The role of mindfulness and ethical reflection in learning and teaching

Facilitator: Kathy Wright

Leeds, 21 May 2015
Abstract

A growing body of literature around the importance of ethical deliberation in teacher education served as a starting point for a series of 24-hour residential workshops, designed to create space and time for critical reflection. Escaping the 'busy-ness' of schools and universities afforded students and tutors opportunities to explore the meaning and value of major ethical concepts commonly met by practitioners in mainstream education settings.

As participants noted, ‘using Socratic dialogue to discuss ethically uncomfortable moments in teaching’ provided ‘really useful reflection’. The project and methods we used will be shared in this session, with an emphasis on thinking how ideas can be adapted for learning and teaching more widely.
Ethical Reflection - Session Outline

- Our project – what, why, how
- Communities of Enquiry
- Key outcomes
- Future plans
Developing ethical reflection on behaviour in the classroom

Collaborative project

2011 - Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain (PESGB) / Centre for Research Ethics and Ethical Deliberation (CREED) and Centre for Learner Identity Studies (CLIS) Edgehill University / Sapere

2013-14 - University of Bristol / Higher Education Academy

Development of ‘Philosophy for Teachers’, or ‘P4T’
Teachers are required to...

‘maintain good relationships with pupils, exercise appropriate authority, and act decisively when necessary’ (DfE, 2011:7)

These actions require knowledge, judgement and making ethical choices

From the work with teacher educators we chose:

To adopt a dialogic approach
To use student-generated narratives rather than ‘set piece’ role plays
Aims

Provide space and time for critical reflection

Enable student teachers to think ethically about dilemmas they might face in the classroom

Help build independence and confidence

Encourage systematic thinking about education

Consider typical examples of complex classroom situations and challenging behaviour

Professional development (in dialogic work) for teacher educators
The workshops

Intensive 24-hours
- six sessions
- scene setting /
  parameters
- sessions of dialogue
  before and after dinner
- three further sessions
  the following day

Working together to
develop a focus
Using real life stories
Ethical concepts (e.g.
  fairness, respect, trust,
  equity)
‘Stretching concepts’ -
  slow and deliberate
  interrogation through
  debate
Reveals depth, ambiguity
  and complexity of ideas
Participants and methods

Range of education students: cross phase and institution
Residential - atmosphere
Facilitation - vital

Role of philosophers of education:
• to contribute
• to intervene if/when challenges were appropriate
• to develop nuance in arguments
• to avoid ethical ‘cul de sacs’
SAPERE Community of Enquiry facilitation methodology was a key ingredient in the success of the initiative.

Plentiful oral work
Skilful teacher questioning
Collaborative exchanges of interaction
Inclusive, non-judgemental teaching
(Haynes et al, 2015)

www.sapere.org.uk
steve@philosophyineducation.com
‘Communities of Enquiry’
- a reflexive paradigm

Shared pursuit of like procedures and goals

‘more than just concentrating on better questioning ... equally important to develop *reasoning and reflection*, both public and private ... these bring into play, among other things, emotions and the thoughtful expression of emotions’ (Sapere)

C. S. Peirce
pragmatist philosopher
1839-1914
Lipman was influenced by Vygotsky, Piaget and Dewey as well as the tradition of Socratic dialogue.

‘students listen to one another with respect, build on one another’s ideas, challenge one another to supply reasons for otherwise unsupported opinions, assist each other in drawing inferences from what has been said and seek to identify one another’s assumptions.’ (Lipman 1991:15).
Our Community of Enquiry

Thought-provoking ‘texts’ (created or chosen) – questions for enquiry were created from trainee teachers’ experiences

These questions formed the ‘agenda’ in a cyclical process of questioning, reasoning and reflection

Facilitator’s stance is fallibilistic, open-ended, tactful, self-effacing challenging, responsive.

Outcomes of enquiry not known in advance
Features of this style of working

Focus on logical and critical thinking in which participants enquire – building hypotheses, considering consequences etc.

