

Helen Griffin, Rob Unwin and Sue Hopkinson explore the relationship between Philosophy for Children and education for Global Citizenship

Philosophy for Global Citizenship

'What kind of person do I want to be? What kind of world do I want to live in?'

These are the questions used by Dr Eugenio Echeverria to introduce Philosophy for Children (P4C) to a new group of children or young people. A Mexican educator in P4C who trained with Mathew Lipman in the 1980s, Eugenio helped to establish a lively programme of training in Mexico and has worked on P4C within intercultural education with Chiapas Indians and non-Indians.

These same questions might equally be used to introduce a programme of work within global citizenship (GC). GC seeks to better prepare children for an interdependent and fast-changing world which faces an increasing number of global challenges. In a nutshell, the aims of global citizenship are to develop:

- children's awareness and understanding of the interdependence of peoples across the world and of people and the environment
- an awareness of the vast global inequalities which exist and a desire for social justice
- the motivation and capacity to be able to take non-violent and responsible action on issues that concern them

P4C and GC

Recognising that P4C and GC have developed as separate pedagogies and are both larger than the overlap between them, this article will focus on the synergy between P4C and GC. It is based on practical work carried out with primary pupils by the Development Education Centre (South Yorkshire) and schools in Sheffield, particularly Dobcroft Junior School.

The process of philosophical enquiry and the skills and attitudes developed through it are completely compatible with the aims of GC. Many readers of *Teaching Thinking and Creativity* will be familiar with the 4 Cs of thinking as a framework for P4C. Let us examine them in relation to GC.

Critical thinking

Critical thinking is a key requirement of global citizenship. In an information-rich society children need to develop the skills to engage critically with the information and viewpoints that they encounter in their lives, being able to recognise and challenge bias, indoctrination and propaganda. Thinking about the likely consequences of actions and making judgements and decisions based on good reasons are essential skills in being able to behave in ways which are not damaging to themselves, others

or the environment. P4C involves a process of opening out or problematising an issue. Through critical enquiry, understanding of the global web of political, economic, social and environmental relationships can be clarified and deepened. This process can lead to the kind of deeply reflective last thoughts expressed by a 9-year-old pupil following a dialogue about 'world peace': 'Supposing you stopped all the fighting in the world and made it illegal to even touch someone, there might be still hatred in the world among other people and people hating each other inside and that's not really peace.' Alongside this critical engagement, P4C encourages openness to other people's ideas and perspectives and a willingness to change opinions in the face of new evidence and rational arguments. These are all crucial skills for citizens to enable them to engage actively in their communities, locally and globally.

Creative thinking

Understanding and critically engaging with complex global issues can be overwhelming and lead to a feeling of disempowerment unless we also nurture the ability to think creatively and imagine different futures:

Hopes and anticipations of the future are not a transfiguring glow superimposed upon a darkened existence, but are realistic

ways of perceiving the scope of our real possibilities, and as such they set everything in motion and keep it in a state of change. Hope and the kind of thinking that goes with it consequently cannot submit to the reproach of being utopian, for they do not strive after things that have 'no place', but after things that have 'no place as yet' but can acquire one. (Moltmann, 1967 quoted p. 71, Hicks, 2006).

Through philosophical enquiry, children have the chance to wonder, speculate and try out their tentative ideas. They are encouraged to problem solve and imagine alternative possibilities.

Caring thinking

Research on P4C carried out with young children by a clinical psychologist, Elizabeth Doherr, in 2000 discovered the success of P4C in helping children to make links between thought and feelings. P4C has never merely been about intellectual enquiry, divorced from feelings and values. This bringing together of the affective and the intellectual is also essential to GC. Lifton argues that 'to be willingly involved in the Nazi death camps or promotion of nuclear deterrence requires that thought be separated from feeling' (p. 70 Hicks, 2006).

The opportunity, within a community of enquiry, to listen deeply allows children to put themselves in another's shoes,

to empathise and potentially understand. Empathy is a core skill for global citizens, for without it there can be no desire for the alleviation of the suffering of other people.

Collaborative thinking

A community of enquiry is by its very nature collaborative. Without the collaboration there would be no community. Children work together to seek answers to a question and grapple with ideas. Learning to co-operate, to work together for change has always been a core requirement of GC and co-operative activities are included in programmes of work. P4C provides a real context for collaboration. It is only through listening and working together that the goal of trying to find answers to a question can be achieved.

