The effects of a teacher development programme based on Philosophy for Children

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Declaration

I declare that *The effects of a teacher development programme based on Philosophy for Children* is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university, and that all sources have been acknowledged.

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Date:…….

Abstract

The study explores the effects of a teacher development programme based on Philosophy for Children. South Africans have emerged from a traumatic experience of years of oppression. Both the new Constitution of South Africa and its new education policies are in agreement about fundamental aspects of individual and social interaction, namely, respect for life, equality, protection of freedom and the right to an opinion. One of the challenges facing education in South Africa is that the school curriculum has to promote the development of these values through creative and critical thinking. The theorists, Jean Piaget, and Lev Vygotsky inform our understanding of cognitive development with the important notions of active involvement, mediated learning and the development of thinking skills. Many programmes have been developed to assist learners in this regard. One such programme is Philosophy for Children. This qualitative study locates Philosophy for Children, and the locally developed material, *Stories for Thinking*, in Vygotskian theory and explores its application within a South African context. Group interviews, with 11 teachers trained in the theory and practice of the programme, are analysed and interpreted using thematic analysis and discourse analysis, within an interpretive research approach. Three research sub-questions are highlighted for the purpose of thematic analysis. These are: (1) were the primary school teachers who attended the training programme aware of any changes that had occurred in themselves on a personal or professional level? (2) to what extent did the teachers find the *community of inquiry* processes relevant to the curriculum? (3) what changes, if any, did teachers observe in their learners? Discourse analysis is used to explore the interviews through the filter of key elements of a *community of inquiry* as presented by Gregory (2005). The discourse analysis was informed by the research sub-question: to what extent did the teachers display the key elements of the *community of inquiry*? A tentative conclusion to the research findings is that the locally developed material, modelled on Philosophy for Children, has the potential to positively affect teachers both professionally and personally and to effect positive changes in their learners. The core of the recommendations is that while teachers who were interviewed have meaningful insights into the mechanisms of Philosophy for Children and *Stories for Thinking*, they nevertheless require on-going support in this approach for a further deepening and understanding of the meta-cognitive operations of the approach.

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This mini-thesis forms a crucial part of a journey that I have travelled as a Master of Psychology student in the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences, University of the Western Cape. The study is located, primarily, within an educational psychology field as the category that I have specialised in is Educational Psychology. My first acknowledgement goes to the staff of both the faculties of Community and Health Sciences and Education.

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This study has emerged out of a South African context, a context that is alive with possibilities and grappling with the challenges of its not so distant history. It is this juxtaposing vibrancy that has created the motivating force behind this study.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Introduction

This chapter explores the context and rationale of this study. It then outlines the aims, theoretical framework, research methodology and scope of the study.

1.2. Context and rationale

South Africans have emerged from a traumatic experience of years of oppression. One aspect of that oppression was the attempt to silence and disempower the minds of young and old from thinking critically and creatively. This pervasive and pernicious (King and Van den Berg, 1991) method of governance, influenced most aspects of life, including that of education. The educational philosophy at the time (roughly 1948 – 1994), Christian National Education (CNE), viewed the child as a "non-adult… en route to that point where he will live the life of a proper adult" (Ashley, 1989, p. 10). The role of the teacher, on the other hand, was "one of an authority, who…is not afraid to exert authority over the young" (Ashley, 1989, p. 11). These brief comments highlight the chasm that was created between learner and educator: the 'non-adult' being moulded by the authoritative 'adult'. The perception of the child was that he/she should not express an opinion that was not approved by the authoritative adult or teacher.

The present political era, ushered in by the democratic elections of 1994, is characterised by the new Constitution (1996) and the emergence of a new educational philosophy, namely, Outcomes Based Education with its new curriculum, Curriculum 2005, and its most recent version in the form of the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) (Department of National Education, 2002a). According to the

RNCS document for grades R – 9 (Life Orientation), education and the curriculum have an important role to play in realising the aims of the Constitution. Furthermore, the curriculum aims to "develop the full potential of each learner as a citizen of a democratic South Africa" (Department of National Education, 2002b, p. 1). Within the RNCS framework, teachers are envisaged as people who are "key contributors to the transformation of education in South Africa… dedicated and caring, …mediators of learning, …scholars, researchers and lifelong learners…" (Department of National Education, 2002b, p. 3). In this same document, the kind of learner envisaged is one who espouses the values of

> democracy, equality, human dignity, life and social justice. The curriculum seeks to create a lifelong learner who is confident and independent. Literate, numerate, multi-skilled, compassionate, with a respect for the environment and the ability to participate in society as a critical and active citizen. (p. 3)

The crucial question is, 'how will these important thinking and moral qualities of citizenship be encouraged and developed?'

One of the challenges facing education in this country is that the majority of the teachers who are required to implement the RNCS have not had pre-service education and training (PRESET) in the OBE philosophy or experience of this form of education during their own schooling. Teachers need to be exposed, continually, to ways of working within, not only a new socio-political dispensation, but also an era of a new educational philosophy. This era requires of teachers to be creative and critical thinkers so that they, in turn, can be mediators of creative and critical thinking. On-going in-service education and training (INSET) programmes are needed to equip teachers for their role in facilitating the growth of young minds placed in their care. This study

explores one way in which teachers can be assisted in making their classrooms places of inquiry and discussion: where the tools of thinking are developed.

1.3. Aim of the study

The aim of this study is to investigate the effects of a teacher development programme (see Appendix F) based on Philosophy for Children (P4C) and to explore the perceptions that teachers have of the changes in themselves and their learners that could be attributed to exposure to Philosophy for Children and the locally developed material. The expected outcome of the programme that the teachers attended was that it would stimulate them to use the Philosophy for Children methodology, in the form of the locally developed material, within the learning environments that they manage. The objective of this study was to investigate the effects of the above mentioned development programme in the following specific areas of investigation: The first area of investigation explored whether the primary school teachers who participated in the programme were aware of any changes that had occurred in themselves on a personal and professional level. The second area of investigation explored the extent to which teachers found the *community of inquiry* processes to be relevant to the curriculum. The third area of investigation explored the changes, if any, that these teachers had observed in their learners. The fourth area of investigation explored the extent to which teachers displayed the key elements of the *community of inquiry* during the interviews in which they participated.

1.4. Theoretical framework

The study is located within developmental psychology, and more specifically within cognitive development. Two of the major theories in the field of developmental

psychology are those of Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky. Piaget emphasised that children pass through a series of four cognitive developmental stages before they construct the ability to perceive, reason and understand in mature and rational ways. Piaget appears to argue against the possibility that children could be taught cognitive skills that they did not, as yet, have within their present or expected stage of development. A fundamental difference between Piaget and Vygotsky hinges around the notion of stages of development. Vygotsky suggests that development is much more complex and that its very nature changes as it unfolds (Driscoll, 2005). Vygotsky also argues that the capacity to learn through instruction is itself a fundamental feature of human intelligence (Wood, 1990). While Piaget offers a comprehensive and substantial theoretical frame, the present study is embedded within a Vygotskian model of viewing cognitive development, most notably, because it highlights the role played by adults (teachers, parents, educators), peers and others in fostering and enhancing cognitive development in children, through communication, language and social interaction. This Vygotskian perspective, which has also been called the mediation of learning in social contexts, with peers and others, was seen by an American professor of philosophy, Matthew Lipman, as having a theoretical 'fit' with the programme that he was developing in Philosophy for Children (Lipman, 1991; Sutcliffe, 2003; Sutherland, 1992).

1.5. Research methodology

Eleven of the 24 teachers who attended a Philosophy for Children programme during 2004 participated in one of three separate group interviews. The transcripts of the interviews form the basis for the analysis. The study was undertaken within a qualitative framework. The methodological tradition of inquiry used was the

interpretative approach. Thematic analysis was used to explore and interpret themes that emerge during the analysis of the group interviews. Discourse analysis was used to explore the interviews through the filter of key elements of a *community of inquiry* as presented by Gregory (2005).

1.6. Structure of the study

The study is divided into five chapters. The present chapter gives a brief introduction to the study. Chapter 2 presents an overview of the theories and practices of cognitive development, with particular reference to the theories of Piaget and Vygotsky, and the work of Matthew Lipman. Chapter 3 explores the research methodology employed in the investigation, which is an interpretive approach within a qualitative research method. Chapter 4 focuses on the actual analysis of the group interviews that were conducted through two techniques of analysis, namely, thematic analysis and discourse analysis. Chapter 5 concludes with an overall discussion and recommendations for further studies in the field of teacher development programmes based on Philosophy for Children.

1.7. Terminology, definitions and abbreviations

Community of inquiry –A *community of inquiry* is a social enterprise, which requires participants to share their own perspectives, listen to one another, read faces, challenge and build on one another's thinking, look for missing perspectives and reconstruct their own ideas. Participating in a *community of inquiry* engages young people in important cognitive moves such as creating hypotheses, clarifying their terms, asking for and giving good reasons, offering examples and counter examples, questioning each other's

assumptions, drawing inferences, and following the inquiry where it leads (IAPC, 2006).

Stories for Thinking – the name given for the locally developed materials based on the ideas and philosophy of Philosophy for Children.

CNE – Christian National Education

IAPC – Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children

INSET – In-service education and training

OBE – Outcomes Based Education

P4C – Philosophy for Children

PRESET – Pre-service education and training

RNCS – Revised National Curriculum Statement

SFT – Stories for Thinking

WCED – Western Cape Education Department

ZPD – Zone of proximal development

Chapter 2: Theories and practices of cognitive development

2.1. Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of selected theories and practices of cognitive development, with a specific focus on the ideas of Piaget and Vygotsky. A particular programme, Philosophy for Children (P4C), which has strong links to Vygotsky's ideas, is then elucidated. This is followed by a review of literature about Philosophy for Children with particular emphasis on issues relating to children, teachers and the curriculum. Research findings related to the Philosophy for Children programme and pertinent to the present study are then highlighted. The chapter concludes with a focus on the relevance of Philosophy for Children for South Africa and an outline of local initiatives.

2.2. Cognitive development and its location within psychology

Cognitive development falls within a branch of psychology referred to as developmental psychology. This branch of psychology is generally concerned with psychological phenomena of all kinds in infants, children, adolescents, adults and older people. Developmental psychology is primarily concerned with changes that occur across the lifespan, particularly development of perception, cognition, language, skills, moral attitudes and social relationships (Colman, 2003). It is apparent that people grow, adapt and change through physical development, personality development, socio-emotional development, cognitive development or thinking, and language development (Slavin, 1994). Some of the major theories in the field of developmental psychology are those of Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky (cognitive development), Erik Erikson (personal and social development), and Lawrence Kohlberg (moral development).

This study focuses on one aspect of developmental psychology, namely, cognitive development. The two theorists whose work most directly informs this study are Jean Piaget (1896-1980) and Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934). Both of these theorists have explored, extensively, how children develop cognitively.

2.3. Piaget and Vygotsky

Both Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky were born in the year 1896. While Piaget lived to the age of 84, Vygotsky unfortunately died at the age of 38. Piaget read, for the first time, the works of the Russian psychologist, in the 1960s. Cohen (2002) reports that Piaget reflected his disappointment of never having been able to talk to Vygotsky, as their theories revealed some interesting contrasts. The main contrast was that Piaget is seen as a structuralist and stage theorist, while Vygotsky is mostly viewed as a socially oriented theorist.

Piaget emphasised that children pass through a series of four cognitive developmental stages before they construct the ability to perceive, reason and understand in mature and rational ways. The sensorimotor stage (birth to 2 years) is characterised by behaviour that is goal-directed, with goals moving from concrete to abstract. The preoperational stage (2 to 7 years) is characterised by the acquisition of semiotic functioning and the engagement in symbolic and language games, and a difficulty in seeing another person's point of view and where thought and communication are egocentric. The concrete operational stage (7 to 11 years) is characterised by the performance of true mental operations and solving of concrete problems in a logical fashion, and a difficulty in thinking hypothetically and in systematically considering all aspects of a problem

(Driscoll, 2005; Rice, 2001). Driscoll (2005, p. 197) reflects on this stage when stating that,

> Despite their ability to solve many different kinds of problems, concrete operational children still cannot think hypothetically. In other words, they would have difficulty thinking about and discussing possible answers to the question, 'If people could know the future, would they be happier than they are now?' (Siegler, 1986).

