

Abstract:

Philosophy with Children, in all its guises, aims to engender philosophical thinking and reasoning in children. Much is written about what participation in philosophy might do for children academically and emotionally. What is proposed here is that by allowing children to participate in philosophical dialogue they will learn an approach that might support their participation in society which might involve them in the consideration and airing of their views, making decisions and their interactions and relationships with others. It is inevitable that by living with others one encounters others' values. It is essential, therefore, that children learn how to deal with others' values but also that they learn how to develop their own through questioning and reflection. Rather than teach children about values or teach them the values they should hold, this article suggests that children should be afforded opportunities to explore a range of perspectives but that they need to learn how to do this. In addition, though, in order to live harmoniously with others, there are considerations beyond ethics to be encountered. Children need to learn how to engage with politics, art, science, literature, and the wider range of issues that comprise life in a society. Indeed, children need to learn what is required of being a citizen. Here the learning of the child is contextualised in the Scottish *Curriculum for Excellence*, where children are expected to be able "to make informed choices and decisions" and to "develop informed, ethical views of complex issues" (Scottish Executive, 2004, p.12) as part of their education for citizenship. If being a citizen involves these elements, then there is a challenge to teachers as to how children will achieve the desired outcomes. The aim of such a curriculum is that children 'learn for life' by acquiring life skills in order that society will benefit. It is posited, in this article, that by participating in philosophical dialogue one is likely to foster appreciation for others and their perspectives, that one's own values and opinions evolve, and that this philosophical outlook may, in fact, work for the betterment of society. Indeed, what is suggested is that in doing philosophy one learns how to live well.

Keywords: Philosophy with Children; *Curriculum for Excellence*; citizenship; wisdom; living well

Filosofia com crianças: aprendendo a viver bem

Resumo:

A filosofia com crianças, em todas as suas guisas, visa engendrar o pensamento filosófico e o raciocínio nas crianças. Muito é escrito sobre o que a participação na filosofia poderia fazer para a criança academicamente e emocionalmente. O que propomos aqui é que permitindo às crianças participar de diálogos filosóficos elas aprenderão uma abordagem que poderia dar suporte a sua participação na sociedade e que poderia envolvê-las na consideração e no arejamento de suas vistas, tomando decisões em suas interações e relacionamentos com os outros. É inevitável que, vivendo com os outros, se encontrem os valores dos outros. É essencial, portanto, que as crianças aprendam como lidar com os valores dos outros mas também que elas aprendam como desenvolver os seus próprios pelo questionamento e a reflexão. Melhor que ensinar às crianças sobre os valores ou ensinar-lhes os valores que elas deveriam ter, este artigo sugere que às crianças deveriam ser proporcionadas oportunidades

de explorar uma variedade de perspectivas e que elas precisam aprender a fazer isto. Além disso, no entanto, a fim de viver harmoniosamente com os outros, existem considerações sobre ética a serem encontradas. As crianças precisam aprender como lidar com política, arte, ciência, literatura e a maior variedade de problemas que a vida em sociedade inclui. De fato, as crianças precisam aprender o que é requerido para ser um cidadão. Aqui o aprendizado da criança é contextualizado no *Currículo de Excelência* da Escócia, no qual se espera das crianças que elas sejam capazes de “fazer escolhas e tomar decisões informadas” e de “desenvolver pontos de vista informados e éticos de problemas complexos” (*Scottish Executive*, 2004, p.12) como parte de sua educação para a cidadania. Se ser um cidadão envolve esses elementos, então existe um desafio para os professores no que concerne a como as crianças vão alcançar os resultados desejados. O objetivo de tal currículo é que a criança ‘aprenda para a vida’ adquirindo as competências para a vida de forma que a sociedade se beneficie. É colocado, neste artigo, que participando dos diálogos filosóficos uma pessoa é suscetível de favorecer uma apreciação dos outros e de suas perspectivas, de compreender que os valores e opiniões de alguém evoluem, que essa visão filosófica pode, de fato, funcionar para a melhora da sociedade. Contudo, o que é sugerido é que fazendo filosofia aprende-se como viver bem.

