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Philosophy for Children: Towards Pedagogical Transformation

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Abstract

Philosophical inquiry (Lipman, Sharp & Oscanyan, 1980) has the capacity to push boundaries in teaching and learning interactions with students and improve teacher's pedagogical experiences (Scholl, Nichols, Burgh, 2008). This paper focuses on the potential for Philosophy to foster pedagogical transformation. Two groups of primary school teachers, 59 in total, have been involved in a comparison of pedagogical transformation between teachers who implemented Philosophy and teachers who used thinking tools (graphic organisers) for conceptual exploration. A mixed methods approach, including, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, was employed to inquire into the effect of teaching Philosophy on teachers' perceptions of their pedagogy. This paper describes how the engagement in communities of philosophical inquiry results in a significant improvement in perceptions of pedagogy, teacher thinking and student engagement.

Keywords:
Teaching, Learning, Reflective Practice and Research

Specific keywords:
Philosophy for Children, Thinking, Democracy

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Philosophy for Children: Pedagogical Transformation

Introduction

Philosophy for Children was first developed by Matthew Lipman (Lipman, Sharp & Oscanyan, 1980). In collaboration with his colleagues he constructed a curriculum consisting of philosophical novels, in which the characters are children who discover and explore philosophical concepts steeped the history of philosophy. Lipman and associates also wrote accompanying teacher manuals with rich discussion plans and exercises to stimulate philosophical dialogue. At the centre of the Philosophy for Children approach to teaching and learning is a specific student-centred pedagogy with detailed organizational and procedural guidelines known as the community of inquiry, wherein *"the classroom is thought of as a pluralistic community, centred on dialogue and collaborative activity, in which all of its members have an active and equitable share"* (Cam, 2006, p. 8). Typical of Australian schools that have introduced Philosophy for Children, time is allocated for lessons wherein the classroom is converted into a community of inquiry. Teachers use materials beyond Lipman's work including existing story books and purpose written material which has philosophical content to stimulate questions and discussion, as well as concept development exercises and discussion plans to match (for examples see Cam, 1993a; Cam 1993b; Cam, et al., 2007). This practice, which is reflected in the practice of the teachers in this study, will hereafter be referred to as Philosophy (upper case 'P') and the discipline itself as philosophy (lower case 'p'). Teachers in this study have engaged in the teaching of Philosophy which has involved them and their students in developing a community of philosophical inquiry in their classrooms.

The community of inquiry is a multidimensional approach to the development and improvement of thinking that cultivates critical, creative and caring thinking through reflective, deliberative inquiry. Lipman's educational theory and practice has its roots in pragmatism, specifically the work of C.S. Peirce who considered scientific practitioners to belong to a community dedicated to like procedures and identical goals, and John Dewey who extended Peirce's notion of the community of inquiry as a theory of inquiry that offered pedagogical guidelines applicable to any curriculum. Lipman extended these ideas further to educational philosophy. He aimed to develop students' social and intellectual dispositions and capacities required for active and reflective citizenship, within the community of inquiry.

This approach of teaching Philosophy, using the community of philosophical inquiry as its central pedagogy, is known for its positive effects on student thinking (Garcia-Moriyon, Rebollo & Colom, 2005; Trickey & Topping, 2004; Trickey & Topping, 2007). The research to date addressing the effects of teaching Philosophy on pedagogy has been minimal and small scale (Daniel, 1988; Roche, 2000; Yeazell, 1981). Yeazell (1981) worked with seven teachers implementing Philosophy over the period of a year and found that the practice had positive outcomes on self-actualizing measures but no significant change on the critical thinking measures. Roche (2000) describes her own 'ethical action research' project of encouraging Philosophical dialogue within her class and then analysing the transcripts for signs of emergent philosophising. She claims that this process was the catalyst for transformation of her own teaching practice. Daniel (1988) reports that her work with experienced teachers and researchers, with regard to implementation of Philosophy, revealed "*a widening and deepening of their teaching knowledge; development of their thinking skills; a personal and critical re-appropriation of their teaching experience; and the development of self-esteem" (p. 14).*

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The outcomes of Daniel's (1988) study speak to Hargreaves (2003) vision of teachers and teaching that envisages teachers who can think themselves, name and manipulate their thinking and problem solving processes, and inspire and facilitate such thinking with their students:

> We [should] promote a high investment, high capacity educational system in which highly skilled teachers are able to generate creativity and ingenuity among their pupils, by experiencing creativity and flexibility themselves in how they are treated and developed as knowledge society professionals. In this (…) scenario, teaching and teachers will reach far beyond the technical tasks of producing acceptable test results, to pursuing teaching as a life-shaping, world-changing social mission again (p. 2).

