

**Wiser Wales:
Developing Philosophy for Children
(P4C) in Different School Contexts in
Wales
2009 – 2012**

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**Final Evaluation Report
September 2012**

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Executive Summary

One of the strong features of the approach adopted by CEWC-Cymru is the way in which the support offered to each school has varied according to their needs, ability and willingness to engage with the Wiser Wales project.

All teaching staff and head teachers interviewed could see ways in which P4C could enhance the delivery of the Welsh curriculum. Specific mention was made of links with the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) and Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC) agendas, both of which are currently priority areas for the Welsh government.

In some schools P4C activities do not seem to have been linked directly to the curriculum, consequently they are primarily reporting increases in skills in listening, speaking and respecting the views of others. However, in other schools P4C has clearly been used as a teaching tool for creative, emotional and controversial topics *within the curriculum*. In these instances the impact has been greater as pupils have engaged more deeply with the curriculum materials as well as gaining skills in critical thinking, collaborative learning and respecting each other.

Another impact of using P4C, possibly not previously recorded, has been the impact on linguistic development in Welsh medium schools. When using P4C in a Welsh medium school setting, there tends to be a high focus on linguistic development including increasing vocabulary in both English and Welsh and bi-lingual self-expression. P4C has also provided opportunities for pupils from English speaking homes to increase their self-expression in Welsh.

The most commonly reported impact on pupils of participating in P4C was enhanced social skills, reported among both primary and secondary school pupils. The language used to describe the changes was generally more advanced when talking to secondary school pupils, however, the changes they described were similar. These changes included increased listening skills, an increased ability to question, increased concentration, respecting other perspectives often leading to strengthened relationships, learning to challenge and be challenged and increased confidence in self-expression.

Pupils talked about the value of the 'rules' of P4C, having to take turns to speak, being required to listen more and try and understand what others were saying. They talked about these newly acquired skills with a sense of pride and several talked about using them in other contexts, e.g. at home or the playground.

Fears have been expressed that P4C is less likely to be effective among young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds, as reading tends to occur later and critical thinking is less likely to be a feature of family life. However, using CEWC-Cymru's approach, P4C had a strong positive impact across the full range of participating schools including one school where 31% of pupils are eligible for Free School Meals, indicating the relatively low socio-economic background of families in the catchment area.

The changes in pupil behaviour were echoed strongly by teaching staff and head teachers in all the participating schools. Teachers tended to report benefits for lower achievers (LAs) mainly in terms of confidence, speaking out and being heard, whereas for high achievers (HAs) they tended to report increases in thinking skills: being challenged more and needing to understand and respect perspectives other than their own.

Most of the teachers who have engaged with P4C and used it with pupils over a period of time feel they have gained skills as facilitators, including adopting a less teacher-led approach, focusing more on the pupils, not providing answers but allowing the pupils to contribute their own ideas. In addition to this, several teachers said they were now noticing which pupils are dominant and trying to ensure that those whose voices are less often heard have opportunities to voice their opinions. When explaining their own development as teachers, most seemed to be referring to changes which influenced their teaching style in other settings as well as P4C.

No school reported that P4C as an approach did not suit their context or was inappropriate for their pupils. All schools saw the value of incorporating P4C with their pupils in their specific context and the extent to which the approach was adopted was less to do with schools' opinions about the value of P4C and more linked to the other competing pressures and the extent to which the school saw P4C as a means of addressing their priority areas.

Three factors were cited as significant barriers to embedding P4C:

- lack of time;
- lack of direction from senior management;
- too many different, competing approaches to critical thinking introduced in the school.

Five factors were identified which promoted embedding P4C:

- CPD opportunities (mentoring, co-facilitation, observing others using P4C, safe places for teachers to try it out for themselves);
- active support from senior management;
- cross-school / whole school strategy;
- resources available 'ready to use';
- peer support, for example through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs).

One of the strongest messages was from teachers who felt that without the opportunity to experience P4C and see it in action first, they would not have felt sufficiently confident to try it out themselves.

The resources developed and made available by CEWC were extremely well received by teaching staff and senior management in both primary and secondary schools.

The extent to which schools adopted P4C depended not only on the strength and applicability of the CEWC's approach, but also on the internal support available to teachers, the priorities and challenges facing the school, and the strategic importance placed on P4C within the school. There is some evidence that where schools introduce several different critical thinking approaches, many teachers find this unhelpful and confusing.