Palavras-chave: Filosofia com crianças, *Currículo de Excelência*, cidadania, sabedoria, viver bem

Filosofía con los niños: aprendiendo a vivir bien

Resumen:

La filosofía con niños, en todas sus guisas, pretende engendrar el pensamiento filosófico y el raciocinio en los niños. Mucho se ha escrito acerca de lo que la participación en filosofía podría hacer para el niño académicamente y emocionalmente. Lo que proponemos aquí es que permitiendo a los niños participar de diálogos filosóficos ellos aprenden un abordaje que podría fundamentar su participación en la sociedad y que podría envolverlas en la consideración y ampliación de sus puntos de vista, para tomar decisiones en sus interacciones y relacionamientos con los otros. Es inevitable que, viviendo con los otros, se encuentren los valores de los otros. Es esencial, por lo tanto, que los niños aprendan cómo negociar con los valores de los otros mas también que ellos aprendan cómo desarrollar los suyos propios a través de el cuestionamiento y la reflexión. En lugar de enseñar a los niños acerca de los valores que ellos deberían tener, este artículo sugiere que a los niños deberían ser proporcionadas oportunidades de explorar una variedad de perspectivas y que ellos necesitan aprender a hacerlo. Además, para vivir harmoniosamente con los otros, existen consideraciones éticas que deben ser encontradas. Los niños necesitan aprender a cómo relacionarse con la política, el arte, la ciencia, la literatura y la mayor diversidad de problemas que la vida en sociedad incluye. En efecto, los niños necesitan aprender lo que se requiere para ser un ciudadano. Aquí el aprendizaje del niño es contextualizado en el *Currículo de Excelencia* de Escocia, en lo cual se espera de los niños que ellos sean capaces de “elegir opciones y tomar decisiones informadas” y de “desarrollar puntos de vista informados y éticos acerca de problemas complejos” (*Scottish Executive*, 2004, p.12) como parte de su educación para la ciudadanía. Si ser un ciudadano implica estos elementos, entonces existe un reto para los maestros en lo que concierne a cómo los niños van a lograr los resultados deseados. El objetivo de tal currículo es que el niño ‘aprenda para la vida’ a través de la adquisición de las competencias para la vida de forma que la sociedad sea beneficiada. Afirmamos, en este artículo, que participando de los diálogos filosóficos una persona es susceptible de favorecer una apreciación de los otros y de sus perspectivas, de



comprender que los valores y opiniones de algunos evolucionan, que esta visión filosófica puede, en efecto, funcionar para mejorar la sociedad. Además, se sugiere que haciendo filosofía se aprende cómo vivir bien.

Palabras-clave: Filosofía con niños, *Currículo de Excelencia*, ciudadanía, sabiduría, vivir bien.

Introduction

“One can never be certain that tomorrow will not bring a new and devastatingly powerful argument that will cast doubt on an opinion held today. In life... the best a human being can do is to keep challenging and testing his own views in light of others” (Weiss, 2009, p.251). This is not to suggest that as individuals we continually question our lives and the way we live to the point of paralysis and an inability to act, but that the process of living should involve a disposition to question oneself and the way in which one lives in light of those living with and around us. We hear Socrates say in the *Apology* (38a) that “this even happens to be the greatest good for a human being – to construct arguments every day about virtue and the other things about which you hear me conversing and examining both myself and others”. Whether or not this is the greatest good for a human being is a question that will not be addressed here, but that it *is* good, and therefore desirable, will be asserted. Human beings do not live isolated, solitary lives; they live in groups, in societies and communities, and these communities require to function in order that people can eat, sleep, love, and live safely in the knowledge that the structures in place will support their living. However, the structures or rules under which we live do not appear from the ether, they evolve and develop from the interactions that humans have with one another and these interactions necessitate, to a greater or lesser extent, some exploration of the values that individuals have about the ways in which we should live.

Teaching values

This exploration of values happens in a range of informal ways. People in pubs discuss the mores of their politicians or the rightness or wrongness of bankers’ bonuses, or the world economy and how the country might alleviate the suffering of those losing their jobs and struggling to make mortgage payments or to feed themselves and their children. Commuters standing in queues at the bus stop will talk about public services or the vandalism of the bus shelter or the ‘problem’ of the



youth in our cities. Parents will remonstrate with their children about the need to study, the type of girlfriend or boyfriend their child should or should not have, that children should respect their elders, and so on. Indeed, from the very earliest stages in a child's life they rub shoulders with the values of others in their lives. By being exposed to others' values, children are slowly but surely socialised into the values of others without necessarily having the opportunity to explore what they think about these values. This 'informal' approach to the learning of values is further developed in school where there is a more formal approach to the teaching and learning of values. It should be noted that children appear in many instances to be taught values rather than being given opportunities to learn *about* values and to move some way towards exploring their own in order that they might engage more fully in the informal discussions of values with their parents, teachers and peers or what will be discussed later in their lives in the pub, the bus queue or with children of their own. Such discussions, with peers, colleagues, neighbours or one's children inevitably lead us to share our views on the topic in hand, whether that is around politics, the rightness or wrongness of some behaviour, the rights of workers or the need for local amenities. We cannot have such discussions without betraying some of our values and it might be suggested that there are few opportunities for children to practise the exploration of their own and others' values in classroom contexts and this leaves them somewhat under-prepared for such discussions when they interact with a wider circle of people and views as they get older.

