Philosophers in Schools: An assessment of the ongoing partnership between The Philosophy Foundation and King's College London's Philosophy Department

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Abstract

In this paper, we pause to assess a long-standing and ongoing outreach programme by King's College London and The Philosophy Foundation. In it, philosophy students at university are recruited and trained to facilitate philosophy sessions for pupils who go to schools with high rates of free school meals. This paper describes every stage of that programme, from the recruitment and training of students to the difficulties that can accrue along the way. It also argues that the programme has a benefit which is underappreciated and understudied in the literature on philosophy in schools, which is that it fosters cultural capital among the pupils who participate in it. As such, the paper serves both as a proof of concept for a high-quality, cost-effective philosophical outreach programme and as an impetus for further research into the effects of such programmes.

Keywords

cultural capital, outreach, P4C, Philosophy for Children, philosophy in schools

Introduction

The Philosophy Foundation (TPF), UK, train undergraduate philosophy students to facilitate philosophical dialogues in schools, hospital schools, young offender institutes, and other learning communities for adults, such as prisons and businesses.

Since 2015, TPF has been a partner in the 'Philosophers in Schools' project with King's College London's (King's) Philosophy Department, as part of the College's Widening Participation and Outreach programme (now known as K+). This programme aims to 'increase access to King's for students who have been traditionally underrepresented in it' (King's College London, undated). The King's 'Philosophers in Schools' project

is part of the wider K+ programme. The project offers a series of philosophical dialogues, facilitated by philosophy students, to school-aged pupils who ordinarily would not have philosophy in their curriculum. The university provides funding to train and accredit students to facilitate these dialogues in a format TPF calls Philosophical Enquiry (PhiE).

This partnership offers a unique opportunity for both university students and for pupils. Students learn to be better teachers and philosophers, while pupils learn to think clearly and to engage openly and critically with one another. In addition, we hypothesise that PhiE has a mitigating effect against the 'double unfairness' (Ofsted 2019) which disadvantaged children suffer when they have to sacrifice cultural capital and experience with a wide curriculum in order to thrive in the narrow set of subjects that can get them into good schools and universities. If we are right, then this mitigating effect is a generally unrecognised benefit of providing philosophy sessions to disadvantaged children, which we believe adds to the extant reasons for conducting programmes such as this elsewhere and on a larger scale.

The paper has four parts. In the first section, we describe the pedagogical principles of the programme. In the second, we explain the structure of the King's Philosophers in Schools project. In the third, we describe and assess the challenges and achievements of the project, including how we think it affects the university, the trainees, and pupils in school. In our conclusion, we offer our current impressions of the project and our recommendations going forward.

Pedagogical principles

In this section, we describe the structure of a Philosophical Enquiry (PhiE) in some detail. We do this in order to paint a reasonably clear picture of what participating pupils experience, what trainee facilitators must learn to provide this experience, and why TPF has chosen to structure PhiE in this way.

Philosophical Enquiry (PhiE)

TPF trains graduates and undergraduates to facilitate philosophical conversations. When we write about facilitating, we understand something different from leading a conversation or teaching something. A facilitator sets out to start and foster a conversation on a chosen subject. If the conversation veers in an unexpected direction, the facilitator takes this as a sign to pursue that direction in more depth—even if it leads away from the chosen subject.

In one session, a TPF facilitator began a conversation about the afterlife. A participant objected to philosophising about the afterlife, because this was a subject reserved only for discussion in holy scriptures. In response, our facilitator put this position back to the class: Should we philosophise about the afterlife? The conversation that grew out of this was lively and everyone in the class participated. After the session, the participant who started this productive detour asked the facilitator for philosophy book recommendations.

Facilitation follows detours instead of fighting them. That's why it is usually not an appropriate method for teaching to learning objectives. Instead, it complements conventional teaching methods precisely by exploring avenues which teachers must normally pass by to do their jobs well.

TPF has developed a structured approach to facilitation called Philosophical Enquiry, or 'PhiE' for short. It was developed in the classroom to help young people develop the kinds of skills that are considered important by philosophy departments, such critical thinking skills, metacognitive skills, epistemic virtues, and rhetorical fluency.

PhiE facilitators are trained both to adopt the language of the class and to explore the interests of the class—even when these may diverge from the lesson plan—through a method of structured, 'contentless' questioning.

