

How effective is Philosophy for Children in contributing to the affective engagement of pupils in the context of secondary Religious Education?

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Abstract

This paper reports the findings of a predominantly qualitative study that explored the effects of the practice of Philosophy for Children (P4C) on pupils' affective engagement.¹ From its conception, the practice of P4C has been linked to the development of caring and collaborative thinking and the study aimed to closely consider that relationship. An appropriate self-designed P4C program was implemented with 75 Year 9 pupils (aged 14 and 15) of Religious Education (a compulsory subject in the British education system in which pupils explore world religions in a non-confessional manner) at an independent secondary school in the United Kingdom. An interpretive research approach was taken and thematic analysis was appropriated to analyse the data. Findings supported the claims of previous research that P4C can foster affective engagement in many pupils, particularly those pupils who find emotional expression and interpersonal interactions challenging. A tentative conclusion reached supposes that P4C has the potential to contribute to the affective engagement of pupils, but with the recommendation that implementing a P4C program must be executed carefully and with the mindfulness that it may not have the same potential or usefulness for all pupils universally.

Key words

affective domain, caring thinking, collaborative thinking, Community of Inquiry, Philosophy for Children

¹ This research was conducted at the University College London. The author is currently a doctoral candidate at the University of Birmingham.

Introduction

Pierre and Oughton (2007) point out that the majority of modern research on educational pedagogy focuses more acutely on cognitive development than affective development. It was the aim of this study to explore the link between Philosophy for Children (P4C) and the aspect of pupils' affective engagement that corresponds to their caring and collaborative thinking. As argued by Lipman, Sharp and Oscanyan (1985), 'if philosophy for children is not good education, it has no place in the schools. The burden of proof is then shifted to the program itself to demonstrate the differences it can make in the students to whom it is taught' (p. 48). With this in mind, the overall research question was: *'how effective is Philosophy for Children in contributing to the affective engagement of pupils?'* The two sub-questions that emerged during the analysis process were: *'how effective is Philosophy for Children in contributing to the emotional engagement of pupils?'* and *'how effective is Philosophy for Children in contributing to the interpersonal engagement of pupils?'*

On a wider scale, the study has important implications. In recent years, there has been increased support for the implementation of P4C into schools as a means of furthering caring and collaborative thinking in young people (Charles 2011). This has coincided with greater attention being paid to young people's affective learning. Silverman (in Davis & Rimm 1994, p. 404) argues that emotional sensitivity can be an extremely positive force in a young person's life and, as stated by Fisher (1995), 'good schools tend to work on being caring schools' (p. 150). The significance of caring thinking is echoed not only by researchers and scholars but also by legislators and educational bodies (Collinson, Killeavy & Stephenson 1999; Ofsted 2007; Department for Children, Schools and Families 2007; Humphrey, Lendrum & Wigelsworth 2010). Therefore, a broader purpose of the study is to draw closer to identifying whether P4C can be a useful step towards this goal, which can, in turn, lead to an examination of policy surrounding the inclusion and implementation of P4C in schools. For the purposes of this research, Philosophy for Children (Lipman 1988, 1994, 2003) is understood as an inquiry-based approach to learning using the discipline of philosophy and the concept of Community of Inquiry (CoI) to promote complex thinking. The CoI can be described as a group of people engaging in collaborative reasoning and discussion of a philosophical question with the aim of achieving a better shared understanding of the subject of discussion.

The affective domain and caring and collaborative thinking

The research presented here focused on young people's affective learning. A general understanding of what constitutes affective learning can be gleaned in relation to Bloom's Taxonomy. While the cognitive strand of Bloom's Taxonomy is the most widely used educational model (Krathwohl 2002), Bloom recognised three domains of educational activity: cognitive, affective and psychomotor. The first domain relates to the intellectual development of the learner; the second domain focuses on emotional and social capability and the third domain is centred on the furtherance of physical skills.

