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'Why do children have to hide their true selves in important places (like class)?'

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Background: Philosophy with Children (PwC) challenges the traditional adult-child binary by recognising children as capable thinkers and co-enquirers rather than passive recipients of knowledge. Philosophical enquiry remains rare in early childhood and primary education, particularly in South African classrooms, where traditional models often prioritise rote learning over critical thinking.

Objectives: Young children's questioning, hypothesising, reasoning and analysing skills and how these enquiry skills emerge, when children are engaged in an enquiry-based pedagogy such as a community of philosophical enquiry (CPE), is explored. I show how children learn through critical, caring, creative and collaborative thinking and through having opportunities to practise these ways of thinking.

Method: A group of eight-to-nine-year-old children engaged in a CPE over four weeks. The children were presented with a provocation, a picture book, given time to think, to develop questions in small groups, to draw their thoughts and to engage in a philosophical discussion.

Results: The philosophical depth of the questions the children developed and their critical, caring, collaborative and creative thinking is clear. This is evident in the transcription of the CPE, an excerpt which is analysed in this article.

Conclusion: A CPE provides a powerful pedagogical process for teachers and demonstrates how enquiry-based approaches can create spaces and the conditions for children to show their thinking and engage in meaningful discussions.

Contribution: There are exciting implications for classroom practice and methodological insights for teachers when children are allowed to show how they think not simply that they are always thinking.

Keywords: philosophy with children; questioning; philosophical thinking; community of philosophical enquiry; child; children; teachers; intergenerational dialogue.

Introduction

It matters that children are thinking in their classes, it matters how they are thinking, and it matters that they be given time to think and develop their ways of thinking. We also need to acknowledge that children are always thinking. There needs to be time in classrooms for children to develop and articulate their thoughts, shaping them in ways that make sense, and offer ways of creating not only new ways but new worlds of and for thinking, meaning and possibility. In schools, children need to be provided with opportunities to learn and to practise their thinking. Philosophy with Children (PwC) challenges the traditional adult-child binary with the acknowledgement that children are capable thinkers and co-enquirers rather than passive recipients of knowledge. In South African classrooms, philosophical enquiry remains rare, and schools are often places where teachers do most of the talking (which matters) and children must listen to what the teacher is saying, sharing or teaching (Sharp 2018a):

> If children do talk, they talk about things that teachers think they should talk about. Rarely is the classroom a place where teachers and children engage in meaningful conversations about matters of mutual concern. Co-inquiry with children is rare in elementary schools. (pp. 175–176)

This article argues that PwC, specifically through its pedagogy, the community of philosophical enquiry (CPE), offers a transformative pedagogical process for teachers, allowing children to engage meaningfully with philosophical questions they develop. This study explored how

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eight-to-nine-year-old, Grade 3 students in a government primary school in Cape Town engaged in a four-week philosophical inquiry which enabled the children to 'become more thoughtful, more reflective, more considerate, and more reasonable individuals' (Lipman, Sharp & Oscanyan 1980:15). The philosophical enquiry led to profound discussions about identity, self, self-expression, and reflections on some constraints of classroom culture. The findings indicate that when given the space, opportunity, encouragement and 'tools' to think freely, children can also be learned from if they are listened to in these intergenerational classroom settings. In this philosophical enquiry, the children discussed and critiqued pedagogical norms, teacher expectations, and power structures in education. This study makes the case for seriously thinking about the inclusion of philosophy in early education, advocating for a shift in pedagogical practices that prioritise thinking, discussion, and collaborative and meaningful co-enquiry.

'Despite research on the benefits of inquiry-based learning, many classrooms in South Africa remain structured around rigid curricula and teacher-dominated instruction' (Green & Condy 2016). This study investigates how PwC can disrupt such norms, centring children's thinking and thoughts as also important in various pedagogical classroom practices.

Philosophy *with* Children emphasises that the practice of philosophical enquiry is something we do *with* children, not *for* children. Most current PwC practitioners have strong ties to the original Philosophy for Children (P4C) movement and great respect for the programme first developed in the 1960s by Matthew Lipman, who developed a curriculum that focused on teaching specific thinking skills 'in school'. The pedagogical approach used during P4C sessions is known as a CPE. Ann Margaret Sharp, a close collaborator of Matthew Lipman, is the person credited with 'reconstructing the philosophical notion of the community of inquiry into a model of educational practice' (Laverty & Gregory 2018:1).