PhiE was inspired by ancient Greek philosophers, especially Socrates. A notable feature of the Platonic dialogues is that they take place amid daily life. They arise out of personal concerns raised in meetings on the street, outside the courts, or in the market square, but quickly get wrapped up in deep philosophical quandaries, precisely by digging into ordinary, everyday concerns.

PhiE adapts this aspect of the Socratic Method to the classroom. A PhiE begins, like a Socratic dialogue, with a narrative, a joint task, a picture, a prop, or just a question that relates to something that is familiar to the participants—sometimes because it is exemplified right there, in front of them, other times because they have prior experiences with it. This introduction closes with a 'task question' set by the facilitator.

While PhiE was inspired by Socratic dialogues, it departs from it in many ways. Socrates often slipped from questioning to leading to teaching before returning to a form of facilitation, taking the chances he got to expound his own views, to contradict others', and to (sometimes intentionally, other times unintentionally) rephrase their answers in his own vocabulary, for his own rhetorical benefit. PhiE facilitators try to

avoid leading, expounding, contradicting, paraphrasing, or rephrasing. Unlike Socrates, they are not themselves part of the enquiry. They are only there to support the philosophical thinking of the group.

In some cases, that support involves modelling good reasoning, especially with younger year groups. However, facilitators aim to use the participants as partial models for one another, by highlighting good uses of reason. If one participant makes a useful distinction, the facilitator may pause to showcase this, to make sure that the whole group can see its use—and later try similar moves on their own.

PhiE is very similar to extant programmes such as Philosophy for Children (P4C) or Philosophy for and with Children (P4wC). However, the latter tend to include the facilitator when characterising the group, as when Lipman writes that 'a community of inquiry is characterized by dialogue that is fashioned collaboratively out of the reasoned contribution of all participants' (Lipman 2003, p. 249). In contrast, PhiE puts the facilitator on the outside of the 'community of inquirers', maintaining the facilitators 'neutrality' to ensure the thinking is developed from, and within, the group itself.

Techniques for neutrality

Since neutrality is a famously elusive ideal, TPF has developed methods to approximate it. We do not claim that it is fully obtainable or that facilitators should lose their humanity. However, TPF considers it paramount to PhiE that the conversation is fully owned by its participants, who are one another's peers. That cannot happen when the facilitator, who is not a peer, is too present in the shaping of the conversation—if only because the participants will defer to the facilitator's judgements, instead of standing by their own.

PhiE operationalises a kind of neutrality with four basic techniques for responding to what different interlocutors say: echoing, opening up, anchoring and if-ing (Worley 2010, 2021; Worley & Worley 2019). These techniques apply to answers or responses that participants offer to the introductory task question.

TPF says that a facilitator should echo what participants say, not paraphrase it. That is, they should repeat, word for word, an extract of what someone said in answer to the task question. This models careful listening and emphasises the importance of using only the concepts that the group brings to its own conversation, not those the facilitator brings in from the outside.

A facilitator 'opens up' an answer when they ask for a clarification, an elaboration, a justification, or a reason—most commonly by asking 'Why?' or 'Can you tell us more about that?' The point is to always open up, even when answers do not appear to need clarifications or justifications. That inculcates an attitude of asking what someone means and why before assuming that one knows it, which is essential when the discussion gets complicated—as it almost always does in philosophy.

A facilitator 'anchors' by asking a speaker to relate their assertions or statements back to the question under discussion and 'ifs' by transforming an answer into a conditional question. Anchoring is a common technique in essay writing, since it helps to focus a conversation by ensuring that its contributions are all pertinent to the same goal, i.e. the question under discussion. It performs the same function in PhiE. If-ing kicks in when a participant has introduced fact that could halt a thought experiment, or contingency, for instance by saying 'it depends on whether P'. In that case, the facilitator asks, 'if P, then what?'—and, if there is time, 'If ~P, then what?' This is crucial to fully exploring an answer.

These four techniques are neutral in the sense that they pick up on the structure of an answer but not on its content. They are to be applied evenly to all answers, whether the facilitator considers them good or bad, misleading or helpful. In many cases, participants will surprise the facilitator, by cleverly anchoring answers which sound off-topic, by resolving contingencies in clear ways, or generally giving surprising but strong reasons for implausible claims.

Ultimately, the goal is that the participants will come to apply the techniques to themselves and one another—automatically echoing, opening up, anchoring, and if-ing one another when that is appropriate, without the help of the facilitator. When they do so, they begin to take full ownership of their conversation. When that happens, we consider the facilitator to be approximately neutral.