One of the striking features of this project has been the way in which CEWC has tailored the type of support provided to each school to the context of each school. This has enabled schools to use P4C in slightly different ways which link with their current agendas. This has resulted in four of the seven schools taking strong ownership of P4C with plans for taking it forward through internal school processes.



1. Introduction

This report assesses the impact of the approach adopted by the Council for Education in World Citizenship (CEWC) through the Wiser Wales project 2009-2012, which has supported the embedding of Philosophy for Children (P4C) in schools in Wales.

During the project lifetime, CEWC worked directly with 2,750 students and provided P4C training for 1,030 teachers in Wales, with 124 of these undertaking 2-day, SAPERE accredited, Level 1 P4C courses. A range of varied approaches to training were employed to suit different contexts, including modelling of 141 philosophical enquiries by CEWC trainers for pupils and teachers in schools across Wales.

The content of this report written by project external evaluator, Dr Katy Newell-Jones focuses more specifically on the **practicalities, benefits and challenges of using the P4C method in Wales in different school contexts** and on assessing the impact of the approach adopted by CEWC. For this research, 7 project partner schools were tracked for at least 1 year following their involvement with the project.

2. The participating schools

CEWC has been working in partnership with seven schools during the Wisser Wales project, four primary and 3 secondary schools. They were selected to represent a broad spectrum of schools. The context of each is very different, with different pressures, priorities and challenges. One of the strong features of the approach adopted by CEWC is the way in which the support offered to each school has varied according to their needs, ability and willingness to engage with the Wisser Wales project. The table below summarises some of the key features of each school and the way(s) in which P4C has been adopted.

School	Primary / Secondary	Notes
School A	Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong commitment to adopting a culture of P4C • Keen to receive P4C ideas and examples • Resources disseminated to support whole school culture • P4C sessions for all pupils throughout the year with differentiated frequency for age groups
School B	Secondary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High achieving school with Thinking Skills Award • Multiple models of critical thinking have been introduced / piloted • Familiar with P4C prior to the Wisser Wales project
School C	Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong commitment to develop and be recognised as a ‘Thinking School’ • Familiar with P4C prior to the Wisser Wales project • Has introduced several strategies for thinking skills development
School D	Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welsh Medium School • Piloted three initiatives simultaneously: SEAL, P4C and R-Time. • Decided to give more focus to the R-Time scheme due to its ‘out-of-the-box’ ‘ready-to-go’ style • SLT and staff recognise benefits of P4C and want to do more, though competing pressures such as staff turnover / low engagement have been affecting factors
School E	Secondary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff involved with project recognise benefits of P4C and value it, however school has received low banding leading to multiple challenges and additional reporting requirements due to school status • Staff under complex pressures, morale low • Pressure to prioritise to change school status
School F	Secondary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two schools amalgamated in 2010 to form a ‘super school’ • Project contacts explorative in approach towards P4C and strong adoption by teachers and supported by SLT • P4C PLC (Professional Learning Committee) set up
School G	Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welsh medium school – strong focus on linguistic development • Small classes with combined year groups • Strong adoption of P4C by head teacher • Disseminating to associated primary school • 31% pupils eligible for Free School Meals

3. Approach to assessing the impact of Wiser Wales

Evidence on the impact of Wiser Wales was collected using a simplified version of the methodology of Most Significant Change (MSC) (www.healthlink.org.uk/we-do/network_msc.html). MSC is a recognised process for gathering qualitative data, particularly suitable where the changes expected could be quite diverse, and possibly unexpected. The changes in attitude among pupils involved in P4C in a Welsh language primary school might be quite different from that of teaching staff in a large secondary school. MSC involves collecting the ‘most significant changes’ from as wide a group of stakeholders as possible involved in a project. These are then systematically reviewed and sorted into categories by the project team supported by the external evaluator. The result is an evidence base of the range of ways in which the project has brought about change, illuminated by actual examples from different stakeholders.

An advantage of the MSC process is that it actively promotes reflection and learning among stakeholders and among the team. The approach does focus on eliciting positive change and so this research has been supplemented with broader questions about the challenges encountered and barriers to change (appendix A). Initially parents were to be included in the interviews, unfortunately, this was not possible. However, head teachers, teaching staff, NQTs, and pupils were interviewed.

