

**To what extent does Philosophy with
Children promote the discussion of political
philosophical themes?**

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Abstract

This study consisted of a seven-week period of action research with a Primary three class, investigating the potential use of the Community of Philosophical Inquiry (CoPI) model of Philosophy with Children to allow children to explore political ideas. The stimuli consisted of letters based on traditional tales and newspaper articles which lent themselves to political themes such as; equality, human rights, happiness, tolerance and safety. The rules of CoPI were explained prior to each session and, after reading the stimulus, questions which 'puzzled' the participants were raised. The facilitator chose the question which had the greatest potential to lead to a philosophical dialogue and the participant who offered the question was asked to explain their thoughts regarding it. Political philosophical themes arose as the children discussed and offered new ideas to the group. Analysis of audio-recordings highlighted evidence of political philosophical themes and thus the success of the CoPI model in allowing children to explore such ideas.

Introduction

The 2014 Scottish Independence Referendum marked an extremely important event in Scotland, and indeed globally. The granting of the vote to sixteen and seventeen year olds highlights a historical shift in terms of the concept of the child. Young people are now being considered as mature and able enough to participate in the decision-making processes which will affect their lives and the enfranchisement of young people has now become a global talking point and debate amongst many political leaders. With 89% of sixteen and seventeen year olds participating in the referendum, it is evident that young people do have an interest and desire to have their views and opinions heard. This has extremely important implications for education. As highlighted by Biesta (2011), the Scottish approach to education for citizenship has a much greater focus on social dimensions of citizenship and only narrowly focuses on the political. This study aims to respond to this concern through the investigation into the possible implementation of Philosophy with Children in classrooms, in order to provide opportunities for children to engage with political ideas.

Literature Review

Education for Citizenship in Scotland

Education for Citizenship in Scotland is not a new focus. *Primary Education in Scotland* (HMSO 1965) highlighted the need for children "to learn in a context of reality by seeing, doing and talking" (p.13) in order to develop as citizens (Cassidy & Christie, 2014). The 5-14 curriculum (Scottish Office Education Department 1987) maintained the element of education for citizenship (Cassidy & Christie, 2014) and within the current Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) it is again not lost. Indeed, "Responsible Citizenship" is one of the four key aims of the curriculum (Scottish Executive, 2004).

Following the establishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1999, the Scottish Executive and the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum (later to become Learning Teaching Scotland and then Education Scotland) produced a discussion and consultation paper in 2000. A more detailed

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paper (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2002) aimed to identify the features of education for citizenship and advise on its implementation (Cowan & McMurty, 2009). This document is the most detailed when defining citizenship and describing how education can contribute to the capacity for citizenship (Maitles & Deuchar 2004; Ross, Munn & Brown, 2007; Biesta, 2008; Akhtar, 2010; Cassidy & Christie, 2014.). It is thought to have influenced the conception of citizenship within CfE (Akhtar, 2010). The 2006 *Education for Citizenship* paper (Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education 2006) is also important because HMIe (now also part of Education Scotland) has a powerful influence on teachers' practice (Cowan & McMurty, 2009). Furthermore, this paper highlights the understanding of 'citizenship' found in schools as the examination of schools gives evidence of the interpretation in practice of the broad prescribed outcomes of Scottish education policy (Biesta, 2008).

Biesta is a key author on the topic of citizenship education in Scotland (see for example Biesta 2004, 2008, 2011). His analysis of policy documents suggests that an individualistic approach to citizenship, one that focuses on individuals and their citizenship responsibilities (Biesta, 2011), prevails throughout the LTS (2002) document. The document opens with the statement "Schools... have a central part to play in educating young people for life as active and responsible members of their communities" (p.6), suggesting that citizenship will only follow from the acquisition of a particular set of characteristics (Priestley & Biesta, 2013).

The Scottish approach also aims to encompass a broad range of understandings of citizenship. This is evident within the description of a "Responsible Citizen" which outlines that "a commitment to participate responsibly in political, economic, social and cultural life" should be developed (Scottish Executive, 2004). LTS (2002) further asserts that "citizenship embraces a range of participatory activities, not all overtly political" (p.8). Therefore the concept of citizenship that underpins the Scottish approach has a strong emphasis on social dimensions and only narrowly incorporates the political (Biesta, 2008).

