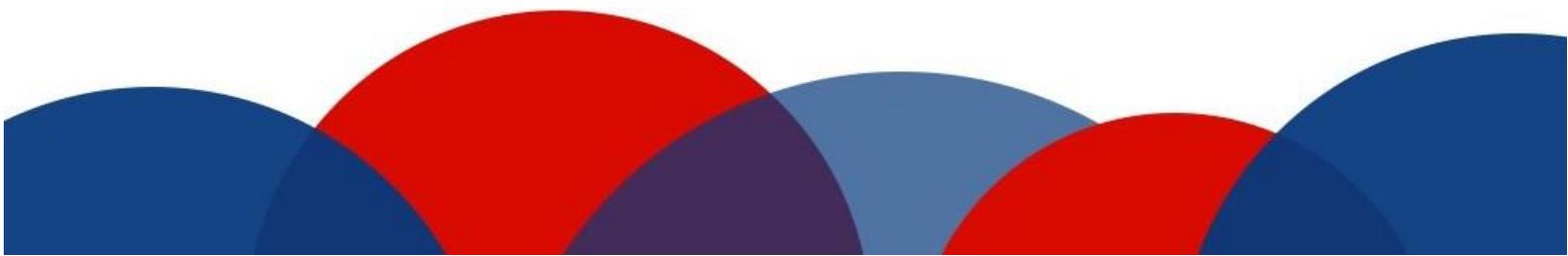


How can the Philosopher's Backpack enrich critical global thinking?

Jane Yates

2018

**Global Learning Programme
Innovation Fund Research Series
Paper 6**



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Published by:
Global Learning Programme (GLP) – England
in collaboration with the Development Education Research Centre,
UCL Institute of Education, London, WC1H 0PD.

GLP website: www.glp-e.org.uk
DERC website: www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe-derc

For further information about the Innovation Fund, contact Fran Hunt at f.hunt@ucl.ac.uk
ISBN: 978-1-9996852-0-1

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¹ Jane can be contacted via her website at: www.janeyates.net

Abstract

'I am not Athenian or Greek, I am a citizen of the world.'

(Socrates 469–399 BC)

This study explores how the use of a metaphor, called the Philosopher's Backpack, can be used as a mnemonic aid to enrich critical global thinking. It suggests that in order to develop critical global thinking skills, practitioners need to focus on the metacognitive questioning that leads to the product of critical thinking. The use of 'kit' within the backpack provides highly memorable metaphors for metacognitive questioning: glasses for alternative perspectives; compass for directionality; rope for polarity; magnifying glasses for deepness; torch for luminosity; and global ball for universality. These are shown to support the practitioners and pupils to remember and internalise the metacognitive questioning that can enrich critical global thinking.

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1 Introduction

In this research I explore the development of a resource for teaching and learning called the Philosopher's Backpack. This is a simple toolkit that has enabled me to reflect on my facilitation and training of Philosophy for Children (P4C) within the context of the government-funded Global Learning Programme (GLP). P4C and global learning are well-established approaches to teaching and learning, with some similarity in their underlying values, and both have aims to foster critical thinking through a dialogical approach. Their combination will be referred to as *critical global thinking*.

Specifically I respond to the following research questions:

- How can the Philosopher's Backpack enrich critical global thinking with children?
- How can the Philosopher's Backpack help support practitioners to enrich critical global thinking?

Research into P4C and global learning is important because it has been the most popular Continuing Professional Development (CPD) chosen by teachers during the government-funded GLP, with over 2,500 teachers attending some sort of P4C training across England during the period 2013–18. My research has been funded by the GLP's Innovation Fund².

I was interested in carrying out research that could support practitioners who were new to P4C to navigate those initial stages of facilitating dialogue that fosters critical global thinking. Prior to carrying out this research, it had come to my attention through course evaluation that participants on my P4C training courses would often highlight that the most challenging aspect of P4C was their confidence when facilitating the children's dialogue to ensure that philosophical thinking was actually taking place. Participants in the early stages of practice also commented to me that they were not quick enough in their own thinking, and often opportunities to intervene would pass them by. There was also a sense of fear about intervening 'wrongly' in case they might guide dialogue inappropriately, or worse not say anything at all. Some participants said they had resorted to having a list of facilitation questions at hand during an enquiry but were dissatisfied as this created a formulaic approach to facilitation. Interestingly, the quality of facilitation is often cause for debate within circles of more experienced P4C practitioners, trainers or the wider international P4C community. This research was driven by a genuine desire to help practitioners with facilitation of dialogue in this initial stage of early practice.

I start with outlining the context for my research, then a review of literature that includes an introduction to P4C, before considering the scope for using P4C as a methodology for global learning. I will then give more background about the Philosopher's Backpack, introducing the notion of its use as a metaphor for metacognition. Then, I will outline the research methodology, both in my own class and working with teachers on CPD sessions. Finally I will present my results and conclusion.

2 Context

Between 2013 and 2015, the primary school I worked in became involved in the first phase of the Global Learning Programme (GLP)³ as an Expert Centre⁴. It is a school I have been involved with for over 15 years, initially in my role as a Project Worker for Cumbria Development Education

² <http://glp.globaldimension.org.uk/research/innovation-fund>

³ See: www.glp-e.org.uk

⁴ A GLP Expert Centre is a school which has expertise and experience in global learning and can support a network of schools in their global learning.