A difficulty arises when describing the affective domain in relation to the ambiguity of the term itself, therefore a clear and comprehensive definition of this concept was integral to the study. Bloom (1956) defines the affective domain as emphasising 'a feeling tone, an emotion, or a degree of acceptance or rejection' (p. 7). More recently, Lang (1998) has defined the affective domain as a 'significant dimension of the educational process which is concerned with the feelings, beliefs, attitudes and emotions of students, with their interpersonal relationships and social skills' (p. 4). There are two essential features in these elucidations that served as a foundation for the final definition of the affective domain adopted for this study: *concerned with emotions* and *concerned with interpersonal relationships*. This led to a final definition of the affective domain as *the dimension of learning that is concerned with emotional and interpersonal engagement*.

Lipman and Sharp (1978) identify four aspects of complex thinking, which are now known collectively as the '4 Cs' of P4C: critical thinking, creative thinking, caring thinking and collaborative thinking. This paper is primarily concerned with thinking of the latter two types, which correspond closely to the affective domain. In the Society for the Advancement of Philosophical Enquiry and Reflection in Education's Level 1 Handbook, designed to guide P4C practitioners, caring thinking is defined as 'listening (concentrating) and valuing (appreciating)' (SAPER 2007, p. 17). Collaborative thinking is defined as 'responding (communicating) and supporting (conciliating)' (SAPER 2007, p. 17). These concepts will now be explored in greater depth.

Caring thinking, according to Lipman (2003), is higher order thinking that manifests as emotion, decision and judgement. He states, 'the emotion *is* the choice, it *is* the decision, it *is* the judgment. And it is this kind of thinking that we may well call caring thinking, when it has to do with matters of importance' (p. 271, emphasis in original). While Lipman identified caring thinking as a type of complex thinking, Sharp

expounded the concept further, arguing that it is 'a particular type of intentionality that shows itself especially in our relationship with other persons' (2004, p. 11). Caring thinking includes the desire and actuality of effecting positive change and growth, particularly relating to our interpersonal connections.

Collaborative thinking involves listening to, interacting with and communicating positively with others to work towards a common goal. It is demonstrated by pupils participating and building on each other's ideas and acting as part of a community (Hymer & Sutcliffe 2012). Collaborative thinking is most successful when there is a feeling of trust between those who are working together.

One of the considerations that arose while looking for shared definitions of these concepts is the question of whether the emotions and communications demonstrated by caring and collaborative thinking must be positive. This issue is recognised by Sprod (2003) who claims that the intentionality that is prominent in caring thinking is not always necessarily positive. He states, 'to care about something or someone may not imply a positive attitude' (p. 24), using the example of resentment as a negative feeling associated with caring about another person. This consideration can also be applied to collaborative thinking. It could be the case that a group of pupils are collaborating with each other successfully to disrupt a classroom activity such as a P4C inquiry, rather than collaborating with each other to conduct a successful inquiry. Although it is not within the scope of this paper to provide an infallible answer to this challenge, it is important to mention that this present study was concerned with positive examples of caring and collaborative thinking.

Caring and collaborative thinking are not standalone or mutually exclusive concepts. In fact, to be a caring thinker one must also be a collaborative thinker, and vice versa. Caring thinking is apparent in our relationships with others and collaborative thinking involves trust and care for others. Lipman (1988) stresses that these two types of thinking should be in balance during an inquiry and claims that a fruitful inquiry must include 'listening to one another, learning from one another, building on one another's ideas, respecting one another's points of view' (p. 148). For this to happen, pupils should be *conscious* of the 4 Cs, not only by being made aware of them, but also by being encouraged to embody and develop them.

Caring, collaboration and P4C

To promote caring and collaborative thinking, a suitable process must be used and, according to many educationists (including Lipman 1994; Sharp 2004), the discussion-

heavy CoI is a designedly appropriate method for this. It is no surprise that Sharp (2004) calls the CoI 'the hotbed of care' (p. 12). According to Sharp (2004), the CoI 'affords [participants] an environment in which they can grow emotionally as well as rationally, socially as well as politically. It is in such a context that they experience authentic dialogue, respect for each other as persons, a growing mutual trust and ability to communicate' (p. 12). If this is the case, it seems prudent to suppose that the process of P4C would help develop the caring and collaborative thinking of the pupils who partake in it.

