



Orchard, J., Heilbronn, R., & Winstanley, C. (2020). In philosophical conversation with: new and beginning teachers. In A. Fulford, G. Robinson, & R. Smith (Eds.), *Philosophy in, and with, the community: Theories, practices, and possibilities* Bloomsbury Academic.
<https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/philosophy-and-community-9781350073425/>

Peer reviewed version

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In philosophical conversation with: new and beginning teachers

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Abstract

The value for teachers of belonging to ‘a professional learning community’ has long been recognised (Bolam et al. 2005), as it enables them to draw on the collective knowledge of the community of practice (Lave & Wenger 1991). Building on this notion, ‘Philosophy for Teachers’, or ‘P4T’ (Orchard et al 2016), offers one distinctive model of collaborative professional learning for pre-service teachers’ preparation, adapted from the more familiar idea of ‘P4C’ (Philosophy for Children). Drawing on the model of learning through dialogue, a 24-hour residential P4T “community of enquiry” is established, comprising new teachers, teacher educators and philosophers of education.

P4T methods are designed to accommodate teaching as a relational practice in which ethically complex situations arise to which teachers need to respond. Alongside the development of dialogical pedagogical skills from experience, members of the community support each other in thinking ethically about dilemmas faced, generating these from their own experiences of classroom practice. One key aim of the exercise is to give teachers the opportunity to develop personal qualities, knowledge and understanding that sensitize them to the ethical complexities of practice so that they address them more confidently and competently. Another is to recognise the personal and institutional benefits of addressing ethical complexities collectively.

Pilots suggest that a ‘community of enquiry’ style professional development model, including a characteristically philosophical dimension to the dialogical activity, extends and develops established teacher education practices of ‘critical reflection’ in distinctive ways. We conclude that there is an urgent need for space and time of this particular sort, in a democratic context and away from the ‘busy-ness’ of work, to challenge the nature, scope and reach of conventional teacher education provision whether located in schools or universities.

Section One – Introduction

There is an urgent need to re-assert the place for community and philosophy in the education of teachers. For, while the general value of belonging to a professional learning community has long been recognised (e.g. Bolam et al. 2005), the distinctive contribution that a philosophically informed, ‘community of enquiry’ based approach

can make to teachers' reflective practice has largely remained unrealised. Seminal work on the notion of a 'community of practice' (Lave & Wenger 1991) has much to offer teacher education and 'Philosophy for Teachers', or 'P4T' (Orchard et al 2016), adapted from the more familiar idea of "P4C" (Philosophy for Children), develops that idea in specific ways appropriate to new and beginning teachers.

The impetus for P4T sprang from the recognition that teachers needed 'space' and a particular quality of time during their professional education in which to reflect on ethical matters as these arose from their practice. As Campbell (2003) has identified, the lone teacher in the classroom is frequently 'struggling to cope without much guidance with the dilemmas and tensions that unavoidably surface when one is engaged in the moral domain' (138–139), and there is little information on where ethics education appears in teacher education (Walters et. al. 2017). This resonated with our own experience as teachers and teacher educators. We saw our student teachers and new teachers in school increasingly pressurised by the various technical demands of their jobs, with little or no time to reflect on ethical issues and scant opportunity for teacher educators to engage in the kinds of learning activities that support such reflection and engagement. Indeed, in our own jurisdiction (England) there is no formal requirement for teacher educators on Higher Education courses to teach ethics to teachers or engage in pre-service ethical preparation (Maxwell et al. 2016).

Yet teaching is fundamentally an ethical endeavour (Hansen 1995 and 2001, Carr 2006, Campbell 2003 and 2008, Papastephanou 2006, Smith, 1999, Warnick and Silverman, 2011). It is a relational practice, one which requires knowledge and understanding of the complexity of contingent instances, and the ability to react and interact with sound moral judgement. Teaching is 'embodied, played out in specific social-cultural contexts' (Griffiths, 2013: 221). Teachers hold values in their practice as a result and generally manifest a strong vocational commitment to being good teachers (Hansen 2001, Estola & Erikkila 2003, Campbell 2008, Higgins 2010). Where is the formal and structured opportunity to support them in developing a vocational sense of commitment that is both considered and informed?

