

Promoting Human Rights through Philosophy with Children

Abstract

While much has been written about children's rights and children's human rights, little appears to have been said about the place children have in the promotion of human rights. This article considers the concept of child in conjunction with citizenship education to take forward children's promotion of human rights. It is proposed that one approach, where individuals explore views and come to this through reason, dialogue and community engagement, would be through Philosophy with Children (PwC). PwC provides space for children to engage in the political, that they might explore questions relevant to their lives as *beings* in society. Such activity would not only prepare children for the political world, since this sees the child as deficit, but would facilitate their engagement politically as children. The article proposes that philosophically deliberative children are required in order to support any society interested in the promotion of human rights.

Keywords

Rights; Philosophy with Children; Citizenship; Participation; Deliberation

1 Introduction

There is, of course, much literature relating to children's rights and their human rights more broadly. Similarly, publications on human rights acknowledge children in society. This literature advocates children's participation and voice, while also asserting the need that children are protected and provided for; they are seen to be important members of society. However, there seems to be something of an omission when considering children, rights, and their participation. Little, if anything, is said about their active participation in the *promotion* of children's rights. One example

where this is evident is in Benjamin Gregg's book *The Human Rights State* (2016) where he progresses his earlier work on human rights as social construction (2012). The goal of this second work is to present an idealised metaphorical state that focuses on its members determining and upholding human rights with a view to advancing 'a free embrace of human rights in the corresponding nation state... [and] to advance human rights as an internal feature of the nation state' (p.11) with a view to embedding these in the political and legislative structures and systems by which the nation state is run. Gregg fails to afford children the opportunity of a place in the development of a state where human rights is a focus and this, then, fails to allow for the opportunity that children may well be in a strong position to promote human rights more generally.

Certainly children are often seen as worthy of being rights holders, but their potential ability to promote rights goes unnoticed or, at best, is under-played. At the same time, human rights education is relatively under-researched. However, with the United Nations World Programme on Human Rights Education and Training (United Nations, 2011; Struthers, 2015) currently in train, and the subsequent growth in awareness of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) since its publication 1989, this has become something of a focus in educational research. In addition, the measures adopted by states ratifying the Convention, such as in the UK with the appointment of children and young people's commissioners, also indicate that this is being addressed to some extent. Lundy (2012) also recognises the UNCRC's potential for encouraging changes in law and policy, though she identifies serious failings on the part of European states in meeting the rights of children within their boundaries. Despite some positive moves towards meeting the goals of the UNCRC, in considering how human rights might be advanced at the broader societal level rather than only within communities of children, children tend to be excluded from the discussions. It is this omission that the present article aims to address.

The first section of the article considers the concept of child. In doing so, some problems of children's status are identified, most notably in the political domain. This leads to a discussion on

children as citizens and then consideration of citizenship education in relation to children's status. The notion of children's deliberative participation is explored in the subsequent section ~~turns~~. As individuals have to learn how to deliberate, the final section of the paper suggests that one approach that might support children's political engagement and, therefore, address their lower status, is the practice of Philosophy with Children.

2 The child

Concepts of child and childhood are important in how we think about human rights and the part they play in our lives. In fact, the concept of child is central to taking forward a rights agenda that is inclusive and sustainable. Gregg (2016) asks, 'How is *child* best defined? At what age does childhood end?' (p.97). This latter question betrays his notion of child and childhood. The very question of when childhood ends exposes a perspective that sees children as 'becoming'. To view the child as becoming suggests that the individual is not a full member of society (see, for example: Kennedy, 1992, 2003, 2006; Friquenon, 1997; Mayall, 2007; Qvortrup 2006, 2007; Cassidy, 2007, 2012a; Cook, 2009).

Stables (2008) helpfully provides three ways in which child is often defined. The first, very simply, is the biological notion, which asserts that we are all children since we all have had parents. The second definition is the age-determined view of child which suggests that one stops being a child at a particular point, such as at eighteen, as outlined in Article 1 of the UNCRC (1989). This age-determined view is one adopted in asking when childhood ends. This view misses the inherent difficulties in making the distinction between child/adult according to age; for example, the age at which one might marry is not necessarily the age at which one may vote or that in Scotland, for instance, someone of sixteen can vote in local elections but those of the same age in the rest of the UK cannot. While a definition determined by age appears at first glance to be an easy approach, it is

messy in law and practice. The third manner in which Stables suggests child might be defined is through the Aristotelian notion of potential. The child is seen here as unfinished, that she is aspiring towards some determined and desirable potential, and that potential is adult. In the manner in which an acorn will always become an oak or a puppy will become a dog, so too, the child will become an adult. In discussing the child as becoming, Kennedy (1992, 2006) also suggests that the child is seen as raw material, that the adult is always travelling with the child until the potential is reached, until adulthood is achieved. The time when one is a child, childhood, is often seen as a time when the individual is being socialised, or trained, for what they will become and the role they will, as adults, play. Shamgar-Handelman (1994) describes this as the period when an individual begins their training, when they are socialised into being the type of individual deemed as desirable for society, or as the 'period of constrained preparation' as Stables (2008, p.4) would put it. In seeing the child as becoming, agency is denied the child.