In Australia, various state and federal governments propose goals for education which match Hargreaves vision. Most recently, the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA, 2008) has stated goals which could be seen to align with a vision for creativity and ingenuity in education, that is, to pursue schooling and education as transformational processes which inspire lifelong learning. The Melbourne Declaration has as its second goal, that, "All young Australians become: successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens" (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 7).

The attributes of these young Australians are further clarified in the document (MCEETYA, 2008) as students who think deeply and logically, and are creative, innovative and resourceful, solve problems, collaborate, communicate ideas, and make sense of their world, have the ability to make rational and informed decisions, act with moral and ethical integrity, are enterprising, honest, resilient, empathic and respectful, appreciate diversity, and are committed to democracy, equity and justice. Such attributes are the product of clear thinking, philosophical understanding and problem solving through democratic processes which are available to teachers and students in Philosophy lessons.

The vision offered by Hargreaves (2003), is addressed by the Melbourne Declaration (2008), and supported in classrooms by the implementation of Philosophy, which aims to develop critical, creative and caring thinking skills of students through communal dialogue on philosophical concepts or 'big ideas' (Burgh, Field & Freakley 2006; Cam, 1995; Golding, 2005; Lipman, Sharp, & Oscanyan, 1980; Splitter & Sharp. 1995). These big ideas are thought of broadly as fitting within and across the philosophical sub-disciplines of metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, logic or aesthetics. The focus when teaching Philosophy is generally on good thinking and its improvement and on developing the social and intellectual dispositions and capacities of *students*. In doing this the teacher's own social and intellectual dispositions and capacities may develop and improve. This leads to classrooms where intellectual inquiry is foregrounded and community cohesion is customary. Philosophy disrupts what Freire (1970) calls 'banking education' as it challenges dominant paradigms of knowledge construction (see Dewey, 1938; Dewey, 1966; Vygotsky; 1978). Social constructivism and democratic education are at the core of the educational aims and practices of Philosophy, with an emphasis on thinking as a process of inquiry in which students develop habits of self-correction for reconstructing knowledge, values and norms when faced with novel problems and solutions, including those in the classroom (Burgh, 2008). In this sense, the community of philosophical inquiry is underpinned by an epistemology of reflective equilibrium, understood as fallabalistic, in that the aim is not the search for absolute foundational knowledge but "a constant remaking, improving, revising of all its failing parts in order to maintain the equilibrium" (Lipman 2003, p.197) and is congruent with a vision of teachers and students engaged in lifelong, reflective, transformative education (Butler, 1996; MCEETYA, 2008; O'Sullivan, 1999). Participation in communities of philosophical inquiry, consists of student generated questioning and thinking, and forms the foundation of *students* active participation in the solving of

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real world problems. As such communities of philosophical inquiry operate at the margins (or on the boundaries) as a critical, even radical, pedagogy (McLaren, 1995), centering on student questions and encouraging thoughtful and active participation in society.

Philosophy finds itself thus positioned, as a result of its basic method, with students as questioners and teachers as facilitators. During Philosophy lessons students critically examine and creatively develop their ideas and thoughts and ideas. Where a 'banking model' operates such opportunities are often missing (Lingard, et al., 2001; Newmann & Associates, 1996). In the 'banking model' schooling is done through a process of either transmitting information directly or through an initiation, response, evaluation (IRE) routine (Cazden, 1988) of playing, 'Guess what is in the teacher's mind?'

