

**MA Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment,
Institute of Education, University College London**

Action-Research Dissertation

**‘What can I learn from
pupil responses to the
discussion of
controversial issues in
P4C with a Year 5 class?’**

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Abstract

This dissertation depicts a teacher's action research in an Inner-London State Primary school with a Year 5 class, aged between 9-10 years old. It seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of introducing controversial issues into the Philosophy for Children (P4C) curriculum and pedagogy. A review of literature discusses the history and current ideas and research surrounding controversial issues in the classroom and the impact of P4C on self-esteem, confidence and academic attainment. The researcher uses research journals, informal conversations and participative observations, recordings and peer observations. The use of a co-researcher enabled a collaborative research approach to examine the impact of the introduction of controversial issues into P4C. The main findings were that young people have capacity and hold interest in talking about controversial issues with sophistication, empathy and maturity. It also points to the strength of P4C as a pedagogy in being able to open safe spaces to converse about these complex issues. The research concludes with a discussion raising questions towards how we view young people within education and the control adults may have over what we allow and want our young people to open dialogue about.

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My research has highlighted a huge area of concern for me – how we easily label parts of society with language and perhaps do not realise the effect these may be having. After writing my discussion, I have been conversing with my pupils about Gittins argument in Chapter Five, The ‘child’, the ‘children’, ‘childhood’,	72
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Chapter One: Context and Objectives of Research

The Inner-London Primary School I work is a state mainstream school. It is approximately 700 pupils from 2 year olds to 12 years old. Each year group holds 3 classes of around 30 pupils of mixed attainment and sex. Demographically, the school's population is diverse with the highest population being Bangladeshi. According to the UK Department for Education, compared to National averages, the school sits significantly higher in areas of pupils with a special educational need health care plan (SEN EHCP), pupils with special educational need support (SEN Support), pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) and pupils receiving free school meals (FSM) because of low household income. To reflect the stark contrasts, see figure 1 below:

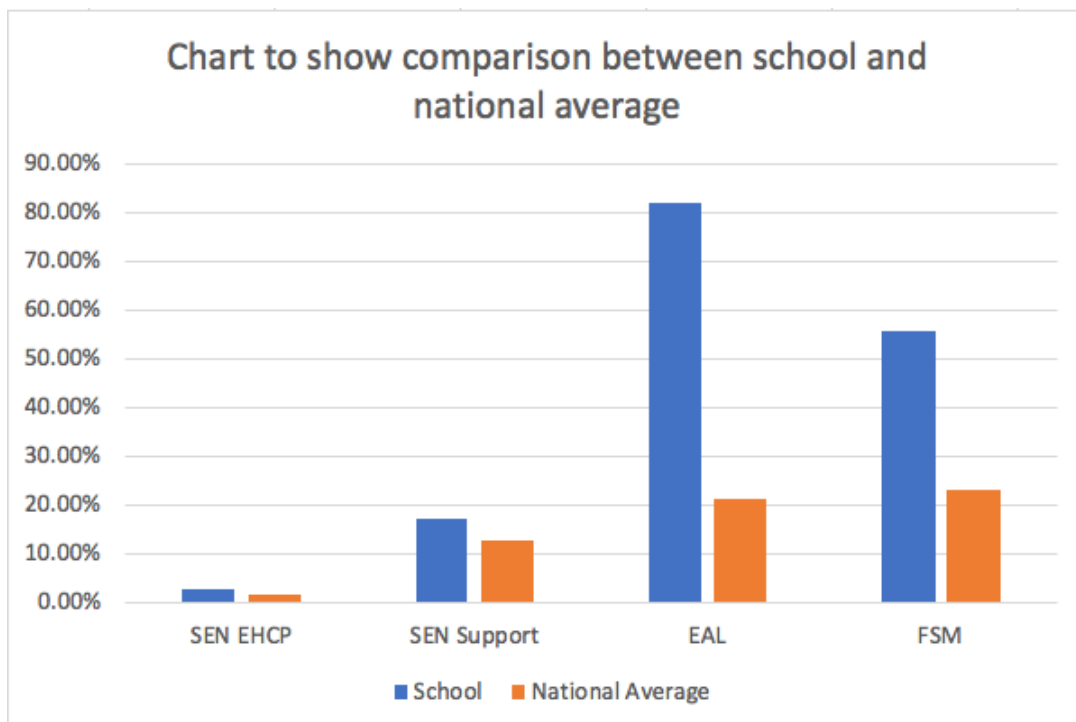


Figure 1

The school takes a creative and child-centred approach to learning. This is developed through links between school, family and the community in order to create engaged citizens in a diverse climate. Fundamental to the school's ethos, all staff have been trained to facilitate philosophical dialogue and pedagogy for the last five years. As well as being a central pedagogy, the school timetable creates space for a

weekly hour long philosophical enquiry for pupils and staff to explore a chosen topic. This training was completed by the Society for the Advancement of Philosophical Enquiry and Reflection in Education (SAPERE). SAPERE is an internationally recognised charity advocating for the teaching of philosophical dialogue. This has enabled teachers to develop a philosophical pedagogy to enquire, actively question and open dialogue in the curriculum.

As the Philosophy for Children (P4C) Lead, I work alongside staff to design lessons and enhance pedagogy in order for enhanced pupil engagement with curriculum subjects. I act as a lead in mapping out stimuli to discuss, co-teach, observe and lead reflections related to activities in the classroom. I have also qualified as a P4C Trainer with SAPERE so that I can train others to become facilitators in their classroom. Being a P4C lead and classroom teacher, offers me an experienced outlook of the impact of P4C on teachers and pupils. The opportunity to complete a research project as part of my MA will hopefully enable me to apply my skills and passion for P4C to help improve the experiences of pupils and staff at my school.

I embarked on this small-scale research with the belief that experiential education, such as the P4C approach, is engaging for students and is an effective pedagogy for developing language and life skills. In the last 25 years, P4C has come a long way in the UK and has now become a prevalent pedagogy and philosophy in primary and secondary schools (Anderson 2016). It was first introduced by Matthew Lipman who modelled this thinking skills programme on similar models of philosophical enquiries to that of Socrates, courtesy of Plato (Anderson 2016). At the heart of Lipman's thinking skills programme is the concept of a community of enquiry, which he calls the community of philosophical enquiry (Anderson 2016). Lipman (1980) describes the community of enquiry as a group who reason and discuss a philosophical question to reach a deeper understanding. The community dimension of the community of enquiry aims to develop caring and collaborative thinking, whilst the enquiry element aims to develop critical and creative thinking. Anderson (2016) argues that these skills work coherently to create a holistic model. It is with this holistic model, which Lipman (1980 p.15) argues 'helps children become more thoughtful, more reflective, more considerate and more reasonable individuals'.

P4C explicitly seeks to construct an environment for young people to discuss complex issues with peers (DfE 2011). A differing environment is built through the use of a semi-circle or full circle instead of table and chairs. The teacher becomes a facilitator in the discussion and sits within the circle. Thus, they are seen as an equal individual in the discussion. I believe that P4C is a positive way of fostering pupils' citizenship, values and helps to build confidence to express themselves.

However there are many counterforts which I have endured and witnessed between philosophical pedagogy and the day to day schedule of schools. I have endured and witnessed the many challenges that stand between philosophical pedagogy and the reality of state schools. I have worked alongside teachers and have also experienced the struggle to balance philosophical enquiries whilst meeting the needs of assessments and data.

One experience of the contrasts between the pressures of teaching to a curriculum I would like to share forms the purpose of my research. In 2017, during my second year of teaching, the bombing at the Manchester Ariana Grande concert occurred. As the class teacher, I witnessed how pupils were interested yet confused about the nature of these attacks. They made remarks about ISIS and the Muslim faith conducting these attacks. It was troubling to see that pupils from the Muslim Faith, around 70% of the school's demographic, had misconceptions about radical Islamists, ISIS and Muslims. A handful of pupils believed that ISIS had carried out this act in Manchester, whilst others spoke about how ISIS were Muslims.

The conversation I remember occurred just after break time, we were already behind for the week, having missed a maths lesson due to an educational visit. I experienced a moral dilemma, where I knew I should address this with my pupils, but equally knew the importance of catching up with my class of falling behind maths pupils. Whilst the class sat at their tables, I tried to tackle the issues with a question and answer type dialogue however they did not appear to engage. This concerned me since we are living in a world where we are exposed to controversial issues daily through pictures, newspapers, social media and family and friends. I felt I was letting my pupils down as I was not equipping them with the skills needed to critically tackle and converse issues surrounding controversy. It left me pondering how different the conversation would have been if I had made time and space to address this in a P4C

style. Also, it made me reflect upon the school's curriculum as a whole, where do we actually address controversial issues with our pupils?

Aims and Purposes of my Small-Scale Research

Due to the glimpses of engagement I have witnessed with P4C, I have chosen to explore the question; 'What can I learn from pupil responses to the discussion of controversial issues in P4C with a Year 5 class?'

The purpose of the research is to explore and observe what happens when controversial issues are introduced into P4C and how my pupils, aged 9-10, responded in discussions around controversial issues.

My key aims are:

- To make a contribution to understand a young person's ability to develop and sustain argument relating to complex issues in a social group situation
- To give pupils a safe platform to discuss their views

I hope by introducing controversial issues during P4C, it will offer pupils a differing style of learning. Where pupils become the centre of the learning, guiding discussions surrounding controversial issues which is meaningful to them. In comparison to the question and answer environment which previously created no engagement in discussions around controversial issues.

Organisation of Dissertation

In Chapter Two, I review literature surrounding controversial issues in the classroom and P4C. Chapter Three highlights the methodology and methods which were chosen and used. This chapter consists of added footnotes due to the Covid19 Pandemic which hit the UK during researching and writing this dissertation. The footnotes show areas which I was unable to address in the research due to school closure. In Chapter Five, I offer a discussion into the larger picture of my research findings and how this links to current literature. Finally, in Chapter Six, I outline my next steps in the on-going action research cycle, reflect and conclude by sharing some hopes from the outcomes of my research.

Chapter Two: Controversial Issues and P4C in Literature

This chapter provides an overview of theoretical understandings and relevant research used to explore controversial issues in the classroom. Although this study is specifically focused on primary school, studies connected to secondary school are also included in this chapter to allow a thorough consideration of the topic.

The scope of this literature review is quite broad and thus to help understand these complex issues, the review will analyse in three parts. During Part A, analysis will be undertaken to look into what others have said or say about controversial issues in the classroom. In Part B, a consideration and examination of research papers about the teaching of controversial issues in the classroom will explore how and what type of research has already been conducted. The chapter concludes in Part C with justification of using a Philosophy for Children (P4C) approach to consider how there could be a tentative link between the teaching of controversial issues and the introduction of P4C into the classroom.

When beginning research for this literature review, an initial search for journals and books in the University of College London (UCL) online library search was conducted. The terms of the search to find books and journals was defined as 'teaching controversial issues in the classroom'. To ensure relatively up to date literature was being used, the search was between 1990 to present. Due to the vast difference in the amount of books and journals published at different dates, it prompted an interest to represent it on a graph. Figure 2 shows this search:

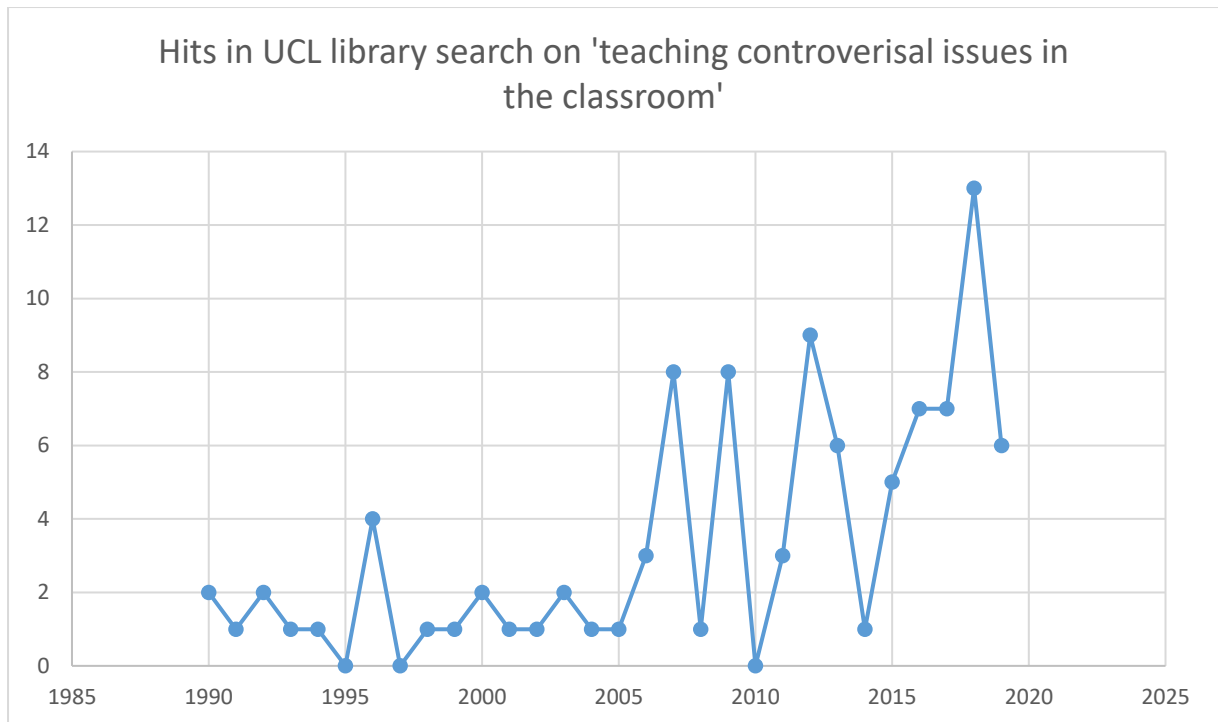


Figure 2

Although it should be noted that a lot of material will be missed out, if it is missing the words controversial in the title (for example sex, drugs etc.), it was still intriguing to see the range of spikes and dips in the publishing of these books and journals.