During January – April 2012 participating schools were visited on a number of times during which a series of interviews and group discussions took place with pupils, teaching staff and head teachers. A series of questions were used to find out information about how often P4C was being used, by whom and with which kinds of pupils. Teaching staff were also asked about the resources which CEWC has developed to support embedding P4C into schools. This information was used to develop case studies of each of the schools in relation to how they had incorporated P4C, the kinds of barriers they faced and the degree of success they had experienced. As part of the interview and group discussions, people were asked what was the ‘most significant change’ for them as a result of being involved in the P4C project. Over 350 short responses were gathered which were then reviewed systematically, clustering into themes before critiquing. As a result of this activity it is possible to draw some robust conclusions about the changes, the ways in which change has been brought about, the challenges faced and the sustainability of these changes. These are discussed in the next section, using examples from the interviews and discussion.

4. Changes experienced

As the changes were reviewed and the themes emerged, it was decided not to report separately by school as the kinds of changes being experienced were common across the schools. It is noteworthy that no major differences were found between the impact reported at primary and secondary schools. As expected, the language used to describe the changes was generally more advanced when talking to secondary school pupils, but the changes were similar. As described below these changes centred on increased ability to question, respecting other perspectives, learning to challenge and be challenged, increased confidence in self-expression, increased critique of curriculum content (when P4C was used to explore curriculum content). The difference in impact between schools depended more on the context of the school, the extent to which they were able to allocate time and resources to P4C at this time in the school’s development. These factors are discussed in section 5.

4.1 Social development and respecting others

The most commonly reported impact on pupils of participating in P4C was enhanced social skills. These changes were described as improved listening and speaking skills, increased confidence, increased concentration, being able to disagree respectfully and strengthening relationships.

The following are comments from pupils when asked what difference P4C made. Repeatedly pupils talked about learning how to take turns, listen, not to interrupt others, having increased confidence to speak in groups and being able to disagree in 'friendly' ways.

"It's made the class more cooperative. Like when we have to work as a team. You work things out together." - School A

"P4C is fun. It's a bit like what Jade said – if you agree or disagree, you don't need to shout out. It's a friendly way of disagreeing. When people disagree [in other contexts] and shout, it's scary." – School G

"I used to shout out loads of time and P4C has helped me to wait. It's made me understand more. I understand things like racism more." – School A

"It's good to help you with your confidence and in making new friends. Some people weren't my friends before P4C. But in P4C they explain themselves, so I can sort of see why and we worked around it. We used to be sort of like enemies, but now we're sort of like friends. It was 'when people get bullied' and the 'racism' discussions helped this." – School A

"It makes you more confident with speaking in front of people in your class and you learn to speak a bit more." – School E

Pupils talked about the value of the 'rules' of P4C, having to take turns to speak, being required to listen more and trying to understand what others' were saying. They talked about these newly acquired skills with a sense of pride and several talked about using them in other contexts, e.g. at home or the playground.

These changes were echoed strongly by teaching staff and head teachers in all the schools, as demonstrated in the following statements:

"At the beginning here the children weren't independent thinkers which might be to do with where they live and the fact that this is a small school. They're used to being spoon fed and being attended to because of the school size. I've seen a vast improvement since using P4C. Their language skills are much better as is their ability to discuss and respect each other. Their eye contact is also better and their oracy and prediction skills have also improved." – School G

"The children aren't afraid to answer because they know that their idea isn't going to be wrong – so it's definitely had an impact. And putting themselves in other's shoes. Thinking from other points of view. Encouraging empathy." – School C

"P4C helps the students become more empathetic and sensitive with other pupils in the class and helps them have more understanding because it helps children to become considerate. It's collaborative learning because it is working together and keeping an open mind." – School B

“It’s a about valuing voice. Being aware of their home backgrounds where I don’t know if their opinions get heard. It’s a pedagogy through which children can take their own time to gradually build up confidence to contribute.” – School G

“With P4C we now have children who are willing to listen to others and accept their diversity across the school.” – School A

Teaching staff reported that P4C was beneficial for both lower achievers and high achievers. LAs tended to gain more in terms of confidence and having their voice heard, whereas HAs were challenged to consider that the views of others are as equally valid as their own.

