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Philosophical enquiry as a pedagogical tool to implement the CAPS curriculum: Final-year pre-service teachers' perceptions

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In this paper, we argue that philosophical enquiry, as practised using community of enquiry pedagogy, is an appropriate implementation strategy for Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) if the principles that underlie the curriculum are to be taken seriously. Matthew Lipman's Philosophy for Children Programme and its community of enquiry pedagogy were intended as a classroom means to enhance children's critical, creative, caring and collaborative thinking and prepare them for democratic citizenship. A previous study suggested that pre-service teachers benefitted from exposure to this pedagogy. The aim of this study was to explore the extent to which pre-service teachers, after a brief experiential introduction to community of enquiry pedagogy, perceived its relevance to the CAPS curriculum. The research was positioned within an interpretivist qualitative paradigm with an emphasis on shared construction of meanings. In 2013 the final-year student group consisted of seventy-four students, of whom 30 volunteered to participate in focus group discussions at the end of the year. Themes were identified within the data and are reported within the following broad categories: perceived relevance to the general requirements of the CAPS curriculum, perceived relevance to specific curriculum areas, and constraints on implementation. Discussion focuses on the insights of participants, potential challenges, some limitations of the research and our plans to address them.

Keywords: CAPS curriculum; citizenship education; cognitive education; community of enquiry pedagogy; critical thinking; Philosophy for Children; pre-service teachers

Introduction

The latest South African Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (Department of Basic Education, Republic of South Africa, 2011) document has been much criticised and is by no means perfect. It has, however, many positive aspects, all of which imply the need for a non-traditional pedagogy and more democratic relations in schools and classrooms. Our experience has been that pre-service teachers exposed to philosophical enquiry, as conceptualised by Lipman, Sharp and Oscanyan (1980), find it of value to themselves and appreciate its classroom possibilities, when they experiment during Practice Teaching (Green, Condy & Chigona, 2012). The next question to explore was whether pre-service teachers perceived how this pedagogy, which envisages the classroom as a community of enquiry, could facilitate the day-to-day implementation of the principles, together with the content, of the CAPS curriculum. The focus on content in the most recent curriculum document tends to overshadow its underlying principles. Teachers are easily overwhelmed by its practical demands. It is important for teachers to realise, that, within the constraints of the curriculum, it is possible to teach in a way that encourages independent critical, creative and caring thinking. The community of enquiry pedagogy to which the pre-service teachers in the study had been introduced generates an attitude to teaching and learning and provides a practical strategy, which can be used in any subject area.

The pre-service teachers we worked with were enthusiastic about the pedagogy, but would be unlikely to implement it if they thought of it as merely an add-on, and could not perceive practical ways in which it could be introduced within the demands of the latest CAPS curriculum.

The Cognitive Demands of the 21st Century

Wegerif (2013:3) makes the point that almost all existing formal education systems have been built around the assumption that there is "one correct version of reality and one correct method of thinking", and the belief that these can best be conveyed to learners through the medium of talk and printed text. He contrasts this with the affordances offered by the internet for participation in the construction and sharing of knowledge, and concludes that what 21st century learners need to know is how to dialogue – not only with each other, but with the 'infinite other'. He refers to Oakeshott's (1962) concept of the 'conversation of Mankind' and its implication that education should be a "dialogue that requires that we preserve voices from the past and deepen our dialogue with them just as much as it requires that we engage in dialogue with the super addressee positions calling us to different possible futures" (Wegerif, 2013:27). If Wegerif is right, then South African education requires not just an admirable curriculum, but also a different way of facilitating classroom learning.

The CAPS Curriculum

This section examines a single selected portion of the CAPS curriculum in order to ascertain to what extent it takes into account the cognitive attributes considered important for 21st century success. There is clear evidence in the General Aims of the South African Curriculum for the Intermediate Phase (Department of Basic Education, Republic of South Africa, 2011:3) that policymakers were aware of both the more traditional knowledge requirements of education on the one hand, and the need for education to serve a broader purpose on the other. There is reference to critical and creative thinking, communication and collaboration skills, sensitivity to diversity, social responsibility and meaningful values, all of which imply emotional engagement, empathy and the ability to synthesise.