An interesting aspect of the graph to underscore is that spikes and dips could be responses to policies or events. An explanation of dipping in literature from 1990 to 1995 could reflect the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1990. During this period, concerns around standards in numeracy and literacy were high. As a consequence, other areas of the curriculum were pushed aside (Machin and Vignoles 2005). It could also reflect the Conservative Government of the 1980s and 1990s, where market mechanisms, such as parental choice and publicly available league tables were introduced in the education system. This raised school concerns in the quality of schooling and education they were offering since a competitive market had been introduced (Machin and Vignoles 2005). Again, stressing the lack of importance of the teaching of controversial issues in the classroom, something which was not monitored or measured. In connection to this, between 1990 and 2005 we see relatively low publications. This dip in publications could reflect upon the fact that legalisations ensure teachers are less able to tackle controversial issues

in the classroom. Thus one could assume that policies can quickly control the priority of teaching controversial issues.

There are also some intriguing spikes in the graph which could be explained by delayed publication time. In 2010, the second National Security Strategy was introduced under the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government. They emphasised the most pressing risk types as being; acts of terrorism, hostile attacks upon UK Cyber Space, major accident or natural hazard and international military crisis between states (HM Government 2010). This might reflect the huge spike in 2012 in response to this National Security Strategy. Educators and researchers felt it necessary to produce literature to advise educators on how best to tackle these issues under the policy. Nevertheless one could assume that it further highlights the control of the government over controversial issues. A policy released explicitly around controversial issues resorted in high publications.

In line with this trend, it would be significant to see whether the first National Security strategy introduced in 2008, under the Labour party, had the same effect in publications on the graph. Again we see that the same pattern appears to occur two years after the strategy was introduced, a huge spike in 2010 is reflected on the graph.

The graph reflects one last huge spike in 2018. If we assume the theory that the trends are following the few year delay from the actual event, then this would reflect a response to the publication of The Prevent Duty Guidance in 2015. This report reflected the need for schools to 'have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism' (DfE Prevent 2015 p.4). This spike could speculate the importance of educators and researchers trying to 'find' a way to fulfil the Prevent duty policy.

Making connections to why spikes occur in this graph and what was happening around that time, or two years before, was an interesting investigation. From the graph, a speculation might be how publishing surrounding controversial issues links to policies introduced and governmental changes in the classroom. Nevertheless, we see a further decline in 2019 of publishing and still writers, researchers and

educators stress the need to address controversial issues in the classroom (Cowan and Maitles 2012; Noddings and Brooks 2018; Hess 2009).

With an initial background history into why topical journals and books about controversial issues are being published, this literature review will now go on to unpick some of the themes which are provoked from them.

Part A: Literature on Controversial Issues in the Classroom

Over the last four decades, there has been an increasing growth of literature promoting the inclusion of controversial issues in citizenship and human rights education (Cowan and Maitles 2012). Yet the teaching of controversial issues is controversial itself (Council of Europe 2015). This is since, almost by definition, controversial issues encompass multidisciplinary issues and beliefs (Torney-Purta et al 2001).

For the purposes of this literature review, the definition of controversial issues from the Council of Europe has been chosen because it includes a broad, encompassing explanation which also links to the idea that controversial issues are controversial in itself. Furthermore, the Council of Europe is a well-established international organisation with aims of upholding human rights and democracy so their definition seems fitting to the topic. Their definition of controversial issues is:

...disputes or problems which are topical, arouse strong emotions, generate conflicting explanations and solutions based on alternative beliefs or values and/or competing interests and as a result have a tendency to divide society. Such issues are often highly complex and incapable of being settled simply by appeal to evidence (Council of Europe 2015 p.13).

It is interesting to consider where these disputes arise or how they become controversial. Hess (2009) argues that topics are not actually controversial by nature, they are socially constructed in ways that cause them to be more or less controversial. Hess (2009 p.122) argues that 'there are many different players involved – society, political leaders, specialised communities, parents and inevitably teachers in deciding what a controversial is'. The media appear to have a big role in

deciding what is controversial. During Brexit, Britain's exit from the European Union, a headline was pasted across many newspapers daily to stir and arouse the strong emotions, which the Council of Europe (2015) highlight as a defining factor of controversial issues.

Controversial issues can differ from country to country. Issues which may be closed in one nation, can be controversial in others (Hess 2009). Brexit is another example of this, as in the UK, it had been socially constructed as controversial due to its coverage in the media by reporters and politicians yet in other countries this did not appear to be the same.

Some further recent controversial issues in the UK include gender fluidity, immigration and global warming. Hess (2009) argues that these issues are 'in the tip' since they are currently open to discussion as they have been socially raised as a new controversy. As the Council of Europe (2015) suggest these controversial issues have divided society due to arousing strong emotions and generating conflict.

Even though there has been a growth in literature over the last decades, it was interesting to read how the same themes appeared throughout various texts about controversial issues. These themes being teacher confidence and training, school structure and media influence. Below I will begin to critically analyse how these themes sit in literature surrounding controversial issues in the classroom.

Teacher Confidence and Training

Linking back to the Council of Europe's definition of Controversial Issues, Torney-Purta et al (2001) highlight how across many countries secondary teachers are afraid to tackle controversial issues. This is since by nature these controversial issues are highly complex and have the ability to divide society. With the definition alone being of controversy, this constrains the discussion of controversial issues in schools because 'teachers are worried about their skills to handle open-ended discussions, which they might not be able to control or direct' (Cowan and Maitles 2012 p.5). Stradling (1984) similarly notes how teachers need to have the confidence to be able to challenge and converse.

Myhill (2007) also believes that teachers need to be confident in directing conversations. Not only this, Myhill (2007) adds that to facilitate a productive discussion, teachers must be 'very confident about the topic' (Myhill 2007 p.59). Myhill (2007) suggests that confidence and subject knowledge need to come hand in hand. Interestingly, most literature such as Cowan and Maitles (2012), see subject knowledge and confidence as two separate entities whereas Myhill (2007) explicitly links the two together as being a collaborative entity. She highlights that without having this subject knowledge, a teacher is unable to 'ask questions at key points which will help to move debate and understanding on' (Myhill 2007 p.59) thus creating a productive discussion.

Cowan and Maitles (2012) suggest that controversial issues are not being discussed since the teaching of it promotes a different pedagogical style. According to them, there has to be a shift in the:

...traditional role of the teacher from an expert with authority on matters of fact to a facilitator of understanding based on student engagement with challenging material and deep thinking (Cowan and Maitles 2012 p.15).

The idea that teachers may have to shift their role in the classroom could create anxiety. As a consequence, teachers may appear to become reluctant to engage with students' opinions due to fear of losing control of classroom discipline (Cowan and Maitles 2015).

Cowan and Maitles' (2015) indication that there has to be a shift in teacher pedagogy to support the discussion of controversial issues promotes Hand and Levinson's (2012) thinking around pedagogical neutrality. According to Hand and Levinson (2012), the teacher's neutral role is seen as key when discussing controversial issues in the classroom. Cowan and Maitles (2015) explore the meaning of neutrality by highlighting that the teacher does not impart their own values during the discussion and allows the students to form their own opinions.

While defining controversial issues is problematic, pedagogical neutrality is also open to argument. Noddings and Brooks (2018) argue that this is since there are always views that should not be given a fair examination; such as racist

recommendations, endorsement of cruel punishment, permission to use nasty language in argumentation. Therefore, a teacher cannot be fully neutral as the term may appear to reflect. Noddings points to this by suggesting:

...a commitment to pedagogical neutrality does not forbid teachers to reveal their own position. It is about reminding students that there are competing positions and they too are invited to contribute and defend their own.
(Noddings 2018 p.2).

Similarly, Cowan and Maitles (2012) note that if issues are considered important and worth discussing, it would be contradictory to determine that teachers should pretend to have no view on them. Nevertheless, they highlight the moral role teachers have in deciding when and where is appropriate for a teacher to share their opinion, bearing in mind that as an authority figure any views they may express could shape another young person (Cowan and Maitles 2012; Noddings 2018).

School Structure

Another theme arising from literature around controversial issues, is the idea that work carried out by individual teachers within classrooms must be extended to affect the organisation of the school as a whole in order to achieve the effective teaching of controversial issues (Cowan and Maitles 2012).

However as reflected in figure 2, the introduction of policies can impact upon the space to explore controversial issues in the classroom. With an assessment driven agenda still present in schools, the political-literacy part of citizenship education is 'boringly, routinely introduced so as to appease audit forms and inspectors' (Cowan and Maitles 2012 p.6). This comment is striking since there is an assumption that an assessment driven curriculum effects the natural structure of the school environment. For example, the physical layout of classrooms, which does not endorse active learning or group work (Cowan and Maitles 2012). One might speculate that this layout and non-natural place for discussion places a barrier to the discussion or teaching of controversial issues in the classroom. Similarly this is the difficulty I faced in my experience raised in the introduction of this dissertation.

Humes (2010) would agree as he argues that deep critical thinking can only be achieved successfully if the culture and ethos of the school is right. By right, he points to the successful components of critical thinking as fair and open minded. The structure should be one where trust can be built, where students feel confident enough to contribute to discussion without fear. If the physical layout of the classroom is a barrier to the ethos, then one would assume confident contributions, or even just contributions cannot be maintained.

Media

With little opportunity to discuss controversial issues in school, due to lack of teacher training and structuring of the school, as outlined above, the Council of Europe (2015) argue this:

...leaves young people unable to voice their concerns, unaware of how others feel... or left to rely on friends and social media for information (Council of Europe 2015 p.7).

The idea that a student may simply 'rely' on social media for information is strikingly concerning due to the era of media and saturation of social networking that surrounds our young people (Cowan and Maitles 2012). Rely, appears to be a last resort, where some young people have no or limited knowledge base or opportunities to help them form an understanding behind complex, controversial issues.

Furthermore, Scarratt and Davison (2012 p.38) underscore how:

... the evolution of mass media has increasingly exposed children to sensitive issues, which require demystification and discussion.

A lack of support stemming from schools could instigate a reliance on social media to help young people build meaning. The Council of Europe (2015) argue that this could cause confusion about major issues which are affecting their communities and society. For example, McNeill (2009) points to one controversial issue of 'gangs' presented by the mass media, which presents antisocial youth gang culture in deprived communities. Young people, in the same communities, could make

meaning from media images, articles and videos and begin to wrongly identify with the labels attached to them. If this controversial issue was unpicked, by talking with students in school, these matters could 'help young people apply critical thinking to the messages and information they are receiving from sources on the internet' (Noddings 2018 p.35).

It is interesting to see the growing literature around controversial issues highlighting that pupils want to discuss issues due to the influence of mass media shaping personal views or stimulating 'an interest or curiosity' (Cowan and Maitles 2012 p.2). However, some parents, educators and teachers believe that some pupils are too young to discuss controversial issues in school and this does not match the fact that media images in a global age mean young people are being consistently exposed to these issues (Cowan and Maitles 2012).

Part B

In Part A, one of the main contentions in the majority of literature was surrounding the pedagogy and confidence of teachers when discussing controversial issues in the classroom. A search for research journals for 'the teaching of controversial issues in the classroom' was conducted. What is to be noted here was that there were more hits on secondary school settings rather than primary school, speculating that more research has been done in the secondary field due to issues raised in Part A about the age of pupils and controversial issues. What was equally noteworthy is how two key themes cropped out of the research papers. The same themes link back to those pulled out from academic literature about the teaching of controversial issues, suggesting that these themes are important to highlight. Because of this, Part B will also analyse the research papers under the two themes of teacher confidence and knowledge and pedagogical approaches.

Teacher Confidence and Knowledge

Chikoko et al's (2011) conducted a qualitative study into the teaching of controversial issues in England and South Africa. From the outset of their discussion, they note that their research is too small to make generalisations about this topic as a whole. They do note that their findings provide insights and understandings of student and teachers views of controversial issues. Their research is contextualised in a historical

account of teaching controversial issues; their use of different policy documents alongside academic readings allows for an insightful discussion of the current state of the teaching of controversial issues in both England and South Africa.

Their research is based on semi-structured interviews. Thirteen individual interviews were conducted with teacher educators and group interviews took place with 23 students in South Africa. Yet in England, six individual interviews and 20 students were interviewed in groups. It is interesting to reflect upon why they chose to conduct individual interviews with teacher educators and not with students themselves. As a reader we might assume that this is to do with increased confidence of teacher educators, but the choice of difference in interview styles is not highlighted. Furthermore, conducting group interviews of this size, could have left some students feeling overwhelmed or even unheard.

They began by asking interview groups what controversial issues are. Most of the answers given were of concrete examples such as drugs, the Iraq war, immigration, racism, religion and bullying. It appears from Chikiko et al's discussion, that semi-structured interviews allowed teachers and students to openly speak about other aspects of controversy. Thus obstacles to teaching controversial topics were highlighted, such as a factory-like climate, backwash effects of tests and curriculum coverage.

