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To what extent can P4C methods enhance the teaching and learning of IB Diploma subjects?

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Abstract

As a teacher of IB Diploma Economics, I am always open to new ideas for how to enhance teaching and learning, and took the chance to undertake training in P4C (Philosophy for Children) at my school when it arose. My interest piqued, I was keen to investigate further the potential for P4C to enhance the teaching and learning of IB Diploma subjects. Though convinced of the potential, my fledgling attempts to bring it into the classroom, alongside colleagues' reservations, indicated that there were challenges to its incorporation.

I interviewed a range of eight staff involved in educational delivery at my campus, hand-writing notes and giving interviewees the chance to verify them. Emergent themes were then identified, helping to form the structure for discussion. Respondents considered the principal gains to centre around improved thinking skills, creativity and criticality, enhanced student ownership and empowerment, more personalised learning, internalised motivation, a holistic approach facilitating cross-curricular links, and improved connection-making helping to deepen learning. Potential pitfalls, however, included over-prioritisation of subjectivity, intangible, long-term results, the epistemological challenge of socio-constructivism, dominant students, time constraints, and a need for both student and teacher training.

Introduction

In May 2017, I undertook Level One training in Philosophy for Children (P4C). Based at the international secondary school in Shanghai where I teach, other colleagues also attended the training, and much discussion about P4C subsequently took place. Intrigued, I ran a Professional Learning Group on the subject in the first semester of the following academic year, and, sensing that P4C-style activities could help with my own teaching of IB Economics, I also ran a couple of fledgling P4C sessions within my own classes. Given this burgeoning interest, I was keen to further investigate the potential for using P4C within IB Diploma teaching.

Eight semi-structured interviews were conducted with various education-practitioners involved with the school. It was hoped that the findings of this project will help to inform my own practice, allowing me to better guide my students in fulfilling their potential, developing their skills, and fostering a love for learning. Further to my teaching duties, I also hold a Head-of-Grade position. This pastoral role afforded me greater insights into the students' personal and emotional issues, heightening my interest in P4C's potential for supporting students' all-round development, and

not just their academic progress. My research question, therefore, asked 'To what extent can P4C methods enhance the teaching and learning of IB Diploma subjects?'

Background to P4C

Born out of pragmatist traditions (Daniel, 2007), P4C was the brainchild of Matthew Lipman, who built on philosophical ideas of Socrates and Dewey, in combination with Vygotskian social constructivism (Sutcliffe, 2004), and Habermas and Gadamer's dialogue theories (Golding, 2011). Interestingly, for Daniel (2007) P4C's alignment to certain educational philosophies makes it not so much a pedagogical but an epistemological stance. As P4C can be for people of all ages, while the 'C' is most commonly taken to refer to children, it can also stand for Communities (Sutcliffe, 2004, p5) or Colleges (Sapere, nd-a). Lipman may not have gone as far as Socrates in believing that 'the unexamined life was not worth living' (Cam, 2014, p1203), but he was unimpressed by positivistic pedagogy intent on 'force-feeding facts with a fire-hose' (Watkins, 2003 in Minchin, 2009, p311), leading, for instance, to 'the 'drudgery' of GCSE' (Sutcliffe, 2004, p7). My school's published Principal's Message accords, for students' development 'depend[s] upon far more than examination results' (My-School, 2017a), and '[extra-curricular] activities... play a significant role in [students'] personal development' (ibid). P4C-promoting charity Sapere (nd-a) acknowledge, though, that there is a need for 'integration with the curriculum'. Though my school does not have an explicit P4C policy, the purpose, for instance, of Willow Brook Primary's (nd) policy is to assist teachers' planning, and management's prioritising. That the first ten schools whose policies appeared in search results were all primaries evidences its predominant use with younger children.

Lipman sought to re-locate the child as the central focus of learning, emphasising the development of their ability to think critically (Daniel, 2007, p135); in particular, their 'reasoning, reflection and critical judgement' (Sutcliffe, 2004, p7). Given that absolutist or relativist stances inhibit reasoning (Knight and Collins, 2014), 'education [must] steer a course between the tyranny of unquestionable moral codes and the bankruptcy of... moral relativism' (Cam, 2014, p1203), and P4C's foregrounding of the child's criticality is conducive to this. That students in Meyer's (2009 in Knight and Collins, 2014, p1294) study saw knowledge in 'hard' subjects such as maths and natural sciences as 'certain, simple and obtained from authorities', in contrast to 'complex, tentative and socially constructed' in social sciences, suggests that P4C activities may be particularly well suited to economics.

