

Philosophy for Teachers (P4T) – developing new teachers’ applied ethical decision-making

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ABSTRACT

Teaching, irrespective of its geographical location, is fundamentally a relational practice in which unique ethically complex situations arise to which teachers need to respond at different levels of ethical decision-making. These range from ‘big’ abstract questions about whether or not what they teach is inherently good, through to seemingly trivial questions about everyday issues, for example whether or not it is right to silence children in classrooms. Hence, alongside a wide range of pedagogical skills, new teachers also need to develop personal qualities, knowledge and understanding that will enable them to navigate successfully these professional ethical demands. ‘Philosophy for Teachers’, or ‘P4T’, is one promising approach to teachers’ pre-service professional preparation which has been piloted in England, adapted from the more familiar idea of ‘P4C’ (Philosophy for Children). Drawing on the model of learning through dialogue within a community of fellow enquirers, an ethical retreat was set up which established a ‘community of practice’, comprising new teachers, education studies students, teacher educators and philosophers. The purpose of the retreat was to enable new teachers to think ethically about dilemmas they had faced, based on their early experience of classroom practice. It enabled facilitators to blend theoretical perspectives on education and systematic ways of thinking about it at an introductory level with examples of complex and potentially difficult classroom situations cited by participants. The experience provoked a series of significant insights – in particular, that a characteristically philosophical concern with the ethics of behaviour management offers an important alternative perspective to the psychological approach which tends to dominate conventional teacher education in the English system. We identified an urgent need among new teachers for facilitating space and time for critical reflection away from the ‘busy-ness’ of school, addressing not only practical concerns but the existential anxieties which beginning teachers face when dealing with challenging behaviour by their pupils, including burnout, sustaining motivation and a sense of ‘moral purpose’.

Teaching, irrespective of its geographical location, is fundamentally a relational practice. As Griffiths (2013) argues, it is ‘embodied, played out in specific social-cultural contexts’ which are ‘changing over the course of a career for reasons beyond the control of any teacher’ (221). It is contingent, subject to chance, dependent to a very great degree on circumstance. In this paper we are concerned with the ethical complexity that the relational and contingent nature of teaching creates for teachers.

There are different levels of ethical decision-making in which teachers commonly

engage, ranging from 'big' abstract questions about whether or not what they teach is inherently good, through to seemingly trivial questions about everyday issues, which can be fraught with moral ambiguity. For example, take the everyday teacher action of stopping children from talking in class which, at first glance, might appear a morally straightforward and functional professional activity. However, as Thornberg's (2006) research on values education in the daily life of school found, children who believed that they were wrongly silenced by teachers when in fact their talk was relevant and constructive, felt they had to choose to disobey the teacher, or to maintain their conduct, in the belief that they had been wrongly silenced. Thornberg concludes that indiscriminate silencing of children may give rise to different forms of moral conflict.

Moreover, each ethically complex situation a teacher faces will in some way be unique. Hence, alongside a wide range of pedagogical skills, new teachers need to develop personal qualities, knowledge and understanding that will enable them to successfully navigate these contingencies – and here lies our concern. For, this critical aspect of teachers' practice has, in recent years, lain relatively neglected in professional development programmes. This is a claim we will substantiate, before going on to trace the development of an initiative in the current context of schooling in England which seeks to address this deficit; and with which we have been closely and directly involved, as philosophers of education and teacher educators. This process has culminated so far in an introduction to ethical deliberation for teachers which we have called 'P4T' or 'Philosophy for Teachers', acknowledging the influence of the well-known and highly regarded dialogical pedagogical model 'P4C', or 'Philosophy for Children'. We attribute its distinctive promise to a series of reasons, rooted in wider literature concerns with deliberation and democratic practice (e.g. Dewey 1916) and professional communities of practice (e.g. Lave and Wenger 1991), therefore justifying our commitment to further realising its potential. At no point do we claim that P4T on its own can solve all the problems of the current approach to ethical preparation of teachers, or compensate entirely for the lack of time and space afforded teachers during their professional development for critical reflection of a particular kind and quality. However, we do believe that it represents an important and positive way forward.