Elements of ethics education may appear when professional codes of practice and conduct are introduced to new teachers (these are widespread in teaching internationally (e.g. DET 2006, SACE 2011, TCI 2012, GTCS 2012, AAE 2015; UNESCO 2015) and Rich (1984) has argued that ethics education for teachers

should be built around these. However, Davids (2016) warns of the limitations of legalistic approaches to ethics in these policy documents (e.g. in SACE 2011) which may not reflect the actual experiences of teachers. If they are to be supported in identifying ways in which to act ethically, or in how to use ethical judgement, she argues, it is important to attend to the inter-related practices of deliberation, belonging and inclusion, as manifestations in themselves of ethical teaching.

Teaching standards offer another mechanism that may trigger some limited input into professional ethics education. Such standards are now customary in most international contexts for teacher accreditation (Drury & Baer 2011) and usually carry a conceptualisation of ethics for teaching. The English Teaching Standards (DfE 2011) have a separate section (Part B) relating to personal and professional conduct. Teacher educators are therefore obliged to engage their student teachers with ethics as far as they are related to professional conduct in a generalised way (DfE 2011, Ofsted 2015). Again, Davids' (2016) warnings of the limitations of legalistic approaches to ethics are pertinent. Heilbronn (2017) also raises this issue in discussing some serious implications of the regulation under Part B of the English standards that teachers must report to the police anyone they suspect of possible 'radicalisation', without having opportunities to reflect on interpretations and implications of the legal guidelines and their own roles within these.

In our work as teacher educators we interpret ethics education more widely than standards and codes can capture, seeing teaching as a human practice, concerned with relationships, and as fundamentally ethical (Dewey 1909, van Manen 1991, Noddings 1992, Hansen 1995 and 2001, Dunne 2003). We concur with the assumption that 'ethics and teaching seem inherently compatible and unavoidably intertwined' (Campbell 2008: 357). Furthermore, the limited amount of research dealing with children's attitudes to their teachers confirms the importance of relationships in teaching. Children's voices confirm teaching as a human practice. They think that 'good' teachers are those who respect them, care if they learn, know them well and know how they learn (e.g. Kutnick and Jules 1993, Beishuizen et al 2001).

Codes of practice and teaching standards are extremely limited in their affordance for supporting teachers in their ethical practice, since they outline general rules without specificity of context, although they are useful in pointing the way to

professionally acceptable behaviour which can be helpful for teachers to make sense of what it is they hope to achieve through education. Todd (2001: 436) suggests that professional codes do at least provide some sense of 'moral ambience' for those engaged in practice. However, standardised ethical statements 'impose ethics on education from the outside' (ibid.) and do not give enough guidance for teachers faced with the ambiguity, complexity and contingency of the present moment in which teaching happens (Campbell 2008, Griffiths 2013). The process of familiarising teachers with the codes and standards does not necessarily produce the desired effect on teachers' conduct, as it is not possible to follow predetermined norms that do not reflect teachers' experiences.

The practice of P4T began as an attempt to create opportunities to address the concerns of students and early career teachers. Committed to the value of dialogical, enquiry-based pedagogy (see below and Orchard et al. 2016), we experimented by translating collaborative and experiential forms of teaching and learning already established in schooling, to the new context of vocational education in higher education. We were seeking to find out whether such work might help teachers in managing those difficult ethical situations in the classroom that they might otherwise experience alone and unsupported, situations for which non-standard responses are usually required. Teachers needed space in which to reflect on the actual ethical situations they encountered, and we sought ways to launch, manage and support their reflective work which were different from those limited opportunities already established in teacher education programmes. Two interlinking models of collaborative reflection informed the work we did, that of the 'community of practice'; and work in philosophy with and for children, concerned with dialogue in a 'community of enquiry'. We discuss each of these key ideas next in more detail.

