

IO2 Pedagogical Framework and Training Course Descriptions

FRAMEWORK FOR *THE ENQUIRING CLASSROOM*

The Enquiring Classroom is working to build communities of practice and exchange in order to support teachers across Europe in sharing their learning, experiences, ideas and practices. It has devised a set of creative pedagogical approaches that can be tailored to specific contexts, cultures and history. It aims to respond educationally to some of the most pressing contemporary issues facing democracies by finding ways of connecting with 'what matters' for children and young people, discussing living values, building the capacity for enquiry, and inviting them to explore together our heritage - our shared and common world. The Conceptual Framework describes in detail the rationale for this project, and explains the motivation for the methodological and pedagogical choices that were adopted.

A number of themes and strategies persist throughout all of the exercises detailed below: De-identification; cultivating an ethical sensibility; democratic agonism; training the imagination to go visiting; pluralism; distancing; critical generosity; refusing binaries; responsibility; educating the senses; living values; telling the story of the world; listening; exemplarity; thinking together; the commons; storytelling; rituals; partnering with community; dialogue; stuckness and perplexity. *The Enquiring Classroom* underlines the importance of: attentiveness to the ordinary, the common and the everyday. It explores rituals, builds capacity in facilitating communities of philosophical enquiry, and encourages imaginative experimentation and historical sensibility.

Four training schools were held in Ireland in collaboration with the Hunt Museum (Limerick) and Chester Beatty Library (Dublin). These events were held in the sites of the museums and lasted a full day. It was decided to double the number of face-to-face events due to participant interest. This is also the case for Sweden and Greece where training schools were held with teachers, and in the case of Sweden, with a collaborating artist. A week-long summer school took place in Athens in July 2017. Final training schools will be held prior to the summer school to validate the methodologies described here. These will be refined for the summer school and written up for the final handbook (IO3). The online community and training component was developed using *Padlet* as this offered an interface that could afford multimodal learning opportunities and shared editing functionality. <https://padlet.com/aislinniodonnell/enquiringclassroom>

The purpose of the training schools was to introduce educators to a repertoire of creative methodologies that support dialogical and enquiry based approaches in education both in schools and with wider communities. They also offer a supportive community of practice, enabling educators to explore together strategies and approaches to navigate those moments of 'stuckness and perplexity' that arise in classroom life. The methodologies invite experiential, existential, relational, imaginative, and conceptual enquiry, as well as introducing new knowledges through innovative framings. In this way, educators' capacity for creative facilitation have been developed through a community of enquiry and a community of practice, as they learn together about how to support dialogue, reflection and how to help students to pursue their own questions and enquiries. This was a progressive and responsive model of learning delivery that built on successive training schools and which shared learning across our different national contexts, developing, testing, and refining methodologies.

Whilst some approaches to dialogical education ask us to begin by stating our own identities or positions or focus on developing empathy for others, the approach adopted in *The Enquiring Classroom* instead asks us to imagine what it would be to live and experience the world from the standpoint of others, by doing what German Jewish philosopher Hannah Arendt, says - training our imagination to go visiting.

In the context of European debates about the securitisation of education alongside on-going efforts to establish democratic competence that mobilise education in the service of the democratic project, *The*

Enquiring Classroom is interested in exploring *educational* responses to the pressing issues of today. By introducing this repertoire of creative methodologies and through its work with educators on facilitation skills, the project seeks to instil the conditions and skills for enquiry in classrooms, supporting their ability to include all children and young people, and up-skilling all parties in the skills of co-enquiry, so that when difficult moments arise, teachers feel better positioned to make educated judgements about how to best respond – pedagogically, pastorally, or ‘judicially’. *The Enquiring Classroom* understands education as an inter-generational encounter whereby educators introduce their students to the story of the world by putting a range of subject matters ‘on the table’- a common space - for study and for dialogue, thus enabling each generation to renew the world, and welcoming the young to our common world.

The following four strands have oriented the project as a whole:

Strands:

- Philosophical Enquiry
- Lived and Living Values
- Religions and Beliefs
- Community building

The methodologies are here grouped under the following thematic headings. As we conclude the training schools, these will be further developed.

- Living Values (the Ethical)
- A Rough Guide to the Sacred (the Religious, and the Secular)
- Thinking Together (the Philosophical)
- Making Democracy (the Political)
- Encountering the World (the Aesthetic)
- Engaging with Tradition (the Past/the Historic)

LIVING VALUES (THE ETHICAL)

1. Contextualisation

In a pluralistic world and in times of increasing value conflicts, there are high expectations on teachers in schools to handle and solve controversial issues by engaging pupils and children in dialogue with those whose values are different from their own. Shifting the perspective on value conflicts, from seeing them as things that need to be resolved through dialogue to seeing them as signifiers of what concern us, the overall approach here is that schools can become places where what is being valued in a society can be rethought and renewed through collective study and exploration. Yet, pupils and children do not always get the opportunity in schools to study and explore the plural and often contradictory meanings that the liberal democratic values hold. How should we, for example, understand freedom? As individual freedom of choice? As submission to a higher power, a God, or a higher cause? As emancipation or as setting free? And when does freedom matter? And when does it not? These are the kinds of questions that are addressed in and through the *Lived Values Approach*.

More precisely, the *Lived Values Approach* offers pedagogical strategies for working with the content dimension of the formative task of schools, drawing on aesthetical and philosophical resources. This approach is different from traditional citizenship education or character education in the sense that it is primarily content-focused and that it treats the liberal democratic values as a cultural heritage in need of being retrieved and renewed by the new generations. Indeed, what schools are in need for is content focused teaching concerned about the living on of those liberal democratic values that most Western societies rely on and that teachers, according to most schools in Europe, should live and embody.

As a way of responding to this situation, the *Living Values Strategies* seeks to open up discussions of values to lived experience, exploring how values are understood and how they could matter in the different lives of pupils and teachers. The focus on values in the strategies here allows for openness in exploration of what they mean in lived experience and reflection, allowing for different inflections and perspectives to enter into conversation. Seeing conflicts as tokens of the different things that different people in a society hold valuable, what is educational in values education is not about solving value conflicts but about establishing a relationship to what is loved, believed and hoped for in a particular society. Through this shift in perspective in how conflicts are perceived and approached, a temporary distancing from societal conflicts is created in schools, beginning instead in a collective study of the values and their meanings in lived life that these conflicts are bringing to the classroom.

The reason for developing this approach stems from the desire to offer teachers in Europe today concrete strategies and exercises for addressing value conflicts anew in a situation of increasing uneasiness and uncertainty when it comes to responding to ethical discussions in the classroom. However, instead of seeing the liberal democratic values as something pre-defined and already common to be implemented in and through education, the *Living Values Approach* sees education as an intergenerational encounter between teachers and pupils through which values are *made common* through teaching and study. To this end, we offer the following five strategies:

Educating the gaze

This strategy has the purpose of neutralizing our ways of looking upon value conflicts by putting ourselves as teachers and pupils in a 'studying mode'. This means that personal views, experiences, and normative judgements are temporarily suspended so that a more descriptive, 'thing-oriented' and enlarged vision can be achieved. By making a distinction between what we see (description) and what we think we see (interpretation) when looking at a common object, the purpose of this strategy is to educate the gaze so as to allow for a more attentive approach to what is turned into an object of study. In this way, a common view of

an object is created from the bottom up, *making* something *common* instead of presupposing commonality and joint vision top down.

Putting values on the table

The purpose of this strategy is to turn liberal democratic values into common objects of study. 'Putting on the table' here means that something – in this case a value – is put on display for everyone around the table to explore and engage in on equal footing. In a literal sense 'the table' could be a whiteboard, a blackboard or a PowerPoint image, that is, an imagined 'table on the wall'. When a value is 'put on the table' in this way, it is released from being an object of negotiation to becoming an object of study, inviting teachers and pupils to explore it and take interest in it in its own right. In other words, the value is taken from the negotiation table (which is a political table) and is turned into an object of study on the studying table (which is a pedagogical table). In a metaphorical sense, 'the table' is here what both brings us together (proximity) and separates us (creates distance) which means that it creates the necessary conditions for approaching value conflicts in an educational way.

Turning matters of fact into matters of concern

When passing on a cultural heritage from one generation to the next, the crucial question for every teacher is *both* to decide what in a given culture or context is valuable, *and* to present this content as something worthy of living on. The purpose of this strategy is to turn the values of the liberal democratic tradition from 'facts' that are assumed to speak for themselves into 'matters of concern', love and care that need to be readdressed by every new generation in each new time. In this way, this strategy seeks to turn values as something 'out there' – to keep or to reject on an individual basis – into concerning matters that collectively gather us as teachers and pupils/children around a common cause and a common task.

Engaging in double reading

The purpose of this strategy is to unpack and unfold the etymologies and genealogies of the liberal democratic values. Concepts such as freedom, equality, tolerance, integrity and responsibility are relational concepts that matter to, and are understood by, humans in different ways in different times and in different cultures. Focusing on the relational nature of the values under study (instead of trying to give them absolute definitional clarity) helps teachers and pupils see their shared pasts and how the values of a certain tradition (in the case of Europe the liberal tradition) are related to the values of other traditions, past and present, in other cultures and contexts. The aim of this strategy, then, is to make possible a 'double reading' of the values 'on the table' offering both a systematic reconstruction of the values' past meanings (preservation), and an opportunity to open the values up for new and unintended meanings (renewal). In order to create such meanings or 'double readings' in the classroom, both teachers and students have to draw on the creative resources of poetic language such as similes, antonyms, metaphors, parables and allegories.

Cultivating moral judgement

The aim of this strategy is to prepare pupils and children *to make moral judgement* and to continuously face moral ambivalence. The strategy is grounded in a relational view of moral selfhood through which the participants are encouraged to recognize their own situatedness and the inter-connectedness of their decisions, as the basis for moral responsibility and action. Rather than seeing education as a site for implementing abstract rules of moral behaviour or good moral conduct, the approach here is to create a safe educational space where the ambivalence involved in moral judgement can be faced and lived with. Through aesthetic exercises, the approach taken here is that teachers and pupils/children cultivate moral judgement and decision-making in a way that seeks out engaged and embodied responses to complex and concrete problems.

2. Key Theoretical References:

Overall approaches and strategies:

Arendt, Hannah. (1962/2008). 'The Crisis in Education' in *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*. London, Penguin Books.

Mollenhauer, Klaus. (2014). *Forgotten Connections: On Culture and Upbringing*. London, Routledge.
Masschelein, Jan & Simons, Maarten. (2013). *In Defence of the School. A Public Issue*. Leuven: E-ducation, Culture & Society Publishers.

Creating Commonality:

Masschelein, Jan. (2010). 'E-ducating the gaze: the idea of a poor pedagogy', *Ethics and Education*, 5:1, 43-53.

Values:

Joas, Hans (2000). *The Genesis of Values*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Moral judgment:

Bauman, Zygmunt. (1989). *Postmodern Ethics*. Oxford, Blackwell Publishers.

3. Concepts

Liberal Democratic Values
Intergenerational
Making common
Educating the gaze
Putting on the table
Matters of concern
Double reading
Moral choice and decision-making

4. Exercises

Educating the Gaze (creating commonality)
Room for values (creating commonality)
Unfolding values (values)
The five-liner (values)
Collective drawing (moral judgement)
Beauty and the beast (moral judgement)

Exercise 1: Educating the Gaze

Why is it difficult to share the same vision or look upon the world? One reason is that we see different things although we are looking at the same object. The following exercise is designed to make a distinction between ‘what we see’ (describing something) and ‘what we think we see’ (interpreting something) in order to pause too hasty conclusions and instead engage in the shared act of study that makes commonality possible.

Aim

The aim of the exercise is to temporarily pause predefined opinions and presumptions and enter into shared and more attentive ways of seeing things in the world.

Learning outcomes

Participants:

Are aware of the difference between description and interpretation.

Understand why it is difficult to see the same thing in what we see when discussing value conflicts.

Are able to explore the difference between pre-supposed commonality and making something common through shared study.

Intended age group

From high-school pupils to adults

Duration

Between 15 to 30 minutes depending on the number of pictures used

Resources

You will need digital pictures that have an explicit symbolic value for at least some of the participants.
A PowerPoint projector and screen.

Preparation

Decide which images of symbolic value you are to ‘put on the table’ (i.e. on the whiteboard) and search for digital pictures that represent them.

Choose and upload the pictures to an electronic device and arrange them in a PowerPoint document.

Method

Arrange the chairs in a circle or a U-shape

Show a picture on the screen and ask: What do you see?

Let the students in silence write down notes about what they see.

Depending in the size of the group, do a small round to share notes

Summarize difference and similarities in what is seen

Look at the picture again. This time, instruct the students to try and ‘go native’. In pairs, let them describe only what is really in the picture and take notes together. That is, try to have the students describe what is in the picture ‘as for the first time’, without using normative judgment and abstract concepts.

Show another picture and, depending on time, repeat the exercise (from step 2)

Finish the exercise by reflecting together on the discrepancy between ‘what you saw’ (descriptions) and ‘what you thought you saw’ (interpretations) in the pictures.

Tip

1. Choose pictures that are ambiguous and can be interpreted in different ways.
2. Use overhead projector and show the images on the wall as a way of making the images common (i.e. putting things on the table/wall).

Images

A table on a wall: A classroom with a table on the wall.

Exercise 2: Room for Values

As a way of creating common ground, classrooms can become places where teachers and pupils together try out different positions in thought around values as common matters of concern. This is by approaching the values indirectly and by interrupting the traditional school setting. In this exercise, a mobile 'nomadic tent' is placed in the classroom where we create attention to what is being said by listening closely and by temporarily suspending the busyness of the outside world as well as personal opinions and standpoints.

Aim

The aim of this exercise is to create a safe environment where teachers and pupils together can try out different ways of thinking and reasoning about certain given values.

Learning outcomes

Participants:

Able to try out different positions in thought in a playful and creative way.
Understand the value of listening and paying attention to others.

Intended age group

From pre-school pupils to adults

Duration

From 30 to 60 minutes

Resources

You will need a hula-hoop ring, see-through or thin fabric (approx. 20 meters), a suitable spring system for hanging up the fabric, chairs and cushions, source of light that resembles a small fire.

Preparation

Arrange chairs and cushions in a circle in the classroom according to the size of the group. Make the 'tent' and set it up according to the instruction/drawing below. Put the 'fire' in the middle of the circle of chairs.
Select the value/s you would like to talk about.

Adjusted to age group, prepare a suitable introduction and questions to be asked in order to stimulate the conversation. The introduction can be in the form of a fable, a story, an image, an object etc. The value in focus can be either explicitly mentioned or only hinted at during the exercise, depending on age group.

Method

Invite the pupils into the tent and let them settle in comfortably on the cushions.