There is an element of antiestablishmentarianism about P4C. Lipman saw himself and his acolytes as 'visionaries and activists who came from so far outside of the field of education that [they] might just… be right' (in Sutcliffe, 2011, p145). P4C questions the institutionalisation of education (Vansieleghem, 2014, p1300), challenging hegemonic power balances in promoting 'schools as a model of… participatory democracy' (Cam, 2014, p1205), Golding (2011) also deeming that there are 'implications for power relations' (p414). O'Riordan (2013) sees P4C as 'swimming against the tide', Sapere (nd-b), expound 'looking beneath the surface' of the curriculum , and Vansieleghem

(2014) neatly frames the juxtaposition thus: '[t]he ambition of education is to bring order, while philosophy disorders[, and] P4C tries to combine both terms' (p1308).. In a fast-changing world of technological advances and globalisation (Daniel, 2007, p135), Cam (2014) highlights the inadequacy of the 'remnants of value systems of much earlier times' (p1209). P4C then counters the perils of 'educational system[s] driven only by economic and bureaucratic considerations'(Vansieleghem, 2014, p1301), seeking to refresh their sense of purpose and reinvigorate their 'desultory advance' (Sutcliffe, 2011, p143), seeking to facilitate students' development of the lifelong learning skills needed to continually evaluate new information (Robinson, 1987 in Minchin, 2009, p307).This is in line with my school's stated mission to help students build 'the confidence, skills and resilience to be life-long learners' (My-School, 2017a, p5). As Minchin (2009) observes, '[m]any of our students may... have jobs in the future, that currently do not even exist' (p307).

Often comprising a ten-step procedure, the principal P4C methodology involves presenting students with a stimulus, inviting them to generate questions based thereon, then selecting, discussing and reflecting on one or more of those questions (Sutcliffe, 2011), hence providing an antidote to externally-set curricula that can quell students' instinctive curiosity (Minchin, 2009, p306). As such, P4C 'is about process, not content' (Lipman, nd, in ibid, p145). Daniel (2007) hopes that students 'apply the chosen solution to daily experience' (p137), but this may not always be possible, given the presuppositions that not only does each participant choose a specific solution, but that such a solution is apt for application in their daily lives. Minchin (2009) points out that 'we stem the flow of our students' desire to question, providing them, instead, with a teacher designed curriculum' (p306), so putting learners in the driving seat improves the chances of selecting topics 'which they would... want to discuss' (Sutcliffe, 2004, p7). Reading texts were initially used as stimuli, especially from Lipman's own 'Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery', though practice has since been 'enriched... to include specially selected stimuli, such as picture books and artefacts' (Sutcliffe, 2011, p144). With learners forming a community of inquiry, 'actively searching for meaning' (Daniel, 2007, p139), 'each person is one among others' (Golding, 2011, p414), giving a sense that strong individuals make for a strong community, and vice versa. Fostering a spirit of mutual trust is paramount, Stanley (2007), for instance, advising students that 'everybody's ideas would be welcomed and that nobody could be 'wrong'' (p173). Relatively mixed groups may assist inquiries, for 'cognitive conflicts arising from divergent peer viewpoints' (Daniel, 2007, p137) facilitate productive dialogues, in causing 'cognitive disequilibrium sufficient to trigger a thought process in the pupils that is likely to lead to a modification of perspectives' (ibid, p141).

Benefits in the Literature

Numerous potential benefits are outlined in the literature. P4C 'in the vanguard of the movement towards more thoughtful curricula' (Sutcliffe, 2011, p143), the focus is on students developing the 'smart' skills of creativity and criticality rather than 'hard' skills of memorisation and regurgitation (ibid). Vansieleghem (2014, p1306) describes P4C's usefulness to society's thriving,

though there are parallel benefits to individuals, the following extract chiming with Socrates' maxim 'know thyself':

> *The more one produces critique that stimulates the continuous making and remaking of individual and social meaning, the more one is able to transform oneself into a subject that is occupied by the development and government of one's true self. (ibid, p1305)*

