

Institution: University of Strathclyde		
Unit of Assessment: C23 - Education		
Title of case study: Improving classroom practice and learning through Philosophy with Children		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2001-2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Dr Claire Cassidy	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Reader	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 16/08/2001 – present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: August 2013 – December 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Cassidy's research demonstrating the benefits of Philosophy with Children (PwC) and extensive engagement activities led teachers, schools, local authorities and NGOs to adopt the approach. Through this increased uptake, the research has supported children's development across the curriculum, their personal development, their agency, and their cognitive and social skills. Importantly, this includes benefits for children with Additional Support Needs (ASN) or who are marginalised. Teachers have reported wide changes to their practice outside of PwC sessions, including greater inclusivity, more active engagement with their pupils, enhanced relationships and improved pedagogy. As a consequence of teacher training delivered by Cassidy, it is estimated that thousands of children will have benefited from this approach since August 2013.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Philosophy with Children (PwC) emerged in the USA in the 1970s, and has been adopted and adapted internationally. It is a structured dialogue wherein children of any age engage in philosophical dialogue. Participants do not learn about the ideas of recognised philosophers; rather, they read a stimulus story, pose their own questions and engage in facilitated philosophical dialogue about their own ideas using a structure to support the dialogue. The Scottish curriculum is open to philosophical inquiry with children to support specific aspects of the school curriculum, critical thinking, citizenship, development of values, pro-social behaviour, and well-being. Cassidy's research from 2001 focused on investigating the place and utility of PwC, illustrating and evidencing the ways in which it might support teaching, learning, and children and young people's participation in wider society.</p> <p>Emphasising concepts of child/childhood and aligning with her work on citizenship and children's human rights, much of the research explores children's status and participation in society. Cassidy's work in this area considered how 133 children aged between the ages of five and eighteen understood citizenship, and how PwC might be used to support children's ethical reason-giving, a key element of Scottish citizenship education [R1]. She found the children to be more politically focused in their understanding of citizenship than their teachers and, following a 10-week PwC intervention, the children's reason-giving improved significantly. This work contributed to conceptual research on children's deliberative participation [R2], in which the researcher argued that PwC could be used as a tool to promote children and young people's participation in society, thereby enhancing their status.</p> <p>Aligned with the notion of deliberative participation, Cassidy's international empirical study exploring children's philosophical views on childhood involved colleagues across ten countries in five continents [R3]. Through PwC, participants engaged in dialogue about what it means to be a child, with findings indicating the majority of children considered childhood to be a period of learning, for fun, socialisation and – significantly – lower status, while adulthood was undesirable due to its responsibilities and the absence of fun. This work, and other associated publications, advocated PwC as a rights-based research method, a new element in educational and social science research. Cassidy's research on PwC and curriculum evidences that PwC supports children's talking and listening [R4], where analysis of PwC dialogue transcripts showed that PwC offers deeper notions of talk than other approaches. Additionally, it addresses the often-neglected element of listening in relation to talk, an aspect teachers find notoriously difficult to</p>		

teach, and, therefore, supports the claim for philosophical dialogue as a rights-based research method.

Informed by and complementing the work on PwC and rights, Cassidy investigated PwC with marginalised and vulnerable children in mainstream settings [R5] and in residential, secure accommodation [R6]. Over the course of three projects, each setting introduced PwC for ten weeks. Through observations, semi-structured interviews, and dialogue analysis, this work showed that PwC is an inclusive practice for all children, but it particularly offers support and structure to children with ASN, notably those with autism and/or social, emotional-behavioural difficulties, and to those considered marginalised, by facilitating and developing their self-regulatory behaviour, engaged participation and providing opportunities for their voices to be heard.

3. References to the research (Strathclyde affiliated authors in b)

- R1 Cassidy, C. & Christie, D.** (2014). Community of Philosophical Inquiry: citizenship in the classroom. *Childhood & Philosophy* 10(19), 33–54. Available from: <https://www.e-publicacoes.uerj.br/index.php/childhood/article/view/20690>
- R2 Cassidy, C.** (2017). Philosophy with Children: a rights-based approach to deliberative participation. *International Journal of Children's Rights* 25(2), 320–334. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1163/15718182-02502003>
- R3 Cassidy, C., Conrad, S-J., Daniel, M-F., Garside, D., Kohan, W., Murriss, K., Rego, M., Wu, X. and Zhelyazkova, T.** (2017). Being children: children's voices on childhood. *International Journal of Children's Rights* 24(3–4), 698–715. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1163/15718182-02503006> [REF2]
- R4 Cassidy, C. & Christie, D.** (2013). Philosophy with Children: talking, thinking and learning together. *Early Child Development and Care* 183(8), 1072–1083. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2013.773509> [REF2 in 2014]
- R5 Cassidy, C., Marwick, H., Deeney, L. & McLean, G.** (2017). Philosophy with Children, self-regulation and engaged participation for children with emotional-behavioural and social communication difficulties. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties* 23(1), 81–96. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632752.2017.1388654>
- R6 Cassidy, C. & Heron, G.** (2018). Breaking into secure: Introducing Philosophical Discussions to Young People in Secure Accommodation. *Journal of Social Work*, 20(3), 287–306. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1468017318815399> [REF2]