Communities of practice in teacher education

General notions of collective enquiry, reflection and self-evaluation are well-established in teacher education through a number of earlier initiatives (Bolam et al 2005) and in this regard, the key principles which underpin P4T are not new. Dewey observed that educational practices may 'provide the data, the subject matter, which forms the problems of inquiry' (Dewey 1929:16). Stenhouse (1975) argued for collective enquiry by teachers as school and classroom researchers playing an active part in the curriculum development process, and Schön (1983) was influential in

advocating the notion of the 'reflective practitioner'. The specific term 'community of practice' (CoP) is generally attributed to Lave and Wenger (1991) and developed through the later work of Wenger (see Wenger, 1998a, 1998b; Wenger & Snyder, 2000). The notion arose originally from a study of apprentice midwives in West Africa which went on to be applied to other contexts, including education.

CoPs have come to be defined as 'the communities through which individuals develop and share the capacity to create and use knowledge' (Wenger 1998a: 1) and there are some parallels between this and work being developed as P4T. According to Wenger, CoPs are almost always created informally and distinct from formal organizational units' (ibid: 2) such that they may not always be given names. They can exist anywhere in human activity; indeed, each of us may belong to several, in the various contexts in which we interact with others, participating in a CoP either as a core member or on its periphery. CoPs arise out of the activities which bring people in social groupings together, which might include anything from engaging in lunchtime discussions to solving difficult problems, and the learning comes from mutual engagement in activities. 'CoPs develop around things that matter to people such that as a result, their practices reflect the members' own understanding of what is important' (ibid.).

Even though as a particular example of a CoP the communities we create in our workshops are short-lived, P4T is certainly organised around what matters to teachers in their daily practice. It aims to support teachers to understand and ideally to cope better with the inevitable ethical dilemmas that arise in the classroom. As Sim identifies, the CoP in which 'members have similar needs and experiences', is an 'effective structure to examine and reflect on these complex situations' (Sim, 2006: 78). So far, a shared concern with 'behaviour management', common in new and early career teachers, has been the focus of pilot P4T workshops and this is a good subject because standardised and codified statements about such management give little guidance in managing the complexity of various ethical demands.

Wenger (1998a) has also stated that a CoP is defined along three dimensions: what it is about, how it functions, what capability it has produced. The essence of what P4T is 'about' is the overarching objective of developing teachers' ethical awareness, sound judgement or 'practical wisdom' (Dunne, 1993; Smith, 1999, Carr, 2006; Heilbronn, 2008; Higgins, 2010). The way in which P4T functions is according to principles of Socratic dialogue promoted by the 'community of enquiry', which we

discuss in more detail below. The 'capability' that P4T 'produces' lies in the development of the dispositions of participants to act ethically in the moment in classrooms.

The essence of the community of practice is its continual renegotiation of aims and reaffirmation of agreement of the participation of its members and consultation on the focus of joint undertaking. Members are bound together through mutual engagement in some activity related to developing understanding about something that arises from the communal shared practice. In the case of P4T this binding together is temporary and short-lived, but strong and intense for the time that the community of enquiry spends together. The practices that develop out of the mutual engagement in a common endeavour reflect the members' own understanding of what is important.

Even when a community's actions conform to an external mandate, it is the community—not the mandate—that produces the practice. In this sense, communities of practice are fundamentally self-organizing systems (Wenger 1998a: 2).

This was illustrated in our own P4T communities, where we used the external mandate of the need for pre-service teachers to meet Part B of the Teachers' Standards (DfE 2011) to make their participation in P4T during a hectic Post Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE)ⁱ programme possible; whilst making sure that the group had clear ownership of the issues being examined, which were not imposed by us, through a process of negotiation and discussion.

Other initiatives in creating CoPs in teacher education are pertinent to our conception of P4T, how it functions and what it achieves. Jimenez-Silva and Olson found that where pre-service teachers have successfully engaged in a CoP with teachers in schools, they have a better understanding of the relationship of theory in practice (Jimenez-Silva and Olson, 2012: 343). Similarly, Sutherland et al (2005) found that those CoPs that involved experience of practical issues in schools and the opportunity for reflection enabled participating pre-service teachers to 'relate the theory taught at the university to their practical needs' so that 'the theory became more meaningful for them' (ibid., 2005:90).

