

Philosophy for Challenging Extremism TOOLKIT



How to use this Toolkit

This toolkit is intended for educationalists – whether teachers, trainees or Civil Society Organisations – who are interested in holding meaningful conversations with young people on difficult topics.

The Toolkit is divided into two sections:

Part 1: This provides an introduction to the Community of Enquiry (COE) method.

Part 2: Considers how what is extremism and how COE might be used to challenge it. There are thinking points and case studies, as well as tips and resources.

Acknowledgements:

This resources was developed by all the P4CE project partners in collaboration. The contributors include: Dávid Bán, Aniko Berta, Andrea Bullivant, Mathias Demetriades, Katalin Erdős, Marta Gontarska, Pablo Guidi, Dorota Mazurek Balázs Nagy, and Jason Ward.

The project partners would also like to thank all the teachers and pupils who took part in this project during September 2017 and August 2019.

Thanks to Lucy Southern, one of the students on the project who designed the logos used this manual.

Cover photos: (top) New Ways of Learning group
Logos used in Toolkit: Lucy Southern © 2019



This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

P4CE:

P4CE

**Philosophy 4 Challenging
Extremism**

Project number: 2017-1-UK01-KA201-036831



Funded by the Erasmus +
Programme of the
European Union

Challenge Extremism: Using Philosophy for Children to develop critical thinking and media literacy in the classroom



Nyköping anthropolis

IGO
Instytut Globalnej
Odpowiedzialności



CONTENTS

PART I

1. Community of enquiry and extremism 6-7
2. Teacher as facilitator 8-11
3. Creating a place for dialogue 12-13
4. Getting started with dialogue 14-15
5. Choosing a stimulus 16-17
6. Ending a dialogue 18-19

PART II

7. Extremism versus controversial issues 22-23
8. Dialogue and controversial issues 24-25
9. Extended country study – Poland 26-27
10. Extended country study – Hungary 28-29
11. Learning from the project 30-31



P4CE

P4CE:
**Philosophy 4 Challenging
Extremism**

Project number: 2017-1-UK01-KA201-036831



Funded by the Erasmus +
Programme of the
European Union

Challenge Extremism: Using Philosophy for Children to develop critical thinking and media literacy in the classroom



Nyköping anthropolis

IGO
Instytut Globalnej
Odpowiedzialności





Part I: Community of Enquiry

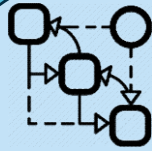




Part I: Sections 1-6



1. Community of enquiry and extremism
2. Teacher as facilitator
3. Creating a place for dialogue
4. Getting started with dialogue
5. Choosing a stimulus
6. Ending a dialogue



THEORY – WHY COE?

Community of Enquiry, or 'COE', has given a voice to children and communities who otherwise did not have one. The use of children leading their own discussions and controlling its outcome has inspired children from all different ages, backgrounds, and areas to believe that their opinion matters. When creating a space for dialogue of any topic it is important that all pupils feel included and valued in the process. This methodology should always be inviting, engaging and most of all safe.

There is a flow of reflection and self-discovery for the pupils in the sessions and each session has the added value to help engage learners in reflecting on their behaviour. The goal for the learner is to see if they can identify for themselves, their own ideas, understanding and prejudices of their knowledge that could be countered as extremist while also developing skills in communication, empathy, reasoning, all tools to counter controversial and extreme behaviours.



CASE STUDY: Understanding the importance of inclusion is crucial in an ethnically diverse school. Jasper and Kristina from Sweden delivered an enquiry around the issue of inclusion in their class.

The stimulus used was an American documentary: 'The Bully'. Students were engaged in the discussion on how the school should be structured for the students to feel more involved. The topic of inclusion was clearly a difficult question for many, and the more time they got for the reflection, the more controversial it became. Some students had the opinion that they did not recognize this to be a problem in their closest surrounding, but at the end of the final discussion, they had changed their mind.