Specifically, children are to acquire knowledge, skills and values meaningful to their own lives and necessary for self-fulfillment, together with those that enable meaningful participation in a democratic society (Department of Basic Education, Republic of South Africa, 2011). Learners are to be able to identify and solve problems using critical and creative thinking, work effectively as individuals and as members of a group, organise and manage themselves responsibly and effectively, collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information, communicate effectively and recognise the interrelatedness of problems and issues (Department of Basic Education, Republic of South Africa, 2011).

The Grade Four English home language curriculum was selected for closer scrutiny because this grade is often perceived to be the start of 'more serious' schooling, and because language is central to how thinking develops (Department of Basic Education, Republic of South Africa, 2011).

The CAPS document (Department of Basic Education, Republic of South Africa, 2011) states that from the first week, learners are to discuss the central ideas expressed in what they hear or read, to relate the input to their own experience and to express the thoughts and feelings it elicits. By the end of Term 1 onwards they are to participate in discussion of the social, moral and cultural values represented in what they hear from their teachers and others and in what they read. In Term 2 their participation in discussion is to include justification of their own opinions and the ability to communicate effectively in groups. Their writing and presenting is to show evidence of organising information logically, although no mention has been made of any need for logic or sequential thought in their spoken language. Comparing is to be practised using both oral and written language. Inferring is mentioned only with reference to reading comprehension. Sequencing is mentioned only with reference to instructions. By mid-year learners are to display the ability in oral discussion to take turns, stay on topic, ask relevant questions and respond to others with empathy and respect. By Term 4, learners are expected to be able to ask relevant and critical questions about what they read and to use language creatively when they write.

Throughout the year there is a strong emphasis on attending to the emotions elicited by what learners hear or read and its perceived relation to their own lives (Department of Basic Education, Republic of South Africa, 2011). Present too, although with less emphasis, is the need to ask questions and the expression and justification of personal opinions.

Although it can be argued that a curriculum should specify what should be taught and not how it should be taught, there are hints in the curriculum document regarding implementation. The curriculum is to be based on 'active and critical learning' as opposed to rote mastery of given 'truths'. The context in which learners are to acquire the above knowledge skills and values is specified as one in which human rights and diversity are respected and social justice is fostered. Knowledge is to be understood as constructed from different perspectives, with an emphasis on the valuing of both international and indigenous knowledges. A classroom in which the above is accomplished would certainly begin to prepare children for 21st century citizenship in a democracy. It would be difficult to argue with the above recommendations, but it is equally difficult to implement them using traditional teaching methods. Desirable cognitive attitudes, skills and habits, require active mediation.

Creative, critical and caring thinking processes such as imagining, comparing, sequencing, inferring and perspective taking frequently need to be explicitly named, modelled, explained and practised. Learners need to be equipped with 'thinking tools' of various kinds and encouraged to use them. Similarly, the desirable group skills described do not necessarily emerge because the curriculum demands them. Any successful cognitive education initiative includes attention to the quality of classroom relations, and a truly mediational teacher will model, negotiate and insist on collaboration and interpersonal respect in the classroom. The emphasis on emotional responses and the valuing of personal perspectives within the CAPS document is to be commended as a means of promoting relevance and engagement but more is required. Teachers need to create a climate in which respect and reasoning can flourish. Moreover, while justifying opinions is mentioned, there is no reference whatsoever to what constitutes an acceptable justification. There is a risk that the message to learners is that all opinions are equally valid. While all may be entitled to express their opinions, it is surely important for children to learn

that there are criteria by which opinions can be judged to be more acceptable, more logical or more likely to be accurate.