CoPs have also been shown to be useful for those already working in school contexts (Sim, 2006; Sutherland et al., 2005). On this basis, P4T may be a useful process for teachers hoping to establish a CoP in their schools, over longer periods of

time than is the currently the case with our workshops and this could conform to the kind of professional learning community advocated by Bolam et al. (2005).

'Professional learning communities' (PLCs) are one specific kind of CoP whose benefits for in-service teachers are widely recognised (Bolam et al 2005). Broadly speaking, PLCs involve a group of people both sharing and critically interrogating their practice in an 'ongoing, reflective, collaborative, inclusive, learning-oriented, growth-promoting way' (Toole and Lewis, 2002). Synergies with the current work we have piloted under the term P4T include the emphasis on collaborative and inclusive reflection. Were P4T to develop into work undertaken predominantly with in-service teachers rather than pre-service; and were the work to be 'ongoing' rather than focussed on creating a temporary community of enquiry during a 24-hour period along the lines just described, the connections between these two modes of learning could be rather closer.

CoPs may also make use of ICT, or blended-learning models, and run over several weeks or months (Hodgkinson-Williams et al, 2008). None of this is presently the case in P4T, although one way in which to address issues raised concerning the scalability and sustainability of the ethical retreat model would be to create groups meeting over time for shorter periods, and perhaps virtually, in lieu of face-to-face 24-hour encounters. For example, the notion of the virtual 'community of enquiry', established with school-children in the work of Generation Globalⁱⁱ but not yet formalised in an HEI setting, sets up the further specific possibility of inter and trans-national dialogue exploring global ethical concerns in teaching including teaching sustainably (Coles et al. 2017) or in addressing teachers' capacity to respond ethically to religious and/or cultural diversity (Orchard 2018).

Communities of Enquiry and Dialogue

The second strand to have influenced our work came from Philosophy for Children (P4C), sometimes referred to as Philosophy with Children (PwC)ⁱⁱⁱ. Following a series of discussions with colleagues, we looked to establish PwC/P4C strategies to structure and conduct the workshops we wanted to focus on professional ethics for teachers and teacher educators, and we found the model of the Community of Enquiry (CoE) to be particularly valuable. Numerous existing versions and iterations of CoE can be found in the P4C/PwC^{iv} literature; our focus here is to explain what explicitly about these methods has proved so helpful in the pilot P4T workshops with

teachers. In the UK, the organisation Society for the Advancement of Philosophical Enquiry and Reflection in Education (SAPERE), is one of the largest that provides, as its website banner states, 'Philosophy for Children, Colleges, Communities'.

SAPERE's definition of the CoE is helpful here, where the closeness to the CoP can be clearly identified:

A Community of Enquiry is a group of people used to thinking together with a view to increasing their understanding and appreciation of the world around them and of each other (SAPERE, 2017)

(Further detail about the practice of the CoE and P4C can be found on SAPERE's website^v).

The origins of the CoE idea can be traced back to Peirce's notion of the community of inquiry and to Dewey's concern with education for 'democracy as associated living', that is, the creation of a consensual community in which joint enquiry is integral. The development of the CoE has also been linked to Vygotskian social practices of 'thinking together' (Murriss, 2008) and back further to Socrates and Plato (ibid). P4T makes use of Deweyan notions in P4T's mode of working, particularly in the importance of reflection in problematic situations.^{vi} As Cam reminds us, 'Dewey's standard substitute for 'think' is 'inquire' (Cam 2018: 59).

The CoE is not the only element of P4C practice that we have used, also adapting other activities that help to build positive community relationships from the outset, including techniques for setting the tone of the workshop, agreeing shared aims and ways of working, as well as sharing ideas and techniques for framing questions together. These link back to common features of the CoP. The various strategies for creating the most conducive setting are frequently discussed in the literature around P4C and for a systematic review, it is worth exploring the work of Trickey and Topping (2004). However, since this publication, other developments have emerged, taking the notion of philosophical enquiry with children in different directions and reconsidering how it can be used. Examples of this include 'narrative ethical enquiry' ideas (Robinson, 2014) and ways of engaging children in using philosophy to help them to learn how to 'live well' (Cassidy, 2012).