The emphasis placed on "active citizenship" is problematic due to the ambiguity of this term. LTS (2002) outlines that children should be active: "in the sense of people being able to act and participate in various communities" (p.10) and so the document is rather vague about which activities can be categorised as "active citizenship". Lawson (2001) outlines that opinions about what active citizenship entails differ because there is not a universal definition of citizenship (Connolly, 1983; Lawson, 2001; Ross, Munn & Brown, 2007). Biesta (2008) argues that active citizenship can either contribute to politicisation or it can essentially be 'non-political'. The Scottish approach to active citizenship seems to be on a form which falls within the social spectrum: a form of 'good-deeds' citizenship (Biesta, 2011).

The notion of the "community" within the LTS (2002) document is again, problematic. It is explained that children should interact with communities on a local, national and global level. However, Biesta (2008) outlines that "community" is used as an unproblematic notion, suggesting it is clear what these communities are. There is a strong tendency within literature to view communities as if they are the same (Lawson, 2001; Biesta, 2004). Biesta (2004) argues that cultural and social communities have similarities but this is not how we should understand political communities. He argues that the very purpose of democratic politics is to deal with the fact of plurality: members of our society have different ideas about what matters to them.

Although discussing the UK rather than Scotland specifically, it is important to examine the views of Crick who led the advisory group on citizenship education in 1998 which published the influential 'Crick Report' (Munn & Arnott, 2009). Crick writes:

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The interpretation of 'community involvement' that underpins the Citizenship curriculum in the UK will involve a conception of the community that sees it simply as a place or neighbourhood where students are merely 'active' - *doing* good rather than *political* good (i.e.- *informed, effective citizens*). (cited in Munn and Arnott, 2009, p. 115).

Being active in the social sense of citizenship is of course extremely important. However, arguably there must be a balance of experiences in order to prepare children for all aspects of their citizenship lives.

The Political Dimensions of Education for Citizenship in Scotland

LTS (2002) outlines that children should develop democratic skills and dispositions such as "negotiation, compromise, awareness of the impact of conflict...and well-informed respect for differences between people" (p.9). It says that children should develop an awareness of rights and responsibilities underpinning democratic and other societies", "the causes of conflict and possible approaches to resolving it" and "the barriers to full opportunity to exercise citizenship arising from socio-economic circumstances, prejudice and discrimination" (p.12).

The HMIE (2006) document explains that education for citizenship must instil skills of critical thinking in children and this involves thinking about issues that affect them. Therefore, LTS (2002) and HMIE (2006) do provide some overview of the political dimensions which should be explored but the description is rather vague. When HMIE (2006) gives a "portrait" of current practice, much of this falls within the social dimension of citizenship (Biesta, 2011). For example, working towards achieving an Eco-Schools award (Keep Scotland Beautiful, 2014), learning about Fair-Trade and raising money for charities.

In response to the announcement of the Scottish Independence Referendum, Education Scotland published a short briefing paper (Education Scotland, 2013) with a focus on 'Political Literacy', the purpose being to ensure young people can participate in society's decision-making processes. The document gives guidance on effective approaches, including discussions, voting and interdisciplinary studies. These approaches, it is suggested, should be taken within the context of contemporary events such as parliamentary elections and major topical issues. Perhaps this renewed interest will re-balance the social and political dimensions within education for citizenship but this is yet to be investigated. However, arguably issues still remain within this recently published briefing paper.

The briefing (Education Scotland, 2013) does not explicitly define the term 'political' but when explaining the contexts within which political literacy should be developed, it has a focus on the more formal domain of politics: voting and parliamentary elections, linking to what might be called civic education where children learn about their country's political structures (Cassidy & Christie, 2014). Akhtar (2010) argued that some teachers may be discouraged from exploring political ideas due to the risk of being accused of indoctrination and Annette (2009) argues that more research is needed into how people understand "political" as it relates to our everyday lives. With a universal definition of "political dimensions", teachers may be more willing to explore issues related to; being tolerant of others, striving for equality and so on.

Why a Political Dimension is needed

A strong emphasis on the social dimensions of citizenship runs the danger that citizenship will become de-politicised and as a result pupils will not be sufficiently empowered to be active citizens who are equipped to make a change (White, 2012). Additionally, Akhtar (2010) asserts that placing an emphasis on particular strands of citizenship whilst neglecting others could lead to inconsistency in the quality of provision of education for citizenship throughout Scotland.