Schools often have programmes or teachers' packs in place that are written precisely for values education. Fernández and Sundström (2011) talk about "shaping and tempering children in certain ways" (p.364) in order that they learn the accepted behaviours of the society of which they are a part. Children are given contexts or life examples to discuss. Such examples might be formulated around fairy tales, for instance: was it right that Goldilocks ate the three bears' porridge and tried out their chairs; what should Cinderella do when her sisters are treating her badly; was it right that Snow White's stepmother wanted to kill Snow White, and so on. It's very clear in these examples what children ought to think or how they should respond. Often the discussions are extrapolated into instances that the

children might recognise from their own lives; for example, if it was wrong for Goldilocks to take what doesn't belong to her, then it is also wrong for the children to take what does not belong to them. Of course, to get the class to the point where they agree that it is wrong to take what does not belong to them, the teacher would ask a series of rhetorical or leading questions that ensure the children come to the 'correct' conclusion. This is not to say that there are not topics where children need to learn what is right, in relation to, for example, racism, sexism or homophobia. What, though, is missing in many classrooms in relation to the Goldilocks type of lesson or the input on racism or sexism is any kind of real exploration of the values or issues involved. In the vast majority of instances, the teacher has the 'correct' answer and the children have to get to that answer one way or another. This picture falls very far short of the suggestion made at the outset of the article, that it is important to challenge and question one's ideas and opinions and that the views of others should likewise be tested, this being the basis upon which one builds and conducts one's life in conjunction with our fellow human beings.

Education, however, perhaps holds the key to this 'examined life'. One might argue that without some support children will only absorb and regurgitate the values that have been inculcated in them. In some instances, the values expounded may be sound, for example, people should not be discriminated against because of the colour of their skin. What is not acceptable, though, is the assumption that children should encounter values without some interrogation of the topic or issue at hand. Certainly, racism is wrong, but it is vital that children are given opportunities to explore all sides of the arguments presented in order that they can counter arguments or reasons that are found wanting and that they can develop their own reason-giving. Mill (1985) suggests this very thing, that views should be aired in order that they may be addressed so that poor arguments or unacceptable views cannot flourish. He states,

Ninety-nine in a hundred are what are called educated men in this condition, even those who can argue fluently for their opinions. Their conclusions may be true, but it might be false for anything they know; they have never thrown themselves into the mental position of those who think differently from them, and considered what such persons may have to say; and, consequently, they



do not, in any proper sense of the word, know the doctrine which they themselves profess (p. 99).

In keeping with Mill, therefore, it is crucial that children are furnished with opportunities to engage with the views of others that they might come to some understanding of their own and that they might engage more fully in the society of which they are a part. In playing a full part in society one might expect that an individual raises questions about the world in which they live and the ways in which they and others lead their lives. Gregory (2008) proposes that children should be encouraged “to formulate their own judgements about what is what, and how things relate, and how their corner of the world could be more just, more beautiful, more meaningful” (p.7); this is part of what it means to engage fully in society. There is more, however, to full engagement in society, individuals would also challenge what they see and hear and make decisions based upon reflection on their observations or the discussions they have about their lives and society generally. Further, they would air their views in order that these might be interrogated to ensure that they are sound. Such a person would undertake to contribute to society in some way, whether that is in the workplace, the manner in which they bring up their children or the ways in which they engage with others around them and the systems within which they live. It should not be assumed, though, that children know naturally how to question and challenge appropriately; some structure or learning needs to take place to facilitate this questioning attitude.