Context and background: a lack of emphasis on ethics in teaching

There is international evidence to suggest that from the 1980s and 1990s ethics education has been introduced into the standard curricula of professional formation (Davis 1999) and is now relatively widespread in contemporary training in the applied sciences and professions, such as medicine and law. Ethics education sometimes takes place in stand-alone courses or may be 'mainstreamed' as part of an integrated curriculum. Our experience as teacher educators in England suggests that unfortunately existing preparation programmes for teachers present few opportunities for ethics education to occur formally.

Teachers face similarly demanding ethical pressures to those engaged in other professions and there is a large and growing literature on the ethical

dimensions of teaching (e.g. Hansen 1995, 2001; Carr, 2006; Campbell 2003, 2008; Papastephanou 2006). However, our own jurisdiction, England, is not alone in providing little formal opportunity or time in teacher education courses to enable deep reflection on the ethical dimensions of the teacher role. On the one hand, in his introduction to a recent government-sponsored review of teacher education in England, sir Andrew Carter (2015) noted with gratitude the ‘tremendous sense of moral purpose’ he had encountered among those practitioners he had met ‘that is a distinguishing characteristic of this noble profession’. On the other, there is currently no formal requirement for teacher educators on Higher Education courses in England to teach ethics to teachers, leaving it unclear where the development of that sense of moral purpose is to come from, which is surprising given the vulnerability of the children and young people with whom teachers are working.

In earlier times, undergraduate routes into teaching might have included provision of courses such as ‘Personal Development and Decision Making’, for example¹. More recently, though, these courses have been lost as degrees have been streamlined. Furthermore, post-graduate programmes of pre-service education, the most common entry route into teaching in England, are notoriously short. The Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) lasts only 36 weeks and this has long been criticised (e.g. Hopkins and Reid 1985; Demos 2009). There is no mainstream tradition of extended ethical reflection on programmes of this kind. A recent international survey (Maxwell et al. 2016) administered in England through the universities Council for the Education of Teachers, aimed to establish how commonly different jurisdictions have included ethics and values curricula in their pre-service teacher education. The survey explored the extent to which teacher educators believe ethics and values represent an important aspect of a pre-service teacher education curriculum and any obstacles that might prevent their inclusion. Results for England show that teacher educators agree in principle about the importance of ethics in pre-service teacher education yet have little time to engage with ethical issues, apart from responding to those directly arising in the course of dealing with pedagogical matters, such as gender issues or special educational needs. In fact, in England the requirement to have an ethics component in ITE programmes was reported to be the lowest of the five jurisdictions surveyed (Maxwell et al. forthcoming). Further, teacher educators in England receive little, if any, professional development themselves to support this aspect of teacher education provision. Few lecturers are confident they have the expertise to lead ethical deliberation with their students as they are most often appointed to post as subject specialists or with experience in areas such as pedagogy. This problem in relation to teachers in England is compounded by the findings from a new data-set released as part of the 2013 Teacher and Learning International survey (TALIs) of 34 countries, carried out by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. As Burstow (2014) points out, this review of continuing professional development found that teachers in England report higher participation rates than average across TALIs countries for courses and workshops (75%) and in-service training in outside organisations (22%), but

lower than average participation in more in-depth activities, such as those involving research or formal qualifications. Philosophers of education may disagree about the value to teachers of engaging with educational research or gaining formal qualifications. However, if Burstow (2014) is right that in-service training is 'shallower, less effective' and likely to 'bring less lasting impact' than structured provision over time, this is worrying. Teaching is fundamentally normative as we have argued. 'short' and 'shallow' professional development that does not engage teachers in extended reflective thinking will not address its complexity adequately.

Perhaps there are currently so few opportunities for teachers to engage in thinking about ethical matters during their pre-service education in England because assessment of the 'Teaching standards' tends to drive the curriculum. Accreditation of teachers relies on meeting a set of competence-based teacher standards (DfE 2011) divided into two parts. Part 1 lists eight aspects of classroom practice necessary to the development of expertise, while Part 2 is intended as a statement about professional ethics for teachers. In theory, both carry equal weight and trainees must be judged to pass every aspect of the standards or they will be refused qualified teacher status (QTS). Further, the quality of provision of teacher education in England depends at least in part on how well trainees have been prepared in this area: 'Inspectors must consider whether trainees awarded QTs have demonstrated the Teachers' standards *in full*' (Ofsted 2015, 31 – our italics).