The CoI by definition involves pupils working together towards a better understanding of the world, and ideally, out of this co-operation trust and openness (Sharp 2004). Pupils care not only about each other but also about the process and the outcome of the discussion, and this care must be apparent for the inquiry to be a success. Therefore, as stated by Sharp (2004), 'the very practice of communal inquiry carries intentionality and constitutes care' (p. 12). Hyland (2012) wisely notes that caring thinking does not merely operate for the individual but also for the inquiring group and even the ethos of the institution as a whole. Pupils are working together to inquire rather than operating on an individual level. This route is not a one way street but a reciprocal process and, in an ideal inquiry, the care and collaboration pupils show for others is offered to them by their peers in return. Overall, it is clear that both care and collaboration are integral to the success of a P4C inquiry.

To date, much of the research on the effects of P4C on young people has focused on its cognitive benefits. In their study of the cognitive effects of collaborative philosophical inquiry on pupils, Trickey and Topping (2004) established that philosophical discussion can sharpen pupils' cognition and can lead to improvements in cognitive ability if practised regularly for a significant amount of time (one hour a week for 58 weeks in the case of Trickey and Topping's study). In a replica study on pupils in both Scottish and American schools, Fair et al. (2015) found that weekly one-hour sessions of P4C could have a meaningful and positive effect on the cognitive abilities of pupils over the course of 22-26 weeks.

There appears to be less research focused on the effects of P4C on the affective domain (although Trickey and Topping note that, as well as cognitive development, improvements in behaviour, participation and empathy were noticeable in their participants). It has been recognised by some scholars that there is a disregard for and potentially even a 'collective fear' of the affective domain (Pierre & Oughton 2007, p. 1), which stems from the belief that it is both difficult to measure and unpredictable. Pierre and Oughton (2007) further note that 'it's not that affective outcomes are

ignored in formal documents, but rather the exploration of them in teaching and evaluation strategies that is ignored' (p. 1). Hyland (2014) proposes that the affective domain 'has gone largely un-noticed in UK curriculum policy and practice' (p. 277) and Markle and O'Banion (2014) succinctly delineate the issue when they state 'the affective domain has remained the stepchild of the taxonomic trilogy when it comes to funded research, practice, and programs' (p. 2).

There has, however, been some relevant research undertaken concerning the effect of P4C on emotional and interpersonal development of pupils. One of the most compelling studies offering conclusions regarding the effect of P4C on the affective domain is the research of Mehta and Whitebread (2003) conducted in a school in Southern India. The study was constructed to analyse the effect of P4C on the moral development of pupils aged 12-13 years over the course of 22 sessions. The researchers used both pupils' self-reports and their own observations to conclude that the interpersonal and emotional development of participants was significantly and positively affected by exposure to P4C. In particular, development was apparent in interpersonal dynamics with participants becoming 'more confident and co-operative' with one another as a result (Mehta & Whitebread 2003, p. 10). In self-reports, pupils mentioned an increase in their self-confidence and in their emotional understanding of others.

Haas (1975) conducted a US-based study to assess the effects of P4C on 400 fifth and sixth grade public school pupils over the course of one semester. She discovered that those who participated in P4C demonstrated significant development of their interpersonal relationship skills in comparison to those who did not participate in the P4C programme. Haas identified the P4C method as a possible reason for this development. She concluded that the open and accepting environment of the CoI provides an easier communication process between pupils, and its discussion-based nature allows for more peer-to-peer interaction (Haas 1975).

Golding, Gurr and Hinton (2012) state that after participating in P4C, 'students develop into caring thinkers concerned with others' (p. 93). They ultimately witnessed a 'thinking school', where pupils participated extensively in P4C sessions, and discovered that the school's ethos had become more caring as a result of the sessions. One reason for this positive change was that pupils were 'expected to support one another and seek support when needed' (2012, p. 94). Another reason suggested by the researchers was that the school applied the CoI method throughout many of their classes, adopting a whole school approach rather than using the pedagogy in P4C sessions only.

Sasseville (1994) studied two groups comprised of pupils from third to sixth grade over the course of five months, one that participated in P4C and the other that did not, and found that the group that was exposed to P4C demonstrated a significant gain in self-esteem. He concluded that the spirit of the CoI can provide a successful way for pupils with low self-esteem to increase their confidence as a result of being listened to and valued by others.

These observations add credibility to the suggestion that P4C can have a positive effect on the affective engagement of pupils.