Guiding principles

Two guiding principles govern how facilitators are to use the techniques above: 'absence-presence' and the 'Open Questioning Mindset' (Worley 2015, 2018). They are designed to make sure that the techniques are used to support rather than corrupt the conversation.

It can be tempting for facilitators to correct pupils when they make obvious mistakes, as a teacher would, to give them what they imagine to be their intended words when

they fumble, or to actively steer the conversation towards what they consider important. When facilitators succumb to these temptations, TPF says they are too present in the conversation. The facilitator should try to balance their presence with absence. They are present when they use the techniques and absent when they abstain. Facilitators are too present when they use the techniques too often or too insistently. They are too absent when participants get away with giving answers without giving reasons. A good PhiE sessions requires a good balance between the two.

The second guiding principle is the 'Open Questioning Mindset' (Worley 2015). It states that facilitators must be genuinely open to what pupils are saying, rather than making assumptions that fill in meaning on their behalf. That means that they should refrain from re-interpreting or paraphrasing what the pupils say, even if they think this is what the pupil really meant, might have meant, or should have meant. The goal is rather to leave the language and the thinking to the pupils, following their lead rather than leading them. The techniques should all model this mindset when used appropriately.

The PhiE questioning techniques work with the guiding principles to ensure that trainees leave the conversation to the pupils (absence), so that the pupils can and, indeed, must evaluate their own and each other's ideas according to their own standards, all whilst securing an open, inclusive, critical, and fruitful dialogue (presence).

Summary of PhiE

We have outlined the techniques and principles that facilitators use in PhiE sessions. We have not talked about other important factors such as behaviour management or inclusion. That is because all classroom activities, not just PhiE, need to face up to these. Nor have we talked about storytelling or the more advanced techniques that we use with groups that have done PhiE for longer periods. That is because these are seldom applicable in the current programme, which only involves five consecutive sessions for each class. In the next section, we describe in more detail what that programme looks like.

Programme structure

The King's Philosophers in Schools programme runs every year. At the start of each autumn term, the Philosophy Department circulates an invitation for their students to attend a trial session. In this session, students get to be participants in a PhiE session

run by TPF. After that, the Department circulates an invitation to apply for facilitator training with TPF.

The training draws more applicants than TPF can accommodate. Applicants are therefore asked to write letters of interest, to provide their CVs, and to list two academic references. TPF accepts about 10-15 applicants to the initial training course, of which the best 10 are selected to continue the full training.

It is important that the programme does not adversely impact studies. It can be time-consuming and difficult for some trainees, and that might influence the quality of their sessions or their ability to study, depending on which they prioritise. That is why TPF requires that students have minimum 2:1 average grade (equivalent to a B or to 3.0 GPA) or higher by the time they enrol as trainees and that they commit to the full training course.

The training begins in early January with an intensive, two-day course where participants learn and practise the principles described above through a range of enquiries, as well as gaining practice in facilitating enquiries themselves. Feedback on facilitation is given and delivered with special attention to each trainee's present abilities and confidence, with a focus on comparing what they did with the techniques they were taught in the course. They also practise games for getting pupils ready to talk together, simple behavioural management ideas, and storytelling techniques for prompting the task question.

TPF selects ten of the students by looking at their abilities to speak clearly, to communicate effectively, to put the techniques into practice according to the guiding principles, to listen, to reflect on their own performance, and to receive and implement feedback.

The selected students are paired with TPF mentors, who guide them through the outreach programme. Before they can begin the training, they are required to observe two or more PhiE sessions by TPF accredited facilitators, either in-person (which is preferable, but sometimes difficult to organise), by watching video recordings, or by attending an online session.

During the outreach programme, trainees facilitate five hour-long sessions with an assigned class, with the ongoing support of experienced mentors, and with the class teacher present throughout. The mentor and teacher offer support with behaviour management and give feedback to the trainee, but neither takes part in nor helps with

running the session. The teacher's feedback is valuable to both mentor and trainee, since it can be difficult to assess how well the session went without understanding the class's baseline.

The first and last outreach sessions are observed by the mentor, while the three middle sessions are conducted together with only the teacher. Trainees consult with mentors before and after each session by writing self-reflections and receiving detailed feedback. The last session includes a final review, in which the mentor determines whether the trainee is ready for unsupported facilitation and able to work for TPF in the future.