In the safety of the peer-group, learners can relax and 'warm-up' (Wellington, 2000, p81), the space granted to them promoting clearer expression (Mauthner, 1997, p21). Sutcliffe (2004) contrasts the physical restrictions of empirical investigations with the '[virtually boundless] opportunities for conceptual and philosophical exploration' (p10), alongside outlining a plethora of benefits of P4C's 'natural and holistic' (p8) approach, including students' social development, responsibility, motivation, humility, optimism, tenacity, courage, empathy, and question-asking. My school's ethos and expectations seem well-aligned, delivering 'multi-cultural and holistic' education (My-School, 2007a, p5) to 'responsible, cooperative' students, who 'show... respect for the rights [and] feelings... of others' (ibid, p11). Sutcliffe (2004) also points to increased IQ levels, and sees particular potential in the 'interestingly humanising' (p12) experience of P4C for gifted students to lessen any social or intellectual isolation they may experience. In tandem with this, P4C helped Minchin's (2009) students to develop a greater sense of ownership, and to realise that they were curious about largely the same things. Furthermore, lower-ability students exhibited greater focus and engagement. Stanley's (2007) review of P4C implementation found benefits for higher-level thinking, pupils able to spend increased time on enquiries having quickly picked up the core skills necessary upfront. Seeing students' confidence increase across all subjects, she describes their having 'wonderful eureka moments' (p180) when finding new perspectives. It was hoped P4C would help students 'engage actively in the real world' (p173), an aspect that would be especially helpful in economics, it seeming somewhat abstract at times. Mauthner (1997) similarly believes P4C's student-formulated questions ensure discussion topics are 'woven into children's talk about their daily lives and social worlds' (p26), producing enquires 'of a more personal... nature' (Minchin, 2009, p310).Multifarious advantages identified by Cam (2014) include: deeper and more enduring learning (p1204), enhanced open-mindedness (p1205), better problem-solving skills and more intuitive collaboration (p1206), and enhanced questioning, connection-making, reasoning, evaluation, and elaboration (p1207). Teachers may also benefit, Baumfield and Oberski (1998) observing that facilitating P4C 'encouraged more reflection on the purpose of education and their role as a teacher' (p50).

Challenges in the Literature

Turning to the potential challenges with P4C, Vansieleghem (2014) emerges as one of the most critical voices. As mentioned above, she believes P4C catalyses students' getting to know their true selves, though believes the focus on this may in fact go too far, 'plurality and intersubjectivity... emphasized instead of logic to think about autonomy' (p1303). The possibility

of P4C being 'masculinist' is raised, students 'respond[ing] not to socially constituted desires but to individual drives' (ibid, p1304).

Vansieleghem (ibid) criticises P4C for prioritising 'becoming conscious of one's life process [and] emotions' (p1304) above academic skills such as logical thinking. Might this be a false dichotomy though, if students are developing Goleman's (1995) emotional intelligence? If a strong community requires strong individuals, then the challenge perhaps is in striking the right balance. An additional issue arises for Vansieleghem (2014) in the erosion of P4C's 'outsider' status when subsumed within mainstream education (p1300), and the nature of the self is problematised, '[personality] becom[ing] something that can be modified at will' (p1306). Furthermore, such modifications may not be for the social good, for P4C-enduced criticality 'could be merely the foundation for an egocentric and possibly amoral way of thinking' (Sutcliffe, 2004, p11), over-emphasis on the individual skirting with moral relativism.

There are temporal hurdles for P4C to surmount too. Despite building on philosophical pragmaticism, one of teachers' pressing 'pragmatic concerns [is] the crowded curriculum' (Knight and Collins, 2014, p1291). How to find time for additional activities, especially when there is constraining pressure for 'the efficient management of large numbers of pupils' (Baumfield and Oberski, 1998, p50), and the results are intangible, there being a 'lack of immediate, concrete outcomes from a thinking skills lesson' (ibid, p44)? Daniel (2007) also nods to this problem, 'socio-cognitive and epistemological progress... manifested in the long term' (p146), while assessment is typically reduced 'to observable short-term elements' (p146). There is reticence to accept uncertainty and divergence, and time must be invested in training students to be able to philosophise effectively (p145), a point also made by Stanley (2007) who found great artificiality in student-formulated questions (p176), the simple methodology 'this is philosophy, now philosophise' (p173) ineffective. Minchin (2009) reflects that she 'felt that [she] was not in control of [the students'] learning' (p309), though it is interesting to consider whether this in itself is necessarily a bad thing. There is a risk that some may grow impatient if others dominate (Mauthner, 1997, p21), Wellington (2000) alluding to 'the maverick voice or the long monologue' (p81). Cam (2014) sees a need to counter a sense of elitism around philosophy (p1206), and Knight and Collins (2014, p1291) express concerns that teachers themselves may be incapable of running P4C enquiries effectively, highlighting the crucial role of the teacher.