From their semi-structured interviews, Chikiko et al (2011) concluded that the overall challenge is to ensure that teachers have the necessary knowledge and confidence to handle controversial issues in their classrooms as this was the main concern which stopped pupils from engaging with big issues.

Byford et al (2009) conducted a similar study to the one conducted by Guyton and Hoffman in 1983, surrounding competency and willingness of teachers to teach controversial issues. A survey method was used, where methods of inquiry such as experiments and surveys were conducted.

A sample of 67 high school social studies teachers from Northern Indiana and Oklahoma participated in the study. A scaled closed questionnaire was given to the social studies teachers. One of the most interesting contrasts highlighted by Byford

et al is that whilst most teachers agreed or strongly agreed that controversial issues should be studied, 60% of teachers agreed that teachers should protect themselves and not teach about controversial issues within the community they teach. The researchers use further data from their questionnaires to try and explain this contrast, by highlighting how only 35% of teachers said they felt confident to teach about controversial issues effectively.

Their conclusion for teachers not wanting to introduce controversial issues in their classrooms was surrounding a lack of confidence and a level of distrust in packaged and designed curriculums. The findings of this research underscore and echo Cowan and Maitles (2012) idea from Part A, that assessment driven curriculums create boringly routine subjects and lessons thus teachers who are conducting the lessons cannot relate to them.

Pedagogical Approaches

Hand and Levison's (2012) small-scale empirical study was to explore the use of philosophy and ethics of science in AS level courses in the UK. They chose to particularly focus on the emphasis on the pedagogical approach of discussion and debate. Their choice of a mixed method research design combined survey questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. They argue that this enabled a broad, elicited point of view from multiple parties.

From their data they reveal four factors that aid discussion: effective preparation, accessible topics, strong and diverse views among discussants and appropriate facilitation. Using direct quotes from their interviews, they highlight how training and background knowledge around the topic under inquiry was required in order for the discussion to be enhanced. Furthermore, from their observations, they noted that for authentic dialogue to transpire, pupils should have a prior understanding that the question in discussion is 'an open one, a question, which their teacher does not know the right answer to' (Hand and Levinson 2012 p.624). They concluded that the teaching of controversial issues using discussion should be based on the grounds of effective preparation, accessible topics and appropriate facilitation.

Pollak et al's (2017) conducted research with two Israeli primary schools over a period of 112 lessons. The lengthy background history to Israel sets the scene well

for their research and allows the reader to connect to the findings and approaches used. As part of the existing Israeli curriculum, students are exposed to the idea of 'land for peace' as part of the Arab-Israeli peace making. This political topic was used for students to investigate open policy questions about political decisions that were made around this part of history in Israel. The main focus of Pollak et al's (2017) study was to ask; 'What approaches to teaching of controversial issues are adopted by teachers in polarized Israeli society, which is characterised by conflict, fragmentation and precarious civic norms?' (Pollak et al 2017 p.388)

Their qualitative approach used semi-structured interviews and field notes, which they analysed thematically to unpick themes and concepts. Their analysis of results found that teachers were using differing approaches to teaching controversial issues. The first was what they termed sidestepping and the second 'scholastisizing'. The first, they argued, was an approach where teachers were reframing the issue as something other than what it was. They argued this removed the complexity from the issue thus making it easier to discuss. They highlighted how they felt this approach did not 'foster deliberative values and practices' (Pollak et al 2017 p.405). This approach enabled pupils to become accepting that controversial issues were present in society however they were not given the opportunity to unpick their meaning or form their own opinion of them through critical debate.

Scholastisizing involved children completing literacy tasks to discuss controversial issues. They found that if the focus was on the literacy outcomes, rather than a pupil taking an informed side, then this did not encourage 'active, informed critical participants' (Pollak et al 2017 p.405). They noted how 'the teachers who often welcomed discussion of topics in their classroom...created consensus' (Pollak et al, 2017 p.404). Their recommendation, highlighted from their study, is that teachers should be opening up discussions in the classroom in order for pupils to be gaining adequate understanding of the controversial issue which was predetermined to discuss. The study leaves the reader pondering how do we choose what is the right controversial issue?

Mirembe's (2002) initial observational research in Uganda found there was considerable effort to teach about controversial issues however lessons were centred around the teacher which removed the opportunity for pupils to be in charge

of knowledge and learning. In her study she depicts schools she has observed as authoritarian, since values are not explored just taught. She concluded that this authoritarian approach was likely to have no change on behaviours, attitudes or opinions to controversial issues. One of the prevalent reasons for this was the fact that teachers did so little to try to challenge learners through discussion.

This is why she chose to conduct participatory action research to see the impact of introducing democratic practices into the classroom to discuss controversial issues. Firstly, she chose to use structured questionnaires and focus group discussion to evaluate the current curriculum offered at school. From her participatory overt observations and semi-structured interviews, the introduction of democratic practices allowed controversial issues to become relevant to young people. The class could speak about these controversial issues through lived experiences and therefore it had meaning.

Although the reader is left unsure as to how many participants were involved in her research, Mirembe's argument is convincing as she analyses her findings clearly and ties together pre-action research observations to tell us why she has chosen her particular intervention. She concludes her findings to say that 'classroom democratic practices should be at the heart of any preventive education for young people if we are to expect positive responses, and, in the long run, transform' (Mirembe 2002 p.301).

All these studies at some point, whether prior to the research or stemming from the research, highlight how didactic approaches, that is a pedagogy where children are spoon fed information, does not support the understanding or teaching of controversial issues. From Mirembe (2002), Hand and Levinson (2012) and Pollak et al's (2017) findings they all note that an open-dialogical pedagogy, which Mirembe (2002) names a democratic classroom, seems the best way to support controversial issues in the classroom. Although this moves away from teacher-led transferring of knowledge, it does not mean that teachers should know nothing or little about the topics they are discussing. Instead, as Chikoko et al (2011) note, we need to support teachers into feeling confident to introduce controversial issues.

In addition, some consideration around which controversial issues are presented to young people needs to be taken into account. Hess (2009) notes that most people take the view that 'all topics should be presented to students as controversial so they can decide which view to support' (Hess 2009 p.122). However, Hess (2009) argues that a teacher's role is to make the best judgement about the content. Although she highlights that this is challenging, she argues that it could be achieved if we make public our decisions about what questions we present to our students or even better to deliberate these questions with our colleagues.

Part C

As underscored in Part A and Part B, there is extensive discussion about the teaching style of controversial issues (Council of Europe 2015). Research has highlighted that high quality discussions is a leading tool to engage children in controversial issues (Hess 2009). Hess (2009 p.14) argues there is a distinction between classroom talk and discussion. Discussion is:

... among or between people...the exchange of information about a topic (controversy, problem etc.) ...it constructs knowledge [through] people expressing their ideas on a topic and listening to others express theirs (Hess 2009 p.14).

Philosophy for Children (P4C) has been seen to have positive impacts in many studies. The P4C foundations are built upon philosophical discussions of big ideas or topics, which are facilitated by a teacher.

Hass' (1975) study of the effects of P4C on sixth grade pupils. Although it appears an outdated study, it is a useful early study of teachers leading philosophy sessions in their classrooms. The study was a quasi-experiment four group design; consisting of two control groups and two experimental groups. The control group were to have no exposure to philosophy sessions, where the experimental group were. There was a large group of 200 students in two schools for the control group and experimental group. Hass (1975) highlighted the reasoning, which is stressed through the P4C course, that P4C can significantly impact upon reasoning when reading academic materials. Her conclusions are drawn from the difference in grade data between the control group and experimental group, which is highlighted for the reader in the

paper. These grades were taken from the Newark reading and mathematics tests both after and before the P4C intervention was introduced. Hass displays her data in bar graphs in order to compare the average standard score of the experimental group compared to the control.

As a reader, the striking difference between the experimental group's reading score compared to the reading control group is highlighted. Hass argues that this was due to the fact that the exposure to reasoned discussion in P4C increased children's reasoning and inference skills in the reading test and therefore were able to better tackle the Newark reading and mathematics Test compared to the group which were not exposed to reasoning skills.

A similar study in the UK conducted by Williams (1993) found that, like Hass (1975), P4C intervention can have benefits upon children's reasoning skills and therefore significantly impact reading comprehension, reasoning skills and intellectual confidence. Williams' aim was to see if engaging in philosophical enquiry through reading discussion could improve reading ability significantly.

Williams (1993) used pre and post-test comparison of reading comprehension using the London reading test. He makes his choice of the London reading test clear by stating that it was because this test has one section which required reader's higher order comprehension skills. The results found that the philosophy group had made significant gains in their reading score, particularly in the section of higher order thinking. He argues that the variety of comprehension strategies that philosophy sessions offer are one of the reasons reading scores were improved (Williams 1993).

To assess reasoning skills and intellectual confidence, a Likert scale questionnaire with statements surrounding confidence and reasoning, such as 'when I get stuck I can think my way through a problem' and 'I am happy to question people's ideas', was posed to students pre and post the intervention. A similar questionnaire was also given to the teachers about the sessions they observed. Williams (1993) argues that the results of the students' questionnaires confirmed the teachers' observations - that pupils were becoming more confident about their own performance and their ability to form their own opinions.

Although this study is particularly small with only 42 participants from two secondary school classes, he similarly found to Hass (1975) that the P4C group made significant gains compared to the control based on their scores achieved in the reading tests. This appears to be promising evidence that P4C impacts children's reasoning, confidence and rationality.

The long term study conducted by the Council for Education in World Citizenship tracked the impact of P4C across seven schools from 2009 to 2012. Their qualitative study used a simplified methodology of Most Significant Change (MSC) due to the fact they felt some of their findings could be diverse and unexpected. The evidence they produced indicated a range of ways in which the project has brought about positive change. They highlight how they also had an 'external evaluator to add to the validity of their results' (CEWC 2012 p.4). The study used group interviews to discuss what had been the most significant change as a result of P4C. From these interviews, 350 short responses were gathered which were then reviewed systemically before clustering them into themes such as social skills and concentration to critique. The CEWC felt that due to this method used, they were able to make 'robust conclusions' (CEWC 2012 p.5). From their interview method, the study concluded improvements in pupils' social skills, concentration, critical thinking and their ability to question. Quotations from their interviews are used to evidence their arguments.

Other large scale research in the UK into the impact of P4C has been conducted by the DfE (2010), who were particularly interested in teaching approaches that help build resilience to extremism among young people. This research explicitly links P4C to controversial issues. The qualitative research methods used were 10 in-depth case studies of relevant projects and interventions, a review of the available literature and interviews with teachers, practitioners, students and classroom observation. From the outset, the DfE define terms of reference used throughout the research paper such as community, resilience and radicalisation.

Using their findings, the DfE (2011) highlight four key factors to engage pupils with controversial issues. They highlighted that young people must understand the purpose of engagement with controversial issues, have an ownership of the discussion, be pupil-centred and the engagement should feel different to other

teaching interventions. The idea of the intervention feeling different was attained through the teacher becoming a facilitator in the discussion and building in group exercises (DfE, 2011). The research report conducted by the DfE underscores P4C as a pedagogy to engage young people to thinking critically about extremism and terrorism. Both these issues being deemed as controversial (Cowan and Maitles 2012; Noddings 2018; Hess 2009). Although this P4C and controversial issues report is commissioned, the author does address this by saying that they are the authors' views and do not reflect those of the Department for Education.

This appears to be the only research paper which explicitly links P4C to controversial issues. This is intriguing to highlight as it could be said that too often we feel the need to support the inclusion of everything in the curriculum in relation to literacy and numeracy.

P4C could be perceived as a suggested pedagogy. Yet the lack of assurance or concrete advice around the best way to teach controversial issues (Council of Europe 2015) coincides with the advocating growth in literature, as highlighted from the beginning of this literature review in figure 2. The advantageous observations and conclusions of past P4C studies seem promising to assume that P4C can have a positive effect on young learners' understanding of controversial issues, however it appears more research needs to be done.

Chapter Three: Methodology and Method

In this chapter, I introduce my chosen methodology which underpins my research. I will highlight the role of academic research in education. I will introduce a brief perspective of action research, before highlighting how the purposes of action research meet the purposes of my own research and philosophical frameworks and finally note validation of action research and limitations.

Finally, the methods will explain which tools will be used to collect data and considerations and discussions will be made to the ethical dimensions of my research.

Methodology

Academic Research in Education

The idea that practice and policy in education should be directed by research was suggested in the 19th century (Nisbet 2005). During this century, advances in sciences, technology and the scientific model came to be applied with growing successes to medicine, engineering and psychology (Nisbet 2005). In the same way, educational practice commenced to be based on empirical evidence. At the time of the Plowden Report in 1967, a radical change questioned the establishment of the experimental style of quantitative statistics research in education (Stenhouse 1970). Researchers were beginning to argue that qualitative research may be more appropriate in education, due to its ability to understand the complexities of learning and human behaviour which quantitative data could not explain (Stenhouse 1970).