In their written reflections, trainees are asked to consider what they did and what effect their interventions had on the philosophical enquiry. Mentors call their trainees to discuss their reflections, offer feedback and advice for upcoming sessions. Feedback focuses on the guiding principles and techniques that can help trainees improve their facilitation.

During their five supported sessions, trainees gain in confidence and settle into the rhythm of PhiE. Many are surprised and inspired by the school children they work with. In 2022 a PhD student at King's described their outreach sessions with a class of nine-year-olds as 'the best philosophical experience I have had'. A pupil reflected that 'I have learnt and gained from philosophy as I am able to think clearer, give clearer points and concentrate better.' This eloquent example reflects the feedback received from pupils and their teachers.

Mentors decide whether to accredit a trainee after observing their fifth session. Accreditation comes in two levels. Trainees at level one pass with the qualification that they need continued support in their subsequent sessions, while trainees at level two are considered ready to work independently, with minimal guidance.

Trainees who don't pass the accreditation process are given the opportunity to try again in the future. That second chance involves two or three more supported sessions, with another final observation. The timeline for the second chance depends on the availability of the class and the mentor. Given that TPF only selects promising trainees for the outreach programme (both in pre-selection and in the evaluation during the intensive course), it is not common for trainees to fail accreditation.

While the training is unpaid for trainees, they qualify to work with TPF in the future for an hourly rate. As they continue with their university studies, many accredited

outreach philosophers also work as facilitators for TPF. However, this work falls outside the scope of the article, since the paid sessions in question are not part of the outreach programme.

Challenges and benefits

Above, we explained the principles of PhiE and the structure of the training programme. In this section, we turn to its challenges and benefits. First, we look at the challenges and benefits for both partners in this collaborative project. Second, we look at challenges and benefits for the trainees. Finally, we discuss how we think the programme benefits pupils.

King's and TPF

It is time-consuming and administratively challenging to run programmes like this. Every year, King's appoints a new departmental contact for TPF, who is usually entirely unfamiliar with the programme. That means that TPF cannot rely on the experience built over the previous year. For that reason, King's handed over responsibility for liaising with schools and organising the training to TPF entirely. The TPF staff have long-standing relationships with schools, philosophers, and mentors and staff who are experienced at planning with schools and trainees. This change greatly improves the year-to-year efficiency of the programme.

King's uses funding from their K+ budget to be able to pay for TPF's time, experience, and expertise to deliver this project each year. The University of Southern Denmark (SDU) has created a specific department for philosophy in schools, called Filosofi i skolen (Nabe-Nielsen 2019). This programme started when members of SDU first came to train with TPF in London, in a programme much like the one above, and later when TPF staff visited Denmark to train the now accredited SDU members in how to run similar programmes at home. Filosofi i skolen now train the philosophy facilitator in-house by employing former philosophy students to run the programme and train students and to conduct research into other ways of doing philosophy, and on philosophy's impact in the classroom. The same programme can, in other words, be run either in-house (as at SDU) or with an external partner (as in this case), depending on the stability and financial situation of the host university. The financial situation is greatly mitigated, of course, by the fact that trainees train without pay—something which may not be possible everywhere.

A mundane but nevertheless important burden is to carry out Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, a legal requirement of providing schools with police checks for all students who are going into schools. This is particularly time-consuming with foreign students. While King's has a team that can help with this, it can still be difficult to get an answer in time for scheduling the sessions for the outreach programme—which can only happen when the DBS check is complete for each trainee.

Another challenge involves the expectations that schools and teachers have for the sessions. Some teachers can feel the need to join the sessions either as participants or as teachers, often to model 'how to do this' to their students. This can be incredibly difficult to deal with for trainees in their independent sessions, particularly when teachers are not fully aware of the aims of the philosophy sessions.

As an example, teachers can sometimes jump in to 'reveal the answer' when the children are struggling to give reasons, instead of letting them work through the problem together. More commonly still, the teacher will fill an awkward silence by suggesting that the trainee can explain to the children something the teacher thinks they are confused about. These kinds of interventions break the 'absence' principle encouraged by TPF, display a closed mindset, and misrepresent the aims of PhiE to the pupils. As a result, the pupils re-enter the mindset of deferring to the teacher, who they assume to be the authority. All teachers are given information about their role in the class and what PhiE is trying to achieve, so this challenge is mitigated against. The mentors also help by reminding teachers of their role if necessary.