1: COMMUNITY OF ENQUIRY AND EXTREMISM



TOOLS – 10 TYPICAL STAGES OF ENQUIRY

1. Preparation
2. Presentation
3. Thinking time
4. Conversation
5. Formulation
6. Airing
7. Selection
8. First Words
9. Building
10. Last Words

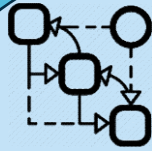
Note: This toolkit draws on the practices of COE. It is still a recommendation to source appropriate training on COE type processes before working from this toolkit. For example look at P4C <https://www.sapere.org.uk/>



Thinking Space

? Can you remember a good discussion or dialogue – what made that communication effective?

? What methods do you currently use to promote critical and creative thinking?



THEORY – TEACHER AS FACILITATOR

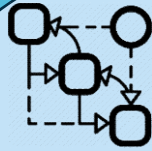
The teacher should be flexible to change their role to a 'facilitator' moving from the provider of knowledge to the guide of the knowledge of others.

Having a non-confrontational approach as a teacher and facilitator is often the most efficient way to deal with controversial issues. Thus, participants and students are encouraged to approach their problems in the context of a discussion, not a confrontation. Confrontation has proved to be counterproductive and harmful when difficult and sometime controversial issues are being discussed.

Students who have not yet established their identity might be forced to embrace an intolerant idea when the teacher confronts him or her point of view in a slight aggressive tone. It has in numerous studies (for instance the EU initiative mentioned above: *Living with Controversy Teaching Controversial Issues Through Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Right*) proved to be much more effective to have a dialogue with your students, ask critical and curious questions, as it leads to them practicing their ability for empathy and understanding of others. As a result, the students become more tolerant, and eventually ready and willing to engage in the democratic collective.

To defend and promote a democratic dialogue is an important factor here as it is an essential foundation for society. To work with human rights therefore involves promoting the condition for its existence, which is democracy.

2: ROLE OF TEACHER AS FACILITATOR



THEORY – TEACHER AS FACILITATOR

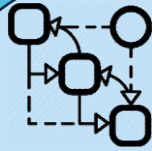
This approach will help the facilitator/teacher to open the floor for disagreements and controversial issues with respect for the individual perspective and the student's right to express his/her views. However, it is not only about opening the floor to different views but also to discuss and analyse and challenge a possible controversial question. Matters that might be looked upon as controversial could be:

- Gender equality
- Politics
- Migration
- Sexuality

Ask many questions - “open questions” encourage the students to reflect

Open the floor for posing questions to initiate the discussion in the group.

Remember that posing questions doesn't mean that as a facilitator you must know the answer. Be ready that the beginning won't be easy as young people could use the opportunity to make fun, jokes and not to take it seriously. Your role as a facilitator doesn't mean that you are the only knowledgeable person in the classroom and must answer on all of them. Be ready that there are many questions without answers as the opinions depends on the perspective, experience and your personal story.



THEORY – TEACHER AS FACILITATOR

Kinds of questions (based on question quadrant):

1) Closed question about the text/picture/film/situation. The answer is easy to identify.

Example: What is the colour of the sky on the photo?

2) Closed questions about things related with the text/picture/film/situation. The answer is possible to find in books, dictionaries, websites, reports, Wikipedia etc. Or asking expert in the specific field.

Example: What was the average rate of USD in 2018?

3) Open questions about things related with the text/picture/film/situation. You can find the answer once using your imagination. There will be many answers on one question and all of them will be equally right.

Example: Where did the main character go after finishing the story?

4) Open questions about abstracts, concepts and/or values. There will be many answers on one question, they must be discussed with the group and opinions must be shared. There is no right or wrong answer on this type of question.

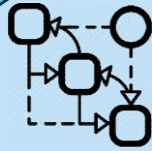
Example: Can you be rich and poor in the same time?

2: ROLE OF TEACHER AS FACILITATOR



TOOLS - DEVELOP STUDENT THINKING:

1. Thinking time – encouraging pauses for thought. Remember to provide at least three seconds thinking time after you have asked a question and three seconds thinking time after a child gives an answer.
2. Think – pair –share – allow individual thinking time about a question, invite discussions on the question with a partner, then open up for class discussion
3. Asking follow-ups – ask children to extend or qualify what they said by asking questions that challenge their thinking such as 'Why?' 'Do you agree or disagree?' Can you say more?' 'Can you give an example?' Describe how you arrived at that answer
4. Withhold judgement – respond to student answers in a non-evaluative way e.g. a positive but neutral response such as 'Thank you', 'That's interesting'.
5. Invite the whole group to respond – by saying things such as; 'How many people agree or disagree with that point of view?' (Hands or thumbs up, down or side) You can also ask questions such as 'Having heard that, what questions might we ask?'
6. Ask for a summary – promote active listening e.g. 'Could you summarise Kim's point?' 'Can you explain what Jane has just said?'
7. Invite a range of responses – model open mindedness by inviting students to consider different points of view: 'There is no single correct answer to this question. I want you to consider alternatives.'
8. Encourage student questioning – invite students to ask their own questions before, during or after discussion. 'Has anyone a question about what has been said?'



THEORY – A PLACE FOR COMMUNITY

THE ROOM: The class, group or community should sit in a circle. The room should be large enough to arrange the chairs in a circle so that all the members of the 'community' can see each other and achieve eye contact with whoever is speaking. The group should also be able to hear each other clearly; therefore the acoustics of the environment need to be considered as well. The teacher should be part of the group and all participants should be viewed as equally important to the success of the 'community'.

THE GROUP: Agreed guidelines established by the group enable the community of philosophical enquiry to be respectful, caring and collaborative environment.

Guidelines may include:

- Listen to the speaker
- Think about and respond to what is being said
- Give reasons (I disagree or agree with X because...)
- Treat everyone's contribution with respect
- Comment on the point, not the person
- Contribute so that you support the community



Thinking Space

Do you agree that a safe space requires...

- A space with agreed rules between students and facilitator
- Respecting others with their opinions, questioning opinions not judging people
- Most of the ideas coming from the group not the facilitator
- Room for asking all questions important for the group
- Accepting disagreement and different opinions

3: CREATING A PLACE FOR DIALOGUE



TOOLS – CREATING GROUND RULES

At the beginning of a session/workshop, the trainer/Facilitator/teacher use prepared sentences with suggested 'rules' or principles. For example, 'I respect the opinions of other people in the group even if I disagree with them'.

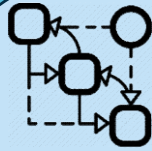
ACTIVITY TO CREATE GROUND RULES

Sentences were used in a 'fruit bowl' activity, whereby participants either agreed by standing up and exchanging seats or disagreeing and remaining seated. New sentences could also be suggested and through this process participants reached agreement about 'rules' and principles for their workshop which all felt comfortable with. If the word 'rules' seems too daunting, try to find a word that appeals to the group such as 'boundaries' or 'group guidelines'.



CASE STUDY: *Creating ground rules in a new way—provoking critical thinking without words*

Mathias (Sweden) used a physical activity to promote critical thinking in a class of 15 year-old students. Students were given 3 contradictory instructions ("Place the chairs on top of each other" / "Place the chairs in a circle" / "Place the chairs in a line") individually, which they had to carry out without words. Then they discussed the experience. Students brought up topics such as 'conflict between different groups', 'miscommunication', 'intolerance' etc. and that the different, conflicting instructions could be a metaphor for polarization in society i.e. about different strong, radical views in society. The task encouraged the pupils think critically on various controversial questions and triggered fruitful interactions.



THEORY – USING WARM UP ACTIVITIES

WARM UP GAMES: A warm up activity is a simple exercise that enables facilitators and teachers to get to know their students and students to get to know their teachers and each other. They are often fun, short and require little or no organisation.

These can be used with your groups to transform the dynamics of your classroom. It can either be used to set the tone and introduce a certain subject or to create a nice and welcoming atmosphere in the classroom.

WARM UP QUESTIONS: As you move into the dialogue section you may want to play with questions and words. These are thinking skill games that focus on the person speaking about a topic or issues.



TOOLS - WARM UP QUESTIONS

- Describe yourself in three words
- If you were 20% more creative what would you achieve?
- If you could trade lives with anyone for a day who would it be and why?
- Who is your favourite cartoon character and why?
- Where would be the worst place to get stuck?

4: GETTING STARTED WITH DIALOGUE



TOOLS – WARM UP GAMES:

PAPER TOWERS

Aim: To get participants acting as teams and for discussion purposes around groups and team working.