My academic, teaching and scholarly work and research has its origins in P4C, as established by Lipman and Sharp. Currently, along with other practitioners, academics and theorists who no longer only use the original P4C curriculum and novels, I practise PwC not as a method but as a movement (Kohan & Costa-Carvahlo 2019:276). There is a focus on using a wide range of materials, art sources, books, multimedia and images not only the original P4C curriculum. There is still, however, strong agreement that the CPE remains the pedagogy of PwC (Haynes & Murris 2011:300). I specifically focus on schooling in South Africa and therefore also draw on the work with other academics, theorists and practitioners who have a focus on work in South Africa including Green and Condy (2016), Green and Murris (2014), Murris (2016), Murris and Haynes (2018), Mathebula and Ndofirepi (2011), Giorza (2021), and Crowther (2021).

I have been facilitating CPE with groups of children at schools, with in-service teachers and teachers in training, since 2014. I have come to practise and experience it as a democratising pedagogy, in the way in which it is able to disrupt the fixed adult–child binary and the power dynamics implied in these relationships. The way I practise CPE usually involves a trained, experienced adult facilitator and a group of children seated in a circle, the children are presented with a stimulus, which could be a picture book, story or picture. This 'created' community then engages in a meaningful philosophical discussion based on questions the children have developed and that have been provoked from the stimulus. This process encourages the asking of open-ended questions; it develops listening and critical thinking skills and allows for engaging in meaningful, empathetic dialogue and an opportunity to grapple with philosophical, ethical and moral dilemmas in a structured setting.

The CPE is a pedagogy of learning that appreciates that the differences in the room based on age are positive, and makes this a very exciting way to work with children and adults as it challenges assumptions and stereotypes through the process. Most educational settings are intergenerational, yet we ignore this significant aspect and allow these age and generational differences to remain fixed in the 'assigned' roles of teachers and students. 'P4C represents itself as a transformative philosophy of childhood and education, one that entails a fundamental reconfiguration of adult-child relationships and school ethics' (Haynes 2014:464). I choose to pay attention to the intergenerational nature of CPE and the opportunity it presents to trouble the adults' uncontested roles which are often reinforced by the school, curriculum, parents and the children. A CPE is not a simple activity, process or way of working, but an opportunity for problematising the way relationships to knowledge, knowing and learning exist in schools. The teacher as facilitator in a philosophical enquiry is co-constructing with others, others who are generally not taken seriously. A teacher who sees their role as a co-enquirer, a participant that asks questions that 'provoke philosophical enquiry, without knowing the answers to the questions he or she poses; and facilitating only where appropriate, that is benefitting the community's construction of ideas' (Murris 2016:182). These are some of the reasons I chose to use PwC and CPE as a pedagogy and as a methodology in this research project.

Research methods and design

In 2022, I volunteered at a government primary school in Cape Town for one hour a week doing PwC sessions as part of the enrichment programme at the school. I worked with two separate groups of Grade 2s (seven-to-eight-years-old) during that year for 6 months at a time. We read specifically chosen picture books, spent time playing and experimenting with art materials, we philosophised, imagined, and played questioning and thinking games. We were thinking, articulating our thinking, practising our thinking, and

engaging in CPE. In 2023, I then conducted a research project called: Philosophy with Children, a South African perspective. I worked with the children I had worked with in 2022, who were now Grade 3s (eight-to-nine-year-old). I did this research over four weeks, for one-hour sessions at a time.

The choice of material in a philosophical enquiry is very important and needs careful consideration. Haynes and Murris (2012:1) in their book *Picturebooks, pedagogy and philosophy*, 'offer reasons to challenge censorship and risk avoidance […] and propose [*that*] exploring controversial subjects is of critical importance to education'. I carefully and thoughtfully chose the book *For every child: The UN convention on the rights of the child in words and pictures* (2002) as the provocation for the research project. The picture book, illustrated by 14 different adult artists, with distinct styles and orientations, features 14 of the United Nations Conventions of the Rights of the Child. The foreword of the book was written by the South African human rights activist bishop, Desmond Tutu. I chose the book because of the content and mode, being a well-curated picture book with excellent illustrations about issues that deeply affect children – such as their right to live in peace, to be loved, cared for, and have access to education – and knew it would serve as an important starting point for our philosophical enquiry. This particular picture book made it possible to consider the controversial subjects posed in the book and I chose to use this with these young children because I am aware of the profound philosophical questions, dilemmas and enquiries that would emerge through their questions.