“It’s good for the lower achievers because their answers are involved [in discussions] and they can see that their answers are worthy. The higher achievers are challenged. They think their answers are right and so P4C challenges that. People who are really shy as well, they benefit and we can make sure we hear their voices.” – School C

Fears have been expressed that P4C is less likely to be effective among young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds, as reading tends to occur later and critical thinking is less likely to be a feature of family life. However, P4C had a strong positive impact across the full range of participating schools including school G where 31% of pupils are eligible for Free School Meals, indicating the relatively low socio-economic background of families in the catchment area. The head teacher and teaching staff at this school said of P4C;

“They are quite relieved to get difficult things off their chests in a safe environment. They’re sensible and practical and matter-of-fact about strong issues.” Teacher

“I could see that P4C could come in very well across the curriculum and help children develop in this way. I see already that the children are better debaters, better listeners and that they show more respect to one another.” Head teacher

“I’ve seen a vast improvement since using P4C. Their language skills are much better as is their ability to discuss and respect one another. Their eye contact is also better and their oracy and predictions skills have also improved.” Teacher

4.2 Increases in skills in critical thinking

Cyfanfyd, the umbrella body for ESDGC in Wales, refers to ‘encouraging questioning and discussion’, and ‘reflecting a range of perspectives’ as crucial aspects of critical thinking in their 2008 paper *Taking a Critical Approach*. There is clear evidence from pupils, teaching staff and head teachers that both of these skills are being developed through P4C.

Where pupils have opportunities to participate in P4C regularly over a period of time, even primary school pupils consider that P4C has helped them develop new thinking skills.

“I didn’t used to get on with English. Now I do. P4C has helped me to concentrate more. It helps me to ask more questions. It makes me want to ask more questions.” – School A

Some pupils are using these newly acquired skills outside of P4C circles. The pupil quoted below explained that he uses P4C-type thinking when he gets ‘stuck’ in other contexts.

“It’s easier to learn and it’s helpful. If I get stuck in that way [in my thinking] I know what to do. I would, I think of it in a way that P4C does. Like listening to myself say it and asking my mum or dad what they think.” – School C

Teaching staff are extremely positive about the changes they see among pupils, even after only a few P4C sessions. As demonstrated in the quotations below pupils are questioning more, analysing and challenging more and engaging in the subject at a deeper level.

“Children are able to question more and they understand that they can explore concepts at a deeper level and they don’t just have to accept what’s on the surface and they can change their opinions too.” – School A

“Pupils are more confident, more open to challenge one another. They are more willing to put their own perspectives across and challenge others as a result of that.” – School B

“So it does enhance how the curriculum is taught in science. It’s enhanced it – support is for more global issues not just from a text book... .. It involves using real live case studies and views. Pupils can bring their own issues in and dissect and develop meaning. Before P4C that might not have been the case.” – School B

Teachers tended to report benefits for lower achievers mainly in terms of confidence, speaking out and being heard, whereas for lower achievers they tended to report increases in thinking skills: being challenged more and needing to understand and respect perspectives other than their own.

“The higher achievers – we want for them to they take on board what other people are saying in the class. In P4C, they think more, they think about the answers they are giving.” – School C

Note: It is interesting that the positive changes in social development, respecting others and critical thinking skills are reported across all schools, whether or not the approach has been fully embedded across the school.

Schools which have embedded P4C to a greater extent tended to report an impact across a larger number and range of pupils. However, no school reported that P4C as an approach did not suit their context or was inappropriate for their pupils.

This suggests that the reason why P4C has not been incorporated more fully in some of the participating schools, has less to do with the impact on pupils’ learning and more to do with the competing pressures and challenges in implementation.

4.3 Linguistic development

One impact of using P4C in Welsh schools, possibly not previously recorded, has been the impact on bilingual linguistic development. In Welsh medium schools in particular there tends to be a strong focus on linguistic development including increasing vocabulary in both English and Welsh and bilingual self-expression.

“When important people came [to the school] before Christmas, P4C helped us to do more work – because we learn more Welsh words and more English words in P4C – so we can talk to other visitors.” – School G

Pupils at School G seemed genuinely interested in extending their vocabulary and P4C was supporting this process.

“You can learn some new words. For example Jade said a new word. We could ask it and it would help us.”

“I like using new words. Say you’re in Tesco’s and you see friend. Then you could use a new word and teach them.”

“I like using new words in my work.”

P4C has provided opportunities for pupils from English speaking homes to increase their self-expression in Welsh. When Welsh is not spoken at home pupils’ Welsh can be somewhat functional in nature. However, participating in P4C sessions in Welsh really stretches their self-expression. They need to be able to express feelings, to put complex points forward, to listen and respond with sensitivity, to challenge without offending. All of these skills are able to be developed through P4C, with a skilful teacher.

“I prefer it in both [languages] because she said we can improve in both languages because there might be words that we don’t know in both languages. Say there’s a word that we don’t know and [the teacher] says what it means in both languages and so it gives you a chance of improving in both languages.” – School D

4.4 Teacher development

Most of the teachers who have engaged with P4C and used it with pupils over a period of time feel they have gained skills as facilitators. The following are fairly representative comments from teachers who became confident with P4C.