In contrast to the banking model and the IRE mode of delivery Philosophy lessons embody a student-centred approach where students experience a stimulus (usually a story imbued with philosophical themes), ask questions about the big ideas which the stimulus introduces, engage in philosophical dialogue about possible answers to *their* questions (Scholl, 2005) and reflect on their ideas and processes. A typical classroom engaging in a community of philosophical inquiry can be described as following five stages: (1) the offering of the text, (2) the construction of the agenda based on the student's questions, (3) solidifying of the community, (4) using exercises and discussion plans, and (5) encouraging further responses (Burgh, 2008; Burgh, Field & Freakley, 2006; Burgh & Yorshansky, 2008; Cam, 2006; Lipman, 2003; Sprod, 2001). A community of philosophical inquiry is usually conducted in a circle formation with the teacher facilitating the student dialogue (whole class or small groups), and the development of appropriate thinking skills through democratic, communal processes. The teacher's role as facilitator is pivotal to the progress of the students' philosophical inquiry and immerses the teacher in dialogue, which can be both professionally and personally transforming.

Professional development which advocates transformational learning must balance challenge and support. To achieve pedagogical transformation, Little (1993) perceives that:

> Professional development [for teachers] must be constructed in ways that deepen the discussion, open up the debates, and enrich the array of possibilities for action. Ground for optimism resides in those innovations on the margin that embody principles consonant with the complexity of the reform task and with the capacities and commitments of a strong teacher work force (p.151).

Building on these ideals for schooling, and teacher education, the ideas and findings within this introduction lead to the hypothesis that teaching Philosophy will have a positive effect, in terms of teaching practice, teacher thinking and student engagement. This paper seeks to explain the methods and initial outcomes of a study which has sought to explore the effect of teaching Philosophy on pedagogy, with the understanding that pedagogy embodies the self, identity and teaching practices of any particular teacher. Pedagogy in this sense takes Parker Palmer's view that, *"Good teaching cannot be reduced to technique: good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher … Good teachers share one trait: a strong sense of personal identity infuses their work*" (1998, p. 10). It is with this view of pedagogy that the following questions are posed for analysis:

1. Does the teaching of Philosophy change teachers' perceptions of their pedagogy?
2. If so, what effect does teaching Philosophy have on teacher thinking? and
3. What effect does teaching Philosophy have on student engagement?

Prior research addressing the issue of the impact of Philosophy on pedagogy (Daniel, 1988; Roche, 2000; Scholl, Nichols and Burgh, 2008; Yeazell, 1981) has been with small numbers of teachers. The

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results are encouraging. Further research on a broader scale is needed to evaluate the practicalities and outcomes for teachers who are implementing Philosophy as a whole school approach.

Within this paper a brief overview of the practice of Philosophy has been given, situating the community of philosophical inquiry as a pedagogy which operates on the borders of current teaching practice. The research hypothesis and questions have been foregrounded and are now followed by an explanation of the methodology and the initial findings from the data. The results focused on in this paper report on the effect which teaching Philosophy has had on perceptions of teaching practice, teacher thinking and student engagement.

Method

Participants

Principals from five Queensland primary schools within one education district committed to Philosophy training for all teaching staff. Once permission was received all teachers, within those five schools, were invited to participate in the study. The main condition of participation was no prior experience with teaching Philosophy. Teachers across two of the schools formed the treatment group and teachers from the other three schools formed the comparison group. The schools in the treatment group were both larger schools with enrolments over 500 students, whereas the three schools in the comparison group were smaller schools with enrolments under 400 students.

A total of 59 teachers participated: 32 in the treatment group and 27 in the comparison group. Of these 46 were female (23 in the treatment group) and 13 were male (9 in the treatment group); 49 were classroom teachers and 10 were specialist music, library or special education teachers. Of the classroom teachers 27 taught Prep to Year 3, and 19 were Year 4-7 teachers. The participants identified themselves in age ranges between 20 to 24 years up to 55 to 59 years. They ranged in experience from first year teachers through to teachers with more than 20 years experience. The treatment and comparison groups were balanced with respect to teacher age and experience.

Study design

Teacher participants were involved in a prospective, longitudinal comparison of pedagogical transformation. A mixed methods approach, including evaluation questionnaires and semi-structured interviews was employed to gauge the effect of facilitating the community of philosophical inquiry, on perceptions of teaching practice, teacher thinking, and student engagement. Collection of data occurred at three time points; prior to the intervention, 3 months post intervention and again at a 7 month follow-up. This paper reports on the initial analysis of questionnaire data and findings from a representative sample of teacher interviews.