Resources: newspapers (2/participant)

Time: 10-15 minutes

Steps

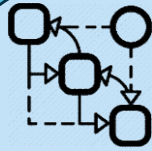
1. Split the group into teams of 5/6.
2. Using newspaper (or if not any scrap paper) ask the teams to (only using the paper) create a tower that can stand on its own for 10 seconds.
3. The pupils have 5 minutes to create their towers
4. The tallest tower wins.

Discussion

This can also lead onto a mini discussion of each pupils 'role' in the construction, were they a leader, follower, or did they stand back and not participate. If there were too many 'leaders' in the group did this cause problems when creating the towers? This activity helps build communities of practice and develops group relationships.

Alternative

It may be useful to eliminate the competition element and just reflect on the creativity and team-working element of the activity.



THEORY – HOW TO USE A STIMULUS?

WHAT IS A STIMULUS: The stimulus is the starting point for the enquiry. With the stimulus, you can try to draw the attention of your group to different topics, issues, questions, without directly specifying it. This is its role in the process: to raise themes and provoke the creation of philosophical questions.

Using a stimulus within Community of Enquiry (COE) is a great way to encourage and develop critical thinking in the classroom. In encouraging creative inquiry, using a stimulus allows the opportunity for discussion to go in multiple directions and elaborate on the topics that the students deem critical rather than rely on the topic chosen by the educator (see case study).

WHAT TYPE OF PROMPTS / STIMULUS CAN YOU USE?

Only imagination can limit what type of stimulus is used in the COE process. At the beginning it is worth starting with simple prompts, but as Jason Buckley suggests, once students are used to framing philosophical questions, an enquiry can be set off by almost anything.



Thinking Space

You want your class to have a discussion around gender equality and choose a prompt that you think will inspire the group. Through the process of creating philosophical questions, the group chooses a different topic when deciding on the question for inquiry. Does this mean that you have failed Or is it an example of the ways in which you can witness critical thinking skills evolving within groups?

5: CHOOSING A STIMULUS

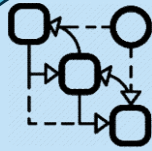


TOOLS – EXAMPLES OF STIMULUS

- song – lyrics can be printed and handed out
- rap – might work well with teenagers, young adults
- video clips – a music clip, TV advert, a movie teaser
- short animation – single stories with a clear message work with any age group
- story – fiction or personal, written or told
- picture book – can be projected
- cartoon – cartoons are almost always controversial
- comic strips – a quick and fun way to engage groups
- film – fiction or documentary
- piece of art – paintings, sculptures, etc.
- object – 3D beats 2D
- dialogues – can be dramatized with group members
- newspaper / magazine article/ blog/ twitter
- photo - a picture is worth a thousand words
- happening – a school event, visit, school trip, etc.
- dramatic scene - can be demonstrated by group members or actors
- data – pure facts can be shocking and provocative
- poem – interpretations can be often diverse
- graffiti – the genre and message can be provocative



*CASE STUDY: When learning happens before your eyes
Calling people a bad name is a controversial issue that can reach the point of some extreme views as well. Kati, an English teacher in Hungary of 13-14 year-old students used the “Naughtymeter pictures” (©Jason Buckley) as stimulus for an enquiry around the issue. With the help of the stimulus students realized how general the problem is. They formed their thoughts quite well in English, but when they noticed that some students could not take part in the discussion in English, as they were scared to become ridiculed (= being called a bad name), students added a new rule in the middle of the discussion: “Hungarian is also allowed”. Then, it was a great pleasure to see how good contributions came from students who usually do not show up during the English lessons.*



THEORY – ENDING A DIALOGUE

It is important that all participants are given the opportunity to express their opinions, feelings and views about the question or concept being discussed, and that each person must listen to others, and consider their points of view and ideas respectfully. The teacher should refrain from giving an opinion, and their role should be that of a facilitator of the enquiry. You may consider:

- Did anyone have anything left to say?
- Are there any tensions that may be left in the room that need to be addressed?
- Was everyone listened to?
- Was there any participant who may have felt they were the only one who had a certain opinion that needs clarifying or supporting?
- Have you arranged the next session if things need to be picked up again?

As with the start of a COE, the ending of a dialogue can involve final words and/or a final game (see next page).



