Embedding Philosophy for/with Children in Initial Teacher Education: A Stealth Model

Co-Authors:

Dr Rhiannon Love - ORCID: 0000-0002-6982-1320 rhiannon.love@winchester.ac.uk

Emma Goto - ORCID: 0000-0003-4199-1464 emma.goto@winchester.ac.uk

Abstract

This chapter presents a case study of Philosophy for/with Children (P4wC) implementation in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) within an English university setting. It shares details of the journey the authors took to champion P4wC and implement change. Through professional development with colleagues, and advocacy of P4wC, the authors worked towards a vision of embedding P4wC within the ITE programmes at their institution. Initially this required a stealth approach to find pockets of space and time through which to incorporate features of P4wC into teaching modules. As the journey developed, this approach grew. Through winning hearts and minds aspects of practice have been transformed. The benefits and challenges encountered on the journey are discussed and recommendations for others on a similar path are provided.

Introduction

This chapter initially explores some of the challenges facing the education sector in England currently, particularly within the context of university based Initial Teacher Education (ITE).

These challenges reflect an increasing move towards neoliberal, performative influences prevalent in the United Kingdom (UK) and replicated in other areas of world (Mor, 2018). The seven-year journey that the authors have been on to embed Philosophy for/with Children (P4wC) into the ITE provision at the University of Winchester (UoW), UK is then presented. This journey began in stealth mode, with the authors endeavouring to find ways to include this approach in a variety of modules across the ITE programmes. Initial training in P4wC with university tutors (Senior Lecturers in the institution) saw this approach embraced across the ITE provision and included in seminar content across several subjects as diverse as Religious Education, Special Educational Needs, Emotional Wellbeing and Educational Theory. Current provision sees multiple P4wC learning opportunities for student teachers, leading to many becoming qualified as Society for the Advancement of Philosophical Enquiry and Reflection in Education (SAPERE) Level One Teacher Practitioners. Founded in 1992, SAPERE is the UK's national charity supporting Philosophy for Children.

This chapter presents the authors' experience of their ITE P4wC journey as a case study. It will explore the positives and the rationale for our vision to include P4wC in the ITE provision at UoW. Additionally, it will share the barriers and challenges that the authors faced, to provide guidance for those considering embarking on this journey.

Context

Currently there is a significant tension in ITE. There is limited time to prepare students to teach current initiatives and curriculum, to ensure they reach certain standards, often measured against children's performance in a very narrow range of subjects. Whilst it is statutory to provide a broad and balanced curriculum within English primary schools (Department for Education, 2014), often large parts of the day are spent on English and

maths. However, many view the purpose of education as being much broader than this, with values such as diversity, kindness, criticality and respect being a central goal of education.

In times of increasing performativity in education (Claxton, 2002; Berry 2016), it can be hard to retain and embed the key aspects of curriculum that one values. There is a culture of constraints in education that to some extent dictates coverage. ITE, much like schooling within the English context, is subject to frequent inspections from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), that can lead to reductionist practice (Hardy & Lewis, 2017; Keddie, 2017). This may be a reflection of broader cultural aspects linked to education, such as the marketisation of education that sees learning as a product (Ranson, 2003). This is evidenced across all levels of the education system in England. Within Higher Education (HE), university level education, this marketisation has created increasing pressure to compete for students and the fees that they pay. Courses are ranked and compared, ostensibly to offer informed choice about value for money. This often equates to the financial impact of education upon a student's future employment and wage potential (Hill, 2007; Mor, 2018). So, in this respect, the value of HE is reduced, arguably being seen largely as preparation for the world of work. This focus on readiness for the next stage of life permeates through all layers of the education system in England (Alexander, 2014). However, education has a value of its own in terms of making the most of the stage of life that you are within (Dewey, 1923). Therefore, it is of value for educators to recognise learners as capable and autonomous (Lipman *et al.*, 1980; Matthews, 1994), as opposed to adults in development. This consumerist view of education is often embedded in government policies, such as the recent introduction of the *Initial Teacher Training Core Content Framework* (CCF) (Department for Education, 2019) in England. This document outlines curriculum coverage in ITE. One concern is that the CCF could further marginalise and restrict creative approaches to

pedagogy (Love, 2021), making it even harder to find space to explore alternative pedagogical approaches, such as P4wC, that can be of real benefit to student teachers.