Explain where you are imaginarily, for example, on the savannah, in the desert, in the rainforest (nomadic places). Tell a story like the following: 'We are sitting in a tent in the desert gathered around the fireplace, and the sun has just gone down. It is getting chilly outside but in here we are warm and safe'... Let the participants help you imagine the place and fill the story out.

Go on to the prepared introduction

Invite the participants to partake in a conversation about the selected value.

End the exercise by returning to the imagined surrounding/environment.

Exit the tent with care and in silence.

Tip

This exercise can also take place outside the school premises such as in public parks, squares, museums etc.
Choose second hand material for environmental reasons.

Images

A tent in a classroom: A classroom with a 'nomadic tent' in the middle
Images for instructions (see above)

Exercise 3: Unfolding Values

The liberal democratic values have long histories and therefore they cannot be defined in any single or straightforward way. The genealogies or 'root systems' of each value take us not only to its antonym, they also take us to different cultures, different times, and different corners of the world. Why, otherwise, can certain religious clothing be seen as freedom for one person and repression to another? And what does tolerance look like? Or generosity? In this exercise we use similes and multi-layered pictures in order to unpack or unfold the different and often contradictory meanings that the same value can hold.

Aim

By using similes and pictures, the aim of this exercise is to offer a more nuanced, historicized and profound look upon value conflicts and to avoid a one-eyed, unified, and narrow understanding of liberal values.

Learning outcomes

Participants:

Understand that the same value can have different meanings and histories.

Recognize our shared pasts and the relatedness of different value traditions.

Are able to unpack and explore different meanings of a particular value by using poetic language like similes, antonyms and metaphors.

Intended age group

From high-school pupils to adults

Duration

Approximately 30 – 45 minutes.

Resources

A PowerPoint projector and screen.

Paper and pencils for each participant.

Preparation

Decide which value you would like to present to the participants and research its theoretical and historical genealogies or 'root systems'.

Choose pictures representing different aspect of the chosen value, approximately three pictures. For example, choose pictures representing 1) freedom as choice, 2) freedom as emancipation, 3) freedom as submission (to a God or to a higher cause). Or, 1) tolerance as carrying a burden, 2) tolerance as welcoming, 3) tolerance as drawing a line (enough is enough) etc.

Arrange the pictures in a PowerPoint document as follows: a) the first slide states the chosen value *in text only*, b) the second slide shows the pictures representing its different aspects (see examples above).

Method

Show the chosen value *in text only* on the first slide of the PowerPoint.

Ask the participants: What image do you spontaneously 'see' when I say (read the given value)? Ask the participants to take down a few notes on their paper individually in silence.

Show the picture representing the aspects of the value and ask the participants to compare their spontaneous image to the different aspects. Leave room for a small discussion about which other pictures the participants would like to add.

Contextualize the different aspects chosen for the value by briefly presenting their different theoretical and historical genealogies or 'root systems'.

Open up for discussion: How can we think differently about value conflicts given the values' multi-layered and inherently diverse meanings? Let the participants discuss this in small groups and finish the exercise by summarizing the discussions in the whole group.

Tip

When researching the value, pay special attention to the meaning/s the value can have in different cultures (avoid a too one-sided European focus).

When choosing the pictures, makes sure that a 'double reading' is made possible, that is, that the value's implied opposite (its antonym) is represented. If this 'double reading' does not come up spontaneously in the discussion, it is essential to the exercise that the teacher addresses it explicitly.

It is recommended that as many as possible of the liberal democratic values are worked through in this way during a particular time period.

Images

A tree with a root system under ground where it is ambivalent what is the tree and which is the root system.

Exercise 4: A Haiku of Value

The liberal democratic values that inform schools in many Western countries are often more difficult to explain than we think. How, for instance, do we explain equality? Or freedom? Or tolerance? Particularly difficult is this when we do not have a shared culture or to a full extent speak the same language. By writing a Haiku together we make use of our imaginary resources in order to come to a shared understanding of a value in a non-dogmatic way.

Aim

The aim of this exercise is to experience the difficulty in explaining the values that we too often think we know the meaning of, and yet offer the strength in poetic language and joint effort.

Learning outcomes

Participants:

Recognise the difficulty in explaining what a value means.

Are aware of the creative force in shared imagination.

Are able to unpack and explore different meanings of a particular value by using poetry.

Intended age group

From high-school pupils to adults

Duration

From 15 minutes to 30

Resources

You need paper, pencils and value cards (smaller cards on which the values are written on one side and the other is blank).

A PowerPoint projector and screen.

Preparation

Decide which values to work with and make the value cards.

Prepare the following instruction, either on the board or on the white board so that everyone can see the instruction throughout the exercise:

- Line 1: one word, a noun, what the poem is about (the value)
- Line 2: two words, adjectives, what something is like...
- Line 3: three words, verbs, what this value does...
- Line 4: four words, i.e. a sentence that expresses a feeling (i.e. your relation to your interpretation of the value)
- Line 5: one word, the same word as in line 1, in our case a metaphor for the value

Go through, with the participants, what a noun, an adjective, a verb and a synonym is by giving explanations and examples.

Method

Divide the participants into small groups, preferably in groups of three.

Hand out one paper and one pencil to each group.

Put the above instruction on the board or whiteboard and explain the exercise.

Let each group choose a value card (values face down).

Give suitable time for group exercise, approximately 10 minutes.

Exhibition and discussion

Put the different Haikus on the wall and let each group read their poem aloud. Discuss both the poetic language used as well as the value it represents.

Tip

If a group finishes earlier than the given time, let them write another haiku on their value.

Images

Japanese signs/letter for different values (i.e. freedom)

Exercise 5: Collective Drawing

We make moral decisions all the time, but we are seldom aware of how our own and other people's decisions are interconnected. The exercise draws attention to the relational aspects of making moral decisions and its collective consequences. It is a quiet exercise, where communication and decision-making only takes place through the drawing.

Aim

The aim of the exercise is to become aware of how moral decisions are always done in context, influencing other people.

Learning outcomes

Participants:

Understand how my decisions and actions influence others.

Become aware of the relational aspects of decisions and actions.

Intended age group

From middle-school pupils to adults

Duration

From 30 – 45 minutes.

Resources

Big A3 papers.

Charcoal pencils or sticks that can draw lines of different thickness.

Preparation

Divide the participants in groups of 4-5.

Hand out one paper and a set of pencils/charcoals per group.

Scotch tape or pins to use for the exhibition.

Method

Introduce the exercise by explaining that it will be done in silence. No communication is allowed, except for the act of drawing itself.

The first participant in the group draws a point on the paper.

The next participant continues by drawing a line of any shape, thickness, strength, direction, etc. This moment is repeated by taking turns, until one of the participants decides to stop.

Exhibition: put the collective drawings on the wall.

Reflect together how each individual choice of the shape, length, thickness or direction of the line, has or has not affected the next person's choice and the entire outcome.

Tip

If a group finishes earlier than the given time, let them draw another drawing.

Images

An image of hands connected by lines or a paper with a dot on it and a pencil/coal.

Exercise 6: The Beautiful and the Ugly

Making moral choices in complex situations and troubled times is not an easy thing. This exercise draws attention to our ability to make moral judgements. By focusing on aesthetic perception, a collection of pictures is categorized according to what is beautiful and what is ugly. In this way, a safe place is created where pupils can indirectly face the necessary ambivalence involved in everyday moral choice.

Aim

The aim of this exercise is to cultivate the ability to remain with the anxiety involved in deciding between two mutually exclusive options.

Learning outcomes

Participants:

Are able to face the ambivalence of making judgements based on aesthetic perception.

Are able to discuss the ambivalence and complexity involved in everyday moral choices.

Intended age group

From middle-school pupils to adults

Duration

Approximately from 10 – 20 minutes

Resources

You will need a collection of pictures (approximately 15 pictures) representing *objects* that could be categorized according to *three* categories: 1) classically beautiful pictures, 2) ambivalent pictures, and 3) classically ugly/disgusting pictures.

A pencil and an answer sheet per participant, with a table for categorizing each picture as either beautiful or ugly (no category for ambivalence).

A PowerPoint projector and screen.

Preparation

Arrange the pictures in a PowerPoint document, one picture per slide and in random order.

Method

Hand out the answer sheets and the pencils.

Explain to the participants that they are going to see different pictures and that task is to decide whether they are beautiful or ugly. Explain that the exercise will be done in silence, and that they will have to make their individual decision rather quickly.

Show the pictures one at a time in a steady but calm pace.

When all the pictures have been shown, go through each picture again and let the participants compare answers as a whole group. Focus on differences and similarities in their choices: Which pictures were easily categorized? Why? Which pictures were difficult to categorize? Why? How would they like to change their choices after hearing others categorizations and seeing the picture again?

End the exercise with the discussion about the difficulty in making judgements and the ambivalence and anxiety that it can involve.

Tip

Avoid pictures of human beings or living creatures.

It is important that at least a third of the pictures are ambivalent or difficult to categorize.

It is important that the participants are given enough time to reflect on each picture but at the same time are forced to make a decision rather quickly.

Images

An ambivalent picture of some kind...

A ROUGH GUIDE TO THE SACRED (THE RELIGIOUS, AND THE SECULAR)

1. Contextualisation

The Sacred

We find today the religious and the secular placed in opposition to one another, as though there is no common ground and no common space in which they might encounter one another. It is difficult to understand the genesis of liberal values without reference to religious traditions. In this way, we refuse to begin with a binary opposition of the religious and the secular which increasingly tends towards polarisation, dispute and debate, and which fails to connect with the existential, with stories, with experience, and with the poetic. Here we think about what we hold sacred and what we value, inviting into a space of contiguity a range of positions that might not ordinarily be found alongside one another – the religious, the political, the philosophical, the cultural. This approach seeks to notice the sacred in everyday life, surveying the long history of humankind, including the faith traditions. We live within traditions. It is impossible to understand the history of Europe without a sense of the faith traditions of Islam, Christianity and Judaism.

There have been misgivings about suggestions that education about religions and beliefs, for example, be taught in a neutral manner. It is felt that, pedagogically at a minimum, this fails connect with the living nature of religious traditions and faiths, and more importantly it fails to connect with the existential needs of students or value their experiences. The *Toledo Guiding Principles* emphasised the importance of providing learners with a fair and deep understanding of religious and belief traditions, but this was without examining what it feels like for learners to practice them from the inside or be committed to them. To teach about religions, beliefs, and ethics in a living way is not to indoctrinate students – it is simply to show that these are living and vital traditions, not simply banks of information. On the other hand, the space of the secular and the political can seem devoid of the rich language of ‘religiosity’, such as the ‘sacred’: philosophers Raimond Gaita and John Llewelyn both argue for a retrieval of the language of the sacred in the everyday.

Distance in Time and Space

In developing the ‘Rough Guide to the Sacred’, we have drawn upon, and extended significantly, Julia Ipgrave’s dialogical approaches project. Engaging in dialogue about beliefs need not only encompass contemporary beliefs. It can invite engagement with the beliefs of religious and cultural groups from the past, drawing upon, for example, the rich belief traditions of the Ancient Egyptians, the Ancient Greeks, the Celts and the Ancient Romans, or the Aztecs alongside a myriad of ancient belief systems, while simultaneously exploring through dialogue learners’ commitments and convictions in the context of complex contemporary belief traditions and practices. We can find fluid and porous connections between past and present values, beliefs and rituals by adopting the lens of the sacred and what really matters – training our imagination to go visiting. Ancient belief traditions are seen as doorways into the present, distancing devices to allow us to be strangers in our own present, and to make unfamiliar, temporarily, that which we may be most attached to. This provides vantage points from which participants can appreciate the complexity of beliefs as well as how others may view their beliefs, whilst cultivating an ethical sensibility that contemplates the long history of humankind in its relation to the sacred and to the ‘gods’.

Common Spaces and Storytelling

This dialogical and listening approach supports participants’ engagement with religions and beliefs through multiple models of enquiry. Taking up the strategy of ‘de-identification’, we do not always begin with a declaration or expression of personal belief identity, but ask why it is that we feel we must *first* identify ourselves before we can listen to one another. With this gesture, we transform conventional approaches to inter-belief and inter-faith dialogue. We also invite working with discomfort or reluctance to engage with issues pertaining to religions, beliefs and values, particularly in classrooms. It can be difficult to know how to navigate such spaces because of a lack of religious literacy, of knowledge (even of one’s own tradition), because of stereotypes and assumptions, or because one doesn’t belong to a faith tradition (or even because

one does). Sometimes, teacher discomfort arises when students know more about beliefs and religions than they do. Students may also feel sensitive, embarrassed, victimised or alienated when issues relating to their personal or familial beliefs are explored in the classroom (Council of Europe *Teaching Controversial Issues*, 2015, p. 12) or, alternatively, be afraid of causing offense or saying the wrong thing or causing conflict in the classroom.

By foregrounding from the outset one's beliefs or identity, this sometimes risks closing down conversations that might be fostered through storytelling: narrating experiences and stories without prior identification or 'self-labelling'. We do not wish to bracket or suspend people's stories, lives and commitments, but rather want to cultivate ways of allowing them emerge through dialogue and listening. By creating exercises that foreground and value phenomenological and existential experience - lived and living values - the aim is to both invite curiosity and interest in the content of different beliefs, faiths, religions and values, but also to connect with the 'living' nature of these beliefs and values. Introducing 'exemplars', as we elaborate in our section "Making Democracy", draws on Hannah Arendt's concept of 'exemplary validity' and Immanuel Kant's claim that 'examples are the go-cart of judgement', supporting participants in developing a finely grained understanding of concepts by understanding how they are embodied and lived.

Our participatory methodologies aim to structure and navigate multiple ways of engaging in dialogue around beliefs in a safe manner. We refuse to set in opposition the secular versus the religious, instead creating 'common spaces' or a 'space of the commons' where different ideas and commitments can be set alongside one another without needing to compete with one another or build towards consensus. This recognises the importance for each individual of having a 'common space' to speak of his or her deeply held beliefs and commitments (both religious and philosophical), and to facilitate receptive engagement with the beliefs of others and the exploration of diverse belief commitments and rituals.

The Heart of the Matter

The Enquiring Classroom methodological approaches provide a space and structure where both personal beliefs and organised religious and other worldviews can be explored. This is not done in a manner that is neutral, objective and detached, but rather it acknowledges that beliefs are core to what really, really matter to us as human beings: our beliefs are not irrelevant in the learning process, and we cannot step away from our commitments and beliefs once we enter the school door. Our beliefs form a key part of who we are. Sometimes, we need to express and explore our personal beliefs in the learning process, and to enter into dialogue from a space that is rooted in our own beliefs and traditions. Sometimes, we can tell stories about what matters and what we value without first having to identify ourselves 'I am a...' or 'As a...'. At other times, we may approach all beliefs, including our own, more dispassionately and critically, listening carefully to what others say about their own beliefs and to what we ourselves say. Such approaches make space in the classroom for dialogue about beliefs and commitments. It allows us to explore with imagination and curiosity, the rituals and meanings, both secular and religious, which give orientation to our lives. Our creative methodologies scaffold moments that are contemplative, existential, dialogical, experiential and personal.