Methods

The objective of this interpretive, predominantly qualitative study was to explore the relationship between P4C and affective engagement. The overall research question, *'how effective is Philosophy for Children in contributing to the affective engagement of pupils?'* was explored through two sub-questions: *'how effective is Philosophy for Children in contributing to the emotional engagement of pupils?'* and *'how effective is Philosophy for Children in contributing to the interpersonal engagement of pupils?'* The participants of the study were three Religious Education classes of Year 9 pupils (aged 14 and 15) totalling 75 pupils. Pupils participated in four weeks of P4C sessions, each lasting 40 minutes and occurring three times a week, resulting in pupils receiving twelve sessions in total. It should be noted that the duration of the study falls significantly below Fair et al.'s (2015) identified threshold of the time it would take for P4C to have a lasting cognitive impact on pupils. A longer study including pre- and post-test measures would be required to offer strong evidence for any correlation between affective development and engagement in P4C.

The three teachers included in the study were the author and the two other faculty members of the Religious Education department at an independent secondary school. All the teachers involved in the study had extensive P4C classroom experience and were given a training session from a SAPERE Level 2 certified P4C facilitator before the study took place. The teachers were also given clear and detailed guidance for the sessions, through the provision of a scheme of learning designed specifically for the study and thorough an initial meeting during which they were talked through the scheme of learning step-by-step. The scheme of learning was not only designed to facilitate the CoI, but also to explore different philosophical concepts and include opportunities for self-reflection. The pupils' RE classrooms served as the research site; therefore participants were familiar with and comfortable in their surroundings,

which was thought to increase the validity of the study by reducing the likelihood of pupils behaving artificially (Glesne & Peshkin 1992).

Data was collected in a number of different ways. Observational data was gathered by filming the final P4C sessions with each class, which was advantageous because it provided a way to directly witness participants' emotional and interpersonal behaviour and engagement with session activities. Questionnaires (see appendix) served the two-fold purpose of retrieving the personal opinions of pupils about their own development and gathering statistical data from the entire cohort, giving the considerable advantage of obtaining feedback from all participants. The self-report (pupils completed the questionnaire individually) and fixed-question (meaning that pupils chose from fixed answers – yes or no) questionnaire focused on the effects of P4C on pupils' emotional and interpersonal engagement. For each question, there was opportunity for pupils to add further comments if they so desired, entailing that both quantitative data (in the form of percentages of 'yes' or 'no' answers to each question) and qualitative data (in the form of the further comments pupils provided) was gathered.

Two types of interview were conducted: one-on-one interviews with the teachers who facilitated the sessions, and pupil focus group interviews with subsets of each participating class. For all the interviews, pre-planned but open-ended questions were posed about how P4C had affected pupils. The purpose of this semi-structured style was to allow interviewees to discuss their experiences in depth without the restriction of closed-ended questions. The qualitative information garnered from the interviews provided a first-hand indication of both pupils' and teachers' views on pupils' emotional and interpersonal engagement. The pupil focus groups were comprised of a randomly chosen sub-sample of three pupils from each of the participating classes. Interviews were audio taped, transcribed verbatim and analysed. It was thought that a trio of pupils would be optimum as participants would feel able to speak their opinions freely and individual voices would be discerned more easily, resulting in accurate transcriptions. Teacher interviews were conducted one-on-one after all sessions had taken place. These conversations were included to gain observational information about how pupils had developed through session participation, particularly through examples of pupil behaviour and specific case studies.

Findings

Due to the interpretive nature of the study, data was analysed through direct interaction with the phenomena being studied. In view of the research questions, evidence of the phenomena of emotional and interpersonal engagement in participants was sought. The main analysis method used was thematic analysis, which can be defined as ‘a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data’ (Braun & Clarke 2006, p. 83).

Themes were drawn from patterns of response from questionnaires and interviews. The relevant themes that emerged were as follows: ‘*self-expression*’, ‘*understanding the feelings of others*’, ‘*interaction with classmates*’ and ‘*confidence in communicating*’.

Self-expression

When asked whether participating in P4C had affected their ability for self-expression, a minority (43%) of participants answered ‘yes’ but the majority (57%) answered ‘no’. A number of pupils commented that they were already able to express themselves confidently, a typical comment being: ‘I have always been quite a confident expresser of emotion’.

