importance of taking this seriously in the practice of P4C in classrooms, as well as in scholarship and research on its enactment and effects. They suggest that whilst P4C emerged in many senses out of a concern for the positionality of children, there has been a tendency to neglect or ignore other aspects of children's positionalities, particularly in respect of race or ethnicity. They argue:

P4C classes that do not explicitly acknowledge real, contextualized structural racism in society (and, consequently, in the P4C classroom) may marginalize students of colour whose experiences and philosophical perspectives are marginalized in White-normative society. This is because purportedly 'neutral' P4C classes may normalize Whiteness and give students the impression that they can engage in the democratic enterprise without reflecting upon systemic injustices that surround them and impact the P4C classroom (Reed-Sandoval and Sykes, 2017:223).

The collection of writing in Ching Ching Lin and Lavina Sequeira's edited book *Inclusion, Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue in Young People's Philosophical Inquiry* (2017) also engages with this territory of how educators can work with optimism with regard to the transformatory potential of dialogical inquiry with children. As David Kennedy puts it in his introduction to the book, how might educators 'save the practice of communal philosophical dialogue from the neutralisation and domestication that follow from being embedded in the pervasive sub-cultural context of traditional schooling' (p.x). This is a central issue for those who can see the possibilities that are opened up through P4C and who are alert to the current climate of mainstream schooling. Kennedy puts this question:

how can a professedly egalitarian safe space, a classroom community whose ethos is intrinsically assimilative, avoid an aversion to disruption, a tendency to ignore the analysis of inequalities, to mute and background differences of race, class, ethnicity, to overlook, however unconsciously the potential voices of the members of silence, marginalised and excluded groups (p.x)

Miranda Fricker's work on 'epistemic injustice' (2007) and José Medina's work on 'epistemic relations' (2013) add further dimensions to our understanding of educational relationships and practices of knowledge creation. 'Epistemic injustice' is helpful when evaluating the extent to which persons are treated fairly with regard to their position as knowers. This conceptual framework refers to everyday practices like conveying knowledge to others by telling them and in making sense of our own experience. Fricker talks about two forms of epistemic injustice: testimonial and hermeneutic. 'Testimonial injustice' describes an event where a deflated level of credibility is given to a speaker's word, for prejudicial reasons, resulting in a 'credibility deficit'. The cases of testimonial injustice that Fricker discusses (from the worlds of work, law, film and literature) do not result from intentional silencing and diminishing – they result from an (unconscious) prejudice in the hearer that results in failure to give the dignity and credibility that is deserved to the speaker. When it comes to the classroom, and including practices of P4C, children and young people experience prejudice about their knowledge claims, simply on grounds of age, or being a child/ young person (Murriss, 2013; Haynes & Murriss, 2017). 'Hermeneutical injustice' relates to a collective absence of sense-making resources; this has an irrepressible connection with social power and requires collective work or action to be addressed. It is a kind of structural discrimination. There is no single culprit, rather it describes *'the injustice of having some significant area of one's social experience obscured from collective understanding owing to hermeneutical marginalization'* (Fricker, 2007, p 158).

Fricker (2007) argues that we need to take action as individuals to correct these kinds of everyday injustices by developing epistemic virtues. Jose Medina (2013) works with both feminist and critical race theory thinkers to qualify and extend the idea of epistemic injustice. Medina's work focuses strongly on the importance of epistemic qualities such as responsibility, culpability, arrogance, humility and sensitivity. Epistemic injustice needs to be addressed both by individuals

and through collective action and policy development.

It is important to take these ideas into account when we consider how teachers see themselves and their students as knowers, and in the context of schooling. It is important particularly as they engage with a practice, such as P4C, that aspires to be democratic, participatory and inclusive, and that purports to take children and young people's philosophical questions and thinking seriously, through the pedagogy of the community of inquiry (see, for example, Sharp, 1991). The community of inquiry aims for egalitarian conditions and epistemic relations, and its reflexive pedagogy, in theory, should provide some means of self-regulation. Relations of power and authority are ever present in the classroom, and are some of the most important, challenging, and *potentially* transformative, aspects of P4C.

Ann Margaret Sharp's work on the pedagogy of communities of enquiry in P4C has not been taken up to the same extent as Mathew Lipman's exposition of the kinds of thinking required of students engaged in philosophical enquiry (Gregory & Laverty, 2018). Arguably, whereas Lipman emphasised the positive impact of P4C on individual self-esteem and critical thinking, and felt it important to demonstrate these impacts through empirical studies (1977). Sharp was more excited by the collaborative and social dimensions of P4C, and more interested in the potential to enact democratic education through classroom communities of enquiry. Although they co-founded the P4C programme, the relative prominence of Lipman over Sharp in public discourse, has had an effect on the ways in which P4C has been promoted and taken up, the emphasis in the training of teachers and the focus of research and evaluation, including the interest in teachers' understanding of 'academic philosophy', conceptualisations of the 'philosophy' in P4C or ability to teach philosophy in schools.

Whilst taking the wider literature into account, I am deeply interested in teachers' perspectives on P4C practice, in their professional development and the contribution they can make to the future development of P4C, as experienced practitioners. In this project I set out to investigate how teachers who are introduced to P4C conceptualise 'philosophy' and the implied 'child philosopher', and the ways in which their understanding and aims evolve through classroom practice

with actual children, which all have a profound effect on students' experiences of philosophical practices. These questions arise out of historic debates about children/young people's capacities and rights to philosophise and diverse perspectives on the character of the 'philosophy/ies' in P4C. This discussion continues to go right to the heart of the debate about the value of philosophy in schools.

Through involvement in teacher education over 30 years I have developed a particular interest in teachers' diverse understandings and views of P4C, how teachers' philosophical thinking develops and the wider impact this sometimes has on their teaching (Haynes, 2007). This report draws on the range of scholarship already mentioned, as well as empirical studies in places such as Germany and Australia, the USA and Hawai'i, cited above (see also Gregory, Haynes and Murriss, 2017).⁹ Anecdotally, many teachers in the UK who practise P4C report significant changes in their views of children's abilities and contributions as thinkers, transformed classroom interactions, as well as a deep and lasting impact on their own thinking and practice as educators, sometimes reconsidering what counts as 'able' and what is worth talking about in classrooms. These are often the 'enthusiasts' however, and we know little or nothing about why other teachers reject or abandon P4C. There are critiques of P4C practice in terms of a lack of proper attention to inclusivity and diversity as already reported. However, it is very difficult to access the views of teachers who are experienced in and familiar with P4C, but who also have reservations about its basic value or its implementation.

There is a paucity of studies that focus on how teaching of P4C influences teacher thinking and practice in a broader sense, let alone teachers' deeper understandings of philosophical facilitation, or their struggles and disagreements with it, particularly when introduced with an element of compulsion, in the context of whole school development and policy. In a special issue of *Journal of Philosophy of Education* (Haynes and Murriss, 2011), we argued that P4C sometimes creates disequilibrium for teachers as it challenges and conflicts with widely held

views of children or their capacities for thinking and it also contradicts teaching framed as transmission or 'delivery'. Such disequilibrium, and feelings of discomfort, shame or guilt, to which Chetty and Suissa (2017) refer, can sometimes be valuable for broadening pedagogical repertoires and provoking professional dialogue in ways that might become more socially and politically modest and sensitive. These feelings can also lead to avoidance of controversy. More critical research is needed on the risks of assuming inclusivity in the community of enquiry, on teacher positionality, as well as other issues in the politics of P4C pedagogy and practice.¹⁰

It is really important to understand teachers' responses to P4C and the extent to which its introduction reflects and/or contradicts teachers' educational beliefs and values, and those of the diverse school communities in which they teach, and of which they are a part. In this project, I set out to engage P4C practising teachers in dialogues about their experiences of P4C, their understandings of philosophy and its 'suitability' for their schools, and their reflections on their teaching through the community of enquiry approach. Through dialogues over the three-year period, this project explored teachers' accounts of their involvement with P4C, investigated teachers' understandings of 'philosophy' and 'children' and examined how those understandings are enacted, and how they intertwine, in terms of philosophical practices. The research aimed to elicit teachers' critical and creative responses to P4C.

Coordinated introduction of P4C in a particular neighbourhood of London created a unique opportunity for contextualised exploration of teachers' experiences, based on direct investigation of issues that they identified, or arising from practices of P4C in their particular schools. Through the inclusion of teachers' perspectives and experiences of P4C in each context, and by noting obstacles to and conditions for curriculum development, I hope that this research makes a distinctive contribution to debate about the educational aims and values of P4C, about teacher education and professional development and about philosophy in the curriculum of schools.

10 See for example Chetty, D. The Elephant in the Room: Picturebooks, Philosophy for Children and Racism (2014); Reed-Sandoval, A., (2018) Can Philosophy for Children contribute to Decolonisation? And also Murriss and Haynes book (2018) Literacies, Literature and Learning: reading classrooms differently. Details in end text references.

9 Doctoral students and colleagues I know in Ireland, South Africa, Brazil, Italy, Norway and Finland, amongst other places, are also concerned with how teachers' thinking and perspectives shape and are shaped by listening to students and through engagement in communities of philosophical enquiry in schools. More critical research and writing is emerging in this field.

SETTING AND CONTEXTS



Tower Hamlets, East London, is a borough that reflects the cultural, religious and linguistic diversity of the population of London. The 2011 census statistics indicated that 44% of the people in Tower Hamlets lived in income poverty. Around two thirds belonged to minority ethnic groups.¹¹

Teachers in the P4C project schools located in Tower Hamlets took part in courses and professional development led by SAPERE trainers and were offered support from SAPERE and through their school cluster groups. The project aimed to enhance young people's educational attainment, as well as their personal and social development. The

P4C project costs were shared between the schools and an investment company that provided £54,000 of funding over three years for training and other costs. SAPERE and the schools themselves conducted their own evaluations of this educational intervention within the terms of its aims.