The participants were organized into two groups, the treatment group and the comparison group. The treatment group received training and mentoring in Philosophy. As part of the Philosophy training involves sharing with teachers a number of tools for conceptual exploration and reflection, the comparison group also received an intervention which consisted of training in the use of five of these thinking tools (i.e. Y charts, T Charts, Venn diagrams, target diagrams [Cam, 2006] and reflective practice matrixes). Alongside this they were given the idea to teach their students the word '*because*' for justifying ideas. Once data collection at the first three time points was complete, the comparison group then received training in Philosophy.

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In both groups teachers were asked to complete a questionnaire at the three time points. The questionnaire was developed with the outcomes of prior research in mind (Daniel, 1988; Roche, 2000; Scholl, Nichols, Burgh, 2008; Yeazell, 1981) and was designed to explore, amongst other items, the teachers' perceptions of the impact of Philosophy or thinking tools on teaching practice, teacher thinking and student engagement. The questionnaire consisted of closed statements that employed a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree with the median score of three denoting an unsure response. The questionnaire was subjected to a pilot test with a focus group of teachers prior to the study. Feedback from the focus group was used to adjust the questionnaire in terms of clarity and content. This paper centres on three questionnaire items that link directly to the research questions forming the focus of this analysis. For the treatment group the items include: 'Philosophy improves teaching practice', 'teaching Philosophy improves teacher thinking' and 'my students look forward to Philosophy lessons'. For the comparison group the items include: 'thinking tools improve teaching practice', 'teaching thinking tools improves teacher thinking' and 'my students enjoy using thinking tools'.

A representative sample of participants volunteered to be interviewed pre and post intervention. The interview schedules were constructed using the same guiding research questions and subcategories as the questionnaires. The interviews were semi-structured (Neuman, 2004). The interview schedules were designed to engage participants in a dialogue which would allow them to reconstruct knowledge about themselves, their pedagogy and the implementation of Philosophy or thinking tools, to inform the central research questions. The interviews were designed to be active (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995), co-operative, constructive and reflective (Seidman, 2006).

Questionnaire analysis

In order to investigate whether there was a change in teacher perception regarding the effect of Philosophy on teaching practice, teacher thinking and student engagement from pre-intervention to post-intervention and at follow-up, a Friedman test was conducted. If a statistically significant difference was observed among the three time points, a Wilcoxon Signed Rank test (using a Bonferonni adjusted alpha value of .025 to control for Type 1 error) was carried out to make direct comparisons between any two time points.

Interview analysis

For this paper the interviews of two participant's were transcribed, one from the treatment group and one from the comparison group. The transcripts were coded using Nvivo software for content analysis (Patton, 1990) to match the research questions presented in this paper. Conclusions drawn respond to three themes regarding teaching practice, teacher thinking and student engagement.

Results

An explanation of the initial analysis from the two groups of teachers is explored here, including the Likert scale data from the questionnaire items and a representative sample of teacher interviews conducted at the third time point. The representative sample of teacher interviews includes Alice, a year 4-7 teacher from the treatment group, and Roger, a year 4-7 teacher from the comparison group. The results presented here focus on the following outcomes from the questionnaire and interviews:

- The effect of Philosophy on pedagogy,

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- The effect of Philosophy on teacher thinking,
- The effect of Philosophy on student engagement, and
- The difference between using Philosophy and thinking tools.

Whilst the evaluation questionnaire provides valuable information about what perceptions of Philosophy and thinking tools have changed across the three time points (pre-intervention, post-intervention and at follow-up), the supplementary teacher interviews allow us an insight into how and why these perceptions have changed.

As shown in Table 1 there was a statistically significant difference (as revealed by the outcomes of the Friedman test) in the perceptions of the effect of Philosophy on teaching practice, teacher thinking and student engagement scores across the three time points (pre-intervention, post-intervention and 7-month follow-up), [teaching practice: Chi Square or χ^2 (2, n=18) = 9.1, p<.02, teacher thinking: χ^2 (2, n=18) = 7.8, p<.02 and student engagement: χ^2 (2, n=17) = 16.05, p<.0005 respectively]. Similar comparisons were made within the comparison group to explore the perceptions of thinking tools on teaching practice, teacher thinking and student engagement. There were no changes across the three time points.