In this section, we explore ways of bringing diverse traditions, values and ideas into a common space, without seeking mutual understanding, agreement or even shared experiences. At the heart of this are the practices of listening and dialogue. We do so through belief circles and everyday rituals, while also introducing complementary approaches that can turn assumptions on their heads (Saturnalian School) or that place personal commitment and belief in a wider cultural, religious, political, and historic context (Does anyone care what I wear?). Some exercises are intimate and personal while others involve collective dialogue and philosophical reflection. Some methodologies draw on personal experience and narrative while others involving thinking together and engagement with formal belief systems.

2. Key Theoretical References

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- Sullivan, J & Lloyd, S. (2006) 'The Forum theatre of Augusto Boal: A Dramatic Model for Dialogue and Community-Based Environmental Science' *Local Environment*, Vol. 11, No. 6.

Key Online Resources

The Pluralism Project at Harvard University <http://www.pluralism.org/> European Commission Platform for Intercultural Dialogue http://ec.europa.eu/culture/policy/strategic-framework/intercultural-dialogue_en.htm Lifelong Learning Platform <http://lllplatform.eu/events/education-for-intercultural-dialogue/> John Paul II Centre for Inter-religious dialogue <https://www.facebook.com/JP2center/> World Council of Churches' Programme on Interreligious Dialogue and Co-operation (WCC-IRDC) http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_20111110_testimonia-za-cristiana_en.html

3. Concepts

Sacred
 Religiosity
 Dialogue
 Beliefs
 Values
 Pluralism
 Faith
 Secular
 Ritual
 Symbolism

4. Exercises

- Belief Circles
- Symbolism of Clothing: Does Anyone Care What I Wear?
- What Really, Really matters?
- Everyday Rituals
- Saturnalian School
- Headcovering

Exercise 1: Belief Circles

Description

Belief circles emerged as an experimental strategy in order to create the conditions to talk about what really matters to us as human beings. They scaffold and structure communication about personal beliefs among small groups of participants (6-8 participants). The belief circle is a small circle made of plastic or chalkboard rewritable material. Topics for discussion are selected by spinning the dial on the belief circle on which topics are written on each of its eight sections. The methodology provides a safe and structured process which invites participants to speak about their convictions, commitments and personal worldview for a short period of time - they might also wish to remain silent but do so for the equivalent set period of time - while encouraging them to also pay attention, to notice, to listen and to become aware of the relevance of beliefs (both religious and philosophical convictions) to other participants' everyday lives. It invites people to communicate to others what they personally believe in a structured safe format and to listen to others.

Belief circles focusing on key themes (e.g. death, life, gods/God, wealth, animals, soul, school, justice) are used to discuss participants' responses to whatever word arises from the spin of the Belief Wheel from a personal and storied perspective. Each person will speak – or be silent – for a set period of time, usually between 1-3 minutes. Each participant will be invited to speak, but nobody is forced to speak. The belief game is a scaffolding device for learners' expressions of personal values, worldviews and belief identities and commitments in the classroom. It normalises and fosters confidence in reflecting and talking about felt and lived beliefs, which are intimately important to learners. Through inviting learners to voice what matters to them and encouraging turn-taking and active listening, it also connects learners to the voices of others who speak about what really matters to them. The Belief Circles activity is supported by materials on *Padlet* and *The Enquiring Classroom* and *Open Discovery Learning* sites where participants encounter a wider community of people who also speak about what matters to them, e.g. Atlas of European Values, Soul Pancake etc.

The topics selected for inclusion on the belief circle should be age and stage appropriate.

Aim

- The aim of the exercise is to reflect upon and express personal beliefs.

Learning outcomes

- Provide a safe space to think about personal beliefs and identity
- Foster participants' confidence in expressing their beliefs
- Create a secure environment where personal beliefs will be taken seriously and will not be ridiculed
- Facilitate participants' respectful engagement with a variety of belief perspectives
- Negotiate points of difference and commonality
- Acknowledge that there are potential moments of disagreement in any discussion about beliefs and that participants can disagree without being disagreeable

Intended age group

- From 8 years old to adults

Duration

- Between 20-60 minutes, depending on the number in the group and the level of activities (three levels possible)

Resources

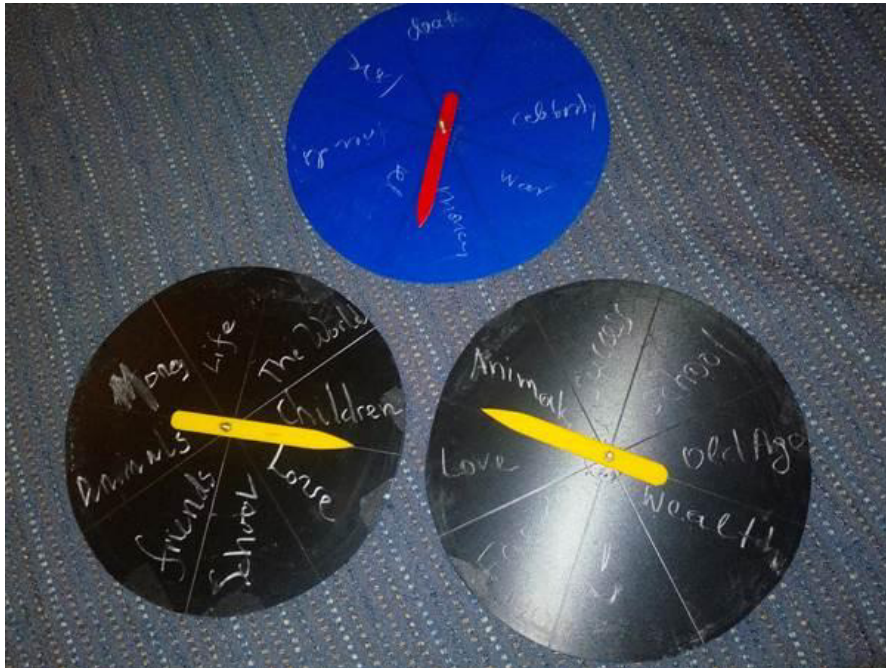
- Belief Circles (one for each group), timer (optional), talking object (optional)
- Whiteboard markers/chalk

Preparation

- Decide on the number and size of the groups appropriate to your context
- Download the Belief Circles pack from *The Enquiring Classroom* Padlet
- Improvise and make your own belief circles by using 8 small cards with topics printed on them and a pen to spin as a dial. Alternatively use a randomizer app to select topics on a circle on your interactive whiteboard.
- A range of possible topics is given in the *The Enquiring Classroom* pack, although teachers can choose to work collaboratively with participants to select topics that are most relevant for their learning needs and interests. Newspapers can be used to select contemporary events and themes. It is important that teachers filter these

Method

1. Arrange the chairs in a circle
2. Teacher introduces the beliefs game and belief circles
3. Agree the rules of the game.
 - Everybody is invited to speak but nobody is forced to speak.
 - Silence is a valuable form of participation and communication.
 - Everyone speaks about their own views... "I think" or "I believe" or "I feel"....
 - Everybody is invited to speak for an equal amount of time (e.g. 1-3 minutes, using a timer or speaking object if desired)
 - Everyone in the group gets a turn to talk (clockwise rotation)
 - Everybody agrees to listen actively to the person who is talking and not to interrupt
 - Nobody criticises or ridicules another person's beliefs (e.g. "you're wrong"... "That's ridiculous" ...)
 - Nobody tries to convert other people to their personal beliefs or to share with anyone outside the circle what somebody has said (confidentiality)
4. Collaboratively decide on themes for discussion.
5. A volunteer starts the discussion by spinning the dial on the belief wheel until it randomly lands on a topic for discussion.
6. Everybody has a first go at speaking for one minute.
7. If time permits, go around the circle a second time to hear participants speak on the existing topic or alternatively spin the wheel again until the dial lands on another topic. Participants speak about their own beliefs.
8. Before the game ends the participants are invited to write anonymously and briefly on a piece of card:
 - One thing they liked about somebody else's belief
 - One thing they heard that made them think differently about their own belief
 - What did it feel like to agree with somebody's beliefs?
 - What did it feel like to disagree with somebody's beliefs?
 - After 5 minutes the cards are gathered, shuffled and placed blank side up on the floor. Participants are invited to pick up a card and going around the circle again they read out the response that is written on their random card.



Belief Circles foster inter-belief dialogue as a distinctive higher order pedagogy, with different levels of meaning, as well as affective, cognitive and relational dimensions that foster co-operation, communication and self-confidence.

Tip

- The teacher facilitates the process but does not join any belief circle
- Leave blanks on the belief wheel so that participants can contribute their own themes
- Different groups might select different topics or extend or reduce the length of time (2 minutes or 30 seconds)

Exercise 2: Does Anyone Care What I Wear?

Description

This methodology explores how beliefs shape choices of *all* clothing and the ways in which *all* clothing is deeply symbolic. In his book *Mythologies* (1957), Roland Barthes writes of how all the world is saturated with meaning: no object or word can exist without being suffused with multiple meanings, and we humans are constantly reinterpreting and reimagining the world around us through a variety of lenses (class, gender, age, ethnicity, belief). One person might look at an item of clothing and see an everyday item, another notice its rich cultural meaning, another might see it as purely practical, another as utterly pointless, or yet another as harmful or culturally isolating. One of the aims of these units is to encourage participants to become aware of and explore the multiple lenses through which we perceive clothing and to become attuned to the symbolic nature of clothing, as Dianne Gereluk describes. This methodology invites participants to become conscious of the way in which they view people who wear certain forms of clothing. Rather than focusing on the clothing of one ethnic group or one culture or belief tradition it opens the question of the symbolism and meaning of all clothing in human lives.

Aim

- The aim of this exercise is to encourage participants to explore the symbolism of clothing

Learning outcomes

- To excite curiosity and interest in clothing and its rich symbolism in human life
- To appreciate that clothing is deeply symbolic and is worn for a variety of reasons: cultural, geographic, fashion, gendered, power, playful, religious, practical, and so forth.
- To present participants' experiences, thoughts, responses about different forms of clothing to peers
- To evoke questions about unfamiliar clothing and to think through the symbolism of familiar everyday clothing.

Intended age group

- From 8 years old to adult

Duration

- 20-30 minutes

Resources

- You will need 30 laminated A4 images of different types of clothing (downloadable resource on TEC padlet Does God Care What I Wear?)

Preparation

- You might listen to Daniel Lismore Be Yourself Everyone Else is Taken
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zeZprXcHW1Y>
- Neil Mc Gregor Church Fur Living with the Gods BBC 4 Podcast The Power of Song
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b09c0pw4>

Method

- Facilitator begins with the question 'Does anyone care what I wear?'
- Participants form a line of opinion with those saying 'No I don't care what you wear' on the left and 'yes I do care on the right' and those who don't know in the middle.
- Probe why participants care/don't care. Facilitator introduces variables. Would you care if...the diamond in my ring were a blood diamond? If my shoes were made by child labour in a sweat factory? If I had assaulted somebody to get my jacket? If I had a hate slogan on my T-Shirt? If the

people who sewed my jeans were trafficked? If the factory where my scarf was made was pouring toxins and plastics into the sea?

- Introduce the topic of clothing carrying meanings that say something about the wearer and extend beyond questions of practicality, labels and fashion, communicating also mood, personality, status, wealth, self-perception, beliefs, ideas, values, etc.
- Divide participants into groups of 4. Each group engages in photo-elicitation activity. Groups are presented with laminated images of people wearing a variety of clothing – different types encompassing fashion, fur, religious, entertainment, safety, etc. Each group is given different images.
- Group collaboratively selects one image to look at more closely and discuss in detail.
- Group discusses what these clothes are saying to them. Do they tell you anything about the wearers' beliefs and values? Do they tell you anything about your assumptions?
- Plenary: individual groups show the image they've chosen and feedback to the main group.
- Are there any issues that might arise if these clothes are worn in schools? Who decides what can and cannot be worn in schools?

Tip

- You may wish to look at the range of images on the TEC padlet *Does God Care What You Wear?*
- In the exploration of clothing, little mention is made piercings and tattoos. These topics may be of interest and relevance to students. It is up to the discretion of the teacher to include/exclude these. Some schools have policies relating to these.



Supplementary Exercises

1. **Describe** at least five styles of clothing in your daily life. If in school, look at how uniforms are adapted and subverted. As you notice, note and describe the different forms of clothing (including your own) think about the relation to role, and the effect that this has on approaching others, on interactions and conversations.
2. **Wonder** about the values that you think may be being communicated by the diverse ways in which people dress or choose to dress.
3. **Question** the assumptions that you bring to the table.

Exercise 3: What Really, Really Matters in a Human life? What Really, Really Matters to Me?**Description**

Sometimes people feel uncomfortable or uncertain when talking about their beliefs. They may even not know what they believe. Beliefs may seem abstract or irrelevant to their lives or overly theoretical. In order to explore issues of ultimate meaning and personal commitment, we ask the following questions:

- What really matters in a human life?
- What really matters to you?

Participants are encouraged to appreciate that people's personal commitments and beliefs are important and often sacred to them. However, they will also notice that beliefs, including their own, can be fluid and dynamic, sometimes internally inconsistent and subject to change, and can be very difficult to express. This methodology gives a place and a space to explore and express the heterogeneous, contested, dynamic, and constantly evolving nature of beliefs and commitments. This methodology involves the creation of two parallel "Beliefs Walls", one focusing on what really matters in human lives (more general and universal) and another focusing on what really matters to me and my life (more personal and particular). Post-its are stuck onto each wall to enable participants to see what matters to them as individuals in a particular time and place, and what may matter to human beings more universally. This methodology is particularly appropriate in educational contexts where people inhabit multiple cultures that interact in complex ways in order to explore affinities and divergences in beliefs in a space shared in common with others.

Aim

- By inviting participants to think about and write down "What really, really matters in a human life?" and "What really, really matters to me?", the group's creation of a collective beliefs wall displays the range and breath and complexity of what matters in human lives and in their personal lives, helping them to see both affinities and also points of difference.

Learning outcomes**Participants:**

- Distinguish and articulate beliefs that are of importance to participants
- Reflect upon what is ultimately important in their lives through answering the questions "What really, really matters to me?" and "What really, really matters in a human life?"
- Reflect upon why certain things really matter to them and to humans.
- Construct a simple beliefs wall using post-its which provides a visual record of different themes and values and commitments which matter to the group and to humans.
- Explore common and diverse themes on the beliefs walls.

Intended age group

- From 8 years old to adult

Duration

- Approximately 20-30 minutes.