Education for citizenship

In order to explore this issue in context, let us take one educational system and consider how the task of enabling children to explore their views and the views of others might be undertaken. Scotland is in a period of curriculum change. In August 2010 Scottish teachers – and the children in their classes – began to follow a new curriculum, *Curriculum for Excellence* (Scottish Executive, 2004), a curriculum for children between the ages of three and eighteen. The authors of the curriculum saw this as an opportunity to move further towards a cross-curricular and integrated approach to learning, where subjects were not treated as discrete entities but that subjects such as science, history, art and language might be interwoven in

meaningful contexts to promote learning. The curriculum would be more child-centred and pupil directed than that previously followed, and approaches such as collaborative group work would be promoted more explicitly. The key feature in *Curriculum for Excellence* (CfE) is that it is built around four elements, known as capacities. The four capacities to be developed under CfE are that children will all be supported to become Confident Individuals, Successful Learners, Responsible Citizens and Effective Contributors. The focus in this article is on the final two capacities, those relating to responsible citizenship and effective contribution.

It has been acknowledged that the terms themselves are somewhat vague (Biesta, 2008; Akhtar, 2010; Priestley, 2010) but this can be interpreted as affording openness and opportunities to teachers, providing greater autonomy and professional judgement about how to foster such attitudes or dispositions in the children they teach. It should be noted that teachers have been encouraged to engage in professional dialogue about what they understand these overarching headings to mean in order that some shared or common understanding is reached. This in itself is a challenge to teachers' views and perspective sharing; under each heading teachers have much to interrogate in terms of their own values. Helpfully, though, the documentation provides some hint as to the authors' intentions in setting such a curriculum.

Responsible citizenship

Citizenship is nothing new within the Scottish curriculum or other curricula around the world, but the Scottish approach is that citizenship should be integrated across the curriculum, in everything that happens within the school, rather than being a discrete, stand-alone subject (Cassidy 2008; Biesta, 2008; Kisby, 2009). Indeed, education for citizenship in Scotland aims to develop in learners the ability to take their place in society as responsible, successful, effective and confident citizens both now and in the future" (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2011). There is much discussion in academic literature around notions of citizenship in education. Buck and Geissel (2009) highlight the range of perspectives taken relating to education and citizenship. They point to the spectrum of approaches that have, at the one end, community engagement and social responsibility, and political



knowledge and skills at the other. Indeed, Biesta (2008) accuses the Scottish system of veering too far from the political in favour of social responsibility and engagement. Osler and Starkey (2003) discuss notions of cosmopolitan citizenship, focusing on the rules and structures that govern our living together as a diverse nation. Howe and Covell (2010) point to teachers' emphases being on children's responsibilities rather than on their rights and that this approach very clearly skews children's notions of what it is to be a citizen. Often, though, children are not even exposed to the term 'citizen' or 'citizenship' (Rapoport, 2010). This, however, may not be so much the case in Scotland, since with the advent of CfE and the 'Responsible Citizen' come the inevitable wall charts, awards and stickers for being regarded by the teachers as a responsible citizen – whatever that may mean.

Within responsible citizenship, children should “have respect for others [and will have] a commitment to participate responsibly in political, economic, social and cultural life” (Scottish Executive, 2004, p.12). This is all very well but it says little about what might enable one to 'participate responsibly' or what one might have to do in order to be described as a responsible citizen. The curricular documentation explains what is required of children, they will be expected to:

Develop knowledge and understanding of the world and Scotland's place in it; understand different beliefs and cultures; make informed choices and decisions; evaluate environmental, scientific and technological issues [and] develop informed, ethical views of complex issues (Scottish Executive, 2004, p. 12).

There is no suggestion, however, as to how this outcome may be achieved or that values might underpin some of what is involved in being a responsible citizen who “develops informed, ethical views of complex issues” or comes to some “understanding of different beliefs and cultures”. Certainly it may be implied in what is stated, that children should have the opportunity to explore and evaluate their own views and the views of others in order that they might reason their way to a good life or that society might be enhanced by being populated by those that question, challenge and reason about their views and those of others.

Running alongside the idea of responsible citizenship within CfE is that of the effective contributor. There is no explanation of the distinction being made between

a contributor and one that contributes effectively. Indeed, there appears to be no evidence of academic literature around this topic in relation to education. According to the curriculum authors, effective contributors are able to:

Communicate in different ways and in different settings; apply critical thinking in new contexts; create and develop; and solve problems” (Scottish Executive, 2004, p.12).