¹¹ Further information about the 2011 census information collated about the Tower Hamlets community can be found on the website https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/community_and_living/borough_statistics/diversity.aspx



PROJECT FUNDING

Funding from the Philosophy of Education Society (PESGB) made this project possible. The PESGB grant allowed me to travel from Plymouth to the schools or to meetings with the participating teachers in London, as well as to employ a wonderful transcriber who did a great job of transcribing the conversations with teachers in the study.¹² The funding from PESGB provided for travel and transcription and dissemination expenses. The interviewing, analysis and writing were not costed into the research budget and

all carried out in my own time. As a result, and because of my circumstances at the time, report writing has been 'stretched out' over a period of more than two years. From my point of view, the 'slowness' and 'interruptions' have benefited my thinking and analysis of the dialogues. Lockdown in 2020 means that planned presentations at conferences have been postponed for now but online means of dissemination and discussion are being explored.

¹² The transcriber told me she found it very interesting to do the transcription and wished that her children's schools were making provision for philosophical enquiry in the classroom.

ORGANISATIONAL CONNECTIONS AND MY POSITION IN THE RESEARCH

I have been a member of SAPERE since 1994 and involved at various times over 26 years in the creation and development of its training courses and materials. I have led P4C courses for education practitioners and students and P4C has deeply influenced my practice as an educator. I have engaged in research and debate about P4C through conferences, seminars, public forum, and publications.¹³ SAPERE Board of Management agreed to my going ahead with this research project provided me with an introduction to members of staff in the schools who might be interested in taking part in conversations about their perspectives on P4C.

13 For example through presentations for SAPERE, ICPIC, PESGB, The Battle of Ideas, as well as through international keynotes, workshops and seminars.

The research proposal was discussed with fellow PESGB members and reviewed by colleagues at Plymouth University, as well as by philosopher of education and P4C scholar and practitioner Dr Steve Bramall. Steve is well known for his promotion of scholarship in P4C. He also has experience of teaching in London schools. Darren Chetty, PhD student and Teaching Fellow at UCL Institute of Education, reviewed the proposal and acted as a critical friend. Darren is an experienced teacher and P4C practitioner and P4C researcher who has worked in a number of London primary schools. I have welcomed critical feedback.

I am very thankful to all those colleagues who expressed interest in this research and particularly to the teachers who generously gave their time to take part in conversations

and to share their experience of P4C with me. I agreed to share the report with PESGB and to SAPERE, once completed.

My long-term involvement with P4C, as a practitioner and researcher has been important in shaping this study and my conversations with teachers, some of whom were familiar with my publications and presentations. It is very likely that this position of relative expertise and involvement had an impact on the ways in which ideas were explored and teachers' responses. There was a shared sense of curiosity and interest in the development of P4C. For example, it meant that conversations sometimes turned to what to do or how to develop practice, to sharing experiences of children's philosophising and the responses of teachers new to P4C.



RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND CRITICAL DIALOGUES

The conversations with teachers in the project were orientated towards their understanding of P4C and their experience of putting it into practice in their particular settings, their questions, reservations and preoccupations. The following questions formed the key provocations for the dialogues over the life of the project:

What P4C is/is not

How do teachers conceptualise the 'philosophy' and 'children' in P4C? To what extent do they perceive the practice as philosophy? What do teachers perceive to be the educational aims of P4C? How far are these in keeping with their values and those of the school and community?

How teachers shape P4C and how P4C is shaped in context

How do teachers enact their role as P4C teachers with the students in their schools? What kinds of critical events arise and how do these influence their orientation and classroom practice?

What emerges from the research project dialogues?

What philosophical and educational perspectives emerge through critical dialogues during the life of the project?

GETTING STARTED

I consulted with SAPERE staff and governing body members regarding the research proposal and approach and I was furnished with a list of the East London cluster of Going for Gold (GfG) schools, along with contact details for the Head Teachers or P4C Leads in the schools, by Bob House (then CEO of SAPERE). Each of the contacts was provided with information about the project and an invitation to participate in the research; a total of thirteen schools were contacted via email. I had seven replies from Going for Gold schools to this initial invitation and

arranged further discussion and school visits in November 2015, to meet P4C Leads and prospective participants. I attended an afterschool meeting of around 15 other teachers involved in the GfG initiative where I spoke briefly about the project and left information and contact details for any other teachers who would like to take part. One additional teacher contacted me following this meeting. To those who volunteered I gave further information sheets and asked if they could inform their colleagues of my invitation.

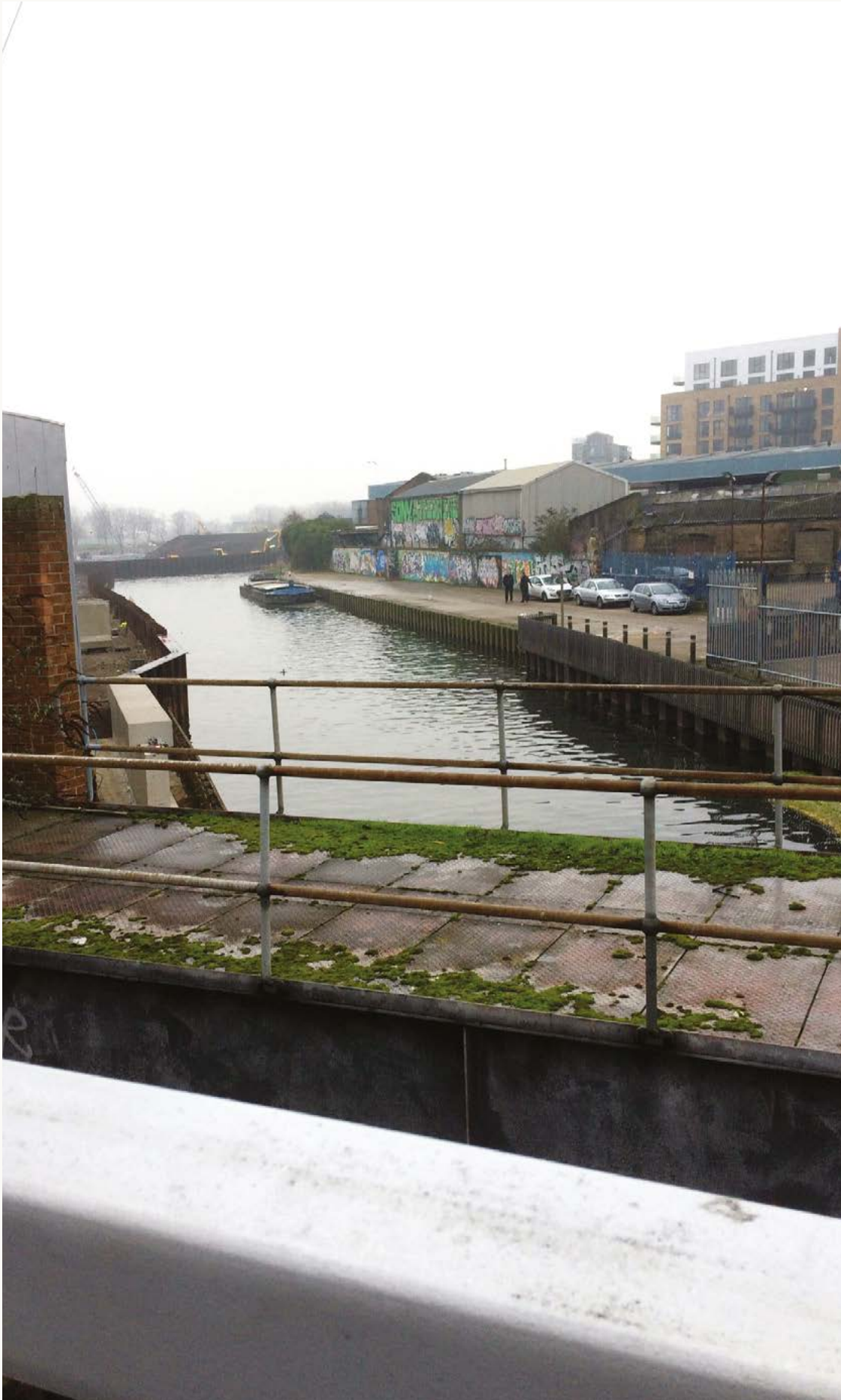
PROJECT DESIGN AND APPROACH

This was a small-scale qualitative study designed to explore teachers' understanding and practice of P4C in their classrooms. Teachers from three secondary schools and from three primary schools agreed to take part in conversations with me, arranged at intervals over a two-year period. These took the form of either face-to-face, Skype or telephone conversations. I travelled to the schools or to meet the teachers at the start and at the end of the period of study. It was important to me to visit the schools, where possible, and to walk around the local area. I took photographs of the surroundings as I walked between schools. A few of these are included in the report, to include some sense of place with the writing about my conversations with teachers. The photographs in this report were all taken with my mobile phone during one winter season visit. I kept brief factual notes of each school on my visits to schools or meetings with teachers to act as an aide-memoire and to inform my conversations with them.

The first round of interviews followed a semi-structured plan (see Appendix C for questions). Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed and a copy of the transcript was sent to each teacher ahead of each subsequent interview. The transcripts provided a starting point for further conversations during which teachers were invited to comment on any pertinent events in their P4C practice or on how P4C was going in their school. I prepared for each interview by reading the transcript and highlighting responses to follow up or that might provide the basis for further exploration.

Analysis of the interviews was guided by the research questions, which focused on teachers' conceptualisation of the philosophy in P4C and a process of highlighting significant aspects of their experience and their perspectives on practising P4C in their schools. In my dialogues with teachers, I set out to be sensitive to what was significant for them and to create opportunities for them to talk about their experiences.

The research was conducted in accordance with Plymouth University Research Ethics Policy (See Appendix B).



THE TEACHERS IN THE STUDY



Following introductory meetings at the end of 2015, seven teachers agreed to take part in the research, from three secondary and three primary schools in the cohort. One of the secondary school teachers had to withdraw after the first round of conversations, due to ill health. The other six teachers, three secondary and three primary, took part in three further dialogues with me at regular intervals during the period February 2016 to September 2017.