Centre (CDEC)⁵, then latterly employed as a senior teacher with responsibility for English, RE & Philosophy for Children (P4C). While I was working at CDEC, not only did this school become involved in many global learning projects, but I also visited the school on a weekly basis as part of the requirement to have practical experience of P4C, as part of my pathway to becoming a SAPERE⁶ registered P4C trainer. Therefore, the school has a long history of P4C and global learning, and is now in the position of having cohort after cohort of 11 year olds leaving for secondary school with seven years of P4C under their belts. In 2015, we become the first school in the North West to achieve the SAPERE P4C Gold Award and we are also an Advocate School⁷ for the GLP.

Alongside my part time role in school as a teacher, I am in the fortunate position of being able to continue to provide CPD training for teachers across England. I mainly provide two-day SAPERE Level 1 P4C training courses for Development Education Centres in Cheshire, Cumbria and Lancashire. I have also developed a four-hour afternoon introduction to P4C and global learning for GLP Expert Centres in Worcestershire, with the option of extending to a full Level 1 at a later date.

The combination of working as a teacher in school and as a trainer has enabled me to embark on a multi-layered approach to my action research. I was able to bring my on-going experience of using the backpack within my own training, not as a 'finished product' but something I could engage in reflective discussions with the participants. It also meant that I could trial any suggestions made by participants within my own classroom setting.

3 Review of literature

3.1 What is Philosophy for Children?

'If you say someone's wrong, then you are closing the question. But, if you disagree with someone, then you are opening up the questions for more answers.' www.lewisquotes.co.uk

Philosophy for Children (P4C) is an approach to learning and teaching that was founded by Professor Matthew Lipman⁸ in the 1960s and is practised internationally in over 80 different countries. In 1992, SAPERE, a national charity, was founded to embrace and develop the P4C practice of Matthew Lipman. Although there are a number of worthwhile 'brands' of P4C within the UK, it is the Lipman tradition of P4C that is mostly associated with my own practice. Typically, teachers who are new to P4C are introduced to the methodology of P4C through a ten-step structure (see Appendix 1), which starts with a thought-provoking or puzzling stimulus that leads to the pupils to generating a 'philosophical' question. One of these questions is voted on for further exploration through a process of collaborative and caring enquiry. A misconception in P4C is that pupils have a sense there are no 'right or wrong answers' to their question which is mis-leading to those teachers who are new to P4C. Because of an ethos of mutual respect, listening and valuing of individual ideas and opinions, pupils often perceive that 'anything' they say can be true. The emphasis should actually be on the community critically and creatively examining (rather than sharing) their ideas and opinions, with a helpful focus on agreement and disagreement. The important role of the facilitator is to support and guide discussion on key issues and concepts, not to manipulate or steer it (Murriss and Hayes 2012). Following the enquiry, the facilitator helps the pupils to reflect on the quality of their thinking and interactions with each other and identify areas for improvement. The facilitator may also plan more focused activities to explore specific concepts

⁵ <https://www.cdec.org.uk/>

⁶ SAPERE is a charity which trains teachers in P4C: <https://www.sapere.org.uk/>

⁷ Lead GLP schools that have already been Expert Centres.

⁸ <https://www.sapere.org.uk/Default.aspx?tabid=162>

identified during previous enquiries. The intention is that P4C enquiries are a regular addition to classroom practice so that progress in concept exploration and skill development in being able to think and reason is made. In essence, P4C is about getting children to learn to think for themselves through thinking with others.

There has been well-documented research on the impact of P4C on children's cognitive, social and emotional development (Trickey & Topping, 2004) and, more recently, the focus of research with SAPERE has been on P4C showing an impact on raising academic standards, particularly with disadvantaged children (Gorard et al, 2015). It can also be noted that not all research of P4C necessarily investigates the aspects of its aims and intentions, but arguably, in the current educational climate of attainment and achievement, these areas of research are highly relevant to schools.

3.2 Why use P4C with global learning?

Philosophy for Children has an association with global learning in England spanning over nearly two decades. Historically, it was first brought to the attention of the Development Education world⁹ in 2001 through an article (Rowley and Yates, 2001) in the Development Education Journal, written jointly by myself and Chris Rowley, a founder of SAPERE and lecturer based in Cumbria. The first-known P4C and global learning workshop was presented in 1994 at the Making One World in Cumbria Conference, which followed the 1992 Rio Earth Summit¹⁰. Having attracted attention from Oxfam Education, a national conference on Philosophy for Global Citizenship was funded by Oxfam and held in 2002 in Cumbria. This led to further development of P4C and Global Citizenship at Development Education centres across England, in conjunction with SAPERE. To date, the use of Philosophy for Children as a methodology within the global learning community in the UK is hugely popular.

To quote from the first article, it was felt there was:

Great potential in the use of the rigorous methods of... (P4C) to achieve some of the aims of... (Development Education), particularly those related to global citizenship (Rowley & Yates 2001: 16).