Running through all these modes of P4C is the feature of 'dialogue', as distinct from discussion. As Wolfe and Alexander (2008) attest, there is a clear difference:

Discussion: the exchange of ideas with a view to sharing information and solving problems. Dialogue: achieving common understanding through structured, cumulative questioning and discussion which guide and prompt, reduce choices, minimise risk and error, and expedite 'handover' of concepts and principles (Wolfe & Alexander, 2008: 3)

During their teacher education (or 'training'), students do tend to engage in 'discussion', as described above, but the opportunities for dialogue are more limited. P4T allows space and expertise to help develop the skills of dialogic work, and the experience of being part of a group striving for common understanding.

SAPERE is one of many advocates of P4C that reference the notion of the '4c's in dialogue; critical, creative, caring and collaborative. Emphasising the importance of these elements and the notion of a dialogic approach, Wolfe and Alexander assert that 'dialogue is not simply a precondition for learning but essential for knowledge construction and human development generally' (ibid.: 4). Ideas around dialogue are taken further by other thinkers, such as Freire (1972) who emphasises a different aspect: *praxis*. Freire considered dialogue to be indispensable in education as it formed a basis for people to take action. *Praxis* is action informed by values, and the role of dialogue is to make this action central for learners, to enable them to make a difference and to change and improve their situations. To enact these positive values requires dialogue undertaken with a backdrop of respect, within a cohesive community in which people are working together towards common aims.

By way of illustration we include a list of elements that are essential for dialogic teaching (Alexander (2017)). They are helpful in imagining the nature of the conversations in the P4T sessions, which were characterised by:

- interactions which encourage students to think, and to think in different ways
- questions which invite much more than simple recall;
- answers which are justified, followed up and built upon rather than merely received;
- feedback which informs and leads thinking forward as well as encourages students;
- contributions which are extended rather than fragmented;
- exchanges which chain together into coherent and deepening lines of enquiry;
- discussion and argumentation which probe and challenge rather than unquestioningly accept;

- professional engagement with subject matter which liberates classroom discourse from the safe and conventional;
- classroom organisation, climate and relationships which make all this possible.

(Alexander 2017)

In the next section we give some concrete examples of the P4T work with teachers.

Section Two – P4T in practice

P4T developed from a series of seminars, supported consistently by the generosity of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain (PESGB). The first was a 24-hour residential weekend for 21 teacher educators, led by researchers from the Centre for Research Ethics and Ethical Deliberation (CREED) and the Centre for Learner Identity studies (CLIs) at Edge Hill University (2011). CREED research had evidenced the tension around ethical issues arising in practice (Shortt et al. 2015). The event was structured 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. Role play was used to develop scenarios as the basis for interaction with one another. However, the role play process became complicated and artificial, stimulating a proposal from participants whose own P4C training and experience led them to believe that more meaningful and productive reflection on ethical dilemmas might arise from incidents identified and experienced by the participants themselves. This became the cornerstone of P4T practice.

A seminar for teacher educators, funded by The Higher Education Academy (HEA) and PESGB followed in 2013. Participants took part in workshops exploring the values and dispositions of ‘the good teacher’ and the theme of professional formation and ethical uncertainty. This allowed us to share cases and experiences of pre-service teaching and together explore how we might forefront essential ethical dimensions of teacher education despite the existing rather hostile conditions of training provision. It was a natural development then to involve pre-service teachers, education students and their tutors with philosophers of education and this was the essence of what became the P4T approach. With continued funding from HEA and PESGB we organised two 24-hour residential workshops, with two further workshops, one in England and one in South Africa, funded by the PESGB and the South African National Research Foundation respectively.

The stated aims of the workshops have been 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.

