



**Global Link**  
Development Education Centre

## **Philosophical Enquiry: promoting community cohesion and Preventing Violent Extremism**

P4C is the shortened name for Philosophy for Children, a methodology developed in the US and now practised in many countries, also under the names philosophical enquiry, philosophy with children, or philosophy for communities.

It's unique because it develops speaking and listening as well as thinking skills in a collaborative setting. Students work together to reach a better understanding of a question that they've chosen themselves- hence they are motivated, engaged, and achieve more.

Because P4C is skills based, it's a way of learning suitable for all ages and most settings. We find it especially suitable for exploring areas related to global citizenship, but it can be useful in any curriculum area, and it is highly suitable for addressing issues of community cohesion.

### **For more information**

Look at the Philosophy for Children pages on the Global Link website, [www.globallink.org.uk](http://www.globallink.org.uk) or contact Ruth Davies [r.davies@globallink.org.uk](mailto:r.davies@globallink.org.uk)

## **Philosophical Enquiry (P4C); promoting community cohesion and Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE)**

Philosophical enquiry, often referred to as Philosophy for Children or P4C, is a methodology developed in the US, initially in response to young people's violent response to perceived injustice. Professor Lipmann, seeing the unrest in American universities, developed a programme designed to develop the skills of reasoned and respectful thinking, and the attitude of 'reasonableness' starting with young children and continuing into high schools.

This methodology is now practised in many different countries and in many different contexts, including schools and community groups.

This approach has particular relevance for developing community cohesion in schools and addressing the issues raised by PVE.

In 2008 the DfCSF published a toolkit, 'Learning Together to be Safe', for schools to offer advice to schools on how to address the issues raised by the PVE agenda. The toolkit suggests the following actions:

### **Leadership and Values**

*Promote critical scholarship and informed moral purpose- Develop critical personal thinking skills*

*Exploring and promoting shared values*

*Modelling participatory democracy and freedom of speech*

*Develop teaching skills for dealing with controversial issues*

### **Teaching, Learning and the Curriculum**

*Develop personal, learning and thinking skills so that pupils become independent enquirers and effective participators*

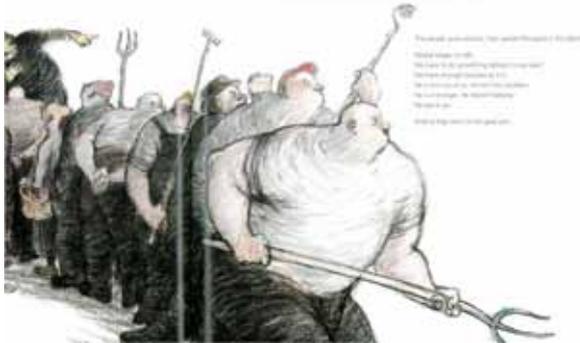
*Teaching and learning strategies which develop- questioning techniques to open up debate - promoting open and respectful dialogue*



Philosophical Enquiry is a proven methodology which explicitly develops these skills and values. Teachers using P4C develop in their classrooms 'communities of enquiry' where dialogue is 'collaborative, critical, caring and creative' whilst, through the process, modelling a truly democratic community. This is recognised by Keith Ajegbo in his report on the curriculum for diversity and citizenship, which recommends P4C as a pedagogy for developing critical literacy. (*Diversity and Citizenship- a review, p48*)

## What is P4C?

It is a student centred thinking skills methodology, where students create their own philosophical questions in response to materials selected by the teacher, for example a news item, a poem or a picture.



At Global Link we have developed philosophical enquiry with students of all ages and abilities to explore questions of global citizenship, resulting in discussions where students have explored questions such as:

*Why aren't people more welcoming to refugees?*

*How do we make friends?*

*Has the world got endless supplies of food?*

*Why do human beings keep committing atrocities on each other?*

Each of these questions formed the starting point for a discussion in which students were able to explore their own and each other's ideas, whilst being challenged to give evidence for their statements, look for connections between ideas, and above all, listen to each other's views with true respect and empathy



We believe that Philosophical Enquiry (P4C) has the potential to be an invaluable tool for countering extremism *of any sort*. In the community of enquiry - the discussion circle - individuals have the chance to explore, in a challenging but safe environment, why they believe and act as they do.

In particular they can test extreme or prejudiced views against their own and other people's experience, and to consider whether their opinions are, indeed, consistent with other values they espouse.

### **What are the benefits?**

Teachers using P4C in their classrooms notice students are more open to each others ideas, think more carefully and more deeply. Research has shown that students make significant and lasting gains in cognitive skills, a summary of the research can be seen on Teachernet-

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=14232>

Teachers also report that students enjoy P4C sessions!

*"By the end of the term they had begun to explore complex issues which initially I would not have believed Y2 children could have done"*

*"Children enjoyed and looked forward to the philosophy sessions. Their improved skills showed in other lessons- I will use ideas from P4C in other areas."*

*"Pupils' listening skills improved, children involved and animated, would use techniques across curriculum"*

### **Training**

Global Link can offer training which is validated by Sapere (the national organisation promoting P4C). The course lasts 12 hours which is usually delivered over two days. The course can be tailored to the specific needs of participants, for example for primary or secondary teachers. Skills developed in the course are useful in many teaching situations, and are not confined to philosophy sessions. Similarly the community of enquiry can be useful in all subject areas.

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Or contact Ruth Davies [r.davies@globallink.org.uk](mailto:r.davies@globallink.org.uk)

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