Table 1
Outcomes of Friedman test on perceptions of the impact of Philosophy on teaching practice, teacher thinking and student engagement.

Item	**N**	***Chi Square***	**df**	***P***
Teaching Practice	18	9.1	2	<.02
Teacher Thinking	18	7.8	2	<.005
Student Engagement	17	16.1	2	<.0005

Examination of the median values showed an increase in the effect of Philosophy on teaching practice, teacher thinking and student engagement scores from pre-intervention (Md=3.5, 3, 3 respectively) to post-intervention (Md=4) and a sustained increase at follow-up (Md=4). This indicates that while teachers were initially unsure (a score of 3) as to whether Philosophy impacts teaching practice, teacher thinking and student engagement, following Philosophy training and mentoring, teachers moved to perceive that Philosophy did indeed affect these attributes. In contrast, the median values of the comparison group across the three time points remained the same (Md=4) indicating that teachers in this group perceived that thinking tools impacted their practice thinking and student engagement before and after the intervention.

Table 2 shows the outcomes of a Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test which revealed a statistically significant increase in perceptions of the impact of Philosophy on teaching practice, teacher thinking and student engagement following participation in the Philosophy training program, [teaching practice: z=-2.65, p<.01, (r=.1), teacher thinking: Z=-2.82, p<.005, (r=.1), student engagement: z=-3.02, p<.003, (r=.1). The median scores on the effect of Philosophy on teaching practice, teacher thinking and student engagement scale increased from pre-program (Md=3) to post-program (Md=4). While the questionnaire scale was not sensitive enough to show a large effect size on perceptions of Philosophy on teaching practice, teacher thinking and student engagement, teacher interviews reveal a noticeable shift in perception.

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Table 2
Pre- and Post-Intervention Comparisons

Item	**Z**	***N-ties***	***P***
Teaching Practice	-2.65	8	<.01
Teacher Thinking	-2.82	12	<.005
Student Engagement	-3.02	5	<.005

The outcomes of the questionnaire are complemented and further enlightened by the teacher interviews. The two teachers reported here are representative of the teachers interviewed from the treatment and comparison groups respectively. They were both enthusiastic teachers who were keen to learn and improve their pedagogy. Not surprisingly then they both reported that they felt they had learnt things from the intervention to which they had been exposed. Alice spoke enthusiastically about her progress with Philosophy and the changes she felt were a result of teaching Philosophy:

> *"I've actually learnt a lot in the last year about just pedagogy and how you know Philosophy has influenced the way I think about things and the way I question the way I ... would ..... structure a lesson and that sort of thing."* (Alice)

> *"I feel like it's enlightened me in terms of how, as a tool or instrument, to get the children to think more deeply about ... everything, not just you know a discussion about a story, but ... how I can get them to be inquiring in science or, you know just all through the KLAs, not just the Philosophy lessons that we do, do."* (Alice)

Roger responded that learning about and using thinking tools had been valuable for him though he was looking for a mechanism which would allow him to embed the thinking tools in his teaching practice:

> *"I think I use them a little bit isolated at times, rather than having that whole approach embedded within the classroom ... you know, so I probably used them in isolation but I think it does affect you cause you, just sort of gets you thinking about how to do things a different way and to promote thinking for the kids, rather than you just dictating what they need to know."* (Roger)

Alice was able to talk about the impact of Philosophy on her own thinking, including their awareness of her own thinking.

> *"So* [Philosophy has] *actually been really good and it's made me think about.... you know cleansing, you know just renewal. It's a renewal process for myself."* (Alice).

> [Philosophy has] "*made me question and think about, the way that I ... look at issues within the classroom and how valuable the contributions that the children have, not that I didn't think that they were valuable, but .... giving them an opportunity to really talk about the big issues in life so, and it's made me really think about the questioning techniques that I use."* (Alice)

Whilst the teaching of Philosophy has impacted Alice's pedagogical practices and thinking (especially questioning) and fueled a process of self-renewal, Roger reports that the impact of teaching thinking tools has been confined to his school life.