Sitting in stark contrast to preponderant outcome-focussed behaviourist models, the socio-constructivist underpinnings of the P4C approach necessitate an evolution in the role of the teacher accordingly (Baumfield and Oberski, 1998, p50). Planning should focus on process rather than results (ibid). Teachers may therefore feel out of their comfort zones, having to suspend their usual positions as content experts (Daniel, 2007, p145), becoming rather facilitators who mediate for particular 'patterns of speech' (Sutcliffe, 2004, p10), akin to 'midwi[ves], helping to give birth to others' ideas' (ibid, p6). Unsurprisingly, teachers' confidence in both the merits of P4C and their own abilities to facilitate it are key to successful implementation, the perceived quality of materials made available also a compounding factor (Baumfield and Oberski, 1998, p50). That 'whole school support' is required (ibid) justifies the inclusion of senior managers amongst my interviewees. An important precursor to any school-wide implementation of P4C

must be careful assessment of teachers' attitudes and training needs. Minchin (2009) warns against both 'a too 'radical' alteration [and...] 'broad-brush' implement[ation]' (p311). Separately, the need for adaptation of P4C subject matter, tools and procedures for different ages is noted by Cam (2014, p1206). Knight and Collins (2014) found a significant factor for P4C's low take-up in Australia was that teachers' own schooling had bred in them either absolutist or relativist epistemological stances, unconducive to inquiry-based learning (p1294). Many exhibited hostility to 'futile' P4C, reluctant to dedicate 'precious... time to discussing abstract ideas that are seemingly irrelevant to the concerns of the mainstream curriculum' (p1291).

Methodology

Approach

As outlined, there are purported to be both potential benefits and challenges with P4C, so this project facilitates 'us[ing] evidence to underpin [my] professional judgement' (Capel et al, 2009, p1) in incorporating P4C activities in my teaching. Relating to my own practice, and being small-scale, short-term and self-contained, this research meets Shaw's (2005, p1236) criteria to be deemed practitioner research. Malone (2003) captures a sense of suspense, researchers 'like detectives pursuing clues to a mystery, piecing together a puzzle, not knowing what the jigsaw will reveal' (p800). Through this project I undertake the first three of Capel et al's (2009, p302) five stages of action research's 'spiral of development': problem identification, data collection, and planning, but not the final two, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. I do, however, ''close the gap' between research and practice' (Noffke, 1994, p13) and look forward to subsequent implementation that this not simply be an exercise in professional development (ibid, p15). I must respect that 'the test for the truth ... is whether it 'works' in practice' (Bridges, 2003, p184), something economists are sometimes accused of neglecting.

Carr (2007) contrasts naturalists' perspectives that see no need to differentiate approaches between physical and social sciences, with interpretivists' which do, seeking to uncover agents' subjective meanings in social sciences, and my chosen method of interviewing should enable the uncovering of such meanings. Malone (2003, p799) points out that so-called 'raw' data can never be entirely raw, in requiring interpretation, my 'not so much 'truth' telling as... story re-presenting' (Sikes, 2000, p267). While quantitative data is conducive to measurement and large-scale gathering (for instance, through questionnaires), it lacks detailed personal explanation (Capel et al, 2009, p306). Capable of 'reach[ing] the parts other methods cannot reach' (Wellington, 2000, p71), interviews' open questioning affords understanding of 'the texture of reality' (Stenhouse, 1979 in ibid, p80).