I think practice of P4C within a global learning context is three-fold. Firstly, there is the potential to use global learning materials as a stimulus for P4C; secondly, it is the participatory methodology of the process of carrying out P4C that aligns with that of development education; and finally, with regular practice of P4C there is a transformational dimension that can lead to a change in thinking and actions. However, the use of P4C within global learning has not been without some critique. It could be argued that because of the focus on human rights and social justice in global learning, there is sometimes a tendency to promote a more moralistic outlook either by choice of stimulus material (often portraying an intended message) or how the facilitator might lead the enquiry to a desired outcome towards an intended message. I would like to suggest this is arguably a superficial interpretation of the current aims of global learning, which might not be fully understood by the P4C community, but more in line with outdated practice in development education. Current theoretical methodology of global learning has a clear emphasis on critical thinking, where global concepts (see Table 1) are contested, with suggestion and exploration of multiple perspectives in order to comprehend the complexity of the world we live in. In their think piece, 'Critical Thinking

⁹ For clarity, it must be noted that the mainstream terminology for the adjectival education of Development Education has evolved over the last 30 years from Development Education to global citizenship (including Education for Sustainable Development) to the current usage as global learning. Although each of these terms are arguably distinctive, this reflects the ever-changing educational, political and ideological re-definition and re-invention of language.

¹⁰ <http://www.un.org/geninfo/bp/enviro.html>

in the Context of Global learning', Shah and Brown (2010) usefully describe the six elements of critical global thinking as being:

- Making connections within and between systems
- Awareness of how things are contested
- Responding to complexity and change
- Understanding the significance of power relationships
- Self-reflection
- Values literacy

That said, I do support the view that there is a more general issue for the practice of P4C as suggested by Robinson (2016) concerning the tensions in terms of ethical enquiry where the facilitator might feel a 'pull' towards leading an enquiry towards their own personal viewpoint. Conversely, there could equally be criticism of P4C as a methodology within the context of global learning where, arguably, there is the possibility for child-generated enquiry to be steered towards general concepts rather than specific global concepts. Indeed, similar approaches such as Open Spaces for Dialogue & Enquiry (OSDE)¹¹, which also use dialogical methodology, arguably offer more of a specific focus and direction towards children enquiring into concepts such as human rights and social justice.

As a long-serving global learning and P4C practitioner, I would also like to propose the wider benefits to the conjuncture of P4C and global learning in that P4C has much to bring to global learning. The suggestion made in my first article still stands: P4C can bring a rigour in facilitation to global learning, but more importantly it provides a way to contest the very values that it is trying to promote. For example, an aim of the GLP has been to 'move from a charity mentality to a social justice mentality'. There are many stimulus materials that would provoke pupils to generate and select a philosophical question such as 'Should we always give to others who are in need?' That could lead them to explore and problematise the concept of charity. At the end of a philosophical enquiry, there will be pupils who may agree and disagree with this question and it is likely that they will have explored a variety of examples and counter-examples to support their own judgements and conclusions. It would be easy to think the global learning aim would necessitate a desired outcome to this question as there is arguably an assumption in this aim that social justice is better than charity. However, a desired outcome through a P4C approach would actually be a better *understanding* of the concept of charity, which is important for future learning about some aspects of social justice.

I would also like to suggest that global learning has much to bring to P4C. There might sometimes be a misconception that the concept of 'global' is understood as something 'out there' rather than an interpretation of the 'global' being what we are all part of. Therefore an important part of critical global thinking is for young people and practitioners to situate themselves in the global (Shah 2010).

As part of the GLP's over-arching aims, there is a focus on familiarising pupils with the concepts of interdependence, development, globalisation and sustainability. These concepts are the corner-stones of a series of eight generic CPD sessions provided by each Expert Centre school, for their local partner schools. As the lead of an Expert Centre myself, I used P4C methodology during these sessions with teachers to examine these four concepts. Table 1 serves to make links between these and other relevant global learning concepts with potential P4C concepts from traditional branches of philosophy. I also created this table with the specific intention of countering a misconception that P4C is content free. I would argue that it would be difficult to facilitate a

¹¹ <http://www.osdemethodology.org.uk/>

dialogue with pupils that was content free. There are concepts in P4C that continually surface and re-surface that have great relevance and provide the content or context for global learning.

Table 1: A ‘loose’ framework of convergence between the Global Learning Programme concepts and philosophical branches and concepts

Global Learning Programme Concepts	Branches of Philosophy	Philosophical Concepts
Interdependence	Logic	Reasons, cause/effect, if/then relationships
Diversity	Metaphysics	Real, unreal, identity, time
Sustainable development	Epistemology	Knowledge, opinion, truth
Conflict resolution, global citizenship	Ethics	Right, wrong, good, bad, duty, compassion
Human rights, social justice	Political	Fairness, justice, power
Values and perceptions	Aesthetics	Beauty, art, value

(Source: Yates, 2016).

I also recognise the link between both Philosophy for Children and the social action emphasis of global learning. Both approaches are methodological with a content and process, and both have a specific aim to lead to more socially and ethically minded behaviour change. However, it is worth being mindful of the assumption that global learning can sometimes be considered an opportunity to promote a set of agendas about individual change and moral refrains (‘be responsible; give to charity; feel bad when you fly’), which is ‘an important trap to avoid’ (Shah 2010). To help students understand the contested nature of concepts in global learning, Brown (2010) suggests that it is important that educators need to be putting forward a variety of perspectives on issues they are dealing with – including intelligent ‘right-wing’ theory as well as views from the left.

