

PHILOSOPHY FOR CHILDREN: THEN, NOW, AND WHERE TO FROM HERE?

Gilbert Burgh & Simone Thornton (The University of Queensland)

Introduction

In 1969 Matthew Lipman wrote the first story-as-text (novels), *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery*, for the Philosophy for Children (P4C) curriculum and with it began a movement that now spans over 40 countries. *Harry* was the first in a series of curriculum materials (novels and accompanying instructional manuals) from Lipman, soon to be co-authored with Ann Margaret Sharp, and the first in a slow moving avalanche of P4C materials that have been and continue to be developed worldwide. Lipman met Sharp in 1974, soon after the establishment of the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC). Sharp was to have a great influence on the development of both the practical and theoretical aspects of the P4C methodology. Lipman (2008) described Sharp's arrival as 'a blessing to both myself and the institute' (p. 124). Indeed, it was Sharp who first proposed the idea of instructional manuals to be used in conjunction with the novels. And it is still true that the 'manner in which the *Harry* manual was organized set the standard for the construction of other instructional manuals in the Philosophy for Children curriculum.' (p. 133).

Predating Sharp's influence on Lipman, was the influence of Pragmatism. The Pragmatists, most notably Charles Sanders Peirce and John Dewey, play largely in the heritage of P4C. According to Lipman (2004), 'Philosophy for Children is built unapologetically on Deweyan foundations' (p. 8). Dewey talks about the ongoing effort and need for education to interpret and translate existing or, in this case, traditional democratic ideas into current situational contexts.

It is because the conditions of life change, that the problem of maintaining a democracy becomes new, and the burden that is put upon the school, upon the educational system is not that of stating merely the ideas of the men who made this country, their hopes and their intentions, but of teaching what a democratic society means under existing conditions. (Dewey, p. 96)

The history of P4C in Australia, in the form of the diverse methods and materials produced over the years since its introduction, shows the effects of life's changing conditions of which Dewey speaks. Lipman (2008) too, saw the need to integrate education and culture, describing it as 'autobiographical'. In a similar way that he thought children saw their experiences reflected in his stories, he noted that 'each nation is looking for an educational approach that reflects its own experience' (p. 145).

In Australia, the introduction of P4C presented challenges in two interrelated areas. The first was the acceptance and integration of the traditional IAPC materials conceived and created by Lipman and Sharp. The second was the acceptance of the very idea of teaching philosophy to children along with the follow on ideas that accompany this endeavour, many of which challenge traditional authoritarian teaching methods. Catriona Mackenzie (2010) speaks of 'imaginative resistance' to works of fiction and 'other persons whose points of view are very different from our own' (p. 316). Imaginative resistance explains the all too common unwillingness of people to seriously consider and engage with new ideas. In the P4C context

this is reflected in Philip Cam's comment on existing educational and wider Australian cultural barriers to entry for P4C into mainstream education. He says,

I am fully convinced of the moral and cultural potential of this work, but in order for that potential to be realized it will have to find its way from the margins of our educational systems to their center. In parts of the world that I know, neither the educational culture, nor the culture in general, make this transition at all easy. (Cam in Naji, 2013, p. 162)

Proponents of P4C in Australia and elsewhere around the world have tackled precisely this problem in a myriad of different ways. In this paper we will look at some of the ways P4C has adapted to Australian conditions, focusing especially on the early years and the extensive production of new materials.

But wait, what is P4C?

The two fundamental components of the P4C approach to education are the curriculum materials and the methodology of the community of inquiry. This statement is seemingly straight forward until you ask the question, what is it about the materials that makes them P4C? And what is it about the method that makes it P4C? Jennifer Glaser, in an article written in 1992 entitled *What's so Special about this Story Anyway?* communicated the results of exploring the first question regarding the materials with all 'who were interested and/or active in Philosophy for Children in Victoria' (p. 45) leading up to the article's publication.