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Maitles and Deuchar (2004) argue the renewed interest in education for citizenship arose as a result of near “moral panic” in Britain that the young were uninterested in politics. They based this view on low turnouts of young voters in the 1999 EU election, the 2001 General Election and the 2003 Scottish Parliamentary election. However, they found that children are increasingly engaged in political issues such as environmental issues and poverty. Arguably, the publication of the Education Scotland (2013) briefing on political literacy highlights a similar panic. The briefing has a central focus on the education of newly enfranchised pupils as it urges the context of the referendum be explored. The participation of sixteen and seventeen-year-olds highlights their interest greatly, with 89% participating in the vote (McInnes, Ayres & Hawkins, 2014).

The *Standards in Scottish Schools etc. Act 2000* insists that children are involved in pupil councils which facilitate their voices in decisions which affect them. However Priestley (2014) argues children’s voices are often consulted in primary-seven when they are provided with greater freedom, yet they are often not given this again until they reach the senior phase of secondary school. The enfranchisement of sixteen and seventeen year olds has engaged young people in political processes, perhaps because their opinions are now being valued and sought after. Evidently, democratic dispositions and a desire to be politically active and informed need to be instilled from a younger age and more research is needed into effective ways to achieve this. It is clear that pupil councils, although idealistic in their theory of raising pupil voice and participation in a democratic process, are neither the most effective nor the only way to achieve this.

The Role of Philosophy with Children

PwC arose in the 1970s as an educational programme initiated by Lipman in the USA- Philosophy for Children (P4C). Since then, the practice has grown in the field of education (Vansielegem & Kennedy, 2011) and it has been adopted and reinterpreted by the likes of Matthews and McCall, founder of her own CoPI model. McCall (1991) explains that as well as providing a space to discuss philosophical ideas and develop knowledge through being exposed to the ideas and experiences of others, models of PwC also provide the opportunities for children to build their skills of listening, reasoning and recognising fallacies and assumptions. These are the skills needed by citizens to be active in making decisions which affect their lives and the life of the community in which they live.

McCall (2013) explains that in order to engage in CoPI a vast range of empirical knowledge is not needed. Thus there is perhaps potential in the use of CoPI to allow children to explore political philosophy: issues surrounding “how we should live together” (McCall, 2013, p.253) and themes relating to such issues are prevalent in children’s literature. Within the tale of Goldilocks, underlying themes relating to our freedom to enter other’s property and our treatment of those who are different from us arise. CoPI might allow these themes to be thought about abstractly, in relation to our own lives and exploring political philosophical themes in this way could also overcome the fear of indoctrination held by some practitioners. Indeed, a previous study conducted by Cassidy and Christie (2014) investigating the effects of CoPI on children’s reasoning skills, found political content within children’s dialogue. This highlights further the potential of CoPI to promote greater exploration of political ideas in schools and the need for this to be researched further.

Therefore, in order to overcome the lack of political dimensions within the Scottish conception of education for citizenship, perhaps an approach such as PwC could be implemented. This would not only provide children with the opportunities to discuss and reflect upon ideas found in political philosophy, but would instil in children, the skills and dispositions required for responsible citizenship in the wider democratic, pluralist society.

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Methodology

The study was carried out with one class of 20 girls and 9 boys in Primary 3, (aged 7 and 8 years old), within a suburban primary school in Glasgow. The study involved all of the children in the class because the focus was on the dialogue as a whole rather than the individual pupils.

Seven texts, which lent themselves to political philosophical themes, were selected from “Teaching Citizenship through Traditional Tales” (Ellis & Grogan, 2003) which aims to encourage the exploration of citizenship ideas. Articles from the children’s newspaper ‘First News’ were also chosen, as well as ‘The Metro’ which has a low reading age and was therefore suitable for the pupils involved.

Seven sessions were held over a ten week placement in the school and each was recorded using a dictaphone. Recordings were listened to repeatedly and key quotes which highlighted evidence of the questioning and discussion of political philosophical themes were transcribed, a qualitative data analysis method described by Wilson (2013). The children’s dialogues were analysed through the comparison with the thinking of political philosophers. Pseudonyms are used to protect the children’s identity.