The fact that P4C is practised in over 80 countries around the world is not to be underestimated as one of the many factors that drew the global learning world to P4C. Indeed, there is an accepted practice within the global learning community of sharing experience with international partners through school linking and projects funded or promoted by the Department for International Development (DfID), British Council, Comenius, Commonwealth and the EU. The universality of the P4C methodology, in that it is compatible with all educational and social backgrounds of young people, is very much in line with the ethos of global learning.

3.3 The Philosopher’s Backpack: metaphor for metacognition

Photo 1: Image of a ‘philosopher’s backpack’



In *Metaphors We Live*, Lakoff & Johnson (2003) explore the role of metaphors in human cognition. They suggest that metaphors not only make our thoughts more vivid and interesting but that they actually structure our perceptions and understanding. Cortazzi & Jin (1999) suggest that the use

of metaphors in educational contexts can help pupils and teachers with complexity in conceptual explanation and understanding. The use of metaphors is also well documented in language and linguistic theory. Some education metaphors, such as a 'tool', have become so subsumed into educational language, that you almost forget they are a metaphor at all. The use of tools as a metaphor is not revolutionary to P4C or global learning practitioners. In P4C, there is reference to examples of tools such as facilitator questions (Splitter & Sharp, 1995), or quadrants, Venn Diagrams and other visual structures to organise thinking (Cam, 2006 & 2012). As well as helping to organise and categorise thoughts, metaphors can sometimes provoke cognitive rupture (Ardanaz Ibáñez, 2016). Ardanaz Ibáñez (2016) introduces a working model of 'global learning optics' and particularly references the use of lenses as a way of seeing in 'more depth' or from 'another perspective' as an important part of moving away from more didactic and 'awareness-raising parachuting' methods of global learning. This type of visual metaphor is also used in the work of Andreotti and de Souza (2008), an online study programme focusing on engagements with indigenous perceptions of global issues.

The wider use of metaphors to aid critical thinking has also been well documented. In particular, I've drawn on research by Bowler & Mattern (2012) who suggest that the use of visual metaphors of the mind (memory aids) can serve to scaffold metacognition, and also Magno (2010) who suggests that critical thinking is a product of metacognition (Magno 2010), thus emphasising the important role of metacognition in critical thinking theory.

The Philosopher's Backpack originally started as a way for me to contain and carry various objects that I used for games and community building activities during P4C sessions. For many years, I simply used one of my children's small old backpacks to keep everything in. Interestingly, it wasn't until I discovered a backpack online with a world map printed on it that I even thought about its potential as a visual metaphor or how it could be used to enrich critical global thinking. I then wondered if the contents or 'pieces of kit' in the backpack could also serve as metaphors for enriching critical global thinking through questioning, especially during the dialogical interactions of an enquiry. Drawing on my experience of P4C, I began to think about relevant objects, such as a compass, rope, magnifying glass, sunglasses, global ball and a torch, that might promote deeper thinking in P4C.

Because of the world map on the Philosopher's Backpack, I then began to start thinking more about the conjuncture between P4C and global learning, particularly in the context of the Global Learning Programme. I quickly saw that the Philosopher's Backpack was a simple way of explaining that P4C can be done anywhere in the world, inside or outside the classroom, with no limitation owing to social or academic background of pupils. It also made me reflect on the metaphor of a 'backpacker' or traveller who would be carrying the backpack – like a facilitator who is encouraging young people to explore and examine the world, just as the ancient philosopher Socrates might have done in Ancient Greece. Acquiring the objects for the backpack had been a simple task for me, something that any teacher could potentially do. I liked that about it. I soon found that it wasn't only my interest in the new backpack that had been sparked, but it had also attracted the attention of my pupils and the teachers I was training.

3.3.1 Methodology

I had a 'hunch' that the use of the Philosopher's Backpack within my P4C sessions could enrich critical global thinking, both in terms of my own classroom practice, but also as a tool for helping teachers on my training course to help support the initial introduction to Socratic questioning skills. Therefore, my main two questions during the action research were:

- How can the Philosopher's Backpack enrich critical global thinking with children?
- How can the Philosopher's Backpack help support practitioners to enrich critical global thinking?

My chosen method of research for this project was action research. I felt that action research would allow me a multi-dimensional and cyclical approach for reflecting on the use of the backpack between my own classroom setting and on my training, with separate and interdependent reflection arising from both of these actions. I saw my own role very much as ‘the teacher as researcher’ rather than a collaborative project with pupils and teachers. This meant I could drive my own research, having more freedom and autonomy.

The research had a two-stage approach, initially within my school and then with educators on some of my P4C and global learning courses.