James *et al.* (1998) are very clear in their assertion that children are social actors. The notion of child as agent has grown as the UNCRC has been embedded in nations' legislation. This does not, though, mean that children's status has become more elevated. Indeed, it has been argued that the view of child presented is one that allows adults to retain control of the social order (Kennedy, 2003; Cook, 2009). Cassidy (2012a), in commenting on the status of children in light of the UN's report cards on progressing the UNCRC in the UK, for example, makes clear that children are seen as other, that they are seen as lesser and that such a perspective denies children as social actors. This articulates with Cook's (2015) suggestion that 'Children can never simply stand for themselves as individuals in the here and now... they wear upon their bodies and dispositions their social worlds' (p.4) and these social worlds are determined by adults. Cassidy (2007) suggests that children are seen as adults minus certain desirable qualities such as being able to reason, to make moral decisions or to express considered views, while it might be more helpful to consider adults as children *with* such qualities or abilities. This, she would argue, allows children to be considered as persons.

Ultimately, the deficit notion of child raises questions around their participation in the world in which they live. Bacon and Frankel (2014) recognise children's lack of status, primarily due to the adult-centric view of children as passive individuals who are not able or competent to engage in the political world they inhabit. They propose that to make the shift towards children as agents a social partnership must be established where it is recognised by all that children have a place in society and that they play a part in determining and shaping the structures within that society. The extent to which children might participate is a challenging one as is clear from the problems in defining *child* by age. The notion that there remains an 'age of reason' that would allow access to participation is equally difficult. It cannot simply be the case that those of five years-old have less of a say or input into what happens in their world than those of twelve or seventeen. Certainly, one might assume that seventeen year-olds are more aware of the world around them, but we cannot take for granted that they will reason well about what they observe or that younger children do not. Reasoning well needs to be taught, as will be explored later in this article when discussing Philosophy with Children. Political participation rights are not removed from older individuals when they progress in their years, even if they display signs of diminished reasoning or poor memory. In proposing a 'politics of difference', Wall (2012) identifies several countries in which children, across the age groups, are active in the decisions made in their communities. He highlights, amongst other practices: New Zealand's 'Agenda for Children' where it is expected that children are consulted on societal issues; South Africa's initiative to include children in public debates and some parliamentary hearings; the committees in the Israeli Knesset that include children as participants; the political consultation in Kazakhstan with children between the ages of ten and fourteen; the Rajasthani children's parliaments for six to fourteen year-olds to contribute to their communities; or the Brazilian children of Barra Mansa who have 'extensive powers over issues concerning children and control parts of the city budget' (p.88).

Child as political citizen has problems akin to child as becoming. The notion of citizenship is such that it relies on preparing the child for engagement in their future world as adults with full participation

rights. Osler and Starkey (2005) seem to recognise this when they assert that ‘When political theorists consider the process of democratisation... little thought is given to the interests and concerns of children’ (p.38). Policy rhetoric and what happens in practice are often at variance; at the same time, children are said to be citizens now, not citizens in waiting, but in practice they are less than enfranchised. This tension demands rethinking of the concept of child on the part of policy makers and when speaking of children and participation it is invariably linked to what happens in education. Education for citizenship in schools tends to be the primary locus for children to learn about political participation.

3 Children and citizenship

The view of children as citizens now is not necessarily how some children see themselves. In a study by Conrad, Cassidy and Mathis (2015) children were asked about the kind of society in which they would like to live. Children in the study, from Switzerland and Scotland, failed to see themselves as social actors in the society they were describing. In effect they colluded with the adult-determined worldview that decisions are made in a realm to which they do not belong. This runs counter to Bacon and Frankel’s (2014) suggestion that children are able to see the interdependence of all people, implying that children will see themselves as part of this interdependence. That said, the children may see the interdependence but position themselves as passive in such a manner that it both structures and perpetuates the status quo.

Citizenship is a political status in the sense that it is conferred – or removed – from an individual. In the context of rights when one is ascribed political rights such as citizenship it becomes problematic for children since they may be discriminated against on the grounds of their lack of political citizenship. Asylum seeking children, for example, are entitled to protection and provision for their health and well-being under the likes of the UNCRC and the UDHR, yet they do not have certain

political rights (Kiwon, 2005). Arguably, children under these circumstances are doubly discriminated against by virtue of them seeking asylum and also in their being children, having decisions made for them with little power in the situation, even taking into account Article 12 from the UNCRC which clearly states that children are entitled to express their views in matters concerning them. While some children – or even some adults – might not fully grasp the politics that have made them flee their countries, all will understand and be able to express in some way their unhappiness, uncertainty or fear in relation to their plight. In making decisions about children, their views should be taken into account and they should be involved in the decision-making process; all to an eye with making them as safe as possible. There is no suggestion that simply because an individual – either adult or child – expresses a view or desire that this is enacted. Authentic participation demands engagement with different perspectives and that certain voices are not silenced. Caution should be exerted to ensure that tokenistic consultation is avoided.