The formal operational stage (11 years and up) is characterised by the ability to solve abstract problems in systematic and logical fashion, and the ability to reason hypothetically and develop concerns over social issues (Driscoll, 2005). Siegler (1986, cited in Driscoll, 2005, p. 198) remarks that,

> This leads at least some of them to think about alternative organizations of the world and about deep questions concerning the nature of existence, truth, justice, and morality.

Unlike Vygotsky, who died at a relatively young age and consequently left much of the elaboration of his theoretical claims to others, Piaget offers us a comprehensive and valuable theoretical framework from which to explore cognitive development. Crucial for the understanding of how Piaget viewed the process of development are the concepts, assimilation, accommodation and equilibrium. Cohen (2002, p. 36) explores aspects of Piagetian thought when writing that,

> As the baby starts to move itself and objects, it slowly acquires sensory motor co-ordination and then schemas. A schema is a design or a mental representation. Piaget used two concepts to explain the development of these schemas - assimilation and accommodation.

To assimilate means to take in information, sounds, sights, smells, and touch sensations. Assimilation, in turn, is constrained by the child's stage of development (Wood, 1990). Accommodation occurs when the environment acts on the organism and, as a result, the organism has to re-adjust and re-organise itself. Wood (1990) notes that every act of assimilation involves an element of accommodation. Piaget uses this term to refer to the changes, often but not always minor ones, that have to be made to pre-existing

schemes of activity in order to make possible the assimilation of a new experience.

Sutherland (1992, p. 26) explores the concept *equilibrium* when stating that,

> At any one stage… accommodation or assimilation dominates for a while and is then supplanted by the other. Eventually, an *equilibrium* is reached for that stage by the process of *equilibration*. The child is operating at full efficiency for that stage.

It is only when the child is 'operating at full efficiency for that stage' that he or she is ready to be shown or explained things that are appropriate for that particular stage.

Wood, (1990, p. 24) remarks that,

> Attempts to question, show or explain things to children before they are mentally 'ready' cannot foster *development* though the child may *learn* some 'empty' procedures. Indeed premature teaching and questioning may demoralize or frustrate a child who can't begin to understand what he is being 'taught'.

This statement has huge implications for the understanding of how children develop cognitively. Does it mean that 'genuine' intellectual competence is in fact a manifestation of a child's largely unassisted activities (Wood, 1990)? If so, does it mean that attempts to draw children beyond what they know is a futile exercise? Another implication of Piaget's theory is that teaching can only influence the course of intellectual development if the child is able to assimilate and accommodate what is said and done. A further implication of Piaget's theory is that children have to reach a particular cognitive developmental stage for them to be able to reason about abstract matters and think philosophically. Siegler's comment, quoted earlier, is evidence of this thinking, namely, that children who are more or less between 7 and 11 years old and functioning in the concrete operational stage would have difficulty interacting with a philosophical question such as, 'If people could know the future, would they be happier than they are now?' (Siegler, 1986, cited in Driscoll, 2005, p. 197). These latter questions and statements form the crux of the present study. One of the questions that this study raises is: Can children engage meaningfully with philosophical issues from

their first years in primary education, and can teachers be trained to assist them to do so?

Piaget's stage theory has not gone without criticism. Gardner and others have argued that different cognitive skills develop at different and unrelated speeds (Cohen, 2002). This criticism emerged despite Piaget's sentiment that, for him, chronological age at which the stage occurs was less essential than the necessary succession of stages: one must, according to Piaget, have passed through each stage to reach the next. Criticism has also come from within the stage theory school: Sprinthall and Sprinthall (1990, p. 117) reflect on the work of Patricia Arlin, a researcher at the University of British Columbia, who was exploring "the possibility of postformal operations as a new and more advanced stage". This comes from the sentiment that the *formal operations* stage may be too limited. Another criticism has been that Piaget ignored the social and cultural influences on development. Green (1998, p. 43) remarks that Piagetian theory "is, with some justification, said to focus on the individual and to pay insufficient attention to social and cultural influences on development". A further criticism, and what is most applicable to the present study, is that Piaget appeared to argue against the possibility that children could be taught cognitive skills that they did not, as yet, have within their present or expected stage of development. Vygotsky, through the development of the concept, 'zone of proximal development', which will be discussed below, presents a contrasting viewpoint.

A fundamental difference between Piaget and Vygotsky hinges around Piaget's stages of development. Vygotsky suggested that development is much more complex and that

its very nature changes as it unfolds (Driscoll, 2005). Vygotsky (1962, p. 115) wrote that,

> These schemes do not take into account the reorganisation of the process of development itself, by virtue of which the importance and significance of any characteristic is continually changing in the transition from one age to another. This excludes the possibility of breaking childhood down into separate epochs by using a single criterion for all ages. Childhood development is a very complex process which cannot be fully defined in any of its stages solely on the basis of one characteristic.

Vygotsky argued that the capacity to learn through instruction is itself a fundamental feature of human intelligence (Wood, 1990). Fisher (1991, p. 136) expands on this notion by clarifying Vygotsky's contention that the

> instruments of language and culture help promote the growth of mental structures. Peers, teachers and parents challenge a child's cognitive approach to a program and support the child by providing a scaffolding of understanding and so extend the child's thinking.

Peers, teachers and parents also challenge the child's thinking about concepts, beliefs and ideas. This notion of scaffolding is directly related to one of the most important Vygotskian contributions to the understanding of how learning and thinking occur, that is, the 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD). Wood (1990, p. 24) explains Vygotsky's notion of the ZPD by asserting that "When adults help children to accomplish things that they are unable to achieve alone, they are fostering the development of knowledge and ability". Furthermore, "readiness, in Vygotskian terms, involves not only the state of the child's existing knowledge but also his capability to learn with help" (Wood, 1990, p. 25). Vygotsky places a far greater emphasis, than Piaget, on the role of communication, language, social interaction and instruction in determining the path of development. What makes a Vygotskian theoretical framework most relevant for this study is that it highlights the role played by adults (teachers, parents, educators), peers and others in fostering and enhancing cognitive development in children, through communication, language and social interaction. This Vygotskian perspective, which

has also been called the mediation of learning in social contexts, with peers and others, was seen by an American professor of philosophy, Matthew Lipman, as having a theoretical 'fit' with the programme that he was developing in Philosophy for Children. Sutcliffe (2003, p. 73) reflects that "Lipman was much taken with the idea of internalising social/ public cognitive practices". Sutherland (1992, p. 42) reinforces this notion when reflecting that "a child's intellectual development cannot be considered in a social vacuum". Sutherland (1992, p. 42) continues with this train of thought when stating that,

> The child's classmates, friends and parents must be taken into account if a realistic picture is to be painted. Cognitive development takes place as a result of mutual interaction between the child and those people with whom he has regular social contact.

One of the social spaces in which regular contact does occur is the classroom situation. It is also a place where the teacher, as the facilitator of the learning environment, can play a crucial role in cognitive development. She or he can do this through creating an environment that is conducive to a mutually caring, collaborative and creative learning experience for herself and the children in her care, and by active mediation of the tools of thinking that have developed in human culture. Sutcliffe (2003, p. 74) contends that, within this framework, the teacher can be thought of

> not simply as the instructor or facilitator of the learning of a large and disparate set of individuals, but rather as the potential creator of a 'community of enquiry' in a classroom, in which individual students can take a shared, active and reflective role in the development of their own understanding.

The idea and practice of a 'community of inquiry' plays a central role throughout this study. Philosophy for Children is one programme that can assist the teacher in this essential task.

2.4. Philosophy for Children (P4C)

Philosophy for Children, or P4C, as it is called in its abbreviated form, was created and developed, initially, by Matthew Lipman, a professor of philosophy at Columbia University in the United States of America (Fisher, 1991). Lipman recalls that he observed that his own children who were about 10 or 11 years old at the time, in the late 1960s to early 1970s, were not given the instruction in reasoning that he thought they needed (Brandt, 1988). In addition, Lipman was, at the time, teaching logic at college level and "became aware of the low level of thinking skills that students were bringing to the college" (Fisher, 1991, p. 156). Lipman remembers this period when saying:

> I felt that I wasn't accomplishing very much with my students because it was too late. They should have had instruction in reasoning much earlier. So I decided I would do something to help children at the middle school level learn to reason. I realised that the principles of logic would have to be presented in an interesting way, so I decided to write a novel in which the characters would be depicted discovering these principles and reflecting on how they could be applied to their lives (Brandt, 1988, p. 34).

The writing, development, reading and discussion of stories, as a catalyst for dialogue, have remained at the core of Philosophy for Children. It is through dialogue, where the classroom or learning environment becomes a *community of inquiry*, that children develop the art of reasoning in critical, creative, caring and collaborative ways. The connection between Philosophy for Children and Vygotsky is embedded within this notion of collaborative dialogue: where children develop the confidence to reason and explore a range of pertinent and often 'taken for granted' issues at a level that they would probably not have done had they been alone. Fisher (1991, p. 157) reflects on this notion when stating that "As Vygotsky and others have shown, children are able to function at an intellectually higher level when in collaborative or cooperative situations". Lipman (1987, p. 94) endorses this thinking by saying that "we are never so moved to think for ourselves as when we find ourselves engaged in shared inquiry with others".

Lipman was influenced by a number of philosophers and psychologists, in addition to Vygotsky, while developing P4C. When interviewed about this by Naji (2005, p. 25), Lipman remarked that the greatest influences came from,

> *John Dewey*, for his intense sympathy for the child, his emphasis upon thinking in the classroom, and his seeing the importance of artistic creativity in getting the child to be emotionally expressive.
> *Justus Buchler*, American philosopher in the 20th century, for his important studies in the nature of human judgment, and for his understanding of the role of judgment in the education of the child.
> *Lev Vygotsky*, 20th century Russian psychologist, who recognized the connections between classroom discussion and children's thinking, between the child and the society by means of and through the teacher, and between the language of the adult world and the growing intelligence of the child.
> *Jean Piaget*, 20th century psychologist and educator, whose work illuminated the relationship between thinking and behavior.
> *Gilbert Ryle*, 20th century British philosopher, who analysed the connections between language, teaching and self-teaching.
> *George Herbert Mead*, American philosopher and social psychologist, whose work dealt almost exclusively with the social nature of the self.
> *Ludwig Wittgenstein*, 20th century Austrian-British philosopher, who explored with enormous sensitivity the complex social relationships that are expressed through the subtleties of language.

What is clear from the above quotation is that much thought went into the development of Philosophy for Children, from the study of the child and society, the study of human judgement, the teacher as the mediator of learning, the relationship between thinking and behaviour, to the dynamics surrounding language. Much writing and thinking have also gone into the reflection of two aspects pertinent to this study, namely, the relationship between children and philosophy, and between teachers and philosophy. The following section attempts to highlight pertinent literature in these fields of study.

2.5. A review of pertinent literature in Philosophy for Children

In this section a review of literature about Philosophy for Children with particular emphasis on issues relating to philosophy and the child, and philosophy and the teacher is explored.

Gregory (2002, p. 11) addresses the aspect of *philosophy and the child* by asking the question: 'Are philosophy and children good for each other?' He proposes that philosophy is good for children for the following reasons: "The first is as an education in standard tropes of good thinking….Second, philosophy…offers children the experience of collective inquiry….Third, philosophy provides children the opportunity to pursue meaning for themselves….". Gregory (2002, p. 11) also proposes three ways in which children are good for philosophy: "The first is simply that philosophy needs good practitioners….Second, insofar as philosophy involves constructing meaning from common and central human experience, and since so much of our experience is shared with children in our lives, it would be irresponsible for us to inquire into the meaning of that experience without including our children's perspectives….Third,…that children on the whole are more susceptible than adults to philosophical wonder". Gregory (2002) offers a rich array of ideas and statements some of which have been mentioned by other writers. Kennedy (1999), for example, contributes to the notion of children and *philosophical wonder* when he focuses on the meaning of children as philosophers from a social constructionist perspective when referring to issues of dominance, which have privileged children to see reality differently to that of the dominant culture, namely, adults and more particularly adult males:

> When there are conditions of domination, the dominated are marginalised by the dominator's personal, interpersonal , and social constructs. To the extent that those colonized by Eurocentric patriarchy: women, persons of color, children live at the margins of the adult white male construction of knowledge, their relationships to that construct is always potentially transgressive. Once that construct comes into question – as it has in our century – these "valuable 'strangers' to the social order," or "outsiders within," are recognized as carrying an "epistemic privilege" as a result of their location in the social and natural world. Since they are not "natives" to the dominant culture, it is assumed that not only do they not see things that natives do, but also that they see things which natives don't [Harding 1991] (Kennedy, 1999, p. 353).