Dialogue and thinking should be rigorous and disciplined using criteria and thus self-correction

The creation of the community links to the Freirean notion of participatory democracy
Key outcomes

• The demand for the activity
• The pedagogic model used
• Students particularly valued – the quality of the experience and the range of discussion
• Tutors particularly valued – the use of reflective methodologies
• Further similar workshops
• Intensive sessions on different themes (‘reading education’ for example)
• Further teacher educator resources
• Online resources including a possible forum
References


www.sapere.org.uk

steve@philosophyineducation.com
How are the ethical principles of our university embedded institution wide?

Judy Donnelly, Leeds Trinity University

Abstract

Our University’s mission is guided by our Catholic identity and faith foundation. We are committed to the promotion of dignity, respect, social justice and equality to deliver positive social and economic impacts. We will demonstrate how the values articulated in the Strategic Plan are embodied in our approach to learning and teaching and pastoral care, and in our commitment to student and staff wellbeing and development.

Delegates will share examples illustrating how our curriculum and university environments serve to encourage and enable the members of our various communities to reflect and act ethically and be compassionate in their engagement with the world.
How Are The Ethical Principles Of Our University Embedded Institution Wide?

Judy Donnelly,
Director of Quality,
Leeds Trinity University
• Our MISSION is

Guided by our Catholic identity and faith foundation. We provide an exceptional educational experience in a diverse community. We are committed to the promotion of dignity, respect, social justice and equality in order to deliver positive social and economic impacts.
Our VALUES of dignity, respect, social justice and equality are lived out and evidenced by:

- striving for excellence in all that we do;
- being a compassionate, respectful and inclusive community that embraces diversity;
- acting with integrity and transparency;
- encouraging dialogue and collaboration.
Our Graduates

Our overarching aim is to ensure that:

A Leeds Trinity University graduate will be a confident individual, able to make a significant contribution to society. They will be comfortable with knowledge at the boundaries of their discipline, understand the connections between different disciplines and be able to collaborate across disciplines in professional contexts. Their professionalism will be underpinned by a clear understanding of ethical practice.
Objectives -

Social Responsibility (and confidence)

- All of our students are engaged fully in their learning and have the confidence and understanding to shape their own learning.
- All of our students will have a clear understanding of their current progress, their strengths and weaknesses and be able to plan their own development.
- Our students have a clear understanding of their discipline and its boundaries and are able to work across discipline boundaries.
- Our students understand that knowledge is provisional.
- All of our students have significant workplace experience as part of their programme of study.
- All of our students have the opportunity to work as volunteers in a range of settings.
- All of our students have established professional networks.
- All of our students have access to a mentor.
- All of our students are engaged in Personal Development Planning throughout their time at LTU.
- **All of our students will have an understanding of their potential impact on society and the key ethical issues in their field of professional practice.**

- Staff and students will make full use of technology in their learning and teaching.
- Our curricula are both contemporary and relevant.
- Our staff are well trained and current in relation to pedagogical practice.
Key actions

• We will introduce a single university wide module that combines consideration of the ethical/moral dimensions surrounding key contemporary issues with the development of academic skills.

• Ethical considerations will be included more widely in programme and module outcomes.
Sharing ideas and examples to feed into the development of university wide strategies...

Consider how the curriculum and university environments can encourage and enable the members of our communities to reflect and act ethically, and be compassionate in their engagement with the world.
Abstract

The notion of mindfulness in education has become more prominent in recent years. Some mindfulness practices are supported with empirical evidence of their validity in fields from medicine, counselling, therapies and education in schools. The efficacy of some mindfulness practices suggests that mindfulness is more than a new buzzword; however a clear, shared definition remains elusive.