Notes on the quality of research: All referenced outputs were peer-reviewed. Cassidy has been invited to present this research internationally, including at the University of Coimbra; PHBern; Zheijang Normal University and Queen's University, Belfast. The research has led to grants to continue the work (e.g. Cassidy & Marwick. Philosophising to support well-being. Barnardo's, 06/01/2020-30/07/2020, GBP33,270).

4. Details of the impact

Focusing on PwC and its relationship to the curriculum, children's rights, childhood and citizenship, Cassidy's research demonstrated the benefits of PwC for children's learning and participation in and beyond school. Her work has reached a wide non-academic audience via various talks (approx. 500 total attendees), and her media engagement has included TES, BBC Radio Scotland, Tianjin TV news. Cassidy's research and extensive teacher training and engagement work led local authorities, NGOs and education officials to adopt the approach, resulting in an thousands of children experiencing PwC since August 2013. Through these activities, Cassidy's research has:

- Supported children's development, with particular benefit to children with ASN and/or who are marginalised;
- Enhancing pedagogy, promoting greater inclusivity and interaction in the classroom;
- Influenced educational policy and furthering the reach of PwC's benefits.

Supporting children's development, with particular benefit to children with Additional Support Needs or who are marginalised

Evidence from observational data and interviews with children who participated in PwC indicated increased personal development, agency, and cognitive and social skills, with a pupil from mainstream education stating: *'Instead of just jumping to a conclusion and giving an answer straight away it helps you . . . actually take into account what the consequences are and what could happen'* [R1]. Children with ASN found they benefitted socially: *'I find it easier getting on with people when I use philosophy'*, *'in the playground it helps out with friends'*, and *'it helps me think and I don't get angry'* [R7]. A pilot project with a Glasgow Primary 6 class resulted in a rise in literacy attainment, and other elements of learning and behaviour improved over the year [S1]. The sponsors, Barnardo's and Scottish Recovery Network, identified how PwC sessions were *'structured in such a way that all contributions are valued,'* and that *'the approach seems to draw in pupils who would be labelled as disruptive in some systems, or may be managing challenging economic and emotional home life, and [it] supports their attainment'* [S1].

Teachers who had undertaken Career-Long Professional Learning (CLPL) with Cassidy noted improvements in children's self-esteem and contributions to class discussions as a result of PwC: *'[a child with autism and global learning difficulties] has got an opinion about everything now and he loves the sessions because it's safe and he can't be picked on by the others'* [S2]. Speaking of a pupil struggling with aspects of the curriculum, a teacher said: *'the fact that he had actually been able to express his awareness of having to think, it made me think that these children, that you maybe wouldn't expect, can be challenged as much'* [S2]. Another also reported a child in her class whose family had been given a decision denying them Leave to Remain and used PwC to discuss the issue, the teacher viewing this as *'a safe environment for her to consider philosophical issues around what was happening to her family'* [S2]. The Philosophy with Children and Communities Network Scotland (PwCC), comprises over 50 practitioners - all of whom have at least completed the PwC Postgraduate Certificate course led by Cassidy, noted increased confidence, engagement, concentration and listening skills for those with whom they work as a result of PwC [S3]. One practitioner summarised the benefits as:

'children were more able/likely to justify their viewpoint, agree or disagree with each other, respect one another, provide examples when speaking, take turns in group discussions amongst other skills. This... work not only impacted the children that I worked with but also the staff and parents, as they were keen to know more and be involved, as they noticed the impact on the pupils.' [S3]

It is conservatively estimated that members of this Network have delivered PwC to several hundred children, young people and adults, with one member estimating having led sessions for at least 400 primary pupils, and another estimating 300 secondary pupils [S3]. Feedback from primary and secondary pupils highlights their recognition of the improvements to their cognitive skills, for example, *'it became much easier to express my thoughts and opinions as the weeks went on'* [S3].