As with responsible citizenship, teachers have to determine what they understand by the notion of the effective contributor and the loosely worded phrases used in the curricular documents. It may be fairly straightforward to grasp that children should be provided with a range of contexts and purposes for their speaking and writing. What is not so evident is what is meant by critical thinking, never mind the application of it; or what it means to create and develop. Indeed, those that create and develop weapons of mass destruction may be contributing effectively, under some understandings, to society, but they may not be behaving like responsible citizens. It is just this kind of woolly thinking or loose use of language that children – and adults – encounter and it is this perhaps, that Weiss and Socrates, above, would suggest we should be armed against. Of course it is desirable that we, all of us, engage with the world around us, that we participate in society and that this may, very simply, be what it means to be a citizen and a contributor to that society, it does not necessarily mean that one is a responsible citizen. This is one of the key problems with the CfE, the adjective ‘responsible’ in relation to citizenship is never explained or described (Biesta, 2008). Indeed, with not even a shared understanding of the concept of citizenship within CfE, it cannot be expected that responsible citizenship will be any clearer. It is, therefore, one would suggest, appropriate to claim that everyone, to a greater or lesser degree, participates in society under the terms described above, but there is not space enough here to explore what the authors of the Scottish curriculum might mean when they talk about *responsible* citizenship. What is critical, though, is the way in which we support our young people to engage, to challenge, to question in order that they might participate by engaging with the world around them. There is no point in suggesting that we should have views about ethical issues or apply our thinking if we have not been taught *how* to think for the good of society.



Thinking citizenship

One solution to the issue of supporting children in how to think for the good of society is that we promote thinking in our children within schools; that thinking is encouraged and ideas shared and challenged in a supportive environment. Perhaps we can assume that we all know how to think, but it is not so clear that all are adept at articulating their thinking or responding to the thinking of others. Philosophy with Children (PwC) may be an appropriate pedagogical approach to address this very issue. Under the umbrella term Philosophy with Children, there are a range of approaches across the world, for example, Lipman's Philosophy for Children (2003), McCall's Community of Philosophical Inquiry (McCall 1991, 2009; Cassidy, 2007), Cleghorn's *Thinking Through Philosophy* (Cleghorn, 2002), Leonard Nelson's Socratic Method (Saran and Neisser, 2004), McCall's Guided Socratic Discussion (McCall, 2009) and Oscar Brenifier's approach (<http://www.brenifier.com>), to name only a few. The first, and arguably the most prevalent, is Matthew Lipman's Philosophy for Children (P4C) program (Lipman, 2003). Ann Sharp, in Gregory's (2011) *Mendham Dialogue* explains that what Lipman had in mind when creating a program of philosophy for children was "the art of making judgments that might improve that [everyday] experience... as a quest to help us to lead qualitatively better lives" (p.200). She goes on to suggest that, "You've got to be curious and questioning [about different kinds of meaning], and know how to think about them carefully, and to dialogue about them with others who think and feel differently" (p.201). This, for Lipman (2003), is crucial; philosophy is "not just something we use to practice thinking; it's chosen deliberately to help children recognise those kinds of meaning. That's an indispensable part of the search for wisdom" (Gregory, 2011, p.204).

One might posit that in the search for wisdom one, by necessity, must challenge one's views and those of others. It may not be the case that children could be described as wise, since they have limited experience of interacting in the social realm and, therefore, have had few opportunities to experiment with their thinking, reasoning and views. Of course, there needs to be some understanding of what it is to be wise or what constitutes wisdom if we are to say that children cannot be so or

that they need to practise their reason in order to become so. In *Theaetetus* Socrates challenges his interlocutor, "...isn't learning becoming wiser about the subject one is learning?" (145d). This, inevitably, leads to an examination of the nature of knowledge. Juuso (1999) makes it clear that "It is the task of philosophy to understand the general nature of human beings and society... In order to gain this philosophical wisdom (*sophia*), any contingent good or bad action is not enough, but only the ability to identify criteria for judgment, and to subject them to the test of critical discussion" (p.13). This is important. We move, with Juuso, away from notions of knowledge being key, to the idea that judgement and critical discussion are essential for the development of wisdom, of knowing how to live a good life. Indeed, this also allows one to be wise because one knows that one knows nothing (*Apology*, 21d). What is crucial, here, then, is the element around 'critical discussion' that Juuso proposes, and this may be achieved through doing philosophy with children since Lipman (1988) would view philosophy as a search for meaning which is a necessary part of our lives and in which all can participate.