What is problematic in considering children and citizenship in relation to the UNCRC is locating a matter that does not concern them. Biesta *et al.* (2009) would support this view since they note that ‘any aspect of their [children’s] lives can be relevant for their growth as democratic citizens’ (p.10) because children, they say, ‘are part of the social fabric’ (p.20) to which we all belong. Of course, as proposed here, children are not actually able to participate in all aspects of society if they are also expected to undertake their schooling, though they share and inhabit many parts of the social world. Separating issues that belong to adults to the exclusion of children is impossible; children are affected by climate change, by living and working conditions, by the economy, by war, and so on. These are not the exclusive preserve of those over eighteen years of age or who pay taxes or who have reached a point when they are physically mature or any other constructed end point of childhood. While children cannot take up paid employment to effect decision-making in areas such as climate change or the economy or war, they should, at the very least, be involved in deliberation on these issues. This deliberation should not be divorced entirely from the contexts in which adults engage. The examples from Wall (2012) above would suggest that this is possible.

Writing in the 1950s Marshall (1950) explores the links between citizenship and social class. Bacon and Frankel (2014) urge that we look to Marshall's notion of citizenship when considering children and their place as social actors. They suggest that his work has informed much of the thinking around citizenship, where 'citizenship is a formal status which is administered through different social institutions' (p.23). Children, under Marshall's view, are in a state of becoming; they are citizens in waiting, with the aim of education being the formation of the adult (Bacon and Frankel, 2014). Children, using this rationale, are akin to lumps of wax to be moulded for what society may demand of them in the future; they are not seen as beings in and of themselves since education systems are established to prepare children for what they will become – adult. The reason, it seems, that we engage and educate children is not for them as they are now, but for the function they will ultimately perform in society. Considering children in such a manner fails to take account of their agency. Indeed, it marginalises and, therefore, excludes them from society and, if we follow Bacon and Frankel (2014), this runs the risk of encouraging children to perpetuate the structures that maintain this exclusion, as the study by Yyy *et al.* (2015) would suggest. In taking the human rights state forward, it is the education of the child citizen that needs to be addressed, as will be explored further below in relation to education for citizenship and the proposed inclusion of the current practice of Philosophy with Children.

4 Citizenship education

In order to make the cultural change in terms of children's agency and citizenship status, educational systems and the associated pedagogical approaches employed in those systems must be reviewed (Santi and Di Masi, 2011). In one way or another, curricula around the world involve some form of citizenship education. It may be embedded within the curriculum generally such as in the Scottish Curriculum (Education Scotland, 2004) or the Dutch system where it is integrated across the curriculum (Veugelers, 2007). For example, in Scotland the curriculum, *Curriculum for Excellence*

(Scottish Executive, 2004), is grounded in supporting children to *become* successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens. Citizenship should be evidenced in all that teachers do within the curriculum; there are no discrete lessons on how to be a citizen (Biesta, 2008; Kisby, 2009; Cassidy, 2013; Cassidy & Christie, 2014). Biesta (2008), however, suggests that this approach runs the risk of the political dimension of citizenship being overlooked in favour of the social dimension of citizenship, thereby omitting to teach children about the systems and their associated functions in a pluralist democracy. For Veugelers (2007), though, while much focus is given to the globalised society, citizenship curricula are paradoxically more individualistic in nature. He would support Biesta's (2008) assertion that learning about political systems is important, but would hold that this goes beyond understanding the systems to engage with democracy as an integral part of one's life.

An alternative approach to citizenship education often takes the form of civics lessons where pupils learn about the systems and structures that govern their country; they are taught how decisions are made and how laws come into being. Slovenia, for example, has a compulsory subject called Civic and Patriotic Education and Ethics which is designed to develop 'students' political literacy, critical thinking, attitudes and values, as well as their active engagement in social life' (Banjac & Pušnik, 2015, p.754). Banjac and Pušnik (2015) consider the manner in which children learn about citizenship, and note that in the likes of Slovenia the emphasis is on belonging to the European Union community, a broader notion than individuals aligning themselves with a particular nation-state. In comparing the political socialisation of young people in formal education in twenty-seven countries by accessing the CIVED 99 datasets (<http://www.iea.nl/cived.html>), Wiseman *et al.* (2011) also note a shift in citizenship education that involves a move away from a national notion of civics to more global perspectives, though they identify perhaps less conformity in how nations approach civics or citizenship education than in pedagogies associated with the teaching and learning of mathematics and language. UNESCO has a network of associated schools around the world, where

they are 'engaged in fostering and delivering quality education in pursuit of peace, liberty, justice and human development in order to meet the pressing educational needs of children and young people throughout the world' (Shultz & Guimaraes-Iosif, 2012, p.243). This, too, suggests a more global perspective in the approaches taken to citizenship education.