I work in a small, three-class, primary school in Cumbria, with pupils of mainly white British origin. Being the P4C lead in my primary school enabled me to access all our 70 pupils from Reception to Year 6 on a weekly basis. Initially, I tested the backpack within my classroom setting over a period of 6 months within three class groups: Class 1 (Reception & Year 1 – aged 4–7 years); Class 2 (Year 2, 3 & 4 – aged 7–9 years); Class 3 (Year 5 & 6 – aged 9–11 years). Although the pupils were familiar with me using the backpack as part of P4C sessions, for ethical consideration, I told them I had gained funding to carry out research to develop it further. They were very excited to think they were part of a ‘research project’. Teaching staff at my school were aware that I was carrying out the project, as were parents and governors who read about the successful research grant through the school newsletter. I collected verbal feedback from the pupils in the form of a written journal, as well as recording my own personal evaluative reflections. This informed how I would use the backpack in subsequent sessions and informed how I would introduce the Philosopher’s Backpack as part of my P4C training. For ethical consideration, all pupils were told about the project. Because the research was carried out during lessons, it was not voluntary, but they could opt out by not responding to verbal questions. Parents were aware of the research capacity via newsletter. I also filmed some of the later responses about the Philosopher’s Backpack.

After six months of trial and development with pupils, I was ready, albeit tentatively, to test out the backpack on some of my P4C and global learning training courses. I did this during the course of 2015–16 over a period of 12 Level 1 SAPERE registered P4C courses in the North West of England organised through development education centres; and 10 four-hour afternoon Introduction to P4C and global learning courses in Worcestershire¹², as part of the GLP CPD offer¹³. In terms of ethics, I explained to the participants and any DEC staff in attendance that I was carrying out an action research project funded by the GLP Innovation Fund. As most of the participants were GLP Partner Schools or Expert Centres, it was easy to explain the bigger picture of the GLP. Participants were able to opt out by not completing the form or responding to verbal questions.

Due to the small scale of this action research project, the focus was on collecting immediate feedback during the CPD rather than on a larger-scale project that would interact with teachers following use of the backpack in their own classrooms. The intention was that I would reflect on the participants’ verbal feedback and ask them to record any additional written feedback voluntarily on their course evaluation forms. I would then combine their feedback with my own analysis of their reactions to the backpack, re-hypothesising and testing out different ways of introducing the Philosopher’s Backpack in subsequent CPD sessions. This would allow me to not only analyse their feedback, but also refine future sessions and collect a summary of findings for my results and conclusion. I collected this data in a notebook, and separated my findings under the headings of my two research questions.

¹² this is a course I have developed myself for the GLP, which offers more depth than (at most) a two-hour twilight session after school, which I do not feel is sufficient to introduce P4C fully.

¹³ Participating schools on the GLP were able to access funds for external CPD.

4 Data analysis

4.1 How does the Philosopher's Backpack enrich critical global thinking with children?

4.1.1 Introducing the backpack as a metaphor

Although all the children at my school were familiar with me pulling out all sorts of objects from the backpack for P4C warm-up games, I had never introduced the Philosopher's Backpack 'by name' or as a possible metaphor. I was pleased to find that in each of the three classes, the children responded positively and quickly picked up on the idea of the backpack as a metaphor for the notion that P4C could be done anywhere and by anyone in the world. However, in the two younger classes, I was surprised to find that many of the children had made the assumption that only children in England, speaking English, were doing P4C. Although children in the Year 5/6 class remembered the P4C they had done with their partner school in Malawi, there was almost a feeling of revelation that they could wonder or find out the philosophical questions raised by children around the world. Interestingly, this prompted an enquiry with the Year 5/6 class where they questioned the notion that P4C could in fact be carried out by anyone, anywhere. It led to an interesting exploration on whether babies or people with dementia or certain special needs lacking in speech could do P4C, or whether there were some locations where it might prove more problematic to do P4C – if you were swimming, for example. The children also explored how family background or poverty might affect whether you could do P4C or not, and there was some discussion about the distinction between being able to 'access' P4C and being able to 'do' P4C. An unexpected outcome has led me consider the potential to be more explicit to children that P4C happens all over the world. This could be hugely enriching in terms of challenging perceptions in global learning and offers scope for school linking through P4C. For me, the culmination of the use of the backpack as a metaphor was when one pupil proposed the idea that philosophy questions are almost like 'global' questions that could be asked by any children in the world. This also linked into P4C sessions before carrying out the research, when encouraging pupils to ask more philosophical questions by asking them to generalise with their questions. For example: Should the boy share his sweets with everyone at the party? To a more general: Should we always share?

During the period of the action research, our school was part of a British Council Connecting Classrooms¹⁴ project that involved a link visit with our school in Malawi. Although, I have shared P4C questions in the past, through school-linking projects in Malawi, Tanzania and Mexico, I had not done so with such extensive reflection on the comparison between questions. Undertaking this action research has made me wonder whether we should be more explicit when introducing P4C to children about the more universal nature of P4C to ensure that P4C doesn't happen in a vacuum or the community's own echo-chamber. The metaphor of the Philosopher's Backpack certainly provided a very quick, simple and visual way of introducing this than if I had done this through explanation. The children used the metaphor as a focus but they built their own meaning, which to me seems more in tune with the aims of P4C.

4.1.2 Introducing the backpack 'kit'

In the next part of the action research, I presented various items that might plausibly be found in a traveller's backpack to provide a metaphor for Socratic questions. These are questions provoked by the facilitator, to deepen the children's dialogue. I felt it was important to have plausible objects because they would more likely to be easily remembered. For simplicity, I started

¹⁴ <https://schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/about-programmes/connecting-classrooms>

with just six objects, with the intention of adding further objects as part of the action research experience. See Photo 2.