The seven teachers in the study, one man and six women, varied considerably in terms of their age, length of teaching or other relevant experience of work in values, human rights or citizenship education and resource development. Their subject backgrounds included degrees in philosophy, theology, English, music and education. Six out of

seven teachers had completed SAPERE Level One training in P4C. The seventh had attended an introductory session at her school. At the start of the study, two of the teachers had also completed Level Two training. By the end of the study, these two teachers had also completed a Level Three course, a further two teachers had attended

Level Two training and a third teacher had been promised funding by her Head Teacher to attend Level Two. One teacher had already completed a Master's degree and another was engaged in Master's study during the period of research. The teachers who took part in all four rounds of dialogue in the study all indicated their high level of commitment to continuing professional development in P4C and were leading and coordinating development of P4C in their respective schools. They seemed to value the opportunity to explore the issues it raised through the research project dialogues.

In the context of conversations about their perspectives and practice of philosophy, one teacher referred to her Indian identity and 'being proudly Sikh', and another teacher spoke of being Jewish. Each of these teachers talked about ways in which they felt that their professional perspectives or actions related to their ethnicity, religion and/or family influence. Five white teachers in the study made no explicit reference to their religious, or ethnic backgrounds. At various points, teachers mentioned growing up, family and/or close relationships, as well as their personal and professional values and what particularly mattered to them as teachers.

As indicated in the section above on the project setting of Tower Hamlets, the census information from 2011 indicated that two thirds of the population in the borough were from an ethnic minority. According to data published by Tower Hamlets Children's Services, based on the school census in spring, 2017, the proportion of children from ethnic minorities is higher than the 2011 figure and 13.7% are identified as white. This report also includes figures for teachers and

other school staff from all minority ethnic groups as follows: 48% of teachers, 66.7% of teaching assistants, 54.6% of non-classroom based school support staff and 62.8% of auxiliary staff (Tower Hamlets Children's Services, 2018). In terms of directly reflecting the ethnic origins of school staff in this area, teachers from ethnic minority groups were under-represented in the research project. It is important to note this under-representation and reflect on possible reasons, such as unequal workloads and/or opportunities for BAME staff, as well as my position as an outsider white academic from the South West.

Recruitment of participants was largely reliant on each of the head teacher's priorities at the time and their passing on of the information and request. Participants in this research tended to be committed and enthusiastic advocates of P4C who were particularly interested in having conversations about something that was relatively new to them or close to their hearts.

There were four rounds of conversations with the participating teachers, at intervals of 4-6 months. To start with, I met all the teachers taking part, either at their own school or at a meeting of teachers involved in developing P4C in their schools that took place at one of the primary schools in the project. This provided an opportunity to give prospective participants a written information sheet about the aims, scope and process of the project to discuss any further queries and seek informed consent (See appendix A). I wanted to do this in person, as most of the subsequent conversations would take place at a distance, via the phone or Skype. With the agreement of the teachers involved, communication with participants was maintained via email and phone.

DIALOGUES WITH TEACHERS: AREAS OF EXPLORATION

OPENING ROUND OF DIALOGUES



For the purposes of my initial exploration with the teachers, a semi-structured interview process was adopted for each conversation. A common set of starter questions and prompts were shared with the participants in advance and sent as an attachment via email (See appendix C for this schedule). The conversations took place either by phone or via Skype and were audio-recorded and later transcribed.

How and why did you and your school become involved in Philosophy for Children?

The schools and participants in this particular East London P4C project had taken different routes to involvement, in some cases awareness of P4C had been raised through Borough level meetings, or through the Going for Gold¹⁴ project, or the curriculum development was proposed by a new Head Teacher with experience of P4C in other schools. One secondary school teacher said she had become inspired through the practice in a local primary school that had achieved Gold in the SAPERE awards scheme.

The motivation of teachers and schools

for including P4C in the curriculum varied from school to school. The reasons given by participants in research interviews included:

- acceleration of academic progress;
- developing skills needed to access higher education;
- strengthening literacy and oracy;
- raising aspirations;
- encouraging children to become lifelong learners;
- strengthening the quality of teaching and promoting children's personal development, linked to coaching and mentoring;
- encouraging greater creativity;

¹⁴ Details of this scheme can be found at <https://www.sapere.org.uk/members-schools-partners/going-for-gold.aspx>

- developing cross-curricular skills of questioning, reasoning, reflection;
- changing a school's ethos through deeper thinking across the board;
- creating time to think.

How do you introduce the philosophy in Philosophy for Children to your students and to others?

To explore their conceptions of the philosophy in P4C, the teachers were asked how they explained philosophy to their students in class, particularly when introducing it as something new, and to others with whom they might informally discuss their teaching. Each teacher described her/his approach to introducing the idea of philosophical enquiry to the students in their schools to communicate the nature of the activity and to convey its value or purposes.

One secondary teacher who had studied philosophy and ethics at university and said she had lots of practice trying to explain to others what it was about, particularly with members of her family to whom she had to justify her interest in philosophy and reasons for studying it. Talking about explaining philosophical enquiry to students at school, she put it this way:

I think what we always say is the whole point of philosophy is not to be having a debate where we try to prove something with an argument it is the idea that together we are going to take everything we know, all of our experiences and what we think and try to get to the best version of an answer that we can together but know that in the future we might get a better version of the answer because we might know more or have experienced more or explored around it, so it is the idea that we are helping each other to think about and pursue a problem, question, and supporting each other and putting up with different points of view.

This teacher said she emphasised the collectivism of enquiry and she told her students that they were 'growing their minds'. She said she had always been interested in 'personal learning and thinking skills' and for her 'that's what philosophy is about'. She referred to her years of studying philosophy and ethics as 'the luxury to just think and that's what I believe philosophy is, you don't have to give up the luxury to think about things so you can decide what to do, about the world, about your way of life.'

Another secondary school teacher, also a poet and writer, who had studied some philosophy

as an undergraduate, said that philosophical enquiry was introduced to students in her school as 'a way of engaging with deeper thinking and that it is sort of a way of asking big questions that do not necessarily have one correct answer.' To others she would describe it as 'developing questioning skills and exploring large concepts.'

I asked this teacher, who was quite new to P4C, to what extent these accounts related to her own ideas of what philosophy is or might be. She suggested that the overlap is being 'centred on large questions' but the difference is that:

I tend to think about philosophy as having distinctive strands to it, so metaphysics, epistemology and so on, and I don't think we use those as part of teaching and I don't think we categorise the kinds of questions or stimuli that way either. We use big questions and more rigorous thinking, but it's not necessarily teaching them how to logically deconstruct something...

This teacher suggested there were common features between philosophical enquiry and encouraging creative writing, in terms of 'getting them to show respect for a variety of opinions but also to listen carefully to understand those opinions.'

A third secondary school teacher in the study talked about her desire for her students to distinguish:

between the idea of a debate which is about issues and [...] weighing up the pros and cons of an argument and structuring an argument, and philosophy which is about a conversation, it is about critical thinking, about questioning and for me the key thing [...], is we are talking about concepts.

This teacher introduced these classes as 'thinking lessons' and she talked about wanting to enable her students to 'think critically, I want to support, if they have any questions, if questions arise I want to encourage that, I want to identify that those questions have arisen.'

She reported telling her mother that she had become interested in teaching philosophy and put it like this:

rather than just give pat answers or that kind of ping pong thing, you know where you've already decided what the answer is before you've answered the question, you know, you are trying to ask more open ended questions and get more open-ended exploratory responses and so, I suppose the word 'thinking' is a key, it is the word that comes up over and over

again, to try and think at a deeper level, to try and actually to get children to question the assumptions that they make.

She spoke at some length about the area of London where she teaches and her sense of the lives of the children she teaches, her recollection of being a teenager herself and the experience of being a parent to teenage children. Talking about the educational relationship she was seeking to establish with her students, she added:

I am trying to get them to question their own assumptions about life, and to question me and to actually to put my own assumptions [...], to kind of lay how I perceive myself and my identity bare in front of them for them, to question that and to unpack that; and I think that having those conversations and unpicking those assumptions is almost more important than [...] having a full recipe for how an enquiry has got to start here and end there you know, it is actually a process that spills out of the enquiry itself into my routine teaching I suppose.

Referring to this idea of the enquiry process spilling out, this secondary school English teacher described 'spontaneous philosophy which can interrupt your lesson plan'.

Exploring these issues of what philosophy might be and of introducing philosophy to children, one of the primary school teachers said that she did not describe it as being 'for children' because she did not want to talk down to her students. She talked to children about doing philosophy where 'we listen to each other and talk to each other with different ideas'.

As I explored how she might describe the philosophy teaching to other people, she told me:

the stand out thing is how it makes the children think about things and topics you can go near, topics that wouldn't necessarily come up in your regular day to day teaching, and you can follow what the children think and you can let the children lead, and it is really interesting to see what they say and how they interact with each other and how that is developing over time and you can see the personal growth within the children and that and they do start to take on other people's views.

She summarised the enquiry process as being about children leading something they are interested in and following it through.

One teacher, who had told his class that he was

about to undertake some training in philosophy, used an analogy to explain philosophical enquiry to his class, telling me that he had adapted it from something he had come across during the course:

I said to my children last year, the first class that I did philosophy, I [...] said 'I am going on some training on a subject called philosophy' [...] 'and when I come back you know I will be doing some sessions with you'. And they were all incredibly excited and their biggest question was 'What is philosophy?' [...] I was thinking how, [...] that's a really good question, how can I explain it in child speak, or break it down in a way that you understand it, so what I said to them was 'if you imagine that most of our thinking is, imagine an ocean and most of our thinking in the classroom takes place on top of the ocean and that we are in our boat and we are steering round the classroom and that is where most of our thinking happens, and I said that in philosophy what we try to do is think beneath the water, so everything in that space is what we will be exploring in philosophy.

Seeking to communicate the ongoing nature of philosophical enquiry, he told me he had engaged the children in discussion about how they would be working during the philosophy sessions and explained to his class:

it is about not just answers but questions, so that we might not always come to the end of a session with an agreed answer, we might come up with an agreed question. So it's kind of not a polished subject in that respect there's not a kind of a finite end to things.