While there is a clear notion of a global citizen, one where the wider community figures largely, there is a problem in determining what kind of citizen this will be. Three kinds of citizens are proposed by Westheimer and Kahne (2004): the personally responsible citizen; the participatory citizen; and the justice-oriented citizen. In exploring different citizenship curricula in the USA, they were able to determine the focus in different schools in terms of the kinds of citizenship they were trying to foster. The personally responsible citizen is one where the individual behaves responsibly, they do things like obeying laws, paying taxes, recycling and volunteering. The notion of responsibility is replicated across nations' citizenship curricula with a seeming emphasis on social order and obedience. Participatory citizens also recognise the importance of community and tend to be more active in taking things forward through organising the likes of charity events or activities designed to improve the community by, for example, organising food drives or cleaning up the neighbourhood. They will also know how governmental structures and agencies function. The third category described is the justice-oriented citizen. These citizens will similarly know how systems work but they will also have a sense of how to effect change by knowing about social movements. They will look for issues around social justice and will critically assess these in order to come to some understanding of their root causes and will be able to explain why specific social problems occur and will recognise the need for debate around issues in a move to establish change. It is interesting that the curricula considered in Westheimer and Kahne's study seem to produce three distinct types of citizen. While there is some overlap in terms of the expected behaviour of the citizens, there are elements missing from each; for example, only the justice-oriented citizens seem to be encouraged to engage in debate or discussion about issues, but, at the same time, the participatory citizen seems to move away from discussion towards getting things done. In the same way that

responsibility is emphasised in the three types of citizen described above, as well as in other countries' curricula, so too is the notion of the individual. The paradox is clear: curriculum is focused on the individual learner as it is the individual who must act, who must be responsible, but at the same time, the individual is part of the wider whole. This atomistic view, that children exist as individuals in a way that adult citizens do not, makes educating for citizenship problematic. There is a need for children to be part of the collective and to see themselves as such.

Part of the problem with education for citizenship is that the concept of the citizen remains ill-defined in curricular documentation and in practice (Cassidy and Christie, 2014). McCall (1991) helpfully offers a list of features necessary for being an effective citizen:

...a person needs to be able to make reasoned judgments concerning the views of others, and needs to be able to modify his or her view if necessary. This requires comprehension skills, which in turn requires skill in analogical reasoning as well as in recognising and evaluating analogies; identifying assumptions; recognising fallacies; being careful about jumping to conclusions; recognising part/whole relationships; always being aware of alternatives; seeking out consistencies and inconsistencies in every sphere of life (p.1).

While such features are not explicitly stated in curricula, the goals of citizenship education are clear. They are designed to support adults' engagement and participation in the society in which they live. In order to achieve this, the teaching and learning must begin at an early stage, the stage when only limited participation is granted, and even then, about issues where there is little impact on the decisions children may wish to make. This is predominantly located in schools and the topics are limited to the likes of the state of the pupils' toilet facilities, the wearing of uniforms or the availability of certain types of snacks on school premises (Cassidy, 2012a). Even in South Africa, where much has been done to address citizenship education since the end of apartheid, there has been concern that the representative council of learners might be too radical (Hunt, 2011). Under

such circumstances, care needs to be taken that participation is not simply tokenistic and restrictive. Shultz and Guimaraes-Iosif (2012) would describe such approaches as 'thin democracy' (p.244). It is not that children are not interested in issues affecting their lives (Head *et al.*, 2015) or that they won't engage with political processes, as evidenced by, for example, by the 2014 Scottish independence referendum when 75% of sixteen and seventeen year-olds who were eligible to vote did so, with 97% of those voters saying they intend to vote in the future (The Electoral Commission, 2014). This would support what Metzger *et al.* (2015) propose when they suggest that there is no problem with young people's citizenship, that rather than it eroding, it is simply changing and that this is facilitated through the rise in mobile technologies and social media. In some ways, they would suggest, young people are more connected than ever.