Photo 2: Contents of the Philosopher's Backpack¹⁵



Further information about questions relating to these objects can be found in Appendix 2.

4.1.3 What happened in Class 1 (Reception/Year 1)

In Class 1, the children seemed to enjoy the familiarity of playing with and remembering the backpack 'kit' items and associative questions. I felt the explicit focus on questions seemed to make the children more aware of my role as a facilitator – as someone who questions to get more out of what they had to say. The children loved wearing the torch to represent 'shining a light' or illuminating a concept from a stimulus. The torch also naturally linked with the magnifying glass, giving a pause to spend time to look at the concept more closely. I noticed children who were fairly new in Reception were quicker to grasp the idea of 'alternative perspectives' using a combination of the global ball and the glasses than in previous years of introducing P4C. Children in Year 1 who tended to only respond with their own point of view seemed more willing to consider alternative perspectives than in previous years. Over time, the children seemed to be naturally seeking alternative perspectives rather than an alternative perspective being prompted by the facilitator. Using the objects within P4C seemed to slow the flow of enquiry, allowing pauses and thus a more structured approach. In fact, the more I used the six objects, I realised the objects could also offer the possibility of representing a structure for a P4C enquiry with younger children. See box below.

¹⁵ Items are: global ball, rope, sunglasses, magnifying glass, compass, head torch.

- 1) TORCH: Can we shine a light on the concept in this stimulus?
- 2) MAGNIFYING GLASS: Can we look a bit closer at this concept?
- 3) ROPE: Who agrees/disagrees?
- 4) GLOBAL BALL: Does everyone in the world think this?
- 5) GLASSES: What could someone else think about what we are saying?
- 6) COMPASS: Are we still talking about the same concept?

I would certainly not advocate that every P4C session with younger children followed such a structure, but the potential for objects to be used in this was certainly interesting. The object that seemed the hardest for the younger children to access was the compass, finding it harder to reflect back on what they had been saying. However, I did find it was a useful metaphor for them to grasp when I used it to summarise what they had said, tracking back on the direction of their dialogue.

4.1.4 What happened in Class 2 (Year 2, 3 & 4)

With the children in Class 2, who are used to generating their own philosophical questions and selecting one for enquiry, I tried to use the backpack questions to facilitate their enquiry. However, I found the focus on a specific question was too narrow and seemed almost formulaic within their dialogue, and I ended up thinking more about remembering to use the question than what came naturally to me as an experienced facilitator. I quickly found it was too restrictive as more substantive content that related to the enquiry was needed with my questions. I then tried the backpack pieces of 'kit' without the associative questions but more as prompts for more general themes of questions rather than having a list of prepared questions. As in Class 1, I found the explicit focus on the metaphors resulted in more children taking on more of a facilitative role themselves, questioning each other, which is certainly an aim of P4C. A shift towards pupil-facilitation is usually modelled by the adult and sometimes types of facilitator questions are highlighted. I noticed the children were more likely to remember the objects and thus internalise the questions than during P4C in previous years. The following 'areas' of questions emerged:

- compass for directionality – questions around the direction of the enquiry
- rope for polarity – questions about agreement and disagreement within the enquiry
- magnifying glasses for small detail – questions about looking at the small detail of a concept or idea
- torch for luminosity – questions about 'lighting up' the relevant concept
- glasses for alternative perspectives – questions about what others might think
- global ball for universality – questions about whether everyone thinks this

Although I found the associative questions limiting, I appreciated that a practitioner that was new to P4C might find this approach useful in the early stages of embedding a P4C approach. This was certainly something I was interested to find out when I shared with educators on my Level 1 courses.

4.1.5 Using the backpack in Class 3 (Year 5 & 6)

Most of the children in Class 3 have been doing P4C since first starting school in Reception and are experienced facilitators in their own right: taking part in weekly P4C sessions with their peers and planning and facilitating a half termly cross-phase enquiry around global themes relating to children's rights as part of our pathway for UNICEF's Right's Respecting School Award¹⁶. The children reported, and I found myself, that using backpack 'kit' with associative questions was

¹⁶ <https://www.unicef.org/rights-respecting-schools/>

distracting and unnecessary during whole-class P4C sessions. However, the children did find the use of the backpack items useful for pupil-led facilitation with cross-phase groups. Unexpectedly, I found the use of the backpack 'kit' items an incredibly useful tool to help describe what had happened during a P4C session, serving to review the progress of the philosophical enquiry and community building. Using objects was certainly a novel and interesting way to review the enquiry, and we tried this out for a number of weeks. In one particular enquiry, the use of the compass to review the direction of the enquiry then led to further enquiry on the appropriate and inappropriate direction of an enquiry. For example, several children mentioned examples of how it would be inappropriate to comment on how you personally feel about a concept and give a personal anecdote but it would be more philosophical to build understanding about the concept. This indicated to me a depth of understanding relating to the goals of P4C that I didn't realise the children had. Over time, I was able to develop a series of the most relevant review questions.