Juuso (1999) suggests that Socrates and Aristotle did not recognise children as capable of thinking and reflecting, that they "lacked the ability to choose and therefore lack determination". Aristotle, he continues, asserts that children "are not capable of sound deliberation" (p.18). Indeed, in *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle asserts that children's character is formed by habit and that the adults within children's lives model the habits children should form. It is essential in forming these habits that children are furnished with experiences that allow for the practice or exercise of the desired behaviour and that they are in the company of adults exhibiting this behaviour or approach to living. The Aristotelian view of child as potential has been much expounded in the literature around children and childhood (Kennedy, 1992, 2006; Shamgar-Handelman, 1994; Cassidy, 2007; 2012; Stables, 2008) and is pertinent here in discussing how we should live our lives and the ways in which we might help children in our societies to live theirs. The model of child as becoming is not helpful if children are to be members of society. They have roles to play, as adults do, but their roles may, in some instances, be different. However, it is of little use to suggest that they are unable to engage in deliberative and reflective



activity. Indeed, there is much evidence to the contrary and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989) is premised on the fact that children are members of society and that they have something to say about the matters that affect them. Indeed, a very clear example of this exists in Scotland: in the last few weeks it has been announced by the Scottish Government that children of sixteen and seventeen years old will be given a vote in the 2014 referendum on Scottish independence. It has been proposed, by the likes of Lundy (2007), that children should be given a voice to air their views, but that they should also be provided with a space, audience and purpose for their voices to be heard and acted upon. It is in acknowledging this ability to reflect and deliberate that children learn how to be wise, how to live a good life.

Living well

Ryan (2012) proposes that it is not enough that one has what she calls “epistemic humility” (p.100), or that one has wide-ranging knowledge for one to be wise. Her focus, instead, is on one’s ability to successfully “apply one’s knowledge and successfully navigate through life’s practical and moral challenges” (p.100). She goes further and suggests that *actually* living well is a prerequisite for one’s being wise. What is required, therefore, for our children, is that we provide them with tools that equip them to steer their way through the tricky ethical terrain that is life, and that this will facilitate their becoming effective contributors and responsible citizens and, potentially, wise. Schooling and one’s personal quest for understanding will largely take care of one’s acquisition of knowledge, but being wise, if we follow Ryan, comes from the application of that knowledge and this is the challenge for teachers: how children should be supported in the application of knowledge.

This, one might suggest, is something akin to Aristotle’s notion of *phronesis* or practical wisdom that “implies a broad evaluative ability. It tells us what and what not to do” (Juuso, 1999, p.21). It is this, perhaps, that Bond Jr, almost fifty years ago,

in 1966, had in mind when addressing a conference of secondary school head teachers in the United States of America; he stated that

The really significant, humane objective is to encourage people to live in a cooperative, compassionate relationship with others... Both inside and outside the classroom we must strive constantly for involvement in experiences and rational processes which will aim at producing responsible judgment and creative action (p.151).

In striving towards this practical wisdom, one must act. Much more than thinking about the essence of a phenomenon or situation is involved; one need be sensitive to the situation and recognise possible action or actions as a result of deliberation (Lunenberg & Korthagen, 2009). Wivestad (2008) highlights this active element in practical wisdom and suggests that it enables “a person in changing circumstances to see and calculate and do what is good for oneself and conducive to the good life in general” (p.310). If it is the good life to which we strive, then it is in our education systems that we must seek answers; we must consider the approaches we take in fostering practical wisdom in our children. Gregory (2011) describes the community of philosophical inquiry as a “method of wisdom training” (p.212).

Elsewhere Gregory (2008) acknowledges that doing philosophy with children supports teachers in attaining educational outcomes that relate to, for instance, reasoning and social skills. However, he also, more importantly perhaps, records that there are other benefits for children in participating in practical philosophy. He proposes that through doing philosophy children will

become aware of the aesthetic or the ethical in their own experience, to share their puzzlement and excitement, to inquire into the problematic and to learn how to make their own sense of it all – to formulate their own judgements about what is what and how things relate, and how their corner of the world could be more just, more beautiful, more meaningful (p.7).

In short, therefore, he provides a recipe for what it is to live well. One would not deny that academic success in the form of qualifications or being able to read and write and count is desirable, but Gregory proposes much more for children, and in furnishing our children with the tools or opportunities to consider the world in which they live, then ultimately the society of which they are a part can only also



benefit and flourish. Indeed, Phillips (2012) suggests that the initial reason he established Socrates café dialogue groups in the USA was to generate a sense of empathy, social responsibility towards one's fellow citizens, that one was interconnected with the others around him/her. This should be coupled with Gregory's notion of what participation in practical philosophy might do for participants and the community or society in which they live.