However, of the comments collected from questionnaires, 26 comments mentioned an increased ability to express themselves. Reasons given by the respondents for this perceived effect included:

- Everyone listens to what they say
- Everyone has a chance to speak
- The interactive nature of lessons
- No fear of being judged and getting it wrong
- The ‘circle’ structure of sessions

Comments included:

- ‘As everyone listens to what you say, you feel free to express yourself’
- ‘It makes you realise that no-one is going to make fun of your opinion’
- ‘In philosophy for children lessons I can express my views clearly and without fear of being judged’

Focus group discussions echoed the reasons given in the questionnaires, with comments including, ‘you are a lot less restricted about what you can say’ and ‘you have more of a chance to say things’. In addition, pupils in the focus groups

demonstrated openness and a willingness to express their feelings about P4C without appearing nervous or worried about the reactions of their peers. All nine focus group participants felt that P4C had helped at least *some* pupils in the classes express themselves effectively. When talking about why they felt able to express their own feelings and emotions so readily, one pupil responded: 'other people build on them'.

In video footage of one P4C session, one pupil felt comfortable enough to share very personal thoughts about an experience that had happened in their life within a group discussion. Pupils making emotional statements and responding to others with sentiment and empathy was a frequent occurrence in the footage and, in general, they demonstrated a readiness to divulge emotions in the discussion without the appearance of worry. For example, during one discussion about the morality of privacy, a number of pupils expressed strong feelings of sadness about personal experiences they were told about, seemingly without embarrassment.

Responses suggest that there was a relationship between pupils feeling that they are comfortable, listened to and given respect, and their ability to express their feelings. This finding was reinforced during the teacher interviews, with one teacher highlighting their belief that the P4C environment allows for pupils to feel able to express themselves, asserting that 'students feel very comfortable and very supported in that environment'. Both teachers emphasised the belief that P4C had particularly enabled less able pupils and those pupils who had previously struggled to express their emotions, with one teacher stating 'I have heard more insightful contributions from the weaker students' and 'their body language is a lot more relaxed than it would be in a more formal classroom environment'.

Understanding the feelings of others

When asked whether participating in P4C had affected their ability to understand other people's feelings and emotions, 51% of pupils surveyed answered 'yes' to the question and 49% answered 'no'. From those respondents who answered in the affirmative, reasons given generally attributed this impact to the opportunity to listen to others' points of view in sessions.

One pupil remarked: 'people put their feelings forward more often [than in other lessons]' and another said 'it has shown me how other people feel', demonstrating that some pupils believed P4C had enabled others to share their feelings more, allowing them to comprehend the feelings being put forward. Another pupil wrote: 'it has helped me listen to people better'. Some pupils explained that these listening

skills were also beneficial to their own understanding, with one commenting: 'I can see how people feel about certain things because the lessons have taught me to try and see and understand things from a different perspective'. These typical comments indicate that the collaborative nature of P4C allowed pupils to understand the reasons of others.

In focus groups, pupils reinforced the supposition that they felt able to listen to and understand the views and feelings of their peers through P4C.

Pupil A: 'you learn other people's views and you empathise with them a bit'.

Pupil B: 'Yeah, you have to respect their views. It's not someone who lived a long time ago, it's someone now and you can respect what they think and no-one laughs at each other or anything'.

Despite this, not all pupils agreed that P4C had this effect and two commented in questionnaires that P4C did *not* help them develop in this area:

- 'I will always be awful at that because other people's emotions get on my nerves and so I don't have time for them'.
- 'I still respect others' feelings at the same level as before'.

Although P4C sessions appear to provide a powerful opportunity for pupils who are able and/or receptive to affecting their ability to understand others' emotions, perhaps it may not always help pupils who are less receptive or less able to develop in this way as much as pupils who are *already* very good at understanding others. It could equally be argued, in interpreting the second pupil comment, that P4C may not advance a previously high ability to understand or respect others' feelings. It was noticeable in video footage that many pupils demonstrated heightened empathy. For example,

Pupil C: 'people who have felt pain appreciate happiness a bit more'

Pupil D: 'if you have been through a bad time ... you will feel more happy doing things that will make you smile ... if you forgive [someone], that, in turn, makes them feel happier ... no-one deserves pain ... as a species we are taught to grow as a species and develop'.