Community of Enquiry Pedagogy

There are several well-known ways of facilitating thinking, of which Matthew Lipman's Philosophy for Children programme, first conceptualised in 1969 (Lipman, 2009), is one of the most widely used. It is a democratic but carefully structured approach to developing understanding and enhancing thinking processes in which the notion of the classroom as a community of enquiry is central. The programme has its roots in philosophy rather than in psychology, but its practices are highly consistent with current beliefs about learned intelligence.

Lipman (1988, 1993), a North American philosophy professor strongly influenced by Dewey's (1961) ideas about education for democracy, argued that the primary aim of education should be to teach children to think for themselves and to think well. He proposed that the best way to accomplish this would be by introducing regular philosophy lessons as part of the curriculum for all schoolchildren. He did not want children to learn about philosophy, but to do philosophy. This experience, he claimed, could encourage children to value their thoughts and equip them with the intellectual tools to analyse their own and others' opinions, and to use criteria to decide whether they were defensible or should be rejected. The Philosophy for Children Programme was developed during the 1970s with the collaboration of Lipman's colleague, Ann Margaret Sharp, who joined him at the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children in 1975 (Hannam & Echeverria, 2010). The novels for children and accompanying manuals were published in the 1980s to make it possible for teachers, who were unlikely to be expert philosophers, to introduce philosophical enquiry in their classrooms. The term 'Philosophy for Children (P4C)' now tends to be used as a generic term for a family of practices that do not necessarily use Lipman's materials.

Lipman's pedagogical proposal was to transform the classroom into a democratic 'community of enquiry' modelled on Peirce's (in Hartshorne & Weiss, 1965-66) description of the ideal community of scientific enquiry. A classroom community of enquiry differs from a traditional classroom in that the topics to be explored are chosen by the children not the teacher, whose role is to facilitate and monitor the process of the dialogue without influencing its outcome - to be "pedagogically strong but philosophically self-effacing" (Jackson, 2002:465). The emphasis is on a collaborative and respectful dialogue in which members of the class build understanding together. Lipman did not propose that all lessons should follow this pattern, but that the experience of philosophical enquiry as part of their learning would equip children to think critically, creatively, caringly and collaboratively.

A community of enquiry is characterised by respect for persons, for truth and for the procedures of enquiry. It takes time to develop and requires regular experiences of safe, shared exploration of ideas. Participants learn to express and defend their own opinions, to respect the opinions and perspectives of others and to distinguish between persons and ideas. As Sharp (1987:39) points out "a community of enquiry allows children to perceive the other's point of view and to take it into account in constructing their own world view". Participants learn to care about reaching the best possible answer even if it means changing their minds, and to value certain procedures as a means towards truth. They learn to use some of the thinking 'tools' or 'moves' used by philosophers in order to examine and justify their opinions. Unlike much of what happens in schools, a community of enquiry does not emphasise 'the right answer'. This does not imply that all answers or opinions are equally valid or relevant. All need to be treated respectfully and considered carefully but some are likely to prove more reasonable than others and more worthy of belief. The outcome of a community of enquiry dialogue is frequently new questions, rather than definitive answers or consensus and the "dialogue always remains open" (Sharp, 1987:39).

Unlike most approaches to the teaching of thinking, which focus primarily on the development of process skills, Lipman's model places equal emphasis on thinking processes, the climate of enquiry and the development of concepts. Participation in enquiry can, thus, enhance the understanding of concepts, the ability to collaborate respectfully and the growth of reasoned judgement in any curriculum area. An open enquiry, typified by trust, can educate learners to reason together, developing a more caring acceptance towards diversity (Sharp, 1987:39). Lipman claimed that enquiry about genuinely controversial questions to which there is no easy answer offer the best opportunities to practise and develop the thinking moves that promote good reasoning.

There is a commitment within the broad Philosophy for Children movement to the use of 'thinking moves' as mental tools, and to the development of meta-cognitive awareness (although philosophers might not use this term). In the philosophy literature, the term "thinking moves" refers to the ways in which language is used to structure thinking. Sutcliffe (2003:73) lists the following examples of 'thinking moves': questioning each other, asking for reasons for beliefs, building on each other's ideas, offering counter-examples to the hypotheses of others, pointing out

possible consequences of particular ideas, utilising specific criteria to make judgments, and co-operating in the development of rational problem solving techniques. In any community of enquiry the facilitator uses participants' own questions and concerns to motivate shared dialogue and actively models and mediates a range of thinking moves. The community is encouraged to evaluate the quality of its own dialogue.