Kennedy (1999, p. 356) elaborates on this train of thought when stating that:

> Being a polymorph, the child is by no means a master of this reality, nor an expert, but simply a native. The adult, in becoming an expert at the specialized epistemologies of his culture, his epoch, his class, and his gender, is no longer a native of this reality. But the transitional is the original space of philosophy, the space called wonder…the space of dialogue and play.

In terms of the notion that "philosophy provides children the opportunity to pursue meaning for themselves" (Gregory, 2002, p. 11), Lipman (1991, p. 2) agrees by relating that it is his hunch that "children are primarily intent on obtaining meaning". On the issue of which children are capable of doing philosophy, Lipman responded that "Any child that is capable of using language intelligibly is capable of schooling and growth, and is therefore capable of the kind of discourse and conversation that philosophy involves" (Naji, 2005, p. 26). Slade (1997, p. 2) agrees with this sentiment when stating that her "conception is that children are naturally philosophical, with a passion for abstract investigation of ideas". On the issue of the potential efficacy of Philosophy for Children, Lipman (1998, p. 2) reflects that "It is especially important to recognize that philosophy in the school curriculum can directly improve the quality of life in a democratic society". Green (1997, p. 20) adds to this sentiment when reflecting that Lipman also "maintains that Philosophy for Children is a powerful tool for moral education". Explanations about how Philosophy for Children can enhance the school curriculum have also received attention. Lipman, when asked why he believed that philosophy should become part of the regular school curriculum, remarked that students need practice in reasoning and that this can be achieved "through classroom discussion involving concepts that reach across all the disciplines rather than only those that are specialised within each subject" (Brandt, 1988, p. 34).

The issue of *teachers and philosophy* has also received attention by writers within the field of Philosophy for Children. Derrico (2002, p. 34) captures the general sentiment

in this area of writing when stating that, “Besides developing students’ critical thinking skills, Philosophy for Children encourages use of the inquiry approach and improves teachers’ questioning techniques”. This sentiment is reinforced by Shaughnessy (2005) who reports on an interview with Maughn Gregory, the present director of the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC). According to Gregory, “The only way to prepare teachers to facilitate this kind of thinking and inquiry with children is to facilitate the same kind of thinking and inquiry with the teachers” (Shaughnessy, 2005, p. 7). Imbriosciano (1991, p. 33) poses a very important question when stressing that “The major obstacle confronting the Philosophy for Children programme’s optimal success is whether teachers, particularly those who are not philosophically trained, possess these skills and can apply them”. A response to Imbriosciano (1991) could be that for teachers to be familiar with the process, methodology and content of Philosophy for Children, they need initial and on-going training and support. Whatever subject teachers teach, they could benefit from training in the techniques used in Philosophy for Children. Green (2000, p. 10) points out that “the cognitive education movement has discovered that it is sometimes the teachers, not the students, who can benefit most from courses in thinking skills…. This is something which may be particularly relevant to teachers in South Africa”. Lipman (1987, p. 90) comments that, “If grade-school philosophy has an Achilles heel, it would seem to be in the area of teacher preparation”. This is definitely a concern in South Africa where teacher-training colleges have been closed in recent years and where the challenge exists for teachers to be exposed, through in-service teacher training, to new approaches such as Philosophy for Children. A challenge to teachers is to remain creative and to make contact with like-minded teachers who are interested in developing classrooms as communities of philosophical

inquiry. In addition, that teachers create the time and space to develop their own skills in philosophical inquiry.

Philosophy for Children has attracted many research endeavours. The following section highlights research that is pertinent to the present study.

2.6. Pertinent research findings regarding Philosophy for Children

Research evidence from a wide range of small-scale studies across the world indicates that Philosophy for Children can make a difference to various aspects of a child's academic performance such as, pupils' achievements in tests of literacy; children's self esteem and self concept as thinkers and learners; the fluency and quality of children's questioning; the quality of their thinking; and their ability to listen to others and engage effectively in class discussion. Research evidence also indicates positive effects in the area of teachers' professional confidence and self esteem (Doherr, 2000; Fisher, 2001; Hill, 1999; Iorio, Weinstein and Martin, 1984; Karras, 1979; Murris, 1994; Schleifer, Daniel, Peyronnet and Lecomte, 2003; Shipman, 1983).

With regard to children's self esteem and self-concept as thinkers and learners, Murris (1994) showed improvements in reasoning, listening, and self-esteem attributable to the teaching of philosophy with picture books in six primary schools in Wales. Green (2000, p. 17), who works with teachers in South Africa and who reports on the locally developed material, *Stories for Thinking*, noted "more active involvement in lessons, the engagement of those previously 'shy' or 'slow', a different quality of discussion, and greater respect for each other".

With regard to the quality of children's thinking/reasoning, Karras (1979) found that 5th and 6th graders, who had done the Philosophy for Children programme for two hours a week over a year, performed significantly better than the control group on a test of reasoning. Shipman (1983) found 6th graders, who followed the programme for a similar period, had consistently better results than a matched control group. Iorio, Weinstein and Martin (1984) found that 3rd, 4th and 5th graders in New York City showed significant improvement compared with the control group.

With regard to children's ability to recognise emotions and to make links between thoughts and feelings, Doherr (2000) showed that children between the ages of five and eight improved their ability to recognise different emotions and to make links between thoughts and feelings after being involved in philosophical enquiry in a Norfolk primary school. Schleifer, et.al. (2003) found that five year olds who had a philosophy session once a week for about an hour showed significant improvement over time.

With regard to teachers' professional confidence and self esteem, Hill (1999) found that preservice teachers reported feeling empowered through taking responsibility for their own learning and related this to their experiences of the philosophical community of inquiry. In another study where primary teachers were exposed to a Philosophy for Children training programme in South Africa, namely, *Stories for Thinking*, it "stimulated them to discover that they can construct learning materials relevant to their particular community of learners….The teachers involved claim that they have developed personally and that their classroom behavior has changed" (Green, 2000, p. 17).

The above research studies all show meaningful and significant changes in children's scholastic functioning, the manner in which they reason, and their ability to listen to others and engage effectively in class discussion. They also show that teachers who used Philosophy for Children in their classes are stimulated and more confident about teaching.

Is Philosophy for Children, though, relevant to a South African setting? The following section will explore this.

2.7. The relevance of Philosophy for Children for South Africa

The IAPC (Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children) curriculum, which consists of "novels that depict fictional children discovering and exploring philosophical issues and applying their reasoning to life situations" (Gregory in Shaughnessy, 2005, p. 6), was used as a starting point to initiate P4C in many countries around the world (Jackson, 2004; Lim, 1994; Lim, 2003; Mulvaney, 1987). It appears that contextualised materials and modes of generating philosophical thinking were thereafter initiated. In Singapore, for example, while the novels *Pixie* and *Harry* were used, with the accompanying manuals, Asian philosophy and concepts, folk tales, local stories as well as comics on Confucius and Lao Tzu were later added to indigenise the content of the teaching material (Lim, 2003). The history of P4C in South Africa shows a similar trend as elsewhere where chapters from Lipman's novels, as well as basic readings about P4C, were used as a means of introducing teachers to the methodology used in a philosophical enquiry session. In the Western Cape, one of the nine provinces of South Africa and the area in which this present study is located, an initiative by the provincial education department gave impetus to research into how cognitive

development can be enhanced within the school curriculum. This project was called the *Cognition in Curriculum 2005 Project* (Green, 2000, p. 14). One of the approaches researched was P4C. Lena Green, a professor at the University of the Western Cape who played a major part in the *Cognition in Curriculum 2005 Project* has since offered programmes to teachers in which they are introduced to the P4C methodology and philosophy and guided in writing stories that are both contextual and relevant to the children in their classes. The present research focussed on teachers who participated in one of the programmes offered in 2004. The aim of this study, as has been mentioned before, was to interview as many of the teachers who attended the programme in 2004 as possible and to assess the effects of the programme on both personal and professional development.

Philosophy for Children, through the locally developed materials, *Stories for Thinking*, enhances the constructivist underpinnings of Curriculum 2005, the new South African outcomes based curriculum since 1998 and its most recent version in the form of the RNCS. The term *constructivism* is used here as implied in the definition,

> A doctrine according to which perceptions, memories, and other complex mental structures are actively assembled or built by the mind, rather than being passively acquired. (Colman, 2003, p. 162)

The 'passively acquired' curriculum relates well to the system of education that applied during the apartheid era, where teachers were expected to implement a curriculum that was, to a large extent, prescribed and set out for them. Philosophy for Children enhances the constructivist underpinnings of the new curriculum by embracing "contextual relevance" (Green, 2000, p. 15). The contextual relevance manifests through the short stories that relate directly to the lives of children in the schools. It also acknowledges the wealth of knowledge that children have. Kearns (2004, p. 10), a

teacher who attended one of the first *Stories for Thinking* programmes, remarks that it was as if she discovered a "gold mine" in her classroom. It is additionally relevant because teachers have mentioned that each story gives them an abundance of material to work with. These stories are relevant because the writing of them is a developmental and empowering process. Green (2000, p. 15) mentions that, "If South African teachers can construct their own context-relevant stories this will be a first step towards a sense of their own capacity to construct curriculum material."

A concern, at present, is to generate sustainability through on-going support for those who have had initial exposure. Green (1997, p. 22) asserts that, "To obtain optimal benefit from Philosophy for Children, teachers need training and ongoing supervision, as with any carefully designed program". It is also important at this stage of the development of Philosophy for Children, in South Africa, to encourage more teachers to become familiar and confident with the philosophy and the method of doing P4C within the learning environment.

2.8. Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to present an overview of selected theories and practices of cognitive development, with a specific focus on the ideas of Piaget and Vygotsky. A particular programme, Philosophy for Children (P4C), which has strong links to Vygotsky's ideas, was then elucidated. This was followed by a review of literature about Philosophy for children. Research findings related to P4C and pertinent to the present study were then highlighted. The chapter concluded with a focus on the relevance of P4C for South Africa and an outline of the local initiatives, which is the kernel of the present study. It does appear, from this chapter, that the *Stories for*

Thinking initiative has potential and that it is worth investigating further. It also seems as if the details about whether children are good for philosophy or whether philosophy is good for children are important but not essential. The essential aspect is whether *Stories for Thinking* is useful and meaningful for teachers in the classroom and whether it is developing cognition in teachers and learners. Before exploring some of these aspects, in chapter 4, the next chapter, chapter 3, expounds on the research focus of the present study and the research methodology used.

Chapter 3: Research methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter explores the research methodology used in this study. An explanation of the research aim and objective is followed by an exploration of the research framework. A description of the participants and the training programme they attended precede a brief introduction to the researcher. This is followed by an engagement with the way that data were obtained and analysed. The chapter ends with a clarification of the important aspects of validity, reliability and ethics.

3.2. Research aim and objective

The research aim of the study was to investigate the effects of a teacher development programme based on Philosophy for Children and to explore the perceptions that teachers have of changes in themselves and their learners that could be attributed to exposure to Philosophy for Children and the locally developed material. The expected outcome of the programme that the teachers attended was that it would stimulate them to use the P4C methodology, in the form of the locally developed material, within the learning environments that they manage.

The objective of this study was to investigate the effects of the above mentioned development programme through the following research sub-questions:

- Were the primary school teachers who attended the training programme aware of any changes that had occurred in themselves on a personal or professional level?

- To what extent did the teachers find the *community of inquiry* processes relevant to the curriculum?
- What changes, if any, did teachers observe in their learners?
- To what extent did the teachers display the key elements of a *community of inquiry*?

3.3. Research framework

The study was undertaken within a qualitative research framework. According to Creswell (1998, p. 15),

> Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting.