Within the education system in England there is arguably a shift towards more traditional, knowledge-led approaches to curriculum (Buchanan, 2015). Over the last few years, the emergence of practices such as the use of knowledge organisers, has been witnessed. A knowledge organiser purports to summarise the key powerful knowledge around a curriculum topic on a single page (Miller, 2019). One needs to consider however, what constitutes powerful knowledge, as this is subjective and culturally bound. This move reflects a transmission view of education, that may limit critical engagement and time for children to explore their own thinking on wider issues. Freire (1996) discussed how neoliberal forces in education encouraged the proliferation of the teacher as knowledge depositor and the student as the passive recipient. In some ways this reflects the issues raised by Lipman in the 1980s about learners becoming more passive and lacking independent, creative thought (Fisher, 2013).

This can create challenges when educating the next generation of teachers to be reflective, autonomous professionals, capable of thinking critically about their own practice and education as a whole. Haynes and Murris (2011:285) argue that engaging with P4wC can provide, 'a transformative critical space in teacher education that disrupts prevalent epistemological frameworks.' Through dialogue and exploration of different views on the purpose and role of education, assumptions can be challenged, causing educators to reflect critically upon their role in the learning process (Murris, 2008; Haynes & Murris, 2011).

In addition, an understanding of the P4wC approach can provide additional tools for beginning teachers to draw from within their own practice, allowing them to disrupt traditional power structures in the classroom (Haynes & Murris, 2011). This can in turn

empower children to have a voice and participate effectively in their communities (Haynes, 2008; Gorard *et al*., 2015). At times when traditional approaches to education focussed upon knowledge transfer are prevalent, the use of pedagogical practices such as P4wC seem even more essential to encourage criticality rather than passive acceptance.

This current educational context thus provides a number of challenges. However, as educators, the authors feel it is important to focus on positives and possibilities, rather than on negatives and barriers. Whilst it is important to acknowledge challenges, it is crucial to look hopefully towards the future (Berry, 2016). Freire (1998) argues that in addition to love, hope is essential and the only way to overcome the cynical fatalism of neoliberal ideology.

The authors were hopeful that P4wC could be a potential means of resistance to the dominant neoliberal discourse, allowing us to hold on to our values and emphasise the culture and ethos of our university. This provided an opportunity to empower our students in areas where, at times, we have felt disempowered as academics. It is within this context that the authors embarked upon a period of development focussed upon embedding P4wC practice into their ITE programmes.

The Stealth Model: A Case Study of P4wC implementation in university based Initial Teacher Education

The following case study focusses upon the implementation of P4wC across a range of modules and programmes within ITE at the University of Winchester (UoW). The university is a small values-led institution in the south of England, with approximately 8000 students and a large ITE provision. The ITE programmes have a rights-respecting ethos. This approach to teacher education places a strong sense of personal and collective responsibility

at the heart of its ethos and values and promotes practices which endorse the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (UNICEF, 2015).

Upon joining the university in 2013 the authors already had a commitment to more holistic child-centred approaches to education. There was a desire to draw from some of these approaches when developing our practice at the university. One of the authors had significant experience of leading P4wC in a primary school. It was recognised that P4wC aligned well with the university's values and the rights-respecting ethos of the ITE programmes.

The Stealth Model Process

One of the key challenges facing university based ITE educators is the limited amount of face-to-face contact with their students. ITE students attend university-based sessions but also undertake placements within schools during the academic year. Government policy dictates the amount of time student teachers must spend in school, so there is no capacity to extend contact time at the university. In addition, curriculum development within an English university context can be challenging for the educator as there are serious constraints in terms of speed of development. Quality assurance of programmes involves validations of learning outcomes, assignments, and coverage. Significant change to programme content would necessitate revalidation of existing modules. Therefore, the authors recognised that dramatic, wholesale immediate change would not be possible. It was pragmatically decided to take a different approach - one based upon stealth. Wherever opportunities arose to promote P4wC as an approach, positive messages were shared. These messages slowly trickled through the department, raising the interest of colleagues. As their interest piqued, this was capitalised on through provision of professional development opportunities. As the vision developed, opportunities were seized, and the Stealth Model was born.