Photo 3: Themes for review



- TORCH: Luminosity – did we identify all the concepts in the enquiry?
- MAGNIFYING GLASS: Deepness – did we explore the concept in enough depth?
- GLOBAL BALL: Universality – did we think about other perspectives?
- GLASSES: Alternative perspectives – what other perspectives did we consider?
- ROPE: Polarity – did we agree and disagree with each other?
- COMPASS: Directionality – did we move forward with the direction of the question?

What was interesting using the objects as a review tool was how the children were able to make different interpretations of an object. For example, when highlighting the rope, one child said: 'the rope could act as a lifeline if you were going to help someone with an idea, but in another enquiry, it could be used to say whether you agreed with something or not'. I was initially concerned by the multitude of definitions as I felt this might make it difficult to share with other practitioners. However, on further reflection, it became apparent this could in fact become a defining feature of the backpack. Perhaps it didn't matter how the metaphors were understood, the more important aspect was that the metaphors served as an explicit tool for the children to 'think about their own thinking', thus enabling metacognition. What struck me most during the work with Class 3 was

the increased motivation when the children had less prescription on the meaning of the objects, with the meaning being made by the community itself, and thus more ownership for the backpack as a metacognitive tool. It has also made me wonder about the potential role of creative thinking in metacognition.

Another unexpected outcome of my work with the pupils in Class 3, was that I saw an increase in more general use of metaphors within P4C enquiries to help them explain their ideas. For example, in an enquiry around the concept of empathy: 'Empathy is not like a laptop that you can charge, it's always there', 'You haven't got this special machine that can tell us how much hatred is in the world' or 'If you upset someone, it's like if you squeeze toothpaste, it comes out and you can't really get it back in, but if you use empathy, you can get it back in'. Without intention, the pupils had begun using metaphors and it has made me wonder about the scope and impact for the explicit use of metaphors in other P4C activities.

4.2 How can the Philosopher's Backpack help support practitioners to enrich critical global thinking?

The revelation that the Philosopher's Backpack was more successful when children had more ownership was a key factor for me determining how I would present it during my training sessions with other teachers. Initially, I had thought that I would need to have a robust 'package' that could be used in any situation. The findings of my action research proved that this was going to be more difficult depending on the age range, but also the experience of the children (I had only carried out the trial in my own school context where there is a strong history of P4C).

Initially, I shared very basic information with participants, mostly the more prescriptive version that had been successful with Classes 1 and 2. This was particularly useful in the early stages of the course to emphasise the features of P4C and global learning. Evaluation comments were positive, mentioning how the Philosopher's Backpack had served to summarise the notion of Socratic questions. One teacher reported that they had not used the backpack in the classroom but just the memory of it from the training had reminded her to ask questions. I noticed teachers on shorter GLP and P4C Introduction training were quickly able to grasp the concept of Socratic questioning through input about the Philosopher's Backpack.

In practice, some teachers commented on how the backpack served as a reminder to help them to stay 'on track' and not be tempted to get carried away and join in with the pupils' discussion and share their own opinions. One teacher talked about how she tended to get stuck at a certain point in the enquiry and didn't know how to intervene. Just having the simple reminder of the metaphors was easier than memorising or reading from a prompt sheet. One teacher said it served as a reminder of the purpose of the facilitator 'to look for opportunities to ask questions that would deepen the enquiry'. Another teacher said she had just put a poster up on the wall of the items from the PowerPoint rather than making a backpack, which had been useful. Some teachers shared the backpack idea with their pupils.

In one training session, with mostly Early Years teachers, the backpack was received especially positively. Participants then spontaneously spent time thinking of other pieces of kit that could go into the backpack. It reminded me of the way that Class 3 had developed creative metaphors for metacognition. In future training sessions, I then asked participants to think of suitable objects as metaphors for facilitation of P4C – which was an effective review strategy for their understanding of Socratic questioning. Once again, I wondered about the role of creative thinking in metacognition and whether my focus purely on critical global thinking had limited this. To me, the use of visual metaphors seemed to have an inherently creative thinking approach that helped with critical global thinking.

A few teachers went away and came back with their own impressive rucksacks that they had developed in between training. One teacher developed their own metaphor of a gardener's tool kit with a trowel for digging deeper, a fork for separating ideas, and a planting line as a continuum line.

A few teachers talked about there being a lot to take in on with P4C, and there was an element of feeling they were 'not doing it right'. Several teachers commented that the Philosopher's Backpack had a 'friendly feel' and was accessible.

Not all staff agreed they would use it, even if they could see it was useful as a memory aid. Generally teachers in Early Years seemed to be more readily enthusiastic about the Philosopher's Backpack on initial presentation.

I decided it would be useful to ask some more experienced practitioners of P4C¹⁷ to comment on whether they would find it as useful as those new to P4C had done. Where P4C practice was embedded, it was harder for them to imagine using it, and one teacher said it might be confusing for their children. However, they could see that it might be helpful with less experienced practitioners who were new to their school. One teacher said it was a bit gimmicky and might spoil the natural flow of philosophy. One more experienced teacher said people new to P4C could latch onto the Philosopher's Backpack and lose some of the other important principles of P4C that are not included.

There was general agreement by more experienced practitioners that it had been valuable for them to be introduced to the Philosopher's Backpack as it had provoked reflection on the potential use of metaphors within P4C.