The methodological tradition of inquiry that was used is the interpretive approach to qualitative research. The reason for choosing this approach is because it lends itself to the type of research that was envisaged. The type of research conducted is succinctly explained by Terre Blanche and Kelly (2002) who suggest that the interpretive approach is useful when the researcher assumes that people's subjective experiences are real and should be taken seriously. They add that an interpretive approach is useful when a researcher wishes to understand the experiences of others by interacting with them and listening to what they say. Furthermore, I utilised the interpretive approach in the way explained by Kelly (2002) when referring to 'insider' or 'first person' perspectives which incorporate empathic, context bound research. In addition, I also used 'outsider' or 'third person' perspectives, which incorporate social constructionist orientations (Burr, 1995). Kelly (2002, p. 401) elaborates on the above sentiments when adding that "understanding of a situation needs to be developed both from the perspective of being

in the context (empathy) and from the perspective of distanciation, using interpretation". What further appeals to me about the interpretive approach, is that it encourages the collecting of data to occur in a natural setting. In addition, "in interpretive research it is the researcher who is the primary instrument for both collecting and analysing the data" (Terre Blanche and Kelly, 2002, p. 126).

3.4. Research participants and the training programme

The research participants consisted of 11 teachers who attended a 10 session programme based on ideas and practices of Philosophy for Children (see Appendix F). The programme was presented by Professor Lena Green of the University of the Western Cape and was held in the Western Cape, South Africa, during 2004. The teachers who participated in the programme were exposed to the theory and practice of Philosophy for Children and were guided in the development of writing their own stories. They were encouraged to work in groups while developing new stories. They were then encouraged to use the stories in their classrooms or learning environments. Sessions included time to reflect on practice. Participants were all primary school teachers who, at the time, taught within one of the seven Education Management and Development Centres of the Western Cape Education Department (WCED).

3.5. The researcher

I am presently studying towards a master's degree in psychology at the University of the Western Cape. My previous graduate studies, research and work experiences have been within the education field. I have worked as a teacher, a teacher-trainer, and a school psychologist. I have, for a number of years, had a personal interest in the study and understanding of cognitive development. My interest and experience in the area of

teacher-training have been the underlying motivation while working on this study. This study forms a crucial part of my personal and academic journey. I realised that my enthusiasm for the field that I was researching could influence my objectivity within the interviewing situation as well as during the process of interpretation.

3.6. Collection of data through group interviews

Terre Blanche and Kelly (2002, p. 128) motivate for using interviews as a form of collecting data when using the interpretative approach to research. They argue that,

> Conducting an interview is a more natural form of interacting with people than making them fill out a questionnaire, do a test or perform some experimental task, and therefore fits well with the interpretive approach to research. It gives us an opportunity to get to know people quite intimately, so that we can really understand how they think and feel. At one level, interviews are simply conversations, similar to the hundreds of short and long conversations we have all the time, but at the same time they are also highly skilled performances.

In keeping with the ethos of a *community of inquiry*, the use of group interviews heeded the call of Sutcliffe (2003, p. 77) who, when writing about critical, creative, caring and collaborative thinking, remarked that,

> research should also focus more intelligently on 'real' dialogues that are of a different order from one-to-one interviewing or even 'paired discussion'. The complexity, but generally greater richness, of many minds working together has yet, to my knowledge, to be assessed in any satisfactory way.

In addition, group interviews were a context in which it would be evident whether participants had internalised the thinking tools, habits and dispositions that form the process of a *community of inquiry*. In planning the interviews I thought carefully about the questions that I wanted to ask and the manner in which I wanted to structure the interviews. Appendix A shows the semi-structured outline that I used when facilitating the interviews. Questions focussed mainly on the three research sub-questions, namely, whether the primary school teachers who attended the course were aware of any

changes that had occurred in themselves on a personal or professional level; to what extent teachers found the *community of inquiry* processes relevant to the curriculum; and the changes, if any, teachers had observed in their learners. With regards to the structure of the interviews, I deliberately opted for a semi-structured interview. The reason for this was that I wanted to listen and acknowledge the thoughts and ideas that emerged. I wanted to be flexible in allowing participants to pursue a particular line of thought or discussion. I was more interested in facilitating a discussion about their experiences with Philosophy for Children than imposing myself on the discussion. I had to balance being flexible with the need to explore specific aspects of their experiences.

An application to conduct research in selected schools in the Western Cape was requested from and approved by the Director of Education Research of the Western Cape Education Department (see Appendix B).

All 24 trained educators were invited to participate in a group interview. They were each sent an invitation. Invitations were hand delivered and e-mailed to their schools two weeks prior to the planned interview. Participants were given two dates to choose from. The venue for the two initial interviews was the same venue used for the training programme. The reason for this was to make it convenient for participants to find the venue and to be familiar with the setting. The first date, unfortunately, coincided with a protest march, organised for teachers.

Four teachers participated in the interview planned for the second date. The four teachers were from three different schools within the district. They, collectively, taught

children who spoke Xhosa, Afrikaans or English. I have called this *Interview 1*. See Appendix C for a sample of the transcription of *Interview 1*.

I realised that a change of plan was needed to interview more participants. I then decided to conduct two additional interviews at two different schools in the district. The two schools were chosen, firstly, because they were located in different communities and, secondly, because each school had three or four educators who attended the programme.

The second interview was conducted at a primary school located in a predominantly Afrikaans speaking community in Cape Town. I have called this *Interview 2*. Three teachers, all teaching at the same school, participated in this interview. See Appendix D for a sample of the transcription of *Interview 2*.

The third interview was conducted at a primary school located in a predominantly Xhosa speaking community in Cape Town. Four teachers, all teaching at the same school, participated in this interview. I have called this *Interview 3*. See Appendix E for a sample of the transcription of *Interview 3*.

The interviews were all recorded for the purpose of transcribing and analysing. *Interview 1* was audio and video recorded. *Interview 2* and *Interview 3* were audio recorded. The participants all approved of the recordings. They were assured that recordings would be used for research purposes only.

3.7. Data Analysis

The audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed either by myself or by professional transcribers based at the University of the Western Cape. The quality of the recordings was good, except for inaudible voices here and there.

Thematic analysis was used to determine recurring themes in the interviews. Theme analysis, according to McMillan and Schumacher (1997, p. 533)

> describes the specific and distinctive recurring qualities, characteristics, subjects of discourse, or concerns expressed. The researcher selectively analyzes aspects of human actions and events that illustrate recurring themes. The complexity and the interrelationships of the events and human lives are emphasized. The themes provide an explanation of the situation(s). The study contributes to knowledge by providing an understanding of the phenomena studied. This type of study also enables others to anticipate, but not predict, what may occur in similar situations.

The above passage generates the salient aspect of thematic analysis, namely, that it is the exploration of recurring elements of the interviews that are analysed and interpreted. In the case of this study, recurring themes pertaining to teachers' perceptions of changes in themselves and in their learners formed the crux of the thematic analysis. After interviews were facilitated, recorded and transcribed, recurring themes were highlighted and categorised using the steps proposed by Palmquist (1993, cited in Babbie and Mouton, 2001, p. 492). These steps are:

- deciding on the level of analysis
- deciding how many concepts to code for
- deciding whether to code for the existence or frequency of a concept
- deciding how to distinguish among concepts
- deciding what to do with irrelevant information
- analysing results

Applied to the present study, the above steps led to the following process: The *level of analysis* was a key phrase that occurred during the interviews, as opposed to one specific word. The decision about *how many* themes would emerge from the study was

not pre-determined: while the research sub-questions were decided beforehand, the themes and number of themes that would emerged from each sub-question were not determined beforehand. With regards to *existence or frequency*, the decision was made to code for *frequency*. In other words, to recognise *recurring themes* and not only the existence of important or meaningful statements and ideas. With reference to *distinguishing among concepts*, key phrases were numbered and grouped together to determine frequency. Information that appeared to be *irrelevant* were scrutinised for meaningful statements that would add to the richness of the analysis. Each theme was analysed within the context of the study and within the context of the programme that teachers had participated in.

An additional analysis of a different nature was also undertaken. This was a discourse analysis of the group interviews for the purpose of exploring whether key elements of a *community of inquiry* had emerged during the interviews. Slembrouck (2000, cited in Babbie and Mouton, 2001, p. 495) defines discourse analysis as,

> (1) concerned with language use beyond the boundaries of a sentence or utterance, (2) concerned with the interrelationships between language and society and (3) as concerned with the interactive or dialogue properties of everyday communication.

Discourse analysis was used in this study to explore conversations from the perspective of reasoned argumentation (Reznitskaya, 2005, p. 6) specifically related to the notion of the *community of inquiry*. This present study is essentially an analysis of a conversational style that has been encouraged by the *community of inquiry* approach of Philosophy for Children. The discourse analysis in this study used, as a framework from which to work, the key elements of the *community of inquiry*, as outlined by Gregory, 2005. According to Gregory (2005), the key elements of a *community of inquiry* are:

- Each person is respected: We listen carefully to each other. We sometimes help each other express ourselves. Each person's views are taken seriously. We challenge other people's views respectfully. We make sure most of us are contributing.
- We practice many kinds of good thinking: Clarifying our terms, Giving good reasons, Offering examples and counter-examples, Identifying assumptions, Making careful inferences, Creating hypotheses, Imaging consequences, Look for missing perspectives, Building on each other's ideas.
- We follow the inquiry where it leads.
- We often think about our own thinking (meta-cognition).

The key elements, therefore, broadly include respect for each person, the practice of good thinking, following the inquiry where it leads, and thinking about one's own thinking. My analysis used these headings.

3.8. Validity, reliability and ethics

Merriam (2001, p. 198) contends that "ensuring validity and reliability in qualitative research involves conducting the investigation in an ethical manner". Merriam (2001, p. 199), when commenting particularly on validity and reliability, states that:

> To have any effect on either the practice or the theory of education, studies must be rigorously conducted; they need to present insights and conclusions that ring true to readers, educators, and other researchers.

Qualitative research does not claim to be generalisable to an entire population. It is hoped, though, that this study may be of value to those who participated in it, and in generating on-going conversations among teachers, student teachers, researchers of educational issues, and other interested people. This study does not claim to be reliable in the way explained by Wellington (2000, p. 200) as "The extent to which a test, a method or a tool gives consistent results across a range of settings, and if used by a range of researchers". This study cannot make such claims as it is based on three separate interviews in three different settings and reveals perceptions that participants

have about a particular training course. Perhaps a similar study could produce similar responses. That would, nevertheless, be co-incidental. Dalton, Elias and Wandersman (2001, p. 91) reflect the sentiment that,

> qualitative methods are concerned with different purposes than quantitative research. Explanation in a qualitative study involves understanding the meaning of complex settings or processes for the persons who experience them. Knowing for certain the causes of these experiences is less important than understanding what they mean in the life of the research participant.

In addition to the above sentiments, this study has taken heed of ethical aspects such as: obtaining informed consent from participants; obtaining permission from the Western Cape Education Department to do research with educators; obtaining permission to record interviews; remaining as objective as possible throughout the research process; remaining aware of my responsibility as a researcher; showing respect towards participants; assuring confidentiality; obtaining permission to use audio and video recordings for research purposes only; adhering to an agreement that participants could withdraw at any stage; not misrepresenting data; and ensuring that support was available in the event that participants needed counselling as a result of the interviews.

3.9. Conclusion

This chapter explored the research methodology used in this study. The following chapter focuses on the actual analysis of the three group interviews through the two techniques of analysis, thematic analysis and discourse analysis.

Chapter 4: Presentation, analysis and discussion of data

4.1. Introduction

This chapter comprises a presentation and an analysis of the three group interviews that were conducted. Two techniques of analysis, namely, thematic analysis and discourse analysis are used. Interpretations and discussions of the analyses are integrated in the presentation.

4.2. Thematic analysis of the interviews

The thematic analysis of the interviews is presented within the framework of previously explained research sub-questions. These are, firstly, the changes, if any, that teachers are aware of in themselves, both personally and professionally. This area of investigation will be presented and discussed in section 4.2.1. The second area of investigation deals with the extent to which teachers find the *community of inquiry* processes relevant to the curriculum. This will be presented and discussed in section 4.2.2. The third area of investigation addresses the changes, if any, that teachers have observed in their learners, which can be attributed to learners' exposure to the locally developed material influenced by Philosophy for Children (P4C), namely, the *Stories for Thinking* programme. This analysis will be presented and discussed in section 4.2.3.