CoPI structure

The PwC method chosen to be implemented was McCall’s (1991) CoPI. Following the guidance of Cassidy (2007), the participants began with a stimulus which was a written text that they read aloud together, sitting in a circle. This ensures that the participants discuss with each other rather than feeding back to the facilitator (Cassidy, 2007). The children are then asked questions based on what they found “puzzling” as McCall (1991) argues this term usually brings out more philosophical topics. These questions were noted along with the name of the participant who asked them. A question which was deemed to have the most potential to lead to a philosophical dialogue, was then selected by me and the participant who offered the question was asked to explain what they found puzzling about it. The other participants became involved in the discussion by raising their hand to show that they had something to contribute. When chosen, the participant stated whether they agreed or disagreed with a point and explained why, contributing any other ideas. I aimed to bring together different philosophical perspectives by selecting the order. There was no search for a conclusion or consensus as is the case in other methods of PwC as the purpose was to inquire which gave an insight into issues rather than provide an answer (McCall, 1991). The participants did not need to give their own opinion during the sessions and they had to use everyday language in order to establish an equal platform upon which the discussion could take place (Cassidy, 2007). Additionally, participants were not permitted to refer to any higher authority, for example, a textbook or relative as it was the individuals own thinking that was important (Cassidy, 2007).

Results and Discussion

Due to the philosophical nature of the study, the results and analysis are presented simultaneously. As each session is analysed in turn, a critique is made in relation to the research question to allow for, both, the political philosophical themes to be analysed as well as the effectiveness of the CoPI in allowing these to arise. Due to the extensive nature of the transcripts, key quotes from the dialogues which represent the key themes, have been presented.

Session one: Snow White and The Seven Dwarves

Although this was the children’s first experience of participating in CoPI, philosophical questions arose, for example: *why does she not let him have his right to be dirty?* Showing evidence of questioning reasons regarding the denial of our rights and questioning relationships between citizens.

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Political themes of human rights and hierarchy arose. Scott suggested that Grumpy didn't have to listen to Snow White because he was born with the right to be dirty:

"Well it's not her life, it's his life so he should have a right to do whatever he wants... if he wants to be dirty he can be dirty and if he wants to be clean he can be clean."

This suggestion links with Paine's philosophy that we are all born free and equal (Warburton, 2014). Disagreements around the monarchy were presented, such as Snow White must be listened to because she is a princess:

"I disagree because Snow White is a princess of the country they are living in, so Grumpy should listen to her."

When asked to justify this view, Fiona explained:

"...she is a princess and the princess is the ruler so she tells everyone what to do and everyone has to listen to her or they will get in trouble."

This prompted agreements that Grumpy may be punished for his disobedience. Consideration was also made for the comfort of the other dwarves as Kathryn argued that Grumpy would be unpleasant to live with:

"...he would be all dirty and it wouldn't be nice for the rest of the dwarves and he would be all smelly."

These themes link with everyday issues; most prominently, the idea that we should respect other people's freedom to live their lives as they wish but also that to live in a peaceful society, it is important to consider others, which is why there are people of authority and laws in place to ensure peace and fairness. It also links, therefore, to Rousseau's philosophy that those who fail to act for the general good of the state should be forced to be free, but with that freedom comes a loss of protection from the state (Warburton, 2014).

Perhaps my facilitation could have encouraged a deeper philosophical exploration. For example, encouraging Fiona to define what she meant by Grumpy's "right" would have encouraged deeper thinking into what a right is and why rights are important.

Session two: The Three Billy Goats Gruff

The question: 'why are they trying to break into his property, it is his, isn't that against the law?' was chosen due to its political philosophical nature as it questions the moral correctness of breaking into someone's home. Themes surrounding morality of theft and the need to share arose. It was suggested that:

"...if there was grass in the treasure chest they would be happier because that's what they normally eat."

I encouraged the dialogue by asking if this would make it ok to steal the treasure. This prompted disagreements as some maintained:

"No because it's not their stuff"

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"No because they are breaking into his house and stealing stuff and it's not very nice and he will get angry."

"I agree... you can't just break in and think 'they will never catch me'."