Resources

- Two clearly delineated spaces on a wall or large whiteboard. One with a label "What really, really matters to me", another with a label "What really really matters in a human life?"
- White card or A3, post-its and pens, youtube clip of the film *Human*.

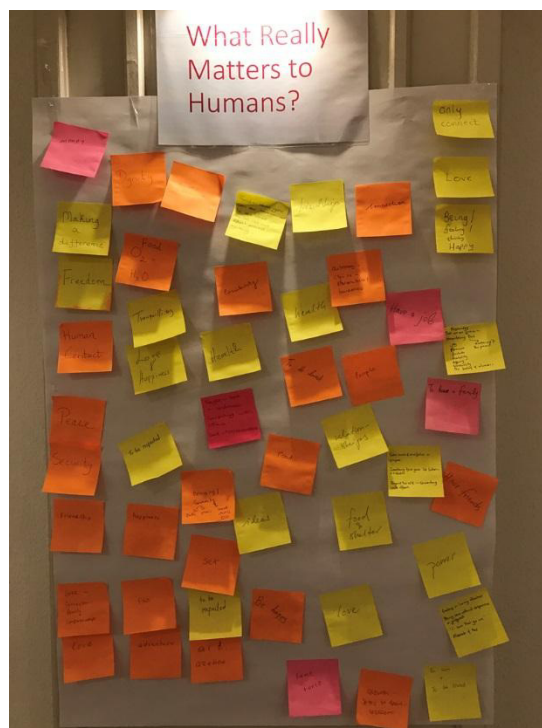
Preparation

Look at testimonies from Yann Arthus-Bertrand's film *Human*. This film addresses issues connected with the question "What is the meaning of human life?". In this film, a compilation of first person human stories

without commentary, people speak in their own voices.
<https://www.youtube.com/user/HUMANthemovie2015>

Method

- Everybody sits in a circle.
 - Introduce the theme of what gives human lives meaning?
 - Show a number of brief excerpts of testimonies from Yann Arthus-Bertrand's film *Human*.
 - Think-pair-share: What really, really matters for human beings?
 - Volunteer hands out a blank piece of card and a pencil to each participant. The volunteer then reads the prompt questions and invites participants to jot down a response (can be visual or written etc.) to the questions: What really, really matters to me? What really, really matters or is important for human beings?
 - Allow participants to spend some time reflecting and then discussing in smaller groups of 2-3, thinking about what people need to live, to feel alive and valued, and to feel that they, and wider humanity, are leading lives that matter, in some way.
 - Invite the participants to place their post-its on the designated labelled wall space.
 - Participants survey what matters to them as individuals, and what they think matters to human beings?
 - Ask what do you notice about what matters to our group? To humans? Return to the circle to reflect.
- Do all humans think the same things are important?
 - Does what matters to me really matter to everyone else?
 - Do we all have the same needs and desires?
 - Are there any things that surprise you on the wall?



Tip

Participants may not associate what really matters to them with questions of ultimate meaning or with what they believe, so you might re-phrase the question to connect in with values and with practices of living. They may view these issues pragmatically or materially and may not see the connection between what matters, practices, values, and beliefs. Think about clustering these, and exploring underlying values orienting practice.

Supplementary Exercises

Description of Task: This simple speaking and listening exercise shifts the locus of agency from imagining *we* hold values to imagining that *they* hold us. It is influenced by the writings of philosophers Rudi Visker and Friedrich Nietzsche.

Participants: Initially work individually and make sure there is a surface for writing available to everyone, then turn to work in small groups of 3-4.

Values: Individually, spend five minutes reflecting on what values *hold* you? Which values do you feel you are chosen by and committed to?

You may wish to engage in a free writing exercise based on this question.

Being Held: What is it like to be held by them? Spend 2 minutes reflecting on this.

Speaking and Listening: In groups of 3-4, time speak for one minute each on the values that hold you, with no commentary or discussion. If someone chooses not to speak, then remain silent for one minute.

Rituals of Everyday Life: How are these values embodied and embedded in everyday life? What are the actions that engaged in that express these values? Participants may choose to speak personally or may speak more generally.

Discuss in the wider circle for up to 20 minutes.

Exercise 4: Everyday Rituals

Description:

This exercise differs significantly from “religious-impartial or belief-impartial” approaches, which place an emphasis on presenting information about cultures or traditions in an objective manner. By centring on the question of ritual, it also allows for exploration of what really matters, including in faith and belief traditions, and for exploration of what is held sacred in everyday existence. Blaise Pascal’s famous formula for belief was ‘Kneel down, move your lips in prayer, and you will believe’. Vladimir Lenin and Louis Althusser also thought about the ways that ideology is part of ordinary rituals, behaviours, movements and so on, reflecting very practically on beliefs and values. On the other hand, ritual is an essential dimension of faith traditions, transforming the nature of experience. For the purpose of this exercise questions of ritual are understood widely.

Here ritual is used as a loose term to describe any repeated gestures, activities, practices, experiences, or events that express and give meaning or orientation in a human life. These rituals may form part of a communal formal religious, faith, or convictional tradition, they may include everyday activities, conventional rituals, or they may be private and particular to an individual (or all of these). This approach invites participants to express what ritual means to them and to express the personal, idiosyncratic and particular nature of those rituals that are meaningful in their lives. Participants are invited to become curious about, explore, express, and reflect upon those everyday rituals which are meaningful or important to them. They are asked from the outset not to ‘overthink’ the exercise. Rituals encompass the everyday, intimate, particular and personal aspects of what matters to people as well as the more formal public aspect of organised belief and philosophical traditions. Participants are invited to explore the movements, language, gestures, devotional life, images, symbolism, and objects associated with rituals, not as if they are tourists surveying foreign objects from a privileged vantage point, but by imagining themselves as fellow sojourners who know the landscape of ritual from the inside. Some everyday rituals may be deeply meaningful to some participants, but they may also seem bizarre or even whimsical to others, however the experience of sharing rituals, marvelling at or being challenged by the ritual of others, allows diverse rituals to be placed in relationship to one another in what we are calling the ‘space of the commons’. This allows for the secular and the religious to occupy the same common space as matters of common concern. The narration of personal ritual can also engender an experiential and participative moments of significance, especially when those stories enter into relation with the stories of other’s rituals.

Aim

- The aim of this exercise is to enable participants to explore playfully everyday rituals that are meaningful to them and to appreciate the symbolism of objects associated with rituals

Learning outcomes

Participants:

- Recognise the importance of ritual in everyday life.
- Are aware of the symbolic nature of objects and their capacity to communicate meaning about what is meaningful in human lives.
- Explore the different symbolic meanings and personal narratives associated with different everyday objects and rituals in people’s lives.
- Appreciate that a ritual that is deeply significant to them may hold little significance for others.
- Understand that different people and traditions value different rituals and that the narrative and meaning of ritual is deeply symbolic.

Intended age group

- From 8 years old to adult

Duration

- From 30 to 45 minutes

Resources

- Participants bring a real, or an imaginary, object that symbolizes or communicates an everyday ritual that is significant to them.
- Large cloth/sheet upon which the objects are placed.

Preparation

- In advance of this exercise, invite participants bring an object that symbolises in some way a ritual that is important in their lives. Everything from the deeply significant to the banal and very ordinary, or even silly is welcomed into the space.
- Participants are invited to think about why their selected ritual is important to them (but asked not to 'over-think').

Method

- The whole group sits in a circle around a large cloth that is placed on the ground between them.
- Each person brings an object that they have brought to symbolise or express an everyday ritual (however apparently insignificant) that helps them to live.
- Participants are invited to tell the story of the ritual. Whilst sitting in a circle, they should not follow the logic of the circle, but rather contribute spontaneously.
- Each person speaks to, and through, their object, why it matters, and what values it holds in their lives for one minute, if they choose.
- When they have finished they place the object (real or imaginary) on the cloth in the centre of the circle.
- They return to their seat and wait until the next participant volunteers to describe their object and tell the story of the ritual it symbolises.
- Some participants may not wish to provide a narrative for their object and may simply wish to silently place the object on the floor space, which is also fine.
- When everybody has placed their object on the floor, the teacher/facilitator invites people to look silently at all the objects and reflect upon the meanings and rituals they have in people's lives.
- Ask the group how might somebody who had not heard the personal stories of their meaning in participants' lives view them?
- Facilitator maps the key themes and ideas throughout the exercise, mirroring and reflecting back on this at the end.

Tip

- The person who goes first is key as they set the tempo and tone for the exercise, including duration of the input.
- Select somebody to model the process, who will tell the story of their object and explain the ritual with rich detail and with ease.
- For ideas look at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qUHgbixI9k0>

Images



Supplementary Exercises

Description: Think about how to make the ordinary 'strange' or 'unfamiliar', using 'distancing' exercises and devices. Imagining becoming an anthropologist who looks at your fellow human beings as though through the eyes of a stranger, or imagine being a Martian Anthropologist seeking to understand human beings, human conventions and human rituals. Walk through different spaces inside and outside, noting the movements, gestures, rituals and the ways these shift with context. (The security guard calling 'hey!' does not have the same sense for us as a friend or as a stranger.) Part of this exercise involves noticing the work of 'ordinary forms of conviviality', as well as the misinterpretations that can arise when forms of politeness and civility in other cultures may not match readily with our own. Tolerance here might be about becoming curious about and staying with these differences, whilst noticing our visceral reactions. Our sense of *who* we are is both shaped and expressed by our sensibility and the ways we are perceived and sensed by others, including the ways we are included and excluded, or feel we belong or are recognised.

Participants

Initially, engage individually in this task. It can serve as a preparatory task for exercises on ritual and on symbolic clothing. Participants may then come into a large circle to discuss their observations and, if willing, enact the choreography of the gestures that they have collected.

Tasks

- Collect an inventory of gestures (movements of hand, head, walking, tone of voice, etc.) and note how these shift between the different spaces. Jot these down without judgement. Simply describe and perhaps draw them.
- Map what you think are the values and beliefs expressed through different gestures and movements of bodies. How is the world being sensed and interpreted by these bodies?
- Are there any spaces where 'rituals' are performed (and repeated) and if so what are these and what is going on? How would we choreograph these? Who exist on the margins of these spaces?
- Reflect on your own responses and reactions to different bodies, movements and gestures. Write down whatever comes to mind, without censorship.
- Finally, note your own movements as you return and enter the room. What are the habits of the body here?

Tips

One fun way of engaging with this exercise is to choreograph the gestures and movements of the school and everyday life in the classroom. This can be made into a kind of 'dance'. Younger children will particularly like this exercise, and older children will find in it a means of subversion. Annette Krauss' project *Hidden Curriculum* is a useful resource for thinking about this.

Exercise 5: Covering the Head

Description

This methodology evokes questions about cultural and religious traditions that may be unfamiliar, or perhaps misunderstood. It encourages participants to think through familiar everyday ways of living that involve covering one's head. It invites participants to think of headcovering in relation to their own lives, and to realise that the head itself is deeply symbolic. Importantly, it avoids a disproportionate focus on certain types of headcovering (e.g. religiously inspired headcovering) by fostering an appreciation of the symbolism and significance of a large variety of headcoverings in diverse ancient and contemporary traditions. This is not to diminish the religious significance of headcoverings in faith traditions, but to displace the assumption that *only* this form of clothing is symbolic, by coming to see the symbolic and expressive nature of all clothing. This methodology moves beyond a binary view of the sacred and profane by placing together a range of headcoverings, exploring their symbolism, as well as exploring the responses of students if they were to be prohibited from wearing their familiar or favoured headcoverings.

Aim

- To excite curiosity and interest in headcovering traditions and practices
- To understand the symbolic nature of clothing
- To appreciate that people in the past and in the present cover their heads for a variety of cultural, safety, geographic, fashion, gender, power, play, religious and other reasons

Learning outcomes

Participants:

- Engage playfully with different forms of headcovering and experiment imaginatively with dressing the head
- Understand that headcoverings are deeply symbolic and mean different things to different people at different times and places
- Explore diverse historical and contemporary practices of head decoration/coverings in religious, secular, ethnic, and cultural traditions
- Elicit discussion about the complex meanings associated with different forms of headcovering in a manner that does not relativise or exoticise them, but treats them in the context of human relationships and expression
- Engage imaginatively with unfamiliar forms of headcovering and explore what they might mean

Intended age group

- From 8 years old to adult

Duration

- 60 minutes.

Resources (Download on Padlet)

- TEC Head Start Cards
- Respect and Disrespect Card
- Fact or Fib game
- TEC Finish the Statement Cards
- Response Board, whiteboard markers, pencils and blank card
- TEC Head covering Power point.

Preparation

- Divide the participants in groups of 5-6.
- Box of headcoverings for each group, including cultural, fashion, religious, sporting, ethnic, novelty etc. head covering.
- Mirrors, pen and paper and response board.

Method

- Students agree to the ground rules
- Warm up fact or fib game exploring headcovering traditions around the world
- Teacher invites everybody in the group to play the finish the statement game: e.g. I think people shave their heads because.. Somebody might wear a wig when.. Religious reasons for covering heads include..
- Each group is given a box of head coverings
- Participants are invited to playfully try on a range of headcoverings (mirrors provided)
- Each participant selects their favourite type of headcovering from the box and explains why they picked it out.
- Participants are then invited to select one item of headcovering they know little about and drawing on information sheets on selected cultural/religious and ethnic head covering (padlet) to record on their response boards:
- What it is called? When, Why, and Where might somebody wear this?

Group discussion

- Is there a headcovering in the box you would never wear? Why?
- What would happen if you wore this headcovering in a place where it is not usually worn (e.g. wearing a cowboy hat in a swimming pool or a swimming hat in the supermarket)?
- Do you think people might view you or respond to you differently if you wore this in the street? How might you feel? What might you think?

Preparation

- Look at Story Booth Disrespected for Wearing a Hijab
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CfON_TDYMn0
- Think of a headcovering that is important to you and/or your family. It can be cultural or religious or used for entertainment. Each participant has sheet of A4 paper and pencils. Invite participants to write a short diary entry imagining how they would feel if people put pressure on them not to wear it. Lay the anonymous responses on the floor and invite participants to read one other's responses.

Tip

- Before you do this activity, invite students, over a period of weeks to bring in different forms of headcoverings (cultural, fashion, religious, sporting, etc.) to contribute to the collection. Build up your collection so that you have a range of head coverings encompassing a variety of beliefs and traditions.
- This workshop will be active and noisy. The leader proposes a signal (aural or visual), which indicates that all participants must stop the activity and listen attentively at particular stages in the workshop.