Returning to the notion of responsible citizenship, it is entirely possible, desirable even, that empathy is generated and that children are taught how to formulate the judgements described by Gregory above in order that they learn how to live well alongside others. In a small local authority in Scotland, Cleghorn's *Thinking Through Philosophy* (2002) was implemented over a period of four years with children in primary schools. While there were very clear cognitive gains for the children that participated in the study, the researchers also identified that there was evidence of social and emotional development as a result of undertaking philosophy on a regular basis in their classrooms (Topping & Trickey, 2007; Trickey, 2008). It is perhaps in this area that one learns to be wise, to live well. A recent study undertaken by the author in Scotland into the links between aspects of responsible citizenship relating to making informed choices and giving reasons, and Philosophy with Children provides interesting results in terms of hearing the children's voices in what they see as the benefits of participating in philosophy session and the ways in which they live their lives.

Using Philosophy with Children in the classroom: an example

Over a period of ten weeks 133 children between the ages of five and eighteen years old participated in weekly Community of Philosophical Inquiry Sessions (CoPI) with their class teachers. McCall's CoPI (McCall, 1991, 2009; Cassidy, 2007) was used for these sessions as the teachers were all trained to facilitate this practice. In summary, as with other practices, it begins with a stimulus, usually a text that the participants read aloud, they then ask questions that the facilitator records before s/he selects one for the group to discuss. Stimuli might be drawn from newspapers,

short stories, or books written specifically for use in CoPI sessions, such as *Laura and Paul* (McCall, 2006). Subsequently, the participants engage in a structured inquiry into the question where they indicate agreement/ disagreement, importantly, providing reasons for that agreement/disagreement. Participants need not give their own opinions and there is no search for consensus or conclusions. The role of the teacher, or facilitator, in CoPI is to juxtapose the speakers' contributions within the dialogue in order that the inquiry is driven forwards. S/he can request clarification or examples, but will not intervene with her/his own questions or ideas and will not summarise either views presented or the dialogue more generally.

Prior to the ten weeks of CoPI the children were given three vignettes to which they had to respond; little scenarios where someone in the scenario has a decision to make; each vignette was adapted to be age appropriate. For example, for children in the primary school – aged between five and eleven years old – one of the vignettes was:

Michael's parents have said they'll take him and four of his friends to the cinema as a birthday treat. They have said they cannot afford to take more than four friends. Michael has five good friends he would like to take with him. What do you think Michael will do? Why? Would you do the same as Michael? Why?

The focus for the researchers was the 'why' element of the response. No moral judgement was made about the reason given, but the quality of the reason provided was scored on a four point scale, ranging from no response being made to a considered and elaborate explanation with justification and evidence of empathy and alternative perspective taking. Each child's responses to the vignettes were awarded a score of 0 – 3. There were three vignettes prior to participation in CoPI, thereby offering a potential score of nine points, and three vignettes following the ten weeks of CoPI.

One example that illustrates the improvement in children's responses is provided by an eleven year-old boy. The initial dilemma presented to the children was:



A primary class have been doing a project on helping people. They have raised some money to give to a charity. They have agreed that the money should only go to one charity so that it can make a big difference. They have made a list of three charities they like. The charities are: a charity that rescues dogs, a charity that helps sick children in Scotland and a charity that helps families whose homes have been destroyed by floods in other parts of the world.

The response that this child provided was that he would give the money to the charity that helps families whose homes have been destroyed by floods in other parts of the world “because I want most people who can get a home to live in one but their homes are demolished”. This response scored one point as the criterion for one point was that the response was ‘a basic explanation with minimal or no justification’. The three vignettes following the initial set were very similar to allow comparison. The second dilemma most closely linked to the one above was:

A primary class have been doing a project on helping people. They have decided to do something helpful for other people. They have agreed that they can only do one of the things suggested so that they make a big difference. They have made a list of three things that they could do: go to the local old people’s home to sing songs for the people who live there; make get well cards to send to children who are seriously ill in hospital; and donate toys that they will send to families in countries where there have been serious earthquakes.

The boy’s response to this second vignette was scored as three points when he stated that he would elect for his class to donate toys to children in other countries where there have been serious earthquakes “because the sick children will probably get cards off their family, old folks will get schools to come and sing for them, so to donate toys would be good. Nobody gives them toys, they only worry about giving them food”. This response was given a score of three because it fulfilled the criterion that it was ‘a considered and elaborate explanation with justification and evidence of empathy and alternative perspective taking’. This is only one example to illustrate the potential impact Philosophy with Children might have on children’s citizenship; this has been written about more fully elsewhere (Cassidy and Christie, under review). In analysing the results of the vignettes it was clear that there was significant improvement in the reasons given in the second set of scenarios against

those completed prior to the CoPI intervention. This, however, is only part of the story.