Cassidy delivered a series of sessions at a secure unit in Renfrewshire with capacity for 27 young people, serving some of the most vulnerable young people in Scotland. The centre noted:

'a particular impact of these sessions on some young people who had previously had negative experiences of education and subsequently, low confidence in the academic setting. The sessions allowed these pupils to develop confidence... They also managed to demonstrate an improvement in active listening skills as a result of the agreement of the rules of each session and respond to other individuals' points of view in a thoughtful, considerate manner.' [S4]

As a result of these benefits, the centre has decided to integrate PwC into their curriculum, has engaged Cassidy to deliver training to staff and intends to work with other local residential centres and ASN schools to share the learning *'as we believe that this approach provides invaluable benefits to the vulnerable young people we serve'* [S4].

Enhancing pedagogy, promoting greater inclusivity and interaction in the classroom

Through CLPL courses for schools and local authorities, Cassidy trained approximately 245 teachers between August 2013 and July 2020 [S5]. A further 90 teachers completed the

Strathclyde PGCert in PwC, and 30 student teachers took an undergraduate module in PwC [S5]. As evidenced by the existence of the PwCC Network [S3], many of the teachers trained by Cassidy have adopted the approach and use it year on year with their classes. Although difficult to quantify, thousands of children are likely to have benefitted from the improved practice of teachers who integrated this training into their work. Combined with the 260 teachers who trained with Cassidy prior to 2013, if every teacher trained integrated PwC into their practice and facilitated it with 25 pupils per year since their training, approximately 95,000 pupils will have benefitted from the increased personal development, agency, and cognitive and social skills associated with PwC between August 2013 and December 2020 [S5]. If each teacher only facilitated PwC with one class of 25 pupils, this still would have benefitted 15,675 pupils [S5]. In addition to this formal training, Cassidy delivered lectures internationally, introducing PwC to approximately 5,500 more student teachers since 2013.

Through Cassidy's leadership of an international research project on children's concepts of child, using PwC as a rights-based research method and unique approach to data collection [R3], colleagues in Switzerland and China began developing PwC and training practitioners in their countries. Approximately 500 teachers in each country were trained to 2020 - further extending the international reach of the benefits to children - with both locations building it into teacher education courses and research funding applications [S6]. In 2018, Cassidy was invited to conduct a five-day training activity on PwC by the Heping District Education Bureau, Tianjin, China [S7]. Following the workshops, the 50 pre-school teachers trained '*accurately understood the philosophy of children, how to choose the stimulus that caused philosophical problems, and how to promote the dialogue of children's philosophy*' [S7]. The District intends to roll out the approach to all thirty kindergartens in Heping, reaching around 5,000 children per year [S7].

As a result of Cassidy's training, several Scottish Schools added PwC to their curriculum, for example, in one secondary school where a member of the PwCC Network works, senior pupils are offered two hours of practical philosophy per week [S3]. In many primary and secondary schools, teachers are embedding PwC into their own subject areas, '*providing the enriching and stimulating experiences that Curriculum for Excellence demands, and making real the aspiration of breadth, depth, challenge and meaningful interdisciplinary learning in Scottish education*' [S3]. Trained participants all reported a positive change in their pedagogy, using the approach to enhance their creativity and develop inclusive classroom practice [S5]. They could meet curricular demands by promoting group work, critical thinking, talking and listening, and have changed how they listened to children and created opportunities for pupil-led classroom dialogue, positively influencing the classroom ethos and relationships [S5]. One practitioner noted he was '*not being stuck to a rigid timetable and that if something does come up in the class, giving the children the freedom to discuss it*'; another said: '*I always thought I was that kind of teacher, taking on pupil voice, giving choice and giving the children a lot of responsibility for their learning, but until doing this... I wasn't giving them enough credit*' [S2]. A secondary maths teacher observed '*I am grateful for the way the PwC course fundamentally reshaped my views on pedagogy and the power of creating opportunities for learners to ask and explore their own questions*' [S3].