There is substantial evidence that philosophical enquiry using community of enquiry pedagogy, if facilitated regularly by competent practitioners, enhances participants' thinking and understanding (Haynes & Murris, 2012; Marsal, Dobashi & Weber, 2009; McCall, 2009; Ndofirepi & Mathebula, 2011:127; Sutcliffe, 2003; Topping & Trickey, 2007; Trickey & Topping, 2004). Gains, at all ages, in listening skills, reasoning, perspective taking and confidence are some examples of how thinking improves. There is a small but growing body of research that suggests its effectiveness in teacher education and in classrooms in South Africa (Green, 2008, 2012; Green et al., 2012).

The aim of this study was to explore the extent to which teachers at the beginning of their careers would, after a brief experiential introduction to Lipman's pedagogy, perceive its relevance to the CAPS curriculum.

As part of a module on professional development, final-year education students experienced Level 1 training in Philosophy for Children, which models community of enquiry pedagogy. They were introduced to the principles of P4C, given selected readings, experienced community of enquiry dialogues and a variety of materials, including original Philosophy for Children texts. They experimented with the pedagogy using locally written materials modelled on Lipman's novels for children during their teaching practice and wrote a reflective assignment on their experiences.

Research Procedures

This research project was positioned within an interpretivist qualitative research paradigm with its emphasis on the shared construction of meanings. As Fraenkel and Wallen (1993) point out, qualitative research is interested in naturally unfolding situations and unique personal perspectives, uses an inductive approach to analysis and acknowledges the role of researcher subjectivity.

In 2013, the final year student group consisted of seventy-four students, of whom approximately 31% were male and 69% female. The language distribution was approximately 11% Afrikaans, 28% isiXhosa speakers and 61% English speakers. From this class, thirty students volunteered to participate in group discussions at the end of 2013. By chance, the language diversity of participants was roughly equivalent to that of the class as a whole. All students had received sixteen hours of experiential training in Lipman's community of enquiry pedagogy, and had experimented with it during teaching practice and submitted an assignment.

Data was collected by means of three sixty-minute group interviews, each comprising ten student volunteers, led by three different researchers, all of whom were familiar with community of enquiry pedagogy. Group interviews were held several months after the intervention, towards the end of the academic year (after final examinations). The three groups were focus groups in the sense that these self-selected participants shared an enthusiasm for the pedagogy. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2008:376) explain that when conducting group interviews, "the participants rather than the researcher's agenda can predominate. It is from the interaction of the group that the data emerge…[and] will yield insights that might not otherwise have been available in a straightforward [individual] interview". The interviews were treated as an enquiry. Although we kept our research agenda in mind, we were open and flexible, allowing the pre-service teachers the space to explore and deliberate (using some of the thinking tools to which they had been exposed), on their own understandings of how the pedagogy could help them implement the curriculum. All three interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim.

The data were thematically analysed using the constant comparative process recommended by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Maykut and Morehouse (1994). All three transcripts were read and examined repeatedly to gain an overall impression of the data. Thereafter, each utterance considered relevant to the current research was tentatively assigned to one or more of the three categories of interest: general relevance to the CAPS curriculum, relevance to specific curriculum areas, and constraints on implementation. Within each category, themes were constructed and reconstructed in order to accommodate all of the relevant data. This process was undertaken both separately and together by two of the researchers in order to refine the themes and the classification of individual utterances. Although the main purpose of the research was to illustrate the insights of the participants rather than to quantify, themes are reported here only if they featured independently in all three interviews.