The empirical data I am drawing on for this research are the transcription of the audio recording of the philosophical enquiry, and one photograph of a drawing created by a child who participated in the research. The children agreed to video recordings and audio recordings of the enquiries and of their drawings and photographs. All this co-created data is 'feeding into' what we are working with here. In this article, I am sharing a short excerpt of the transcribed transcript of the philosophical enquiry which took place in week three of four. The created data is embedded and layered with their talking, their musings, thinkings, colouring, complex artworks, being on and off the chairs, on the floor in the school library or audiovisual room, which is where we had our sessions. After reading the book, we discussed the various themes that the children found interesting. The children were given time to think and to draw about what they had heard through the reading of the book and seen through the images in the book.

The children then self-organised into small groups and developed their own questions about what the book had made them think about. Below are some examples of the questions the children developed in their small groups:

- Why do children have to hide there true selfs at inportn places (like class)?[1]
- Is there a right to choose your religion even if it's different to your parents?
- Why do kids have to live in an environment where dangers are afoot?
- Why do our parents think they have to go to war?

All of these questions are philosophical as they have complex concepts embedded and attached to them. Matthews (1994:14) reminds us that 'one of the exciting things that children have to offer us is a new philosophical perspective'. I believe this fervently, through my interaction with children as a teacher for more than 20 years, because I am a parent and watched and observed this in my 'own' children and subsequently as someone who now has the privilege of being engaged in research with children. In my PhD thesis (Reynolds 2021) I argue that:

> [*T*]he questions developed by children make new ways of being possible, in a classroom and create conditions for deeply meaningful intergenerational dialogue and learning to occur, which disrupts and destabilises the adult/child relations in the classroom. (p. 140)

Sharp (2018a:180) suggests that 'to question is to take a stance of curiosity or challenge toward someone or something, which constitutes a relationship of freedom in regard to it'.

In my experience of facilitating many philosophical enquiries with children, and during my many years of research in this area of PwC, I have observed that children are not usually asking and developing questions only to get an answer. Rather the questions seem to evoke a curiosity in ways that help to develop the depth of the philosophical dialogue for the children and the teacher. The philosophical enquiry also then makes possible the conditions necessary for radical un-learning and learning to happen.

After the questions were developed, we gathered in the larger circle again and the small groups of children presented their questions to the larger group, explaining how they developed that question. Then the children as a collective voted on the question they wanted to discuss in the philosophical enquiry. For more details on how the voting of the questions works in a CPE process (Reynolds [2021, 2023]). The question that received the most votes, which the children wanted to discuss was: Why do children have to hide there true selfs in importn places (like class)? [Why do children have to hide their true selves in important places (like class)?]

Data analysis

A rhizomatic community of philosophical enquiry

A qualitative, participative research methodology was enacted, where the focus was on co-production and co-creation of data in a CPE between the facilitator, children and materials like the books, drawings, questions, crayons, seating positions, chairs and circle (Reynolds 2021).

1 This is the exact spelling used by the children who developed this question.

I made the deliberate choice to use the CPE to engage in with this research. I was also guided by this invitation that the structure of the CPE could be 'chaotic, emergent, self-correcting and self-organising' (Kennedy 2010:101). There are different ways that CPE develop. One particularly helpful formulation is by Kennedy (2012:4), who describes how communal philosophical dialogue can be understood as a rhizomatic epistemological structure. This could be a structure that develops organically, with lots of unexpected twists and turns. This is how I choose to work, where it is not a preformulated curriculum plan, but rather the outcomes are emergent. When children are listened to, and taken seriously, the possibility of making cross-curricula connections, not just limited to the current school curriculum, occur far more frequently and more meaningfully. This has enormous benefits for how children learn, as they are able to keep making different connections. Kennedy (2010) asserts that during CPE:

> [*W*]hen allowed to, the concepts are continually both challenging and being challenged by our experience and by the experience of others, and thereby de and re-territorialising, connecting with other concepts and re-entering experience. (p. 2)