One of the first to promote P4C in Australia, Glaser no doubt encountered the question the title poses on numerous occasions, and as she noted, it did not simply come from outside the community, 'voices also came from amongst some of the strongest advocates of Philosophy for Children' (p. 46). It is a question that remains pertinent, especially in light of the array of new materials developed in Australia alone. It has a pragmatic, in the common use sense of the term, answer; whatever works in stimulating philosophical discussion in the classroom. Lipman's (2008) novels were designed to do just this, and it has subsequently been demonstrated by many worldwide, that 'the logic in the first part of *Harry*' (p. 134) does.

However, as Glaser further notes, theoretically anything can fulfil this requirement, 'to suggest otherwise would be to raise doubts about a central claim of the whole Philosophy for Children programme, namely that the skills and dispositions acquired are transferable to all intellectual inquiry' (p. 50). This raises the further question of how the stimulus material is used in the classroom, i.e., the question of facilitation, which brings us to the second part of P4C—the pedagogy—and shows just how closely related these too are. This in turn brings us to another contentious point in P4C history; that of teacher training. How should teachers themselves be trained, and with what materials? And yet these questions all share a wider question dominant in P4C's philosophical lineage; what is Philosophy? Lipman (2008) raises this last question in relation to the reasoning behind the name P4C, which he 'especially liked because it seemed dramatically to contradict itself: if it was really philosophy, people would say that children couldn't do it, and if children could do it, then people would say that it couldn't really be philosophy' (p. 125). Our aim in this article, in the tradition of philosophical inquiry, is not to answer these questions, but to keep them alive.

Australian Beginnings

Along with Glaser, P4C was heavily promoted in Australia by Laurance Splitter, a key figure, since the early 1980s. Splitter first visited the IAPC in September of 1982, and met with Lipman. Regarding the meeting Splitter wrote that he ‘came away deeply impressed by his [Lipman’s] conviction that philosophy in the hands and minds of the young was the key to improving education’¹. On his own enthusiasm for the possibility of the programs uptake in Australia, Splitter notes that in ‘retrospect, my tactics in those early days were absurdly naïve’. Early brushes with the Australian Department of Education taught him they were not easily swayed and that convincing them ‘whilst necessary, is hardly sufficient’. This led to a focus on the conversion of ‘teachers, but also principals, parents and consultants’. Splitter further noted that P4C was introduced into approximately two hundred Australian schools, albeit usually on a one-off basis rather than systemically’. Splitter cites 1985 as a starting point as it was during this time that Lipman and Sharp made their first trip to Australia.

Splitter organised for Lipman and Sharp to conduct seminars, awareness sessions and demonstration classes around Australia, including the first national P4C workshop held at The University of Wollongong. Their visit marked the formal beginning of P4C in Australia with the inauguration of the Australian Institute for Philosophy for Children (AIPC), with Splitter as director. It was through the AIPC that the P4C materials came to Australia. Twenty-six people attended the workshop and ‘participated in this very intense and productive session, the objective of which was to produce suitably qualified individuals who may proceed to work with, and train, classroom teachers’ (AIPC, 1985, p. 2). Their visit, and the institute they helped begin, proved inspiring, and by 1987 P4C had made inroads into every state and territory.

The growth of the movement was, however, uneven across the states, being introduced ‘usually on a one-off basis rather than systemically’ (Splitter) and in 1987 not all states had yet developed a P4C association. To give a snapshot of the progress during this time we take note of the number of schools involved with P4C by state. South Australia, under the coordination of Susan Knight and Bill Ekins, was an early leader—approximately fifty teachers from twenty-five Primary Schools had introduced P4C into their classroom by 1987. Western Australia, headed by Robert Wilson and Felicity Haynes, boasted approximately ten schools involved with the program in the same year. Several schools in New South Wales, under the direction of Laurance Splitter and Marjorie O’Loughlan, had introduced P4C. One school had already incorporated P4C into its curriculum, and a subject was developed for the ‘Studies of Education’ Masters Program at the University of Wollongong. Tasmania, coordinated by Brian Haslem and Felicity Hickman, equalled Western Australia in the number of schools involved. A school in Victoria, under the management of Cliff Penniceard and Sue Wilks, had also introduced P4C into its curriculum. The Australian Capital Territory, directed primarily by Frank Sofo, Christina Slade and Peter Forrest had introduced P4C to five schools. Queensland had used the Lipman material in a Diploma of Teaching supervised by Robert Elliot, but was lacking both a school presence and a principle organiser at the time. Despite attempts to nationalise AIPC, Splitter noted that

WA and SA, whilst not rejecting the concept of a national organisation, quite naturally wanted to “do their own thing” (with some experience of p for c in

¹ The information in this paragraph was obtained from correspondences.

other countries, I can confidently assert that this desire is especially, albeit not uniquely, Australian).