A theme, in the context of this study, is a statement or a pattern of thought that was mentioned or that had recurred in at least two of the three interviews. Themes were analysed and interpreted using steps proposed by Palmquist (1993, cited in Babbie and Mouton, 2001, p. 492) as presented in chapter 3. The themes that emerged from each

area of investigation were noted as well as substantiated by quotations from the three interviews. Quotations are referenced as *Interview 1, Interview 2* or *Interview 3.*

4.2.1. The area of investigation that focussed on *teachers' professional and personal development* revealed three themes:

4.2.1.1. The first theme that emerged from this area of investigation was that *the story writing exercise was a professional and personal developmental experience*. Comments that were recorded include,

Interview 3: *It has helped us to write stories, especially Xhosa stories, so that learners can understand and hear some valuable stuff.* (p. 9)

Interview 2: *This was the first time that I was part of a group writing a story. It was nice for me to see it on paper and look at it afterwards.* (p. 1)

Interview 1: *The story writing exercise was a great experience.* (p. 15)

The general sentiment of this theme is that teachers both benefited and enjoyed the experience of writing stories that related to the context in which they teach. Writing within a South African context, Green (2000, p. 17) reflects that where primary teachers were exposed to a Philosophy for Children training programme in South Africa, it "stimulated them to discover that they can construct learning materials relevant to their particular community of learners….The teachers involved claim that they have developed personally and that their classroom behaviour has changed". These sentiments correlate well with those expressed by teachers who work within a Xhosa speaking community. They too expressed delight in the sense of empowerment to write in their own language, *about* the context in which they teach, and *for* the context in which they teach. Of crucial importance for this endeavour to be successful is that in-service training of these teachers be sustainable and consistent. I believe that teachers who are interested in the work of Philosophy for Children could be exposed to

continued training in philosophical inquiry so that the stories that they write could be influenced by philosophical underpinnings and method. I do not wish to sound as strong on the issue about training in philosophical skills as Imbrosciano (1991, p. 33) who proposed that,

> The major obstacle confronting the Philosophy for Children programme's success is whether teachers, particularly those who are not philosophically trained, possess these skills and can apply them.

Nevertheless, I believe that to write good texts for curricula purposes and within the genre of philosophy for children one would have to be mindful of wanting to create texts that generate critical dialogue and are relevant to context. The South African context offers a rich 'garden' of potential pickings. It is no wonder that the teachers that I interviewed were excited about the prospect of their stories being published and used by their colleagues. In addition, the need, particularly for Xhosa stories and texts, is immense and requires special attention.

4.2.1.2. The second theme that emerged from the area of investigation, *teachers' professional and personal development,* was that *teachers gained insights into what learners can do and learners' abilities.* Comments that were recorded are:

Interview 3: *It did change things for me about what the learners think, especially from the stories of their age. You gain their level – what kind of kids are they.* (p. 11)

Interview 1: *We sometimes underestimate the children in our class. We told children to use their imagination, and they did.* (p. 13)

Teachers said that engaging in the Philosophy for Children programme through the *community of inquiry* method changed the way they thought about their learners. They gained insights into how learners think when they discuss issues with each other. Another comment was that teachers sometimes underestimate the children in their

classes, even with regard to them using their imagination. My interpretation of this theme is that for many of the teachers that I interviewed, Philosophy for Children had created a shift in their thinking. They were astounded, at least in the *community of inquiry* sessions, how insightful children were able to be when they are left to dialogue within albeit loosely structured, yet firmly facilitated sessions. What appears to have happened is that children were given the power, or empowered, to give personal opinions, and to be critical in a respectful manner. These sentiments are echoed by Colbeck (2003, p. 22) who stress that "we should reduce the exercise of our power over children to a necessary minimum….if we do not equal children we will not understand them, nor they us".

4.2.1.3. The third theme to emerge from the area of investigation, *teachers' professional and personal development*, was that *Philosophy for Children made teachers reflect on their personal relationships***.** Comments that were recorded are:

Interview 2: *In relationships, not just to agree with everything that is said. To raise your opinion: 'No, I don't agree because'*.(p. 6)

Interview 2: *You are listening more to what that person is saying to you*. (p. 6)

Interview 1: *It's by time I noticed them – my family*. (p. 19)

Interview 1: *I really, really listen to people*. (p. 19)

Teachers commented that one should not just agree with everything that is said but to express one's opinion. Another comment was that more listening was occurring. One teacher commented that she had started to take more notice of her family. Although there was a general reluctance to reflect on whether the Philosophy for Children course had impacted on personal issues in participants' lives, there were strong enough comments to suggest a theme. My sense is that the participants reflected on themselves

as partners, wives, and women in society after they became more comfortable with the interview process. Fisher (2001) remarks that one of the findings from a wide range of studies across the world is that the Philosophy for Children programme has a positive effect on teachers' self concept. It seems feasible to extrapolate from the above comments that Philosophy for Children has the potential to not only generate changes in children but also in teachers.

In addition to the above themes, the area of investigation, *teachers' professional and personal development,* also revealed the following realisations from teachers:

Interview 1: *…you never stop with a story. There's always something to add to the story. Almost like you keep the stories open for the children to develop more around the main ideas*. (p. 3)

Interview 1: *…it was very nice and I interacted with my class because you had pupils who would normally not speak in other instances*…(p. 4)

Interview 2: *…we under-estimated ourselves. It motivated us – we can do it*. (p. 6)

Interview 1: *Outside my professional life, it also had a good effect…because when I look at something I'm always thinking 'now what, why, how?'* (p. 19).

Interview 1: *…so now they can also think and tell me "But you are wrong". That is not something that I allowed…I was never wrong*. (p. 20)

Each of these statements appears to have come from quite a lot of thought and reflection. The exposure to the Philosophy for Children programme and the experience of the *Stories for Thinking* process seem to have facilitated teachers to re-think some of their actions in the classroom and their relationships with themselves and their learners. What has come out quite strongly from this area of investigation is that teachers gained confidence in their abilities as teachers and as writers of stories in context.

4.2.2. The area of investigation that focussed on *the extent to which teachers found the community of inquiry processes to be relevant to the curriculum* revealed one theme,

namely, that *the community of inquiry has usefulness throughout the curriculum***.**

Comments that were recorded are:

Interview 1: *You can use it across, in any way. You can use it in your languages. You can use it in your social sciences, your history, your mathematics*. (p. 6)

Interview 3: *The community of inquiry is used to implement the literacy ½ hour programme that is being used to encourage reading and improve literacy levels in primary school*. (p. 8)

Interview 2: *We can now spend more time on these stories to help the literacy levels to improve*. (p. 8)

In summary, teachers said that the *community of inquiry* is a useful approach that can be used in language lessons, social sciences, history and mathematics, and for improving literacy. The exact mechanics of these statements were not explored and would make interesting study. Haynes (2002, p. 137) contributes to the sentiments offered by these teachers when concurring that,

> In the UK (as well as in other English-speaking countries) there is evidence to suggest that regular practice of philosophical enquiry leads to significant gains in children's overall use of English. Teachers will immediately recognise the importance for the wider curriculum of a good command of the language used for learning.

An observation with regards to this area of investigation is that teachers could, at this stage of their development in the ideas and practices of Philosophy for Children, be far more comfortable facilitating a *community of inquiry* than talking about the mechanisms of a *community of inquiry*. The reason for this could be that the teachers that I interviewed were not yet confident enough to explain what the concept was even though they could demonstrate its elements through their actions. Green (2000, p. 18) adds another important dimension to the discussion of the relationship of teachers and the *community of inquiry* when reflecting that teachers within the South African setting, "preferred to discuss classroom applications rather than to engage in inquiry

themselves". Perhaps the full engagement of teachers in the *community of inquiry* themselves will occur through more frequent practice and opportunities that are created both by themselves and for them. It is encouraging that teachers consider the *community of inquiry* approach, and more particularly *Stories for Thinking,* as having the potential to be part of the solution to the literacy crisis facing the country. Teachers have also identified one of the places in the curriculum where the *Stories for Thinking* can be of particular relevance, namely, the literacy ½ hr. This is a minimum time – slot that has been stipulated by the education department as a compulsory space where reading has to occur throughout the school.

4.2.3. The area of investigation that focussed on *changes that have been observed in learners* revealed three themes:

4.2.3.1. The first theme that emerged out of the area of investigation called *changes that have been observed in learners* was that *the implementation of the programme assisted in developing self-esteem in children***.** Comments that were recorded are:

Interview 1: *Pupils who would normally not speak in other instances now started participating verbally*. (p. 4)

Interview 1: *Children came 'out of their shells'*. (p. 5)

Interview 2: *It helps to combat shyness*. (p. 3).

In summary, the responses by teachers who were interviewed in this study indicate that the implementation of the programme has the potential to assist children with becoming more verbal and in being more assertive in their responses and interactions. My analysis is that this does have the potential to assist in the development of children's self-esteem. This theme features prominently in the research on P4C and is evident in the writings of Fisher (2001), Green (2000), Murris (1994) and Sasseville (1994).

Fisher (2001) reports that research evidence from a wide range of small-scale studies across the world indicates that Philosophy for Children can make a difference to various aspects of a child's academic performance. One of the ways of improving academic performance, according to Fisher (2001), has been found in children's self esteem and self concept as thinkers and learners. In a similar vein, with regard to children's self-esteem and self-concept as thinkers and learners, Murris (1994) showed improvements in reasoning, listening, and self-esteem attributable to the teaching of philosophy with picture books in six primary schools in Wales. Green (2000, p. 17), who works with teachers in South Africa, reports that with regard to their students the teachers noted "more active involvement in lessons, the engagement of those previously 'shy' or 'slow', a different quality of discussion, and greater respect for each other". Sasseville (1994), working in Quebec, reports on a research study with Philosophy for Children where a significant increase in positive self-esteem is reported. Sasseville (1994, p. 32) makes a significant statement when commenting that,

> For children who have low self-esteem, to speak up in class and find their speech is being taken seriously by their peers can lead almost immediately to important changes concerning the value they give to their person.

The above quotation is significant within the context of this present study. Most of the children who benefited from the practice of P4C in this instance are children from previously disadvantaged communities. During the previous *apartheid* regime and especially during the era of Christian National Education (CNE), there was a huge chasm between the adult and the child. While the child was viewed as a "non-adult…en route to that point where he will live the life of a proper adult" (Ashley, 1989, p. 10), the role of the adult or teacher was "one of an authority, who…is not afraid to exact authority over the young" (Ashley, 1989, p. 11). It is my contention that teachers are still, today, under pressure to play the role of authority within the communities in which

they teach. It is therefore not a taken for granted phenomenon that the new democratic era in South Africa has magically eroded all previous forms of questionable practices such as punitive classroom management styles. For many of the teachers interviewed, P4C challenges what has remained the status quo in many communities. This status quo gives teachers the authority to know what is right or wrong, and what is truth and untruth. The teachers who were interviewed appeared to have made the shift of sharing power with children. Their response has been, similar to the findings in previous research on P4C, namely, that they have observed significant improvement in self-esteem in children after even limited exposure to P4C, especially within the environment of a *community of inquiry*.

4.2.3.2. The second theme to emerge out of the area of investigation called *changes that have been observed in learners* was that *children learnt to reason*. Comments related to this theme were:

Interview 1: *Children learnt to reason – not just to make a statement and leave it there. They learnt why, they learnt to explain themselves. They say something and elaborate on the idea or the thought*. (p. 5)

Interview 2: *Children learn to say, 'I agree', 'I disagree'…they are reasoning*. (p. 4)

Interview 1: *Children are agreeing and disagreeing appropriately*. (p. 8)

In summary, teachers reported that children learnt to explain themselves, they elaborated on ideas or thoughts, and they used the words 'I agree' and 'I disagree' during the community of inquiry sessions. This theme has also featured prominently in previous research in Philosophy for Children, especially in the writings of Haynes (2002), Karras (1979), Shipman (1983), Iorio, and Weinstein and Martin (1984). With regard to the quality of children's thinking/reasoning, Karras (1979) found that 5th and 6th graders, who had done the Philosophy for Children programme for two hours a week

over a year, performed significantly better than the control group on a test of reasoning. Shipman (1983) found 6th graders, who followed the programme for a similar period, had consistently better results than a matched control group. Iorio, Weinstein and Martin (1984) found that 3rd, 4th and 5th graders in New York City showed significant improvement in reasoning skills compared with the control group. In a similar vein, Haynes (2002, p. 135) reports that,

> Children stress the advantages of talking together in a number of ways... They speak of the pleasure of hearing a variety of opinions, pursuing ideas, constructing argument and seeking truth. One child says that what he likes is 'having all the different arguments, finding out whether things are true or not, and discussing them all together'.