Thinking Space

List the reasons why it is important to consider how a dialogue is finished.

How would you feel if your views had been misunderstood, and you didn't get the chance to respond?

6: ENDING A DIALOGUE



TOOLS – FINAL WORDS

Final Words: it is important that the group is given time at the end of the discussion to reflect upon what has been said, what they have heard and upon their own thoughts, views and opinions about the question or issue that has been discussed. After a period of reflection each person should be allowed the opportunity to share their final thoughts about the question with the rest of the group, possibly writing a sentence to compare to that which they may have written in response to the question before the enquiry

Ending activity : This may be an activity for laughter, focusing or simply to close what was said in the discussion, it is important to gauge mood at the end do the participants need their mood heightened because of low feelings and so would encourage a more movement based activity, or were tensions very high causing anxiety and some of this tension needs to be expelled.



CASE STUDY: USING CoE OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

Karen, a non-classroom community educator from the UK took the opportunity to use CoE within an exhibition, which included the work of three refugee artists. CoE was used as a way of guiding people around the space, and inviting responses / provoking conversation around migration and refugee issues. The methodology allowed people to reflect on the work but also to feel able to respond in an honest way, with no fear of being judged for their opinions. On some days (at the suggestion of one of the artists) Karen used the artists themselves as 'stimulus', with them sharing something of their stories at the beginning of sessions.



Part II: Dialogue and controversial issues





Part II: Sections



7. Extremism versus controversial issues
8. Dialogue and controversial issues
9. Extended country study – Poland
10. Extended country study – Hungary
11. Learning from the project

THEORY – EXTREMISM VERSUS CONTROVERSIAL

This P4CE project started out using COE to look at extremism. But as the teachers used the methods, the term controversial issues became more appropriate and useful. So what is the difference between extremist and controversial issues?

During 2017-2019, 6 partner schools and organisations from 4 countries came together and wrestled with the same question. For some partners the term “extremism” had no relevance. For others the terms ‘difficult conversations’, ‘controversial issues’, or ‘sensitive issues’ did not go far enough in tackling extremism? How would teachers manage this complexity?

Take a look at the definitions of controversial issues and extremism, and think about the differences yourself.

Definitions of Extremism

Dictionary definitions of extremism highlight the tendency to be extreme. However, the issue is what is considered moderate or extreme, and who regulates this. The UK government has one of the most explicit definitions:

“Extremism is defined... as vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs.” (Revised Prevent Duty Guidance for England and Wales, 2015)

7: EXTREMISM VERSUS CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

Definitions of controversial issues

Oxfam, defines controversial issues as:

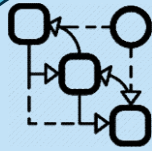
- Evoke strong feelings and views.
- Affect the social, cultural, economic and environmental context in which people live.
- Deal with questions of value and belief, and can divide opinion between individuals, communities and wider society.
- Are usually complicated, with no clear “answers” because they are issues on which people often hold strong views based on their own experiences, interests, values and personal context.
- Arise at a range of scales affecting local, national and global communities.
- Include a wide range of topics such as human rights, gender justice, migration and climate change.
- Can vary with place and time, and may be long standing or very recent. For example, an issue that is controversial in one community or country may be widely accepted in another.

Citizenship Foundation and partners defined it more succinctly as issues “which arouse strong feelings and divide opinion in communities and society”.

Useful resources

<https://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/teaching-controversial-issues>

<https://edoc.coe.int/en/education-for-democratic-citizenship/7738-teaching-controversial-issues.html>



PRACTICE – EXTREMISM vs CONTROVERSIAL IN THE CLASSROOM

After working with the project for two years, the partners agreed that what separates the two terms is the level of activity.

Controversial issues are just that – concepts, talking points, disagreements. Whereas extremism is the proactive opposition, or objection, backed by a view that is held so strongly that no other perspectives are considered.

This is supported by the definitions. The teachers would find it difficult to tackle the act of extremism, but they could use COE to explore the controversial issue that might push a person to an extreme action.

What follows on these 2 pages are some practical thinking points and classroom strategies. There is also a case study from one partner who put the theory into practice.



Thinking Space

How would you define extremism and controversial?

How are these concepts relevant to your work?