The interview transcripts and the above analysis process created an audit trail that can be reviewed and verified, and the collaboration of two researchers in the analysis of the data reduced the likelihood of personal bias. It is acknowledged, however, that the analysis cannot be entirely independent of the subjectivity of the authors and

that in some cases alternative interpretations are possible. Student responses are quoted verbatim in order to enhance the credibility of the data and interpretations. In our data, participants sometimes referred to the pedagogy as P4C and sometimes as community of enquiry. It should be borne in mind that only self-selected students participated and that these students, for a variety of reasons, may not have fully disclosed their thoughts. As Page (1997) remarks, the evaluation of research is a judgement made within the relations existing between the author(s), the research participants and the readers of the final interpretive text.

Written permission was granted by the university to carry out this study and students who volunteered were assured of confidentiality and made aware that they could withdraw at any time (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004:73). Data was stored safely and available only to the researchers. For confidentiality reasons, all names of students were removed.

Findings

The research findings are reported below under the following three categories: general relevance to the CAPS curriculum, relevance to specific curriculum areas and constraints on implementation. Each category and sub-category is supported by evidence taken from the focus group interviews. The participants in this study, who had both experienced and experimented with community of enquiry pedagogy, made the following connections. Within each category, their insights are presented in order of the frequency with which they were mentioned in the data.

General Relevance to the CAPS Curriculum

Participants believed that the pedagogy was relevant in a number of ways. It was perceived to foster active and critical learning; create a context for collaboration and mutual respect; enhance thinking and reasoning; prepare learners for democratic citizenship; enhance awareness of different perspectives and develop language skills, all of which are important aspects of CAPS (Department of Basic Education, Republic of South Africa, 2011). The quotations that follow illustrate these themes.

Fostering active and critical learning

This finding had two dimensions, namely, creating the space for children to share their opinions and making this space safe enough that they felt confident to do so.

> … [the pedagogy is] *allowing the space in which they have their own voice where people listen to them and so they actually listen to each other and hear how their opinions are accepted by others and talked about ...*
>
> *We actually need to find out what they think ... we are actually not giving them a chance to tell us what they think ...*
>
> *It* [this pedagogy] *brings the discussion to focus just on the talking and the opinions of the children ...*
>
> *... children don't normally give their own opinion ... only when they feel that there is no right or wrong answers, or in a safe space ...*
>
> *... if a child feels threatened they will not speak so if you know we practice Philosophy for Children [community of enquiry pedagogy] principles* [...] *then they would know that this is a safe place in which to talk* [...] *Then they will talk and they will develop confidence in the process ...*
>
> *... I think the one thing that really breaks the ice is when we have open discussions like Philosophy for Children where everyone listens. Usually we sit in groups and 'mine is wrong, yours is right' within the discussion but now the guy who is always right, they are quiet, they are listening* [...] *so I get to express my opinion ...*

Creating a context for collaboration

> *… when we are talking during the Philosophy for Children we respect each other …*
>
> *… in Philosophy for Children everyone's ideas is important, everyone's opinions is respected …*
>
> *… because there are rules for Philosophy for Children – it gives them an opportunity to realise that this is a type of conflict resolution and it is actually a better way …*
>
> *… it can help learners ... they will give their reasons why the one is bullying and why the bullied ones can't defend themselves … and they will come up with solutions about how they can stop this by discussing this through the community of enquiry …*

Enhancing thinking and reasoning

> *… get them to speak about things they see happening every single day and rationalise it and reason on it and* […] *as a group to decide what is good or bad …*
>
> *… thinking, reasoning, all of these could be brought in and can be utilised in community of enquiry discussions, listening as well …*
>
> *… you should always be able to state why you said that maybe was a good idea, maybe it was not a good idea …*
>
> *… you can't just say 'yes' or 'no' to answer a question you must always give a reason …*

Preparation for democratic citizenship

> *… it's done in a democratic fashion, so they get to practice, see democracy …*
>
> *… that's also you know like teaching them about how democracy essentially should work …*
>
> *… with Philosophy for Children, when you are doing philosophy in class, it teaches you discipline, it teaches you to be democratic ...*
>
> *... I think it teaches children about that aspect of democracy that as much as you have your chance to vote, as much as you have a right, things might not go your way and because it's democracy you*

must be OK with that ...