The turning point for this phase of the action research was when I decided to present the Philosopher's Backpack as a narrative of my own experiences of using it rather than a pre-packaged resource. This was particularly evident in presentations purely about the Philosopher's Backpack (rather than as part of GLP or P4C training) I made at an international P4C conference in Madrid¹⁸ and an advanced P4C seminar. In both, this provoked discussion about the potential use of objects to exemplify the process of P4C.

5 Discussion and conclusions

Through this action research, I set out to respond to the question: Can the Philosopher's Backpack enrich critical global thinking with children and practitioners?

The Philosopher's Backpack works on two levels: firstly, as a metaphor in its own right to represent the notion of a 'global learning philosopher' and, secondly, as a container for pieces of kit that represent individual metaphors that are easily remembered and subsequently internalised, increasing confidence with metacognitive questioning. I would particularly like to pursue the notion of a 'global learning philosopher' as a facilitator in future research by exploring the work of Vanessa Andreotti and her metaphor of 'Shouldering our Colonial Backpack'¹⁹ which would have relevance for both P4C and global learning.

The notion of a Philosopher's Backpack is also an imaginative and simple way of encapsulating the conjuncture between Philosophy for Children and global learning, especially for those who are new on the pathway to becoming P4C practitioners. The Philosopher's Backpack metaphor has been useful for introducing P4C as part of the GLP, especially where there is limited time for

¹⁷ A group of local teachers.

¹⁸ <https://icpic.org/events/18th-icpic-conference/>

¹⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=le2A5hxr6XE>

training. Using metaphors can also be a useful tool for introducing metacognitive processes, which can be used to enrich critical thinking, and more specifically critical global thinking.

The use of the Philosopher's Backpack was certainly found to be particularly effective as a practical tool during enquiries with younger children. With older children, it seemed to be more effective as a review tool that would in turn lead to better metacognition.

The use of metaphors has been a valuable way for children to make their own meaning about important aspects of philosophical practice. As is so often the case with a new methodology, it relies on the practitioners having to explain the important features and this can often be didactic. Arguably, enabling children to build their own meaning about the process actually seems more in line with the spirit of philosophical enquiry. Use of the Philosopher Backpack metaphor seemed to increase the use of metaphors more generally in P4C enquiries to explain concepts. Exploring the impact of the use of metaphors on other aspects of P4C, global learning or curriculum links is an area I would be very interested to pursue in future research.

Although this action research promotes the creative ownership by children and practitioners to find their own ways of finding metaphors *beyond* the notion of a Philosopher's Backpack, I feel it is relevant for me to present my experience of using the Philosophical Backpack as a narrative. It is my intention that my narrative provides a basis for discussion so that new metaphors may be considered by the wider P4C and GL community, by practitioners both experienced and new to P4C.

Finally, I would like to make a general appeal to the wider community of P4C. This action research project has led me to reflect on whether it in fact seems a tall order to expect someone who is totally new to P4C to immediately master the 'art' of facilitation, especially if they are also new to the experience of philosophical dialogue on a personal level. I would argue that the P4C community should be mindful of our critique around good and bad facilitation in forums where there are practitioners that are new to P4C. Instead, it might prove more helpful for newer practitioners if the focus was on their 'progress' in the rigorous but delicate art of facilitation through practice. It is with this in mind, that I will look forward to continuing to find ways to help those new to P4C through the context of global learning.

distinctions and disagreements that might not necessarily be in a linear way, e.g. overlapping or in a circle.

The compass as a metaphor for directionality

Are we still talking about the question?

Where do we want to go with this question?

Are we going off-track with this question?

This piece of kit enables the facilitator to ask questions about the direction of a philosophical enquiry. The metaphor of a compass implies there is forward movement, but this might not necessarily be in the intended direction.

The torch as a metaphor for luminosity

Can we shine a light on the concept in the stimulus/question?

This piece of kit enables the facilitator to ask questions that identify a relevant concept. The concept may be explicit as an actual word in the question or implicit and need to be illuminated by the group.

The magnifying glass as a metaphor for deepness

Can we look a bit closer at this concept?

What are the synonyms for this concept?

This piece of kit enables the facilitator to ask questions that look closer at the small detail of the question or concept. This could be through word-play activities with synonyms and antonyms, phrases, examples and connections.

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About the author

Jane is passionate about providing transformative educational experiences for young people and adults using critical global thinking methodology. She has over 25 years as an educator in schools, universities, local education authorities; public and third sector organisations in the UK and internationally. She is a registered SAPERE Philosophy for Children trainer and is mainly involved in training and supporting schools as part of the research arm of SAPERE's Going for Gold programme. Jane was awarded Global Educator of the Year in 2017 by Think Global. Her website address is: www.janeyates.net

About the Global Learning Programme

The Global Learning Programme (GLP) in England was a government-funded programme of support that is helping teachers in Primary, Secondary and Special schools to deliver effective teaching and learning about development and global issues at Key Stages 2 and 3. It was delivered by a team of organisations with complementary experience in supporting development education, the wider development sector and peer-led CPD for schools. For further information on the Global Learning Programme in England go to: www.glp-e.org.uk Information about the GLP in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland can be found at: <https://globaldimension.org.uk/chooseglp>

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Development Education Research Centre
UCL Institute of Education
London International Development Centre,
36 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0PD