We could move from the psychological or social orientation to a physical or even historical or geographical, scientific or mathematical orientation with the concepts, in these philosophical enquiries so that we are working with the concepts in a transdisciplinary way. Every single interaction in a CPE has an incalculable effect on the system. 'Growth is characterized by building and integrating, which also involves, as an aspect of continual re-organization, splitting, extenuation, tangles, asymmetries, attenuations' (Kennedy 2010:101). The CPE, with all its risks, but also all its potentialities which I tried to be awake to and aware of, becomes the co-participant in the creation of the research data. I therefore used the rhizomatic nature of the CPE as an analytical lens to influence the interpretation of my findings. By using this rhizomatic approach, I remained open to the unexpected connections in the children's responses. This non-linear analysis engaged the dynamic aspects of the CPE, revealing insights about thinking that a more rigid analytical framework may have overlooked.

Ethical considerations

An application for full ethical approval was made to the School of Education, University of Cape Town and ethics consent was received on 15 February 2023 with ethical clearance number EDNREC20230205. In addition, application for full ethical approval was made to the Western Cape Government: Education and ethics consent was received on 06 April 2023, with the ethics approval number 16375E04C00002F-20230215. Furthermore, all of the Grade 3 students who participated in the timetabled enrichment sessions were invited to participate in this research project. I hosted a parent and student information session one evening after school, which served to explain to the child participants and their parents what the four sessions would entail. The parents were provided with information letters and consent forms on which to indicate their consent for their children's participation, and the children were given information letters and assent forms to provide their assent. All video, audio recorded data and photographs have been stored safely, and the names of the children used in this article have been replaced with single letters which serve as pseudonyms in order to maintain their anonymity and confidentiality and the anonymity of the school. Given the adult–child power-producing binary at play in most educational settings, I was intentional about ensuring the children felt their thinking, thoughts and what they were wondering about and grappling with was valued. That the children would not see themselves as research subjects but as co-enquirers.

Discussion

Critical, creative, collaborative, caring thinking by children in a community of philosophical enquiry

According to Hannam and Echeverria (2009:13–19), the CPE process is used to develop *critical, creative, collaborative* and *caring thinking* through communal dialogue.

Box 1 contains an excerpt from the philosophical enquiry based on the question that received the most votes. This is a continuous piece of the recording and has been transcribed. This is only a short excerpt of the entire 20 min philosophical enquiry. All the children are represented by a letter of the alphabet to indicate their name, and my turns are indicated with RR. The turns are numbered, which will make it easier to refer to in the analysis and discussion. When I say 'Give it to someone who has not had a turn yet' in turn 7, I am referring to the handheld audio recorder the children were taking turns holding to audio record the philosophical enquiry.

The term *caring thinking* in a CPE was first established by Matthew Lipman and then further developed by Ann Margaret Sharp. Sharp (2018b:212) argues that 'caring is a particular kind of intentionality that shows itself especially in our relationship with other persons'.

Morehouse (2018:202–204) argues for caring thinking 'as a method and goal of the community of philosophical inquiry' and that 'care is compatible with rigorous inquiry'. In the excerpt from the transcription presented in Box 2, we see how the children enact caring thinking in their dialogue.

In turn 4, participant E's response is a clear example of caring thinking, not just in the way they challenge the idea of testing, but in how they express concern for what it means for students to be themselves in that space. There is something deeply relational about this response; it recognises the pressure that exists, not just as an individual burden but as something that shapes the experience of learning for many children. Similarly, when participant Q in turn 2 reflects on teachers' expectations, they are not simply voicing a personal frustration but raising a shared concern about fairness, about the way emotions and belonging are negotiated in classroom spaces. This is the kind of thinking that PwC makes possible: where children are not just thinking critically but also with care, attuned to each other and the conditions that shape their learning.

BOX 1: Excerpt from transcription of philosophical enquiry on 23 August 2023.