On the flip side, it is necessary for the teacher to be present. Trainees only receive basic behaviour management training, enough to keep an interested class engaged. However, if, as is often the case, the class is set on testing the new person, it will generally not be possible for the trainee to practice what they are there to practice, namely PhiE. Therefore, it is important to confirm with the class teacher that they will be present and alert during the session. This is usually coordinated by the trainee's mentor when they come to observe the first session.

Trainees

Some philosophy students who train with TPF have gone on to work with the charity, some have become mentors for the next generation of trainees, and others have gone on to become teachers or university lecturers. Dr Alexander Franklin, who teaches at King's, trained in one of the first TPF cohorts. His feedback captures what many trainees think of the programme:

> I found the initial training, and especially the time spent in primary schools, to be valuable in developing skills that I've brought to my undergraduate teaching. In particular, I developed a keen awareness of the various ways in which my questions/statements might be construed as leading students towards particular conclusions. A consequence has been, in my view, more open discussions in which students are generally more ready to explore a wider variety of solutions to the problems under discussion.

To do PhiE, philosophy students need to change the way they engage in conversations, to avoid leading them towards particular conclusions. Many students struggle with this, at least in the beginning of their training. One recent trainee, a master's student, told us that they struggled to stay absent and stick to the core techniques when the conversation went to the wrong place (in their opinion):

> I know I am doing it, and I know that is not what I should be doing, but I really can't help it—I know the answers to these problems and want to teach people about them rather than letting them flounder. It's difficult to facilitate!

It takes careful cycles of practice, self-assessment, observation, and feedback to learn to appreciate the difference between facilitating a conversation and leading it, and to practise a balance between being present and absent as a facilitator. That problem is less pronounced among philosophy students than among teachers who train with TPF, in different training programmes. It can be very difficult for a teacher to unlearn the habit of keeping the class on track towards some pre-set learning objective. However, this can be a challenge for philosophy students too. Many, like the master's student above, have a vision of using what they have learned in their studies when they facilitate. It is common that trainees plan their sessions by thinking through all the ideas they want to explore and teach.

The first session can be a shock for many trainees, which is why it is important for the mentor to be there. The children have a habit of defying expectations. In some cases, that can be in negative ways, with disruptive behaviour or complete, disinterested silence. More commonly, they will be more excited and imaginative than the trainee can imagine ahead of time, raising more hands and ideas than a single session can possibly fit. In some cases, the children even come to challenge or even change the facilitator's own views. As a result, trainees can often feel torn between exploring all these ideas and going deeper into their plan. They worry that they failed to 'get to' this

or that idea or question. Mentors are there to alleviate these worries, by observing and recalling with the trainee how the children manage to have interesting conversations even when they are not 'on track'.

In the three independent sessions, the biggest challenge for trainees is to recount their sessions accurately. It is very common that their preconceived notions about philosophy invade their view of their own sessions, by negatively colouring everything that doesn't resemble academic philosophy. A central role for the mentor is to instil a principle of charity in the trainee: to encourage them to assume that, even when children say things that sound obviously wrong, they may have a worthwhile point to make with it anyway, if they just get the chance to give their reasons and to relate them back to the question under discussion. This reinforces the importance of using the techniques before interpreting how well the class is going, since to make that evaluation is to fail to have an open questioning mindset.

Another key challenge in the independent sessions is to get the trainee to recall what happened in the session without first putting it through an evaluative lens. It is common for trainees to write that they used one of the techniques ('I opened this up'), without describing what they said in response to what. That makes it impossible for the mentor to judge whether they applied the technique well. For that reason, mentors must emphasise the importance of reporting what situation prompted the trainee's intervention, what the intervention was, and what the results of the intervention were. A positive side-effect of this emphasis is that trainees are forced to be more attentive to what was said in the session—by themselves and by the participants—and develop a full metacognitive analysis and evaluation of their facilitation.

Pupils

The benefits of philosophy for children are well-known and widely theorised. In controlled studies by Trickey and Topping, collaborative philosophical dialogue has been associated with better cognitive and metacognitive skills in the intervention group (Topping & Trickey 2007b, 2007a; Trickey & Topping 2004, 2007). This is consistent with Worley's argument that PhiE fosters metacognitive skills (Worley 2018) and with research carried out in 2019 by TPF and King's into the teaching of critical thinking and metacognitive skills through PhiE (Worley & Worley 2019). This research showed a 63% increase in the intervention groups' successful use of critical thinking skills and metacognition.