Developing Capacity

The first challenge was to develop capacity within the department. Fullan (2020) highlights that relationships are key when managing change. It is essential to take people with you as there is a real possibility that changing too rapidly can end up leaving people behind (Fullan, 2020). It is vital to work at an appropriate pace with others and communication is key to success. The director of ITE at UoW at the time was supportive of the implementation of P4wC provision across the ITE programmes and funded one of the authors to complete her SAPERE Level 3 accreditation to achieve Trainer status. Grootenboer *et al* (2015) suggests that having the support of senior leaders when implementing any change is a significant enabling factor. This allowed for the first phase of the Stealth Model. There were fifty-eight tutors within the department at that time, none of whom had previous experience of P4wC, apart from the aforementioned author. It was recognised that a key factor for the success of embedding P4wC would be developing the capability of the staff team. Therefore in 2014 the first group of twenty-two tutors were introduced to P4wC and achieved the SAPERE Level One qualification. This was repeated early the next year for a second group. The experience was particularly well received by tutors who were impressed by how P4wC could empower children. It was recognised that there would be benefits to introducing this approach to our student teachers, with one tutor commenting that: "*P4C will make a difference to the children in our classrooms if it is part of the student teacher's underlying vision for teaching and learning.*" The impact of developing experience of P4wC widely across the tutor team cannot be underestimated. The other author of this chapter was one of the first group of tutors introduced to P4wC and was particularly inspired by this approach and became a key advocate and crucial part of the Stealth Model. It is recognised that when introducing new initiatives within an educational environment, it is beneficial to have local champions who

can help navigate the organisational structures, drawing in aspects of the new initiative (Solitander *et al*., 2012). One reflection from the authors of this chapter is that having a colleague to support and share the vision is particularly empowering. The authors believe that working together they have been able to achieve far more than either could have individually. This collaboration enabled the authors to move to the second phase of the Stealth Model.

Developing a vision: Setting and Achieving Goals

A commitment was developed to make P4wC an integral part of the UoW ITE programmes. The vision was that all student teachers would have experience of P4wC during their studies. Collaboration with SAPERE was an important part of the Stealth Model, this was formalised with UoW becoming one of SAPERE's Partner Universities. Through this partnership an opportunity was identified to enable students to achieve SAPERE's certification for an *Introductory Unit in Philosophy for Children*. A goal was set to enable all undergraduate ITE students to achieve this certificate through engaging with a minimum of four hours of high quality P4wC theory and practice. Additionally, it was an ambition that as many students as possible would be given the opportunity to achieve the full Level One SAPERE *Teacher Facilitator* certificate. Our challenge was then to find the time and space in which to achieve this.

Finding spaces

Heifetz and Linsky (2017) highlight that change happens within a culture and to be successful one must connect to and build from, what is already there. Integrating any new approach into any existing structures, such as current modules, is a key part of the process (Solitander *et al.*,

2012). Therefore, the Stealth Model aimed to integrate P4wC within existing provision as part of this third phase.

Fortuitously, the authors both led modules within the existing ITE programmes that aligned with integrity with the aims and purposes of P4wC. These modules encourage the development of reflective practice, teacher identity, critical thinking and an understanding of ways to facilitate children's learning. Opportunities for lectures about the theory of P4wC were identified alongside seminar sessions that provided space for practical experience of philosophical enquiry. Additionally, alongside the authors, other members of the wider tutor team were starting to embed P4wC approaches within their own teaching. They recognised that the P4wC approach, utilising carefully selected stimuli, could be a powerful tool to develop creative and critical thinking around educational practice within their own curriculum areas. Both Fisher (2013) and Kelly (2005) argue that creative approaches to teaching and learning such as P4wC develop enquiring, risk-taking and autonomous thinkers, who approach problem solving with originality and imagination.

The spaces that we had identified within modules provided opportunities for all of our undergraduate students to have the chance to achieve their SAPERE *Introductory Unit in Philosophy for Children*. One of the modules used focussed upon Educational Theory. Initially only half of the tutor team for this module had the SAPERE Level One accreditation, however data collected from students indicated that groups facilitated by the tutors who had achieved the Level One, reported that the module had a greater impact on their practice. This led to a decision to be taken to provide further professional development for the rest of the tutor team.

In addition, an elective module was developed that allowed groups of students to achieve the full SAPERE Level One accreditation and allowed the students to explore the theory and

research around P4wC in greater depth. As the second chapter author gained SAPERE Trainer status this meant we were able to offer this module to more students. Increasing capacities within these modules was driven by feedback from students such as: "*The module is so amazing that my only wish would be that they offer more places so that more students can experience it.*" Furthermore, students who chose to specialise in primary and secondary Religious Education also had the opportunity to achieve the SAPERE Level One *Teacher Facilitator* accreditation. The final area where students had the opportunity to develop their expertise with P4wC was through their dissertation research.

Positives that were observed

Over the years that we have been engaged in this process we have had large amounts of positive feedback from students and other stakeholders in education. Students frequently highlighted how enlightening it can be to lead a community of enquiry, where the children are leading the dialogue and how the process has changed their view of the capability of children.