Haynes (2002, p. 138) also reports on a Welsh study that was carried out with 5 and 6 year old children. According to the results of the study,

> In terms of thinking and reasoning the children had more ideas as a result of the intervention, not only in philosophy sessions but also in other areas of the curriculum.

In addition to the above, Sasseville (1994, p. 31) reiterates that

> in most cases, the child who begins to discover herself as a thinker likes to learn to reason well and to recognise that she can reason well. Being able to think well gives the child a good reason to feel well and a good reason to be proud of herself.

The above references show that where the development of reasoning or thinking have been observed within the ambit of Philosophy for Children, there appears to have been marked, positive, shifts in children's thinking, questioning and reasoning. My sense, and the sentiments emerging from the responses of the teachers that I interviewed, is that they are also beginning to experience similar possibilities. For the teachers who participated in the present study, Philosophy for Children is a relatively new concept that needs to be practiced and used consistently so that they, themselves, will become more confident, and children will receive continuous exposure. My interpretation is that their wish is that exposure to P4C should not stop when children leave *their* classes

and enter another class. Also, that P4C should not be confined to a particular time-slot on an already crowded time-table. For the development of reasoning skills to be sustained, there needs to be continued support for teachers by the co-ordinators of P4C, the education district and their school management teams.

4.2.3.3. The third theme to emerge from the area of investigation called *changes that have been observed in learners* was that *children were listening more to each other and this has led to them becoming more attentive***.** Comments related to this theme were:

Interview 2: *Learners are listening more* (p. 5)

Interview 1: *They are listening* (p. 8)

Interview 1: *They are more attentive because they have to follow what's going on* (p. 5)

Teachers reported learners were becoming more attentive within the *community of inquiry* sessions. This theme has also featured in previous research in Philosophy for Children. Haynes (2002, p. 135), when describing a Welsh study carried out with 5 and 6 year old children, reports that children "describe the sense of feeling cared for, and not being alone, when others listen to them". In the same study Haynes (2002, p. 138) reports that,

> Observations carried out by the project team recorded that most of the 5-6 year old children became better listeners as the project progressed, sustaining concentration and an interest in the views of others for up to an hour.

What is evident in the above statement is that there is a relationship between listening and concentrating, or paying attention, to what others are saying. In the interviews that I facilitated with the teachers, this came out very strongly, to the extent that it emerged as a theme in the conversations. Teachers were pleased that their learners were not only listening better, but that they were starting to develop into listeners who were paying

attention so that they could respond appropriately and accurately to the arguments put forward by their peers.

In summary, the area of investigation that I have called *changes that have been observed in learners* revealed three themes. What has been interesting is that the three themes that emerged were similar to that found in the literature and in the research on P4C. The other interesting and important aspect of this section of my research is that reasoning and listening skills are intertwined with the development of self-esteem. Murris (1994) echoes these sentiments when showing improvements in reasoning, listening, and self-esteem attributable to the teaching of philosophy. In addition, Sasseville (2002, p. 32) reinforces this notion when stating that,

> Finally, one thing that should be underlined is the fact that we discovered a relationship between the development of self-esteem and the development of logical skills: when self-esteem increases significantly, logical skills increase too.

The above presentations and interpretation of the thematic analysis appear to show that meaningful and significant changes can occur in children's scholastic functioning, the manner in which they reason, and their ability to listen to others and engage effectively in class discussion. It also shows that teachers who were interviewed feel excited about the story writing process, and that they have gained more insights into what their learners are capable of. What was also interesting about the interviews were some of the other comments made by teachers, comments that did not 'qualify' as being part of a theme, as they did not occur more than once in the interviews. I have listed these comments below using the particular interview as a reference:

Interview 3: *it helped them to express emotions* (p. 11).

Interview 2: *Instead of talking directly to me, they are talking to one another when you give them a topic* (p. 2).

Interview 1: …*children give input and give their own opinions* (p. 4).

Interview 1: *They learnt to respect each other* (p. 5).

All of these comments, even though they have not qualified as themes, show the potential usefulness of P4C. Issues such as the expressing of emotions, having a meaningful conversation with one's peers, expressing one's opinions, and having respect for others indicate the potential usefulness of the approach for possible changes for learners both within the school environment and elsewhere.

Other possible areas of investigation that did not generate themes are mentioned below. I have used the particular interview as a reference:

A question about using contextual experiences in the *Stories for Thinking* exercise generated the following comment:

Interview 2: *Our story was about things happening in class, at school. We were talking about and writing about our experiences* (p. 1).

A question pertaining to how the *community of inquiry has assisted with classroom practice* generated the following comments:

Interview 1: …*what we did in the course, helped with discipline as well*…(p. 5)

Interview 1: …*it helps with structure…there are the ground rules set out…all the levels of the community of inquiry agree on the ground rules, and…once they understand that you can introduce the topic*…(p. 5)

It does appear to me that despite these latter responses not emerging as general themes, they are nevertheless significant statements within the context of the usefulness of P4C and *Stories for Thinking* both in South Africa and elsewhere.

4.3. Discourse analysis of interviews

The discourse analysis in this study used, as a framework from which to work, the key elements of the *community of inquiry*, as outlined by Gregory (2005) and as presented in

chapter 3. The theoretical explanation of the type of discourse analysis employed in this study is proposed by Reznitskaya (2005, p. 6), who refers to it as an "argumentative discourse in a dialogic collective setting". For the purpose of this study, the dialogic collective setting is the *community of inquiry*, while the argumentation or the discussion will be filtered through the key elements proposed by Gregory (2005).

4.3.1. Key element 1

Each person is respected: We listen carefully to each other. We sometimes help each other express ourselves. Each person's views are taken seriously. We challenge other people's views respectfully. We make sure most of us are contributing.

The practice that *each person is respected* was present throughout the interviews. Teachers listened to each other respectfully. This could be attributed to the dynamics of being part of a recorded interview and behaving in a manner that is respectful. It could also be a South African phenomenon where there is a culture of respect that is encouraged by the country's constitution and the general ethos amongst teachers. In other words, teachers are in a profession where tolerance and the celebration of diversity have become increasingly important. In terms of *making sure most of us are contributing*, there was sensitivity, by participants, not to dominate the discussion and to make sure that most participants had an opportunity to express him or herself. In one interview, though, there was a teacher who sat very quietly throughout the session. Towards the end of the interview, the interviewer asked her opinion about what had been said. Her response was that she had enjoyed listening to the others and that they had said everything that she wanted to say. She was also relatively new to the school and was still 'feeling her way around'. The interviewer's perception was that because of her 'newness' to the school she did not participate as much as the others. At the same time, though, she did not seem to be intimidated by the others. Also apparent

during two of the interviews was the relaxed nature of the teachers towards each other, especially those who were of the same school. These teachers were extremely relaxed in each other's presence and could interject while the other was talking without the other being upset. This was particularly the case in *Interview 2*, where the three participants had been teaching with each other for more than 20 years and were all teaching within the foundation phase. An example of this can be seen in the following extract:

Interviewer: *And, as an adult, in a marriage, are the arguments more interesting now?* (Interview 2, p. 7)

Teacher A: *That's more personal. We are encouraging other teachers to also attend courses and* (Interview 2, 7)

Teacher B: *And also, sorry, we have been at a workshop on other areas. But that is past. Now we can focus more on numeracy and literacy* (Interview 2, p. 7)

The dynamic of tolerance is quite clear in the above example. Teacher B is saying "sorry" because she overlapped with a point made by Teacher A, who was still speaking. Teacher A then allowed Teacher B to continue the conversation. The tolerance mentioned here could also be addressing the notion of *each person's views are taken seriously*. In addition, there was a mutual respect shown to each of the participants. This also applies to the aspect of *we sometimes help each other express ourselves*. This aspect was also embedded in the spirit of helpfulness, pleasantness and friendliness apparent in the interviews.

4.3.2. Key element 2

We practice many kinds of good thinking: Clarifying our terms, Giving good reasons, Offering examples & counter-examples, Identifying assumptions, Making careful inferences, Creating hypotheses, Imaging consequences, Look for missing perspectives, Building on e/o ideas.

The following are extracts where *Key element 2* was observed. I have interwoven comments as a way of explaining the extracts:

The practice of good thinking was present in the form of *giving good reasons* when one of the interviewees explained how Philosophy for Children has impacted on her personal life:

Teacher: *The more you learn about something, the more you learn how to handle yourself with people. So, the more you go to educational things, there is always a change: someone else might notice something in me that I didn't see. So for me, when I go to something, I want to gain something.* (Interview 3, p. 12)

This participant's reasoning was quite clear. She had set criteria for a training course or a programme, namely, that it had to benefit her in some way before she was convinced of it usefulness.

The practice of good thinking was evident in the form of *offering examples* while the group discussed the aspect of doing the community of inquiry sessions in Xhosa or a language other than English. After one teacher had spoken about how she had to translate from English to Xhosa, another teacher offered an example from her own experience in the intermediate phase: "Also, in the intermediate phase, you don't have the space to sit in a circle…" (Interview 3, p. 7). The practice of *offering examples* was also evident when the discussion ensued about the continuation of skills that are being developed by Philosophy for Children and when these are no longer encouraged because not all teachers have been exposed to the programme:

Teacher A: *I wouldn't like it to stop just there where we stopped now. When we finished with grade four then it stops. Then the next year they are not exposed to it at all. So for me, I would say that all educators, I mean really it's a great value to me*…. (Interview 1, p. 12)

The teacher who spoke next *offered an example* to reinforce what her fellow participant was saying.

Teacher B: *…my grade two learners were sitting with the grade 6 children because their teacher was absent. And there they made the statement about 'I agree and I disagree'. And so this one girl was saying 'Look at this Miss's children. They now think they are so'. You see, for me if its going to stop somewhere then the child is not going to develop, because they learn something, and it must go to a different level*. (Interview 1, p. 12)

The teacher who first introduced this issue of continuity of P4C in the different school grades added to her colleague's example by stating,

Teacher A: *So that is true what you said, if teachers are not going to get into this programme, they won't realise…* (Interview 1, p. 13).

The important aspect here is that one participant reinforced the comments made by a previous speaker. The *practice of good thinking* was also present when the topic of literacy levels was raised. This topic engendered much discussion. Most of the participants participated quite vigorously in this discussion *building on each other's ideas* and *offering examples* on how learners are struggling with reading and writing. Some of the comments were:

Teacher D: *So I think with the reading problem too, you have a problem but just to let them start to think creatively. And now some of them can write but there is still a few, with the creativity writing, there is still some of them have a problem because they can't read* (Interview 1, p. 17)

Teacher C: *I was just thinking now about a little boy in my class…he was reading history and there was nothing on the page…*(Interview 1, p. 17)

Teacher A: *…children have the ability to think about things but not always to write it down* (Interview 1, p. 17)

Teacher B: *Having the situation of more that 60% of my class being Xhosa speaking…I find myself starting with writing one sentence…*(Interview 1, p. 17)

Examples where three participants *built on each others ideas* was also evident in the interviews. The following example is related to a question about the value of the course that they attended:

Teacher A: *Kids that you would normally not think would come out and speak about something...*(Interview 1, p. 11)

Teacher B: *…so that is also one of the things… that they learn: lots of skills. From the thinking they go to the writing* (Interview 1, p. 11).

Teacher C: *Can I just say something please? It doesn't stop them*…(Interview 1, p. 11).

What is clear from these examples is that this particular interview flowed without participants feeling restricted. One participant continued where the other ended.

The issue of listening also engendered much discussion where the practice of *building on each other's ideas* occurred. One teacher conveyed that his relationship towards his family had changed. He said that he had developed,

Teacher D: *…a totally different attitude towards them and I really, really listen to people* (Interview 1, p. 19).

Another teacher *built on* this discussion by stating that before she used to demand that her children,

Teacher A: *…must just do what I tell them to do, but now they can also think and tell me 'but you were wrong'. And also, I've got a teenage boy and I actually listen to him* (Interview 1, p. 20).

Another teacher reflected that she was,

Teacher B: *still busy trying to listen and to change because the children are different* (Interview 1, p. 21).