“My teaching style has developed alongside my acquisition of P4C. Yes, it’s not so much teacher-led. Not so much me telling them. It’s much more collaborative.” – School G

“The ability to prompt pupils and not give them the answer (or *an* answer). I definitely don’t do that as much. I think it’s a different way of assessing. You’re more aware of the skills that pupils are developing. You’re able to assess speaking and listening skills in a circle. In a circle, there’s no pen and paper in front of them so it’s this idea that the focus is on the oral content. You’re more aware of the pupils who aren’t participating. It highlights pupils that may need extra support or encouragement.” – School F

The mostly commonly reported changes are adopting a less teacher-led approach, focusing more on the pupils, not providing answers but allowing the pupils to contribute their own ideas. In addition to this, several teachers said they were now noticing which pupils are dominant and trying to ensure that those whose voices are less often heard have opportunities to voice their opinions.

When explaining their own development as teachers, most seemed to be referring to changes which influenced their teaching style in other settings as well as P4C, as expressed by the teacher below.

“I think that I’m more aware of questions without answers that the children can maybe offer an answer or opinion to. Because of the matter of respecting others - I think that comes into other lessons as well. I’m more aware of the need for the respect and opinions of others and the beliefs of people in the wider community.” – School D

However, not all teachers felt comfortable with using P4C, especially where the support across the school was limited and teachers were experiencing many other pressures, as explained by the following teacher.

“Perhaps it is just me but I feel that if they can’t come up with philosophical questions I can’t guide them and confidence is a massive barrier for me. I feel like it hasn’t worked. Sometimes I feel like put off from having a go because I feel that I haven’t got it right. It’s being organised but also confidence.” – School E

This links with the need for on-going support and encouragement is essential, especially at the early stage of becoming familiar with facilitating P4C (section 5.2).

5 Broader issues

5.1 Understanding the pressures and priorities of schools

Throughout the project it has been clear that the context, pressures and priorities of different schools have a considerable impact on the success or otherwise of embedding P4C into schools. Introducing and embedding P4C into schools is neither straightforward nor easy. Most schools face challenges, most years – which CEWC has needed to work around.

The participating schools included one which amalgamated with another local school during the lifetime of the project. Another was a school received ‘Band 5’ status with a high free school meal ratio, which subsequently experienced additional reporting requirements and multiple pressures. Another was a high achieving school which had already been engaged with several other learning models and approaches to developing critical thinking. Yet another was a Welsh language primary school, with a strong focus on linguistic development. Another was a primary school where the commitment of the Head Teacher to P4C was high and she took a strategic whole school approach. A common feature across all schools was that many teaching staff lack the confidence to develop their own materials and need accessible materials, initially, which they can use with little adaptation.

One of the striking features of this project has been the way in which CEWC has tailored the type of support provided to each school to the context of each school. This has enabled schools to use P4C in slightly different ways which link with their current agendas. This has resulted in four of the seven schools taking strong ownership of P4C with plans for taking it forward through internal school processes.

5.2 Schools’ perspectives – what works?

The evaluation interviews provided some insights into factors which aided or hindered individual schools in their engagement with P4C. All schools saw the value of incorporating P4C with their pupils in their specific context and the extent to which the approach was adopted was less to do with schools’ opinions about the value of P4C and more linked to the other competing pressures and the extent to which the school saw P4C as a means of addressing their priority areas.

Three factors have emerged which have been cited most frequently as significant barriers to embedding P4C:

- lack of time;
- lack of direction from senior management; and
- too many different, competing approaches to critical thinking introduced in the school.

Some teaching staff expressed a sense of a lost opportunity, due to lack of time, in particular, for example one who said “I don’t think we have given it a fair chance, though I can see it would promote the new curriculum”.

There were several teachers who felt overwhelmed by too many different approaches to critical thinking which were introduced one after another, each slightly different, requiring different resources, or using different steps.

“I find the numerous strategies hard. It would be better if there were fewer, and more was done on each. There are so many different branches of the [critical] thinking that everything’s done a little bit but nothing’s done with 100 percent to it.” – School C

“I find there are lots of other things that get introduced. And for a while people do things with it. But after a while it slows down or stops..... I think there’s too much.....we have ‘Thinking Hats’ [thinking tool] too which I think is going to be introduced next term.”
– School C

The pressures are summed up by the following statement from a member of a senior team, who sees the potential of P4C, although the school has not been in a position to take advantage fully of the support Wiser Wales has been able to offer.