Some educational research has been conducted by university-based researchers who carry out an investigation at the school setting (Efrat Efron and David 2013). Thus the researcher is seen as an outsider, external to the context being studied. Mertler and Charles (2012) note how this may emphasise the neutrality of the researcher. It could be argued that this approach is a top-down process (Efrat Efron and David 2013) since the teachers are seen as consumers of knowledge developed by outside figures. As

Hargreaves (1996 p.3) notes 'in education, researchers are rarely users'. In educational research, it may be the case that some researchers, those being external to the setting, have diminutive knowledge of classroom life. Therefore research produced may not be trusted. Bloom (2016 p.19) underscores how 'academic papers are not written for practical application'. Bloom (2016) paints a picture of educational research being full of complex language and de-contextualised findings for teachers. As McAleavy (2016 p.30) notes 'teachers and school leaders cannot be seen as technicians who must passively accept and act upon directives from academic researchers'. Thus the approach of an external researcher conducting the educational research views teachers as passive recipients of knowledge about their own specialism. This is why Mertler and Charles (2012) argues that in this type of educational research, there is a distinction between theory and action and research and practice.

In my experience as a teacher, I have always welcomed the contribution of educational research to my practice. This is because, during teacher training, much of my understanding of the process of teaching and learning drew on studies done by researchers in the field of education. It was suggested that I should turn to already published research and replicate their suggestions to problems in my classroom. However, I began to realise that the particular settings I worked in did not fit the solutions which were posed. Elliott and Norris (2012) reiterate this point by noting theories which are recommended from research in one situation may not fit another. Similarly, what works with one pupil might not with another. This is strikingly relevant when applying research to my school demographics, explored in chapter 1, figure 1. With this view in mind, the methodological approach I have chosen is action research, since it challenges the boundaries between practice, theory and research.

Action Research

Action research in education can be traced back to progressive educational leaders from the early 20th century, who encouraged practitioners to conduct research in their own settings (Efrat Efron and David 2013).

Historically, action research has been seen to be a movement of teacher empowerment. Stenhouse (1975) highlighted the phrase “practitioner research” which redefines teachers as professionals. Stenhouse (1975) argued that this was following the trend of practitioners challenging more typical educational research, where an external researcher was employed to carry out the research, and an insistence on teachers becoming involved or even leading the process of decision making about their classrooms and schools was introduced.

In contrast to the majority of educational research from the 18th and 19th century, action research is viewed as constructivist, situational, practical, and cyclical (Efrat Efron and David 2013). Figure 3 below shows Efrat Efron and David’s (2013 p.8) representation of the cyclical nature of action research. This systematic form of research enables the researcher to identify a problem, create a plan, monitor results, reflect and apply to an on-going investigation. Rather than the research being a linear process, it is seen as a cycle since often other aspects emerge from the results. Mertler and Charles (2012) suggests with the application of knowledge gained it leads to further questions and thus a new cycle of research begins. This is important for me since I want to be continuing to improve my own practice and learning experience for my pupils.

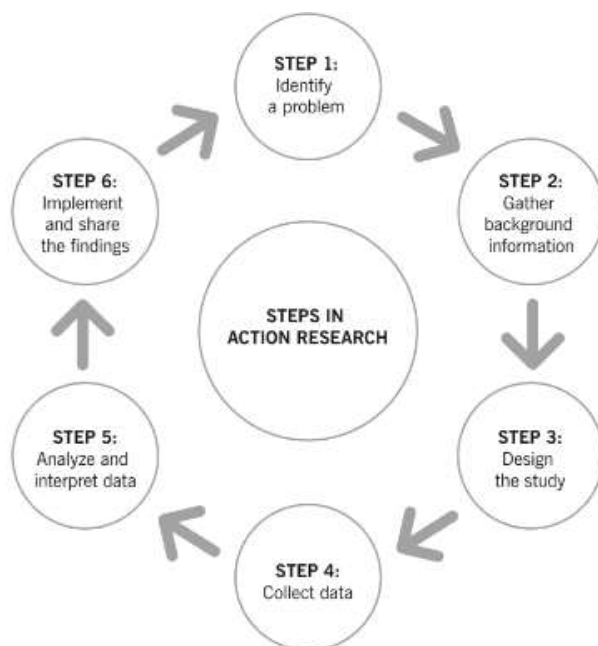


Figure 3

Purpose of Action Research

Burnaforde et al (2001 p.8) underscore that action research is a way of categorising between 'theories-espoused and theories-in-use' (Burnaforde et al 2001 p.8). It is a reflective process of identifying whether the values sought after match with those underlying in the classroom. Nixon (1981 p.6) states that 'in brief, action research is about investigating and reflecting upon teacher's own practice [and by doing so] they may increase their understanding of the [school]'. Thus with my role as P4C lead, it seems purposeful for me to conduct action research.

Action research can be viewed as an empowering way for teachers to build professionally. Due to its practical and situational nature, the professional has choice behind the question explored; based on professional intrigues or concerns and thus the results are then directly relevant to improving pedagogy (Efrat Efron and David 2013). Elliot (1981 p.1) highlights how it is able to 'focus on practical educational problems arising from particular situations and with the aim of illuminating such situations for those involved'. Strauss (1995 p.38) emphasises an 'enquiry can be productive in illuminating otherwise overlooked occurrences in the classroom'. I hope that through careful observations and reflections, it will allow me to modify future teaching and help to identify strengths and areas for improvement.

Philosophical Framework

Creswell (2012) stresses that it is important to consider a researcher's philosophical assumptions which they may bring to the study. The philosophical approaches of action research; post-positivist, pragmatic and constructivist (Burnaforde et al 2001) accommodate my personal framework and also those of the P4C approach.

A post-positivist approach will allow me to enter the research alongside those being researched. This will enable more particular and personal findings to be highlighted in the context (Burnaforde et al 2001). Burnaforde et al (2001) also highlight how action research enables one to view the complications of researching with human beings as a positive element rather than a control mechanism. It does not provide *all* 'teachers

with a proven method that is likely to work' (McAleavy 2016 p.16). Instead, what it will provide is research which is unique to the school context, my pupils and staff.

As highlighted in figure 3, action research is pragmatic therefore allowing it to be flexible and open. The researcher has to be active in the process to adjust plans. A pragmatic approach allows the teacher researcher to focus on the reality of the school and classroom rather than imposing theory onto a classroom (Burnaford et al 2001). This approach is appealing since it stresses the idea of building ownership for not just staff but also pupils. I believe the involvement of pupils in the action research approach is the soundest aspect of choosing this methodology. As Nieto (1997) stresses 'student perspectives are for the most part missing in discussions concerning strategies for confronting educational problems' (Nieto 1994 p.396).

As Hendricks (2012) highlights action research is constructivist because the researchers, often the teachers, are seen as generators of knowledge and not receivers. The process itself is interactive and cyclical in that the teacher researcher explores what works and does not work and reflects upon this (Burnaford et al 2001). The idea that action research supports a constructivist philosophy, in that encourages interaction and collaboration, promotes itself to cooperation among teachers. Strauss (1995) highlights reflection during research should not be independent but a collaborative part of the research. Collaboration with colleagues enables teachers to share knowledge for others to try in their classroom or for the teacher researcher to form a further understanding of their results. I believe this also links to the ethos of my chosen pedagogical approach of P4C since it is open and dialogical and concerns meaning making collaboratively.

Validity of Action Research

Glesne and Peshkin (1992) highlight that a classroom acting as the research site alongside the teacher as the researcher offers an increase to validity. Since it reduces the possibility of artificial behaviour. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) definition of artificial behaviour is that the teacher is not 'performing' for an outsider from a university or external body. It could be argued that because the teacher/researcher

gives meaning to the data, rather than interpretation by an outsider, it leads to greater validity.

Furthermore, Cohen et al (2011) stress that action research offers validity since it includes the involvement of individual voice. It is 'inherently a matter of inference from the words and actions of participants in the situations studied' (Maxwell 1992 p.49). In-depth interviews which are often used in action research provide different kind of data to the scientific, academic-led approaches in the 18th century. This is because 'the topic is approached from the perspective of the interviewee rather than within a framework decided by the researcher' (Nisbet 2005 p.36). Therefore, using this approach, I hope to access informative qualitative data from the conversations and interactions with my pupils. Therefore, the results are more likely to reflect the phenomenon studied and thus increase validity of the results.

Limitations of Action Research

A criticism of action research is the researcher being part of the research. Kock (2007) disputes that the researcher could become too attached to the findings therefore affecting the validity. However, action research does not seek to generalise but instead to understand practice. Validity is achieved in action research by careful and systematic collection and analysis of data and if possible by scrutiny of the data by colleagues. A colleague will be sharing the observation and data collection and I will carefully discuss my findings with her, this will be highlighted in the methods section.

Any conclusions from this research should be viewed as contextually specific. This could be viewed as a limitation of action research since as Bassey (1998) argues only "fuzzy generalisations" can be drawn. However, one could highlight that the notion of 'proof' is itself always open to scepticism and because classrooms are complex situations 'proving' anything will always be controversial.

Method

My 7-week¹ action research will involve a weekly discussion into a controversial issue following the approach of P4C (Philosophy for Children). It will be conducted within my Year 5 class of 30 pupils aged between 9 and 10. The P4C approach will present a problematic stimuli. Each stimulus will create a discussion, which should provoke some controversy. I will be using the influence of controversial issue stimuli from DECSY who were represented in the DFE (2010) report as successful in creating discussions. DECSY stimuli build to eventually talk about more complex controversial issues. In Week One, I have tweaked their first stimuli to appeal to my pupils (Appendix A). The stimulus will be based around the re-generation of the estate in which the pupils live. I have picked this as I imagine it will encompass some controversy. However it should be noted that this research is open, the issues which will be discussed are not set in stone and instead will follow the pupil's interests and dialogue.

Triangulation will be used as part of the action research. Cohen and Manion (1994 p.233) define it as 'the use of two or more methods of data collection'. As Bell (2005 p.116) states triangulation can see 'the same thing from different perspectives and thus be able to confirm or challenge the findings of one method with those of another'.

Participant Observation

As part of my participant observation, I will keep an offline written research journal. Lodico et al (2010) distinguishes journals from diaries or logs due to the fact they are arranged to pool objective notes and free-flowing descriptions. The journal will include my thoughts pre and post the P4C session as well as notes during my P4C session with my class, where I will be looking out for questions such as:

- Is there any evidence of dis-engagement?
- Is there any evidence in the session that someone has changed their mind?
- Do the children seem to understand the issue differently than they did at the start? If so what is the evidence for this?

¹ Due to school closure because of COVID19 I was only able to run the intervention for 5 out of the 7 weeks.

- Does the discussion seem dominated by one or two more vocal children or are there opportunities for all children to engage?

I hope that the use of a journal will enable me to begin to identify themes and extracts for my data analysis. Linking to my chosen methodology, journals are seen as important tools for action researchers, since the process of self-reflection could allow for changes in the practices of self and others (Briggs et al 2012). With this in mind, I will ensure that children are aware that they will be able to read my notes and will place this in a prominent place.

Observation

With reference to page 32, in line with the good practice of action research, where one should share and collaborate with colleagues, I have sought the permission of a co-researcher to take part in my research. I will prompt my co-researcher before each of the sessions to look for the following:

- What did the children say?
- How many children spoke or contributed? (Create a tally).
- What did you notice about their listening? How did you know they were listening?
- Is there any evidence that someone has changed their mind? What is it if so?

My co-researcher will have her own research journal, in which they too, can record their thoughts and notes. I will seek permission from my co-researcher to ensure that they are comfortable with anything recorded in the journal being used as quotes in my data analysis and seek their permission also for pupils to view their journal if they would like to. I believe a co-researcher adds immeasurably to data collection for two reasons - firstly it allows for triangulation and secondly it makes it more likely that good practice is shared in the school.

I also plan to video a P4C session at the start and end of the research². Videoing will help support my dual role as a teacher and researcher since it will enable me to gain an overall insight of children's apparent engagement and enthusiasm and the extent

² Due to COVID19 school closure I was only able to complete the beginning recording

to which they are participating³. Thus, videoing will hopefully enable me to act in my normal capacity as a teacher whilst also enabling research to be collected.

One of the advantages of filming is that I will capture behaviours I or my co-researcher could overlook. As Cohen et al (2011 p.456) note we 'can look directly at what is taking place without relying on second hand accounts'. To risk the distraction of video recording to students (Hopkins 2002), I will ensure that the device is present in the classroom in the lead up to the start of the research to minimise intrusion.

Because there will always be two adults in the room, and because we will both watch the videos, this means that there will be the opportunity for cross analysis between the video and research journals created by myself and the co-researcher thus adding to validity.

Informal Conversations

I will carry out informal open-ended conversations in which some general themes will be decided in advance but I will follow the participants rather than lead with pre-decided questions. Themes will include:

- change of mind
- engagement with the issue
- involvement in the issue during the session
- feelings and actions after the session

The use of an informal conversational style will encourage pupils to discuss their experiences in depth. I will be using a coaching style method during my informal conversations and will use prompts such as the following:

- summarising – is x what you mean?
- Can you tell me more about y?

These prompts will be used to support my pupils to talk about controversy and to understand what they mean.

Lodico et al argue:

³ Having a co-researcher there meant I was still able to gain overall impressions such as engagement without having the final video to compare

...a major advantage of interviews is flexibility... there is plenty of opportunity to ask for clarification of answers or ask additional questions on unexpected issues that arise (Lodico et al 2010 p.122)

Flexibility in my informal conversations will allow me to steer down paths to deepen the understanding of pupil's experiences.