Alternatively, Adam suggested:

"...you can steal sometimes because he is just being greedy and you have to share."

Researcher: *why do you have to share?*

"In case the goats don't have money to survive."

Therefore explaining that it is necessary to share to ensure the survival of the goats as they might not have money or resources. The dialogue links to Mill's thinking. Mill outlined that morally right actions are those which maximise total happiness (Warburton, 2014). These political philosophical themes are evident in our society and children will encounter this kind of knowledge when participating in a democratic society in which people come together and share resources to solve problems and ensure survival.

Session three: Jack and The Beanstalk

The philosophical questions: *'why don't they split it half and half, one half on them and one half on the rest of the world?'* *'Why don't they share with the poor?'* arose. Therefore, questioning issues related to class systems and the imbalance of wealth.

Utilitarian thinking arose through the discussion of the best use of Jack's money, suggesting that there would be a greater distribution of happiness if the money was shared. Therefore linking with Mill's Greatest Happiness Principle which Warburton (2014) put simply as *'actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness'* (p.274):

"I think they should share with the poor because it wouldn't be very nice if they just spent it on themselves"

This led to a discussion on fairness:

"...if the rich people had lots of money and the poor people didn't then that wouldn't be very fair"

Researcher: *"What do you mean by 'fair'?"*

"It wouldn't be kind"

However, Kathryn maintained:

"...they could have got a job so they could get money like our mums and dads go to work and that's how they get money"

This idea suggests that it is not the role of rich people to help the poor, highlighting an individualistic view regarding poverty; one which favours little state intervention (Wilson, 1996).

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The children therefore developed their knowledge and views in relation to the ongoing issue in our society of the gap between the rich and poor and the difference of opinions also made links to debates regarding the payment of benefits. They explored reasons as to why such a gap could occur and suggested possible ways to overcome the problem albeit on basic level but nevertheless, beginning to think critically and develop independent opinions on similar matters.

The children began to provide original ideas, whereas, during the initial sessions, they would often simply agree and repeat what had been said previously. As outlined by McCall (2013) a CoPI cannot be immediately created but emerges as a result of sustained practice over a period of time. This was evident in this session as Ross shared that he agreed with Michael *"because he is smart"* rather than contributing his own thoughts regarding the issues being discussed.

Session four: "Is this Fair?" (First News article 21/1/15)

Philosophical questions arose: *'why can't we share?' 'why can't the rich give to the poor?' and 'why can't everyone in the world have the same amount of money'* Therefore, similar to the previous session, questioning the gap between the rich and poor.

Further themes arose in relation to equality, on this occasion, discussing the imbalance of wealth on a global scale. Initially, the question was responded to very literally as Michael discussed the practical implications for transporting money to poor people in third world countries:

"...they can't give money because it's too difficult for them to get the money and they would need computers."

This notion continued and it was discussed that charities can collect money for the poor, therefore highlighting, again, that a CoPI takes time to emerge. Adam put forward a more philosophical response, exploring the causes of war:

*"...if you didn't share the world might go out of balance and there might be a war."
Researcher: "what do you mean out of balance?"*

"It won't be the exact same amount of money on each side."

Researcher: "Do you think there is a balance now?"

"Yeah there's a balance."

This argument makes links with Paine who was eager to find a government system which ensured fairer ways of sharing wealth (Warburton, 2014).

On reflection, the dialogue could have been encouraged to explore the issue of war at a deeper level had I asked Adam to provide an example explaining the balance of wealth in the world. Additionally, dialogue of a more philosophical nature began to emerge when I changed the question to *"why can't everyone in the world have the same amount of money?"* highlighting the key role of the facilitator to undertake an instant analysis in order to decide how to drive the discussion further.

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Session five: "Ex-PM's son lands a win against OAP: Supreme Court backs Tory peer in dispute" (Metro article, Jane Cassidy 7/1/14)

Political philosophical questions arose surrounding the decision made by the Court with regards to laws on ownership of land; *why are they forcing him off the land when he has been looking after it for seventeen years?*

Further utilitarian thinking was highlighted as the children contemplated the consequences of the ownership of land in relation to happiness:

"I don't think they should force him off the land because if they do he might miss it...they should just leave the man alone because he takes care of it very well. He's not doing any harm."