Have a look at the list on the next page. Write down your thoughts and share these with a colleague.

8: DIALOGUE AND CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES



TOOLS – GETTING READY FOR DIALOGUE ON CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

COE provides the framework to create a safe space, and allow participants to disagree. When running a dialogue around a controversial issue, these are the things you might want to think about before you start:

- Teacher personal awareness and self-reflection
- Awareness of the nature of controversial issues and the challenges they pose
- Awareness of the make-up of the class and school environment
- Ability to use and apply a range of teaching styles
- Creation of an appropriate classroom atmosphere and supporting democratic school culture
- Introducing students to frameworks and strategies
- Eschewing the role of 'knowledgeable expert'
- Training students to identify bias;
- Ability to plan and manage discussion effectively
- Ability to use and apply a range of specialised teaching techniques
- Involving other stakeholders and teachers



CASE STUDY: *Controversial issues in a biased culture – talking about homosexuality with 14 year-olds*

Homosexuality is never an easy topic, especially in a religious society, where the topic polarizes the public. Zofia, an English teacher in Poland led an enquiry on homosexuality in her class of 14 year old students, using a short animated film as stimulus ('In a heartbeat'). In the safe space of the session, one of the students felt comfortable enough to tell the story of his homosexual friend. His perspective caused deeper reflection in some of the strongly opinionated students. Students were naturally challenged to revise their original views and opinions in the light of the arguments presented in the discussion.

PRACTICE – EXTREMISM vs CONTROVERSIAL IN THE CLASSROOM

Klonowic Primary School, by Dorota Mazurek

Poland has been a multicultural country for centuries. However, recent events have shown how fragile this co-habitation can be. The month the P4CE project was launched saw the various demonstrations led by far-right groups. *'Poland's Day of Independence is marred by far-right march. Thousands of far-right nationalists lit flares, waved Polish flags and marched through Warsaw today, marring the country's Independence Day celebrations.'* (dailymail.co.uk 11th November 2017).

In our school Społeczna Szkoła Podstawowa im. Sebastiana Fabiana Klonowica w Lublinie (Elementary School) (285 students, aged from 6 to 15) we care about balanced development as well as intercultural education. The school takes good care of educating students and preparing them for the challenges in the changing world but we also put much effort to instil ethical behavioural patterns in our pupils. Universal values are of primary importance to us.

Critical thinking is obligatory in our educational systems and practiced every week. However, it is not easy and teachers have problems talking to students about these issues and what is more, the results of the work are almost impossible to evaluate.

In the P4CE project we decided to have lessons with P4C method on different levels. Two teachers worked with 8 year olds but the rest concentrated on 13 to 15 year olds.

The first year of implementing the project concentrated on preparing the teachers, getting them acquainted with the method. First there was a 5 day event in Budapest where three teachers from Klonowic school, 2 English teachers and one geography teacher, took part learning the method of P4C. In October 2018 cascade training began, and that means that also lessons with students began.

The first big question was not how to tackle extremism but how to introduce difficult subjects in the classroom. The extreme ideas are not necessarily the topics willingly and widely discussed. On the contrary, many students have been raised in a religious culture and most of them are strongly opinionated either by their family, the Catholic Church and quite often intolerant culture. The topics like homosexuality, refugees in Europe or charity events raise very extreme comments and polarize our society.

9: EXTENDED COUNTRY STUDY – POLAND

There were several challenges for implementing the programme. Firstly, there were lots of staff changes, unrelated to the project, which led to staff anxiety. However, some colleagues got really interested in the method after the training session in August 2018 and started working with the above mentioned groups of students. A second big challenge was time, for example how would we incorporate it into the already packed school timetable. We decided to get around this by using lessons with the form teacher. A third challenge was the topic. We agreed to start sessions on 'difficult conversations' with all the age groups, working with the materials from Budapest training and extra materials that were kindly presented to us by Marta Gontarska from IGO – our project partner.

At first the students especially the older ones, were expressing their disapproval, with their body language showed how reluctant they were to talk or engage in any debate. We decided to divert into a safer space, starting with problems closer to home, to everyday situations and then redirect the topics to wider ideas. We held enquiries relating to current media. This focused on situations in Poland and Lublin after the riots during 'Equality March', which became undoubtedly big news. P4C activity allowed us to introduce the discussion about homosexuality (which is still an extreme and taboo topic), in a way that was acceptable for the students.