Wiseman *et al.* (2011) are clear that what the range of citizenship curricula has in common is the emphasis on 'universal principles of personhood, such as human rights and social justice, rather than national belonging' (p.574). Gregg (2016) recognises the need for human rights education, though he situates this within tertiary education. Not only is this too late, it fails to account for children as beings, capable of engaging with the world in which they live and this is a key factor in undermining children's citizenship and the role they might play in evolving a state with human rights concerns at its core. All curricula, no matter how well-intentioned, seem to progress the idea of preparation, that the child remains a citizen-in-waiting, that participation is fine and acceptable within the confines of the school but it should not extend beyond those parameters for they know not what they do. Even those who profess children's participation should be facilitated, for example, Preece (2002), Veugelers (2007) and Biesta *et al.* (2009), the language is still one of preparation, of becoming. An additional point to note is that children will learn to be citizens regardless of the citizenship curriculum in place (Preece, 2002). It is perhaps also worth bearing in mind that totalitarian regimes have citizens and that citizenship is not the preserve of democracies. This, then, demands that we think carefully about the kind of society we wish to engender and how best to

educate children in that context. Given that human rights are more likely to flourish in a democratic society, it is essential that we look towards approaches that will lead to a democracy where the human rights agenda is placed securely at the centre. Democracy, says Veugelers (2007), 'should be aimed at empowering humanity' and this takes us beyond the political, 'it includes all aspects of human behaviour [including dignity,] equality, diversity and justice' (p.110).

5 Deliberative participation

Gregg (2016) is correct that, 'To seek social transformation through civic education is to attempt social change through the practical consequences of ideas for the behaviour of people who hold them' (p.111). He posits that 'better-civic-educated citizens are better able to persuade others to participate in human rights politics' (p.130). What demands consideration is that children should be included in this drive for better-educated citizens and that they, children, may be involved in human rights politics. For this to happen, the earliest stages of formal education should include human rights issues. Human rights, by definition are political; they pertain to individuals living together and the manner in which they co-exist. This is political. By introducing human rights politics to young children as part of the culture, life and learning in schools, it becomes part of their discourse, making it more likely to feature at the front of their thinking and in their corresponding behaviour.

This goes beyond a notion of formal civic education at university level. It is aligned with the suggestion that what is necessary is 'independent thinking' (Gregg, 2016, p. 122) or independent thinkers. This independence of thought comes from living in families and attending schools, a long time before children reach university. It is also worth bearing in mind that not all children will go on to university, though all are expected to participate in society. While Gregg offers the example of post-Authoritarian societies, he might easily be talking about the over-whelming majority of schools and the structures that govern them almost anywhere in the world. Schools are incredibly hierarchical and often socialise children into what Gregg sees as 'traditional education for state

citizenship that emphasizes 'responsibility, conformity, national loyalty and service to the community' (p.122). In South African schools the representative council of learners, for example, have become limited in their activity because the staff want to retain the decision-making powers by shaping the discussions that the pupils are allowed to have (Hunt, 2011). Shultz and Guimaraes-Iosif (2012) recognise these hierarchies when they assert that 'hierarchical structures in schools may need to be shifted' (p. 251) if we are to increase children's participation and move towards the goal of a healthy democratic society. Importantly, though, this will demand that children are included in driving the agenda forward since it does not appear to be the case that they have much input, if any, in the design and development of citizenship education, even in the likes of the UNESCO Associated Schools mentioned previously. While the likes of Veugelers (2007) asserts the need for children to be able to practise their participation in schools, the power dynamics are such that the adults hold the power, meaning that children are rarely, if ever, permitted to participate authentically and so the structures and relationships are maintained. This permission in itself is problematic since it is in the gift of adults in authority rather than power being afforded to individuals across the school population.

Certainly, as Biesta *et al.* (2009) suggest, context and opportunities shape children's citizenship learning and their engagement with democracy, but the same holds for adults. They too are bound by the opportunities available to them and the contexts in which they find themselves. Marginalised adults will also struggle to participate, engage or situate larger citizenship, political issues as central to their lives if they are not afforded access and decision-making powers. The exclusion of children in shaping society mirrors that experienced by women in the past, and sadly, in some places in contemporary society. Indeed, in discussing women's citizenship, Preece (2002) makes the claim that citizenship is gendered because of the perceived roles that men/women are given or permitted in society. This, she says, is a subordination of women. If this is true for women, then it is equally true for children, though it might be suggested that female children are, then, marginalised even

further. Preece is correct when she highlights that 'Terms such as 'dialogue' and 'partnership' are irrelevant for marginalised groups if institutional systems and practices do not create opportunities for these voices to be heard' (p.24). 'The concept of democracy,' says Preece (2002), 'implies that people play a part in shaping how they are governed, through formal politics as well as societies, private interest groups' (p.24) and, it is posited here, this should include children.