Trickey and Topping also report that children in intervention groups reported increased self-esteem and showed evidence of 'significant reduction in dependency and anxiety and of greater self-confidence', particularly for girls (Trickey & Topping 2006, p. 599). More recent meta-analyses (Mahmoudi 2010; Yan et al. 2018) and systematic reviews (Ab Wahab et al. 2022) of worldwide research shows that P4C and similar programmes, such as PhiE, can be cognitively and emotionally beneficial for many children in schools.

The programme is offered for free to primary and secondary schools with a high proportion of students on free school meals. In the United Kingdom, this measure is commonly used as an indicator of economic disadvantage. In England, the average number of pupils on free school meals is approximately 20% in primary and secondary schools (2021 data); TPF works with schools above this average, many hitting the 40% mark. TPF aims to reach cohorts that are not normally exposed to philosophy as a subject to give more children an opportunity to experience philosophy, and therefore be a potential area for study in the future.

The national inspectorate of schools in England, Ofsted, stated in a recent report that many disadvantaged pupils have a 'double unfairness' when their curriculum is narrowed: 'So many disadvantaged pupils may not have access to cultural capital, both in the home and then in their school' (Ofsted 2019, p. 8). As part of their school evaluations, Ofsted therefore take into consideration the 'extent to which schools are equipping pupils with the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life' (Ofsted 2019, p. 10).

In this report, Ofsted do not explain what they mean by 'cultural capital', except that it is needed to succeed in life. The term comes from French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's (1974) paper 'School as a conservative force'. Golann (2021) explains that cultural capital 'comprises the cultural attitudes, skills, knowledge, and behaviours that give certain groups advantages in institutional settings' (p. 2). Meanwhile, Jack (2019) says that it 'refers to the collection of taken-for-granted ways of being that are valued in a particular context' (p. 19). The children of relatively privileged families, writes Jack, will already be familiar with the ways of being that are valued at school, because they are the same ways of being that are valued at home. This gives them an advantage over children from underprivileged families, who must learn everything that privileged children can take for granted. A striking example is help-seeking. Golann writes that students from middle and upper classes are much more likely seek help than working class and poor students, even as early as in kindergarten. This

difference persists later in life too. It should be noted that these differences are even more pronounced when race is factored in, in addition to class (Golann 2021, p. 63).

Many schools and academies in the UK with high rates of free school meals have followed the lead of American Charter Schools by adopting a new way to build cultural capital. Golann (2021) calls this 'scripting the moves'. This method gained popular traction with Doug Lemov's *Teach Like A Champion* (2021) and Daniel Whitman's *Sweating the Small Stuff* (2008). In the UK, Teach First, Harris Academy, and Arc Academy use these books as their core textbooks and use many of their strategies in their teacher training programmes, as one of the authors can testify to, having trained at one of these institutions. This shift was heavily promoted by the government's 'behaviour tsar', Tom Bennett, whose special report (Bennett 2017, updated 2020) concluded that behaviour management was a central, overlooked concern in UK schools. Meanwhile, the government's current 'social mobility tsar', Katharine Birbalsingh, actively branded her style as 'military' and herself as the strictest headmistress in the country when she led the Michaela Community School in London—a school which prides itself on its adherence to 'no excuse' policies (Carr 2018).

What these 'no-excuses' schools have in common is that they aim to build cultural capital by a process of 'scripting the moves' (Golann 2021). 'Scripting the moves' means making it transparent what is expected in every context, so that students who do not know what 'taken-for-granted ways of being' are valuable in a particular context, can easily learn it. The idea is that disadvantaged children need to learn these scripts in order to move up the social hierarchy, especially to get into and succeed at university. For instance, many of these schools use the motto 'SLANT', which stands for 'sit up, listen, ask questions, nod for understanding, track the speaker', to hammer home the importance of asking questions to seek help.

While such scripts may have positive effects on grades in school and on university acceptance rates in the US, they have negative effect on independence and performance in university (Golann & Torres 2020). Golann (2021) theorises, based on qualitative research, that rigid 'scripts' lead to rigid behaviour, which is contrary to the conduct of privileged, advantaged students, who know how and when to be flexible, when to skirt the rules, and how to take advantage of their loopholes. Advantaged children learn to know when to break the rules, when to give excuses (responding to authority), when to make exceptions for themselves and others, and

when to think for themselves about the case-by-case importance of sticking to the script.