The practice of good thinking was also evident when the discussion around the *community of inquiry* evoked lots of opportunities for *building on each other's ideas.* Three of the participants shared ideas and continued to add to the previous speaker's comments: Two participants offered ideas or examples about the writing of stories. One suggested that this would be made easier if they had a school newspaper. Another *built*

on this idea by suggesting that time is also a stumbling block (Interview 3, p. 9).

Further examples of the practice of *building on each other's ideas* are observed during a discussion of the issue of writing stories that are related to the social context of the child. Here one teacher reinforced a remark made by another:

Teacher A: *Our story was about things happening in class, at school. We were talking about and writing about our experiences*. (Interview 2, p. 2)

Teacher B: *It is about the daily happenings at school. Like day to day things, what the child is doing during interval. It was about what happened after interval*. (Interview 2, p. 2)

The practice of *building on each other's ideas* was well illustrated when three teachers contributed to the discussion of whether Philosophy for Children adds value to the way teachers teach:

Teacher A: *It does add value to the teaching moment because a child loves stories. If you go to him, he still remembers at the back of his mind: the beginning, the ending and the middle, in their own words. And that is something that they enjoyed. I also took one of the stories on their level. Sometimes when you do teaching in the class, when you ask them questions, they don't just say "no". Now they will say: "I agree, I disagree", and why. They are reasoning*. (Interview 2, p. 4)

Teacher B: *And they identify themselves with the characters also*. (Interview 2, p. 4)

Teacher C: *We also are working on children's listening skills in the foundation phase*. (Interview 2, p. 4)

The practice of *building on each other's ideas* was also evident when the issue of personal development was discussed. In the following example three teachers contributed to the discussion:

Teacher A: *Not just to agree with everything that is said. To raise your opinion; 'No, I don't agree, because'. I am finding that in my relationships, and also, you are listening more to what that person is saying to you*. (Interview 2, p. 6)

Teacher B: *We as teachers have a lot on our minds*. (Interview 2, p. 6)

Teacher A: *Yes, and we don't even give that child enough time to explain to you why he did that*. (Interview 2, p. 7)

Teacher C: *Sometimes you don't listen to the child*. (Interview 2, p. 7)

The practice of *building on each other's ideas* was also evident when the issue of how *Stories for Thinking* can assist with the literacy levels. One of the participants remarked that *Stories for Thinking* could assist teachers in getting children to read with understanding, while a fellow participant reinforces her remark:

Teacher A: *And to encourage a child to read with understanding. And to enjoy reading*. (Interview 2, p. 8)

Teacher B: *And to have fun reading*. (Interview 2, p. 8)

4.3.3. Key element 3

We follow the inquiry where it leads.

The practice of *following the inquiry where it leads* was evident when an educator shared about a story that she had introduced to her class. The story was about magic. The teacher went on to play a fairy god-mother who waved a magic wand across the class. This generated numerous questions about magic and witches. Another participant followed this inquiry about magic by reflecting on a follow-up writing exercise that she had engaged her class in. This inquiry was followed through to how writing, singing, art, and drama have resulted from an initial story about magic.

Interviewer: *And it seems as if it can generate a lot of discussion.* (Interview 1, p. 11).

Teacher A: *…the topic was magic…What I did was I demonstrated – I think I started off by demonstrating a fairy god-mother and I waved the magic wand over them and said, 'You are going to turn into this whatever, whatever'. And it was a very lengthy discussion, because a lot of things came up. Things like magic, like the witch on the broomstick, what the witch does. And it came out, you know, the black magic that they do these days, sangomas, these things, all of that came out. You know, because the children know about these things*…(Interview 1, p. 11)

Teacher B: *From there you could move on and say maybe 'Write your own song to*

> *do with magic' and sing it to the class for Arts and Culture*…(Interview 1, p. 12)

What is evident from the above extracts is the litany of examples of the *practice of good thinking***.** This appears to be an indication that the teachers who were interviewed were either naturally inclined towards good thinking, or that they had been trained well in the course that they attended. Whatever the reason for this commendable level of thinking and debating, it augurs well for philosophy in the classroom. An analysis of this "argumentative discourse in a dialogic collective setting" (Reznitskaya, 2005, p. 6) would, though, be incomplete if the *key elements*, as proposed by Gregory (2005) are not analysed in terms of why some *key elements* featured prominently while others appear to be absent. While the key elements 1, 2 and 3 were represented, some to a greater extent than others, key element 4, namely, that *we often think about our own thinking* was not evident at all. What could be the reason for this absence of meta-cognition? In addition to the total absence of *key element 4*, sub-elements were absent from both *key element 1* and *key element 2*. The sub-element that was absent from *key element 1* was the notion that *we challenge other people's views respectfully*. This is a crucial aspect of P4C. While teachers had, elsewhere in their conversations, mentioned that children were starting to 'agree' and 'disagree' respectfully with each other, they themselves were not practicing this with each other. This interesting omission could be a result of participants not yet being confident about challenging each other's views as they were in the process of developing competence in the approach. It is hoped that with continued exposure and participation in the *community of inquiry* approach, participants will become more confident in agreeing and disagreeing respectfully. The sub-elements that were absent in *key element 2* were: *clarifying our terms, making careful inferences, creating hypotheses, imaging consequences,* and *looking for missing*

perspectives. My speculation about these absences is that the teachers have not, at the time of being interviewed, had sufficient exposure to being participants in *community of inquiry* sessions themselves. My analysis is that the teachers who were interviewed had been exposed to the mechanisms of the *community of inquiry* and the process of developing local materials through the *Stories for Thinking* programme, but had not had sufficient exposure to themselves being participants in regular *community of inquiry* sessions. The visit in 2005 of Professor Maughn Gregory, director of the Institute for Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC), occurred after the interviews were conducted for this study. One of the highlights of this visit was the experience that teachers received while being part of a *community of inquiry* group. My sense is that the *key elements* and sub-key elements that were absent from the interviews could be categorised as higher level processes that require further thinking and reflection than the thinking that accompany sub-key elements such as *offering examples, building on each other's ideas* and *giving good reasons*. On-going exposure to self-reflective programmes, linked to the *community of inquiry* could be of benefit to teachers, especially those who are part of the further development of the locally developed materials. Previous mention was made, when exploring the thematic analysis of the interviews, of the need for more frequent practice and opportunities for teachers to be part of *community of inquiry* sessions themselves. It appears that this latter sentiment represents the core of the recommendations, namely, that while the teachers who were interviewed have meaningful insights into the mechanisms of P4C and *Stories for Thinking*, they nevertheless require on-going support in this approach for a further deepening and understanding of the meta-cognitive mechanics of the approach.

4.4. Conclusion

This chapter comprised a presentation and an analysis of the three group interviews that were conducted. Two techniques of analysis, namely, thematic analysis and discourse analysis were used to explore the four research sub-questions which form the focus of the study. The following chapter comprises a summary of the present study. It also gives an overview of the research findings in addition to comments on recommendations, relevance and limitations of the study.

Chapter 5: Summary

5.1. Introduction

This concluding chapter gives a summary of the present study. It also gives an overview of the research findings. Comments about recommendations, relevance and limitations are made to conclude the study.

5.2. Summary

In summary, this study explored aspects of the effects of a teacher development programme based on Philosophy for Children. The theoretical underpinnings of the study are developmental psychology, focussing particularly on cognitive development. A Vygotskian, social interactionist approach was found to be a more useful framework from which to work than a Piagetian, stage approach. A Vygotskian approach is also a most appropriate theoretical frame as it fits well with Matthew Lipman's *Philosophy for Children* programme. The connection between *Philosophy for Children* and Vygotsky is embedded within the notion of collaborative dialogue, where children develop the confidence to reason and explore a range of pertinent and often 'taken for granted' issues at a level that they would probably not have done had they not had social interaction.

A review of pertinent literature in *Philosophy for Children* shows that issues such as 'philosophy and the child', 'teachers and philosophy' have received much attention. The general sentiment for both these issues is that there are potential benefits for children as well as teachers due to the exposure to *philosophical inquiry*.

A review of pertinent research findings regarding Philosophy for Children indicates that it can make a difference to various aspects of a child's academic performance such as, pupils' achievements in tests of literacy; children's self esteem and self concept as thinkers and learners; the fluency and quality of children's questioning; the quality of their thinking; and their ability to listen to others and engage effectively in class discussion. Research evidence also indicates positive effects in the area of teachers' professional confidence and self esteem.

The aspect of the relevance of Philosophy for Children for the South African setting revealed a number of interesting observations. One of these was that Matthew Lipman's novels were used as a springboard for generating locally developed material, namely, *Stories for Thinking*. Another reason for Philosophy for Children, through *Stories for Thinking,* being seen as relevant is because it supports the constructivist notions of the new South African school curriculum. It does this by assisting teachers in their endeavours to become and remain 'contextually relevant' with regards to curriculum development. The sustainability of the programme, though, is reliant on on-going supervision and training.

The research aim of the study was to investigate the effects of a teacher development programme based on Philosophy for Children and to explore the perceptions that teachers have of changes in themselves and their learners that could be attributed to exposure to Philosophy for Children and the locally developed material. The focus of the research was a training programme attended by selected teachers in the Western Cape. The programme introduced teachers to the theory and practice of Philosophy for Children and encouraged story writing, through the *Stories for Thinking* approach.

Teachers were encouraged to create *communities of inquiry* in their classes. An interpretive approach within a qualitative method of analysis was employed to explore the effects of the training programme on teachers.

5.3. Research findings

Data were captured from three group interviews. Three areas of investigation were highlighted for the purpose of thematic analysis. These were, firstly, teachers' professional and personal development that they could attribute to the course. Secondly, the extent to which teachers found the community of inquiry processes to be relevant to the curriculum. The third area of investigation was focussed on the changes that teachers had observed in their learners. The following tabulations, Tables A - C, give an overview of the reflections and interpretations that emerged from the three areas of investigation and the themes that emerged from each area:

Table A: *teachers' professional and personal development.*

(Three themes emerged)

Themes	Interpretation of themes
The story writing exercise was a professional and personal developmental experience.	Teachers both benefited and enjoyed the experience of writing stories related to the context in which they teach. Continuous in-service training and support are deemed to be important for sustainability.
Teachers gained insights into what learners can do and learners' abilities.	The P4C training programme has created a shift in how teachers perceive learners' insightfulness, their use of their imagination, their ability to give personal opinions, and to be critical in a respectful manner.
P4C made teachers reflect on their personal relationships.	There was a general reluctance to reflect on whether the P4C programme had impacted on personal issues. Some reflections were offered when participants became more comfortable with the interview process.

Table B: *the extent to which teachers found the community of inquiry processes to be relevant to the curriculum.* (One theme emerged)

Theme	Interpretation of theme
The community of inquiry has usefulness throughout the curriculum.	Its potential usefulness is felt in language, social science, history, mathematics and literacy teaching. Teachers were far more comfortable facilitating a *community of inquiry* than talking about the mechanisms of a *community of inquiry*. Frequent exposure to participating in *community of inquiry* sessions could result in a deeper understanding of its mechanics.

Table C: *changes that have been observed in learners*

(Three themes emerged)

Theme	Interpretation
The implementation of the programme assisted in developing self-esteem in children**.**	The programme has the potential to assist in the development of children's self-esteem. Teachers have observed significant improvement in self-esteem in children after even limited exposure to P4C. Children from disadvantaged communities appear to have benefited from the *community of inquiry* experiences.
Children learnt to reason	Children learnt to explain themselves, they elaborated on ideas or thoughts. There appears to have been shifts in children's thinking, questioning and reasoning.
Children were listening more to each other and this has led to them becoming more attentive	Learners were becoming more attentive within the *community of inquiry* sessions. Teachers were pleased that learners were not only listening better, but they were starting to develop into listeners who were paying attention so that they could respond appropriately and accurately.