Splitter's observation is interesting in light of the large amount of development of new materials and methods across Australia.

AIPC endured for a total of four years until 1988, at which time it was incorporated into the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER). This was due largely to the support of then-Director Barry McGaw, who appointed Splitter as the director of a new Centre for Philosophy for Children (later Centre for Philosophy with Children and Adolescents). The substantial debt of money owed to IAPC's American publishing house, to print and distribute the IAPC materials in Australia, as well as the administrative burden both this and the day to day running of an organisation produced, proved problematic in terms of both time allowed for promotion of P4C after administrative duties, and efficiency of distribution of titles to schools nationwide. It was in part to address these issues that a deal was struck for the transfer of AIPC to ACER, officially taking place on April 12th 1988.

The next year Sharp was to make a return visit to Australia, this time accompanied by Ron Reed. The purpose of their visit was to head a six-day workshop held in Lorne, Victoria, again with a goal to 'train the trainers' and again it proved inspirational. According to Millett (2006), 'The participants at the Lorne workshop, by creating associations and drafting school textbooks, had the most visible impact on the introduction of P4C in Australia'. The attendance of Alan Day, then a Senior Education Officer for the Northern Territory Department of Education, lead directly to a philosopher in residence program to which Clive Lindop was appointed in 1991. Over a hundred teachers and 2400 children participated in this project alone. Philip Cam, at the time a lecturer at the University of NSW, was another notable participant. Before the workshop, Cam 'was of the impression that "cognitive skills happen in the head", whereas, post-workshop, he concluded that "cognitive skills are things that develop in conversation with your peers"' (Quote from the article: 'The Young Philosophers'). Tim Sprod, from the Hutchins School in Hobart was also inspired by a session conducted by Ron Reed. After the workshop he wrote to Splitter asking for his thoughts on the possible incorporation of picture books as stimulus for dialogue in a community of inquiry. Subsequently, he spent the next few years developing classroom resources designed to aid teachers in finding philosophical themes and creating classroom activities based on existing children's literature, such as familiar children's stories and picture books. *Books into Ideas*, published in 1993, stands out as the first publication to move away from Lipman's purpose-written story-as-text approach to curriculum. We say more on the development of material in the next section.

1991 saw a renewed attempt to unify the states, with the establishment of a Federation of Australian Philosophy for Children (FAPCA) at its first national conference in July. The conference was attended by over 160 delegates from Australia. Sandy Yule, then Chair of the Victorian Philosophy for Children Association, was president and in his Keynote heralded the development as a consolidation of P4C history, not simply a new chapter. Splitter shared his sentiments deeming it a "Coming of Age" for the growth of Philosophy for Children in Australia' (Splitter, 1991, p. 2). Since historically both the production of new materials and the responsibility for teacher training largely came out of individuals from various states, the structure of FAPCA as a federation reflected this and concentrated the work on the states rather than coordinating at a national level. In light of this choice it is interesting to reflect upon McGaw's analysis in his keynote address on the structure of FAPCA.

It is no threat to anything we imagine we might do in the scheme of things, for there to be now a strong, national, professional body of people sharing an interest in philosophy for children. The only thing that intrigues me is that at this time, in this country, you choose a federal structure and not a national body. I predict that sooner or later you will form a national body, but I wish you well as you establish a federal body tomorrow night.

McGraw, too, spoke of ACER's acquisition of AIPC, admitting that P4C was a novel activity for ACER and that the establishment of FAPCA created a situation where strategic thought could take place as to what role ACER could play within its partnership with P4C, e.g., new ways of educational research and measurement, the distribution and production of curriculum materials, and training. Lipman (1991) also stated that he was 'very gratified to see the work that you have been doing in the programme to move it on' (p. 17). He clearly saw Australia as leading the rest of the world in professionalism and innovation: 'I do want to come back and tell you how warmly I wish you success in these uncharted waters that you are getting into. The ground is uncertain, but there is a thrill, an excitement, there is a sense that this is virgin territory' (p.3).