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> *"Yeh, I don't know that it carries really into my personal life, but I find that when I'm planning I'm thinking about introducing thinking skills or trying to look at doing things a little bit differently … I think I still do it in an isolated fashion."* (Roger)

The relevant impact of teaching Philosophy or thinking tools on pedagogy and self of the teacher is mirrored by the impact of Philosophy on student engagement. Alice notes that:

> *"At the moment we're learning together but I don't think that's a bad thing for ... children to see that we're learning together."* (Alice)

Alice goes on to say:

> *"The important thing that I'm seeing the benefits of is just getting them to think more deeply and less superficially. I'm astounded by some of the things that they're coming out with and..... I think it gives them an instrument to be able to do that, and not just randomly answer knowledge-based questions or something, that there's an issue that they can really think about."* (Alice)

Alice demonstrates an awareness that the pedagogy required to facilitate a community of philosophical inquiry differs from a transmission style pedagogy (Freire, 1970) which would require students to 'randomly answer knowledge-based questions'. Classrooms where students are able to question and 'think more deeply and less superficially' leads to situations where the teacher can be 'astounded' by their students' responses. Such surprises stimulate teacher thinking, too (Scholl, Nichols, Burgh, 2008). Roger however, expresses doubt that teaching using thinking tools is having a similar impact on student thinking and engagement (or teacher thinking).

> *"I think it's when you can do it naturally that you're really using* [the thinking tools] *... and as I say I do them a bit in isolation you know, let's do a Y chart. It's not just embedded in what I do. It's something that I think, 'Oh well these Thinking Tools should be good, teach the kids to think things differently or whatever' …… you probably feel like you're dictating a bit of what's being taught, whereas the kids aren't getting those opportunities .... to negotiate or bring up their own sort of questions."* (Roger)

This comment explains the results of the questionnaire analysis regarding the unchanging teacher perceptions (in the comparison group), of the effect of using thinking tools on pedagogy. Roger has elaborated that students need opportunities to bring up their own questions. Student questions are one of the key mechanisms which disrupt transmission pedagogies.

At the close of the data collection period the comparison groups began their Philosophy training so Roger had been exposed to one Philosophy lesson with the children in his class and he had participated in one community of philosophical inquiry with the teachers in his school. When asked what the difference between teaching Philosophy and thinking tools might be, Roger responded in the following way:

> *"OK I think with what you did yesterday* [Philosophy]*, the kids generated, well we generated the questions.... they had to justify what they were. like with the art work we had to justify why we made the, so justify is a really big word, so we try to use that in you know when we are doing the writing task, justify your reasons or, it's that 'because' word that you keep talking about.... whereas my teaching of thinking tools this year has been more generated by me and*

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> *helping them come up with ideas rather than, I felt yesterday the Philosophy* [lesson] *was more student directed rather than teacher directed."* (Roger)

Roger perceives Philosophy to be a more student generated and directed pedagogy that promotes an opportunity to justify and question (both thinking skills). Teachers and students could also use these thinking skills with the thinking tools, except that student questions are not in the pedagogical repertoire and justification of knowledge comes from the teacher as part of the initiate-respond-evaluate process, if at all, in a more teacher '*dictated'* or directed approach. This is not to say that direct teaching of thinking skills is obsolete. A constant balancing act is required. Alice confirms that a more structured approach to the teaching of thinking skills, which could then be employed within the community of philosophical inquiry, would be advantageous to progress for teachers and students.

> *"It's random, yeh. I would build the* [thinking] *skills and do it differently from the beginning of the year.*" (Alice)

Ideally, what is needed is an approach which embeds the use of thinking tools and thinking skills within the regular, daily practices within the classroom. This can happen where the skills required for engagement in Philosophical dialogue are foregrounded within a curriculum which includes the community of philosophical inquiry. The opposite however, teaching with thinking tools in isolation hoping they lead to dialogue, does not seem to have the desired effect. Such classrooms remain teacher directed places. Both Roger and Alice realise that:

> *"As a facilitator you're a facilitator to learning and so it's giving the kids a little bit more ownership of where the direction of the lessons are going to be, and that's the future."* (Alice)

Alice's recommendation to teachers starting out with Philosophy was:

> *"It's like anything new ..... you know you're not going to get it first up, you've got to keep persisting to see, cause there is a benefit there."* (Alice)

If teachers are able to persist and have access to support for their learning they can begin to develop a thoughtful pedagogy that is balanced, focused on teaching and learning interactions, and future oriented.