This also links with Locke's philosophy that human labour adds value to land and thus is what determines who has a right to property (Warburton, 2014). The philosophical inquiry was driven further by Adam who considered the consequences of the decision on the community:

"Some people might use that free wood to make a shelter if they don't have a house."
Kathryn then took this idea further:

"I agree...maybe the people are dying and they need money to help them survive so they might sell firewood for money to get medicine."

Therefore highlighting a development of her thinking as a result of the suggestion made by Adam. The children shared their knowledge and views with regards to how to decide who should own something and decisions such as these are regularly made within communities, whether it be on a national scale, for example, the government decisions to clear land in order to allow for fracking or on a local scale, within the school community, deciding who should be allowed to play where in the playground. The children showed a systematic form of decision-making; considering happiness and the consequences on the wider community, linking with the findings of Cassidy and Christie (2014) who found that CoPI enhances children's reason-giving.

Session six: "The World's Oldest Schoolgirl" (First News article, 21/1/15)

The question 'Why do they allow her to go to school?' was chosen to be discussed. This is a political philosophical question as it relates to ideas such as anti-discrimination, fairness and equality for all. It was suggested that it was only fair to let the lady attend school now:

"...all of the children are getting to go, the 7 and 8 year olds and...so she should be allowed to go now."

Therefore highlighting themes related to the need for equal opportunities for all. It was discussed that:

"She's finally getting the chance to learn... she might learn to write and read...and she has friends and she is happy."

Again, the children considered happiness when exploring the question. Their dialogue makes links with political philosophical themes such as tolerance in a plural society and respecting the wishes of autonomous citizens, therefore making links with Mill who asserted that the only grounds for preventing action is if that action is going to cause harm to others (Warburton, 2014).

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Session seven: Little Red Riding Hood

Philosophical questions arose: 'Why are they trying to make her move out if she doesn't want to?' 'Why isn't she safe on her own?' and the children explored themes associated with caring for others in our society. Many pupils agreed that it would be safer for Granny to move:

"...the big bad wolf might be near"

"...there might be violent animals out there and they don't know what might be coming, without a husband she can't live alone"

Interestingly, therefore gender stereotypes also arose as this argument highlights a view that there is a need for male presence to ensure safety of women. Differing perspectives might have been contributed if I asked for a reason as to why Granny can't live alone without a husband.

Others held onto their view that granny should be left alone:

"Why can't they just leave gran to live in harmony, they want her to be safe but she might already be safe, she isn't doing anyone any harm."

"It's granny's choice because they can't force her, maybe she's having fun in her own house"

Adam veered away from the story and talked about the elderly in general and this prompted agreements, suggesting that there is a need to help the elderly as sometimes they are incapable of making responsible decisions with regards to their safety:

"When they get older they are too weak so if they get attacked they have no defence so I think it is right for them to force Granny to move."

"I agree... in real life they would be put in a care home"

"Sometimes if old people lose their minds, we have to help them."

These ideas link with political issues in our society such as ensuring the safety of citizens and links were made to Mill again who argued that paternalism, that is controlling the behaviour of others, is justified towards those with a mental illness because they are incapable of making responsible decisions themselves (Warburton, 2014). It is important that children develop opinions regarding safety to ensure that they are capable of deciding whether an intervention is necessary in ensuring the survival of others.

What political themes arise in children's dialogue?

The themes that arose in the children's dialogue were of a political philosophical nature and made links with our everyday lives; sharing, the greatest happiness, the common good and caring for the elderly and respecting differences. Many of the questions raised by the children and the ideas shared, linked to the political philosophy of Mill, Kant, Rousseau and Hobbes. This links with the argument of Matthews (1980) that children will raise the kind of questions academic philosophers are puzzled about, only with simpler vocabulary.

The themes discussed are consistent with the description of what the exploration of 'political' should entail within Scottish curricular documents. LTS (2002) highlights the importance of learning about "rights and responsibilities underpinning democratic and other societies, the causes of conflict and possible approaches to resolving it and the barriers to full opportunity to exercise citizenship arising from socio-economic circumstances, prejudice and discrimination" (p.12). References to all such aspects were made throughout the children's dialogues. Furthermore, the children discussed

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themes stemming from newspaper articles which highlighted major issues such as poverty and the imbalance of wealth and this is consistent with the approaches to political literacy, outlined by Education Scotland (2013).