Turn	Participant	Dialogue
1	G	Why do children have to hide their true selves in important places [indistinct] like class?...
2	Q	I feel like some teachers have an expectation for a certain child, like if you usually get an answer right and you get it wrong they'll be disappointed or they'll pull a face or something.
3	RR	Wow. They'll put a face that you're not getting that right, okay. So I'm going to ask [indistinct] we really want to try and get everybody in who hasn't had a turn. Thanks so much for your contributions.
4	E	I think that it's true because you can't be yourself when you're in class and during a test you can't talk to your friend even though you really want to talk to your friend.
5	RR	Do you want to say more about that, E? Why can't you talk to your friend?
6	E	I think it's because that maybe in tests you need to focus and you need to get good marks. But I don't actually believe that you need to get good marks for tests even though you might fail school if you don't get good marks on your tests.
7	RR	Give it to someone who hasn't had a turn yet.
8	S	I just want to add something on to E. Look, I think the reason you're not allowed to talk in tests is because they think you're, you're trying to cheat to get your answers correct because you don't believe in yourself.
9	RR	That's a good point. Thank you. Look at someone who hasn't had a turn, please. G, I think G's got the [indistinct].
10	F	Some teachers are like also, like if you usually like are quiet and stuff but then if you put up your hand the teacher only chooses the people who usually put up their and like if you're usually quiet and you really know the answer and you put your hand, they just don't notice you.
11	RR	Wow. I'm learning so much third grade.
12	G	Well my friend when she's at school she's quite so slow at work but when she's at my house or I'm at her house she's very energetic and very playful. So I think maybe she's trying to hide something.
13	RR	Have you thought about that before today or did you think about it today?
14	G	Today.
15	RR	Okay, *ja*, thank you. Now I think everybody who didn't speak now we can just keep going. I want to encourage people, maybe H and K to share some thought you have about this. You don't have to, but we've got lots of people now you can choose from who'd like a turn. Thank you G, for that contribution.
16	G	Can it be somebody who already had a turn?
17	RR	Yes, it can because I think everybody has had a turn.
18	D	I just wanted to say I think some adults don't always understand children what they're trying to say or trying to show what they're meaning.
19	RR	You can choose another person.
20	A	So this is for E's thing. I agree and disagree. So for some classes it might be the same that what E said but I find in our class, unless, it depends on which subject but I find in our class we're allowed to talk to our friends as much as we want as long as if it's about the work and if we're not distracting them and we're concentrating.
21	RR	Okay, thanks.
22	Q	I think most teachers, if you get the answer right usually then you usually get picked to do something and they don't give other kids chances because they think they're going to get the answer wrong.
23	RR	Do have some thoughts about that? What could teachers do differently?
24	Q	I think teachers could just give the other children a chance and just like not pick favourites basically.
25	RR	U's got his hand — and he didn't speak earlier so do you mind, either U or B because they didn't go. Thanks Q, here we go.
26	L	I want to add to S's thing, to S's question. I think that also they think you're cheating about talking to them because you might also be looking down at their answers because normally you would be looking down at their book while you're talking to them.
27	RR	So you think the teachers are making an assumption but it's not completely incorrect …

Collaborative thinking is co-constructed between the participants (Hannam & Echeverria 2009:8) and I would add between the participants and the more-than-human, the paper, books, thoughts, questions etc. This kind of thinking is being co-created in a pedagogical space which is emerging in the CPE. The provocation and the storybook invited a different way to talk, draw, think, philosophise together, not individually by an individual child. This is about foregrounding collaboration and not simply in an activity that everyone happens to be engaged in at the same time, but rather that it matters that 'we' are all thinking together and building ideas together. Even the process of voting on the questions is collaborative, it matters that this is an activity they are doing as a group, not simply because they are a group.

Box 3 clearly shows they are listening to each other and building on each other's ideas. Participant S says, 'I want to add something on to [*participant E*]', showing that they have heard what participant E has said and want to add another reason and justification. In turn 10, participant F notes that 'the teacher only chooses students who usually answer'. This suggests that the children perceive the teacher's right to choose, as the more powerful adult, and what can be seen as favouritism as shaping classroom participation. This also speaks directly to having to hide their true selves in class, as generally classroom participation and pedagogical choices are made by the teacher and usually according to their preferences. The insight about shaping classroom participation also challenges the assumption that all children equally feel invited to contribute to class discussions. While this may not be the teacher's intention, it is helpful as a teacher to grapple with these powerful insights.