Once the issue of homosexuality was introduced in the stimuli material some students expressed their discontent with the topic by saying 'Why do we even have to watch this?', so it was clearly a controversial issue for them. However, an interesting thing happened when one of the students shared the story of his friend who is homosexual and how hard it is for him to deal with people's resentment towards him. That real story caused students to divert their discussion into a more personal, emotional direction. All of the sudden, a philosophical activity became less theoretical and students began thinking in terms of actual people standing behind the problem discussed. Personal testimony told by a classmate caused others to think much deeper about the issue. Students were naturally challenged to revise their original views in the light of the arguments presented in the discussion.

The example above shows how crucial it is to start educating youngsters on this type of thinking because where if not in the classroom students can talk freely and openly and what is more important without fear of being judged. My advice would be to start with topics closer to home, more familiar and less controversial to see if they can do it. Create some safe space not only for your students but for yourself as well; it will show you how difficult you can get later on.

PRACTICE – EXTREMISM vs CONTROVERSIAL IN THE CLASSROOM

ELTE Radnoti High School, by Aniko Berta

Hungary has been in the spotlight for various government measures that do not seem to support democratic values. The media is apparently controlled by the government to a great extent, and alternative truths have caused massive misunderstanding between people, and led to a lot of hatred and heated conversations. People, including young people and children, are exposed to manipulative billboards all over the country, and untrue articles in daily magazines of rather low value, distributed free on streets.

Most young people have to realize that their peers may have different narratives from that of their parents', and rarely have the opportunity to discuss any issues that appear to be controversial. Also, teachers and schools typically avoid these questions.

For these, and several other reasons, most young people lack the ability to communicate effectively, and find it hard to listen to and accept points of views different from theirs, or from what they are accustomed to. Most course books tend to avoid controversial issues, and rarely is there any opportunity to learn about meaningful communication and effective communication skills.

The group where we implemented P4C is a class of 17 sixteen-year-olds, very intelligent, clever teenagers, in their adolescence: full of radical ideas, motivation and need for liberty and autonomy. Our school is a rather liberal institution of innovative teachers and outstanding students, a place that welcomes new methodologies and is dedicated to help students become responsible citizens.

I was really enthusiastic about the project, and most of my colleagues were supportive and very interested in how COE works, and how it would work with this particular age group/class.

The sessions went well, and they enjoyed controversial issues. The greatest problem was probably that of timing. Our 45-minute lessons sometimes proved to be short to fully incorporate all the steps, and sometimes we had to stop in the middle of a very impressive dialogue. They showed outstanding interest in current issues, especially when I managed to design the session around an input that would tell a lot about the students' own problems, questions, situations. These included lies, success and failure, punishment, social media issues.

10: EXTENDED COUNTRY STUDY – HUNGARY

In our sessions we mostly tackle difficult topics, although some sessions did tackle extremism as well. We discussed the challenges of media in Hungary, based on an outdoor exhibition "Arc - Unfake" (<https://arcmagazin.hu/>) they visited the previous day, and discussed ethical journalism. There was also a session dedicated to the Sargentini report, and one focusing on Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four and doublespeak.

We looked at Bosch's Last Judgement (an online lecture) and had an engaging discussion on the difference between crime and sin. We used online news articles with differing points of views and videos, as well as pictures and online lectures.

I would definitely advise a step-by-step, systematic approach when introducing P4C, and being consistent but flexible. Once the students accept the rules, they will enjoy the benefits of the pattern they provide for each session. At the beginning, students may find it difficult, even unnecessary to formulate philosophical questions, and even if they try to "troll" the session, you need to keep doing it – they will learn so much from it!

Also, if students find that the method provides them with useful strategies, they will find it easier to initiate discussions of difficult topics, and learn a lot about each other and first of all about themselves. Teachers should be open to including topics discussed in other lessons to offer students the opportunity to see differing points of views, differing attitudes and express theirs while doing their best to understand those of others.



Thinking Space

Having read the case studies, what strikes you as different or similar with regard to your country?

How do you think your colleagues and students would react to the topics used?