These findings suggest that P4C can provide *many* pupils with an opportunity to express themselves that is not usually given in a typical classroom setting. This opportunity may be due to factors including: the physical structure of sessions; pupils listening to each other readily and all pupils being given the chance to share their emotions. However, as the video data was collected at the end of the study, without a

pre-intervention baseline for comparison, it cannot be assumed that this behaviour was a direct result of the P4C sessions.

Interaction with classmates

When asked whether participating in P4C affected the way they interact with classmates, a minority (47%) of participants answered 'yes' and a majority (53%) answered 'no'. Of those who said that P4C had affected this element of their classroom behaviour, many stated that the 'circle-time' nature of P4C had allowed them to be more open with their classmates. One pupil stated: 'there are more opportunities to share your points and it is more interactive as we sit in a circle so we can see everyone' and another said: 'because we are in a circle it makes it more open and easier to discuss ideas with my classmates.'

Many pupils commented on the collaborative nature of P4C and how the sessions had helped them to come together as a class to launch an inquiry. Typical comments include 'I really enjoy these lessons. They are a lot more open, and I can think about things that interest me greatly and speak my mind about important topics. They are also a lot more friendly - people work together' and 'it all helps us to come together as a class and think as one whole class.' One pupil explained that increased confidence led to positive interactions with others: 'as I feel a bit more confident and have learnt a lot more, I can interact better with them'; and another 'you learn to have more respect for your classmates'. Such responses demonstrate the belief of many pupils that the sessions increased confidence and mutual respect and created a comfortable and tolerant environment. This promotes effective social interaction, supporting Sasseville's (1994) conclusion that the CoI can lead to increased confidence and self-esteem.

The inquiry-based nature of P4C was also cited as a reason for positive interactions between classmates, with one pupil stating: 'we participate in discussions as a class instead of separately in our books which contributes to a more interactive lesson.' Comments like this demonstrate that many pupils believed P4C gave an opportunity for whole-class debate that was not apparent in 'normal' lessons. The collaborative nature of P4C was recognised by many pupils: 'when you are arguing for or against a point, it makes you talk to people, co-operate, and help others out.' and 'it makes me listen and understand different viewpoints because everyone can speak and we all listen to each other'. These comments suggest that pupils have an awareness of collaborative thinking and that this can help the class interact successfully.

Focus group discussions also highlighted the potential of P4C sessions to allow pupils to interact with other pupils who they may not have been previously familiar or comfortable with: 'I think maybe you get to know your classmates a little better, because you get to hear their views' and 'you get a chance to speak to people you don't speak to more often'. It was clear that the pupils interviewed felt that P4C had facilitated teamwork within the class with one pupil stating: 'we all have our own ideas and when we share them we combine them and share them and make them better'. These findings align with Mehta and Whitebread's (2003) observation that exposure to P4C can result in co-operative behaviour and respect between pupils.

Two pupils stated that although P4C sessions had helped them develop rapport and connections with other pupils in the class, this was restricted to classroom interactions only, and that once outside of the classroom, they would not be 'more friendly' with classmates. While further research on this finding is required, it suggests that although P4C may help *inter-classroom* relationships this may not necessarily extend to developing interpersonal relationships outside of lessons.

The footage of the P4C sessions showed numerous occasions of pupils working together to inquire about a particular philosophical question. Rather than making isolated points that did not relate to the comments of their peers, pupils were collaborating and responding to each other, building on previous points and working as a team to further the discussion. As one pupil stated during one of the inquiries: 'people are working together to get one point across'. This finding supports the idea that within P4C sessions, at least, the CoI can help pupils to be collaborative thinkers and co-operate with one another, enhancing interpersonal skills. That said, and to repeat, further research is needed which examines the potential impact on lasting effects outside of the classroom or indeed to other lessons, particularly since this study was conducted over a short period of time and included only a small section of the student body at the school.