I have chosen to pose informal conversations to all pupils in my class⁴, which meets requirements for equality and trust which a P4C approach builds. The interviews will be conducted in focus groups of three. An advantage of this is a prospect that 'participants may build on other's comments, producing ideas or details that may not occur in individual interviews' (Lodico et al 2010 p.123). In addition, this is consistent to the community of enquiry approach which is built in P4C. Although as Cohen et al 2011 p.413 argue '[there are] constraints and limits on naturalness' during interviews. I hope by implementing guidelines of classroom practice into interview practice it will ensure an element of naturalness and comfort for the participants. This is in line with Dickson-Swift et al (2006) who state that it is important for the researcher to foster a relationship, in order for participants to construct their stories. Furthermore, by making the participant feel relaxed it allows them to open up and talk about their experiences (Dickson-Swift et al 2006).

The informal conversations will be transcribed thematically. As Bell (2005) notes, this allows researchers to use quotes to fit research purposes. I will take the pupils out in randomised groups. Interviews will be conducted throughout the research process and notes of who is interviewed when will be kept with the interview transcripts. I will voice record using a Dictaphone since I believe this will make the pupils feel more relaxed in a smaller group.

One disadvantage with interviews is that they are very time consuming. I will work around this by keeping the interviews to 20 - 30 minutes in groups of 3. Furthermore, my co-researcher will observe me conduct an interview, so that she can lead some

⁴ Due to COVID19 school closure, I was only able to conduct half of these informal conversations. My class were disappointed they did not all get to complete informal conversations. Referring to Chapter Six the headteacher has agreed to let this project continue to run next academic year so they will all get a chance to share their ideas.

interviews too, which will reduce the time needed for this aspect of my research. I believe this is most fitting, since as noted in my methodology, action research should be centred around the pupil's voices therefore be able to interview all of the children is an advantage.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis will be used to analyse observational data and pupil focus interviews. Braun and Clarke (2006 p.83) define it as 'a method for identifying analysing and reporting [themes] with data'. I will identify and group themes from observational data and informal interviews in order to analyse and make links. As Nisbet (2005 p.26) notes:

...from interview transcripts the researcher derives interpretive categories. Recognising the subjectivity involved, the interpretation is supported extensively by excerpts from the interview transcripts (Nieto 2005 p.26).

To support reliability of results I will ensure that observations and interviews are conducted at the same time of day (Cohen et al 2011). Observations will occur straight after lunch time and informal conversations follow the next day at the same time. It is hoped that conducting observations and informal conversations at the same time will ensure reliable interpretations can be made without time or tiredness playing an impact. It also ensures that pupils have time to reflect on the session.

Ethical Considerations

As with any research being conducted, ethical considerations have been considered and are outlined below.

Conducting research in the dual role of teacher and research could impact upon pupils and confidentiality. To minimise the impact of this, I will make my researcher role explicit to the pupils (BERA 2018).

BERA (2018 p.9) states it is 'normally expected that participants' voluntary informed consent be involved in the study and will be obtained at the start'. Participant consent for my research will have to be gained from children. Alderson (2004 p.107)

underscores the importance of 'ensuring [children] know about research and the project and their rights'. This will ensure they feel in power to give consent or withdraw from the research. A letter to parents and carers (Appendix B) will be sent at the beginning of the research to ensure parents have time to raise questions or concerns.

To avoid distress or discomfort during the research, I will ensure participants are informed of some of the aspects of the project which could arise. Participants will be prepped on how to seek for further advice or someone to talk to. I will also set up a confidential worry box for pupils to post concerns. A reminder to the pupils throughout the research that they may withdraw at any point will be echoed.

One risk which could occur during the research is disclosures. BERA (2018) sets out guidelines for researching students to follow. If disclosures do occur, I will ensure I seek advice from here, my supervisor and school safeguarding protocols. A research journal will also be kept with decisions made surrounding any disclosures.

As BERA (2018 p. 21) underscores 'confidential and anonymous treatment of participants' data is norm'. I will ensure I employ fictional approaches when reporting in my findings. Furthermore, to comply with legal requirements in relation to the General Data Protection Regulation I will ensure data is kept securely within password protected encryptions (BERA 2018).

I understand that videoing the children will not be confidential due to the fact faces will be able to be identified. However, only I will have access to this video so that I can analyse the data. I will ensure I get consent before videoing and will dispose of the video as soon as it has been analysed. The video and transcript will be stored on an encrypted laptop and hard drive USB. Only I will know the encryption code.

Chapter Four: Data Analysis

For the purposes of clarity, and in order to distinguish and present data clearly, notes from the pupil's voice recordings will be in a red box, notes from the video observation will be in a yellow box, notes from me will be indented and notes from my co-researcher will be in a blue box.

Three themes were identified in the data:

1. Pupil gave evidence of a growing understanding of what made an issue controversial and had mature comments about this.
2. Pupils were highly engaged with controversial issues during and after the P4C session
3. Pupils are very aware of the impact of the media on people's perceptions of controversial issues

My co-researcher and I found some sub-themes which are explained in each of the sections. These were often pulled out after informal conversations conducted by myself.

Pupils gave evidence of a growing understanding of what made an issue controversial and had mature comments about this.

Within this section, two sub themes were identified: pupils growing understanding of controversial issues and the sophisticated responses of pupils when talking about responses or reactions to controversial Issues. The second sub-theme followed from unexpected conversations during the informal conversations with pupils about laughter as a reaction in the first few sessions.

Pupils Growing Understanding of Controversial Issues

From the outset of the research, I made it clear to my pupils that we would be discussing controversial issues and we would hopefully develop an understanding of what the word controversial means and different types of controversial issues from

our P4C sessions. It should be noted that I had not given the pupils a definition of controversial issues. After the first P4C session engaging with controversial issues, I posed the question 'What are controversial issues?' during my first informal conversation:

Me: What are controversial issues? Have you spoken about them before?

N: I'm still not really sure what controversial issues are.
Long pause of 10 seconds.

Me: Shall I rephrase the question?

A: Yes please

Me: If someone wanted to know about controversial issues, what would you tell them they were or are?

A: Erm... I'm not really sure

Me: That's ok, it's a new topic so thank you for being honest with me. What about anyone else?

N: I'd agree with A.

Informal conversation (26.02.20)

From this initial informal conversation, it could be assumed that they had little understanding of what controversial issues were. This same question was asked at the beginning of every informal conversation and it was interesting to see how their understandings appeared to be shaping after every P4C session. For example, the following week I had this conversation:

Me: What are controversial issues? Have you spoken about them before?

O: I think climate change, pollution, recycling are all controversial issues.

Me: What makes them controversial?

O: Throwing things like plastic onto roads is not good for the environment....

Y: Building on your idea L, I think what makes them controversial is they are having an impact on the Earth

Me: So do you mean human beings?

O: And animals

Y: Yeah and animals

Me: So am I right in thinking that what makes them controversial is that it impacts upon humans?

Both nod

Me: How about you K? Did you want to add anything?

K: I knew what controversial were but I hadn't really spoken about them before we have started.

O: Yeah me either but I think it's important to talk about them as they might effect you

Informal conversation (04.03.20)

It

struck me that it appeared that the pupils were forming a shared definition of what controversial issues were after only two sessions. The word controversial was not defined by me as a teacher, it was reflected at the end of the P4C session by the pupils. A question was asked by me such as 'how could the issues we are talking about be classed as controversial?' and the pupils used dialogue to help them understand. Although it should be noted that it could have been that the first interview group had no or little understanding of controversial issues, whereas this second group could have had some prior understanding.

The definitions continued to develop the following week; it was interesting to see how their definitions touched upon those of the Council of Europe discussed in Chapter Two.

Me: What are controversial issues? Have you spoken about them before?

H: Controversial Issues cause feelings of anger

Y: They make you want to do something and cause disagreements which I think can sometimes lead to change. I'm thinking of the suffragettes.

M: They are personal to people and I think sometimes people don't want to talk about them.

Y: Yes, but I think they do matter and we should talk about them because they effect people's lives, we should talk about them

H: I just wanted to add about anger, I think they also create fear and can scare people

Informal conversation (18.03.20)

These are all sophisticated responses. It is interesting to note that several pupils in the conversation above agreed that for an issue to be controversial it means that there is no agreement in society about it. They seem to understand that for something to be controversial, it is an issue that people argue about and disagree on. However most interestingly, they also see that it is an issue that impacts people's lives and is therefore important to them.

The same theme of fear and upset continued in a conversation around 'Can you think of any other controversial issues?':

O: But it's not just the news media it's also social media. That's also an issue. Because there are so many people out there which are making other people upset.

Me: So are you saying that social media is a controversial issue?

O: Yes, because it makes people feel bad about themselves.

Me: Are you saying O that what makes something controversial is that it stirs a negative feeling inside them?

O: Yeah even if they don't realise they are doing, and they probably do, that's what happens.

Informal Conversation (04.03.2020)

Me: Can you think of any other examples of controversial issues?

J: I was thinking about the Ariana Grande concert earlier and I think that's a controversial issue?

Me: Why do you think that?

J: Because people spent loads of money to go and see her and these people bomb the place and some people die and you know security people they cared more about Ariana Grande than the people there.

N: It also created loads of fear

Me: So are you saying what makes it controversial is that it created lots of fear?

N: Yep.

Me: J, you said about how security people cared more about Ariana Grande what effect do you think this had?

J: I think that there was like different opinions on it. Some people loved Ariana Grande so would have wanted her to be safe whilst some people maybe lost friends there and weren't saved so would have been angry. So probably people would have been arguing about it.

Me: Can I just check. Is it the fact people argue or disagree about it which makes it a controversial issue or just that it creates fear or both?

J: It's both. If something is controversial people aren't going to agree.

Informal conversation (11.03.20)

As mentioned in Chapter Two, Part A, the pupils had begun to touch upon some of the Council for Europe's key words about dividing opinion and creating fear. This prompted me in the informal conversation to ask whether they had not spoken about them before because of the concern about raising fear:

Y: Teachers might think children might get scared or something
Me: Does anyone agree or disagree?
H: Yeah I agree children often get scared about bad things happening. Also, I don't think teachers will want to scare pupils, like Terrorism there's killing and pupils are sensitive
Mu: Yeah they don't want them to go home to their family and their mind will be blown
Me: So do you think people don't want to talk about it at home too?
Mu: Parents are scared too.
Me: So is P4C a good place to talk about it?
Y: Yeah you've got teachers there and we can share how we feel
H: I think P4C is a good time. Don't do it on the playground because children just exaggerate
Mu: In P4C we've got the teacher so if a question comes up they can help us understand it and calm us.
Informal conversation (18.03.20)

The response I received links back to Chapter Two, Part A, that it is not only teachers, but also parents, who are afraid to expose and speak about controversial issues with young people. This informal conversation appears to reflect the fact that children are as aware and directly tell me that they think school, and in particular P4C, is a way to engage in these conversations whilst removing fear since teachers are there to help guide them and 'calm us'. It was interesting that the pupils did not seem to think the teacher was there to do the 'teaching' of controversial issues but instead help them understand it. This is why it seems that P4C fits well since the teacher can be a guide on the side.

The Sophisticated Responses of Pupils when Talking About Responses or Reactions to Controversial Issues

In the first two sessions of the class engaging with a controversial issue, I observed that the pupils in my class were responding to controversial comments or discussions with giggling or sniggering. In my journal after the first session I noted:

Today was the first session about the controversial issue of peaceful and violent protests surrounding building new flats on the pupil's playground. When violent protests were explored through the fictional story, some laughter erupted and some

gasped. An individual in particular had to be taken out of the classroom setting to calm down. This was not what I was expecting.

Notes from my research journal (25.02.20)

My co-researcher had also noted that:

Children exhaling, visibly shocked with hands over mouths, some giggling though when heard of violent protests compared to their reactions of the peaceful protests.

Co-researcher Journal notes (25.02.20)

My co-researcher and I discussed this. We felt it was an unexpected reaction to something serious such as violent protests. We decided we would invite one of the pupils who laughed alongside two other pupils in an informal conversation the next day to raise the question of responses to controversial issues:

Me: Why do you think people respond to controversial conversation with laughter?

M: Yes, I was one of those people. I think it's just a reaction when you're shocked or you find something uncomfortable. It's like when you're told off sometimes by your Mum and you can't help it but you start laughing.

A: I know what you mean M. I do that too. It is just a reaction which comes bursting from inside you.

Me: Why do you think not everyone laughed then?

M: Some people react differently. Some sort of squealed when they decided to blow up the council offices. I guess everyone just reacts differently to different issues.

Informal conversation (26.02.20)

It is interesting to note how mature, thoughtful and reflective the pupils are when talking about their reactions. It was not until I saw the response on paper that I realised just how able the pupils are to talk about these issues. There has been occasions in class when pupils have laughed and as a teacher it is easy to think they are not focused. However, after hearing the comments from the pupils in the conversation I resolved to take laughter as a sign of discomfort. As a teacher, we sometimes do not question unexpected reactions of emotions to 'serious' situations or topics as we are pressured for time. Yet the conversations above show how

important time is to find out how our pupils are really feeling. Above, it shows it was actually a sign of discomfort.

I decided to make unexpected reactions something for my co-researcher to look for during our P4C sessions. In a later P4C session my co-researcher reflected and noted:

I remember in the first session or so there was a range of different reactions to controversial issues. We're now talking about terrorism, there's no giggling involved. It's very serious.... Children almost have a pensive face as if they are in deep thought...They're engaged with a mature discussion.

Co-researcher Journal notes (17.03.20)

After discussing this comment with my co-researcher in my journal I wrote:

I think the children are becoming used to engaging with controversial issues due to the lack of laughter and gasping we observed in the first session. I'm assuming this links to the comment made in the first informal conversation with the pupils about not really knowing what controversial issues were or never speaking about them at home or in school. They've almost become comfortable talking about more difficult topics, concepts and appear comfortable to disagree or agree with comments around them.