Having taken on some coordination of P4C in the school, this teacher reported describing it to his colleagues thus:

it's about asking big questions, so I said that our sessions are really raising one big question and then seeing if, all together, we can answer it and I've said that it wouldn't really be a question that you can immediately answer it is a question that requires deeper thought.

Asked whether such descriptions were close to his views about what philosophy is or should be, this teacher explained he had not had the opportunity to study philosophy. For him it had been a subject that was, 'far away over there subject that I didn't really know a lot about if I'm honest and not one that I ... just knew that I didn't want to go anywhere near'. His views of philosophy as 'far removed' and 'alien' had changed through his philosophical enquiries with his class where he reported:

'finding out quite a lot from the children and through these sessions yes it's kind of sort of helped to solidify my understanding the subject.'

His colleague in the same school used a similar 'above/below' analogy to introduce philosophical enquiry to her students: *'I have given them the analogy of a field, and what you see on the top is growing, but the strength of what you've got on the top depends on what's underneath and how that determines how well it grows on the surface.'* This teacher talked to her students about digging down and looking at the roots, and about how the roots give strength to what grows. When she tells other people about this aspect of her teaching, she explains that philosophy is about *'looking at big ideas and discussing them in a in a safe controlled environment where everybody is respected.'*

Not unlike her colleague, this teacher's views of philosophy had also shifted radically through the P4C training courses and through engaging in philosophical enquiry with children. She now viewed it as a *'fully inclusive subject'*, something *'for the common man'*.

The most experienced teacher, in P4C terms, who took part in the research study, said that she explained philosophy to children as *'thinking about thinking, which is very Socratic.'* She had often used a particular resource to introduce children to P4C, one that provided a set of questions, and got children used to the sound of questions. In another school, she had introduced philosophy by breaking down the word and exploring its meaning, *'Sophia being a wise name.'*

Talking to members of her family, she also used the phrase *'thinking about thinking'*, because *'it is such a kind of open and useful phrase.'* To these members of her family she reported, *'justifying philosophy as a way to develop this repertoire of transferable skills which children can apply to other aspects of their life, and I think that is probably something which comes across when I introduce it to teachers for the first time.'*

When I asked whether this account was consistent with her own view of what philosophy is or should be she responded:

I think P4C runs the risk of becoming very much a kind of critical thinking programme, [...], we mustn't forget that it is also about the philosophy and exploring these things which are meaningful for children, rather than

developing this set of, you know, formulaic speaking frames and ... they are useful yes, but I don't know, I guess my own outlook maybe sixty per cent philosophy, forty per cent this bank of skills. I think the skills are philosophising, and I'm I am not saying that they are not, and I think it is useful to explore all these little words and things because it can help people think about the big things better, but um I don't think they are, you know, the be all and end all, and there is a real danger of slipping into this territory of um of instrumentalism really.

Are there aspects of Philosophy for Children that you disagree with?

My research aimed to offer an opportunity for participating teachers to articulate their concerns and criticisms of Philosophy for Children, whether substantive issues or questions regarding ways in which P4C had been introduced and developed, through training and/or through in school support. This question, during the first round of interviews, was included in order to elicit such reservations or disagreements.

Concerns and/or reservations that participants in the study raised about the introduction and development of P4C practice in their schools included the following:

a. Their understanding of the structure of philosophical enquiries to which they had been introduced in P4C training was seen by some teachers as restrictive, particularly for the secondary school timetable and curriculum. These teachers looked for ways of adapting the process of enquiry or the use of particular starting points for enquiries, so that it could be more effectively integrated into existing subject areas and/or into the set length of lessons. This adaptation was referred to by one teacher as an *'embedded model'* and felt to be much more appropriate for the secondary school, where she was coordinating P4C. She also made the case that it was important to have a clear framework for progression and for linking concepts and questions explored philosophically to knowledge domains that encountered in other subjects. The importance of embedding P4C within the secondary school curriculum, through concepts or themes, was affirmed by another secondary school teacher in the study.

b. Linked to this issue of flexibility and adaptation, some teachers reported that they were led by SAPERE trainers to

believe that they should stick firmly to the sequence of enquiry and that steps such as 'warm up activities' at the start of a P4C session were non-negotiable. This sense of inflexibility seemed to depend on how teachers felt that trainers communicated during the initial P4C training course and during support visits. In other cases, teachers reported that trainers worked closely alongside them to help them find the best ways to practice P4C in their particular settings. One teacher reported experiencing very different attitudes between two P4C trainers, with one described as being 'fantastic' and the other 'dogmatic' in ways that she felt lessened teachers' enthusiasm and the pleasure being taken in philosophising, particularly where their focus as a school was on developing creativity and integrating P4C into the existing curriculum.

c. Some teachers said they found it difficult to fit P4C sessions in every week, particularly for Year 6 pupils. In this case, the teacher chose to open each extended block of study with an enquiry. Time constraints also had an impact on the arrangement of the classroom itself and sometimes it was not necessary to move the furniture and enquiries sometimes happened '*spontaneously*', rather than being planned. This teacher suggested that the most successful sessions were often '*off the cuff*' through spontaneous enquiries about things that '*just happen*'.

d. Teachers said they found it important to choose a much wider variety of starting point for enquiry, responding to the interests of a particular class and wanting children above all to enjoy the philosophising. The choice of material seemed to be an important way in which teachers felt they could take their particular students' interests into account, and make the P4C practice their own.

e. One of the more experienced teachers who had responsibility for leading P4C in the school and demonstrating P4C lessons to other teachers said she felt some pressure to '*deliver good sessions*'. This teacher also expressed a desire for greater spontaneity and not to feel that the same P4C lesson structure should always be followed.

f. Teachers' responses indicated that there seemed to be some tension between

sticking to the same pattern or structure to secure P4C in the initial stages of its introduction and the sense of allowing the practice to develop more 'organically' with the emphasis on children and young people making meaning together and having the freedom to adapt the process to that end.

g. One teacher reported feeling uneasy about approaches to showing progress based on tick sheets and had reservations about what were perceived by this teacher to be 'simplistic' approaches to its evaluation.

How far do you feel that P4C is suitable for the students and families in your school community

In their responses to this question about 'suitability' of P4C for a school community, teachers tended to emphasise different issues related to a particular school's 'students', 'families' and/or 'community'. They considered this question of 'suitability' in relation to how, as teachers, they perceived their students' educational needs and the views of parents, rather than from a position of their full association as a member of or from *within* the school community. They also reflected on wider issues in their school community or society. The extent of teachers feeling a sense that they belong in, or influence, or benefit from, or are part of a school community remains ambiguous and is worthy of further exploration in future research. These issues were not taken up in this project. Some teachers expressed concern about students in their schools experiencing marginalisation and not getting such educational opportunities as their middle class counterparts. While schools kept parents informed about school and curriculum development, they did not necessarily engage parents directly in active communication about the P4C initiative. One primary school regularly held open events for parents and had invited parents to workshops about P4C.

A secondary school teacher argued that P4C engages students more deeply with big issues '*helping to broaden cultural horizons but also enabling young people to articulate ideas [...] hugely important obviously for a fulfilling life but also for academic success*'.

One of the primary school respondents highlighted the suitability for pupils at her school '*it's the sort of thing we want to do with our children, we want to encourage them to*

think. She said they had not yet gone down the route of having parental sessions, but nobody had complained and there were some positive comments from parents about their children asking more questions.

In the same primary school, another respondent focused on colleagues' views of the value of P4C and their desire to be clear about the benefits of introducing another subject. Teachers were concerned to justify the time spent on philosophy and it took time for teachers to become confident in their practice. This teacher described introducing P4C in his school as *'waving the banner for philosophy' and 'quite a hard sell' – that it was not so much a question of whether P4C was right for this school, but 'we've all had this kind of crash course if you like in philosophy and [...] until you do it regularly, it does feel like you are finding your feet still'*.

One primary school teacher reported *'how much the children absolutely love it'* and that staff had considered the possibility of sharing P4C questions in the newsletter to parents. Like another teacher, she wondered whether English not being the first language of all families in the community could be a barrier to sharing P4C with parents. She argued that in terms of curriculum initiatives *'you just have to see what happens'* and put a programme of staff development in place for both teachers and support staff. In this school, there was endorsement for P4C from the Governing Body, when she had given a presentation. This respondent spoke about the head and deputy head *'really singing the virtues of it' and support for P4C being 'one hundred per cent from the top down.'*

In one of the primary schools in the study, a lot of effort had been put into organising workshops for parents. In this school, the teacher described parents as being very enthusiastic about P4C. This teacher said that on the one or two occasions where parents had raised questions about P4C it was not about the practice per se but about the suitability of particular topics, *'usually on religious grounds'*. When parents raised concerns, it was usually with their child's class teacher. The position of the school on P4C was described as,

we explain what P4C is and why we do it and that this is just a chance for children...we are not trying to change their minds we are trying to get them to think and understand that there are different people, there is otherness in the world.

References to *'broadening cultural horizons'* or P4C being *'the sort of thing we want to do with our children'*, as well as children understanding *'different people'* express the teachers' perceptions of students' position in the social world and of their educational need to be *'broadened'* and encouraged to *'think'* in particular ways. Teachers did articulate concerns about what futures lay ahead for their students and expressed a desire to strengthen their students' *'chances'*. They also referred to their own horizons being broadened by listening to their students.

In the primary school referred to above where workshops were held, parents had regularly attended P4C sessions in the classroom, in particular with the youngest children. The school held four or five workshops per term for parents on a range of themes, including P4C with as many as 65 parents attending on one occasion, but an average of 15-20 parents each time.

Another secondary school teacher talked about colleagues' responses to P4C and said that she felt that some staff were not keen on new initiatives, and appeared negative about feeling this is *'another thing they have to do.'* The climate of teacher workload and initiative fatigue needs to be taken into account here, particularly as this falls unevenly in schools, some of which are constantly under heavy scrutiny and face the threat of external intervention for their test and exam results.