The dialogues exploring letters based on traditional tales highlight that political themes are prevalent in many well-known children's stories and thus, the exploration of these within the classroom provides a means to explore themes without the risk of opposition from parents which some practitioners fear (Haynes & Murriss, 2008). Additionally Annette (2009) discussed the need for a clearer definition of 'political' as it relates to our everyday lives and the themes found in this study can contribute to this definition.

In what ways might undertaking a CoPI provide children with the opportunity to discuss political ideas within the classroom?

The results provide evidence of the success of CoPI in providing conditions for children to discuss political ideas in the classroom. The findings are consistent with those of Maitles and Deuchar (2004) as many of the features of CoPI mirror the structure outlined by the teacher in their study; an open, pupil-driven discussion in response to weekly newspaper articles chosen by the pupils. Additionally they highlighted the need for an attitude of 'critical affirmation': a desire to 'understand, appreciate and take on board the insights of other people which have arisen from their unique perceptions and experience' (Ashton & Watson, 1998, p.191) and this was evident within this study as the children's ideas developed and changed as a result of the exposure to the thinking of their peers.

The teacher in the Maitles and Deuchar (2004) study highlighted the need for facilitators to be as objective as possible so as not to influence the children's ideas. She aimed to ensure the discussion was pupil-driven, thus, taking a step back. However, in CoPI the facilitator has a key role in helping children to follow the direction of the conversation and push for depth of thinking. Upon analysis of the recordings, at times, the philosophy could have been driven further by my facilitation. My reflections are consistent with writers of CoPI (McCall 1991, 2013, Cassidy, 2007) who urge for high quality training from experienced and qualified staff.

There is an emphasis within Education for Citizenship guidance that children should engage with communities. Participation in a CoPI allows for this and links particularly with Biesta's (2011) description of a political community as children are being given an insight into and learning from the different views of others. Therefore not only are they engaging with political ideas through participating in a CoPI but children are developing an awareness of the need to communicate with and be tolerant of others which is essential for life in a plural society.

The CoPI structure provides a means to explore political ideas with pupils, without the risk of indoctrination, a fear which is held by many practitioners. The facilitator is 'philosophically self-effacing' (Echeverria & Hannan, 2013): it is their role to bring to the fore the arguments participants have in favour of and against a position, allowing pupils to decide which stance to adopt.

Conclusion

This project aimed to address Biesta's concern that the Scottish approach to Education for Citizenship fails to take account of the political dimension of citizenship. The study explored the features of this dimension, the reasons why it is essential and the effectiveness of the CoPI model in allowing the exploration of political ideas. Political philosophical themes arose, often linking with the thinking of academic philosophers. These themes are consistent with the features of the 'political dimensions' of Education for Citizenship (LTS, 2002, HMIE, 2006 & Education Scotland, 2013) and

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thus, the findings have identified CoPI as a successful tool to explore political ideas. This has important implications for Scottish education for Citizenship practice as political dimensions were often found to be lacking, running the risk of children becoming essentially 'de-politicised'. The literature highlighted that some practitioners fear exploration of political ideas risks indoctrination. Annette (2001) argued for a clarity of definition of 'political' as it relates to our everyday lives and the political philosophical themes which arose during this study contributes to this definition. Furthermore, the CoPI model itself evidently provides a means for teachers to explore these themes with pupils without influencing their views: the children constructed knowledge socially through the exposure to the ideas of their peers.

Analysis of the transcripts highlighted some limitations of the study such as the need for facilitators of CoPI to be trained by a specialist to ensure opportunities to encourage a deeper philosophical inquiry can be recognised. Nevertheless, the findings suggest that teachers with a basic knowledge of philosophy and PwC can still facilitate a philosophical inquiry, even if at times it is of a rudimentary level.

At times, the group-size and time constraints had a negative impact on the philosophical dialogue. Often, the quality of the dialogue would improve towards the end of the session and therefore, more time for each session would have been beneficial. Moreover, it was clear that some children struggled to think more abstractly and share their opinions, with the example given previously of the very literal thinking regarding the giving of money to the poor and a longer study may have given richer philosophical dialogue as the children would have been given more time to become familiar with the reasoning process.

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