The ability to listen to other people, see their point of view and perhaps change one's own mind is another skill essential to living peacefully in a plural society. Peaceful dialogue between people with potentially opposing points of view and even value systems can contribute to a world where the possibility exists of tensions being resolved without the use of force or violence. At its best, P4C gives young people an experience of how it is possible to engage with people with differing viewpoints and disagree with them in a

non-confrontational way. As a child wrote in an evaluation of P4C:

'I've never looked at so many viewpoints before!' and wrote as a target for himself that he was going to put himself 'in other people's shoes'.

Commitment to action – the fifth 'C'?

GC has at its core Freire's idea of the 'constant rhythm of critical reflection and committed action without which all the understanding or knowledge would remain just words or policies' (Toh Swee-Hin p. 123, Hicks, 1988). Lipman's idea of a 'reflective citizenry' also points to this close relationship between thought and action. P4C is not about thinking in isolation from the reality of everyday life. Eugenio makes this explicit if a dialogue has become divorced from this reality by asking, 'What are the implications of what you are saying in your daily lives?' However, in neither P4C nor GC should action be imposed upon children – the educator facilitates the child making their own decisions about what is right for them and what they would like to do about it. This process can take place within a philosophical enquiry or afterwards in further curriculum work.

GC understanding through P4C

Whilst P4C, as we have seen, can develop many skills and values in common with those promoted by GC, it is also interesting to explore to what extent P4C can contribute to the knowledge and understanding aspects of GC (see,

for example, the eight key concepts in DfES, 2005). A particular issue is that a primary principle of P4C is that children choose the questions they will discuss. What if they don't choose questions that connect to issues of Global Citizenship?

With this in mind an enquiry was run with a reception class using the storybook *The Richest Crocodile in the World*, with the intention of stimulating questions around wealth and happiness or standard of living and quality of life. The class, who had only experienced one enquiry before and had been practising how to ask questions, wanted to know very practical things, for example: 'Why didn't the giraffe find the crocodile in the swimming pool?' The question that achieved the greatest number of votes was: 'How does the crocodile eat his food? He has such little hands!' Abandoning the original aim, an enquiry was carefully facilitated on the question asked – deciding that these very young children could benefit from experiencing a process which quickly and predictably led to a clear, agreed answer (one of the other children had an African wildlife video!).

A little more success was achieved, in terms of the GC knowledge and understanding objective with a class of year 6 children on the, then topical, theme of the World Cup. Using activities from Oxfam's excellent *Cool Planet* website and some statistics relating World Cup wins to continent as a stimulus, lots of interesting questions were generated around the GC concept of social justice. The joint first most popular question was 'Why can't Kibera afford what the UK can afford' (a photograph of Kibera, an African village where a game of football is being played, was used as one of the stimuli for the question generation). The facilitator was thinking at this point, 'Brilliant! I can get a fantastic enquiry on global issues out of this one', right up until the result of the second 'secret' vote on the two tie-breaking questions. He ended up having to content himself with 'Why do football players get paid so much money when we could live without them, and we couldn't live without firemen and people like that?' This did lead to an interesting enquiry with almost the whole class contributing and the teacher relating it to a recent curriculum topic on life choices. Again, the facilitator contented himself with the fact that because the enquiry had focused on a topic of greatest interest to the greatest number, it would be likely to bring the greatest development in terms of skills. The second most popular question was looked at briefly but time was running short and the school was soon to break for half-term, so it was not possible to pursue it again whilst still fresh in people's minds.

Attempt number three was made with a year 5 class using as a stimulus one of the videos in the *What Makes Me Happy* series that features children making and flying a kite in Sri Lanka. Despite their material poverty – the community

in the film is still recovering from the Asian tsunami – the children are very cheerful and the story is engaging. This time it was, again, the second question 'Why were they so skinny?' rather than the one with the highest vote 'Why did they celebrate when they lost the kite?' that seemed to offer the best GC content opportunities. Again time was too short to do justice to the second question during the first session, but this time the question was returned to the following week. Interestingly, the child who asked the question was of Asian heritage himself, and despite the mirth that first accompanied his suggestion, just genuinely wanted to know why children who looked quite like him should be different from him in that respect. The short follow-on enquiry led into a discussion of issues of diet, poverty, wealth and happiness, the price paid to farmers of coconuts and tea, and Fairtrade (the enquiry actually took place during Fairtrade Fortnight 2007).