In this session we will delve into different viewpoints, including mindfulness as a method, as a perspective, and as a cognitive process. Practical examples will also be explored – some which purport to help students with their learning and others that support tutors in their teaching.
Mindfulness in Learning and Teaching

http://www.philosophy-of-education.org/
c.winstanley@roehampton.ac.uk

Dr Carrie Winstanley
May 2015
Mindfulness - Session Outline

Defining, understanding and measuring mindfulness
Evidence for its efficacy
Mindfulness as a perspective
Cognitive processes and mindfulness
Mindfulness methods in learning and teaching
Research and references
Defining mindfulness

Roots in Buddhism
Related to meditation
Mindfulness can be a state of mind, a disposition or a method
Often makes use of meditation training - ‘open awareness’ meditation
Aspects of mindfulness

- **Embodiment**: feeling comfortable and relaxed in one’s body
- **Focused attention**: sensory information – within and environmental
- **Heartfeltness**: recognising one’s emotions and regulating difficult ones
- **Interconnection**: compassion, forgiveness, and gratitude
Dispositional and state mindfulness

‘Mindfulness is an attribute of consciousness long believed to promote well-being.’

Increases in mindfulness over time relate to declines in mood disturbance and stress (Brown and Ryan, 2003)
Measuring mindfulness

Both: traditional Buddhist conceptualizations; and modern psychological implications

Requires theory-based construct validity

Needs an improved or alternative scale to ‘better represent the construct’ and ‘uncover other benefits of mindfulness practice’

Limiting assessment solely to a Westernized version of a complex Buddhist concept may be shortsighted in consideration of a fundamentally different way of being and commitment to a path of well-being. (Van Dama et al, 2010)
Mindfulness integrated into cognitive therapeutic work

Importance of accurate professional awareness and understanding of mindfulness and its therapeutic applications

Helpful strategies in health - physical and mental

(Melbourne Academic Mindfulness Interest Group, 2006)
Neurobiology informs education

*Sustained mindfulness practice can:*

can:

- enhance attentional and emotional self-regulation and promote flexibility
- Increase teachers’ sense of well-being and teaching self-efficacy
- Help teachers manage classroom behaviour and establish and maintain supportive relationships with students
- Improve mood and decrease anxiety, stress, and fatigue

(Meiklejohn, et al, 2012)
Support from philosophy of education?

'therapeutic turn' in education

‘whilst accepting that 'self-esteem' and cognate concepts cannot provide a general end or universal aim of education, the therapeutic function is more valuable and significant than is generally acknowledged’

‘can be an immensely powerful and valuable notion, which is integrally connected with the centrally transformative and developmental nature of learning and educational activity at all levels.’

(Hyland, 2009)
‘not a magic bullet’ ‘a slow process’
‘Just because kids sit and listen to the bell doesn’t necessarily mean they’ll be more kind.’
(Brown, 2007)
Academic Centres of Mindfulness for students and staff

Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice (CMRP)
http://www.bangor.ac.uk/mindfulness/

The Oxford Mindfulness Centre
http://oxfordmindfulness.org/
https://vimeo.com/67334120
The mindful campus

Spaces for mindful activities
Mindfulness seminars
Ethical activities / outlets
Meditation sessions
Learning support
Within teaching sessions
Mindfulness for students and staff

Stress reduction
Commitment
Locus of control
Openness to change
Strip back to basics
Doing good
Thoughts and attitudes are keyholders to stress
Classroom activities

Guided meditations
Colouring / doodling
Music / sound
Moving places
Changing spaces
Journalling
Free writing
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Executive functions</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time management</td>
<td>Being realistic; good sense of time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working memory</td>
<td>Keeping information in mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional control</td>
<td>Regulating heightened emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning, prioritising, organising</td>
<td>Breaking down tasks; keeping self, space and ideas organised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impulse control</td>
<td>Reflecting; assessing situation before action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task management</td>
<td>Starting / persisting / completing; shifting tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self monitoring</td>
<td>Deliberate awareness and –if needed - adjustment of thoughts, feelings and actions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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(Krcmar and Horsman, 2014, after Brown 2005 and Zylowska, 2010)
STOP

S  = Stop for a moment
T  = Take a deep breath
O  = Observe mindfully in the moment
   (notice your body sensations or actions more consciously)
P  = Proceed with relaxation and awareness
   (Zylowska, 2008)
https://www.headspace.com/
SIT-On-ME

Spotlight: identify what you need to do
Imagine its completion
Think about how you will do it
Operate: do it
Maintain: keep on without being distracted
End: know when enough is enough and successfully end, tying up loose ends

(Krcmar and Horsman, 2014)
References