Cassidy's research on citizenship and rights of the child [e.g. R1, R2] has been of particular benefit with regards to Religious and Moral Education (RME). One practitioner noted that the research '*has been influential in my thinking regards how pupils engage in tackling difficult questions and scenarios in life... Working with Dr Cassidy has opened up tools to me that allow the young people I work with to better face, tackle and question themes around citizenship, including politics, diversity and ethics*' [S3]. One practitioner stated: '*Dr Cassidy's research and the wider academic reading I've encountered through the Research Network has given me a more critical and thoughtful perspective on how school should be enacting pupil voice and developing a 'rights-respecting' school. I've shared my findings with colleagues on the school's 'Rights Respecting' working group, to inform their future agenda*' [S3]. The approach has allowed practitioners to deliver more effective RME, with one practitioner stating that '*pupils have engaged more deeply and at a more personal level with the themes, concepts and ideas that arise in the RME curriculum*', and a secondary teacher noted it '*improved my questioning and I have noticed I am more confident in facilitating what some would call 'Higher Order Thinking' with my students*' [S3].

Some teachers reported greater employability, with the training giving them '*a unique selling point which helps them stand out in the crowd, a unique perspective on education and pedagogy about*

which they can speak confidently in interviews, a respected professional qualification, and the chance to offer prospective employers “added value” by being able to introduce [PwC] to schools’ [S3]. Several members of the PwCC Network commented on the value of Cassidy’s work in bringing together practitioners from different geographical regions and professional contexts, allowing them to share experiences and knowledge [S3]; for example, one practitioner stated ‘I would not be the enquiring, analytical, inquisitive, critical, articulate teacher – or indeed human being – that I am if it wasn’t for the PwC courses I have undertaken and the significant input from Dr Cassidy in my career thus far’ [S3].

Influencing educational policy and furthering the reach of PwC’s benefits

Drawing on her research, Cassidy has worked closely with Humanist Society Scotland (HSS) since 2012 to increase adoption of PwC [S8]. She contributed to their response to the Education (Scotland) Bill consultation in 2018 by participating in roundtables, and has worked with them in relation to RME, in particular the mandatory, contentious ‘Religious Observance’ part of the Scottish curriculum. Cassidy has also provided example workshops to aid in policy positions of the Society, from which they lobby Scottish Government, as well as wider engagement with the Society members through talks, workshops, a podcast (listenership: 2500) and an in-house magazine article (readership: 15,000) [S8]. The Society’s Chief Executive acknowledged Cassidy’s contribution to their work, and its impact on the RME curriculum:

‘Your knowledge and expertise in the benefits of a philosophical approach to children’s learning and development has helped us draft educational resources on Humanism for the [RME] curriculum. Thanks to your input the [curriculum] has broadened in the past decade to be ever more encompassing of different beliefs and importantly considering the views of non-religious people. This is a significant policy and educational change... our ongoing work with the Scottish Government around Religious Observance/Time for Reflection has been significantly impacted by your guidance and research.’ [S8]

Since 2015, Cassidy has worked with Glasgow City Council (GCC) to provide local authority-funded CLPL sessions [S9]. Through this route, 80 practitioners have been funded to take the course, several of whom had roles of responsibility such as Leaders of Early Learning and Glasgow’s Improvement Challenge Leaders of Learning. The Quality Improvement Officer for GCC estimates that through these trained practitioners, approximately 5,000 pupils will have participated in PwC [S9]. Following the CLPL work, Cassidy was invited to join the CREATE Creative Learning Network’s Steering Group, which shapes policy across the local authority relating to creative skills [S9]. PwC has been included in the GCC CREATE Workstream Plan, which is a key part of Glasgow’s Improvement Challenge aiming to raise attainment for all and close the poverty-related attainment gap. The Quality Improvement Officer highlighted the importance of PwC for this work; ‘This has been an invaluable initiative which is now embedded in many of our schools and contributes to children being more skilled in the four capacities of the Curriculum for Excellence (successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors)’ [S9].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- S1** Collated corroborating statements from Barnardo’s project partners, received July 2020.
- S2** Creative Learning Network, Glasgow City Council: Final Report, 2016.
- S3** Corroborating statement from PwCC Network representative, dated 6 June 2020.
- S4** Corroborating statement from the Head of Education of the secure unit in Renfrewshire, dated 18 November 2020.
- S5** Collated teacher training numbers for Career Long Professional Learning courses, the Strathclyde PGCert in PwC, and undergraduate module in PwC, with cumulative table detailing the estimated number of children reached.
- S6** Collated emails with PwC course numbers in Switzerland and China, dated 10 January 2020.
- S7** Heping District Education Bureau. *Heping District Education Bureau invites British education expert to conduct early childhood teacher training.* 28 June 2018.
- S8** Supporting statement from Chief Executive, Humanist Society Scotland, received June 2020.
- S9** Supporting statement from Quality Improvement Officer, Glasgow City Council, received November 2020.