We do not want to suggest that all discipline is bad or that the 'no excuses' schools fail to build cultural capital. However, with Golann, we think that such scripts only build very crude cultural capital—the ability to carry out the steps that someone else has determined to be valuable. That cannot be the goal of good education, especially not good philosophical education. As is evident in the literature, this is not sufficient for succeeding in life, which was the context in which Ofsted brought up the notion of cultural capital. Thus, we suggest that a different form of cultural capital is needed in 'no excuses' schools, a kind which teaches flexibility and autonomy—the ability to know when the script is no longer worth following, or when it needs editing.

We hypothesise that PhiE can go some way towards building this kind of cultural capital, which is sorely lacking in more and more UK schools. Our reasoning is that PhiE, as described above, forces children who participate in it to evaluate one another according to their own, shared standards. Indeed, they also have to work out these standards together. For instance, if two children disagree, then the facilitator will not resolve the disagreement for them, only question the children to help them explore it in more depth, for example by asking them to give more reasons or clearer descriptions. Likewise, the facilitator will not stop when someone gives 'the right answer'—even if there is one, which there sometimes is. They will instead support the children in trying to recognise this as the right answer (for example, in terms of logic)—which they may or may not manage.

The children rarely do any of this explicitly, of course. They do not stop to say, 'this is the standard for answering correctly'. However, they set standards all the same by voicing disagreements, giving reasons, and listening to one another, and by coming to agreements (or agreements about why they disagree) at the end of that process. In this way they show each other what they are and are not willing to recognise as good answers.

We also note Habermas has argued that 'Every valid norm [or standard] would meet with the approval of all concerned if they could take part in a practical discourse' (Habermas 1990, p. 121). This is a condition for the validity of a norm, in Habermas's philosophy. Of course, it is wildly unrealistic that all standards will be approved in any kind of discourse. Often, standards are just determined by those who are in charge—the school, for example. PhiE is structured to simulate this practical discourse, in which participants come to evaluate the standards they are held to, for instance by

their teachers and schools. There is no room for such practical discourse elsewhere in schools, especially not in 'no excuses' schools. Yet the ability to make such judgements is, according to Golann, a key part of succeeding in life and at university.

We do not want to claim that this programme has fixed disparities in cultural capital. We do not know how to measure cultural capital, but we assume that any scale would, at best, show modest increases due to this programme—it only involves five sessions with the same class, after all.

What we mean to suggest, instead, is that the core structure of PhiE and the King's Philosophers in Schools programme carves out an important space for learning a kind of cultural capital which is otherwise withering away in UK schools. That is the sense in which our programme contributes to the aim of widening participation, which is what K+ set out to do. We think even a modest difference is worth pursuing. However, we also hope that others will take up similar programmes, to make a bigger difference still.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have offered an overview of the collaborative Philosophers in Schools project, in which the King's College London Philosophy Department and The Philosophy Foundation have come together to offer free philosophy sessions to schools with high rates of free school meals by training undergraduate philosophy students to facilitate philosophical enquiries. We have explained the pedagogical system, Philosophical Enquiry (PhiE), and how the programme has been put together. Finally, we have explored the challenges the programme faces, and the benefits we believe that it brings.

While the programme does come with a range of administrative, financial, and pedagogical challenges, we believe that it is nevertheless a cost-effective way of satisfying the K+ aim of widening participation. It does so, we have argued, by opening a space for developing an important kind of cultural capital, namely the flexibility to individually and collaboratively judge when to follow a rule or standard, and when to challenge it.

We have argued that this kind of cultural capital is deteriorating as schools with high rates of free school meal pupils come to adopt more rigid methods and narrower curricula to achieve a more rudimentary, imitative form of cultural capital, which is focused on teaching internalising the rules that can help pupils climb the social ladder.

Although the effects of our programme are likely modest, we believe they are nonetheless important to pursue and to study.

We have also argued, based on testimony from trainees, that the programme benefits philosophy students who train to facilitate Philosophical Enquiry. They become better listeners, seminar participants, philosophers, and teachers in the process—and they come to see that non-philosophers can sometimes notice things that philosophers have become blind to. The ones who go on to teach philosophy will pass these benefits on to their students too. As such, we believe that the programme is worthwhile and worth pursuing elsewhere too. We hope that this paper can serve as a blueprint for others to take up similar programmes.

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