(Notes from my journal 17.03.2020)

This prompted me to ask in the informal conversation the next day about how laughter did not seem to be present in the sessions:

Me: At the beginning of our research project, there was laughter when we were talking about controversial issues, why do you think no one is laughing now when we talk about controversial issues?

Ha: Can I start? Because I think I know.

Y: Yes, you start.

Ha: Thanks. In my opinion it's because we are used to it now. We had never spoken about these issues before but now we have so we are not so shocked.

Me: Can you tell me more about that?

Ha: I guess we just know more about it now and what they are.

Y: Yes and maybe we've grown up more.

Me: Can you tell me more about what you mean by grown up more?

Y: Like we are... (*long pause*)...like we are quite grown up talking about it. Because our understanding of it has become more grown up.

Me: And how do you think your understanding of it has become more grown up?

Y: By talking together in P4C.

(Informal Conversation 18.03.2020)

It is striking that pupils have engaged in thoughtful and serious discussion about issues as the P4C sessions progressed. Furthermore the informal conversation highlights that they had a different view of themselves and their ability to engage in such conversations. They saw themselves as 'more grown up' suggesting perhaps a pride in their understanding and concern for the issue but also a concerning societal labelling of what we believe young people are capable of thinking and talking about, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Pupils were highly engaged with controversial issues during and after the P4C session

In this finding, three sub-themes were pulled out; the high amount of pupils verbally contributing to the P4C discussion, non-verbal engagement during the P4C session and engagement with the issue after the P4C session.

The high amount of pupils verbally contributing to the P4C discussion

It was clear that we had verbal engagement from the outset since in the very first session, a relatively high amount of pupils willingly contributed in the session:

16 out of 20 spoke at least once in the first session and at no point did anyone interrupt or talk over someone else in the session.

Co-researcher Journal notes (25.02.2020)

After the first session, I was blown away with the high amount of verbal pupil contributions. This is something I did not expect to happen. Often in our P4C sessions, the same children contribute and this has been a challenge but in this session we had varying pupils contributing.

(Notes from my journal 25.02.2020)

In the second session, 15 out of 20 spoke at least once, with one child who did not speak at all in the first session making two contributions. These talk tally charts stayed around 14,15 or 16 pupils contributing at least once in each session.

There was a real sense from the informal conversations, that a big part of engagement was the contribution, the physical talking during the session. The pupils expressed how engagement was:

M: It means actually taking part

Me: Can you tell me more about that

M: It means when you are actually talking in the session and sharing your ideas

Informal conversation (26.02.2020)

O: Contributing and being collaborative
K: I think it's getting involved
Me: Can you tell me more about what it means to be involved?
K: You talk to the class, your partner and you

Y: Telling everyone what you think and feel
H: I think coming into the session and talking and telling others how you're thinking and feeling is engagement
Informal conversation (18.03.2020)

When listening back to the informal conversations, it appeared to me at first that the pupils felt that engagement was just about talking and contributing to the session. However, I looked back at my co-researcher's notes on engagement in the session and they wrote:

The pupils are able to make reference to the previous points made
Co-researcher Journal notes (25.02.2020)

This then prompted me to not only look at the talking or contribution of ideas aspect of engagement but also the listening and recall aspect.

I rewatched the first video observation where the following comments were made:

It's like what x said about force. You cannot force people to make a decision. Force is never the answer.
Video Recording 1 (25.02.2020)

The idea that pupils are able to summarise and repeat what a previous pupil has said seems to symbolise engagement in the session. When watching Video Recording 1, there was further comments which showed the ability to recall and therefore underscore the listening aspect of engagement:

A: I think they are right to protest because this is the biggest park in the area and they will be destroying nature by building more flats on it. I think we've got enough flats being built for the amount of people that work go to school

L: I agree with what Child A said because if they were to actually build it they would be destroying nature and the environment. We should be saving the environment like Child M said.

Voice Recording 1 (25.02.2020)

It is again important to note above that not only were children engaged, but they were able to make a reasoned argument, drawing on evidence for their position.

Me: So do you think peaceful protesting is a moral thing to do?

J: I think it is important to protest for what you believe in, as long as it is peaceful and does not harm others because we have the right to voice our opinion and let others know what we believe. If we sit back and don't react to things we believe in, we might not like what we've done.

M: I disagree with what you said J, you can't always protest for things you think is right because actually what we think may be right might not be right for other people

J: I understand what you're saying M but I'm not saying that you're going to protest about every little thing like when I don't get sweets when I want them. I think it's deciding when something inside you doesn't feel right and you want to act upon it.

M: I see what you mean. I think I've changed my mind then. Can I move sides?

Me: M are you saying that you want to change to the same side as J, that you think you should protest for something you strongly believe in.

M: Yes. (*stands up and moves side*)

Voice Recording 1 (25.02.2020)

In this extract, Pupil J and Pupil M had listened to each other's points of view. Although M does not agree, from listening and clarification, pupil J is able to explain what he means so that Pupil M eventually agrees to his point of view. This empathetic language such as 'I see what you mean' and 'I understand what you're saying but I'm not...' is sophisticated and shows a real understanding of what the

previous person has said. We must not forget these young people are 9 to 10 years old and show a level of maturity in conversation and understanding that perhaps some adults struggle with.

Seeing the conversation written down, really brought to light just how reasonable these pupils are. It is important to note that this language has been modelled and practiced in the school for five years during P4C enquiries. Yet it is astounding to see how the pupils can apply it to talking and engaging with controversial issues and arguably shows the strength of the P4C model to develop this type of mature language and thinking.

This agreeing, disagreeing and building on others ideas was something which was highlighted in the informal conversations where pupils commented on what engagement meant:

O: Engaged means actually taking part and listening to other people and agreeing and disagreeing with others ideas

I: I agree with O, you'll be able to talk and be able to agree and disagree

Me: Why does agreeing and disagreeing mean you're engaged?

I: Because you'll be listening. If you're not listening, you won't know what's been said so you won't know what's been said before.

Informal Conversation (4.03.2020)

Y: Being able to agree and disagree with each other

H: Yes, I agree because if you can do this you're listening and able to build on others ideas.

Informal conversation (18.03.20)

The pupils across these informal conversations all echoed that to be engaged you have to be actively listening to the conversation, otherwise you will not be able to respond to what has been said and therefore engage in the conversation.

There was a group of 3 who were not contributing at all across the sessions. After discussing this with my co-researcher we questioned why some pupils were not making a verbal contribution. We raised questions such as whether it was because they were anxious to share their ideas to the group, lack of connection to the issue or that they just did not understand. A question about why some did not speak had already been prior-planned in my informal conversations so we were interested to see a response about what the pupils thought about this:

Me: Why do you think some pupils did not speak in the session? Does this mean they are not engaged?

M: They are engaged but maybe they are engaged with what's going on inside their head

Informal conversation (26.02.20)

The idea that they were engaged with the session but in their own mind continued to be a theme throughout informal conversations:

O: They were engaged. I think engaged is about letting your mind run free even though you aren't speaking they still are engaged. Their engaged in their own brain.

Informal conversation (04.03.20)

Y: Even though they aren't talking they would still be agreeing and disagreeing in their own head so they're engaged.

Informal conversation (18.03.20)

This is where the theme non-verbal engagement appeared. My co-researcher and I began to observe non-verbal engagement which the pupils had brought up in conversations.

Non-Verbal Engagement During the P4C Session

Interestingly, Pupil Y, was one pupil who did not contribute during the P4C session on the 17.03.2020, but clearly had been thinking about things in their own mind and engaged in conversation with me when we had our informal conversation. After hearing from the pupil's themselves after one of the first informal interviews, that

perhaps engagement is more than speaking in the session, I asked my co-researcher to look for non-verbal engagement signs or gestures. They noted in their journal:

Several children had legs crossed on the seat or hands on chins which seemed to show focus and engagement.
Co-researcher Journal notes (03.03.2020)

I had also noted after the first session in my journal:

I know a pupil is usually not engaged in my lesson, if they are gazing out of the window, swinging on their chair or generally fidgeting. It does not appear to be happening during the P4C sessions. Everyone seems to be still, offering their hands to share their ideas and calm.

(Notes from my journal 25.02.2020)

In the Video Recording 1, I went back to look for any gestures or signs of non-verbal disengagement. I found one occasion 8 minutes into the hour session where a pupil was swinging on their chair and spinning around to be away from the circle for about two minutes. On reflection, I really wished I had asked this pupil post or during the session about why they thought they were doing this. Nevertheless, it was interesting to see only one occasion where a pupil shows signs of non-verbal disengagement.

Furthermore, my co-researcher noted:

Children are looking and making eye contact with the person who is speaking another sign of non-verbal engagement
Co-researcher Journal notes (17.03.2020)

I had also noted this in my journal:

Children appear to be respectful of others ideas and genuinely interested in what they have to say through the eye contact they show to the speaker. I assume that if they were not engaged they would be speaking over each other's ideas or even whispering.

(Notes from my journal 3.03.2020)

This eye contact was also evident in Video Recording 1. I had asked my class to share their ideas with a partner. When doing so, every single pairing, turned to face each other and made direct eye contact with the partner who was speaking. Again, I would assume, if they were not engaged with their partner speaking, they would have their back turned or be looking elsewhere around the room.

Engagement with the Issue after the P4C Session

The pupils were engaging well within the P4C sessions surrounding controversial issues however I also wanted to find out whether they were engaging with them outside of the P4C session. It appeared that the amount of engagement outside of the P4C session grew as the sessions increased.

After the first session, the pupils explained how the issues had only remained in their own thoughts:

N: I haven't spoken about it with anyone just kept it in my own thoughts
Me: When did you think about it?
N: After the lesson we had our choosing time and I thought about it then. I thought about the fact peaceful protesting was a good thing because you can stand up for what is right
Me: Do you think you will speak to anyone about it or will you just keep it in your own thoughts?
N: I'm not sure maybe I guess I don't need to because I've already made up my mind about what I think about it
K: I was the same as N I didn't speak to anyone just carried on thinking about it. I've been thinking about whether protesting actually has any impact though. So I think I need to talk somebody about this so I can decide whether I think it's right or not.
(Informal Conversation 26.02.2020)

For Child N, they had already made up their mind about the controversy of protesting and had decided it was ok if it was peaceful whilst Child K was still torn between their

thoughts and so said they wanted to talk about it further. Nevertheless, both show more evidence for an active interest and determination to make a decision on the issue.

In my journal I noted:

I have assumed that after today's conversations that children will talk further about these issues if they are still unsure about it.

(Notes from my journal 26.02.2020)

However, the informal conversation the following week is evidence against my assumption from my journal on the 26.02.2020:

O: Yes, I've spoken to my sisters about it. We started talking about the fact that protesting can be on different extremes. So there's violent protests which aren't right because they cause harm but there will be peaceful protests where people stand up for what they believe in and sometimes that's ok. But then we spoke about the fact that we can't then protest about everything little thing we think is right like when our mum says we can't have sweets.

Me: Why did you want to talk about the issues with your sisters?

O: Because I found it interesting. It's good to understand these issues because we can link them to the past like the suffragettes and it might help us understand why people might have chosen to do something.

(Informal Conversation 04.03.2020)

It seems Pupil O continued to engage with the issues after the session because they were interested in the issue and therefore wanted to talk about it further. It is also interesting to see this pupil making links between one controversial issue and an issue closer to home that has some relation to it. This shows the growing importance of wanting to make decisions about matters affecting oneself. In the third informal conversation, a pupil explained they wanted to find out more about the controversial issue terrorism and why people do it. It could be assumed that the pupils became more interested in the topics the more we discussed them so prompted them to talk about it further at home. It would be interesting to find out why the pupils did not

continue to talk about the topics with peers at school and only back in the home environment.

Pupils are very aware of the impact of the media on people's perceptions of controversial issues

One thing which I found most striking was pupil's awareness of the media. At the end of the second P4C session surrounding violent protests, I asked pupils whether they could connect or link it to any other controversial issues. In my journal I wrote:

Children were able to so confidently link experiences of violent protests to things such as the Ariana Grande concert which they said they had seen on the news.

(notes from my journal 03.03.2020).

My co-researcher also wrote:

One thing I'm struck by is the children's knowledge and opinions on the media and how it can influence people. They remembered things such as Grenfell Tower, Manchester Bombings and it seemed scary to me how these events had affected them yet had never really been discussed.

Co-researcher Journal notes (03.03.2020)

They continued to talk about the news without prompts the following day during informal conversations:

Me: Are there any other controversial issues that you want to discuss?

Y: Homeless people, corona virus

Me: How do you know about these issues?

Y: From the news. The news exaggerates so much to try and make people stressed and scared

A: I know!

Me: Are you saying that the media is an issue then?

Y: Yeah.

O: They keep exaggerating it to try and make people scared to try and make people buy their magazines and their newspapers

Me: What else have you seen them exaggerate about before?

O: Erm. Oh what was it? There was one thing I saw. Well I know they are always talking about Trump.

Me: So are you saying they exaggerate about politicians and leaders?

O: Yes, they do.

Me: Why does this make it a controversial issue?

O: Because he is made by the news to be unfair, rude and has power.

Both (at same time): He is over powerful. *(laugh together)*

Informal Conversation (4.03.2020)

It was interesting how the pupils seemed to have the same shared understanding of the impact of the news, shown through speaking at the same time.

Media continued to be highlighted as a source of knowledge for controversial issues when pupils were prompted as to how they knew of controversial issues:

Me: So how do you know plastic and the environment is a controversial issue?