The activities over 24 hours have been steered by an experienced SAPERE trainer, who is also a philosopher of education, and included other invited philosophers of education. When we borrowed some of the P4C strategies, it was vital for us to work with an experienced facilitator. The coordinator acted as co-enquirer, helping the group in many ways, such as building a collaborative, reflective ethos which meant instilling a co-operative and caring culture, grounded in mutual respect, which functioned as a safe space for the expression of ideas in the group search for understanding, meaning and values - always supported by reasons. This is no mean feat to achieve in a short time-span but is essential to the P4T practice as it has emerged. As Murriss notes, a community of enquiry has to be able to respond to the thoughts of its members in ways that are 'genuinely open-ended, critical and self-reflective' (Murriss, 2008: 671). This requires a facilitator who is, in Murriss' words, 'actively seeking opportunities to be perplexed, numbed and open to change through reflection and self-reflection' (ibid), emphasising the need for them to be enabling and attentive to the needs of others.

Having learnt that role play was unhelpful, we ensured that the ethical dilemmas explored in the workshop were based on participants' own direct classroom experience. We worked to develop deep consideration of ethical issues, building on CoE practices, as the following example from the P4T seminars illustrates. An experience a pre-service teacher on a practicum, initially shared with another participant, highlighted the kinds of dilemmas and ways of working

through them. When shared in the COP/COE as a whole, the group voted to work on her narrative. The teacher recounted the experience as one in which she had been lenient with a child who had broken some school rule. She did so, she explained, because she was sympathetic to the pupil's circumstances, which she knew about, but the other children did not. She reported some pupils complaining vociferously that overlooking the rule-breaking was unfair, and she realised that they had interpreted this as an instance of the teacher failing to apply rules consistently. It was difficult for her to regain the confidence of the class as a result. She still believed that her actions were the right ones in the circumstances and yet she could also understand the children's point of view. She was left feeling troubled, concerned that she could have handled the situation better and perplexed about what she could have done otherwise.

In the large group discussion this personal classroom story led to a substantive dialogue in which the concepts of fairness, equitable treatment and equality were discussed and examined in some depth. Questions were posed about what might be done in similar circumstances. 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 were thoughtful and stimulated engaged and sustained contributions, demonstrating both elements of dialogic work (Alexander, 2017, *ibid*) and the power of the CoP.

In a follow-up session building on the group discussion above, key words and concepts in the questions that were raised were interrogated to find a hierarchy of the concepts being generated, since some concepts are more generalized and generalizable than others. For example, on the discussion of rules, fairness and differential treatment, an overarching theme was 'justice'. Highlighting these complex and principal ideas is a P4C practice in which participants are able to see how their own more specific issues and questions would fit within the umbrella concept - '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 think about ways forward in other situations when reflection was needed to articulate reasons for actions. In this the philosophers of education were helpful in guiding clarification, demonstrating how P4T operates typically as philosophical enquiry in the community. In summary, both the content of the discussion, and the dialogical and iterative methods used, engage everyone to build on their own experience of practice. Everyone contributes, and these contributions form the basis of the community learning.

Section Three: Critical reflections

What does this work reveal about the nature and value of community and philosophy in the professional formation of teachers at the pre and early career stage? What does working in this field have to teach philosophers? What do these practices offer to the members of the community of practice/enquiry which they would not have benefitted from otherwise? Are there wider points of learning from the P4T experiment that we can take into future work?

A different learning experience

Participants identified a number of factors that made up the distinctive experience of inquiry and deliberation, which was not one that they had habitually experienced in their pre-service courses and which were typical of pre-service teacher education programmes in Wales and England. These factors were a particular sense of time, of space and of ways of working.

The pace of the sessions gave them time for 'slow learning' (Smith 2017), through the deliberation on concerns about their work in schools. In schools, their roles often revolved around having too many time-consuming duties, a problem compounded because the purpose of the duties was unclear. Many participants felt that even when the value and purpose of those duties had become clearer to them, they had insufficient time to undertake them well. In the P4T workshops they could consider issues at a pace which enabled their concerns to be uncovered and explored in some detail.

The second factor that contrasted to being in school and working on the PGCE was the provision of a safe space for participants' concerns to be aired and shared with the group as a whole and the environment was important in the success of P4T to date. For example, an early workshop took place at Gladstone's Library, near Hawarden in north Wales, where participants reported the powerful positive impact that the chosen location had exercised on them.