A discourse analysis was employed to determine the extent to which participants displayed the key elements of the *community of inquiry* as suggested by Gregory (2005). Examples of the *practice of good thinking* were evident throughout the interviews**.** This appears to be an indication that the teachers who were interviewed were either naturally inclined towards good thinking, or that they had been trained well in the course that they attended. Whatever the reason for this commendable level of thinking and debating, it augurs well for philosophy in the classroom. A further analysis revealed that while the key elements 1, 2 and 3 were represented, some to a greater extent than others, key element 4, namely, that *we often think about our own thinking* was not evident at all. In addition the notion that *we challenge other people's views respectfully (key-element 1)* and the sub-elements: *clarifying our terms, making careful inferences, creating hypotheses, imaging consequences,* and *looking for missing perspectives* of *key element 2* were also absent. The speculation about these absences was that the teachers had not, at the time of being interviewed, had sufficient exposure to being participants in *community of inquiry* sessions themselves. Further speculation was that the *key elements* and sub-key elements that were absent from the interviews could be categorised as higher level processes that require further thinking and reflection than the thinking that accompany sub-key elements such as *offering examples, building on each other's ideas* and *giving good reasons*. On-going exposure to self-reflective programmes, linked to the *community of inquiry* would be of benefit to teachers, especially those who are part of the further development of the locally developed materials.

A tentative conclusion to the research findings reveals that Philosophy for Children, through the locally developed material, has the potential to positively affect teachers both professionally and personally and to effect positive changes in their learners.

5.4. Recommendations

A recommendation that has been mentioned previously in this study is that, while teachers portrayed meaningful insights and understanding about the mechanisms of Philosophy for Children and *Stories for Thinking*, they nevertheless require on-going support for a further deepening and understanding of the meta-cognitive operations of the approach. I would suggest that teachers who have been trained in Philosophy for Children, through the *Stories for Thinking* approach, be given continued support by the representatives of the IAPC in South Africa, as well as by the education managers and officials of the education districts. Officials who work in curriculum development, such as life orientation and language advisors, as well as those who work within the support components, such as learning support facilitators and school psychologists, are probably the most well placed for supporting the teachers in the field. A further recommendation is that Philosophy for Children be introduced to aspiring teachers at the pre-service stage of their training. This could be a good place to plant the seeds of philosophical classroom dialogue. A concerted effort, at a pilot project stage in one or two education districts, could be more realistic than to spread it too widely, initially. Success in one district could encourage the education department to support its growth to other districts.

In terms of the research undertaken, I would recommend that the researcher tries to make an effort to re-visit interviewed groups. In the case of this study, I managed to

meet informally with some of the participants during the course of my work as a school psychologist. These informal meetings were very valuable as they served to reinforce some of the statements made during the interviews and brought the 'interviewing moment' closer to the reality of life: the wind and dust of the Cape Flats and its townships.

A further recommendation, and what appears to be the next logical step in the development of P4C in the Western Cape, could be to locate P4C within different parts of the curriculum. I believe that teachers would become very interested in P4C if they could visualise the links between what they are expected to 'deliver' as teachers and how *Stories for Thinking* through the *community of inquiry* approach can be integrated to enhance existing practices and methods of teaching. Some of the comments from the interviews alluded to the possibilities of P4C being useful throughout the curriculum.

Some of the teachers that I interviewed were very excited about the possibility of their work being published. This has been a difficult area for many South Africans with only a few of its citizens reaching the stage of seeing their hard work in print. Perhaps the time has arrived for institutions such as education districts to invest time and resources into publishing the works of teachers and others who write in the field of education.

Recommendations for further research in the field are related to practices that I would try to improve if I were to re-do the present research. Others are due to factors that were out of my control. The teachers' march that was planned on the day that I had set aside for a group interview was out of my control. I had, fortunately, advertised two dates. Participants who arrived on the second date, excluded the ones who were

intending to be interviewed on the day of the march. I had to plan special interviews for those who wished to be interviewed but had missed the second date. The recommendation, therefore, is that an attitude of flexibility could assist the researcher in accessing further participants. Added to this is the notion of time and venue. For the second and third interviews the participants determined time and venue. A situation that was within my control was the seating arrangement of the participants. I would suggest that participants sit as close to the microphone as possible, or that the researcher plans for a number of microphones that can be placed close to the participants. In one of the transcripts one of the participants is quite inaudible. The transcriber could hardly hear his voice. I was fortunate that the interview had been recorded using both the visual and the audio media. Another area that was within my control was the way that I interview or the way that I ask questions. I learnt that I have to ask one question at a time. I noticed, only while reading the transcripts, that I had, more than once, asked a question and then asked another question before the first question was answered. The exercise of asking questions has taken on a new dimension for me. It is a skill that I could continue to work on for the future.

On the issue of suggestions for further research, the question posed in chapter 2 of this study stands out as one that could benefit from further exploration. The question posed was 'Can children engage meaningfully with philosophical issues from their first years in primary education, and can teachers be trained to assist them to do so?' This question poses a range of interesting aspects that would be worth exploring further. The present study has been an attempt to contribute to the discussion generated by this question.

5.5. Relevance of the study

I believe that this study has attempted to address the important aspect of how education policy can be implemented in practice. In this case, how the RNCS can be strengthened, in its implementation, through the teaching of thinking skills. It has also attempted to address some of the cornerstones of a growing democracy, namely, mutual respect, critical thinking, and dialogue. It also touches on the crucial and urgent area of INSET for teachers and regards the interaction between teachers and learners as fundamental aspects of the learning environment. It also tried to add to the critique of theories and practices that have originated in other settings so that these, if deemed useful, can be adapted or modified for the South African context. Crucial to the relevance of P4C, through the locally developed materials, is that it has the potential to enhance the constructivist underpinnings of the Revised National Curriculum Statement, the new South African outcomes based curriculum. The potential lies in its encouragement of "contextual relevance" (Green, 2000, p. 15). The contextual relevance manifests through the short stories that relate directly to the lives of the children in the schools.

5.6. Limitations of the study

One of the main limitations of the present research was that the 11 participants interviewed were too few. A larger number of participants might have improved the wealth of the conversations and responses to questions. Another limitation was that only one group interview was conducted with each of the three groups. Follow-up interviews could have added to the richness of the conversations. A further limitation was that all the participants were from the same education district. This meant that they all had a similar experience of the socio-economic dynamics of that geographic area. A

final limitation was that, similar to most qualitative research projects, this study is not intended to be generalisable as a finding that would automatically apply elsewhere. It would be useful, though, to assess the outcome of a similar study in another education district, or elsewhere in the country. While it is not expected to have the same results, perhaps trends or themes will be comparable.

5.7. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has shown that Philosophy for Children, through the locally developed materials, has the potential of playing a very meaningful role within a context such as South Africa. What will be crucial for the future is sustained support for the practitioners in the classroom. Green (1997, p. 22) reiterates this sentiment when stating that, "To obtain optimal benefit from Philosophy for Children, teachers need training and ongoing supervision as with any carefully designed programme".

Lipman (1987, p. 94) offers an appropriate closing remark to this study when stating that "we are never so moved to think for ourselves as when we find ourselves engaged in shared inquiry with others".

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Appendix A: Guideline of questions used when facilitating semi-structured interviews

1. What do you remember about the course?

1.1. Community of inquiry

1.2. Stories for thinking

1.3. The story writing process

2. General critique

2.1. How does it add/ not add value to the education of children?

2.2. Why would you want to use stories in this way?

2.3. What would you like should happen next in terms of P4C in the district?

2.4. What would have helped to make the course more effective?

3. What difference, if any, have you noticed in your learners?

4. Self development

4.1. Professionally

4.2. Personally

Appendix B: Letter of approval to conduct research in selected schools in the WCED

Appendix C: A sample of the transcription of *Interview 1*

Interviewer**:** And it seems as if it can generate a lot of discussion – it can kind of spur on other thoughts... And so for you, what is the value of this programme in education? To put that into a kind of a nutshell, what's the value for education?

Teacher A**:** I am going to say for me personally. You develop strong speakers. Kids that you would normally not think would come up and speak about something, they would come out and they would speak. Right, you move from there to something that is ……like I had come to video my class. I had - the topic was magic. What I did was I demonstrated – I think I started off by demonstrating a fairygod-mother and I waved the magic wand over them and said 'You are going to turn into this and whatever, whatever'. And it was a very lengthy discussion, because a lot of things came up. Things like magic, like the witch on the broomstick, what the witch does. And it came out, you know, the black magic that they do these days, sangomas, these things, all of that came out. You know, because the children know about these things. So you move – so we sort of moved, from the unknown to more identifiable things, but they immediately first feel the waters, test the water first, and then they plunged in.

Teacher B: So that is also one of the things. They learn lots of skills. From the thinking and the speaking they go to the writing. What I did as a follow-up activity was "write plus/minus six sentences for me about a magic pencil that you received for your birthday". And the things that came out there, you know, they received it for their birthdays, they got it from this one, the magic pencil could do this, the magic pencil could do that…

Appendix D: A sample of the transcript of *Interview 2*

Teacher A: Our story was about things happening in class, at school. We were talking about and writing about our experiences.

Teacher B: It is about the daily happenings at school. Like day to day things – what the child is doing during interval. It was about happenings after interval. We sometimes underestimate the children in our class. We told children to use their imagination, and they did.

Teacher C: We are grade 1 teachers. We asked children to tell us what they were reading. They told us. They had to draw a picture about themselves – things that they like. About their family.

Interviewer: In your discussions in class, do you also use the *community of inquiry* approach?

Teacher A: You mean the implementation in class?

Interviewer: Yes.

Teacher A: I read the story to the learners and I get the discussion going. I find that learners are interested in responding spontaneously to one another. Their questions come very easily. Instead of talking directly to me they are talking to one another when you give them a topic. We find that those shy learners who do not speak. Now we find them also taking part.

Interviewer: And do you find that you could sustain that, or were you enthusiastic after the course and right now it is at the back of your head when you do stuff. Do you still use elements of it?

Appendix E: A sample of the transcription of Interview 3

Teacher A: I think a *community of inquiry* is the discussion which takes place in a circle or a semi-circle. There should be rules that are set. And each and everyone present at that moment must follow and understand the rules that if someone is speaking. If someone wants to speak he has to lift up the hand and the others have to listen so that they give him a chance. They have to listen to each other's views.

Teacher B: I also think that in that discussion that they are dealing with there must be the agreement and disagreement. When there is some discussion everyone can have a view. Other people can disagree or they can agree.

Interviewer: And if someone disagrees with you, what do you do as a teacher?

Teacher C: If you disagree, you have to make a statement why you disagree with someone so that is where we have to learn to talk about that. Sometimes the other one will forget. The person could say, I disagree with those who said this or that. She has to follow what is happening.

Interviewer: Do you think there is value in creative thinking? What is the value for education?

Teacher A: The value is that the learners can use their minds. It is their chance now. They have to speak their views. Not necessarily on the curriculum but where you can see their minds. You can see that this learner can focus on whatever. He or she can really speak. Some of the learners can express themselves through speaking even though they can't write.

Appendix F: Outline of the teacher development programme

STORIES FOR THINKING: CLASSROOM RESOURCES DEVELOPED IN COLLABORATION WITH WESTERN CAPE EDUCATORS, USING PHILOSOPHY FOR CHILDREN AS A MODEL

Introductory session

This would describe the structure of the course, introduce some material from the existing booklet as a model, show the video of the material in use and explain their value, with, if possible, input from the educator in the video. This would be followed by discussion and an opportunity to interact with the material.

Further sessions

Educators would write their own stories and develop appropriate activities with guidance from an experienced cognitive education specialist. Stories would be piloted, revised and shared. Ideally draft stories would be typed up and printed out for educators at the sessions to enable comment and improvement.

Session 1
Introduction: aims and rationale of the programme
Video and input
Community of inquiry experience 1
Introduction to stories from existing educator text
Arrangements re practice

Session 2
Report back re practice
New story #1 text development
New story #1 support material development
Community of inquiry experience 2
Arrangements re practice

Session 3
Report back re practice
Feedback and revision: new story #1
New story #2 text development
New story #2 support material development
Arrangement re practice

Session 4
Report back re practice
Feedback and revision: new story #2

New story #3 text development
New story #3 support material development
Arrangements re practice

Session 5
Report back re practice
Feedback and revision: new story #3
New story #4 text development
New story #4 support material development
Arrangements re practice

Session 6
Report back re practice
Feedback and revision: new story #4
New story #5 text development
New story #5 support material development
Arrangements re practice

Session 7
Report back re practice
Feedback and revision: new story #5
Community of inquiry experiences 3 and 4
Arrangement re practice

Session 8
Report back re practice
Revision and modification of stories 1-5
Community of inquiry experience 5
Arrangement re practice

Session 9
Report back re practice
Final revision and modification of stories 1-5
Community of inquiry experience 6
Planning and evaluation

Session 10
Final report back
Evaluation of the course
Conclusion