However, in our experience, provision tends to focus greater attention on Part 1, which brackets out consideration of values and ethics from the practical aspects of teaching, even though the two are interlinked. Take Teaching standard 7 in Part 1, for example, concerned with behaviour management. This states the need for teachers to 'maintain good relationships with pupils, exercise appropriate authority, and act decisively when necessary' (DfE 2011, 10). Consideration of this matter during professional formation tends to focus on teachers' knowledge of the accepted behavioural conventions in the school in which their practice is based and their ability to reproduce these accurately and reliably. However, this is a thin conception of teaching; meeting Teaching standard 7 well is much more than just 'management'; for good classroom practice, 'managing' behaviour well depends on the teachers' professional judgement and their capacity to weigh up what might be the best action in specific circumstances (Heilbronn 2008). Insufficient time and space is dedicated currently to the moral matters of value and opinion on which 'managing' behaviour in the classroom rests.

Perhaps a reason why those aspects of teachers' work relating to their personal and professional conduct featuring in Part 2 receive relatively little attention is that they appear to be more difficult to develop. Take, for example, the requirement to assess student teachers according to their ability to 'respect the rights of others ... not undermining fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty' (DfE 2011, 14). As Shortt et al. (2015) argue:

Each of these (rights, values, democracy, law, and liberty) are weighty

philosophical concepts about which, we argue, almost all trainees, teachers, and teacher-educators would benefit from having some education and a space in which they could discuss and debate what they actually mean for the teacher in the classroom. (90)

In the light of the avowed importance of ethical deliberation in teacher preparation as seen in various policy documents, it appears that the reasons for omitting ethical deliberation from conventional teacher education are not principled objections but practical constraints (Maxwell et al. 2016). With this in mind, as teacher educators and philosophers of education we have been engaged in various initiatives over the past five years through which we have attempted to promote ethical deliberation in new ways that relate directly to pre-service teachers' experiences. Time constraints clearly represent one significant obstacle that will be difficult to address in isolation from wider pre-service teacher education curriculum reform. A second issue concerns the lack of expertise among teacher educators in developing approaches that enable student teachers to reflect fruitfully on experiences of dilemmas and conflicts that arise in their ongoing classroom practices.

In the next section, we chart the development of a project in which we seek to address the dearth of support in ethical deliberation for pre-service and newly qualified teachers and their tutors. Our exploration of these issues and various events culminated in the development of the Philosophy for Teachers (P4T) methodology. P4T is a way of engaging with teachers and teacher educators that has elements of a number of practices, including Philosophy for Children (P4C) which we describe below. We have been feeling our way into a mode of working that is fundamentally discursive and dialogical, sometimes using activities that are familiar to P4C, and also drawing on Deweyan discursive methods that depend on being together as a group of people over time, in a democratic 'form of associated living'. Having philosophers as participants is an important element in developing P4T.

The next section of the paper gives an account how we conceived and implemented P4T, identifies the underpinning principles, and argues for P4T as a worthwhile practice.¹

Promoting ethical deliberation in pre-service teacher education in England: working with teacher educators

An early influence on our work was research undertaken by the Centre for Research Ethics and Ethical Deliberation (CREED) and the Centre for Learner Identity studies (CLIs) at Edge Hill university. Here, researchers had been investigating teachers' engagement in debates on values, exploring the extent and quality of their preparation (if any) through their formal training. CREED and CLIs investigators reviewed how teachers were being prepared to deliberate over 'the multitude of moral and ethical dilemmas with which they are faced on an almost daily basis' (Shortt et al. 2015, 89). As Campbell (2003) has identified, too often the lone teacher in the classroom is 'struggling to cope without much guidance with the dilemmas and tensions that unavoidably surface when one is engaged in the moral domain' (138–139).

The researchers working at CREED evidenced a tension 'with which we all appear to live when it comes to decisions about right and wrong, good and bad, worthwhile and worthless' (Shortt et al. 2015, 91). We seem to experience, they go on to suggest, 'significant discomfort in moving from what we believe to what we think, from what we think to what we feel we know, and onwards to what and how we teach that which we think we know' (91). And, as noted, teacher preparation courses are heavy with curriculum demands which make it difficult to give space and time for meaningful reflection on the wider ethical issues in teaching, despite the pressing need for such deliberation.