Methods

Although triangulation enhances data validity (Capel et al, 2009, p307), showing the 'wider landscape' (Tyler, 2001), time and word-count restrictions prohibited this. My chosen method,

therefore, was interviewing, which can 'provid[e] some of the richest material of [a] case study' (ibid). '[C]onversational encounters to a purpose' (Powney and Watts, 1987, in Sikes, 2000, p266), interviews' interactive nature facilitates probing (Open University, 2001, p170), respondents able to offer explanations (Capel et al, 2009, p306). I employed a semi-structured format, affording flexibility within a framework, and shared proposed questions with participants beforehand (Appendix-1), allowing greater consideration on their parts, it being 'essential that informants are prepared and able... to talk for extended periods' (Sikes, 2000, p263). One interviewee did subsequently admit regurgitating prose from the internet, a response I subsequently disregarded. I avoided leading or double-barrelled questions (Open University, 2001, p171), separating out benefits and drawbacks, for instance, and was conscious not to lead or prompt (Wellington, 2000, p79). Since recording problematises anonymity and confidentiality (ibid, p77), I declined to record the interviews, thus encouraging forthrightness (p85), though, as a 'major source of error... can occur in making records of interviews' (p83), I followed Tyler's (2001, pp35-6) advice to strengthen validity by sharing written-up notes with interviewees, welcoming any amendments. I cited respondents sparingly, only quoting when certain I had recorded their comments verbatim. Seven of the interviews took place face-to-face and one through video-conferencing.

Sample

I interviewed eight people in total, including senior managers, heads of department, fellow teachers, and an experienced P4C trainer. While efforts should be made to avoid bias in sampling (Wellington, 2000, p73), I did admittedly choose people with whom I had positive working relationships, nobody turning down the invitation to participate. This may have led to a degree of over-optimism in both their responses and my interpretations; Malone (2003) cautions against researchers 'venerating' respondents (p806). Interviews' interactivity gives rise to social considerations, interviewees sharing 'the version of the information that they think is appropriate' (Open University, 2001, p170). There are, therefore, ''multiple truths' in social situations' (Wellington, 2000, p71). Thus, although some rapport helps, 'balance [was] needed between task involvement and social involvement' (Wellington, 2000, p78).

Data Analysis

Although only semi-structured, the interviews' loose frameworks all covered three broad categories: what P4C is, benefits of P4C, and drawbacks. Despite interviewees' answers often flitting between these categories, when writing up the notes I grouped utterances under these headings, thus providing an initial broad categorisation of response data. I then began my 'filtering process' (Marsh and Wellington, nd) by printing out and re-reading the notes, jotting key ideas in the margin. I began to identify emergent themes, building a list of the main points in each area. I then grouped together different respondents' views on similar themes, though carefully labelling each comment with the relevant respondent's number. I then identified key points in the literature and cross-checked these with the data, using three colours to highlight points which were in agreement with the literature, in disagreement, or neutral/ambiguous. These annotated notes then formed the basis for my discussion.

Ethical Considerations

Insider research raises moral issues (Bridges, 2003), 'ethical principles invoked... in the obligations and rights at stake in the relationship between researcher and researched' (p183). Accordingly, I strove to act ethically throughout the project. I had considered canvassing the views of students, but opted to speak just to staff. Student participants may be 'vaguely uncomfortable' due to 'issues surrounding power' (Malone, 2003, p798). Milgram's (1963) notorious pain-infliction experiment showed how deeply ingrained a tendency for obedience can be. My acting as some students' Head of Grade could have raised issues regarding the validity of any data 'obediently' gleaned from them. 'If children regard you as an authority figure, it will be hard to adopt a more egalitarian relationship in an interview' (Open University, 2001, pp172-3). All respondents received a detailed information sheet, and anonymity was safeguarded through numbering rather than naming respondents in documentation, a pseudonym also used for the school name. Written consent was obtained from respondents, their rights clearly outlined. This said, 'truly informed consent is impossible' (Malone, 2003, p812) as unpredictable issues may emerge. Also, despite withdrawal at any time being permitted, respondents rarely feel free to do so (ibid, p799). Therefore, this right was verbally reinforced to respondents. A principal participant in Malone's research declined to read the analysis causing problems in assuring its validity (p808). On reflection, rather than merely inviting my respondents to check interview notes, I could have requested their active confirmation of their veracity.