Since the formation of FAPCA there has been a proliferation of materials produced. However, in relation to the questions Barry McGraw has asked and the issues Jen Glaser raised with regard to classroom materials, there has been no attempt at a comparative study looking at the effectiveness of the new materials compared with the traditional IAPC materials.

The Development of Australian Literature

Embedded in the IAPC novels is a selection of philosophical ideas chosen for their propensity to provoke thinking and wonderment in children. Lipman contended that once provoked, wonder would lead children to turn to their classmates to aid in their explorations. In doing so, children develop

a tendency to emulate the modes of thought and utterance they find in them. This is the production of matching behavior that is termed, in the psychological literature, "observational learning." The corpus of Plato's writings provides a plethora of such models. (Lipman, 2014, p. 12)

Following this line of thought, the aim of the novels is to create space for children to scrutinize reasoning, test beliefs, uncover assumptions and prejudices and, thereby, develop the skills to explore their own ideas and the ideas of others in a community of inquiry in addition to the ideas in the novels. The community itself, along with the novels, are models through which the children come to recognise their own and others prejudices and fallibility (Burgh & Thornton, 2015a,b).

1992 saw the first major developments in Australian P4C materials, the first of many. The first episode of *Lift Off* was produced by the Australian Children's Television Foundation for ABC Television, with assistance and consultation from Glaser. Around this time too, Glaser, also published the previously mentioned, *What's so Special about this Story Anyway?* The first Australian publication of a classroom resource, in the form of an Australian adaptation of Lipman's novel *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery*, was created by Splitter. This was also the

year that a study conducted by Susan Wilks of the IAPC materials found that the teachers involved thought the materials and pedagogy not suited to the classroom. Instead the study found they preferred selecting their own materials and drawing from the Lipman instruction manuals, which they found to be very useful.

The year before, *Philosophy for Kinder Kids* series by Chris de Haan, San MacColl and Lucy McCutcheon, was developed and published in house, although it was not commercially published until 1995. This series used a set of purposely created manuals to explore the philosophical themes of children's picture books. Although this was the first material developed to do this, the authors acknowledged that Sprod 'has also used children's stories for philosophy classes for some time in Australia' (De Haan, *et. al.*, 1995, p. 4).

De Haan, MacColl and McCutcheon's (1995) rationale for moving away from the purpose-written novel to the use of existing picture books was 'to include Australian material' and 'because kids in their first years at school already know the storybooks, or can easily become familiar with them' (p.4), thereby extending the program to those pre-reading age. The series, aimed at young primary school aged children, consists of a number of teacher's instruction guides each containing a short write-up on a particular philosophical topic, a selection of on topic, existing children's picture books to be used as stimulus materials, discussion plans, exercises and activities. The layout was intended to assist teachers in provoking and facilitating philosophical inquiry, although it is stressed in several places in the beginning of the books that they work best in conjunction with "philosophical training" or at the very least, in the hands of teachers who have some interest in philosophy' (p. 4).

These moves away from Lipman's purpose-written novel raised concerns over teacher education. While the judiciously selected children's stories may contain content that can be cause for philosophical wonderment, and are accompanied by well-constructed support materials, it was argued that, implementation in the classroom would require even more skill than the purpose-written novels with extensive discussion plans, exercises and other activities that focus on philosophical themes. Sharp (in Naji, 2004) had this to say about the use of 'tradition literature' as stimulus material,

Even though some might believe that approaching philosophical issues through traditional literature is easier than working from these purpose written novels and manuals, I suspect that it is more likely to be the other way around. In most countries, teachers are not prepared in the art and craft of philosophical inquiry. To explore the philosophical dimension of literature, and teaching children to do the same, requires an expertise that cannot be taken for granted, especially given the complexity of a good piece of literature.
(p. 1)

It was thought that teachers who relied on literary works without having adequate philosophical training would not have the capacity to effectively facilitate classroom dialogue—a deficit the genre of purpose-written philosophical materials and the use of accompanying teacher's instructional manuals was thought to address.