Having established our shared interests and concerns, we organised a collaborative venture with the CREED researchers (2010–2011) as representatives of the Philosophy of Education society of Great Britain (PEsGB). We organised a 24-h residential weekend (2011), led by the CREED team of researchers and tutors, attended by 21 teacher educators keen to engage in and reflect upon ethical deliberation with like-minded peers. The objectives were threefold: to support

tutors in finding time for reflection on how they might incorporate support for their student teachers around ethical issues in their practice; to acquire the skills and confidence to enable understanding of their own value judgements; to reflect on them and to understand how these directly affect their every-day practice. CREED staff structured the event around four previously piloted themes: the ethics of a prescribed curriculum; power and accountability in the classroom; the ethics of responding to learners, and the ethical teacher.

The workshop proved an extremely useful introduction to modes of working in the field and a number of positive features emerged which we report below. However, when Shortt et al. (2015) reported on follow-up interviews they identified a number of reservations with the methods being used. For example, 'role play' as a tool for promoting reflection and debate was problematic: it required extensive foregrounding and the purpose was unclear, resulting in participants talking at cross purposes and in misunderstandings, when interpreting the scenarios. This had become such an issue mid-workshop that we began to experiment during the event by using participants' actual experiences as a basis for discussion and deliberation, which was a more effective way to engage people. The proposal to base the workshop on personal experience came from those participants in the workshop with experience as facilitators of P4C, as well as an interest in teacher education and ethics. This introduced us to the possibility of broader methods of learning through dialogue within a community of fellow enquirers exclusively with adults.

next, in 2013, we ran a whole day seminar at the Institute of Education, London for 24 teacher educators with the support of joint funding from the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and PEsGB. The seminar was aimed at teacher educators in higher education institutions in England and philosophers of education. It focused on the topic of the ongoing and intensified concern about the radicalisation of young people, and the putative duty of schools and teachers to intervene, as an area of relevance and mutual concern and interest. Building on what we had learned from the first workshop, the format for this second event drew on some of the elements of the P4C approach to dialogical teaching. P4C generally starts a session with a stimulus resource, such as a picture book or poem. The children are inducted into asking questions. They are given 'thinking time' and, using inclusive and democratic classroom strategies, they choose a question that interests them, which they discuss together with the teacher as a facilitator.

The teacher aims to get children to welcome the diversity of each other's initial views and to use those as the start of a process that encourages children to question assumptions, develop opinions with supporting reasons, analyse significant concepts and generally apply the best reasoning and judgement they can to explore the question they have chosen. In the longer term, the teacher aims to develop children's skills and concepts through appropriate follow-up activities, thinking games and the orchestration of connections between philosophical discussions, life and the rest of the school curriculum.' (P4C Cooperative 2015)

The seminar began with a dialogue between a philosopher of education and a teacher educator as a stimulus activity to which all were invited to contribute. Participants then took part in two workshops, the first exploring values and dispositions in considering what constitutes a good teacher, and the second on the theme of professional formation and ethical uncertainty. The event concluded with a plenary round table². The event was facilitated rather than directed, in the spirit of democratic deliberation which P4C characteristically promotes. The seminar, being directed at Teacher Educators, allowed us to share cases and experiences of pre-service teaching. Through these, we explored together how we might forefront essential ethical dimensions of teacher education despite the existing rather hostile conditions of training provision. This, as characterised earlier, is a climate which offers little or no time for deliberation and where complex ethical issues have been detached from practical teaching concerns in the Teaching standards which determine programmes of study.

Following these experiences, we decided to engage directly with pre-service teachers as well as with Teacher Educators, and so created P4T, the culmination of our exploratory work in promoting ethical deliberation among teachers to date. The idea was to develop some of the activities familiar to practitioners of P4C, building on the potential identified in earlier workshops. With financial support from the HEA and PEsGB, we were able to offer some 24-h residential experiences for teacher educators working together with student teachers. Significantly, we also invited a facilitator who is both a philosopher of education and also a P4C trainer and who had attended the two previous workshops. While he drew extensively on his P4C training he used philosophically informed interventions which helped us to build an effective community of enquiry. He helped us to establish ground rules, as the basis on which a democratic form of professional deliberation on ethical issues could be conducted. We held the courses in a relaxed and quiet location and communal meals contributed to the building of positive relationships, fostering mutual respect and trust. Moreover, we learned from our previous experience that participants' own direct classroom experience, rather than role-play, offered a particularly fruitful stimulus for ethical discussion.