“The idea is very good. The problem we find is finding the time to fit everything in. Extra pressure due to banding, and there’s ESTYN. Numeracy and literacy are being pushed. Then there’s PISA. It’s trying to fit all of these strategies in, if anything. I think staff feel like this too. Because if it’s not subject specific, they think ‘why should I do it?’ I think people feel pushed into a corner. It’s a time issue. It’s a time issue really. We have Band 5 now so being results driven is the big pressure.

People haven’t got time to develop beyond the introductory session [to P4C]. The Welsh government have prioritised numeracy, literacy and reducing the poverty gap. I do think P4C could help with that. Then there’s the Welsh BAC of course, ‘cause you’ve got such aspects as ‘Wales in the Wider World’ and ‘Working With Others’ ‘Community’ and ‘Problem Solving’ and PSE is a core content of the Welsh BAC – it’s got so many areas that suit. One of the areas is voting – so you could use P4C to begin or refresh an area of work or to pin down a concept. You could build P4C into the unit of work on politics. It’s the logistic though of putting it into place. We have only 5 insets a year.” – School E

Where the project was most successful the factors which staff felt had contributed included:

- CPD opportunities (mentoring, co-facilitation, observing others using P4C, safe places for teachers to try it out for themselves);
- active support from senior management;
- cross-school / whole school strategy;
- resources available ‘ready to use’; and

- peer support, for example through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs).

One of the strongest messages was from teachers who felt that without the opportunity to experience P4C and see it in action first, they would not have felt sufficiently confident to try it out themselves. They also valued the opportunity to see how experienced P4C facilitators managed the sessions and the group dynamics.

“Taking people to see it in action first. That blew me away. It highlighted areas of good practice. Then I would say get a trainer to go into the school because I think that works well.” – School C

“I think teachers need to see P4C to believe it. It would be really good to have some video clips of P4C being facilitated in Welsh.” – School G

The resources developed by CEWC were extremely well received by teaching staff and senior management in both primary and secondary schools. The CEWC Weekly Thinking Skills Bulletin is being circulated within most schools and there are reports of teachers using ideas from it.

“I think it’s very straight forward. It’s pitched right. Some people are put off by the word ‘philosophy’ and it makes people anxious about being about being able to access materials. The CEWC PATHWAYS guide lays it out clearly and it puts minds to rest. It’s enabling. That’s what it is. I see where it’s coming from and I think - I could do that!” – School B

“I think [CEWC PATHWAYS] is brilliant. It’s all there for you. The teachers aren’t going to want to find recourses. It’s easy to follow.” – School C

“The newsletter is excellent. I forwarded it to the head and he was thrilled because it is so readable. It keeps it in the back of your head and the Head’s really aware now. So the profile of P4C has been raised with the head.” – School F

“The fact that there is a bank of stimuli that you can just look at and think ‘yeah, I can use that, it’s great’. You would have to go through it beforehand. Having access to a paper copy would be better for someone like me. The weekly bulletin is great. I’ve created a P4C folder and all staff are alerted when the bulletin comes in.” – School E

“It’s interactive nature is so helpful and I like the weekly bulletin. I think teachers just need things. If you give it to them, they’ll just do it. It’s all there. It’s brilliant.” – School G

5.3 Links with other national initiatives

A key factor in the adoption and sustainability of any initiative involving a specific learning and teaching methodology is the extent to which it fits into the current education priorities. Schools are inevitably under pressure to address government priorities and targets. Few schools have the luxury of being able to allocate significant amounts of resources into initiatives which do not explicitly contribute to inspection criteria or secure additional funding.

Given that education priorities change frequently, a ‘successful’ teaching methodology needs to be flexible and able to be adapted to meet different education priorities.

Schools were specifically asked about the way in which P4C fitted with current curriculum in Wales. All teaching staff and head teachers interviewed could see direct links between P4C and the Welsh curriculum. Specific mention was made of links with the Social and Emotional Aspects of

Learning (SEAL) and Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC) agendas, both of which are currently priority areas for the Welsh government.