Discussion

Taken together, these data confirm that the implementation of Philosophy results in improvement in student thinking which necessitates and reflects an improvement in teacher thinking. In particular, there is an improved metacognitive awareness of teachers and deeper engagement of students in learning. Interview data reveals that teachers are complimentary in their appraisals of Philosophy and intend to persist in including communities of philosophical inquiry in their pedagogical repertoire.

This study further demonstrates that the implementation of Philosophy supports the development of strong, thinking, active and reflective teaching workforce. Philosophical inquiry into student questions has the capacity to push boundaries in thinking teaching and learning, and as such is seen as a border pedagogy, which encourages dialogic interactions between teachers and students and students with each other. Facilitation skills for communities of philosophical inquiry are a healthy addition to teacher's pedagogical repertoires and classroom experiences. Participation in Philosophy lessons allows teachers and students access to practices of deeper thinking, questioning, metacognition and reflection within democratic, supportive classroom environments.

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The process of a Philosophy lesson allows the children to inquire into the ideas which they submit as being central and contestable in their own lives (Splitter & Sharp, 1995). The teacher facilitates the progress of the student's thinking; he or she is interested in teaching students *how* to think *not what* to think. Together the community seeks a shared understanding of the big ideas which are being explored. Such practices, when juxtaposed with traditional, conservative pedagogical practices are considered critical, radical and disruptive of the status quo. Traditional practices are, understandably, safe places for teachers who are uncertain themselves of boundaries, ideas and identities on the borders of their own experience. The following quote from a teacher within this study captures the experience teachers have when they begin teaching Philosophy. They are unsure about which questions to ask and when to intervene.

> *"I was challenged ... What Philosophy? A couple of the first times that I did [a Philosophy lesson], I'm going - where do I go from, from now? And like* [name of other teacher] *and I, actually when we were doing the first ones, we'd go – "How did you go? What did you do?" I would say like the first couple* [of Philosophy lessons] *the question quality was really pathetic, so I would say, 'We can only go up'".* (Alice)

These destabilising, confusing and challenging experiences can instigate transformative adult learning (Butler, 1996) for the teacher, if these teachers are personally able to maintain the belief, optimism and perseverance captured in the comment, *"We can only go up"*. This connection between challenge, support and courage (Butler, 1996) underpins the hypothesis of this research: Teachers who regularly engage in Philosophical inquiry with students over a sustained period of time, with professional support for their own learning, can experience a pedagogical transformation.

Such transformation, occurring at the margins of traditional schooling structures, requires courage and support on many levels, from within and external to the classroom and school (Butler, 1996; Newmann & Associates, 1996). Given this courage and support the ultimate outcome for a teacher facilitating communities of philosophical inquiry is to develop a heightened awareness of themselves as thinkers and learners, along with a fresh and open-minded stance towards students and learning so they can begin to enjoy and employ the thoughts and ideas their students bring to the classroom. It is through philosophising with children in communal dialogue that teachers are engaged in reflection on action, beliefs and values. The subsequent construction and generation of pedagogical knowledge leads to a change in their pedagogy – a reconstruction for the better. This is a model of professional development which is supported from the students within the classroom (Scholl, Nichols and Burgh, 2008) and can be enabling to professional dialogue within and across schools. It is a time and resource efficient method of professional development and learning, which is "*constructed in ways that deepen the discussion, open up the debates, and enrich the array of possibilities for action*" (Little, 1993, p.151).

In this study such learning and transformation has occurred where teachers participated in initial Philosophy training and received ongoing mentoring and support in conjunction with three data collection episodes. This pedagogical change is supportive of student learning and addresses the goals outlined by the Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA, 2008) that all young Australians become "successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens" (p.7). Philosophical dialogue within democratic communities of inquiry acts as a catalyst for both teachers and students to become engaged lifelong learners, who are able to exercise clear thinking, develop philosophical understandings and problem solve with others through democratic processes.

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