Another took place in a Quaker retreat centre in the Oxfordshire countryside, which has a long history and association with ethical and reflective practice and afforded the opportunity for time outside and some gentle strolls around the grounds. The character of the building and the sense of history it engendered proved amenable to reflection. The atmosphere contributed to the participants' positive sense of well-being and eating communally allowed for discussion to flow continuously, ensuring the different sessions linked together smoothly and momentum was maintained.

The mode of working proved significant too, as 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. 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. Participants reported that they enjoyed the experiences despite finding them challenging.

In addition, other educational professionals who were present thought they could take away specific actions from the workshops. Having seen the value of carving out time and creating a safe space for dialogue, teacher educators stated their intentions to take the ideas into their work with head teachers (establishing inquiry-based approaches), to use dialogical enquiry methods and to introduce students and colleagues to this mode of reflection. This emphasises the value of identifying and exploiting what we have described elsewhere as 'leaky spaces' (Orchard et al 2016), or spaces in a formal agenda, like a meeting or curriculum time which are not completely defined and can therefore be open to innovation and afford an opportunity to try out some elements of the work we describe.

Reflections on community

As already established in this chapter, there are different types of CoPs/CoEs and they have various pros and cons. For our purposes it was helpful to build and use the CoP quickly and intensely, in a context divorced from daily regular activity, so lending an immediacy to the discussions. The benefits included students being able to engage

in depth in complex discussions about knotty ethical issues, and in these conditions, they were very good at analysing the intricacies and nuances of the various scenarios they considered (as also found by Bauml, 2009). However, a clear disadvantage is the 'one off' nature of the community which would need to be sustained on a different basis where this to be wished for by participant members.

In an ideal world moreover, the conveners should have limited if any professional connection to the students or teachers participating in the community, in terms of grading their work or performance, given the potential impact of power relationships and issues around motivation that typically arise in regular university classroom settings. This was not possible in the less than optimal conditions in which the workshops operated. However, we did create a context where student participants were free to disagree with facilitators and other staff 'without fear of reprisal' (Jimenez-Silva and Olson, 2012: 342); and as far as we are aware by operating 'Chatham House' rules this was possible in the workshops undertaken thus far. Sim concurs, noting:

Establishing strong and supportive 'communities of practice' within teacher education programmes should be an effective strategy in enabling tensions to be examined in safe and non-threatening environments (Sim, 2006: 79).

In two cases however, the stories shared of problems identified in classroom practice were potentially compromising for teacher educators involved because they revolved around allegations of poor (in one case illegal) practice by qualified school teachers. This again raises the question of whether tutors should be involved with their own student teachers in the CoP/CoE. Adding a further note of caution, in the use of CoP practice and theory (in our P4T work one of the central tenets is to problematise the terms we are using ourselves): whilst it makes it easier to discuss our project by referring to CoP and P4C, we are not necessarily advocating all the different and various ways in which these concepts can be used. Moreover, we tend to use the terms 'dialogue' and 'deliberation' interchangeably when we describe our work, exposing us to the challenge that we are not entirely clear what P4T practice entails.

Watson also expresses concerns about clarity around the nature and purpose of a professional learning community. While she emphasises their 'potentially significant role in ... destabilising the rigidities with which the school as institution surrounds itself' (Watson 2014:27), she also expresses disquiet about the ubiquity of

such communities, calling for a re-examination of the underpinning concepts and meanings. We have similar concerns for both CoPs and P4C but, having noted that striking similarities can be seen between CoP and key features of some types of P4C/PwC practices, we found both sets of practices useful as models for building effective CoPs in very limited time-frames. It is also worth noting that one criticism of the CoP model as it has developed is how, aligned with systems theory and instrumental concerns it now is. It has become 'managerialist (e.g. Cox, 2005; and lost its more radical edge (e.g. Huzzard, 2004; Contu and Willmott, 2003). We believe that P4T offers an important corrective to that impression.