Awareness of different perspectives

… sometimes the answer is not right or wrong. It depends on your perspectives because you might be reasoning in a particular way and somebody else might look at it totally different and if you juxtapose these two opinions [...] *so it teaches you multiple perspectives as well …*

… when people speak about issues it presents an opportunity for you to learn about other people and to see what they are going through …

… when children are debating and doing Philosophy for Children they are bound to talk about their differences, as in race, abilities, cultures and everything …

Development of language skills

… it does present one full opportunity for them to use the language …

… the teacher gave them the tools, the verbal tools with which to work …

… so we are not taking away the choice of the language that they get to use, we're just giving them the words …

… I notice we haven't said anything about language skills. Is it thinking skills? ... Okay … thinking skills like I remember in class we would use terminologies like 'I disagree with this because of that' … as much as we made our statement we had to support it with examples ...

Relevance to Specific Curriculum Areas

Participants believed that the pedagogy could be applied in a range of subject areas and generated a number of possible questions that could be addressed during lessons. We asked for questions because community of enquiry dialogues always begin with a question to be explored. Ideally these questions are generated by the children themselves but it is often necessary for teachers to begin by modelling philosophical questions. The participants' questions fell into three groups: questions directly related to the curriculum that could be answered by research, questions that were more philosophical in nature and implied philosophical questions, not worded as such. Examples of each type are presented below.

We teach the kids about teenage pregnancy then why are they still getting pregnant?
Who said the world is going to run out of resources?
What was life like on a ship in 17th century?
Why is the [this] plant needed in the community?
Do you think we can live without it [electricity]?
How is isiXhosa important to us?
Can we also live without technology?

***

Why are there so many languages around the world?
How did it come about that we have different cultures and different religions?
Was it right for her, to be true to herself? (referring to a character in a novel)
Was it right for her to fit in society and be like one of us? (referring to a character in a novel)

***

... you don't really need your parents to look after you.
Implied question: Can children develop successfully without parents to care for them?
... then you can have discussions around poverty or you know, the bigger picture of South Africa ...
Implied question: What should South African society be like?
... people from communities that actually deal with certain things, they value things differently.
Implied question: What are values and how should we deal with differences in values?

Curriculum Related Challenges

The participants perceived the major curriculum related challenge to be related to the process itself and their own identities within it. They were aware of the complexities of allowing open dialogues and were concerned whether they would be able to manage them constructively.

... but it's really gonna [sic] *be a nightmare to monitor and there are a whole lot of things you know if they open up other debates ...*
It is actually [...] *is a tricky thing for me* [...] *it's a tricky thing because you had to listen, and you had to weigh up and judge and you had to do all kinds of things. It's a thing that requires a lot of skills as a facilitator.*
... that's what I am saying; like people from communities that actually deal with certain things they value things differently.
... we mustn't teach the political ideology to them. We must let them choose for themselves.
... in this kind of digital age you have Facebook, you have twitter [...] *they can hurt each other's feelings and they don't see the reaction ...*
... I've seen a lot of things that are disrespectful what they have written but they've never said it face-to-face, and its just learning to communicate with respect [...] *it stops them from using that kind of disrespect on the social media sites ...*

Discussion

We learnt from this research that the final-year preservice teachers we worked with in the Professional Studies module were well able to make connections between Lipman's pedagogy and the principles that frame the CAPS document. The participants in this study believed that community of enquiry pedagogy could foster active and critical learning, create a context for collaboration and mutual respect, enhance thinking and reasoning, prepare learners for democratic citizenship, enhance awareness of different perspectives and develop language skills.

Participants could generate questions for enquiry related to specific subject areas, although their ideas were richer and more insightful when speaking of the CAPS principles. They made some appropriate connections to the content of particular curriculum areas, in the form of questions of fact

that could be answered by research. It is hardly surprising that participants found it easier to identify and word questions of fact rather than questions that were more philosophical in nature. Their past educational experiences are likely to have shaped their thinking about suitable questions, and time did not permit exploration of curriculum applications during the course. There is certainly a place in education for factual questions that can be answered through research. Judgements have to be well-informed.