Exercise 6: The Saturnalian Classroom

Description

At the Ancient festival of Saturnalia the Romans tried to recreate and imagine a vanished golden age when Saturn, the god of the harvest and the god of agriculture, ruled on earth. This festival recalled an ancient but long past Utopian time of joyful plenty and feasting without slavery or hunger or division. During the festival of Saturnalia Romans imagined returning to this age of plentiful contentment and lack of division by turning the world, as they knew it, on their head. Saturnalia turned upside down the normal social conventions and role reversals and role-playing were an important aspect of the festival. C. Geertz says, "In ritual the world as lived and the world as imagined ...turn out to be the same world". During Saturnalia, slaves could disrespect their masters or tell them what they really thought of them without reproach. A king of misrule was elected in each family and could bid the *paterfamilias* (head of the family) to do whatever they pleased. Women could mingle in men-only company. Free speech – satire, liberty to insult without impunity, criticism of those in power, abandonment of social hierarchy, dress (more solemn white toga exchanged for synthesis – brightly coloured gown), disruption of convention over a number of days, playing of games, gambling, etc. became the norm during the festival. Ancient Romans gave to one other what is a precursor to greeting cards containing deliberately awful verses. Gifts were given – the more esteemed the person, the worse the gift. "Now you have license, slave, to game with your master".

James Frazer writing on Saturnalia in *The Golden Bough* remarked: "the earth brought forth abundantly: no sound of war or discord troubled the happy world: no baleful love of lucre worked like poison in the blood of the industrious and contented peasantry. Slavery and private property were alike unknown: all men had things in common".

This version of Saturnalian activity is influenced by the Brazilian playwright, Augusto Boal's, key work *Theatre of the Oppressed*. His practice turns things on their head so that spectators become active participants in the theatre, as they dialogue with performers and they suggest alternative ways of engaging with the narrative to become Spec-Actors. Boal suggests 'While some people make theatre, we all *are* theatre.' Historical (long ago), geographical (far away) and cultural distancing (different worldviews) can provide a safe starting point to allow students to look imaginatively at both their own and other's belief traditions and values. This enables them to reflect on the familiar through a stranger's eyes, and helps navigate complex and difficult questions by 'introducing activities to help students to see an issue from someone else's perspective...' (*Teaching Controversial Issues*, 21). This exercise is also influenced by Jacques Ranciere's arguments for the re-distribution of the sensible by analysing how the voices and ideas of some people are rendered invisible and inaudible, and by exploring what might need to happen to change this: the subversion of the master-slave relation, for example.



Aims

- Introduce students to the cult of Saturnalia as a device to role play and role reverse so that they can see their own familiar world through unfamiliar eyes

- Appreciate the complex relational nature of ancient Greek traditions surrounding death and the afterlife
- Discuss links between ancient and modern rituals and beliefs and values
- Playfully explore the role of ritual in everyday life and the ways in which values are embodied.
- Distinguish and articulate beliefs and values that are of importance to participants

Learning outcomes

Participants:

- Playfully explore the festival of Saturnalia through role reversal
- Reimagine the world of the classroom or the school where current assumptions and conventions no longer exist by occupying the space/time of the school or learning environment differently
- Write an instruction piece to an educator telling them about the Saturnalian Classroom or School

Intended age group

- From 8 years old to adult.

Duration

- 30 – 60 minutes

Resources

- PowerPoint on the god Saturn and Saturnalia (available on TEC Padlet)
- Whiteboard markers, response boards, card, pens

Preparation

- Select images of Saturn
- Research historical accounts of the festival of Saturnalia

Method

- Introduce the god Saturn and the festival of Saturnalia.
- Saturnalia involved role play and role reversals. In small groups of 4-5, ask participants to brainstorm what it might be like to celebrate Saturnalia in their classroom today? What would they do?
- Prompt questions: Imagine what would happen to the physical learning space during the festival of Saturnalia? What roles would change? What rules would be inverted? What might the transformed learning space look and feel like? Would the playground remain the same?
- Breaching Experiments: Try out some of the inversions of the ordinary by taking up alternative positions and acting out familiar roles in different ways. How might the teacher become student, and vice versa?
- Give a sheet of card and pen to each participant. Ask them to imagine yourself as a child that you know or as the child that you were/are. Go to any available space in the room you are in and find a place and posture where that child might be comfortable. Imagine what this Saturnalian classroom or school space might be like if the 'normal' rhythms and everyday rituals of the classroom were turned on their head. What would happen to your experience? On your blank sheet of card write out a simple and concrete set of instructions for a teacher to change the nature of your experiences and express your needs and desires
- Group Task: Return to their smaller groups, collaboratively compose and record a set of classroom rules for the Saturnalian classroom on their response boards
- Children and young people may enjoy writing a manifesto or creating placards.

Tip

Selecting beliefs or rituals from ancient history or culture is a distancing device, which can be a useful strategy to enable participants to engage imaginatively with conventions and practices by re-imagining how they are connected to both the contemporary world and the past.

THINKING TOGETHER (THE PHILOSOPHICAL)

1. Contextualisation

Philosophical enquiry is well established as a practice. We are particularly interested in exploring pluralistic approaches to enquiry in community, supporting philosophical contemplation and dialogue, careful analysis, critical evaluation and exchange of ideas, as well as fostering existential and imaginative relationships to 'big questions' by creating a wide range of activities to manifest and explore ideas and concepts. Philosophical enquiry differs from belief circles and other *The Enquiring Classroom* exercises in that participants are asked to robustly support their ideas, providing reasons for their position, and are also invited to actively take diverse standpoints that may be at odds with their own beliefs and positions. However, these different methodologies in this project are designed in order to complement and enrich one another, so philosophical enquiry should not be undertaken in isolation from the range of other activities, and it should pick up on the themes and topics introduced through other methodologies. It does, however, also give students and teachers the opportunity to develop critical thinking skills and higher order thinking skills. Whilst centred on the discursive, ideas and positions developed in the course of philosophical enquiry can be also be manifested through a range of activities, including drawing, making, performance, action, and so forth. This invites a movement between the discursive and the expressive, and is an inclusive strategy. This means that in diverse classrooms in which not all children have equal fluency in the language, or where they may have undergone a range of experiences, including sometimes difficult experiences, that they have the opportunity to explore, express and manifest their ideas through diverse media and through the lenses of different traditions, cultures, and histories.

Communities of philosophical enquiry encourage intellectual humility, disagreement, capacity for reasoned argumentation, imagination, listening skills, analytical abilities, fostering the desire to engage in thoughtful and respectful dialogue. They are premised on the principle of collaborative learning – our thinking is enriched by the ideas of others. Like other methodologies discussed in this project, putting a 'concept' or question 'on the table' allows for a kind of 'intimate distancing' that enables a dispassionate, yet interested, engagement with the question. As participants are encouraged to take those positions that will enable multiple perspectives to be taken and explored on a topic, questions can be discussed in a safe space that doesn't demand personal positions or views to be disclosed. At the heart of this process is the development of critical, creative, caring and collaborative thinking. Philosophical enquiry is particularly useful when an educator needs to 'take the heat' out of a difficult topic or conversation. The rules of philosophical engagement demand active listening, careful reasoning, and respectful engagement.

It is important to negotiate and agree a set of rules for communities of philosophical enquiry:

- We will all respect each other's ideas and views, even if they are different
- We will (hopefully) disagree with one another if we're going to do philosophy well, but don't make it personal, and be respectful
- Disagreement helps us to think philosophically
- We will listen to each other
- The teacher/facilitator will ask you to explain or tell us why you think something and to give reasons. Take your time, or come back to us if you need more time to think.
- There are no absolutely right or wrong answers, it's about our ideas and the more we have the better, but let's keep an open mind and aim to think and understand one another.
- No one in the room has the answers to all the questions; this is a journey of discovering together
- Everyone's ideas and views are valued in this conversation
- We won't ask you to put your hands up but just to turn up your palm when you want to say something, and we will make sure you have a chance to talk.
- Sometimes we will give you a little time to think about questions, so you don't need to feel you have to come up with an answer immediately.

- The children are the experts in the room, and we want to learn from you

2. Key References:

Lipman, M.(1991) *Thinking in Education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lockrobin, G. (2011) *Creative Philosophical Enquiry*. CAPE.

Vansieleghem N., and Kennedy, D., (2011) 'What is Philosophy for Children?', *Journal of Philosophy of Education*. 45 (2), pp.

Sample Online Resources:

<http://www.sapere.org.uk/>

<http://www.p4c.com>

<http://thinkingspace.org.uk>

<https://www.philosophy-foundation.org/>

3. Concepts

Enquiry
Philosophy
Community
Imagination
Existential
Dialogue
Respect
Critical Thinking
Collaboration
Creativity
Experience
Questioning
Values

4. Exercises

Agree-Disagree Statement
Concept Generation
Questioning Strategies
Community of Philosophical Enquiry
Living Values

Exercise 1: Taking a Position: Agree-Disagree Statement

Description

This exercise is an excellent 'way in' to philosophical enquiry, in particular for concept clarification, analytical skills, and perspective taking. It presents with a statement that should provoke different responses, for example, "Happiness is more important than Freedom". It asks participants to 'take a position' and to offer reasons for their position. It is important to try to follow the framework suggested. Try to avoid controversial statements or positions until the students have developed the skills of working as a community of philosophical enquiry, but choose statements that will be contested, interesting and that of common concern. Students should understand that there is no final right or wrong answers, but that it is also not just a matter of 'expressing opinions': one should give reasons, reflect, and be willing to change one's mind.

Aim

Develop the foundational skills and dispositions for engaging in philosophical enquiry.

Learning outcomes

Participants: This exercise can be undertaken in a group from 10-35. Participants will:

- Be able to take a position and offer reasons for their position
- Critically evaluate the reasons offered by others
- Ask for clarification from others and be prepared to clarify and offer a definition of concepts
- Feel comfortable in changing their minds if they hear a persuasive argument from others
- Analyse concepts and begin to develop a more finely grained and nuanced understanding of concepts
- Learn how to disagree and to value disagreement.

Intended age group

8 years old to adult

Duration

30-45 minutes

Resources

Masking tape to draw a line on floor stretching across the room

Two A4 size pieces of paper with words "Agree" and "Disagree"

Preparation

Explain the rules for the exercise.

Tables and chairs pushed back to clear a space where everyone can stand.

Method

This exercise is done standing up and involves moving positions physically.

Explain that students should position themselves along the Agree-Disagree line, depending on how strongly they feel about the statement.

Begin with asking for responses from students at the extremes of the statement, then move to students in the middle. Ask 2-3 students from each position to explain why they are standing where they are.

Offer students the opportunity to change their mind and to ask questions at regular intervals.

Facilitator should continuously mirror back the responses, seek clarification, and make connections/distinctions between the different reasons and definitions. "X said.. but Y said.. and Z said..".

Students should be encouraged to make distinctions and to explore more deeply both their definition and the reasons offered.

The facilitator models philosophical reasoning by mirroring, comparing, finding similarities, and encouraging sustained focus on analysis, on reasoning, and on clarification of concepts.

Students should come to see that points of disagreement sometimes stem from disagreements of definition, and that where there appears to be agreement, this may not be the case as people may be using the same word but understanding it differently.

Tip

Encourage students to occupy the whole space of the room, and invite responses from a range of participants. It can be useful for the facilitator to cluster ideas and concepts and mirror back a concept map.

Try to create a good energy through careful consideration of the statement. Later students may propose a statement themselves.

As students become more familiar with the approach and with philosophical enquiry more broadly, more ‘controversial’ statements can be introduced, with sensitivity to the wider group.

Exercise 2: Concept Creation

Description

Working with concepts is core to philosophical enquiry, but sometimes it can be difficult for students to identify concepts and work with abstraction. It can also be difficult for them to connect abstract ideas or concepts with concrete examples, stories and experiences. In the context of this project, it is important that students begin to identify, explore and discuss key concepts and values, and to develop their critical media literacy skills, drawing out the concepts implicit in images, or those concepts that they generate from their interpretation of and response to images. This exercise is a very open one that should encourage everyone in the group to say something. It involves contributing single word 'first thought' responses to images. These are noted by the facilitator who also summarises the contributions, at intervals. It serves as a building block for the next exercise on generating questions. The exercise can be tailored by using Freire's concept of 'codification', distributing the same image to everyone in the group, and asking them to both describe it (initially in pairs) and then to generate concepts.

Aim

This exercise aims to develop capacity in concept identification and generation. It aims to show students how they each read images in diverse ways, building on and complementing "Educating the Gaze" activities.

Learning outcomes

- Build confidence in particular amongst those who may be more reticent to speak
- Encourage students to move from description of stimuli to generation of concepts
- Develop ability to navigate abstract ideas
- Enable students to see the connection between concepts and concrete examples
- Cultivate critical media literacy and interpretation of images
- Develop understanding of how one's experience, background, context and perspectives shape the reading of images, by also imagining how such images might have been 'read' in the past.

Participants: 10-35 students can engage in this exercise.

Intended age group

From 8 years old to adult.

Duration

20-30 minutes

Resources

1. Each individual is given the same image in print out to study and to describe. Historical, newspaper or archival images can be useful here. It should be quite ambiguous as an image. It can be black and white.
 2. A wide array of colourful images is placed on the floor – these can be sourced from the internet, including sites like *National Geographic*.
 3. Any classroom or any space, inside or outside, will do.
- A3 page and markers/sharpies.

Preparation

Create a circle and ensure all participants can see and hear one another. Facilitator may find it useful to map the concepts on an A3 page.

It is important to emphasise that there is no right or wrong answers in this exercise. Facilitator should map responses without evaluation or judgement, only seeking clarification where required.

Emphasise the importance of listening to one another and making sure that everyone has a chance to speak.

Method

Method 1:

Place wide array (20-25) of both abstract and richly detailed concrete images, ideally laminated, on the floor and encourage students to move, pick them up and look at them.

Without prior indication that they will speak, students should simply say what comes to mind in terms of concepts (values, feelings) as they look at the images. They will need to listen to one another and pay attention to one another so that no one voice dominates.

Where students describe what is *in* the image, encourage them to draw out the concepts, asking “Is it about...?”

Facilitator maps the images and begins to make connections on the map.

Method 2:

Facilitator distributes identical copy of individual image to each participant.

Participants are asked to look at the image in silence for one minute.

Participants then discuss the image in pairs – this will allow quieter students to engage and allows for more time for reflection.

Participants move back to the wider circle and begin to describe what they see in the image prompted by the questions “What is going on here?”, “What do you see?”, “What do you think is happening?”.

After 10-15 minutes the facilitator feeds back responses and identifies key concepts.

Participants are then encouraged to draw out concepts that they think are related to the image.

Method 3:

Look around whatever room you are in and begin to generate concepts, thinking about the symbolic nature of the space and also paying attention to images, to the world outside, to people: e.g. power, nature, space, time, rules, obedience, discipline, fun, friendship.

In all cases, ask the students to do ‘**concept clusters**’, seeing which concepts they want to put alongside one another, and to offer a rationale for the concepts that they group together. For example, one group of 10 year olds suggested that love, life, joy, grief, and pain should all go together because you can only be sad if you have loved someone.