The stated aims of the project were to:

- create space and time for critical reflection away from the 'busy-ness' of schools;
- create a community of practice in a residential 'safe-space' conducive to this kind of work, where potentially confidential concerns could be aired;
- develop independence and confidence among student teachers on how to manage examples of ethically complex and potentially challenging classroom situations;
- address existential concerns which arise typically among beginning teachers when dealing with challenging behaviour by their pupils, including burnout, and sustaining motivation and a sense of 'moral purpose';
- offer teacher educators a form of professional development in the methods of dialogic teaching and learning, and in the value and possibilities of such engagement.

In addition, we were able to offer participants a practical induction in how to initiate and lead deliberation on ethical issues, using some of the P4C activities. This proved to be of particular interest to those student teachers who had not previously encountered dialogical teaching pedagogy. We understand, however that the ability to manage such a discussion cannot be absorbed overnight. To develop the ability to lead workshops in ethical deliberative practices requires significant exposure to such practices and considerable skill and experience. In the next section, we identify issues that arose in the course of the workshops.

Philosophy for Teachers: establishing key principles of ethical professional development

Here, we identify the main findings from the workshops here, discussing the key factors that positively affected their perceived success.

1. Time and a safe emotional space

The workshop extended over 24 h. This was a luxury which was afforded with generous funding from two charitable bodies. To justify the time spent in taking student teachers away during term time we had chosen to identify the Teaching standards in the workshop's stated aims and intended outcomes. necessarily teacher educators need to ensure that student teachers achieve the teachers' standards, while acknowledging their reductive nature. The workshops enabled participants to reflect in ways that led to understanding the deep and interconnected matters that the standards, particularly Part 2, attempt to articulate.

The experience of inquiry and deliberation was not one that the student teachers had habitually experienced in their pre-service courses and differed markedly from the way their sessions on 36-week PGCE are usually run, in which time is at a premium. Participants felt able to share their concerns about work in schools and these also tended to focus on lack of time. The worries revolved around having too many time-consuming duties, a problem compounded because the purpose of the duties was unclear. Moreover, even when the value and purpose of those duties had become clearer to them, they felt they had insufficient time to undertake them well.

The P4T approach allowed both time and a safe space for these concerns to be aired and shared with the group as a whole; time was spent drawing connections, clarifying meanings and going deeper into the issues raised. Values were explored allowing insights and thoughts to be shared, leading to new perspectives, disparate directions and a deepening of understanding. The iterative nature of the process of discussion led to a deepening of inquiry as the workshop progressed, which participants appeared to find satisfying. It allowed deep reflection on issues which student teachers considered disturbing and unsettling. One person described the experience as being like a 'safety valve' that helped them manage the complexity of their work.

The problem of finding time to engage with ethical issues extends to the whole area of school life. The workshops prompted some reflection among people

engaged in educational practices to identify ‘leaky spaces’ where work of this nature might be done. Having seen the value of creating a safe space for discussion and carving out time, teacher educators stated their intentions to take the ideas into their work with head teachers (establishing inquiry-based approaches), using dialogical enquiry methods, and introducing students and colleagues to this mode of reflection.

2. A conducive environment

One important factor in the success of P4T was the venue. This proved the case in an earlier workshop too, which took place at Gladstone’s Library, near Hawarden in north Wales; participants reported the powerful positive impact that the chosen location had exercised on them. The venue was important for P4T too, as it needed to be a peaceful space away from the ‘busyness’ of schools. We chose Charney Manor – a Quaker retreat centre in the Oxfordshire countryside – which has a long history and association with ethical and reflective practice. Perhaps it was the character of the building and the sense of history it engendered which proved so amenable to reflection; it was designed for and is dedicated to activity of this nature. The atmosphere also contributed further to the participants’ positive sense of having time, and eating communally allowed for discussion to continue to flow, making the different sessions link together smoothly and maintaining momentum. The venues also afforded the opportunity for time outside and some gentle strolls around the grounds; such settings contribute to a contemplative ethos and having a weak cell phone signal and quiet atmosphere discouraged constant distractions from outside. Participants reported that they enjoyed the experiences despite finding them full of challenging ideas.