Discussion

Potential Benefits

Respondent-6 (R6) saw the use of the C in P4C as 'Colleges' or 'Communities' simply as re-branding, and R4 was frustrated and 'amazed' at P4C's thus far primary-age orientation, concurring with Sapere (nd-a) that it can be for all. The respondents showed broad agreement with the literature regarding what P4C actually is, R5 noting that P4C is not just about the ten-step process, but is more about an ethos of collaboration and reflection. The equalising of power balances in the classroom (Cam, 2014) was alluded to with every participant given a voice (R1), which along with better listening skills (R5) aids appreciation of different perspectives (R6). R4 raised the same point as Baumfield and Oberski (1998) that support from senior management is needed, though they cautioned against an 'almost religious fervour' sometimes displayed. While R2 agreed with R4 that P4C must be embedded in the overall school philosophy, that he was unsure how it should be implemented suggests that this has not yet been realised. Further uncertainty was discernible in R1's call for embedding P4C within subjects, in contrast to R6's reported plan that it will serve as a standalone course for some of the school's younger grades next year; a compromise solution perhaps. R7 reported struggling with the remit to promote cross-curricular links, sensing compartmentalisation between IB Diploma subjects, though R6 was optimistic that cross-curricular coordination would be reinvigorated next year, something

that P4C's holistic approach (Sutcliffe, 2004) could help with. R1 and R4 signalled further hope in this regard, in the school being open to innovation and new methods, the former explaining that the P4C training last year was partly due to P4C-accustomed students now coming through from the feeder primary.

Interestingly, two respondents claimed P4C was not really about philosophy itself, perhaps confirming Cam's (2014) concerns about its elitist image, their possibly doubting that something as potentially accessible as P4C could actually be philosophy. R8 shared the antithetic view that all subjects, as distinct ways of looking at the world through particular lenses, are all in fact sub-branches of philosophy. While Daniel (2007) saw P4C as more epistemological than pedagogical, R8 believed it was both, the two being inter-related, and the socio-constructivist nature (Sutcliffe, 2004) was welcomed by R7, who noted similarities with TEFL courses in reducing 'teacher-talk-time', and by R1 for students can build on each other's comments. That P4C helps to unpack questions (R6) and is better suited to subjects involving debate (R1) indicates suitability for economics. Aligning with Wellington's (2000) relaxing peer-settings, R5 believed some students' opening-up encourages others. While R7 was dismayed that some see it as a 'nice sit-down', chatting about something unrelated to their learning, this may not actually be a bad thing. Opportunities for student-to-student interaction and 'longed-for personal connectivity' were applauded by R4 and R6 respectively.

P4C's foregrounding of criticality (Daniel, 2007) was a draw for respondents, two noting that universities increasingly desire this facet. In a fast-evolving world (Minchin, 2009), students need to be able to 'unravel' things as a 'form of self-defence' (R2), while for R8 P4C could help form 'renaissance' views, balancing expertise of 'tiny windows' with wider wisdom. Creating lifelong learners (R6), could prevent students sometimes becoming 'teacher-pleasers' (R4), interest evaporating once guidance is withdrawn, and R7 hoped students could be deterred from the memorisation to which Sutcliffe (2011) alludes. Two respondents agreed with Stanley's (2007) findings that imbuing a sense of inquiry upfront leads to more efficient learning, and R4 appreciated 'more personal' learning, reiterating Mauthner's (1997) praise of student-generated questions. This could particularly aid much-needed real-world application in economics. In getting to know themselves (Vansieleghem, 2014), students could mature emotionally and overcome natural selfish impulses (R6), R8 citing older students' more advanced linguistic skills and self-awareness as being catalytic here.R5 concurred with Mauthner's (1997) pinpointing of greater space for expression, R7 enthusiastic that students' ability to form arguments, an area in particular need of improvement, could improve. R6 commended P4C's 'hands-in' rather than 'hands-up' gestures, facilitating assertiveness without overshadowing, and R8 defended P4C against Vansieleghem's (2014) charge of being overly individualistic, seeing no paradox in personal expression alongside community-building: 'think for yourself, and think for others'.

Potential Challenges

A host of concerns were nonetheless expressed by the respondents. Of particular prescience with elder children is Knight and Collins' (2014) crowded curriculum, for teachers must 'complete the syllabus' (R5), R2forced to opportunistically find 'small [P4C] moments'. For R5, primary children

having the same teachers across multiple subjects was more conducive to integrating P4C, and harnessing cross-curricular links. Echoing Baumfield and Oberski (1998), the intangible nature of results was problematic for R7, who felt it a challenge to 'sell' P4C to students given a preponderant focus by many of them (and by many teachers) on grades. R4 framed this as a tension between quality (deeper learning) and quantity (content coverage), the former facilitated by P4C, though the latter desired by parents. Focusing on primary level, externally-accredited exams were absent from the literature, though were considered a hindrance to P4C for elder students by multiple respondents, R6 the exception given the 'very broad scope' in language subjects. Regretting a lack of alignment with formal assessments, R2 wondered if P4C could shape innovative oral assessments, and R1 supported imposing restrictions to counter the boundlessness of inquiry (Sutcliffe, 2004), though would that then dilute P4C's essence?