“It’s perfect for the SEAL curriculum. SEAL is a brand new thing.....I can see how P4C fits perfectly with SEAL so it would be good to introduce an element here.” – School E

“It helps to embed ESDGC absolutely. We have a question of the week. A child is leading on this. She’s just amazing. She’s come up with a timetable. We’ve got 2 values per month that we discuss. We’ve looked at humanity, quality and responsibility. The question of the week last week was ‘Quality or quantity, which is most important to you?’. The questions that children want to consider this week is “How can we take responsibility for how we impact on the world?” – School C

Where P4C is being embedded across the school, teaching staff are finding their own creative ways of linking curriculum and P4C. Examples include:

- School F which has established a Professional Learning Community (PLC) to promote and evaluate a cross school P4C initiative to promote literacy (oral and written).

“The most important message is that P4C is valued..... And out of that PLCS are formed. Through our PLC, teachers getting together to decide how they want to take [P4C] forward. They have an hour’s meeting booked in and two full days this term. I wouldn’t dictate how this happens but it will have a high profile in the school.” – School F

- School G which has identified books which they are going to translate into Welsh to enhance the linguistic development of primary school pupils.

These initiatives will all continue beyond the end of the Wiser Wales project and are not dependent on CEWC’s support, thereby demonstrating that the project has a legacy where schools have fully embraced P4C.

Addressing the ESDGC agenda

The Welsh Government has been committed to Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC) since 2008 and ESDGC remains an area of priority in schools. The principle way in which the Wiser Wales project is supporting the ESDGC agenda in schools is through the development of critical thinking.

Cyfanfyd, the umbrella body for ESDGC in Wales, stressed the essential role of critical thinking skills in ESDGC in their paper *Taking a Critical Approach* produced in 2008:

“It is not sufficient... to just provide resources and /or disseminate them, training about the resources and how to use them is equally, if not more, important. The work undertaken with teachers by Cyfanfyd.....to encourage and develop critical thinking around resources and the ways that they are used is a useful starting point and one of the recommendations to come out of this collaborative work is that there should be a ‘resources’ component in all continuing professional development (CPD) relating to ESDGC.”

Cyfanfyd recognised exploring different viewpoints and perspectives as key elements of critical thinking (see box). The research into the impact of Wiser Wales has found evidence

that pupils who are engaging in P4C have developed critical thinking skills and have an increased acceptance and understanding of other people’s perspectives (see sections 4.1 & 4.2 **Social development and awareness of the perspectives of others and Increases in skills in critical thinking among pupils**). P4C, therefore, when incorporated using the approach adopted by CEWC has been successful in developing the kinds of skills in pupils which are essential for ESDGC.

Key questions (in *Taking a Critical Approach*)

4. Does the resource encourage questioning and discussion?

- Are different viewpoints presented?
- Are learners encouraged to develop the skills outlined in both the Skills Framework and PSE Framework through using the resource?
- Are learners’ values and attitudes challenged?
- Are there opportunities for learner involvement and active / participative learning?

6. Does the resource reflect a range of different perspectives?

- Whose attitudes / values and viewpoints are being put forward?
- How does it make us feel about people and places in other parts of the world?
- How does it make us feel about equalities?
- Does the resource reflect viewpoints from less economically developed countries and black and southern perspectives?
- Are the views put forward balanced and fair?

In some schools P4C activities do not seem to have been linked to the curriculum, consequently they are reporting primarily increases in critical thinking skills and respect for the views of others. However, in other schools P4C has clearly been used as a teaching tool for creative, emotional and controversial topics *within the curriculum*. In these instances the impact has been greater as pupils have engaged more deeply with the curriculum materials as well as gaining skills in critical thinking, collaborative learning and respecting each other. For example, one school which has seen P4C used in history noted:

“In year 11 when they’re a bit more mature, you could see with the subject of the holocaust that P4C got them thinking more deeply about the consequences of the holocaust.”
– School E

This was further supported by pupils at one of the secondary schools where they were clearly being encouraged to think critically across a range of topics. When asked about their experience of using P4C they said:

“It makes you more aware of everything, like happiness – most things have more deeper meaning - you develop your thinking.” – School B

“It makes me reconsider important things in life. It makes you consider doing things differently like explaining the nature of God, and asking why. It strengthens views and it allows you to prove things to friends. If you think about why you act and make claims, you’re more likely to act and feel good about that.” – School B

“It’s relevant in creative subjects. The work you do is more personal it has more meaning -like in art after the philosophy café it made me think more.” – School B

The following quotation from a teacher explains the holistic approach she would like to see with P4C, ESDGC and the curriculum closely linked and promoting deeper learning and critical thinking. However, the challenges to bringing this about in a complex school environment with multiple pressures should not be underestimated.