Y: Because plastic stays on this Earth for years and years it doesn't disintegrate. If we don't recycle properly it could end up underneath our Oceans or swallowed by creatures.

Me: How do you know about this?

Y: From media, things like Blue Planet and David Attenborough.

H: Yes, and seeing Greta on the news when all those people starting striking.

(Informal Conversation 18.03.2020)

The media was highlighted furthermore through drawings of a 'Terrorist'. Our violent protest conversations led pupils to discuss terrorists. I asked the pupils in my class to draw a picture of what they thought a terrorist looked like. In the informal conversation following the next day, I asked the pupils to tell me where they got their image from. This conversation follows along from this image 1 drawn by Pupil Ha and image 2 drawn by Pupil Y:

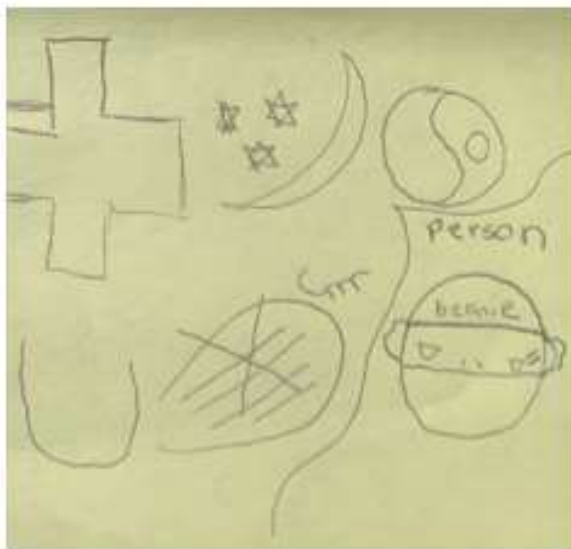


Image 1 taken from P4C session on 17.03 Image 2 taken from P4C session on 17.03.2020

Me: I'm interested to find out about your picture (image 1). Could you tell me where you got the image from?

Ha: I got my idea of a terrorist from pictures I see in the news of bad people.

Me: Are these symbols linked to something?

Ha: Yes, religion.

Me: Can you tell me more about that?

Ha: In the news I've seen religion always linked to terrorism where religious places or people are attacked.

Me: Are you saying that terrorists are normally religious or go against religions?

Ha: I've seen both in the news.

(Informal Conversation 18.03.2020)

I realised after the informal conversation, that I wasn't sure whether Pupil Ha was talking about religions in general or one religion in particular. It prompted me to ask her, without recording our conversation. I did though ask her permission to note down her ideas in my journal, which she agreed to:

Pupil Ha said she was talking about Islam and ISIS because they are terrorists. I said but do you not follow Islam? She replied to say yes some Islamic people break the rules that's why they are in the news as terrorists. To check what she meant, I asked her whether the terrorism she had seen had been committed by a Muslim she replied yes most of them are Muslims.

(Notes from my journal 20.03.2020)

I selected Image 1 and 2 to match with the informal conversations however interestingly all other pupils also drew pictures of men. I had this noted down in my journal:

Interested by the fact that all pupils drew images of men. It would be intriguing to try this out on adults too to see if they do the same. I will prompt pupils as to why they drew this in informal conversations tomorrow.

(notes from my journal 17.03.2020).

Me: Can I just check all your pictures are showing males?

(shake heads to show yes)

Me: How did you know to draw a man and not a woman?

Y: There's only ever mans on the news in random pictures when they talk about terrorist.

H: I also drew a man.

Me: Where did you get your idea from?

H: I just pictured someone in my mind. I gave them a face. One I've seen before like on the news.

(Informal Conversation 18.03.2020)

Y: I've also drawn someone with a mask because sometimes they hide their identity. Often when someone does something bad they are shown in pictures wearing a mask.

Me: These pictures you talk about where do you see them?

Y: They're in the newspapers all the time. Like bad people wearing masks

Me: What kind of bad people are we speaking about?

Y: Like obviously we've spoken about terrorists who are normally religious but then you've got gang people.

Me: What are gang people?

Y: They are like these young people who gather in groups and carry knives and stuff. They stab other people to make themselves look good

Me: Are these gang people normally religious?

Y: No. But they are all the same.

Me: What do you mean by all the same?

Y: Like their skin.

Me: Would you mind telling me more about that?

Y: I don't want to because I don't want to be racist.

Me: that's no problem but if you want to talk to me about it later you can.

(Informal Conversation 18.03.2020)

There could be seen to be two topics here, one that Pupil Y had only seen the same people portrayed as Gangs; young people of a certain ethnicity which was reflected in Chapter Two, Part A, Media, about the representations of Gangs. However, it also shows how she was quite concerned to talk about the ethnicity of someone because she might be deemed as racist.

Pupil Y came to me later in the day and with her permission, I was allowed to jot down what she was saying in my journal:

Pupil Y has allowed me to jot down her thoughts in my journal following our informal chat earlier. She has explained to me that she did not want to talk about the “colour of someone’s skin” on the voice recording or in front of her peers because it is often labelled as racist and racism is controversial and can hurt people’s feelings. She asked me whether we could talk about racism in one of our sessions so that we understand better what it means and helps her feel more comfortable talking about it. I asked her where she thought this stigma came from. She said from films and each other. She explained that this is why she was glad that we were talking about it because people often “just make up” what certain things mean but now we are talking about it together we can understand what things mean together.

(notes from my journal 18.03.2020)

It was interesting to hear another source of pupil’s understandings coming from the portrayal of particular ethnicities’ in films but also from each other at school. The usefulness of P4C has been highlighted again here since it seems that Pupil Y has found that P4C is a helpful way for her to make meaning of certain big ideas which could be deemed controversial. This led her to want to talk about racism in the next P4C session.

It could be viewed that the fact a pupil sought me out to have this conversation shows that they do want to talk about these big topics because they are confused about their meanings and how they fit into their world or life and perhaps they are sensitive to hurting the feelings or offending their friends.

By looking at pupils responses, engagement and conversations I sought to inform the question 'What can I learn from pupil responses to discussion of controversial issues in the P4C with a Year 5 class?' The data supports that pupils are able to engage with controversial issues with sophistication and maturity. It is important to recognise that P4C enabled a safe space to discuss these issues by removing traditional barriers which was suggested in Chapter Two, Part A, Teacher Confidence and Training. However, the research points to a condemning view of the capabilities of our young people under our current system which will be discussed in Chapter Five.

Chapter Five: Discussion

The data analysis highlighted the power of being able ‘to guide young people to understand, question and critically reflect, consider alternative possibilities and [have] a genuine concern for truth and clarity’ (Cam 2014 p.1204). This has supported the aim of P4C which surrounds fostering logical thinking, to use the language of argumentation and to show empathy through listening carefully to the views of others. Through this intervention, I have observed young people who are happy to share ideas, are confident and able to talk about complex and controversial issues, when given a safe place and time to do so. The time and space I have given my pupils to discuss controversial issues in P4C has highlighted that pupils can talk with sophistication and with maturity about these issues. Yet, as the young people have made me aware and as my literature review highlighted we often avoid some topics in school because we are not confident enough to lead these discussions. Not only that, we may believe that our young people are not able to discuss these ‘big’ concepts. It has made me reflect that we may underestimate our young people by defining ‘childhood’ as a period in which the ability to understand and have a view on contemporary issues is limited. By doing so, we may stereotype the child and impose our own perceptions of ‘suitable issues’ for discussion with young people. We could be narrowing issues down from social and political events to those narrower and immediate concerns that we think pupils have. For example, what the lunch menu should be at school or how the school playground should be organised. Thus possibly patronising and infantilising young people.

By depriving children of this philosophical dialogue in our curriculum, we are creating a deficit conception of childhood (Matthews 2009). We assume that children miss capacities that adults have but young people lack. It was interesting that during Informal Conversation 18.03.2020, Chapter Four, the pupils called themselves ‘grown up’. This further reflects the embedded Piagetian chronology views of children. Thus we do not give young people a chance to flourish in certain aspects, so therefore we do not know their capacities. We have created this perception - through a focus on developmental psychology and a narrowed, test based curriculum which undervalues young people’s critical voice. This limits room for discussions and therefore undervalues the fact that young people can converse

about philosophically interesting questions and topics, sometimes far beyond what some adults can.

In this chapter, I will therefore take this finding to its obvious next step by exploring how sociologists and developmental psychologists of childhood perceive these issues, including how they write about perceptions of the 'child', 'children' and 'childhood' both in society and within the United Kingdom (UK) National Curriculum.

It should be noted though, this topic has significant literature published and therefore I cannot do the topic justice in a small chapter such as this. When speaking about the 'child', 'children', 'childhood', I have chosen to reflect the views of Interpretive sociological views since its central view is the importance of collective activity and how young people share and construct culture with adults and each other (Corsaro 2017) and reflects upon the values of my methodology and aims of my research.

The 'child', the 'children', 'childhood'

James (2017) notes that childhood historically has been seen as a social construct. He offers a brief definition that childhood is:

...at one and at the same time common to all children but also fragmented by the diversity of children's everyday lives....it is characterized by basic physical and developmental patterns (James 2017 p.13).

If we acknowledge the view of James (2017) then we note that childhood is formed by children actively constructing and contributing to their society and culture and not simply internalising society. However as Corsaro (2007) notes childhood will be constrained by existing social structures since children and their childhoods are affected by the cultures which they are members of.

Archard (in Baher and Kennedy 2016) stresses that it is a simplification to claim that childhood is a social construction, in that it can be deconstructed and reconstructed and instead we should appreciate the difference between our conception of childhood and a concept of childhood. Archard (in Baher and Kennedy 2016)

explains that all societies have a concept of childhood but our conceptions of it differ, such as its extent (when it ends), its nature (what exactly is the difference between child and adult) and the significance adults attach to these differences. Gittins (1985) would agree and argues we must see the importance of differentiating between the concepts 'child' and 'childhood'. She differentiates them as:

...the notion of a child denotes an individual embodied being, that is in one way or another, not adult. It defines both the biological being and connotes dependency. In contrast childhood is a social and cultural concept, an idea, as well as a category (Gittins 1985 p.22).

Similarly, Wells (2009) echoes the difference between children and childhood. She argues children refers to the lived experiences of children whilst childhood is the concept that informs expectations and attitudes towards children. Wells (2009) argues that we focus on children rather than on how their childhood experiences might shape the adults they may become. Or even, as I have seen from my research, the young people they are in the present moment. Gittins (1985) and Archard (in Baher and Kennedy 2016) have similar criteria to differentiate between the two and both argue that the word 'child' is too often defined by maturity and thus the boundaries between the child and the adult are huge and therefore limiting.

All writers seem to point to society being careful of the language we use when referring to our young people. It is not unexpected then that James (2017) notes we have to be careful with the language we use. In a descriptive label, the term 'child' suggests a young person's developmental position whereas the terms 'childhood' or 'children' is analytic. James (2017) further highlights that adults need to be cautious of how we construct and convey our view of what young people 'are' or are not since children are often united under a 'singular umbrella term "the child", their individuality dismissed and disregarded' (James 2017 p.15). The term child is often referred to in policy documents such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. James and James (2012) argue that the use of the term child, rather than children, makes us think of the child as an individual lacking collective agency. Not only does this dismiss and disregard an individual's uniqueness but it also reduces their worth 'as agents with individual contributions to make' (James 2017 p.15). James' ideas are

important to my work since they emphasise how often adults generalise about children as a group. This creates an 'other' culture and ethos where they are highlighted as different from adults yet similar to one another. It underscores a culture where it could be assumed that they do not possess the same characteristics as 'us'. The 'us' being the adults deemed to be more knowledgeable and rational.

Furthermore, as Gittins (1985) highlights, adults are too quick to put labels on what it means to be a child rather than letting children decide what it means for themselves. It is possible that young people do not define themselves as children at all and that 'children', 'child' or 'childhood' is in fact an adult label. This 'other' culture is underscored by Gittins where he identifies the gap between children and adult thinking as an "age patriarchy" (Gittins 1985 p.35). He argues this patriarchy enables adults to maintain authority over young people. This 'other' culture creates beliefs that adults are superior beings with knowledge, wisdom and therefore power. Murriss (2016) argues this is only created and awarded by age and because of this we routinely ignore young people's thoughts and actions as they are not seen as mature or developed and therefore not taken seriously. These ideas are not dissimilar to the negative thinking behind the teaching of controversial issues to particular age groups in Chapter Two. By deciding that pupils may be too young to discuss these issues we remove any power or opportunity.

The influence of Developmental Psychology on views of the 'child'

Developmental psychology appeared in the late nineteenth century to answer precise questions relating to evolutionary theory, anthropology and philosophy (Burman 2007). It contributed in social movements openly concerned with the comparison, regulation and control of groups closely identified with development of mental measurement and classification of abilities. Piaget (1969), an influential developmental psychologist, was interested in this classification and thus divided childhood into stage based categories. These four stages were: the sensorimotor stage; the preoperational stage; the stage of concrete operations and the stage of formal operations. It is through these stages that Piaget (1969) argued children develop a mature conception of thinking. Piaget (1969) highlighted that children around the age of 8 or 9 are unable to see or describe an alternative point of view

due to their egocentrism. In addition, he highlighted that philosophical thinking, in terms of abstract reasoning, will not occur until the formal operations stage of 11 and 12 years old. For Piaget (1969), the construction of intelligence, at any age, consisted of schemes denoting knowledge on the basis of a child's response to particular tests he created. He argued that each and every child reaches a certain stage of cognitive development at certain chronological ages and therefore development is marked by the acquisition of new and more complex concepts to replace simpler ones (Piaget 1969). Piaget therefore saw childhood, child and children as structured and viewed by age – a linear view (Corsaro 2007).