Confidence in communicating

When asked whether participating in P4C had affected their ability to communicate in class discussions, a majority (58%) of participants answered 'yes' and a minority (42%) answered 'no'. Of those who responded 'no', some pupils commented that their communication skills were 'already very good', and some commented that their skills had remained 'the same'. Many pupils who responded positively felt more able to participate because of the welcoming atmosphere of the CoI environment, reinforcing the notion that the openness of others allows for effective communication. A number

of pupils again referred to the circle format of the discussion and how this had helped them feel that they could communicate more openly. One pupil stated: '[P4C is] much more including of everyone in these discussions' and another said: 'It feels more welcoming to more suggestions by being in a circle'.

It was clear from teacher interviews that both teachers questioned believed one of the main effects of the P4C sessions to be increased communication, particularly for pupils who struggled with peer interaction. One teacher stated: 'for the vast majority, students' comments reflect much greater engagement with one another rather than just streams of consciousness'. The same teacher gave the example of one of their pupils who had previously found communication with peers difficult.

Teacher A: I've really noticed in the last few weeks ... P4C has had a huge impact on this student because his whole body language now is much more faced ... towards his peer group ... his level of eye contact has increased with his peers. It is evidence for me that P4C has had real impact on his communication skills and social skills and I think as a result it has had a real impact on the group.

The teacher also claimed that the entire class had responded positively to the sessions in the manner in which they supported and communicated with each other: 'I think they have become very supportive as a result of this process'.

Another example from the same teacher demonstrates how sessions aided group communication: 'There's a number of students ... who were very outspoken atheists ... and were intolerant of theist views or religious beliefs ... what's been wonderful to see is this handful of students are so much more tolerant of other people's views and much more inclusive of other people's views'. The teacher concludes: 'pure and simple they are just listening to each other more'. The other teacher who was interviewed also had very positive things to say about the effect of the sessions on the communication skills of the pupils in their class:

Teacher B: The 4 C's has really helped, it's really memorable ... the way they know what they're trying to achieve ... one child was getting really aggressive with his views, and three students in his mini group said 'you're not being caring, you're not being collaborative' and he didn't take it in as an affront and it was handled in a really neutral and clever way.'

Discussion and implications

While the sample size involved in this study precludes generalised statements, the findings align with previous research which suggests that engaging in P4C on a regular basis of at least once a week can contribute to the emotional and interpersonal engagement of pupils, but that the extent and nature of this contribution is complex. From the perspective of the teachers interviewed, pupils who experienced difficulties co-operating or sharing their feelings with others at the outset tended to demonstrate the most development in relation to their affective engagement. The findings also reinforce Haas's (1975) claim that P4C can have a positive effect on a child's interpersonal relationship skills. Feedback from teachers about the development of particular pupils who are less emotionally expressive and slower to interact with others adds weight to the claim that P4C allows some pupils of this type to feel willing and able to interact effectively with others.

The quantitative data suggests that many pupils *did not feel* that P4C affected their emotional and interpersonal engagement. The qualitative data, however, demonstrates that the sessions can potentially make a positive contribution to many pupils' emotional and interpersonal engagement. In particular, evidence from teacher interviews concerning specific pupils who they believed to be positively affected demonstrates that, for these pupils, P4C can have a meaningful effect on both their ability to successfully interact and collaborate with their peers and their ability to express their own emotions. A number of reasons were alluded to for this emotional and interpersonal engagement, including the collaborative nature of the process of the CoI and the trusting environment that it fosters, supporting Sharp's (2004) claim that caring and collaborative thinking are necessary aspects of a successful CoI.

A number of other interesting observations were made from the research data. Generally, the teachers believed the extent of the positive benefits of P4C on the sample to be greater than the pupils did. From a pupil perspective, around half of those questioned believed that P4C had impacted their emotional and interpersonal engagement positively and clear reasons were suggested for this perceived impact. Most prominently, pupils identified the open and comfortable environment of the CoI, and the spirit of listening to and respecting the views of others as reasons for this phenomenon. Those pupils who did not notice a positive effect were neutral (they did not believe that P4C had affected them negatively). Some pupils believed that P4C should be an occasional practice rather than a regular, frequent occurrence and thought that they would learn more through content-based learning. Therefore, it can be surmised that the Maieutic nature of P4C does not appeal to *all* pupils – some may

prefer more 'traditional' teaching methods. That said, those pupils who find the CoI challenging and uncomfortable may still benefit from this mode of learning, despite not favouring it.