The initiative to develop new classroom materials, more in line with Lipman's format, was led largely by Cam's *Thinking Stories* 1&2 (1993, 1994). Cam developed his own purpose-written philosophical narratives, accompanied by teacher's manuals specific to each story, but utilized a short story format rather than the lengthy novels Lipman wrote. This format pulled

the material somewhat back toward Lipman's original methodology—narratives from children's perspectives. Indeed, Lipman and Sharp both contributed to the first two volumes of *Thinking Stories*. Two years later, in 1995, Cam published a teacher's instruction book, *Thinking Together*, for primary school teachers. The book explains how to select and use story-based materials to facilitate children's dialogue using questioning techniques, small group discussion and other activities to develop thinking skills and concepts that apply across the curriculum. Also in 1995, *Teaching for Better Thinking* by Splitter and Sharp, a book that was four years in the making, became available. In its attempt to integrate theory and practice, the book was to become a template, as were Lipman's novels, for future resources.

A proliferation of books and other resources steadily followed. It seems that practitioners in Australia tried their hands at every aspect of philosophy education in schools. These include:

- more instructional books to assist teachers using existing children's literature (Wilks, 1996; Abbott & Wilks, 1997; Olley, 2006; Cam, Fynes-Clinton, Harrison, Hinton, Scholl & Vaseo, 2007; Davey Chesters, Fynes-Clinton, Hinton & Scholl, 2013),
- more collections of purpose-written short stories with teacher's resources and activities for primary school teachers (Cam, 1997, 2013; Keen, 2002; Keen, Black & Hanzak, 2002) and secondary school teachers (Freakley, Burgh & Tilt MacSporrán, 2008),
- multi-media kits (Australian Children's Television Foundation, 1998, 2008a, 2008b),
- books that support teacher's professional development for pre-service teachers (Freakley & Burgh, 2000) and professional learning teams (Golding, 2005),
- new philosophical novels/novellas with accompanying instruction manuals (Sharp, 2000a, 2000b; Sharp & Splitter, 2000a, 2000b; Cam, 2011),
- a booklet and teacher's resource (Keen, 2002),
- workbooks with practical notes and activities (Golding, 2002, 2006; Olley, 2001, 2003),
- books on theory, pedagogy and practice of collaborative philosophical inquiry: curriculum design (Wilks, 2004), pedagogical practice within a framework of democratic education (Burgh, Field & Freakley, 2006), ethics in schools (Cam, 2012),
- more instructional books on practice, containing resources and activities for classroom teachers: thinking tools (Cam, 2006), science (Sprod, 2011), art (Wilks, 2012), and
- student texts, classroom companions and supplementary resources specifically written for philosophy/logic/ethics subjects in accordance with the School Curriculum and Standards Authority (Millett & Tapper, 2007, 2008; Robinson-McCarthy & Symes, 2010, 2013, 2014).

Most of the new material followed the format of either the support material for existing children literature, short-stories, instructional guides, books on theory, pedagogy and practice of collaborative philosophical inquiry, or the Australian Children's Television Foundation animated short films, or were a combination of these. However, it was also acknowledged that if philosophy was to succeed as an integrated and accepted part of the school curriculum, approaches and methodologies needed to be adaptable and a broad range of materials developed (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p. 106). To this end, other authors made attempts to diversify farther afield from what was previously published. Some examples are:

- Michael Parker's *The Quest for the Stone of Wisdom* (1997), a comic and activities to stimulate discussion; *Brain Strain 1&2* (Keen, 1997); Splitter and Sprod's *Places for Thinking*, a teacher resource manual to accompany a somewhat 'off-beat' set of children's picture books by Francesca Partridge and Franck Dubuc; and Cam's *Twister, Quibbler, Puzzler, Cheat* (1998) which introduces classical and modern paradoxes illustrated in cartoons.

The Ethical School by Felicity Haynes (1998), Sprod's *Philosophical Discussion in Moral Education* (2001), *The Socratic Classroom* by Sarah Davey Chesters (2012) and *Social Reconstruction Learning* by Jennifer Bleazby (2013) significantly extended existing theoretical scholarship.