“I want P4C to be embedded into the fabric of the school.....It’s got to become part of the language and the fabric of the school..... ESDGC really should be part of everything too.....Like anything it needs to be embedded so it’s part of the school.”
– School F

5.4 CEWC’s progression from provider to mentor and adviser

During the course of the project the role of CEWC has changed, partly through resource availability and partly through responding to the increasing skills in schools to deliver P4C. I have observed three stages over length of project.

Phase A

Initially CEWC was seen as the **provider** of P4C training, supplier of cover, replacement, materials and a source of P4C lesson content. At this stage schools were extremely keen and the programme officer was being invited to visit all schools regularly to ‘model’ P4C, although in some schools teaching staff would use this time to do marking, rather than sitting in with the pupils.

Phase B

As the project entered the second year, CEWC changed to a more **facilitative** role. The programme officer was involved as co-facilitator, rather than sole facilitator and become an adviser on embedding and whole school development of P4C. Some schools embraced this fully, others were more reluctant and one school left the project at this stage, as they seemed unable to devote the kind of resources required to embed P4C.

Phase C

In the final year, CEWC’s role has changed again to a being one of **mentor and consultant** ‘working with’ and ‘learning from’ schools. The relationship with the most successful schools (in terms of embedding P4C) has become one of equal colleagues with different areas of expertise. Where it has worked well it has encouraged creativity to flourish and new materials are emerging from committed teaching staff.

Overall this model of changing roles has worked well and seemed appropriate. In future projects, CEWC might benefit from considering the kinds of relationships and the ways they might change as part of the initial discussion with potential schools. This might avoid taking on schools which are unwilling to make the necessary commitment. It might also enable other schools to plan internally from the outset for taking on greater responsibility as the project progressed.

Conclusion

The Wiser Wales project has demonstrated the value of P4C as a teaching tool at both primary and secondary level, and with pupils across the ability range. Increases in social skills and critical thinking were evident among pupils who had only participated in 3 or 4 sessions. However, where P4C was embedded more fully into teaching, greater depth of critique of curriculum content and ESDGC materials was also evident.

The Wiser Wales approach of tailoring its support to the specific support to the needs of schools has considerable merit. However, the extent to which schools adopted P4C depended not only on the strength and applicability of the CEWC's approach, but also on the internal support available to teachers, the priorities and challenges facing the school, and the strategic importance placed on P4C within the school. There is some evidence that where schools introduce several different critical thinking approaches in rapid succession, many teachers find this unhelpful and confusing.

The research aspect of this project has identified key factors which aid and hinder the adoption and embedding of a teaching methodology into schools, which could be valuable in the selection of participating schools in future initiatives.

These questions were used on which to base the interviews and discussions at each of the schools.

Senior Leadership Team

- What did you hope to get out of the project?
- What have you actually got out of the project?
- What kind of impact have you seen?
 - To what extent has P4C enhanced the delivery of the curriculum in Wales?
- What strategies have been successful or not so successful?
 - What has been SLT's role?
 - Are you connected with any networks exploring P4C? If so what how, what have you gained?
- Is there a legacy of the project and where are you taking it as a school?
- Is there any support which would be useful to you in the future?
- If CEWC were to be working with a new secondary school, what support would you suggest would be most appropriate in introducing P4C? Year (e.g. curriculum focus, year group focus, training plus co-planning, co-facilitation)
 - What do you think of the draft resources guide?

Teachers

- Background information of the subject, level and experience of the teacher(s)
- How has P4C been implemented? What topics, how often?
- What have been the challenges? (timetabling etc.)
- Have you developed any new skills? Has P4C changed your teaching style?
- What kind of impact have you seen?
 - (pupils, teachers, curriculum heads)
 - To what extent has P4C enhanced the delivery of the curriculum in Wales?
 - Which pupils have benefitted most? How?
- What strategies have been successful or not so successful?
 - What has been SLT's role?
 - Are you connected with any networks exploring P4C? If so what how, what have you gained?
- Will there be a legacy of the project and where are you taking it as a school?
- Is there any support which would be useful to you in the future?
- How useful / effective do you find the draft resources / guide?
- If CEWC were to be working with a new secondary school, what support would you suggest would be most appropriate in introducing P4C? Year (e.g. curriculum focus, year group focus, training plus co-planning, co-facilitation)

Pupils

- How have you been involved with P4C?
- What are the best and worst things about P4C?
- What difference has it made to you?
- Has it helped you with other school work? Or with things outside school?
- What would you say to someone from a different school if they were going to start using P4C?
- How could your school have improved the way they use P4C?