Similarly, in turn 20, (ten turns later [see Box 4]), participant A still connects with what participant E has said and offers a different and almost counter explanation for why the teacher may react to someone not being allowed to talk in a test. Participant A suggests that it is not that simple and they engage with the complexity of agreement *and* disagreement by saying: 'I agree and disagree' and then proceed to explain their position. Participant A can distinguish that in some classes, this is not the case, and in this circumstance, in their class they are allowed to talk to their friends. The notion that the teacher is reasonable and it is about each context (classroom), is evident.

Creative thinking in a CPE goes beyond what has been done or thought before. This is about imagination, fantasy and thinking and being playful (Hannam & Echeverria 2009:15). In and through the drawings and the discussions, there is not a focus on what is already known to be retold. Rather, the children engage in developing their own questions about the provocation creatively: they are being playful and imaginative because the enquiry is about divergence and difference from. The drawing provides opportunity to experience the affect and power of child art as enquiry and as thinking, and also philosophising which was created during the research process. Often in research with young children we focus on the linguistic as a marker of what will be known and what is given value. Barad (2007:232) suggests that 'language has been granted too much power'. I counter this by deliberately always inviting the young students I am co-researching with to additionally express their ideas, through drawings, which then form part of the research process. In one particular instance, a child responded to an inquiry and (at my suggestion to the whole class to draw what they hide in class) drew: 'hiding that she wishes she was home with her dog' using language and the language of art to visually illustrate her point. The drawings created by the children are valued in the same way as their verbal and linguistic sense making in this research process.

BOX 2: Excerpt from transcription of philosophical enquiry on 23 August 2023.

Turn	Participant	Dialogue
1	G	Why do children have to hide their true selves in important places like their class?
2	Q	I feel like some teachers have an expectation for a certain child, like if you usually get an answer right and you get it wrong they'll be disappointed or they'll pull a face or something.
3	RR	Wow. They'll put a face that you're not getting that right, okay. So I'm going to ask [*indistinct*] we really want to try and get everybody in who hasn't had a turn. Thanks so much for your contributions.
4	E	I think that it's true because you can't be yourself when you're in class and during a test you can't talk to your friend even though you really want to talk to your friend.
5	RR	Do you want to say more about that, E? Why can't you talk to your friend?
6	E	I think it's because that maybe in tests you need to focus and you need to get good marks. But I don't actually believe that you need to get good marks for tests even though you might fail school if you don't get good marks on your tests.

BOX 3: Excerpt from transcription of philosophical enquiry on 23 August 2023.

Turn	Participant	Dialogue
8	S	I just want to add something on to E. Look, I think the reason you're not allowed to talk in tests is because they think you're, you're trying to cheat to get your answers correct because you don't believe in yourself.
9	RR	That's a good point. Thank you. Look at someone who hasn't had a turn, please. G, I think G's got the [indistinct].
10	F	Some teachers are like also, like if you usually like are quiet and stuff but then if you put up your hand the teacher only chooses the people who usually put up their and like if you're usually quiet and you really know the answer and you put your hand, they just don't notice you.

BOX 4: Excerpt from transcription of philosophical enquiry on 23 August 2023.

Turn	Participant	Dialogue
20	A	So this is for E's thing. I agree and disagree. So for some classes it might be the same that what E said but I find in our class, unless, it depends on which subject but I find in our class we're allowed to talk to our friends as much as we want as long as if it's about the work and if we're not distracting them and we're concentrating.

To address the issue of youngsters hiding their true selves in class, students collaborated in small groups to construct a "key", similar to a map legend. To reveal the 'hidden', students sketched or wrote what was hidden beneath the dark black scribbled area. This is a perfectly reasonable and acceptable desire to have as an adult and as a young child, but what conditions exist in a school, (although not possible to go home and be with your dog) being able to have that very real wish acknowledged is and should be important. As teachers, are we creating the conditions where the students can say what they are feeling and not immediately be pathologised?

All of these 'kinds of thinking' are contingent on each other and *critical thinking* in a CPE is not about problem-solving, but about problem posing, developing questions and asking the prior questions. Using creative, caring, collaborative ways of being to develop critical thinking is what allows philosophy to emerge in a CPE. Haynes (2015) reminds us that 'students need opportunities to think and talk critically, making connections between new ideas and prior knowledge and experience'. In the extract presented in Box 5, I am so deeply grateful for the criticality and thoughtfulness this response given by participant G, as it helps provide ways to think about why children hide their true selves in class.