The possible learning points from these experiences are that, whilst P4C makes an undoubted contribution to GC skills and values, it should not be relied on, even when GC stimuli are used, to deliver GC content. If it could, then perhaps the integrity of the process being applied should be questioned. However, there would be a case for making use of those 'second questions' as a starting point for further enquiries or other work in the curriculum with the support of other excellent GC resources which can be accessed from local Development Education Centres. In fact, one enquiry in response to the stimulus

Something Beautiful, and starting with the question 'Are there lots of people who are poor?' used with a year 3 class, could have provided enough curriculum material for a half-term's work. Stimulated by a picture of a woman sleeping in a cardboard box and motivated by a genuine desire to know whether there were poor people in the UK, the children's discussion ranged across the issues of homelessness; whether you should give money to beggars or not; poverty in Africa and Pakistan and whether that is worse than poverty in the UK. Further curriculum work based on this enquiry could have looked at definitions of poverty, including relative/absolute poverty, and the merits of charity, aid and other kinds of action. If the children's other questions ('Why do people chuck rubbish in people's gardens?' 'Why did the people write "die" to make it worse?') had also been tackled, then work could have been done on sustainability and environmental improvement. Given the proviso above about caution in dictating the content outcome of an enquiry, P4C can be an ideal starting point for any GC curriculum programme, since it potentially not only opens up an issue, but enables the teacher to really start to get to know where the gaps in children's knowledge and understanding might be. It could equally be used profitably at any point in a programme of work where a philosophical question arises naturally. (Go to www.yhgsa.org.uk/database/index.cfm to access a GC resources database or www.decsy.org.uk/P4GC/index.html for more examples of GC stimuli for P4C.)



A whole-school approach to GC and P4C

P4C, with a clear focus on global citizenship, has been a valued part of the whole-school curriculum at Dobcroft Junior School, Sheffield, for the past four years. Having been trained at level 1 (SAPERRE) thanks to an Oxfam project, I introduced the technique to staff during an INSET day, and set each year group up with a philosophy box of stimulus materials: stories, pictures, poems and newspaper articles. As part of our whole-school staff performance management objective of thinking skills, each teacher was expected to conduct at least one philosophy circle (community of enquiry) each half-term. By Easter the majority of staff were enjoying regular philosophy circles with their class, recognising the fabulous starting point for many areas of discussion and study. P4C is used in literacy, science, RE, themed topics, PSHE, and is now of course an integral part of the new SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) programme. Ten members of staff are now trained at level 1, and we have become a training school for P4C and, in fact, in June are welcoming an American teacher to school, who read a newspaper article about our work in philosophy on the internet and is fitting us into a study visit here!

What has P4C, and in particular the global aspect, given to our school? A huge amount! Staff confidence and understanding, about how to handle some of the deeper and more sensitive issues of life has grown – poverty, war, bereavement, independence, freedom, pollution. Our children are used to having open and reasoned discussions about areas, often beyond their experience, but which they know touch humanity. They start with opinions and ideas often brought from home and the media. Philosophical debate accessed by relevant-age material allows the children to join in at their level of understanding. They listen brilliantly, share their thoughts and respond to challenge and differences from others. They are expected to give reasons for their views and debate openly across the circle with the teacher as facilitator. As classes become proficient, the teacher observes and occasionally guides, but is able to let the class steer discussion. There is a final round in which children share what they have learnt from the circle and tell if they have altered any of their views. The children love it!

What is the benefit? Our pupils learn to articulate and share opinions confidently and sensitively! They become more knowledgeable about the wider world and its needs, understanding their own privileges and also recognising that we don't all think and behave in the same way. They are brimming with ideas on many subjects. It was wonderful to see the determined and happy faces as the Y6 yesterday tackled the SATs writing on recycling! In

fact our achievement in writing has risen and drew the comments from Ofsted in 2006 'exceptional standards in English' along with the judgement 'outstanding school'. They also commented, 'Philosophy lessons make extremely effective contributions to moral development', and in the letter to children said:

You are some of the most responsible and caring children that we have met. The school's values, which we know that you appreciate very much, help to make sure that you are very good global citizens and will be valuable members of society in the future.

Finally, we are thrilled to become the first school in Yorkshire and Humberside to receive the highest level of Global Citizenship Award, partly due to our innovative and inspired teaching, which all began with the remarkable P4C programme!

Helen Griffin, Rob Unwin are from the Development Education Centre South Yorkshire and Sue Hopkinson is deputy headteacher of Dobcroft Junior School, Sheffield.

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