Given the long-term nature of benefits (Daniel, 2007) and importance of teacher buy-in (Knight and Collins, 2014), R4 pondered how to enthuse globally-mobile teachers who may plan to move on after the completion of two-year contracts, and R1 questioned whether secondary teachers would actually want P4C training on their CVs. The P4C-teacher's evolved role would undoubtedly necessitate training, R3 admitting to minimal knowledge, and R5 fearing sceptical teachers can see new ideas as ignorable fads. Describing our own P4C trainer as 'so zen', R6 saw training as essential, and hoped to include some in the upcoming autumn's induction training for new faculty. Teachers may benefit of course from professional development (Baumfield and Oberski, 1998). R4 hoped staff's confidence could build, also ruing a shortage of experienced trainers in China. Linked to this, that students too would need practice and training (Daniel, 2007), was backed up by R6's reporting varied success with inquiries. They echoed Daniel (2007) in believing mixed groups can be conducive to debate, though R8 reflected that humans are naturally very diverse.P4C's capacity to aid gifted students' social integration (Sutcliffe, 2004) was not the experience of R7, for whom some students' social 'awkwardness' was amplified, perhaps reinforcing the need for training. R1 suspected that the loss of control (Minchin, 2009) would deter some teachers, necessitating keeping a 'tight rein' on things, R4 likening teachers' invariable focus on content to a 'comfort blanket'. Finally, some students' tendency to dominate (Wellington, 2000) might be circumvented through systematically inviting everyone to contribute, for example through middle- or last-words routines.

Conclusion

This research project has provided invaluable insights with which to evaluate the potential for P4C to enhance the teaching and learning of IB Diploma students. There is convincing evidence of wide-ranging benefits to students' learning from participating in student-led, teacher-facilitated communities of inquiry, with respondents' views in large agreement with the literature. The principal gains centre on improved thinking skills, including creativity, problem-solving, criticality and judgement, skills especially useful in economics. Being highly valued by universities too should bolster the appeal of developing these skills for IB Diploma students. Although some teachers balk at the power shake-up, enhanced student ownership and

empowerment, more personalised learning and internalised motivation increase the chances of students becoming lifelong learners, hopefully tempering preoccupation with exams. The holistic approach can promote cross-curricular links, improving connection-making and deepening learning.

I must be aware of the pitfalls, though, which can include over-prioritisation of subjectivity, the typically intangible and long-term nature of results, the epistemological challenge of socio-constructivism, loss of teacher control, dominant students, and time constraints. The need for whole school support suggests senior management could consider explicitly referencing P4C in school educational policies, and the appointment of a P4C Coordinator may help. Working towards achieving Sapere's preliminary P4C Bronze Award might provide a useful accreditation framework too, an award for schools that demonstrate 'commitment to P4C as a whole school pedagogy' (Sapere, nd-c). The dual needs for student and teacher training are particularly apposite. Although many learners in Grades 6 and 7 may be largely comfortable with P4C techniques, learners entering Grades 11 and 12 will have had minimal exposure, so careful consideration must be given as to how to gradually build their confidence, and convince them of them worthwhileness of the methods.

A limitation of my research was the absence of the student voice, though their views and feedback will be canvassed moving forwards. A further sampling weakness was that six of seven staff interviewees were managerial, so non-managerial teachers' voices were also largely lacking. Respondents may potentially have been overly positive if they believed greater incorporation of P4C within the school in future was already a fait-accompli, not that there is any clear evidence of this. I may be alone in the business and economics team next year in having received formal P4C training, so I must offer close guidance and support to others who are interested, alongside pushing for more formal training. Furthermore, the evaluation of actual P4C activities would have increased the rigour, the investigation then becoming full-blown action research. I remained, however, in the preparatory phase, hoping to optimise planning before eventual implementation.

I would like to do further research on the nature of the self, and its relationship with community. More specifically on P4C, it would be useful to investigate what factors determine the success of P4C implementations, a meta-study of other studies perhaps. Finally, regarding research methodologies, I was struck by seeming similarities between action research for teachers and P4C for children, empowerment and changing power balances, for instance. If action research arose due to a pivot in emphasis away from that 'which is to be learned by students' to 'student's own search for meaning' (Noffke, 1994, p11), then it would be fascinating to investigate whether Philosophy for Children is essentially a form of Action Research for Children. Its potential then might be greater still.