Tip

Where the facilitator shows interest and encouragement to students, this can foster confidence. Work in small steps and ensure that each person feels valued for the contribution he or she is making. Don’t push anyone to respond.

Get students to respond creatively by drawing the abstract concept, or by sculpting it in plasticine or clay. You might get them to add titles or statements, and curate the objects in the space of the school or classroom.

Exercise 3: Generating Questions

Description

In order to engage in collaborative enquiry, we need to generate good questions. In this approach, students generate their own questions and this requires scaffolding. This will enable students to gradually come to frame, formulate and discuss difficult and complex questions relating to questions of values, identity, belonging, ethics, and politics. This exercise focuses on supporting students to develop philosophical questions and distinguish those questions from empirical questions and imaginative questions. The previous exercise on concept creation provides a useful way into this discussion. Philosophical questioning involves creating open-ended questions that can't be settled by observing or using our senses, by asking an expert, and that involve contestation and investigation, rather than asking for personal responses and observations. Whilst inviting responses or explanations, some open-ended questions allow for multiple responses but are not philosophical, for example, *visual thinking strategies* or *literary analysis*.

Aim

Build student capability in formulating and framing questions that will enable and sustain engaged enquiry.

Learning outcomes

Participants will:

- Understand the difference between different kinds of questions
- Be able to generate questions from concepts and from diverse stimuli, such as newspapers, literature, images, social media, and films
- Learn how to use different questioning words and framings in order to generate philosophical questions that will sustain a community of enquiry discussion.
- Be able to evaluate the strength of different kinds of questions in respect of their likelihood to precipitate and sustain dialogue.

Intended age group

From 8 years old to adult

Duration

30-45 minutes

Resources

Version of Question Quadrant (see, for example, Philip Cam)

A4 sheets cut in two

A3 Card

Markers

Preparation

The **Concept Creation** exercise provides content to begin to generate questions.

Ask students to come with examples of what they think might be philosophical questions, and to sort these.

Method

Introduce the Question Quadrant and give examples.

Look and See or Clarification Questions: How many students are in the classroom today? What day of the week is it? One Correct Answer	Imaginative/Speculative Questions: If there are aliens, what do they dream about? Multiple Possible Answers - there can be crossover with philosophical questions
Ask an Expert/Factual Questions: What is the chemical composition of oxygen? How do you make a circuit board? One Correct Answer (in principle)	Thinking/Philosophical Questions: What is justice? Can we ever <i>know</i> reality? Should the end justify the means? Multiple Possible Answers - and sometimes

Ask the students to generate questions relating to each of the four boxes and work together to classify the questions, and identify borderline cases.

Use the concepts and discussion from the **Concept Creation** exercises to begin to formulate questions.

Encourage students to play with the wording of questions and see how their meaning changes with different questioning words: **How? Why? Does? Can? Ought? What? When? Could? Should? Is?**

See what difference it makes when you include other words: **Always, sometimes, never, often, every, some, one.**

Working in groups of 5-6, ask students to choose a concept and to both make questions more general and more complex (this will help them move from description of stimuli) and to make them more precise or simpler. e.g. What is happiness? Is happiness a universal right? Can people be happy all the time? Is it possible to be both happy and free? Should the aim of government be to maximise happiness? If everyone in a society is happy, but only because one person is suffering, is that acceptable? Do we need to have been sad in order to be happy? (Mill on utilitarianism, Ursula Leguin on the story "The Ones who Walk Away", Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*.)

Ask the group to designate one person in the group as the scribe, one person to be in charge of ensuring that everyone has a chance to speak and everyone listens, and one person to feedback.

Place the questions in the middle of the floor so that everyone can see their diversity and together sort through the questions and classify them in line with the **question quadrant**, offering justification for the classification.

Tip

Encourage students to air ideas and questions without self-censorship. When sorting and classifying ask them to explain why questions go in different categories, and which are the borderline cases.

Beginning with the same concept them, ask students to generate questions, using as many different starting words and re-framings as they can, making them more simple and more complex.

Find ways of 'curating' the questions, placing them in different places (under the table, in the lobby), occupying spaces of classroom and school.

Exercise 4: Community of Philosophical Enquiry

Description

Our understanding of democracy underscores the agonal and contested nature of democracy, a process of negotiation that is constantly renewed, as we continue to ‘put our values on the table’ and discuss matters of common concern. Philosophical enquiry is about ‘big ideas’ and it invites and welcomes difficult and complex conversations. It deals with questions that are, as Grace Lockrobin says **conceptual**, **common** (bearing on issues and questions that we have in common), **contestable** (eliciting lots of different and diverse views), and **central** (they are important) (CAPE, 7). At the heart of this is a tolerance for disagreement, for perspective-taking, for dialogue, for critical thought, for analysis and for humility and for fallibility. Communities of philosophical enquiry involve critical, creative, collaborative and caring thinking, asking us to look at questions through the eyes of others, and to examine our own positions and beliefs with fresh eyes, and with a sense of proportion and distance. Lockrobin describes these as follows:

“**Creative**: They generate new ideas, put old ideas together in new ways and see things differently; **Critical**: They pull ideas apart, scrutinize them and make judgements; **Caring**: They show sensitivity to the context of a discussion and to other people, investing in the outcome; **Collaborative**: They rely on others, learn from each other and support one another’s learning” (CAPE, 8).

This section provides an introduction to building a community of philosophical enquiry with students. It draws on the work of Matthew Lipman, John Dewey, Gareth Matthews and Ann Sharp, and on the practice and pedagogies developed by a range of organisations and individuals including SAPERE, IAPC, the Philosophy Foundation, and the community philosophy model developed by Graeme Tiffany.

Aim

The aim is to build the foundational principles and skills for engaging in a community of philosophical enquiry. This builds on the previous exercises of **concept creation** and **question generation**.

Learning outcomes

Students will:

- Develop active listening skills
- Be able to engage in collaborative thinking building on the ideas of others
- Develop capacity for critical analysis
- Cultivate the ability to think carefully
- Identify questions and matters of common concern and interest
- Be able to devise questions that are contested, inviting a range of position
- Be able to appraise and evaluate the ideas and suggestions of others
- Learn to make distinctions and connections between different concepts

Intended age group

From 8 to adult.

Duration

45-60 minutes

Resources

A4 paper and A3 paper

Markers

Talking object (preferably soft and ‘throwable’)

There are a range of resources (downloadable from Padlet and the Internet) to help to develop facilitation skills, to support self-reflection, and evaluation.

Preparation

Remind students of agreed rules for community enquiry

Organise room into circle

For early sessions, may be helpful to offer a reminder of earlier exercises.

Method

This 10 step approach is commonly used by SAPERE. As students become more familiar with the process, this can be stretched over different sessions and led by the students.

1. Icebreaker: Use an introductory activity to warm up the group. This might be an agree-disagree statement or other exercises like 'philosophy fruit-salad'. Decide on an activity based on the dynamics of the group: you may need one group to calm down or another to be energised.

2. Stimulus: Choose a stimulus that is rich, ambiguous, thought provoking and age appropriate. You can draw on resources from across the curriculum. Images and films can be engaging ways in. Key here will be ensuring that students don't just *describe* the stimulus, and that they understand that the stimulus is a provocation to thinking.

3. Thinking Time: Allow students to reflect and consider the stimulus in silence for a few minutes. It may be helpful to ask what ideas or thoughts come to mind, and/or do they see any 'big ideas' in the stimulus.

4. First Thoughts/Responses: Remind students of the **Concept Creation** exercise. It may be helpful to ask students to briefly discuss in pairs their responses. Invite one word responses to the stimulus that are shared with the wider group.

5. Question Generation: Working in pairs or in groups of 3-4, ask students to think about and write down some of the concept words that they have heard. Remind the students of different questioning words and framing of questions. Encourage them to ask questions that are **interesting**, that **matter**, and that are **contested**. Invite the students to go around in the circle.

6. Airing Suggestions: Encourage the students to reflect on and engage with one another's questions, asking for clarification, and making suggestions to help build and develop the questions. It may also be useful to begin to group and cluster the questions that are similar. For groups that are beginning to do philosophical enquiry, remind them of the question quadrant and ask them to sort the different questions.

7. Selecting a Question: Ask the students to vote on a question, using their feet or placing thumbs or palms up. Make sure that those questions that are not chosen are not dismissed but are kept as possibilities for future sessions. Ensure that students use **criteria** to make their decisions. (Which question would be most interesting for us as a group to discuss? Which question might matter most to the group? Which question will create discussion?)

8. First Words: Invite the students who generated the question to explain the process and their reasons for generating this question.

9. Engaging in Dialogue: Build on and begin the conversation amongst the students, encouraging them to build on one another's thinking. Ensure they know how to signal that they wish to say something (open palm, talking object). The facilitator can support enquiry by asking each student for their thoughts. Initially, it can be helpful to mirror responses, to note ideas, and to model responses "So are you saying that..?" "Is that different from what Y is saying .." or "Why do you think that..?", "Can you give a reason..?", "Can you give an example/counter-example..?", "What might someone who disagrees say..?". It might be useful to ask students in making distinctions, comparisons, and connections. It can also be helpful for those beginning to summarise, at intervals, the conversation, and to ask whether we are answering the question or whether we want to change our question, given the shift in focus.

10. Final Reflections: Going around the circle for one final time, offer students the opportunity to respond to and evaluate the enquiry. You might ask "What did we do well? What do we need to work on?" and also ask "What I learned.." or "What I found interesting..".

Tip

If the conversation starts losing focus, summarise the ideas discussed thus far, or ask for a volunteer to summarise them.

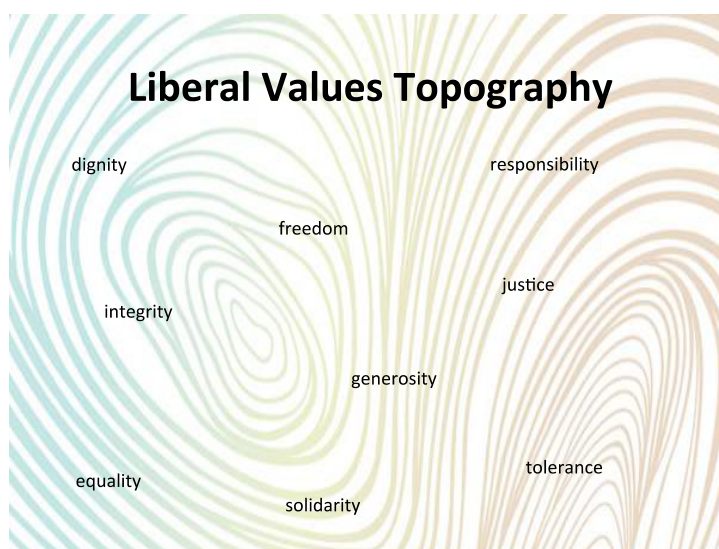
If it's proving difficult to initially generate a conversation, ask students to return to pairs temporarily to exchange thoughts and reflect.

Don't start with controversial issues; build up the skills of enquiry first so that students know how to navigate disagreement.

Ensure that all students know this is a safe space, and a space for trialling and testing ideas. Remind them of the skills of enquiry (adopting different standpoints and perspectives) and the purpose of this in developing thinking skills about questions that matter and that are of common concern.

As students develop familiarity and capability with the process, trust them to suggest stimuli and to take increasing responsibility in leading the process.

Exercise 5: Living Values

**Description**

Discussing, exploring and enquiring values through dialogue and reflection is helpful in coming to understand the different positions and standpoints that people can have on what seems, at face value, to be the same concept, for example, freedom. It reminds participants of why these concepts matter, and it can make their significance very much felt. This exercise complements the commitment to finely grained analysis of philosophical enquiry, but this time the concept is explored through storytelling, lived experience, and by listening to the perspectives of others. This exercise has some strict parameters and it's important that these are adhered to. It takes up the classic liberal values, but invites participants to reflect on these through the lenses of their diverse cultures, traditions, and personal or political experiences.

Aim

Students actively listen to one another's stories and perspectives on the central 'liberal values'.

Learning outcomes

- Deepen and develop an appreciative understanding of the complexity of values
- Cultivate ability to simply listen to the perspectives of others.
- Understand how the rich traditions and lives of others inflect their understanding of these values.
- Experience having one's own perspectives and ideas listened to, and having one's voice and story valued
- Develop capacity to sit with complexity and disagreement, without immediately reacting.

Intended age group

From 8-adult

Duration

45-60 minutes

Resources

Coloured card of good quality, not too bright with the following concepts written on one side. You need a set for each of the groups.

Tolerance; Solidarity; Justice; Freedom; Integrity; Equality; Generosity; Dignity; Tolerance; Responsibility.

Timer

Preparation

Divide the students in groups of 4-6, all sitting in a circle facing one another. Facilitators should have experienced this exercise before trialling it.

Method

Facilitator explains the process.

There are two options. In each case, each person has 1-3 minutes (decide the exact amount of time in advance but perhaps begin with one minute) to speak, from their experience or through a story, about a value.

The circle moves clockwise.

If someone chooses not to speak, everyone remains in silence until their time runs out, whereupon the next person speaks.

No one should speak more than their allotted time.

No one should interrupt or discuss the input of another person.

If someone becomes emotional or upset, allow the person to simply be unless they become distressed.

When everyone has finished, the group may choose to do another round on the same concept.

Method 1

Place the cards face down. Each person chooses a different card each time.

Do this for 2-3 rounds, or choose one concept as a group.

After round 1, extend the time period to 3 minutes for each person.

Method 2

Place the card down. Everyone in the group reflects on the same value.

After the first round, you may decide to choose a different concept as a group, to continue reflecting on the same concept, or to each choose a different concept each time a person speaks

After round 1, extend the time period to 3 minutes for each person.

Tip

If you see groups 'breaking the rules', step in to insist that people stay with the process.

This can be a very intimate exercise, or it can be a matter of fact exercise. The facilitator should step back and allow each group to develop their own dynamics, only stepping in where real distress is observed.

Don't ask for feedback, but allow individuals to volunteer their own experiences, whilst asking them to respect the process and not disclose the stories of others.

MAKING DEMOCRACY (THE POLITICAL)

1. Contextualisation

In this project, we follow Laclau and Mouffe, amongst others, in understanding the democratic society as follows: a democratic society is one that allows and makes use of negotiation and deliberation, and is open to difference and different views (liberal, socialist, conservative). The democratic person is a person that allows and makes use of negotiation and deliberation, and who is open to difference and different views (liberal, socialist, conservative).

Democracy is here understood as a form, verb or adjective, *not* a noun. **Liberalism**, or more precisely ‘liberal values’ is the content (broadly defined) to be negotiated/deliberated.

