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Developing Thinking Capacity in Children: The role of Philosophy for Children (P4C)

What is P4C?

NOT:

About facts on the lives of great philosophers

NOT EVEN:

The thoughts of great philosophers

BUT:

The practical process of philosophizing, i.e. thinking

Why P4C?

For teachers, the principal goal is to enhance thinking abilities to raise attainment across the curriculum – which P4C does

BUT.....

Why P4C?

If children can think for themselves:

They can be more adaptable and flexible in their jobs,

Distinguish real from fake news and be better informed citizens,

Feel less confused by a bewildering world,

Etc. ....

Mathew Lipman

Professor Matthew Lipman started the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC) in 1972 in Montclair University, USA. (https://www.montclair.edu/cehs/academics/centers-and-institutes/iapc)

Lipman introduced the Community of Enquiry idea and wrote novels as Stimuli

Community of Enquiry

A group engaged in **Exploring** ideas through **Dialogue:**

Pupils and teachers **Ask** each other questions

They **Discuss** the different responses

They work towards a **Consensus** – or a **Conflict** - of substantiated views

Thinking through Dialogue

Questions and **Discussion**
between teacher and children
AND
between children and children

(the Socratic Method
– only 2500 years old)

Professor Keith Topping

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What Do You Do?
(Teachers and Children)

- Ask open and inviting questions
- Seek clarification
- Give examples and evidence
- Make comparisons and contrasts
- Summarise
- Evaluate

Rules of the Community

- Focus attention on the speaker
- Don't "put down" others
- You are not forced to speak
- Respect other's views
- Be open-minded
- Be truthful

Role of the Teacher

- Focus attention on important points
- Model good questioning
- Encourage appropriate behaviours
- Praise positive contributions
- Divert vapid conversation
- Direct the discussion towards truth

Facilitative Questions

Can you say more about that?

What makes you say that?

How do you know that?

Do you have any evidence for that?

Why?

Is it possible to know if that is true?

Does anyone else support that view?

Good Questions

NOT Closed, Multiple or Leading

BUT Clarifying, Probing the Superficial, Exploring Alternative Views, Scaffolding, Seeking Evidence, Testing Implications, Evaluating

Teacher Strategies

- Ask ALL Pupils – encourage the quietest
- Give Thinking Time – don't hurry
- Slow the Rate of Questioning
- Listen
- Second-Questioning
- Provide Cues and Assistance
- Withhold Judgement
- Keep It Simple

Skills Developed
(in relation to the Scottish curriculum)

- Information Handling
- Enquiry
- Reasoning
- Evaluating
- Creative Thinking

Daniel Goleman

- Self-Awareness
- Motivation
- Self-Regulation
- Empathy
- Social Skills

Paul Cleghorn

(www.aude-education.co.uk)

Thinking Through Philosophy

Series of 4 books:

For upper 3 years of primary &
first year of secondary

Eprint Publishing

www.eprint.co.uk

Lesson Structure

1. Focusing/Calming Exercise
2. Connection with previous session: TFTW
3. Summarise rule(s) for good thinking
4. Present the Stimulus
5. Ask pupils to remember three things
6. Teacher-led Enquiry through Dialogue
7. Pair/Group Work
8. Closure: Think of the most important idea
9. Discuss Thought for the Week

The Stimulus

Often a Story (e.g. Aesop's Fables)

But can be:

- Poem
- Picture
- Video (short)
- Activity (e.g. Thinking Map)
- Dance/Drama

Aesop's Fables

Aesop was a slave who lived in Greece from 620 to 564 BC

(see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aesop%27s_Fables)

Fables used from the Renaissance onward for the education of children

See Library of Congress for examples (http://read.gov/aesop/001.html) and others

Organizations

- SAPERE (Society for Philosophical Enquiry and Reflection in Education) – UK (https://www.sapere.org.uk)
- SOPHIA Network – Europe (www.sophianetwork.eu)
- The Philosophy Foundation (https://www.philosophy-foundation.org/p4c)
- International Council of Philosophical Inquiry with Children (ICPIC) (http://icpic.org)

Spread of P4C

Now in 60 countries across the world

Including developing and developed countries

Ireland has included it in their national curriculum

But Does it Work?

Research on Effects

Trickey & Topping Review (2004):

10 short term studies
Cohens's δ (effect size)= 0.43
low variance

Trickey, S. & Topping, K. J. (2004). "Philosophy for Children": A systematic review. *Research Papers in Education, 19(3), 363-378*.

Empirical Studies in Scotland

All primary schools in a school district involved eventually

Some but not all had P4C throughout the school

Sampling

Eight primary schools involved
Four schools selected **randomly**
Four classes from 8 selected randomly (n=96)

From schools not then involved:
Four **matched** control schools/classes (n=52)

Measures

Cognitive Abilities Test
(Lohman, Thorndike, Hagen, 2001)
Standardised, norm-referenced
Correlates with examination performance

Pre-post = 12 months

Follow-up - Two years later after secondary transfer

Cognitive Results

Pre-post study:
e gained 6 points (δ =0.46),
c gained nothing

Follow-up study:
e remained same (δ= 0.01),
c declined further

Other Results

Video analysis of specimen lessons for analysis of implementation integrity/fidelity:

(1) Reduction in teacher talk,

(2) Increased use of open-ended questions by teacher,

(3) increased participation of pupils in classroom dialogue,

(4) improved pupil reasoning in justification of opinions.

Other Results #2

Participant views: Most students enjoyed it. Improvement in listening and concentration commonly reported. Half the students reported gains in relationships, social behavior and empathy, self-confidence, and self-regulation of emotion. Two thirds of students reported generalization of effects outside the enquiry sessions.

Other Results #3

Socio-emotional effects:

On a test of self-esteem as a learner (MALS), experimental pupils (n=119) gained significantly while controls (n=52) did not.

Girls gained more in self-esteem than boys.

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Fair et al. (2015) - Texas

Randomised controlled trial (RCT)

Secondary - 7th/8th grade

Cognitive Abilities test

e=363, c=177

1 hour week; 22-26 vs. 4-10 weeks

long was effective; short was not.

Fair et al. - Texas #2

Followed up 7th graders (12-13 year old)

Three years later without P4C

Texas students more ethnically diverse

Higher attrition than Scotland

e =133/186, c=50/79

Cognitive Abilities Test

e Cohen's δ = 0.68, c δ =0.28

Effect on Traditional Achievements

EEF report:

Primary - Years 4-5

P4C once weekly for a year

Cognitive Abilities test + reading, maths, writing achievement

48 schools across England

Gains

Significant impact in reading and maths

No gain cf. controls in writing

Biggest impact among disadvantaged pupils

Costs

T&T gave on-cost as £9 per pupil

EEF give on-cost as £16 per pupil per year

but this included out-of-authority input

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and if you want something Australian....

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Critical Thinking Project

https://critical-thinking.project.uq.edu.au

Coming soon....

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Questions

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