This teacher suggested parents of secondary school children are generally less involved than when their children go to primary school. She suggested many parents in her school community might not know what philosophy is and she believed that parents do not necessarily have conversations with their children about school lessons, thus making a general evaluation of local parental knowledge and involvement

Only one teacher addressed this question in terms of broad social and political issues and spoke at length in response to the question about the suitability of P4C for the school community. An active trade union member, and in a school where redundancies had been taking place, she had teenage children herself, and began by suggesting that P4C could be a way of protecting children and the community given what she described as the *'paranoia and the Prevent'¹⁵ agenda.¹⁶* She felt P4C was important to encourage young people to raise questions and engage

in critical thinking. She suggested that young people have many mixed and conflicting messages in their lives from family, friends, from religious education and/or what she referred to as their 'secular' education. She wanted 'to get them to question their own assumptions about life and to question me and to actually put my own assumptions [...] to lay how I perceive myself and my identity bare in front of them to question that and unpack that'. She argued that 'unpicking those assumptions is almost more important than having a full recipe [...] it is a process that spills out of the enquiry itself into my routine teaching'. This teacher described putting herself and her assumptions into question alongside those of the pupils. In the context of a lesson about John Steinbeck's novella *Of Mice and Men*, she described a classroom conversation about how 'somebody who's Jewish, which I am, can be an atheist...'. She called this conversation 'a bit of a kind of spontaneous philosophy...'

This teacher talked about 'routine teaching', and the problem of students giving 'pat answers' or 'saying things they have learned to say' – perhaps a 'provocative' or a 'defensive' answer in a citizenship or sociology lesson. She continued

my experience has been that by not shirking away from those issues and not just going

along with this idea that we are constantly looking for children being radicalised and being terrorists, but we are actually bringing those things into the classroom, what is terror; why might someone turn to terror as a response to their situation and their environment, answering those questions and bringing those things into the room....

She described in detail a lesson she had taught following the bombings in Paris in November 2015. Evidently moved by what had taken place in her classroom, and referring to it as a lightbulb moment, she reported on what she had felt to be a fertile enquiry when young women in her class had been talking openly to each other and drawing on their knowledge of the Qur'an. She suggested that the structure and process of the community of enquiry had been particularly important in making it possible for these young people to engage and articulate their perspectives on this occasion.

This teacher also spoke at some length about the way that she felt the community of enquiry structure worked effectively for another group of students with learning difficulties that she taught on a regular basis. In particular, she described ways in which the process seemed to encourage her more reticent students to speak freely and take part in the enquiry.

15 'Prevent' is part of the British Government's counter-terrorism strategy aimed at reducing radicalisation. It places a legal duty on specific bodies, including schools, to have 'due regard to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism'.

16 This conversation took place in 2016, the year after the 2015 Counter Terrorism and Security Act's imposition of a statutory duty on health and education bodies to have "due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism."



CONTINUING CONVERSATIONS



As indicated in the section of this report that describes the research approach, after each round of conversations the audio-recordings were given to a transcriber and a written transcript was sent to each teacher, for clarification or revision if necessary, as well as to provide a starting point for subsequent conversations.

The approach I have taken to reporting on these further conversations is to highlight what appeared to signify greater affective intensity, leaving a lasting impression, and mattering to these teachers. This 'significance' emerges through fragments of our conversations that sometimes appear more emotionally charged;

perhaps indicators of a change of direction or a difficulty encountered; sometimes clearly expressing the teacher's values and beliefs or reporting on a particularly memorable moment in the classroom or conversation with a colleague. I have loosely grouped these interview extracts around recurring themes.

ADAPTING P4C AT SCHOOL LEVEL, MAKING CURRICULUM LINKS AND UNDERSTANDING P4C AS A WAY OF TEACHING



Teachers working in secondary and primary schools were very conscious of workloads, of accountability for the allocation of precious teaching time and of meeting targets for student achievement. They had to find creative and justifiable ways to 'fit' P4C into existing areas of the curriculum and timetable. The pressures came from policy demands and to an extent from requirements for written records associated with working towards SAPERE awards.

One primary school teacher talked about 'experimenting' with where it would best fit and encouraging colleagues to take it up. She didn't want people to feel pressured so 'made the decision that I didn't want formal planning for P4C and for teachers to just have a go and see'. She was concerned that teachers would not have to spend

hours planning and did not want to increase their workload. She added 'if you start to implement rules and demands then it sucks the joy out of things, unfortunately the nature of going for awards and things means I do need evidence of planning'. This teacher was keen to preserve the enjoyment both teachers and children experienced in P4C

and not to jump to conclusions 'when I take into account that everybody loves it and when everybody loves something they will do more of it'. This teacher's attention was with treading carefully to try and make sure P4C could be sustained.

The same teacher talked about how important it was to have a SAPERE trainer that understood these pressures on schools and could tailor their support to the school's needs. This teacher felt that the school had been more encouraged by a trainer that was described as *'more supportive and less dogmatic'* and who was aware of the importance of building teachers' confidence gently, fitting P4C in and making it sustainable. For this teacher, fitting it in might also mean introducing a wider range of philosophical activities, rather than insisting on a singular model of practice. Due to timetable pressures, this P4C coordinator was often unable to dedicate 'whole sessions' to P4C and spoke of *'the principles I'm still keeping'* and *'drip feeding it through'*. Exploring this notion further, this teacher talked about a desire for children to be able to talk and the importance of always noting children's questions. She explained

this principle and this idea of Philosophy for Children, once it becomes standard in school, then teachers will probably feel a lot more comfortable just saying ok we are going to pause whatever we are doing and we are going to look at this a little bit more. And that's my goal really, that's what I really want to happen.

The teacher referred to this as part of 'a much broader shared ideal' of permeating the whole curriculum with a shared enquiry approach.

One secondary school English teacher reported

feeling inspired by the P4C training and how strongly it was influencing the direction of her professional development and further study, giving confidence to approach the Head Teacher with a proposal to raise the profile of P4C in the school as a whole. This had been met with a promise of extra time to put this proposal into practice. This teacher also spoke of the cross curricular nature of P4C and the opportunity it provided to speak with teachers of other subjects such as RE. She spoke of how plans might be frustrated by real pressures and *'agendas that take priority which are about becoming an outstanding school'*. Later in the conversation this teacher explained why this mattered in terms of the school's opportunities to steer the curriculum and establish priorities *'if you are an outstanding school you don't get Ofsted breathing down your neck every five minutes'*. This sense of external pressures and meeting targets contrasted powerfully with descriptions of a warm and happy community school where everyone knows one another.

This teacher talked about how hard it was to embed P4C and keep it going, even when the resources were available, teachers and students enthusiastic and it was part of the departmental policy. She talked of *'getting overloaded, this is what happens in schools'* and management trying to juggle which initiatives to run with. Nevertheless, P4C seemed to help keep this teacher going and feel excited about teaching against a difficult background of being in an area of deep social disadvantage, compounded by economic austerity and the sadness and impact of staff redundancies in the school.

BECOMING A TEACHER OF P4C



Several of the teachers in this study were taking the lead on P4C in their schools whilst engaging with P4C training and learning to put it into practice themselves in their classrooms. They were very reflective about how the ideas and principles were shaping their teaching.

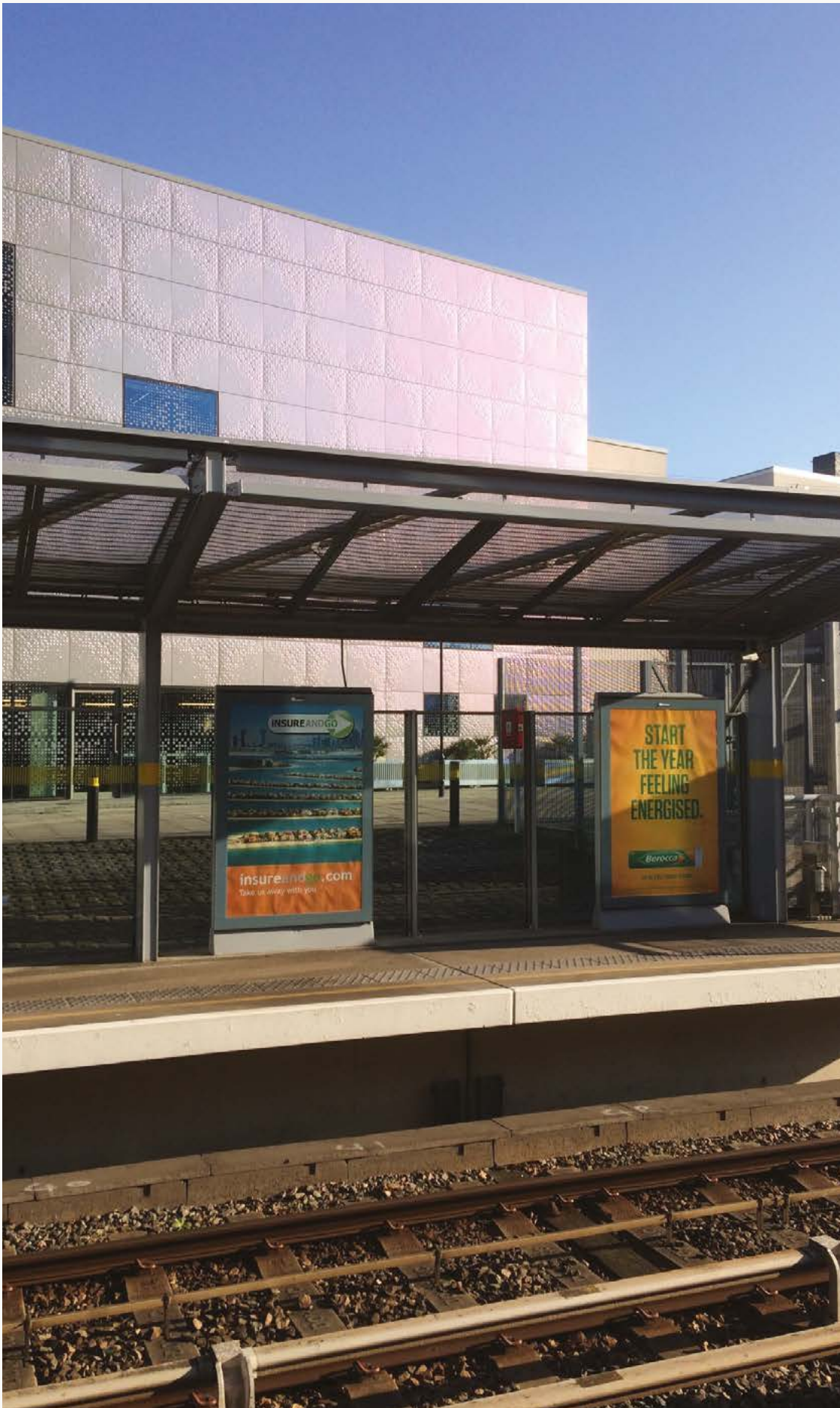
I've only been doing P4C for a short time and that's the difference I suppose. I suppose one of the things is because even when we're asking or answering questions, I might have an idea in my head but a child might have a totally different idea and it's sort of like me letting go of my idea and I think that sometimes is still quite difficult for me as I think 'No no, that's not the way' so I have to let go of my idea and that's something I don't always find easy if I'm honest.