Some countries are trying to move away from the traditional and conformist agenda Gregg rejects and more towards what he advocates: 'a pedagogy... of pluralism, individual autonomy, active citizenship, and independent thinking' (p.122) that works toward encouraging the development of a critical, questioning citizenry. The goal of 'informed, educated citizens' (p.108) comes through public deliberation and, if we are serious about the place of children in society, facilitates children's participation by including them in deliberative activity and enabling action on their part. This 'entails that schools themselves can be part of the transition away from authoritarianism' (p.111); and while education for citizenship does not, traditionally, imply a human rights focus, it demands that curriculum bodies, teacher education institutions and teachers themselves, embrace the notion of the activist teacher (Sachs, 2003), that education is a tool for empowerment, for children and the adults that work with them. Education that takes a rights-based approach to education, where children learn about, through and for human rights (Struthers, 2015) is required. While Struthers identifies that this may be a limited way of approaching teaching and learning about human rights, she explains that the tripartite approach to human rights education is indivisible, all three elements are required in concert; it is through this mechanism that children come to understand what human rights are and the values related to these.

Children, in learning through human rights, are taught in a manner that is respectful of their rights and the rights of those teaching them. While not divorced from the other two aspects of human rights education, this third feature should, says Struthers (2015) citing the United Nations

Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training, 'empower persons to enjoy and exercise their rights and to respect and uphold the rights of others' (p.4). Such an approach demands dialogue and democratic classrooms which leads to the third element of human rights education, the learning for human rights. Given that, by and large, children are located in schools, it is arguably in schools that children should be inducted into deliberative practices by seeing and experiencing these human rights and associated deliberation in action. It is not sufficient, as Struthers (2015) argues, to focus on teaching about human rights since such an approach would not allow for contextual information or understanding. We must, asserts Gregg (2016), move away from 'the centralized-state legacy of uniformity in curricula, textbooks, and teaching methods' (p.112) if we are to promote what he calls 'human rights consciousness'. This articulates well with Shultz and Guimaraes-Iosif's (2012) distinction between the active and the activist citizen. While activist citizens 'engage in writing scripts, creating the scene, active citizens follow scripts and participate in scenes that are already created. While activist citizens are creative, active citizens are not' (p.244). They see clearly that citizens should be emancipated, that activist citizens are required in order to promote democracy authentically. This, they note, is established on the foundations of 'critical thinking and the ability to act collectively' (p.242) and that for a school to be considered as democratic it 'should create a dialogical, collaborative and deliberative space' (p.251) for its teachers and, one would argue, its pupils. It is in such a deliberative context, where children might discover the plurality of ideas and beliefs, where values and assumptions can be challenged, where children are taught to think and to practise their thinking and reasoning that the answer may lie in moving towards a state with human rights at its core.

It is in such a deliberative context, where children might discover the plurality of ideas and beliefs, where values and assumptions can be challenged, where children are taught to think and to practise their thinking and reasoning that the answer may lie in growing a state where human rights are core. One approach to such development where individuals come to this through reason, dialogue and

community engagement, where they encounter the ideas of others and can challenge values and assumptions may be through the practice of Philosophy with Children (PwC).

6 Philosophy with Children

There is a range of approaches to PwC, but all grew from Matthew Lipman's Philosophy for Children (P4C) programme in the USA in the 1970s (Lipman *et al.*, 1980; Lipman, 2003; Pardales & Girod, 2006; McCall, 2009; Vansielegheem & Kennedy, 2011). There is a difference between traditional, academic philosophy and PwC (Murriss, 2000). Gazzard (1996) is helpful in making the distinction clear; she proposes that philosophy can be considered in three ways. The first is in the manner in which the likes of Socrates might recognise it, where the individual searches for meaning or wisdom. The second is the one Murriss (2000) describes, the academic philosophy found in universities where students learn the history of ideas. Gazzard's third way of considering, is around the notion of reflective thinking. This might, of course, be aligned to the first way of thinking about philosophy by engendering what Gazzard describes as 'a reflective habit of mind' (p.14). She exemplifies the distinction between philosophical reflection and, say, scientific reflection by suggesting that philosophical deliberation may consider ethical questions around the likes of abortion, such as those related to the mother's and/or the child's rights. This is different, she says, to the kinds of questions that might be asked in scientific inquiry on the same topic, where scientific reflection would consider the likely survival of the foetus or the chances of adoption for an unwanted child.

Put very simply, PwC is an approach to practical philosophy; it involves children engaging in structured philosophical dialogue. The common general feature across the approaches to PwC is that the participants are expected to contribute to the dialogue by making connections with contributions from other participants in the dialogue. They do this by agreeing and/or disagreeing with what they have heard and then proceed to give their reasons for that agreement or

disagreement. The principle is that no one contribution is more important than another, but that all participants work to address the question together with all contributions being valued in the shared search for meaning (Cassidy, 2007; McCall, 2009). The goal of PwC is to promote philosophising in everyday language that is accessible to all participants.