This section is concerned with dialogue and with listening. Sometimes we have too much dialogue, and sometimes too little. Here again, we don’t *first* identify ourselves by saying ‘I am a...’ or ‘As a...’ but instead tell stories and recount experiences related to concepts. The aim is not to reach consensus or to deliberate with this in mind. It is not to seek to make everything transparent.

Communities of philosophical enquiry take up this agonistic mode of negotiation, premised on the principle of disagreement, and drawing on Socratic Enquiry. The content, which we discuss in this section, relates to the values, issues and questions that we put on the table. This is what we call ‘making common’. In these exercises, we look specifically at ‘lived values’ and explore the ways in which we ‘imagine’ democracy and other systems in order to draw out our assumptions, presuppositions and investments.

The aim here is not to make schools or classrooms democratic, or to seek to ensure that education is in the service of democracy, but rather to pay attention to and foster those rare democratic moments in schools, to put ‘values on the table’ for dialogue, and to know *when* democracy (qua negotiation) is not appropriate in the daily life of the school.

The Living Values exercise in the previous section is a very useful entry-point to this section.

2. Key Theoretical References:

Arendt, H. (2008). *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*. London: Penguin.

Laclau, E. and Mouffe, C. (1985) *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London: Verso.

Masschelein, J., and Simons, M. (2013). *In Defence of the School. A Public Issue*. Leuven: E-ducation, Culture and Society Publishers.

Rancière, J. (1999) *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

3. Concepts

Democracy
Agonism
Liberal Value
Education
Imaginary
Power
Conflict
Peace

4. Exercises

Embodying Power
Imagining the Demos
Living Exemplars
Porch-sitting
False Beliefs

Exercise 1: Embodying Power

Description

These exercises draw on Boal's work *Theatre of the Oppressed*. They enable students to explore the nature of power through physically exploring the relations of objects and space, and by giving reasons for their decisions. The focus here is on power, but this can also serve as a useful stimulus activity for other exercises.

Aim

To help students understand the embodiment of power, the relationship between bodies and space, and their own affective responses and presuppositions.

Learning outcomes

- Develop the ability to symbolise and manifest power using material objects and space
- Deepen understanding of affective responses to power and the positioning of different bodies
- Development of creativity and imagination in exploring options
- Understanding of the perspectives and experiences of others through noting their responses and listening to their reasons

Intended age group

From 8 to adult

Duration

20-30 minutes

Resources

Four chairs
One table
One bottle

Preparation

Create sufficient space in the room for objects to be moved

Method

Option 1: Place a table, 4 chairs and bottle at one side of the space, so we can all see it.

Ask someone to place the objects in an order to make one chair the most powerful object. No objects can be removed, but they can be placed in any way in our 'scene'/'image'.

Ask: Do we all agree that this is the best way for the bottle to have power? Why? What do we see that makes us say that it has power?

Ask someone else to change the image if they think they can do it 'better'.

Ask a volunteer to place him or herself in the image to take up the most powerful position without moving anything. Invite them to move the objects.

Ask another volunteer can join to see if they can take a more powerful position (all without hurting anyone or being rude)

Option 2: Place a table and 4 chairs in space.

Ask one person to step into the image and take up what they think is the most powerful position.

Analyse what they have done as a group and ask that person to say why they think they have taken a powerful position.

Then ask one other person to step into the image to see if they can usurp that power (all without hurting anyone or being rude).

Repeat a few more times with more people joining the image and us all analysing it as the image progresses.

Think about, what makes someone or something powerful in an image? What symbols/body postures/positions of things make them powerful?

Tip

Invite younger children to model and engage in gestures and postures of power between different iterations of the Boal exercise.

Supplementary Exercises

Explore the “Hidden Curriculum” by occupying the space of the classroom in different ways and notice how this shifts relations of power (see Saturnalian School above).

Give the children cards naming different roles within the school and wider education context and ask the student to take a card and rank status by standing in a line of rank. Include student teachers as a role!

Exercise 2: Living Exemplars

Description

If we are to put 'values on the table', it's worth exploring and understanding how those values are embodied by others in ways that have been significant in our own lives. This is quite a personal exercise so participants should be made aware that they will be under no pressure to describe or share their writing. This can also help us connect with what we *really* value, rather than what we think we *ought* to value by virtue of our identities, histories and associations. This exercise is informed by practices of appreciative enquiry and seeks to shift from practices of critique and problematisation to exploring how those critiques also reveal our commitments and values. Recently, philosophers of religion have argued that in order to understand values, we need to encounter them as living, embodied and alive. This is why stories and exemplary figures are important as they help us to make *contact* with values. The structure of the task is informed by Swiss artists, Fischli and Weiss.

Aim

Understand deeply held values and gain insight what it means for these values to be embodied and expressed.

Learning outcomes

- Explore and reflect on the living nature of values
- Develop practices of appreciation and gratitude for those who embody those values
- Listen to the stories of others, if they choose to share them, developing insight into what matters for others
- Learn to co-exist together in difference, without seeking consensus, mutual understanding, or agreement.

Intended age group

From 8 years old to adult

Duration

30-40 minutes

Resources

Pens
Blank postcards
Plasticine
Ideally, origami paper on which to place figures.

Preparation

This exercise is better suited to groups of 12-15.
Create a circle with a large space in the middle where objects can be placed

Method

Ask the group to silently bring someone *who they know* to mind who embodies what they see as an exemplary life. They should reflect on the values expressed in this life
Write a thank you letter to that person, explaining why they have been important, what you have learned and how you sensed and felt the values that they embodied. Spend 15 minutes on this.
Create from plasticine, a little figurine or symbol related in some way to that person and place it on a sheet of origami paper on the floor.
You may decide to choose one word or a short phrase to title the little sculpture.
If anyone wishes to volunteer, listen to and share the stories, reflecting together on what it means to embody values.

Tip

Make sure participants don't feel pressurised to share their writings and thoughts.

Exercise 3: Imagining the Demos

Description

This is a set of imaginative exercises to explore political imaginaries, in particular the democratic imaginary. They aim to draw out the conceptual presuppositions relating to different political systems, and the affects that accompany and constitute different political and social imaginaries. In many respects they are playful and provocative. The exercise also supports political literacy and enables students to see the connections between the circulation of affects (feelings/emotions) and political life, in particular dogmatic and polarised positions, and the different investments that people hold. Whilst our position in *The Enquiring Classroom* is that we need to separate questions of democracy *qua* negotiation, from questions of values – the content which is of common concern - it is important to understand a variety of conceptualisations of political systems.

Aim

Explore political systems through a range of creative and non-traditional strategies.

Learning outcomes

- Understand the tenets of a range of political systems
- Analyse the concept of democracy from a range of perspectives
- Develop imaginative responses to contemporary questions
- Connect the world of the past with the present

Intended age group

From 12 to adult

Duration

20-60 minutes depending on how many exercises are developed.

Resources

A2, A3 and A4 paper
Pens

Preparation

Ensure materials are ready if you are engaging in a sequence of exercises.
Students need to have a good understanding of diverse political systems

Method

Task 1: *Mapping and dialogue in group of 5-6.*

- **Draw democracy:** First individually (A4 page) and then as a group (large page).
- **Concepts of democracy:** Map provisional ideas and concepts associated with democracy.
- **Affects of democracy:** How does it 'feel'? What are the dominant affects and lived experiences that circulate in democracies?
- **Values and democracy:** What are the key values, virtues and dispositions that one *expects* to encounter in a democracy? Why?
- **Individual writing exercises: Democracy's Autobiography:** Write from its perspective of its hopes, dreams, gifts? Write from a **Critic's** perspective of its blindspots, and its shortcomings.
- **Right of Response:** What would Democracy say to those who reject it?

Share the writing exercises.

Task 2

For students who have a good understanding of different political systems and who are able to weigh up the pros and cons of different systems.

- **Political Systems in Therapy:** In pairs, imagine a political system going to therapy. How does it look? Sound? Move? (Oligarchy, fascism, totalitarianism, communism, socialism, theocracy, imperial, colonial, democracy, social democracy, liberal democracy, republicanism..). Describe autobiographically, in the voice of the system, the problems they may face, the relationships they value, their own values.
- **Political Systems at a Dinner Party:** In groups, each person chooses to be a system. What is the image that each of these systems might want to project of itself and how might it relate to others? How would it behave? How would it move? What would it look like? Map the primary affects, ideas and values motivating different systems. Describe autobiographically in the voice of the system the problems they think they face.
- **Manifesto:** Choose a system and write a short manifesto advocating its values, but do so in the voice of an 8-10 year old child.

Tip

You can modify these exercises depending on the age, level and knowledge of the students. This is a good strategy to evaluate their political literacy, interest and engagement.

Exercise 4: Porch-sitting

Description

This is a short listening exercise that can be done in pairs, sitting side by side (porch-sitting), or in groups. If the latter, participants should be encouraged to listen to one another rather than engage discussion after each contribution.

Aim

This exercise aims to connect a concept or value with an experience or story, this time by shifting relations in space.

Learning outcomes

- Experience how sensibility shifts when spaces are re-organised, in particular when participants sit side by side.
- Identify connections between stories, experiences and concepts/values.

Intended age group

From 8 years old to adult

Duration

45-60 minutes

Resources

No additional resources required, other than reorganising spaces

Preparation

Think of an object, a story, an image, or an experience that in some way symbolises, or connects with, the concept of conflict (or of peace.)

Don't overthink it.. Work intuitively..

Method

Sitting side by side (porch-sitting), speak to the person beside you for between 2-4 uninterrupted minutes about whatever has come to mind. Change places.

Tip

If doing this exercise as a group, this should be done around a table, face to face.

Exercise 5: False Beliefs

Description

Many teachers and schools discourage students from bringing their “beliefs into the classroom”. This pattern may follow or resemble certain governmental initiatives: some countries forbid students from wearing garments or accessories that are associated with certain belief systems such as religions. Although teachers may act to forbid such clothing out of genuine concern for the effects of beliefs in their classrooms, it is important to show the impossibility of achieving a belief-free classroom, because of the very nature of beliefs. But *why* it is impossible for someone to leave her beliefs at home?

Why Beliefs?

- Beliefs are mental states in which someone considers something to be the case.
- Forming beliefs is an essential process of the human mind. For example, philosophers refer to knowledge *as a justified true belief*. In order to know that something is the case, one has to believe that this is the case (If I know that I have a head, I believe that I have one). It is impossible to say that one *knows* something without *believing* it.
- Beliefs are part of complex networks of other beliefs and often rather difficult to separate.
- Beliefs are also part of particular *worldviews* which guide one’s life. It is even more difficult to alter worldviews, especially in students who often inherit them (the worldviews) from their families, their cultural, religious, and political contexts, etc.
- Behaviour is also determined by beliefs: One acts in a certain way because he or she holds a belief or many related beliefs (I am standing in a bus stop, because I believe that there is a bus coming and that this bus will take me home).
- Certain beliefs, for example religious beliefs, determine the ethical stance that one has. A student behaves in a certain way towards fellow classmates because of the beliefs he or she holds. It is very difficult, therefore, for a teacher to ask a student to maintain a certain moral code (respecting or loving fellow students) without the beliefs that may support this code.
- All the above hold for false or even irrational and extreme beliefs.

Given this very nature of beliefs, asking a student to “leave them home” is similar to try to undermine or punish beliefs that are deemed false or cause problems in the classroom. It is often the case that such approaches have the opposite effect. They reinforce such beliefs and the entire approach will probably end up causing more problems. This is the so-called *backfire effect*: It has been demonstrated in adults in experiments in which false beliefs are treated with corrective facts:

Thought Experiment

In a series of experiments by Dartmouth College professor Brendan Nyhan and University of Exeter professor Jason Reifler, the researchers identify a related factor they call the backfire effect “in which corrections actually increase misperceptions among the group in question.” Why? “Because it threatens their worldview or self-concept.” For example, subjects were given fake newspaper articles that confirmed widespread misconceptions, such as that there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. When subjects were then given a corrective article that WMD were never found, liberals who opposed the war accepted the new article and rejected the old, whereas conservatives who supported the war did the opposite ... and more: they reported being even more convinced there were WMD after the correction, arguing that this only proved that Saddam Hussein hid or destroyed them. In fact, Nyhan and Reifler note, among many conservatives “the belief that Iraq possessed WMD immediately before the U.S. invasion persisted long after the Bush administration itself concluded otherwise.” (Shemer, 2017)

Task

Imagine a similar scenario with false beliefs held by students? In IO3, we shall see how schools and teachers address the issue of beliefs through a series of engagement exercises.

Theoretical References

For a more technical introduction to beliefs, look at the following entry:

Schwitzgebel, Eric, "Belief", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2015 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2015/entries/belief/>>.

For more on the backfire effect and the related experiments look at the following entry:

Shermer, M. (2017, January 01). How to Convince Someone When Facts Fail. Retrieved February 22, 2018, from <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-to-convince-someone-when-facts-fail/>

ENCOUNTERING THE WORLD (THE AESTHETICAL)

1. Contextualisation

Encountering the world and educating the senses are both central to the educational experience. This project is interested in experiences of listening, dialogue, imagination and attention, and to the rhythms of the classroom life. Creative and critical exercises can help us to notice and to pay attention, encouraging us to open our senses to the world. The research process of artists, scientists and philosophers is driven by curiosity and interest. By experimenting with new ways of experiencing: looking close, looking far, touching lightly, with different parts of the body, sensing the body.. we can come to notice and imagine new connections and patterns. In these exercises, we ask children and young people to document and archive what they notice, collecting inventories of sounds, gestures, images, movements, smells, tastes.

We also notice how many disputes and difficult moments in classrooms are driven by *visceral* reactions. Returning to this idea of a common space, we support practices of interruption and paying attention, allowing oneself to be surprised or curious, before reaction sets in. Pedagogically, it is also important to incorporate contemplation, silence, and stillness into the busyness of the day. Children often respond with openness to engaging in re-staging or experiencing classic conceptual or performance pieces like Abramovic's *The Artist is Present* or the short version 2'33" of Cage's classic work.

This section is about 'putting something on the table', in these cases, quite literally putting objects on the table.

These exercises have been co-designed with Katy Fitzpatrick as part of **Art and Philosophy in the Classroom.*

Elements have been adapted for The Enquiring Classroom

2. Exercises

Educating the Senses

Autobiography of an Object

Exercise 1: Educating the Senses

Description

These exercises are ideally undertaken both inside and outside, encouraging children and young people to ‘collect’ multiple sensations by moving and touching in ways that may be at odds with ordinary everyday engagement with the world, where we may pay little attention to our surroundings or even our embodied experiences. We sometimes ask students to imagine being a newly born child, or an alien arriving on earth for the first time in order to make the familiar strange. It is important that even if some students don’t wish to participate, they don’t break the silence or disturb others, so we agree this in advance.

Aim

These exercises focus on paying attention and ‘educating the senses’ in order to explore the material world and find affinities, resonances, and connections between diverse material objects and sensations.