This teacher talked about learning to 'shut up' and about negotiating the sense of being a rock or a point of stability for children in her class and accepting the uncertainty of letting them come to their own conclusions. She talked about the responsibility she felt in teaching children how to become free open-minded thinkers. Although very experienced this teacher commented 'nothing

really prepares you.'

This teacher was adamant that philosophy is for everyone and that if she had the authority to change things she would insist on it being part of every school curriculum.

For another teacher engaging with P4C also took some pressure off as the school was introducing P4C through co-facilitation and peer observation, establishing a 'nice support network' with shared resources. For him this 'relaxed philosophy quite a bit and made it feel not so rigid as perhaps other subjects can feel...and it's helped me feel more confident...I wouldn't say I was the best facilitator but I would feel comfortable with someone sitting in if they wanted to'. This teacher talked about the open and exploratory nature of P4C teaching that went 'hand in hand with handing a bit of responsibility to the children'.



SPONTANEOUS, NATURALISED OR 'OFF THE CUFF' PHILOSOPHY



On separate occasions, teachers talked about classroom philosophising being spontaneous and unplanned, often emerging from events at school or in the lives of students. One teacher reported on a spontaneous enquiry at the end of the formal SATs assessment when, referring to the tests, a student said something like 'that doesn't show who we really are'. This teacher felt that the most successful sessions of P4C are often 'off the cuff':

... sometimes I think if you've planned too deeply for something and it's not going the way you think it should go then it's you are either going to feel it's unsuccessful or you are going to try to shift it towards you know so I personally find the ones that work so well are the ones that are off the cuff, that the children come up with themselves and are on the journey that they want to take it on...

...they are using their direct experience it is because that is the experience they've got, that is the world that they know, in order to try to answer the questions that they don't really understand.

This very experienced teacher reported that she felt able to be flexible and 'lucky enough' to be able to say 'let's just stop what we are doing now and let's just think about this question'.

Another teacher talked about P4C being embedded or naturalised in the sense that colleagues and students in her school expressed a kind of understanding of what P4C means in terms of teaching taking the form of 'enquiry' – or a 'no pens' lesson:

So we have the resources, there is a bank of resources that, there's an expectation that we will do it, we do do it – often successfully, and the other thing often that's interesting is that those enquiries from time to time, not you know every single time but from time to time they spontaneously spark conversations, 'Oh I had a really interesting lesson, I did an enquiry, this is what happened in the enquiry, this is what we talked about, it raised this issue.' You know etcetera etcetera, so that is what I mean by embedded.



ORGANIC PHILOSOPHY SEEPING OUT



Related to discussions about naturalisation and spontaneous enquiries taking place were teachers' descriptions of P4C developing 'organically' in the settings. One teacher felt that the idea of P4C being organic had really struck her as important:

I suppose something that I've been thinking about lately is, kind of the whole sequence being organic, not of the development of the enquiry but the role of the facilitator as well and that that kind of parallel development that goes on through its practice.

Part of this 'organic' character of P4C seemed to be a recognition of the distinctiveness of every class or cohort, meaning that enquiries would reflect the variations in children's

lives and experiences, rather than being predictable or following a discussion plan. One teacher put it this way:

I think what is lovely about philosophy is we are not kind of putting a ceiling on the children's thinking, it is free flow and kind of they get to go where they go with it because their life experiences are very different, their school experiences are very different so it is kind of, it is nice not to put a cap on that, it is nice to be able to say,

you know I don't I wouldn't mind telling somebody 'Oh here's what my children come up with.' But I don't want to put a framework around it, 'oh play this song and they will think about this' that would be doing them a disservice I think.

This teacher added: *I think you can prompt, but it has to be organic, otherwise I don't think it is philosophy. I think you would be straight out teaching them something, whereas I think they need to think.*

Where philosophising was more spontaneous and organic, teachers also talked about it spilling out of the classroom. One teacher also explained how this 'organic' aspect was important in terms of maintaining privacy and the voluntarism of taking part or sharing individual experience:

I think what's quite nice is um... our philosophy sessions tend to run just before their afternoon playtime and that is quite a nice lead in because sometimes you hear them talking in the playground, not having a philosophical debate, but they will be talking about things we just talked about in philosophy so it is nice to see them sharing those experiences with friends. Um... because perhaps some of them don't feel they want to share in the room, that is completely understandable. I think what is nice about philosophy is I never ask individual children questions, because it should come from them, they should want, if they want to volunteer information they volunteer information.

This teacher recognised a connection between children's willingness or reluctance to speak out in a classroom community of enquiry and the same tendencies among colleagues, acknowledging that speaking out in public can be challenging, perhaps depending on the context or topic, and that the process can make allowances for these tendencies:

you know I suppose even as adults, you know we

did a philosophical enquiry in a staff meeting a couple of weeks ago as a staff meeting. Sometimes even as an adult you don't want to share what is in your head amongst your peers and I think it would be unfair to ask the children for certain information that they might be uncomfortable about they might not have got to grips with it themselves yet.

The notion of 'organic' processes surfaced again in relation to the apprehension associated with speaking out and the intrinsic value of teachers taking part in philosophical enquiries themselves:

we are all perhaps a little bit apprehensive about speaking out especially in something that, you know yes it is an organic conversation but it is still being set up, it's a conversation that's very much organic but it is, not an artificial environment, but it is in that you are asking people saying go and have a conversation. So I think it was daunting for a few people, myself included actually I was one of the people who said the least.

There seemed to be an important connection between 'spontaneity' and 'speaking out' and the process of P4C becoming naturalised in the school:

What is really obvious though is that it seeps through everything which I think is where I think its place is...

...Well it again I suppose it is just for me, but it is sort of like you feel, and hear snippets of people who are sort of like during any sort of lesson will actually bring some P4C aspect to it where the children are allowed to discuss and raise questions and nobody is right and nobody is wrong and the children are responding more positively...

And that is, and it is becoming their way of thinking, so it is becoming natural.....it is part of the make-up of the school now.

CHILDREN'S LIVES AND TEACHERS' LIVES



Related to P4C practice engendering a sense of relative freedom, the openness and unpredictability brought further unexpected pleasure for teachers as they realised the different opportunities provided for participation through oral enquiry

And it's often the children who aren't performing well in other subjects...they are suddenly coming out with things in philosophy because there is not pressure to write anything, there is no pressure to fill a blank page...it has brought up a lot of positive comments about pupils you don't often hear about.

One teacher expressed particularly valuing the dimension of philosophical enquiry involving

learning from each other's experiences, something that deepened collective understanding and relationships, the sense of coming to know one another.

Teachers in the study appeared to be often taken aback by ways in which P4C seemed to create a structure for young people to bring personal knowledge to bear in discussions and to establish a climate for sharing experience.

For example, a lesson drawn from a work of fiction, based on a hypothetical dilemma and working with a Venn diagram activity, could soon be transformed into a conversation about something connected to children's lives. One teacher talked about an occasion when a popular boy in the class who loved to be found funny *'started telling me how his cousin had been deported [...] having the wrong sort of passport'*. The teacher spoke of *'realising the fear that they (the students) live in all the time'*. What had particularly struck home for this teacher was exactly how the starting point chosen had led to this particular conversation, *'but I suppose that is what P4C is about, and if we are talking about concepts...'* *'It was a conversation with the children talking about their experiences and in terms of it being philosophical it was about doors being open or not'*.

Teachers talked about how they learned from and particularly valued the unpredictability of enquiries they engaged in, reflecting on what this made possible and called for from them as teachers. Coming to appreciate the conceptual nature of some philosophical enquiries was felt to be important, alongside the establishment and growth of respectful and trusting relationships.

Unpredictability might be hard to start with. But the more experience the teachers accumulated in P4C the more they seemed

to appreciate the complexity of enquiry and the social nature of the process, as well as the tendency of philosophical enquiry to be driven by concepts and questions. One teacher argued that working regularly with a class had the most effect on children being able and willing to be free in their thinking *'the regularity of P4C is essential in the communicative enquiry becoming effective'*. This teacher was concerned about P4C being what she termed 'reduced' to a set of tools or activities and particular tools, such as, for example, question quadrants.¹⁷ This teacher said that tools could be de-skilling and *'what makes a good facilitator is someone who can see into questions'*, and feel their way into the conversation with children, showing flexibility with the process. She was also reflective about the idea of 'modelling' enquiry, a term widely used in P4C training, saying that she had tried to move from *'modelling enquiries to supporting them'*.

Teachers themselves feeling free to think and coming to appreciate and relish the philosophical activity with their students was something that emerged from all the conversations.

Other teachers expressed this sense

'I want to be a teacher and be with children and I am interested in ideas rather than you know being a player in that power structure'

17 See SAPERE Level 1 handbook for an explanation and examples of question quadrants and other techniques to explore different types of question.