Gazzard (1996) is clear that philosophically reflective thinking should not be a discrete activity, it should articulate with one's life and the manner in which one engages in that life. Indeed, Lunenberg and Korthagen (2009) also see links between one's action and careful deliberation, while Schertz (2007) aims to avoid what he refers to as 'passive empathy' through dialogue by practising PwC, emphasising that the activity promotes cognitive and metacognitive engagement as well as enhancing the affective domain. Indeed, the work of Topping and Trickey (2007) and Trickey (2008) support this claim. While thinking and reasoning is vital in the promotion of human rights, the affective dimension should not be ignored. Schertz (2007) is emphatic that teaching empathy should not be about socialising children in order to maintain the social order, rather, it is necessary, he says, as 'a form of social liberation for the express purpose of sharing feeling states to foster personal and societal growth and transformation' (p. 187). He takes this further to explain that empathy is a 'psychological phenomenon that provides a connective link for moral action' (p.190). This echoes Gazzard's (1996) earlier suggestion that there is a need for reflective thinking and Cassidy's (2012b) proposition that engaging in philosophical activity such as that promoted by PwC will support children to 'live well'. In living well it is anticipated that human rights will be respected and promoted and that a cohesive society will be formed.

The cognitive cannot and should not be separated from one's actions, regardless of one's place in society. Schertz (2007) suggests that PwC might be the approach required to bridge the link between moral contemplation and the lived experience. This is important given that we do not exist abstracted from people and their moral codes and reflections. What must be borne in mind, however, is that it is not enough simply to assert that children ought to engage in moral reasoning or

deliberative thinking in general, there needs to be structures in place, whether in the form of the curriculum or the pedagogy employed by teachers. A dialogic space needs to be established where children can engage in discussing ideas where they are free to explore the plurality of ideas in order to critique their own ideas and those of others before determining what they think, how they will act, and ultimately take their deliberations further. What is proposed is a cyclical framework, not one where individuals come to conclusions and stay there; for a deliberative society to function, it demands continual checking and re-checking of ideas. Veugelers (2007) recognises that for a democracy to work it 'needs citizens that are socially aware and autonomous [that]... Democracy must be won repeatedly and maintained' (p.110); he sees it as a process and this process can only be won and perpetuated if it is continually interrogated by its deliberative citizens, regardless of age.

In creating his approach to PwC, Lipman (Lipman, 2003; Murris, 2008) was clear that teaching children to philosophise had a role to play in advancing democracy and considered it as essential that citizens are able to 'think flexibly but responsibly' (Lipman, 2003, p.208) and that if they cannot do so then they are easy prey to conformity, propaganda and brainwashing. In a study to explore the use of PwC to promote democracy, Bartels *et al.* (2015) claim that supporting children to philosophise is an effective way of ensuring children engage with other children and that this engagement is critical, it encourages them to think collaboratively and that this suggests an opportunity for them to practise democracy. Bartels *et al.* (2015) see PwC as part of citizenship education, as do Garratt and Piper (2011) who propose that introducing philosophy into the curriculum is likely to raise children's levels of political and social awareness.

Gregory (2008) suggests that children should be encouraged 'to formulate their own judgements about what is what, and how things relate, and how their corner of the world could be more just, more beautiful, more meaningful' (p.7); this is part of what it means to engage fully in society. A

complement to this is described by Sharp, in Gregory's (2011) Mendham Dialogue when she explains that what Lipman had in mind when creating a program of philosophy for children was

the art of making judgments that might improve that [everyday] experience... as a quest to help us to lead qualitatively better lives... You've got to be curious and questioning [about different kinds of meaning], and know how to think about them carefully, and to dialogue about them with others who think and feel differently (p.200).

This, for Lipman (2003), is crucial; philosophy is 'not just something we use to practice thinking; it's chosen deliberately to help children recognise those kinds of meaning' (Gregory, 2011, p.204).

Elsewhere Gregory (2008) lists the demands on children participating in PwC; they are involved in:

creating hypotheses, clarifying their terms, giving and evaluating reasons, offering examples and counter examples, questioning assumptions, and drawing inferences, as well as social practices like sharing perspectives, listening attentively, helping others make their point, and challenging and building on other people's ideas (p.8).

These are all essential in taking forward democratic citizenship of children – and adults – and articulate well with McCall's (1991) list, above, of what is required in being an effective citizen. In addressing the need for promoting human rights, in advancing democracy and participation of all, the features outlined by McCall are undeniably important and PwC in its approach to shared meaning making through a community of philosophical inquiry appears to be an effective way of facilitating desirable citizen behaviour, but in a manner that does not see children as other, as deficient (Cassidy, 2007).