Philosophical questions serve, however, to open up difficult issues and reveal the limits of our knowledge. Engaging with them in school can develop the dispositions and skills to make judgements based on reason. Participants generated philosophical questions appropriate primarily for Life Orientation or Language/Literature lessons, subjects, which most obviously lend themselves to this type of pedagogy. The philosophical questions implied by their comments suggested that these pre-service teachers were aware of relevant issues but could not yet easily articulate them as questions.

A significant insight was that monitoring the process would be challenging both within and beyond the classroom. The participants pointed out that some interesting discussions tended to spill beyond the time and space where they were originally initiated. Many learners use social media such as Facebook and Twitter, and these discussions may continue out of the safe environment of the classroom, into cyberspace, where they cannot be monitored. It was not clear whether participants believed they needed to monitor the outcome of classroom dialogues in terms of the conclusions individuals reached and/or in terms of interpersonal processes outside the classroom.

Only one participant raised the issue that this approach requires considerable facilitator skill. We agree that without regular mentoring from knowledgeable others, together with support from those in authority (Moolla, 2014) it is unlikely that the community of enquiry pedagogy would take root across an entire school community. Similarly, Lee (2009) writing about P4C in the Philippines, stressed the need for institutional support at all levels, and the negative effect of too many changes to the curriculum. Interestingly, he also suggested that "…in certain quarters, in corridors of power, that include schools, it is not acceptable for average Filipinos and students to be too questioning and inquisitive, and there are certain questions that are not encouraged…" (2009:587). He speculated that the colonial history of the country might have imposed a norm inhibiting intellectual enquiry.

No participant mentioned the time constraints imposed by the demands of the CAPS curriculum, possibly because, as pre-service teachers, they had not yet experienced this as a serious challenge. Teachers in schools today experience severe time constraints and are under extreme pressure to produce results in the national assessments, leaving little time for active learning. As two ex-students reported after teaching for six months "…it's like you're doing […] crowd control all the time" and "…in my case, when it comes to curriculum, because each and every subject you have to finish by a certain time and then we have to rush it for the for the ANA and also the CAPS document… . So for them it might take time because even if they are writing, they take time to write... ."

Most of the P4C research focuses on the nature and extent of benefits to learners. There is little literature on the various constraints on implementing P4C generally. As Leckey (2009: 468) observes, "there are many variables that are rarely discussed in the literature that impact on how the program is received by students and by others such as teaching peers and school administrators." Some of the variables that are relevant to the implementation of P4C in the broader South African context are: socio-economic conditions, and differences of class, language and culture. Within the education system today limiting variables include: overcrowded classrooms, lack of resources, teacher stress, under-qualified leadership, and a demanding curriculum in terms of teaching time frames and assessments. These limiting factors affect many, although not all, schools. Moreover, the diversity in South African classrooms could contribute positively to any classroom community of enquiry. As Wegerif (in White, 2013) suggests, gaps and differences make for a successful dialogue.

This study had some limitations. Only pre-service teachers at one institution and only those who volunteered to be interviewed were involved. Nevertheless, it is possible that its findings may be generalised by analogy (naturalistic generalisation) to similar contexts. Our future research plans include a longitudinal study with a focus on both teachers and learners and a broadening of our research base to other institutions.

The curriculum document states that it promotes active learning and enquiring minds (active and critical learning) but its time constraints alone limit the kind of classroom engagement that would make this possible and the guidelines provided for teachers do not leave much space for learner autonomy. If the admirable principles of the South African curriculum are not to be mere rhetoric, all teachers must not only understand and support the CAPS principles, but be equipped with appropriate pedagogic tools to implement them. Teacher education can, as this study shows, prepare pre-service teachers, but if the curriculum does not provide the necessary pedagogic space they may quickly lose sight of the principles that should guide their teaching.

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