Piaget's work has informed educators' thinking about what children can do and how they think for the last fifty years and perhaps more than any other theory has imposed limiting conceptions of childhood. Burman (2007 p.2) argues 'its effects are so great they are often almost imperceptible, taken-for-granted features about our expectations of others' and in particular children. Burman (2007) argues that developmental psychology, more than any other variety of psychology, has a powerful impact on our everyday lives and ways of thinking. Burman (2007 p.3) highlights how:

...normative descriptions which are provided by developmental psychology have slipped into naturalised prescriptions. Thus the representations of children frequently function as a projective slate of nature.

Burman (2007) suggests here that the influence of developmental psychology has become so imbedded into our laws, politics, education system and society that we have accepted its role without question. James and James (2012) highlight that this has an effect of creating boundaries in relationships and expectations with our young people. Burman (2007 p.2) would agree as he argues that 'developmental psychology has structured and even forms relationships and behaviours'. Interestingly, this again links back to the expectations set out in controversial issues literature in Chapter Two where language was echoed that primary school pupils were not old enough to discuss these issues.

Similarly to Burman (2007) and James and James (2012) not all writers have agreed with the work of developmental psychologists. Research conducted by Paley (2005) shows that children *are* able to see things from different points of view, even as young as 3-5 years old. My action research project also provides evidence that young people are able to see and understand different points of view and think abstractly, this was reflected in many informal conversations, but particularly in Voice Recording 1 (25.02.2020) in Chapter Four. Though to note I often highlighted language such as ‘it was surprising’ when my pupils spoke about complex issues however perhaps this was not surprising it is just that they have not been given the opportunity to speak.

Thus it could be argued that the gap between children and adult thinking is not so great as Piaget claimed (Donaldson 1978). As Matthews (2009 p.8) also notes:

...developmental psychology has become prominent in our culture that many of us tend to look to developmental psychologists rather than to parents or teachers, to tell us what our children are like – or, even more important, what they should be like.

This highlights that as a society we have underestimated young people’s philosophical abilities (Matthews 2009). Since focusing on a developmental psychology has completely structured our views of the child, particularly in relation to what they are capable of. Gittins (1985) goes on to argue that Piaget’s underestimation of intelligence in infants means that the baby is commonly regarded as not being able to conceptualise in any way in the womb. Whereas several studies, as reported in the AAAS (2013) suggest that fetuses process sounds and words in the last trimester.

It is not surprising that Matthews (2009 p.8) writes:

...if developmental psychologists are not to have anything of much interest to say about philosophical thinking in children, we as adults, as their parents and teachers, are likely to leave philosophy out of our expectations for the children around us

It could be argued that the focus on developmental psychology, which is often embedded in teacher training courses (Matthews 2009), encourages inquiry-based philosophical learning and discussions to be left out of the curriculum.

Matthews (2009) highlights that without space for philosophical reflections it allows us to assume children's capabilities lack and our attitude towards children will be completely paternalistic. He calls this a "deficit conception of childhood". This model of childhood has been adopted through lenses such as developmental psychology. Matthews (in Hand and Winstanley 2009) argues that many of us, including those with little or no knowledge of Piagetian psychology, share the assumption that children are thought to lack certain competencies that they can expect to develop by the time they are adults. In this sense, Matthews (in Hand and Winstanley 2009 p.28) argues that 'by having only incompletely developed cognitive capacities, [children] are essentially incomplete human beings'. We forget, under this deficit model of childhood, children have talents that elders lack; such as learning languages, being artistic or talking about big concepts such as racism and extremism as reflected in my research. Matthews (in Hand and Winstanley 2009) notes that if we recognise the ability of children to think about important issues in philosophy we might become less inclined to view children on the deficit model of childhood. He argues that by 'making space for discussions for them on issues that they can help us think about...we will foster a climate of respect otherwise missing from adult interactions with children' (Matthews 2009 p.15). In turn, this may help them to respect themselves and increase their self-confidence and self-esteem. This is what I have observed happening with the pupils over the course of my action research project; the pupils are allowed to become scientists in their own learning, reviewing things in their own way and time and following pathways that intrigue them.

The Curriculum and Standardised Testing marginalise open-ended Pedagogical Activities and the young person

Our socially constructed views of childhood are also created and controlled through factors such as a narrowing curriculum and standardised testing. As Stanley and Lyle (2017) note, pupils find themselves in classrooms doing tasks that are

controlled by the teacher with instruction prioritised. This underscores the authoritative role an adult can have in defining how a child develops and how young people view themselves. Au (2011) argues that Teaching under the New Taylorism has adopted an authoritative role, rather than a facilitating role to encourage philosophical dialogue. This creates an assessment style curriculum where pupils are reduced to a stanine score. Au (2011) argues that this has completely changed how we view young people since it defines our pupils by a number. It highlights them as simply a quantity rather than viewing their human qualities and capabilities. In other words, it objectifies young people.

Au's (2011) criticality of the traditional system is similar to Dewey's (1938) criticality. Even 70 years later, both writers hold the same ethos that educational experience should be seen as a development from within rather than a prescribed curriculum. Dewey (1938) highlights that experience is created through experiment, purposeful learning and freedom in order to create sound educational experiences. In contrast, it could be argued that the experience our curriculum produces for young people is the polar opposite, since our curriculum is disconnected (Au, 2011). The curriculum, which is broken up into minute disconnected chunks, cannot foster continuity (Au 2011). This is not dissimilar to the work of developmental psychology, broken up into disconnecting, limiting stages. Perhaps this stresses Matthews (2008) point that we do not realise the impact of developmental psychology on our society.

Dewey stresses that a 'traditional' educational system is producing experiences by means of instruction so that young people's power of choice and capacity to act intelligently in new situations is reduced. In addition, Murriss (2016 p.5) argues this curriculum:

... suffers from an ageist prejudice in which adults claim to know what is true knowledge... leaving children not listened to because being child gives them no claim to knowledge.

Not only does this leave little room for the importance of young people to explore philosophically as Matthews (2009) highlights above, it also again underscores Gittins' (1985) idea of an age patriarchy, where pupils play a limited role in finding out about the world they live in or even their purpose or role in the world.

Many, such as Splitter (1995), have highlighted that we are facing a “near paralysis in which education for thinking [has] found itself in” (Splitter 1995 p.5). This coincides with the fact that the DFE (2005) wants children today to be ‘reasoning and competent in solving.... [and children to] discuss and solve problems’ but yet perhaps has not equipped teachers with the tools in teacher training or space in the curriculum to be able to support young people to think this way. Splitter (1995) paints a picture of Philosophy for Children (P4C) as a ‘classroom community of inquiry in which sound thinking, good judgement and a sense of care are nurtured and practiced’ (Splitter 1995 p.26).

I believe that my action research project has revealed that the P4C model enables pupils to think deeply, reason and discuss complex issues with maturity and sophistication. It points to growing evidence for a pedagogy to open a safe space and to foster thinking we might believe pupils are unable to do under our current curriculum and thinking of conceptions of childhood, children and the child. It stresses the importance of creating a new view and relationship of and with our young people. A view where young people and adults share a capacity for meaning making (Stanley and Lyle 2017).

Chapter Six: Reflections, Recommendations and Conclusions

My pupils thrived and looked forward to speaking in the small informal conversations outside of the classroom, letting their voice be heard and feel valued was important to them. The school have also noted the strengths in this project and I have been asked to continue this project and lead the Prevent Role at my school.

It is through critical engagement, where I was able to question and challenge assumptions and beliefs which has helped shape and alter my pedagogical practices such as not overlooking pupil reactions and giving time for them to explain their thinking. I knew when conducting an action research project that I would analyse practice but I believe I have been able to look more holistically at the classroom for both the learners and myself as a teacher.

My research has highlighted a huge area of concern for me – how we easily label parts of society with language and perhaps do not realise the effect these may be having. After writing my discussion, I have been conversing with my pupils about Gittins argument in Chapter Five, The ‘child’, the ‘children’, ‘childhood’, about adults labelling young people as children. We have had lots of discussion surrounding whether they prefer to be labelled as children or our country class name. They collectively decided they preferred to identify with their class name or by their actual name. I think this has opened up an intrigue to conduct research as to whether children define themselves mostly as children or as boys or girls or something else entirely.

After conducting this action-research project, one question has been provoked; do we, as educators, allow ourselves time for meaningful reflection that impacts our pupils and our own pedagogy and values. My action research project has enabled space to reflect deeply, examining not just my pupils’ learning but also my own teaching.

Furthermore, having chosen to embark on this research journey with a co-researcher, I would argue we cannot accomplish action-research alone. I believe it is through partner dialogue where I was able to be truly reflective of what was actually

happening within my classroom. This was particularly true because my co-researcher was experiencing the present research moments alongside me. She was able to highlight areas I missed when facilitating or highlight points I too had analysed from the sessions. My co-researcher has also clearly had a transformative learning experience since she is now looking at completing her own Masters in Social Justice in Education.

It should be noted that action research is a time-consuming process; it can be challenging to realise that your own values or the values of your pupils do not match up with the pedagogy you practice within the classroom. However, I think the strength lies in feeling my relationship has grown with the pupils and they have felt valued, heard and respected, and this outweighs the challenges.

Whilst teachers carrying out research seems the best route to take for learning about classroom practice, the problem is there are too many other pressures on teachers. Teachers are being pulled in different directions by the education system with pressures of exams and assessment culture. This overshadows time which could be spent on research. I believe I was able to push this aside partly because of the demands of the MA. I would also encourage others to do the same, and analyse the internal narrative of pupils and life within the classroom. I think conducting action research has underscored the importance of taking time to enquire to fully understand young people's experiences and situation in depth.

Being an educator gives me a unique position to empower each of my pupils with the opportunity to express their thoughts and feel heard. The choices I make have to be renewed every day even under the consistent pulls of standards, assessments and lack of time. Amongst the hectic tempo of the school day, educators can make choices to create a culture that does not doubt capabilities and gives endless opportunities to our young people. I hope that my research project plays a small contribution in reforming the idea that our young people are just 'children' and instead views them as equal human beings, with the capacity to speak about controversial issues, which they experience and are exposed to day to day.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Week one, session one P4C plan based on DECSY stimuli

The activity has been adapted from Richard Gore working for DECSY.

Date:	Class	Teacher:
Learning objective (with a 4C focus)		
Warm up activity	<p>Tell the children that you have heard a rumour (but you are not sure if it is true!) that the Council want to take some of the playground away from the school and use it for offices for people who work for the council.</p> <p>Ask them what they think about this news and what they could do to try and stop this from happening. Write up their ideas in large letters on A4 paper or WBs, one idea per sheet. Dependent on what they come up with you can also present the following ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do a petition and get family and friends to sign it Make leaflets and posters Set up a Facebook page Write to the newspapers Organise a protest outside the school with banners/ posters <p>Then do a continuum activity with the children using the different ideas</p>	
Stimulus or activity	<p>Step One: understanding the story The story is shared with the class about council wanting to build on their playground</p> <p>Step Two: Moving to enquiry As an alternative to the 'thinking questions' on the PowerPoint ask the pupils to identify the big ideas and themes in the text. Write-up keywords on the interactive whiteboard or flipchart paper and get the children to develop philosophical questions around these keywords and themes and then continue to an enquiry in the usual way. A small number of specific question stems may be helpful to give focus to the children's questions such as Why...? Were they right to...? Is it right...? What if...? How....?</p> <p>Last Words As a way of providing closure you might ask the pupils to agree or disagree with the following statement: 'It is important to take part in protests against things that you think are wrong'</p> <p>You could invite certain children stand on the 'agree' or 'disagree' side of the line.</p>	
Key themes (big ideas/concepts which come from the stimulus or activity)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Peace - Violence - Happiness - Decision making 	
Possible questions arising from stimulus or activity	<p>Should you stand up for what you believe in?</p> <p>Who has the right to make decisions?</p> <p>How do you make decisions when there are opposing views?</p> <p>Who owns the land?</p>	

Appendix B: Parent/Carer Permission Letter

Dear Parent / Carer,

P4C Research Project

For the next two terms, your child's class will be taking part in a P4C research project with Miss Saunders. Miss Saunders is currently studying for a masters in Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment at UCL and would like to hear your child's views for her study.

The aim of the study will be to work on how we respond to divided opinions and the children will be working alongside Miss Saunders to work out how to tackle divided opinions.

As part of the project, Miss Saunders will be filming two of the sessions at the beginning and end of the project in order to watch back and learn about how children respond and learn from divided opinions. The filming will only be viewed by Miss Saunders and will be deleted as soon as the project ends. The research will be written up in a dissertation at the end of this academic year and will be read by a supervisor at the Institute of Education at UCL. All names will be replaced with a pseudonym.

This is a project which has been carefully planned and resourced with a particular focus on your child's age group by Miss Saunders. However, if you are concerned about any aspects of the project please speak to Miss Saunders for further information.

If you do not wish your child to take part in the project or be filmed, please return the response slip below.

Best Wishes,

Nicole Saunders (Class Teacher)

Please tick relevant statement if applicable:

I would not like my child to take part in the project or be filmed ____

I would not like my child to be filmed, but I am happy for them to be part of the project