While it is vital that children learn how to reflect and are able to “make informed choices and decisions” and to “develop informed, ethical views of complex issues” (Scottish Executive, 2004, p.12), this is not all there is to living well. Even if it were, there is potentially a gap between what teachers think they are teaching and what children are actually learning. Often what is learned is determined by the teacher in their assessment of children’s performance. There is a drive in Scottish education towards more formative assessment where children are encouraged to be part of the teaching and learning process by evaluating their own and their peers’ learning. Grounded in the work of Black and Wiliam (1998) and the Scottish *Assessment is for Learning* (2002) initiative, teachers are expected to recognise the place of providing formative feedback to children, to make suggestions about how their work might be improved but also to identify strengths in the work. Similarly, children are included in this process. They are encouraged to comment on their work or the work of their peers against ‘success criteria’ in order that they can gauge what learning has taken place and the extent to which the learner has been successful in achieving the success criteria and learning outcomes for that lesson or activity. This has been something of a shift from the teacher simply marking a score on a piece of work or noting ‘good’ at the end of the page. It is this element of children’s voice that was one of the most interesting aspects of the study.

The children were asked, in one-to-one interviews and in large focus groups, what they thought they gained by participating in CoPI. The children were free to offer their own views without prompting or intervention on the part of the researchers, and the comments, noted below, reflect far more about how participating in CoPI accrued benefits to the children’s lives as members of a society, as they see it, than the academic merits of taking part in regular dialogue, although these were acknowledged. The structure of agreeing/disagreeing and providing reasons for the agreement/disagreement was seen as beneficial. The children suggested that it helped them to listen more carefully to what others were saying but that they also thought that they learned *how* to agree/disagree and that they could



do this without arguments becoming heated. They recognised that this was an important part of living with others but that listening carefully to what people are saying might mean that one can help another person to articulate their thoughts or make meaning of what they are trying to say. They considered listening skills to be 'transferable' into their lives outside the classroom. Indeed, all of the children reported that they enjoyed hearing others' views and a range of perspectives and many suggested that they considered themselves more tolerant as a consequence. They suggested that they allow others to finish what they are saying before making a measured contribution to discussions or conversations in their personal lives outside of school. This notion of sharing views and respecting alternative viewpoints in order to enhance one's own thinking and reflection was raised several times, with children explaining that it was important "to create more of an open mind" and that they appreciated the fact that they could change their mind about a topic or idea that they had previously held. A large proportion of the children said that they took the discussions from the CoPI sessions outside into their lives with their friends and families and that they often discussed things more philosophically than previously. This is perhaps the shift to which Gregory (2008) aspires for Philosophy with Children, that they move beyond the instrumental nature of using philosophy in the classroom to enhance academic performance and allow that it becomes an enriching part of one's life. It was, in fact, stated by all the children that they enjoyed participating in philosophical dialogue and that it was fun. Fun and enjoyment must, one would contend, be vital if one is to live well.

The children spoke at length about the realisation that they were part of a wider society and that it was important to challenge and reason in one's life, but that this challenging was of oneself as well as of others with whom we live. One child articulated it thus: "when you're thinking about your beliefs and then you hear what other people think, you can take that into consideration, it can maybe even change the way *you* think". It seems, from the responses, that the children considered that they developed more patience and took time to think things through in order to help them to consider issues or dilemmas in their own lives: "analysing a problem if it comes and thinking of all the different possibilities if it would happen and what I

was going to do if it did happen” was one response. Children across the age range spoke about their consideration of consequences before they acted upon something and acknowledged that this was an essential part of being a member of society.

Conclusion

It was evident from the children’s feedback in the study described above, that there is much to participating in philosophical dialogue in terms of how it impacts on one’s life, but also the lives of others. Certainly, if one wants our citizens to be wise then they must be able, if we follow Ryan (2012), to be able to *live well*. They must, by necessity, take account of the other and think about how their living has a bearing on those around them. Socrates advocated the examined life and Weiss (2009) suggests that “In the absence of moral instruction, the best we can do is talk – to each other” (p.251). It is, though, perhaps through practical philosophy, Philosophy with Children, where knowledge and understanding is shared and examined with others through structured dialogue, that we learn *how* to examine our lives, that it might translate into our actions and we may begin to live well – and wisely.

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