CLOSING QUESTIONS



In this section, I report on the content of the final round of conversations with the teachers in the study, a kind of wrapping up, necessarily rather provisional, since all the teachers had plans to continue with their practice and to take it in different directions.

The interviews in the final round were prompted by three questions that came from me. These questions were sent in advance to the teachers in an email. The questions were designed to round things off and invite longer-term reflection on the previous couple of years of working with P4C, as well as some thoughts about what might come next. Below I have included some of the observations made by teachers during these final conversations of the study. I have created headings from words teachers used.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IS MOST SIGNIFICANT IN P4C THINKING/ PRACTICE? HAVE SOME ASPECTS OF P4C BECOME MORE OR LESS IMPORTANT TO YOU?

Listening and changing minds

I think maybe that the children listen to each other and actively listening and have an opportunity to change their stance on something [...] It is that kind of freedom to not have to stick by something, you might have learnt something new and changed your mind, so they are kind of, they are growing their minds in that way

Serious and playful

It is deeply serious endeavour, but it is also really playful, and one of things a lot of my colleagues have been complaining about deeply this year and this term, in particular you know, we are losing play, we are losing fun and enjoyment from our teaching, there is no room, there is not space for it, so actually we have protected our you know, our fortnightly P4C sessions in the English class and you know, at least for our Key Stage Three children, I mean becomes you know so so valuable, so precious

Own mind

Yes, I don't think anybody should be passive in what is told to them and what is taught to them, I think you should always have your own mind, but I mean, I don't know with eleven year olds, you are still so much under the car of your teachers and of your parents and their effect on the hero worship of those important people in your life, you are not going to be critical because you know of the love and respect that you have for people.....I think that still might be um might still be stronger when you are eleven, and you know in a way quite rightly because that is what keeps you safe, isn't it? That's what keeps you from wandering off and doing all those things. I think the seeds are planted to be critical about what has been told to you, you know whether it's through the media or whatever when you are eleven, and by the time you are a teenager and you are able to stand on your own two feet a bit more you then start to weigh up and challenge those relationships a little bit more.

Skills

It is important young people have the oppo-

rtunity to explore questions that matter to them and then work to go beyond opinion and validate, test and pursue truth.

Freedom and safety

I suppose that it is giving children, or allowing children the freedom to express their opinions um in a safe environment um you know I am sort of like, and they do feel safe, they feel safe enough to be able to say something that could be considered quite contentious in some ways but they have the freedom and they have the safety knowing that they can do this and I think that for me is one of the biggest things.

Creative responses

I suppose in terms of you know leading P4C I think, I feel a slight I suppose not a problem arising but a slight, to be aware of I suppose is this balance between what is expected and the traditional P4C sessions, what we have made it, because yes, you know, if you turned up in week three of the term, you probably wouldn't see a standard enquiry you would probably see someone setting it out in some creative way, and making or producing a bit of music or piece of art, and yes, so it goes back to the concern of of lingering

DO YOU THINK IT IS APPROPRIATE AND/OR IMPORTANT OR NOT TO CALL IT PHILOSOPHY?

This question was included to reflect the wider contestation about whether P4C is philosophy or not and concerns that teachers practising P4C do not necessarily have a background in academic philosophy. In this study, the teachers' responses seem to indicate that philosophy is the right term to use, making it suitably distinctive. Some responses indicate the potential for interest in academic philosophy to grow out of engagement in philosophical enquiry.

I think it is important because it [philosophy] has a scary tag to an extent when you don't know what it is and you don't know that you are doing it, and I think it makes it a more friendly and accessible subject once people realise it is not scary. You know you don't have to know the ins and outs of the world, you just have to have an open mind and be able to listen and get involved and I think yeah, I think by calling it philosophy and then people knowing that is what they are doing..

...well if you give it the title, it allows the children

to label outside of the lessons, now they are able to recognise yes that is a philosophical question, if they are in a different subject, and that is quite empowering for them...

For me personally, since I have been doing this, I mean I think when I first got the chance to do the SAPERE training it was very much; well this is a set of tools you can use in the classroom and then you practice and you become a little bit more adept. But what has happened, two things have happened, one is I have got a bigger range of approaches and techniques and hopefully a bit more experience in framing questions, but also my personal kind of need to root what I am doing in conventional academic philosophy has actually grown.

Philosophy for Children is for me a distinct pedagogy and it has a distinct value as well, because you know, because it is to do with thinking conceptually and thinking categorically um and thinking you know analytically, all of those things have informed the way I teach English you know, and it is not a two way street, you know, the way I teach English has not informed what I am doing in Philosophy for Children to the same degree. I mean obviously I use my subject knowledge and my experience of teaching English in my enquiries as I expect you know I would if I was a history teacher I would probably use that subject knowledge and you know and the techniques of history teaching but it is you know the way that philosophy, teaching philosophy for children has enriched my English teaching it is, it is something different it is very, it has, it has been transformative actually and so I am completely persuaded by the argument that it is, Philosophy for Children is just that, it is philosophy um and it can basically, when you basically if you have been teaching Philosophy for Children when you then kind of put a toe in the waters of conventional academic philosophy

if I heard someone say you know 'critical thinking' I would think that sounds very negative. I mean that is probably because of the word 'critical' a lot of people react very badly to criticism and so the word critical has I think a very negative connotation, um and I think philosophy sounds a lot more, not fluffy, it doesn't sound as loaded and it doesn't sound as in inverted commas 'bad' but we don't call it so much 'philosophy' with the children, we do stick with 'P4C'. They do know it is, that that P stands for philosophy um, but

yeah I don't, I think it is [pause] I don't know what else you would call it.

actually I quite like the term 'philosophy' um because philosophy is about thinking isn't it? And that is what it is all about. It is about thinking, whereas current affairs would make it just about the news.

call me old school, I don't know, but 'philosophy' is a match, because again 'critical thinking' is, children know sort of like, if you criticize then that is normally a complaint so to some it would be confusing whereas philosophy which is about thinking is thinking you know. The thinking can be, involve very many different ways; it can be creative thinking, it can be critical thinking, caring thinking.

it should be called philosophy because it is more than critical thinking and current affairs.

I think it is the sense of it is philosophy, or is it? I don't know, I haven't quite got my head round that one yet. I think there is philosophy in P4C and that's what for me makes it different when you think about the children and their response to it, I suppose where, you know how that relates to their lives and their own philosophies, whereas when you start getting into debating and critical thinking it can be much more teacher-led and not necessarily so child-centred.

I think it is quite tricky because a lot of schools use it as a PSHE tool um so you get lots of moral and ethical questions raised by the children in response to specific stimuli which have been selected to link in with a particular worry or concern or area that is being developed within that class, but I wonder how much of the other areas of philosophy are present in P4C and whether there is a balance

I wonder how many people are aware of what philosophy is... I know I am only partly aware myself.

Yes, you can take it whatever way you want to take it, which is very lovely in its own way, but... it is nice to have that freedom, but whether it is P4C or not is part of that I am not sure, we will see.

**DO YOU HAVE RESERVATIONS/
CONCERNS? ARE THERE OTHER
POSSIBILITIES/OPPORTUNITIES?
WHAT IS THE FUTURE FOR P4C (IN
YOUR CURRENT CONTEXT AND
MORE WIDELY)?**

As with the first question in this final round, these were included to reflect concerns about unbridled enthusiasm for P4C leaving little space for dissent, modifications or challenges. The headings below have been generated from the responses made by the teachers in the study.

Ongoing training and differentiated school development

I think in regards to P4C you know we are on that, the scheme with SAPERE¹⁸ where we are striving for Gold, you know we have gone through Bronze and we are in the process of applying for Silver and we are heading for Gold and it is, that is sort of like a nice momentum. I suppose in terms of that on the ground level just thinking, you know we have got three teachers starting who are not trained, so to kind of keep that embedded within the school and not to lose it, you know it is kind of, to have that as of one of the pillars of what makes our school our school, you know we are a P4C school, everyone needs to kind of get on board with that.

the new deputy head is very much for it, but I don't think in such the way that our old one was, so I am concerned that it is going to get out of SMTs so we should have had XXX coming in in autumn, our trainer, but he is no longer, they couldn't find the room so he has been bumped to spring, so it is little things like that which have worried me.... Yeah. But then on the flip side um our humanities co-ordinator has now given every humanities topic a P4C-style question as a topic question, um which you know they kind of work towards, and then Tower Hamlets have changed their

RE syllabus and it is much more P4C-based, every unit is a question to answer, and work towards, and there is a lot more discussion and, oh gosh it is such a beautiful curriculum, it is so lovely, and so you know P4C is being embedded within subjects

I suppose a very slight concern would be the transition of the new people coming in, if they are able to take it forward as well, and as a school to continue to move forward at a pace, I think we have moved quite quickly in some respects, it was a slow start but then we seem to have picked up and I think maintaining that is the big, not a concern, it is like a worry, it is there at the back of your mind. We have got six weeks now coming up and also we are expecting Ofsted so you know, with things like that, and you know what teachers are like, when things like that start in the back in your head they slowly make their way forward and other things then have to be pushed aside,

Secondary schools need something different because P4C skills can be taught in lots of lesson.

Practitioner networks and desire for ongoing support

...actually, I'd love to actually um you know get together with my fellow practitioners in schools in our area and I am kind of hoping that when I do this transition programme project that I will find my fellow practitioners in other schools, ...

It would be really nice, I don't know if there is a way of kind of keeping these kind of conversations going between trainers or groups or supporters or networks or ...And like I said last time almost like coaching or mentoring.

18 This refers to SAPERE's graduated scheme of awards that schools can achieve through their development of P4C. For more information on this scheme go to <https://www.sapere.org.uk/members-schools-partners/school-awards.aspx>

CONCLUSIONS



This research project set out to address a 'gap in knowledge' about how teachers conceive of 'philosophy', 'children as philosophers' and 'philosophical enquiry' and how teachers enact P4C in their settings over time. The emphasis was on teachers' conceptualisations of P4C and their experiences and reflections on putting it into practice.