Much of the feedback we have received from students indicates that learning about P4wC has been transformational. As one student commented: "*I think this module may be the first to ever change my mind about something completely (Can children think philosophically?)*" Another student highlighted how P4wC had impacted on her personally as well as professionally, "*It has inspired me to think/teach in a different way and has helped me to develop as a person and a teacher beyond P4C!*" Murris (2008:677) writes that the transformative power of philosophy can lead practitioners to re-evaluate their whole approach to education. In essence, the exposure to P4wC within their ITE programmes has helped our students to develop their teacher identity. One student summed this up saying, "*It has helped me to realise the kind of teacher I want to be.*" Another student commented, "*I wanted to*

discover strategies for questioning and discussion, but it's more than that. It's opening a new world to children, which I find fascinating."

One of the most heartening things has been how empowering this has been for many of our student teachers in practice. A clear example of this is when one of the authors met with a first-year student teacher who had been engaged in teaching children in a primary classroom as part of an initial teaching placement. This student effusively shared that whilst teaching a lesson about sustainable environmental practice, they had planned a lesson that involved a community of enquiry. After the lesson, the class teacher had fed back to the student teacher about the lesson and had commented that they had really learnt something from the student. It is unusual for student teachers so early in their journey to see themselves as able to share expertise with more senior colleagues. In a similar example, a Secondary Religious Education student teacher shared how their lesson using P4wC had been observed by a member of the senior leadership team at their placement school. The Senior Leader had been so impressed by the impact on learning of this lesson, that they took the decision to arrange professional development in P4wC for the entire Humanities' teaching team. Likewise, other headteachers and senior leadership teachers in local schools have commented positively about the inclusion of P4wC in the ITE programmes at the UoW; with some commenting that this has meant that they favour UoW students as future employees.

Conclusion

Upon reflection on our journey to embed P4wC in our ITE provision, we believe that through small steps we have made a big impact. The stealth-based approach taken sowed a seed that has grown beyond where initially imagined. Consequently, P4wC stands proud within our ITE programmes as one of the more popular elective choices, it is embedded within our programmes, no longer necessitating integration within modules through subterfuge.

One potential barrier to embedding P4wC can be financial. Professional development can be costly (Anspal *et al.*, 2012). The benefits reaped from having a supportive senior leadership team are recognised. At UoW, leaders not only authorised the costs of training large groups of tutors, but also enabled the second author to herself achieve the SAPERE trainer status, which was essential to build capacity. Therefore, a key recommendation of this chapter is to share a vision with senior leaders, potentially inviting them to witness the impact of P4wC themselves.

Small changes through stealth can make a big difference. Our vision for a stealth leader is someone who:

- Is a champion of their initiative - and positively promotes their practice wherever opportunities arise

- Spreads the word, winning hearts and minds

- Supports the professional development of colleagues to build capacity

- Sets goals and works towards a vision

- Identifies opportunities to apply and embed their practice

Not all educational settings are conducive to fostering creative approaches in the way that one might want. When one encounters resistance, our experience suggests that it is important to not lose hope. Small changes can reap big rewards. Freire (1998:69) exalts the educator to remember the importance of hope and joy in education:

> There is a relationship between the joy essential to teaching activity and hope. Hope is something shared between teachers and students. The hope that we can learn together, teach together, be curiously impatient together, produce something together, and resist together the obstacles that prevent the flowering of our joy. In truth, from the point of view of the human condition, hope is an essential component and not an intruder.

Reference List

Alexander, R. (2014) The best that has been thought and said. *Forum,* 56 (1), pp. 157-166.

Anspal, T., Eisenschmidt, E., & Löfström, E. (2012) Finding myself as a teacher: Exploring the shaping of teacher identities through student teachers' narratives. *Teachers and Teaching, 18*(2), pp.197-216.

Berry, J. (2016) *Teachers Undefeated: How global education reform has failed to crush the spirit of educators.* London: UCL Institute of Education Press.

Buchanan, R. (2015) Teacher identity and agency in an era of accountability. *Teachers and Teaching, 21*(6), pp.700-719.

Claxton, G. (2002) *Building learning power.* Bristol: TLO Limited.

Dewey, J. (1923) *Democracy and education: An introduction to the philosophy of education.* New York: Macmillan.

Department for Education (2014) *The national curriculum in England: complete framework for key stages 1 to 4.* Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-framework-for-key-stages-1-to-4 Accessed 11th June 2021.

Department for Education (2019) *ITT Core Content Framework.* London: DFE Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/843676/Initial_teacher_training_core_content_framework.pdf Accessed 11th June 2021.