Participant G is engaged in a reconciling of how her friend is different at school than when she is at her house playing and is grappling with what is making this occur. She identifies that her friend is 'quite slow at work' but at her home is 'very energetic and playful' and so what is making

BOX 5: Excerpt from transcription of philosophical enquiry on 23 August 2023.

Turn	Participant	Dialogue
12	G	Well my friend when she's at school she's quite so slow at work but when she's at my house or I'm at her house she's very energetic and very playful. So I think maybe she's trying to hide something.
13	RR	Have you thought about that before today or did you think about it today?
14	G	Today.

these two very different ways of being happen in these two settings. This question is provoking this unravelling of her understanding of her friend and her musings about what could it be. It is not that important that a definite answer is 'found' but it is very profound that a nine-year-old is able to notice this and wonder about it in this context. Why do we have to be different in class than we are at home?

Ann Margaret Sharp theorised the 'epistemic, aesthetic, political, feminist, ethical and spiritual dimensions of the community of inquiry' through many years of scholarship (Laverty & Gregory 2018:13). Sharp was deeply influenced by feminist philosophy and believed that people were 'more ready to listen to the voices of children doing philosophy, having learned to listen to the voices of women, themselves marginalized in the history of philosophy' (De La Garza 2018:133). I have come to have a deep respect for Ann Margaret Sharp and her contribution as an academic, feminist, theorist, philosopher and practitioner to developing the CPE as it is widely practised all over the world. The focus on child as co-enquirer *with* the adult teacher in a process of teaching and learning is what excites me most about the CPE envisioned by Ann Margaret Sharp (Reynolds 2021). I am excited that this CPE made it possible for these children to imagine a different world, to think about what was necessarily in the curriculum or prescribed for that day, but rather that they could do the work of thinking of reasoning, of trying to make sense of ways of being which could be seen as rudimentary and not worthy of discussion or thinking about. Yet, how we are at school – in places where children have to spend years of their life – it absolutely makes sense that they are allowed and encouraged to think and to use their thinking to critique their schooling and various pedagogical practices.

Conclusion

This research has shown how a CPE provides a powerful pedagogical process for teachers and demonstrates how enquiry-based approaches can create spaces and the conditions for children to engage in meaningful discussions. In this CPE, what the children enquired about and discussed was about their lived experiences in school. The questions that emerged, questions about identity, fairness, and belonging, matter. They matter because they show not only children's capacity for deep critical, creative, collaborative and caring thinking but also their need for spaces where they can articulate these thoughts freely. The CPE is as much about the way children engage with ideas as it is about the ideas themselves. What also becomes evident in this study is that philosophical enquiry should not simply be seen as an 'extra' or enrichment activity; it is a vital and meaningful pedagogical approach that matters for how we understand learning, knowledge, and how what children think and how they think should matter in every classroom. The CPE provides ways to challenge conventional and entrenched classroom hierarchies. It shows us that children, when given the opportunity, do ask the most important questions in schools. If we take seriously the idea that children are thinkers, then we must also take seriously the spaces we create for them to think. How we engage with children's ideas matters. The questions they ask matter. And the pedagogies we choose – whether they make room for thinking, questioning, and listening – matter too.

I return to the wisdom of Sharp (2018a), who was concerned that 'co-inquiry with children is rare in elementary schools' (p. 176). Sharp's provocation helps me ask the questions: What are the material and discursive conditions that would need to change in schools for children to be engaged with and listened to as co-enquirers? Which pedagogies create the possibilities for children to speak and co-enquire about what matters in their classrooms and schools? I would suggest that the CPE is an approach that teachers can and should invite into the spaces of their classrooms as it makes it possible to for the children and teachers to think, practise thinking and articulate their thinking processes. This particular CPE offers a critique about teaching and has implications for classroom practice and creates the possibilities for the children to be meaningfully engaged and active participants in shaping the educational processes in their classrooms. As a teacher, lecturer or practitioner, if there is not currently space in your classroom for this to occur, then I encourage you to think about why not and what could help create this possibility.

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Author's contribution

R-A.R. is the sole author of this research article.

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Data availability

The author confirms that the data supporting this study and its findings are available within the article.

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