This was a small-scale qualitative study involving teachers from primary and secondary schools in East London, who were engaged with practising P4C in their own classrooms, and/or leading this curriculum and school development initiative in their schools. The research took the form of one to one conversations with the volunteer

teachers, either face to face or via Skype and telephone. The conversations took place at regular intervals over a period of two years. With the teachers' agreement, the four rounds of interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. The research process was iterative, in as much as the 'original' research questions were revisited

in the closing interviews, and generative, in the sense that transcripts were shared with each participant, and these served to provoke further exploration and to extend reflection about each teacher's understanding and practice of P4C. The length and frequency of direct quotations from the transcripts included in this report are an attempt to do justice to the range and depth of the teachers' generously shared perspectives, and to the ways in which they exemplified what they valued or what concerned them.

The teachers expressed the view that philosophy is for everyone and felt that calling P4C 'philosophy' was justified and a valuable way of identifying the distinctive character of these conversations. Teachers' reasons for including P4C in the curriculum were wide ranging, both intellectual and social. They regarded P4C as an opportunity for personal development, led by children and young people, involving thinking, what they termed 'big' questions, questioning assumptions, engaging with concepts and constructing arguments. The teachers talked about philosophical enquiry as a more relaxed, open and free space, not available elsewhere in the curriculum, where young people's questions and personal knowledge came to matter and which allowed for shifts of thinking and for listening to each other.

In terms of their enactment of P4C, a number of themes emerged through the conversations with teachers, including:

- the importance of taking ownership of the practice: choosing the material to prompt enquiries was an important aspect of this;
- flexibility and being enabled to adapt P4C

to particular settings and contexts;

- the pleasure of P4C's 'unpredictability';
- the value of P4C 'seeping out', 'spilling out' and being at times 'spontaneous' (these features were sometimes associated with its becoming 'embedded' or 'naturalised' in the school).

In terms of their enactment of the pedagogy of the community of enquiry associated with P4C, teachers commented on the collectivism, the sense of doing something 'together'. In some cases, teachers argued that this structure seemed to make it possible for more reticent students to engage in the enquiry, speak freely and/or articulate their perspectives. The sense of the community of enquiry was not about the 'arrangement' of the classroom. Rather the teachers expressed the view that the frequency, regularity and practice of working with this structure, in their own ways, contributed towards students and teachers listening to each other and shifting relations of knowledge creation. Sometimes this shift was associated with teachers learning to 'let go' or to 'shut up' and responding to the opportunities that arose.

The teachers seemed to particularly appreciate the opportunities created by the research conversations to reflect on their teaching of P4C and on children's philosophical questions and thinking. They commented on the value of engaging in dialogue about what P4C meant to them, the sense that the dialogic nature of P4C also afforded them a potential space for thinking about teaching and about their own philosophical and pedagogical questions. They expressed the desire for this to continue.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS AND INFORMED CONSENT PROTOCOL

WHAT IS MY RESEARCH PROJECT ABOUT?

The focus of the project is on teachers' diverse perspectives on philosophy for children (P4C), and their varying classroom experiences and responses, against the backdrop of the Going for Gold initiative. The research costs are being met by the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain (PESGB <http://www.philosophy-of-education.org/about/index.html>).

My research project focuses on:

- How teachers interpret philosophy for children and how they experience P4C with their students in their classrooms and schools.
- The extent to which teachers agree or disagree with the aims and/or teaching approaches of P4C; the questions and decisions that are provoked by the P4C initiative.
- Teachers' different experiences of this initiative, its impact on teachers and the educational and professional issues and questions that emerge.

WHAT COULD BE THE BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN MY RESEARCH PROJECT?

I hope that taking part in the project will be of benefit to teachers by providing a private dialogue space with the researcher in which to talk about their experiences and express their views of the 'Going for Gold' initiative. The findings will inform thinking and practice in CPD and curriculum development and contribute to critical debate, practice and policy development with respect to philosophy in schools. All the schools in the East London Going for Gold initiative are being approached to take part and I hope there will be at least 2 volunteers from each of the schools. In the event of there being more than four volunteers, a random selection will be made by picking names out of a hat.

WHAT WILL TAKING PART INVOLVE?

If you are willing to take part, this will involve an introductory meeting, followed by periodic individual face to face, skype or telephone dialogues over the life of the Going for Gold project. I expect these 25-30 minute dialogues to take place about once a term, in private, to be arranged between individual participants and the researcher. With your agreement these conversations will be audio recorded. They will focus on your views, responses and experiences of philosophy for children and do not involve any physical or psychological risk.

My research project has been approved by Plymouth University Institute of Education Ethics Committee and I will endeavour to maintain care for participants and ethical

sensitivity throughout the life of the project. I will be seeking your written consent to taking part. My attention to ethical principles of research is outlined in this information sheet and in the consent form.

WHO IS THE RESEARCHER?

I currently work at Plymouth University Institute of Education. I have worked in many different school, community and higher education settings. Following my undergraduate studies and PGCE, my career in teaching started in Glasgow; then I spent twelve years in schools in inner city Bristol. I gradually became involved in CPD and ITE and Education Studies. I have a critical interest in philosophy with children and have researched and published in the field. You can find out more at <http://www.plymouth.ac.uk/staff/jhaynes>. I may employ a research assistant to assist me in this project.

TRUST, PRIVACY, CONFIDENTIALITY AND SECURITY

Where introductory meetings take place in schools I will ensure I have the permission of the appropriate person for these to take place. I will be open and honest with participants throughout. I will ensure that all data is kept securely either in locked cabinet and/or password protected. Interviews will be arranged in such a way as to ensure privacy. Only research staff may have access to the data. All data will remain confidential, except in the case of a disclosure that raises a child protection concern. The data will be encoded to protect identities of participants and schools. In accordance with legal and ethical requirements data will be stored for 10 years and then destroyed. As this research involves teachers in a group of schools known to one another, it is possible that the identity of individuals might be inferred from the report, but every effort will be made to minimise this.

WHAT IF I WANT TO WITHDRAW?

Participation in this research project is entirely voluntary and you may stop taking part at any time without penalty or giving a reason. You may withdraw your data from inclusion up until the end of each yearly phase of the research: in Phase 1 by the end of May, 2016; in Phase 2 by the end of May 2017 and in the final phase by the end of March 2018. I will remind you of this prior to each interview.

HOW WILL THE FINDINGS BE REPORTED AND DISSEMINATED?

Over the life of the project I will draw on issues raised by each participant in ensuing dialogues with that person. Towards the end of the project I will offer each participant a summary of the key issues and questions s/he has raised, for further comment where desired. I will offer schools in the East London Going for Gold group a summary report of the project. I will provide both SAPERE and PESGB with a copy of my project report. I will be presenting and publishing papers in academic and professional contexts, based on the research findings.

Should you wish to register a complaint in respect of the research please contact the researcher in the first instance, or where it is felt to be necessary contact the Chair of the Plymouth University Arts and Humanities Faculty ethics committee artsresearchethics@plymouth.ac.uk Thank you.

INFORMED CONSENT (Please circle 'YES' or 'NO' as appropriate)

1. I have read and understood the information provided about this project and have had the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification YES NO
2. I give my consent to taking part YES NO
3. I give consent to audio-recording of dialogue interviews YES NO
4. I understand I may withdraw at any time without giving a reason YES NO
5. I understand I may withdraw interview data from being used in the project up until the report writing stage YES NO
6. I understand that the researcher will remind me of these aspects of informed consent prior to each of the interviews YES NO
7. I understand the procedure in the event I wish to make a complaint YES NO

NAME OF PARTICIPANT:

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

CONTACT DETAILS:

Email

PREFERRED MODE OF INTERVIEW:

Phone
Skype

APPENDIX B

First meeting with teachers – autumn/winter 2015/16

Meetings will be held in schools initially as I have been introduced to the schools involved in the Going for Gold Philosophy for Children project.

These meetings will give an opportunity for teachers who might be interested in taking part in the research to hear more about my research questions and themes, possible benefits of taking part, the research approach, ethics and dissemination of findings. At this meeting teachers can seek further clarification or ask questions. Paper copies of information sheets and consent forms will be given out at this point.

To avoid teachers having to make public to colleagues their participation or non-participation in the research I will invite teachers who want to take part to email me after the meeting, from the contact email address they prefer me to use for the project. I will then forward the information sheet and consent form in electronic format and arrange the skype interviews by email.

After these meetings in schools, if there are teachers who already keen to engage in conversation with me, related to the research themes, I will seek their consent to include my notes of these conversations as part of my data collection.

APPENDIX C

INITIAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Dialogue prompts for my initial meetings with teachers:

Could you tell me about any formal or informal studies you have undertaken in philosophy/childhood/education?

Can you tell me about how your school became involved with the Going for Gold project and philosophy for children? What is your involvement? Have you taken part in CPD in relation to the project? What do you take to be the 'principles' of P4C?

When you introduce P4C to your pupils how do you explain what the philosophy is? When you are talking to other people about P4C how do you describe the philosophy that it involves? How does this relate to your ideas about what philosophy is or should be?

Could you tell me a bit about how you are putting P4C into practice/ or not? To what extent does P4C sit comfortably with your ideas about children and your values as an educator? Are there things you disagree with? Do you think P4C is suitable for your students and your school community? Should philosophy be part of the national curriculum – if so in what form? What kinds of questions have come up for you so far through this project?

For the purposes of this research, would you be willing to maintain this conversation with me about your perspectives on the project, at intervals to be agreed, and via electronic means?

May I request a further interview with you towards the end of the Going for Gold project?

APPENDIX D

Timeline

May 2015: seek ethical approval Plymouth University and seek consent from teachers.

Autumn 2015: initial round of dialogues with teachers.

Winter 2015/16: transcription and conceptual and thematic analysis to inform further dialogues.

2016-2017: maintain electronic dialogue with teachers, maintain regular transcription and ongoing analysis.

Winter 2017: final round of dialogues.

Autumn 2018 onwards: transcription and conceptual and thematic analysis of data and preparation of report.

September 2020 publication of report.