7 Conclusion

What is hoped is that in engaging philosophically with the wider world around them, by asking questions about that world and inquiring into the questions in collaboration with others, that a sense of the political is engendered, that children become more political and that this will in turn lead to action (Cassidy, 2007, 2012b). It is crucial that one recognises the likes of anomalies, disruption, injustice in order to challenge them; if one fails to see these issues and engage in the associated arguments, then it is not likely that one will ever work to address them in any positive sense, the injustices will continue to be perpetrated and perpetuated. Shultz and Guimaraes-Iosif (2012) are correct to stress that a healthy, democratic society demands that individuals learn 'to participate and deliberate in a more emancipatory and humane way' (p.251). This will support individuals to enact their citizenship and become the activist authors of scenes Schultz and Guimaraes-Iosif describe. If, as Biesta *et al.* (2009) suggest, 'young people learn from the opportunities for action, participation and reflection that are afforded by the practices and communities in their everyday lives' (p.21) then we have to ensure that such opportunities exist. Of course, children must be inducted into their participation; they cannot simply be expected to know how to participate. Their induction may happen in a range of fora, but given that the majority of children at least attend primary schools, deliberate induction may be situated in schools. Adopting a rights-based approach to this induction, children should learn through a democratic approach. They ought to be consulted and included in decision-making processes within the school. They should be given opportunities to engage in dialogue to explore their ideas and the ideas of others. Beyond the school environment children might, as suggested above, be included in citizen juries where they, as in school, are able to contribute to the debate about the ways in which their society should be run.

What is essential is that the induction cannot be seen as a preparation for later participation but that they are seen as novice participants, that they learn about their world and become better able to articulate and reason in order to be better immersed in their participation. This is as true for adults as for children, it is merely the case that assumptions have been made that by growing older one

becomes more competent or adept and should, therefore, be more entitled to participate. Simply because one is not as adept as another does not mean that the individual concerned should be excluded; for instance, a teacher or plumber are equally entitled to express their views and to cast their votes on political issues related to a government's education policy. It may reasonably be assumed that the teacher is better situated than the plumber to understand the implications of the manifesto, but the plumber is not precluded in airing her/his views. Similarly, children are not perhaps as competent or knowledgeable in every matter, but they, like the plumber discussing educational issues, will have views. In harnessing these views, by including children in the dialogue, they will be more politicised and more likely to engage with the world in which they live. In so engaging they should come to recognise the interconnectedness and interdependency required for a society to function. Additionally, in engaging in dialogue they will further appreciate the need for community and collaboration and see how this can work to promote a common goal. They, through interrogating issues, will recognise what is good, or right or fair, and will use this thinking to work for the betterment of society. This critical reflection, in effect, will support the promotion of human rights if, as Garratt and Piper (2011) hope, it 'disturbs and radically unsettles all hierarchic and anti-democratic conceptions and practices of citizenship education and learning in schools' (p.73). They see dialogic philosophical inquiry as 'inhabiting a wider social and cultural space' (p.73), a wider social and cultural space, it could be argued, to which children currently have access.

Indeed, Garrett and Piper (2011), as Cassidy (2007) previously, propose that community groups of philosophical inquiry should be established, that there is scope for people to mix across ages and backgrounds. Through philosophising, or deliberating, participants seek understanding to inform their lives. This, thinks Garrett and Piper (2011) may be a successful approach to enhancing citizenship and ensuring political engagement for the whole rather than the individual, that as a social practice moves 'away from a naturalized politics and towards a more critical and inclusive, cosmopolitan conception' (p.74) of citizenship. While school is a good place to begin the induction

of children into philosophical inquiry as logistically it is simple because they are in regular attendance, it is vital that citizenship education moves beyond the confines of the school.

Children – and their teachers – should see citizenship as more than a subject or curricular area and recognise the relevance of their deliberations in order that they might more fully engage as participative citizens with other citizens. This would perhaps satisfy Biesta *et al.* (2009) who emphasise that enhancing the citizenship curriculum is not the dilemma, rather it is ‘the actual condition of young people’s citizenship’ (p.21), and this is where the future of democracy lies. If, as Biesta *et al.* (2009) contend, schools are seen by young people as non-democratic, hierarchical structures, then this will reinforce their feelings of disempowerment and sense of limited agency. They may, in fact, not even sense their disempowerment; they may simply collude with the structures and hierarchies in place because they have not been taught how to question and deliberate, they have not had their participation facilitated. Their status as less than full members of society is reinforced. If participation is denied then so too are voice, democracy, and even personhood where, as Gregg (2016) suggests, we ‘recognise the individual as someone worthy of human rights’ (p.86). Drawing on Dewey, Garratt and Piper (2011) recognise the importance of social learning that is active rather than passive and that positively affirms ‘the principle of democracy and human rights, striving to encourage the development of more equal and respectful relations between adults and young people’ (p.80). Given Tremmel, Mason, Dimitrijoski and Godli’s (2015) prediction that the change in age demographic will ‘go hand in hand with a shift in power between generations’ and as a consequence, ‘the younger generation will witness the diminution of its societal, economic and political power’ (p.1), it is important that we focus on supporting children’s participation and civic engagement. Bacon and Frankel (2014) suggest that a social partnership between adults and children is important in taking forward human rights. In short, the role and place of the child in society, particularly one advocating the promotion of human rights, is key.

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