3. Building a ‘Community of Enquiry’

A strong and positive sense of community quickly built up as a result of the residential nature of the experience, such that participants quickly felt at ease with each other, and able to deliberate comfortably and openly, despite their different backgrounds and stages of development as teachers. The workshop brought together pre-service teachers with some ‘beginning’ or newly qualified teachers with teacher educators across both primary and secondary phases of schooling in England, and this is an unusual occurrence. At one event, a significant number of Education studies undergraduates also attended. As a result, the student teachers were engaged with educational theory in relation to their developing ethical classroom practice in a more sustained and rigorous way than might otherwise have happened on a conventional PGCE programme. Student teachers reported several benefits from the experience, including talking widely about education in a way which had not been possible while on placement in school.

4. Expertise in deliberative practices

The workshop articulated a model of dialogical pedagogical practice, a key element

of which was our workshop leader, who was both a P4C trainer, and a philosopher of education. As a facilitator he was accustomed to leading workshop activities and creating a shared space of enquiry; as a philosopher he had an overview of the field of philosophical questions and issues that particular 'stories' could illustrate. In the particular experiences under discussion, he could recognise the tensions, synergies, arguments and positions of varied accounts and general philosophical questions and help draw out participants' ideas.

An emphasis on identifying questions, rather than supplying solutions honoured the contingency and complexity of ethical dimension of teachers' work in general. The discussion did not patronise participants with easy answers but legitimised their sense of difficulty. Activities led the group back to reconsidering previously identified conclusions and generating different types of further questions which deepened philosophical reflection. As mentioned, the workshop events were attended by different groups of students and tutors so that the exact detail of activities undertaken and 'outcomes' achieved were varied, tailored to their particular interests and needs, as might be expected in student-centred learning.

The confirmed finding in an earlier workshop of using personally experienced ethical dilemmas proved a more fruitful and effective starting point for deliberation of this kind than the role-play and imaginary scenarios used in earlier residential workshops. We found that this approach enabled explanation and clarification and the beginnings of working towards a shared perspective. Creating an environment in which trust is felt and confidentiality assured is a prerequisite for sharing 'real' stories. This kind of issue is well-rehearsed in P4C and our able facilitator used strategies with in-built paired and small-group activities for 'private' clarifications and conversations before ideas were shared with the wider community. No one was coerced to share personal stories and on occasion people told stories on behalf of others to protect their identity. Other measures such as fictionalisation based on real shared stories could offer further protection and again, these techniques have been documented in P4C practice and some are easy to translate into the P4T workshops.

Through carefully encouraging the sharing of stories, the group was able to develop some deep discussion. One example concerns a teacher's story, voted for by the group as a basis for discussion. In this instance, a newly qualified teacher had treated a child in her care rather leniently, because she had knowledge of the child's complex circumstances. Other children had complained that the teacher's action was unfair, since she had not applied the rules consistently. As a new teacher, she had found this experience unsettling and felt that the children were undermining her professional judgement. She felt she had acted wisely in the situation, but could understand the children's point of view and was left feeling concerned that she could have handled the situation better.

From the substantive dialogue around this incident, the concepts of fairness, equitable treatment and equality were discussed and examined in some depth. Questions around what factors might inform choices of action were considered and participants went on to explore concerns such as, 'How can we treat people equally when different responses would be helpful?' 'What does it mean to be

fair?’ ‘How can compassion be squared with equity?’ These discussions stimulated thoughtful, lengthy and sustained contributions.

The key words and concepts in these questions were further discussed as we thought about a possible hierarchy among the concepts being generated (in the sense that some concepts are more generalised and generalisable than others). For example, we added ‘justice’, to the discussion of rules, fairness and differential treatment. Highlighting these complex and overarching ideas is known in some P4C practices as identifying a ‘big concept’ and the participants were able to see how their own more specific issues and questions would fit within the umbrella term ‘justice’, in this example. Through exploring the concept and related practical concerns, clarificatory and specific further questions arose, using a P4C strategy known as ‘concept stretching’. This helped participants to contemplate possible ways forward in thinking about how to act in the future and how to articulate reasons for their actions.

5. Philosophers and philosophers of education

A sustained engagement with philosophical theory differentiates our workshop from school-based P4C work. This was substantiated by the involvement of political and moral philosophers, as well as philosophers of education in each workshop who engaged philosophically with the discussion, probing, clarifying and helping participants to develop argued positions. The philosophers of education also helped the students to identify the nature of the questions they were raising, pointing out when these were more like sociological or psychological questions. This is useful in helping the teachers see how to find answers to some kinds of problems by researching effectively; the academics present were able, for example to suggest further reading or useful resources for pedagogic and behaviour management issues, while then bringing the focus back to philosophical concerns for the discussion.