Postscript Reflection

Two years on from my own first P4C course, the trainer tells me his overall goal now is not to promote P4C per se, but to encourage the development of 'philosophical teachers'; the overarching goal being to help develop philosophical students through philosophical teaching, and this has influenced how my own objectives have evolved. While P4C's ten-step method provides a great blueprint in itself for inquiries, I have found it difficult to find the space within my own teaching for full wholesale, implementations of the ten steps. Rather I find I more typically adapt existing exercises that I previously used, bringing in P4C's ethos. This does almost problematise the very nature of P4C itself – what exactly is it? I feel that given the constraints of educational institutions and external exams at the elder grades, it has to be seen more as a spirit and in a way an epistemological stance, rather than just a rigid ten-step procedure, which, if followed rigorously, could conceivably take up hours for a single cycle of inquiry.

At the same time my own role has evolved, so that I am now an information-provider to a lesser extent, and a scaffolder, encourager, and celebrator of inquiry on the students' parts to a much greater extent. I find myself much less inclined to give direct answers to questions, rather finding myself more re-framing and re-posing questions back to students to help them along the path to deducing things for themselves. At the same time, I find myself more comfortable in admitting at times that I do not myself know an answer to one of their questions, more inclined to thank students for stretching my own thinking than to try to reel them in. I feel, as a consequence, that there is more space for thinking in my classroom now, students more likely to appreciate the grey in-between shades of issues instead of wanting to resolve something in black and white terms.

The IB is gradually updating syllabi to instil a greater sense of its TOK (Theory of Knowledge) course and more conceptual thinking throughout all the IB Diploma subjects. Running parallel to this, as a school, we are seeking an increasing degree of vertical integration; that is to say, placing greater emphasis on helping younger grades to prepare for the IB Diploma and develop the skills and mindsets needed for success therein. In this regard, it has been proposed that we should start to infuse a TOK feel down the school, through all subjects and grades. For me though, a perhaps more accessible and less-daunting way to paint this is to say that we should be attempting to have a P4C ethos infusing up through the school. The two might just then meet in the middle.

There are undoubtedly great potential benefits from infusing IB Diploma teaching with the P4C ethos. Indeed, P4C aligns well with the IB's own Learner Profile. Do not try to do too much too quickly, though, as it will typically require something of a culture change. Many teachers are sceptical of the ideas, seeing them as a fad, or too roundabout a way to teach, their used to simply 'telling' the students what they 'need' to know. Students too may have become habituated to principally being 'receivers' of information through years of largely didactic pedagogy. P4C shakes things up by asking students to take the lead, and this can be jolting for many. Therefore, managing the process of the introduction of P4C ideas must be handled with great care in order to get teachers and students on board.

This month, it was announced that the IB exams this year have been cancelled globally due to Covid-19. I was reflecting on this news in an audio-visual conference with my final-year students, and discussing what we might spend the rest of the class time this year doing, now that there were no exams to focus on. One student asked, 'Can we just learn what we want to learn now, go beyond the syllabus, you know… learn for fun?' As an array of thumbs-up and round-of-applause signs from his classmates lit up the screen, I couldn't help but wonder if we should cancel the exams every year.

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Appendix 1 – Interview Questions

1. What does the term P4C mean to you?

2. You have experience in using P4C methods with younger children (from 5-13-y-o…?). What have you found to be the main benefits of using P4C methods with younger children?

[only used for respondents who had used P4C at primary]

3. Have you found there to be any particular challenges of limitations when using P4C methods with younger children?

[only used for respondents who had used P4C at primary]

4. Do you see any potential benefits in using P4C methods in teaching IB Diploma students (typically aged 16-18)? (Any differences with younger children?)

5. Do you see any potential challenges or limitations in using P4C methods in teaching IB Diploma students? (Any differences with younger children?)

6. Do you see any potential benefits in using P4C methods in teaching IB Economics in particular?

7. Do you see any potential challenges or limitations in using P4C methods in teaching IB Economics in particular?

8. Do you see P4C as an area for further development for yourself, and/or any teachers you supervise, or are you focused more on other areas?

9. Are there any other comments you would like to make?