Learning outcomes

- Cultivation of the ability to sense the body’s movements
- Creative engagement with the material world, making distinctions and finding resonances between different material objects
- Extension of the imagination by exploring the relationship between one’s physical body and the earth and world
- Developing curiosity and interest in the natural world and in the qualities of different sensations.

Intended age group

From 8 year olds to adult. Particularly suitable for 8-12 year olds.

Duration

20-25 minutes

Resources

Sufficient space, ideally both inside and outside, for children to move about.

Preparation

Little preparation is needed other than instructions on the spaces that the students are allowed to move through

Method

The following are the ‘sensation’ exercises. These aim to help students better notice and attend to sensations, materials, the different qualities of matter, and the relations between different kinds of bodies (e.g. hand and stone, flesh and air)

Sensation exercises

Outside:

Moving and Breathing Exercise 1: Breathe in slowly, bringing arms up, standing on tiptoe and hold it. Then breathe out slowly returning to a normal stance. Notice the sounds and the touch of the air through your fingers. Repeat as a group five times.

Walking Exercise I: Walking Outside.

Walk very slowly in silence across different surfaces, noticing the different sensations underfoot as you move.

Touching Exercise I: Sensing Outside.

Explore as many different surfaces and textures as you can, in silence. Spend 10 seconds on each surface with each point of contact, exploring the sensation of different parts of the hand on different surfaces at different speeds. Listen closely for the different sounds of different surfaces.

Inside

Touching Exercise II: Sensing Inside - Choose a surface: wood/metal/fabric/face/hair or own hand (own skin). Move the palm of your hand, fingertips, back of your hand slowly for ten seconds each. Then make noises by banging or drumming the different objects and see what you can learn about the material from this.

Write: A noun, three adjectives and a verb to describe the experience.

Tip

If the students start getting giddy, bring them back to silence. Invite them to whisper on the way back to the classroom.

You might give them a card on which they can document their observations. Noting words and sentences can be used to write a collective poem.

Exercise 2: Autobiography of an Object

Description

This exercise is particularly effective in gallery or museum settings with older children who can move autonomously through the space, or with families. Building on the sensation exercises, which ask children to explore the qualities of matter through the senses, here the imagination is extended to the story of the object. Diverse and complex cultural and faith traditions can be bridged through acts of fiction and the imagination by writing, in the first person, the story of the chosen object. This exercise asks the person to pay careful attention and to become curious about the object before them, or the object that has chosen them. It is developed through a series of extension activities.

This can also be a wonderful way to curate the space of the school 'otherwise', placing objects in different spaces, perhaps accompanied by their autobiographies, avatars, and titles.

Aim

'The autobiography of an object' aims to create interest and curiosity by engaging the senses in an act of storytelling by asking students to pay careful attention to one particular thing and to imagine its journey through its 'life'.

Learning outcomes

- A sense of connection with the long history of humankind and appreciation for cultural artefacts
- Interest in the materiality of things, both everyday things and those deemed to be special.
- Engaging the sympathetic imagination, de-centring the self and exploring the worlds of other things.
- Fostering the capacity for playful, experimental engagement by imagining oneself into another kind of being.

Intended age group

From 8 years old to adult

Duration

Depending on the site and engagement with the extension activities, 40-80 minutes

Resources

Flashcards

Pens

Plain plasticine (ideally white)

Title cards

Objects, brought by the children, in the gallery space, or discovered in the space of the school.

Preparation

Children should engage in the sensation exercises prior to beginning so that they have a good sense of the different qualities of matter and some understanding of their geneses and transformation.

All children should have access to an object of some kind as a prompt for the exercise.

Clear instructions, in particular in relation to the autobiographical dimension – writing in the first person – is essential.

You may suggest for a school-based exercise that students "choose a non-living object (that will fit in your schoolbag) that you think has had an interesting history and has a story to tell. Bring that object into class. (Remember, non-living means not your dog, cat, goldfish or little brother or sister.)"

It can also be useful if there is a lead in to the session to ask the students to do the following in preparation. The instructions can be simplified for younger children.

Task 1: Choose an (inanimate) object that you would normally pass by. Pay attention to it for a minimum of 1 minute every day.

Day 1: Explore it through all the senses, in particular touch and vision. Move closer and further away... Touch with the fingertips and the back of the hand.. Write a noun and three adjectives to describe the experience.

Day 2: What kinds of movements does it involve? How does it hold itself? Everything has lines, movements, and rhythms. Look at the plates in your kitchen, the doors, light switches, ladders.. (Don't over-think this.) Just look and notice how different things move and express themselves (the wall is very upright, solid and no nonsense). Write a couple of lines describing these objects, and also noting what else comes to mind. (Light switches as quite closed, inflexible beings, they are binary (either on or off), and quite 'tight' with little room for negotiation.) Please be silly and/or imaginative with this exercise.

Day 3: If your object could speak, what would it say, and to whom or what? Two lines. Again, silliness and imagination most welcome.

All these different elements can be developed into individual or collaborative poems.

Task 2: This is more suitable for age 12+. Listen to an example from *Living with the gods*.
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b09c1mhy>

Over the course of the week, locate an object that is an important part of a daily tradition or ritual, perhaps one unfamiliar to you, but about which you would like to learn more in order to understand it. This could be something that you see as either negative or positive. Spend a short time researching or wondering about this object and thinking about its role in the lives of those for whom it may be important. You might like to share some of this with the wider group as we reflect on ritual. This could be a domestic object, something connected with politics, work or faith... really anything goes..

Method

Method 1: Gallery or Museum space.

Choose a piece that resonates with you.

Walk through the museum/gallery.

Find something (part of the collection/exhibition or in the space) that for some reason resonates with you.

Stay with it in silence for five minutes, simply paying attention.

Method 2: Classroom/School

Bring an object that can fit in your pocket that you find interesting, in some way. If you've forgotten to bring something, then dig out something from your bag.

For Method 2, first work in pairs and groups.

- **Curation:** Place your objects in different ways and on different parts of your body. Imagine placing it in different areas of the school where it might look a bit strange.
- **Object as Witness and Agent:** Imagine that you can feel your object, and it can feel you. How do you think it would feel? What has it experienced?

In both cases: Imagine its story and begin to write its autobiography in the first person: fiction is fine. This can be modified and simplified for younger children. The following questions should be shared, ideally individually printed. It should be made clear that these should inspire the writing rather than be answered in a linear manner.

- What are my origins (material and otherwise?)
- Have I changed identity?
- Where did I come from?
- Where have I been?
- Was I loved?

- Whose hands did I pass through?
- How do I feel about being encased, exhibited, or my current situation? How do I feel about these other objects with whom I now live?
- With which other objects do I feel most affinity?
- What are my values?
- What are my favourite rituals?
- How would I like to affect the humans who come to see me?
- What are my hopes and dreams?

Recount this autobiography like an animation on a flashcard. You may wish to add a drawing.

Extension Activities

Create three activity stations.

1. **DRAW** elements of your object on tracing paper for 30 seconds each time, looking at different angles in detail (like a Cubist artist). When you have done 4 or 5 layers, write a message to make someone smile in the future (what would make you smile?). Then decide how you will display this artwork. Will you crumple it, throw it, hide it away, store it somewhere, display it on the wall?
2. **SCULPT**: Create a sculpture of your object or add the object to the plasticine to create a sculptural assemblage with your object. Or use it to join your object with others to create a community. (Only distribute small amounts of plasticine as part of the discipline.)
3. **WRITE**: Make up a title/label for your object – how will you choose to display your object, where would you put it in a gallery? Would it be hidden or obvious? Place all our objects together on a table.

Tip

With these exercises, children, young people and adults often need some initial support, modelling and encouragement to be silly, imaginative and experimental. Treat it like an art crit and explore ideas together. It's helpful to have another adult in the room.

ENGAGING WITH TRADITION (THE PAST/THE HISTORICAL)

1. Context

Contemporary educational policy often sees itself as preparing students for an unknowable future. Hannah Arendt contests this notion that education ought to be oriented towards the future. In *The Enquiring Classroom*, the future is not privileged over the past, and tradition and history are valued. Indeed, we understand education to always be oriented towards the past and, for this reason, it is always conservative. The role of educators take responsibility for our common world, telling the story of the world to the next generation, helping them to find a home in the world, and allowing us to reconcile ourselves to the world. This orientation towards the past does not absolve educators from the responsibility of selecting from the past those stories to be told in our present. This responsibility for teaching curriculum enables educators to put in common the time of tradition and history and the time of the present. These exercises, still in genesis, allow us to cultivate the historical sensibility of students, to navigate the complexity of the local and the familiar, and to bring together, contiguously, moments of the past that whilst distant, also resonate with the contemporary and help us understand our condition. This is the time for telling other stories that break with identitarian politics, or ideas of purity in belonging.

2. Exercises

Common Fates, Different Times
Grandma's rule

Exercise 1: Grandma's Rule

Grandma's Rule



Why Grandmas?

Is your Grandma a special person in your life? Has she told you her story? Grandmothers occupy a unique place in many people's lives. They represent a certain unity of life and a pathway to collective (national, political, social etc.) and family histories. Yet, they often tend to be conservative and they are not always approving of what you do or wear. They can be critical of certain behaviours, despite their often unconditional love. But, again, nobody wants to upset them!

Grandma's Rule

If you have chosen not to upset your grandmother by not attacking her views on your dressing and behaviour, you may try to do so with a fellow student who holds similar views. If you have chosen not to post a crazy photo of you on Facebook, because your grandmother may see it (another version of Grandma's Rule), you may apply the same criteria when you are ready to say something nasty about other people's views on their/your choice of dress code, etc.



What can I do then?



Does this mean that I have to suspend all critical comments against somebody else's views? Can I express an opinion without upsetting someone else? Yes you can! Despite that none of us occupies any moral high ground that allows us to criticise other people's choices, we can engage in a dialogical process where opposite views are offered with kindness and never out of context. Explaining to your grandmother your desire to wear a certain outfit is a daunting task, but not an impossible one. It requires a careful choice of words and a lot of patience. You may try this approach next time you feel the urge to criticise a fellow student for his or his family's choice of clothing or his criticism of yours.

Stephanos Cherouvis for the Enquiring Classroom:
<http://www.enquiring-project.eu/>

Exercise 2: Common Fates, Different Times: War, Immigration and Shared History

Description

The mass influx of refugees into Europe from war-torn Syria reached unprecedented levels in 2015. Over 870.000 refugees from Syria arrived in Greece by sea, crossing the Aegean Sea. For a few months in the second half of 2015 until early 2016, refugees and migrants enjoyed almost unimpeded passage from Turkey to countries in northern Europe such as Austria, Germany and Sweden. In fact, governments along the route and NGOs helped them travel, offering supplies and free transportation. The only obstacle was the dangerous crossing of the Aegean Sea, where 806 refugees lost their lives in 2015 (ESI, 2017).

The events sparked tensions in all countries along the route leading to the closing of borders along the Balkan route and to the EU-Turkey refugee agreement that saw Turkey agreeing to take back all refugees and migrants, including asylum seekers, who reach Greek islands. In turn, the EU committed to resettle Syrian refugees from Turkey and to provide 6 billion Euros in assistance to improve the conditions for refugees in Turkey.

Despite the overall positive attitude of the Greek people in assisting refugees who arrived by sea, tensions run high within Greece, a country already hit by a massive economic crisis since 2010. Despite such tensions, a similar story emerged involving Greek refugees in... Syria in WWII. This is the story of Greek residents in many islands in Eastern Aegean Sea during WWII, who, following the famine that resulted from the German occupation, crossed the Aegean Sea into Turkey and then arrived in Aleppo in Syria, where they found safe refuge. Over 30.000 islanders attempted the cross with small boats during the night in order to avoid being spotted by the German Navy.

Such shared histories offer significant opportunities for the introduction of war and migration and may alleviate any tensions arising in the classroom. In IO3 we shall see what type of exercises and projects can be designed by teachers who want to address similar issues

Resources

The Refugee Crisis through Statistics. (2017, January 30). Retrieved May 2, 2017, from <http://www.esiweb.org/pdf/ESI%20-%20The%20refugee%20crisis%20through%20statistics%20-%2030%20Jan%202017.pdf>

A LITTLE BOOK OF STUCKNESS AND PERPLEXITY

Exercise 1: The Little Book of Stuckness and Perplexity

Description: This is an exercise for educators to allow them to discuss difficult questions and to explore possible creative responses. As part of this exercise we aim to help teachers to distinguish between: 1. Pedagogical moments; 2. Pastoral moments; 3. Judicial (or reporting) moments.

Aim: The aim of this exercise is to create a space for professional sharing of practice, in relations of mutual trust. This exercise should not be introduced until the group have spent some time together.

Method: In advance of the session, they should have reflected on a moment of difficulty that they have experienced in the classroom, or a story of a difficult moment which they have heard about from someone else. The descriptions offered should be anonymised and preserve confidentiality. Place the stories, on blank postcards, in the *Box of Paralysis*.

Participants create a circle, and the cards are placed with the writing side facing down in the middle of the circle. A volunteer chooses a card and reads the story on it. The group discusses and explores the story, engaging constructively, sensitively, and thoughtfully with the topic, sharing practices and possibly shared experiences. Depending on the nature of the 'moment of stuckness or perplexity', possible responses and/or pedagogical strategies are suggested. When participants are ready, another card is chosen.

Exercise 2: Difficult Conversations: A Case Study

This case study example focuses on the *when* question and the *how* question in responding to difficult moments as they are live in the classroom, or relationships that have become difficult with students. How do we decide whether this is a *pedagogical* moment, a *pastoral* moment, and a *judicial* moment? When should we adopt different responses? *What* are the most effective responses in each case? This will be further explored in IO3.

In your class you notice that a 15 year old white male student is sometimes argumentative and assertive when topics relating to Travellers, homeless, refugees, migrants, asylum seekers, religious and ethnic minorities and socio-economically disadvantaged groups are mentioned. Sometimes he stays quiet. But some of the time he expresses derogatory views often associated with the alt-right. This student is a very articulate, academically capable, well-balanced, sociable and popular student. He is otherwise very polite. His tendency is to confront and challenge, in a very assertive manner, anyone whose views he disagrees with. He tends to repeat phrases like 'that's typical of what you liberal lefties say...you haven't got a clue'. He sometimes repeats statistics that portray minority groups in a negative light by linking Muslims to Sharia law and the death penalty or mistreatment of women or stating what he claims are factual statistics about the amount of rapes or murders, burglaries and acts of terrorism that have been committed by asylum seekers. When peers respond to him and challenge him he says that his arguments are based on 'fact' whereas their response is based on naïve, uninformed 'feeling'. The interaction becomes heated and tense. As a teacher you are very uncomfortable with this situation and you really don't know what to do.