Another role of the philosophers of education was to model good ways of challenging students and colleagues in rigorous but non-combative ways. Through hearing the arguments between philosophers representing different traditions in their field, the students were able to observe and/or participate in debate in a way that would not normally feature as part of their training. It was interesting to see the participants develop confidence in disagreeing with one another quite significantly, while maintaining an open and cordial atmosphere.

Conclusion and future directions

Teaching, we have suggested, is ethically complex because it is contingent and dependent to a very great degree on circumstance. In the sessions we were able to establish, albeit for the brief time we were together, an open-ended, critical and self-reflective community of enquiry focused on shared ethical concerns. The model created an amenable space for participants to reflect on a series of ethically complex issues that had arisen in a variety of circumstances they had experienced at early stages in their teaching careers.

Having built up a model of ethical deliberation, we are now thinking about the sustainability of the initiative. We are confident it works well from what participants have told us but it is hard to see how future work of this kind could be funded, writing at a time of increased financial austerity in public services in England, so that all teachers might experience it and have it repeated for new cohorts. Securing funding is a priority for future events.

P4T also ensured that dedicated time was set aside for ethical reflection during the otherwise conventional teacher education programme experienced by practitioners. By relating the main aims of the workshops loosely to the acquisition of teaching competency (developing skills in relationship to a pedagogical approach; providing an opportunity to reflect on behaviour and its management in the classroom), teacher educators were able to justify diverting time away from other pressing priorities on their busy schedules. Given the complexity of teaching as a practice and time pressures both in school and during teacher education programmes, problems persist. More priority needs to be given to the ethical dimension of teachers' work as an integral part of those key aspects of teaching identified in policy documentation such as the Teachers' standards. Positive changes of this kind need to be addressed at the level of policy as well as in the practice of individual teacher educators. That said, as was argued earlier, expertise in leading ethical deliberation among teacher educators may be a further factor in its relative marginalisation on existing teacher education programmes. Certainly, the considerable experience and expertise of the facilitator was recognised as key to the success of the P4T workshops. As Murriss (2008) has argued, for a community of enquiry to be capable of continuously renewing, transforming or diverging practice, it must be able to respond to the thoughts of its members in ways that are 'genuinely open-ended, critical and self-reflective. This requires a facilitator who must actively seek opportunities to be 'perplexed, numbed and open to change through reflection and self-reflection' (671). While a number of tutors and student teachers were able to experience and then reflect upon the workshop process at an introductory level, further training and experience of working in this way would be needed to enable them to act effectively as skilled facilitators.

Crucially, the residential nature of the programme, away from regular work and home, the intensity of having six sessions within 24 h made a considerable difference to the group's experience. Indeed, even with an expert facilitator, P4T sessions for an hour a week in the school staffroom might well yield quite different results, especially when it comes to discussing issues the teachers experience as disturbing and unsettling.

We conclude that P4T has yielded fruitful and enlightening learning experiences. The factors that contributed to its success included: time dedicated to a form of ethical deliberation based on real experiences in the workplace; making use of P4C models of Communities of Enquiry, led by an experienced facilitator; contributions from philosophers of education; an appropriate safe-space for discussion. Given the complexity of teaching as a practice, school

cultures and heavy time pressures, we have found that there is a clear need and appetite for ethical deliberation among teacher-educators and student teachers which is not being satisfied adequately by conventional teacher education provision. We need to continue to feed that hunger wherever we can. Although this is difficult in current circumstances – exploration of complex concerns requires a suitable physical and social environment if it is to be enabled to happen – we believe that with dedication to the cause, hard work, limited resources and imagination, some solutions can be found to address the problem.

Notes

1. An example of a course at Kingston Polytechnic (now university of Kingston) in the 1980s as part of the professional education degree. In earlier decades, the Institute of Education ran philosophy lectures for teacher education students at all the London-based colleges.
2. Other publications look in more detail at the key findings and participants' evaluations of the P4T and explain the process for an audience of practitioners.
3. In the course of the day, John Vorhaus led on disability issues in the classroom; David Aldridge on the ontological turn, i.e. what it means to be a teacher; Ruth Heilbronn on solidarity with teachers as an injunction for teacher educators, and Steve Bramall on ethical deliberation. Janet Orchard and Pat Mahoney led the final round table discussion.

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