Reflections on philosophy

For philosophers of education, P4T provides a means by which to communicate key principles and ideas within the discipline to a professional audience in ways that are both relevant to their practice and accessible. Making relevant connections is important in the case of teachers who are not philosophy trained since this helps to make the philosophy interesting and applicable. Reflecting philosophically through a community of enquiry approach avoids the difficulties inherent to the traditional mode of delivering the educational foundations programme to teachers on vocational training programmes such as the PGCE, which is so short. (This seems not to be so pressing for those on Education Studies degrees, with more time to spend developing ideas). We have organised the workshops deliberately to take place towards the end of the PGCE, when participants have a reasonable amount of practical experience in the classroom on which to reflect and to relate to the experiences shared by their peers in the community.

The presence of participants within the community with some formal knowledge and understanding of philosophy is significant: they are able to make pertinent philosophical observations in the moment, related to the participants' experiences and in language they can understand. The philosophers might be the tutors/ teacher educators but could also be the beginning teachers themselves, for example one participant who had both a first degree and a doctorate in moral philosophy, made a significant positive contribution to the first P4T workshop and this was made possible by the collectivist, non-hierarchical approach to professional learning.

Concluding remarks

This experiment established, for the brief time we were together, an open-ended, critical and self-reflective community of enquiry focussed on shared ethical concerns. The factors contributing to its success included time dedicated to a form of ethical deliberation based on real experiences; making use of P4C models of Communities of Enquiry, led by an experienced facilitator, and creating an appropriate space for deliberation, in which philosophers of education contributed.

Ethical deliberation on matters arising in practice for teachers has proved an important element in their professional practice and the model we have built up has worked well for these teachers. We now need to think about the sustainability of the initiative. We are confident of its success but aware how dependent it has been on 'one off' research grants. One issue in the sustainability of the model is the pivotal role played by an independent facilitator with a specific and 'niche' set of knowledge, professional skills and competencies. Another is that of scalability. Clearly there is a need for some kind of preparation for ethical decision-making in teacher education - how much philosophy, might all teachers reasonably expect to experience during their initial teacher education if this is such a priority? How might this initiative be repeated year on year with new cohorts? Such questions need addressing at the level of policy as well as in the practice of individual teacher educators.

Nonetheless, it is equally clear that the programme made a considerable, potentially transformative difference for many of the participants. Regardless of context, teachers will always be confronted by particular ethical challenges for which they are unprepared. The P4T format presents a space for navigation of these challenges, through a unique opportunity for self-reflection with others, albeit briefly, through this particular form of professional learning community.

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ⁱ The Post Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) in England is a 36-week programme leading to the award of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). Courses are available across all phases i.e. Primary, Secondary and Post-Compulsory Education PGCEs are available. It is the most common route of all the possible routes into teaching

ⁱⁱ <https://generation.global/>

ⁱⁱⁱ The discussion about the use of 'for' or 'with' has obvious implications, not particularly relevant to this article. users of both terms come from a common foundational literature and practice.

^{iv} For example, Trickey and Topping (2007) conducted a major empirical study into P4C, but for readers of this chapter, it serves as a useful guide and summary of the field, referencing the work of key people in the international field, such as Matthew Lipman, as well as those who have influenced practice in the UK, like Robert Fisher and Joanna Haynes.

^v 'P4C focuses on thinking skills and communal dialogue ('philosophising') and aims to build 'communities of enquiry' where participants develop the 4C's: creative, critical, caring and collaborative thinking skills.

- Caring = listening (concentrating) and valuing (appreciating) (e.g. showing interest in, and sensitivity to, others' experiences and values)
- Collaborative = responding (communicating) and supporting (conciliating) (e.g. building on each other's ideas, shaping common understandings and purposes)
- Critical = questioning (interrogating) and reasoning (evaluating) (e.g. seeking meaning, evidence, reasons, distinctions, and good judgements)
(P4C Cooperative)
- Creative = connecting (relating) and suggesting (speculating) (e.g. providing comparisons, examples, criteria, alternative explanations or conceptions)

^{vi} For Dewey, reflection arises in a problematic situation: it starts from 'a felt difficulty' (1910:72). Some 'felt difficulties' can be settled by observation and reasoning but some cannot. In order to understand the problematic situation some kind of action is necessary, a process that Dewey names 'inquiry'