LEARNING FROM THE PROJECT

There were 4 key themes that all partners found in common resulting from this project. It found that community of enquiry: creates a discipline; establishes a framework for discussion; increases teacher's sensitivity to student concerns; puts school, local and national attitudes towards extremism under the spotlight.

Creates a discipline

The case studies throughout this toolkit show how COE was used at regular times in the school day, often on a weekly basis. Whilst this was difficult due to timetable, there were places that this could be done, such as in form time. The fact that it was done consistently allowed students to know they were entering into a safe place for discussion.

Establishes a framework for discussion

The toolkit has shown the various steps that COE discussion follows. This not only provides a framework for teachers to follow, but allows students to know what is coming next. The fact there are no surprises helps create a safe space. The framework also allows students to "warm up" and "cool down".

Increases teacher's sensitivity to student concerns

The partners have described in case studies how they needed to reflect on sessions and respond to the interests and concerns of students. This helped teachers get a better understanding of what the issues were that concerned their students.

11: LEARNING FROM THE PROJECT

Puts school, local and national attitudes towards extremism under the spotlight.

In exploring the rise of populism, the COE not only helped to unpick issues related to extremism, but also the social and political context in which it operates. Project partners took different approaches to this in terms of how sensitive this was. So took a close and local view, while others chose to look at broader issues.

FINAL WORDS

Throughout all of the project, partners reported it was never easy starting to discuss controversial issues. However, the rewards were great. It is hoped that future projects will look at measuring the impact of this work.

We hope that you have enjoyed reading this toolkit and that it has inspired you to start your own enquires.



Thinking Space

Having read the learning from the project, does it make you think any differently about your work?

What will you do to start your own Communities of Enquiry?

ABOUT THE P4CE PROJECT

Background

The objective of this project was to support teachers with the training and resources they need to help children to become critical and challenging thinkers. This training reached 400 teachers across the UK, Hungary, Poland and Sweden. These teachers facilitated 'difficult conversations' with over 12,000 pupils.

The project had five phases. Phases 1 and 2 resulted in a five day training focusing on Community of Enquiry as a technique for supporting teachers to facilitate 'difficult conversations'. This was attended by all partners, and involved them sharing their teaching experiences and approaches to developing critical thinkers and challenging extremist views. Phases 3 and 4 involved these partners delivering cascade training to 100 teachers in each of countries. This allowed teachers to work with their pupils on a projects called "Holding Difficult Conversations".



P4CE

P4CE:
**Philosophy 4 Challenging
Extremism**

Project number: 2017-1-UK01-KA201-036831



Funded by the Erasmus +
Programme of the
European Union

Challenge Extremism: Using Philosophy for Children to develop critical thinking and media literacy in the classroom



Nyköping anthropolis

IGO
Instytut Globalnej
Odpowiedzialności



NOTES



P4CE

P4CE:
**Philosophy 4 Challenging
Extremism**
Project number: 2017-1-UK01-KA201-036831



Funded by the Erasmus +
Programme of the
European Union

Challenge Extremism: Using Philosophy for Children to develop critical thinking and media literacy in the classroom



Nyköping anthropolis

IGO
Instytut Globalnej
Odpowiedzialności





This material is licensed under the Creative Commons licence, 2019. This means that you are free to copy, distribute, and display portions or the full version of text and images, provided you give explicit credits to:- Jason Ward, Andrea Bullivant, Dávid Bán, Balázs Nagy, Marta Gontarska, Aniko Berta, Dorota Mazurek and Mathias Demetriades for the Toolkit and the Philosophy for Challenging Extremism project. However, if you intend to distribute a modified version of our material, you must ask us for permission first and distribute the resulting work only under authors consent.

P4CE This learning material has been produced within the “P4CE: Philosophy for Challenging Extremism” project financed by the European Commission (2017-1-UK01-KA201-036831)



This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



P4CE

P4CE:
**Philosophy 4 Challenging
Extremism**

Project number: 2017-1-UK01-KA201-036831



Funded by the Erasmus +
Programme of the
European Union

Challenge Extremism: Using Philosophy for Children to develop critical thinking and media literacy in the classroom



Nyköping anthropolis

IGO
Instytut Globalnej
Odpowiedzialności