Overall, it is clear that successful interaction, communication, understanding and expression between pupils are greatly aided by the mutual respect, openness and engagement that the CoI encourages. If pupils abide by the P4C guidelines of caring and collaborative thinking, this may help many of them express and understand emotion and forge successful interpersonal relationships, at least within the classroom. The following comment from Davey (2005) helps illustrate why this might be the case:

Lipman's Community of Inquiry also requires reciprocity, as well as a regard for the views and interests of others, which entails trust, tolerance, and fair-mindedness. Opinions or points of view can be truly received only when others engage with those opinions or points of view. Regardless of disagreement, if the relationship is a caring one, then a commitment to the process of inquiry becomes paramount. (p. 37)

Many pupils felt able to express their emotions and cultivate interpersonal relationships when the above factors were apparent in the P4C sessions and, moreover, through participating in P4C, pupils were able to nurture and sustain this productive environment.

It is important to note that for a strong correlation to be established between engaging in P4C and the significant affective development of pupils, a lengthier study would need to be conducted. Due to the time restrictions of this study, a causal relationship between the two cannot be firmly established. In their study of P4C and cognitive development, Fair et al. (2015) state that they 'would not be surprised to find a threshold for the minimum number of times that a typical student has to engage in [P4C] before they become consolidated' (p. 34). It is likely that this threshold constitutes a more extensive period of time than that which was provided to the participants in this study.

Based on the observations made, there are practical implications for the sample school which could potentially be widened to other institutions intending to implement P4C. The findings tentatively indicate that the CoI can be a successful method for many pupils, particularly those with emotional and interpersonal difficulties, to engage with classmates. This mode of teaching could be effectively included in lessons either as a stand-alone activity or general approach without necessarily conducting regular P4C inquiries in their entirety. Furthermore, the CoI could potentially be used as a

pedagogical tool in any subject in which interpersonal and emotional engagement would be beneficial which, theoretically, could be all subjects within a school.

It is suggested that the duration and frequency of P4C sessions offered to pupils should be carefully considered so that they are in balance with content-based lessons: P4C can be a practice that complements 'traditional' learning. Alternatively, a whole school approach that embraces the CoI pedagogy throughout all lessons may allow the potential benefits of P4C to develop across all subjects. It may be the case that not all pupils will be significantly and positively affected by P4C, in relation to their affective engagement. Based on pupils' responses, it should be recognised that P4C may not lend itself towards some pupils' approaches to learning, and they may benefit from different pedagogical approaches.

Finally, although it may be the case that P4C sessions are particularly beneficial for pupils who struggle to collaborate with and care about their peers, those pupils who are more able to express themselves emotionally and interact socially may act as positive role models for others during inquiries. This suggests that P4C sessions including only those students who are challenged in these areas may not be as successful as those in which more socially and emotionally able students also participate.

Conclusion

In relation to the research sub-questions, it can be tentatively supposed that P4C is effective in contributing to the emotional and interpersonal engagement of some pupils, in particular those pupils who may have struggled in these affective areas before. In response to the main research question, it can be surmised that P4C is effective to a certain extent in contributing to the affective engagement of some pupils.

Overall, cautious final conclusions drawn from the research are that P4C can make a positive contribution to the affective engagement of many pupils, but that this phenomenon is not universal for all pupils. This conclusion highlights the importance of recognising the different approaches pupils take when learning and the imperative for educators to continue to care about caring and collaborative thinking in schools.

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Appendix

Student Questionnaire (questionnaire was conducted using an online survey program)

This questionnaire is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from completing this questionnaire at any stage.

1. What makes Philosophy for Children lessons different from other lessons?
2. Has participating in Philosophy for Children affected your level of input in lessons? If so, how?
3. Has participating in Philosophy for Children affected your confidence in lessons? If so, how?
4. Has participating in Philosophy for Children affected your ability to communicate in class discussion? If so, how?
5. Has participating in Philosophy for Children affected the way you interact with your classmates? If so, how?
6. Has participating in Philosophy for Children affected the way you understand philosophical issues? If so, how?
7. Has participating in Philosophy for Children affected the extent to which you understand other people's feelings? If so, how?
8. Has participating in Philosophy for Children affected your ability to express yourself?
9. Have you enjoyed participating in Philosophy for Children? Explain your response.