- *Engaging in Ethics* (Freakley & Burgh, 2000) was designed as a text for teacher preparation programs. Clinton Golding's 2005 book, *Developing a Thinking Classroom*, attempted to address the issue of professional development for teachers. Golding's Workbooks, *Connecting with Concepts* (2002) and *Thinking with Rich Concepts* (2006), provide an introduction to conceptual analysis in the classroom. Cam's *20 Thinking Tools*, published in 2006, provides a guide for teachers in the use of the tools that students will acquire as they learn to examine issues and explore ideas.
- Specifically written materials to accompany school syllabi on philosophy were also being produced (Millett & Tapper, 2007, 2008; Robinson-McCarthy & Symes, 2010, 2013, 2014).
- *Art is What You Make It* (Wilks & Healy, 2011) and *Philosophical and Ethical Inquiry for Students in the Middle Years and Beyond* (Davey Chesters, Fynes-Clinton, Hinton & Scholl, 2013) extended on the notion of using only literature and drew on stimuli from everyday culture.
- Cam's later forays into philosophical stories, *Thinking Stories 3*, *Sophia's Question* and *Philosophy Park*, make use of continuity. *Philosophy Park* breaks new ground. It is a history of philosophy in short story format, starting with the pre-Socratics, and based on well-known passages and central ideas of the various philosophers. As such, the book provides continuity in the ideas and debates in the history of philosophy.

Some of the resources have not passed the test of time. Others, on the other hand, have been successful both in Australia and internationally.

To try and answer the empirical question of the philosophic and pedagogic worth of the materials, we can turn to the studies that have been published. International research findings on the effectiveness of philosophy in schools indicate marked cognitive and social benefits (Millett & Tapper, 2011). An analysis of 18 studies by Garcia-Moriyon, Robello and Colom (2005) concluded that 'the implementation of P4C led to an improvement in students' reasoning skills of more than half a standard deviation' (p. 19). Topping and Trickey's studies concluded that the practice of collaborative philosophical inquiry produces increases in measured IQ, sustained cognitive benefits, and clear performance gains in other school studies (Trickey & Topping, 2004, 2006, 2007; Topping & Trickey, 2007a,b,c). Empirical research in Australia has shown the potential for collaborative philosophical inquiry to foster pedagogical transformation (Scholl, Nichols & Burgh, 2008, 2009, 2014) and more effective

learning in the science classroom (Burgh & Nichols, 2012; Nichols, Burgh & Kennedy, 2015). As none of the Australian studies mentioned used the IAPC curriculum materials, and the results are comparable to previous studies done around the globe, arguably the Australian approach has not suffered pedagogically, due to difference. Nevertheless, the studies do not indicate the quality of philosophical discussion and teacher understanding of philosophy. There is a case for a comparative study on the use of the original IAPC curriculum materials with other purpose-written materials and existing children's literature.

Conclusion

It should be noted that context played a large part in shaping the history of philosophy in schools in Australia. Issues of politics, including individuals seeking to develop a niche consultancy or business in this emerging field, competing visions of the disciplinary core of P4C, the relationship between P4C and other subject areas, and the curriculum itself have influenced and shaped this history. In particular, Australia has led the way internationally in producing a diverse range of materials. At the time of writing, the prevailing view is that the implementation of philosophy into school classrooms is best achieved through integration into the school curriculum and the development of suitable materials—rather than updating, expanding on or translating the original IAPC materials.

Due to the scope of this paper we have focussed on the early years of philosophy in schools and on the development of classroom resources and related materials. The history of philosophy in schools in Australia is complex and it certainly would be beneficial to look at other aspects of its history, such as: *Critical & Creative Thinking*, which was established under the editorial management of Clive Lindop and later re-established as the *Journal of Philosophy in Schools* by Andrew Peterson and Laura D'Olimpio; how various individuals and state organisations contributed to the development of FAPCA, which in 2002 was renamed the Federation of Australasian Philosophy in Schools Associations (FAPSA) to reflect the changes to a broader approach to teaching philosophy; empirical research into classroom practice; making inroads into the school and national curriculum; and future directions.

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