Fisher, R. (2013) *Teaching thinking: Philosophical enquiry in the classroom.* London: A&C Black.

Freire, P. (1996) *Pedagogy of the oppressed (revised).* London: Penguin Books.

Freire, P. (1998) *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy, and civic courage.* Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Freire, P. (2007) *Daring to dream: Towards a pedagogy of the unfinished.* Boulder: Paradigm Publishers.

Fullan, M. (2020) *Leading in a Culture of Change.* Hoboken: Jossey-Bass. Available at: http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=2324572&site=eds-live Accessed 12 May 2021.

Gorard, S., Siddiqui, N., & Huat See, B. (2015) *Philosophy for Children: Evaluation report and executive summary.* Education Endowment Foundation: Millbank.

Grootenboer, P., Edwards-Groves, C., & Rönnerman, K. (2015) Leading practice development: Voices from the middle. *Professional Development in Education*, *41*(3), pp.508-526.

Hardy, I., & Lewis, S. (2017) The 'doublethink'of data: Educational performativity and the field of schooling practices. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 38*(5), pp.671-685.

Haynes, J. (2008) *Children as philosophers: Learning through enquiry and dialogue in the primary classroom.* Abingdon: Routledge.

Haynes, J. & Murris, K. (2011) The provocation of an epistemological shift in teacher education through philosophy with children. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 45(2), pp.285-303.

Heifetz, R., & Linsky, M. (2017) *Leadership on the line, with a new preface: Staying alive through the dangers of change*. Boston: Harvard Business Press.

Hill, D. (2007) Critical teacher education, new labour, and the global project of neoliberal capital. *Policy Futures in Education, 5*(2), pp.204-225.

Keddie, A. (2017) Primary school leadership in England: performativity and matters of professionalism. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 38*(8), pp.1245-1257.

Kelly, P. (2005) *Using thinking skills in the primary classroom.* London: SAGE.

Lipman, M., Sharp, A. M., & Oscanyan, F. S. (2010) *Philosophy in the classroom*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Love, R. (2021) *Critical Considerations of Teacher Identity, Performativity and 'Perform-ability' and their Significance for Initial Teacher Education.* (Unpublished EdD thesis) University of Winchester.

Matthews, G. B. (1994) *The philosophy of childhood*. Harvard: Harvard University Press.

Miller, M. (2019) Organising knowledge: The purpose and pedagogy of knowledge organisers. Available at: https://my.chartered.college/2019/05/organising-knowledge-the-purpose-and-pedagogy-of-knowledge-organisers/ Accessed 11th June 2021.

Mor, N. B. (2018) Teacher education in a post-modern liberal democratic society. *Research in Education,* 100(1), pp.10-31.

Murris, K. (2008) Philosophy with Children, the stingray and the educative value of disequilibrium. *Journal of Philosophy of Education,* 42(3-4), pp.667-685.

Passy, R. (2013) Surviving and flourishing in a neoliberal world: primary trainees talking. *British Educational Research Journal, 39*(6), pp.1060-1075.

Ranson, S. (2003) Public accountability in the age of neo-liberal governance. *Journal of education policy*, 18(5), pp.459-480.

Solitander, N., Fougère, M., Sobczak, A., & Herlin, H. (2012) We are the champions: Organizational learning and change for responsible management education. *Journal of Management Education*, *36*(3), pp.337-363.

UNICEF. (2012) A summary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Available at: https://www.unicef.org.uk/rights-respecting-schools/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2017/01/Summary-of-the-UNCRC.pdf Accessed 11th June 2021.

Author Bios

Emma Goto is a former primary school and Early Years teacher. She has been working in initial teacher education since 2013. She is currently a Senior Lecturer in primary education at the Institute for Education at the University of Winchester. She teaches and leads modules focused upon Philosophy for Children (P4wC), education theory, primary computing, and Early Years education on the undergraduate BA (Hons) Primary Education programme and teaches the primary computing input on the postgraduate (PGCE) Primary Education programme. Emma is also a Level One SAPERE trainer.

Dr Rhiannon Love is former secondary and primary school teacher. She has been working in Initial Teacher Education since 2013. She is currently a Senior Lecturer and Route Leader for the PGCE in Secondary Religious Education (RE) at the Institute for Education at the University of Winchester. She is the curriculum lead for the RE input and leads modules in Philosophy for Children (P4wC) on the undergraduate BA (Hons) Primary Education and postgraduate PGCE Primary and Secondary programmes. Rhiannon is also a Level One SAPERE trainer. Rhiannon has just completed her doctorate using a P4wC community of enquiry as her principal research method.