



Orchard, J. L., & Davids, N. (2019). Philosophy for teachers (P4T) in South Africa—re-imagining provision to support new teachers' applied ethical decision-making. *Ethics and Education*, 14(3), 333-350.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17449642.2019.1617392>

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## **‘Philosophy for Teachers (P4T) in South Africa – Re-imagining provision to support new teachers’ applied ethical decision-making’**

### **Introduction**

Philosophy for Teachers (‘P4T’) comprises a 24 hour residential workshop for student teachers, teacher educators and philosophers/ philosophers of education engaging in a form of community philosophy focussed on issues in professional ethics which, crucially, the student teachers identify, based on their own experiences of professional practice (Orchard, Heilbronn and Winstanley 2016). The initiative arises out of two convictions. First, teaching is fundamentally a relational practice, irrespective of its geographical location (Orchard, Heilbronn and Winstanley 2016), played out in specific social-cultural contexts’ Griffiths (2013), which is constantly changing and thus fraught with moral ambiguity (Orchard, Heilbronn and Winstanley 2016). Secondly, the opportunities that new teachers need to develop personal qualities, knowledge and understanding that will enable them to navigate these contingencies, alongside their need for a wide range of pedagogical skills, lie relatively neglected in conventional professional development programmes (Glanzer and Ream 2007; Warnick and Silverman 2011).

This is the case not only in England (Orchard, Heilbronn and Winstanley 2016) but in other parts of the world (Maxwell et al. 2016), including South Africa. Conventional pre-service programmes in this context direct relatively little attention to the formation of teachers’ ethical sensibilities; although expression of this concern might be phrased slightly differently, post apartheid, and related specifically to issues with the formation of teachers’ professional identities. As Jansen observes, every education policy document, whether explicit or implied, whether conscious or unconscious, holds particular ‘preferred and cherished images’ about ‘the teacher’ (Jansen, 2001: 242). Implicit within these homogenous constructions of ‘the teacher’ are uncontested assumptions of a singular ‘teacher self’ (Zembylas, 2003: 108) which essentialise identity by undermining the plurality of teachers’ lived experiences.

Given these particular contextual concerns, could the P4T initiative be translated helpfully to the South African context? At no point was an exact reproduction of what had happened previously in England considered; more a re-imagining, shaped by teacher educators working in that context who are also philosophers of education. Specifically, what contribution might P4T have to make relative to established work by Murris (2012, 2014 and 2016) which introduces P4C more systematically into teacher education, with a shared intention to develop

pre-service teachers' ethical awareness? Could 'P4T' create an alternative space for teachers to simply engage in conversations across divisions that are racial, cultural, religious, linguistic, gendered and sexual?

The ensuing discussion focuses on a 'P4T' workshop run in South Africa in October 2017. Adopting a similar format to that piloted in England, the programme unfolded differently, yielding unexpected nuances and tensions. P4T in South Africa represented the first occasion when pre-service (PGCE) teachers from historically different Western Cape universities could come together to engage in ethical deliberation. The three universities involved – the University of Cape Town (UCT); Stellenbosch University (SU); and the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) - enjoy very different historical contexts, thanks to apartheid. While UCT and SU are considered as 'historically privileged', and until recently the domain of white students, CPUT is described as 'historically disadvantaged', geared at Black (marginalised) students, who, historically, would not have been granted access to UCT and SU. Despite its post-apartheid context, South Africa remains a deeply segregated society, where students are seldom presented with opportunities and spaces to engage with those, who are different.

### **Context and Background: professional ethics and teacher education provision in South Africa**

Teachers face similarly demanding ethical pressures to those engaged in other professions and there is a large and growing literature on the ethical dimensions of teaching (e.g. Hansen 1995 and 2001, Carr 2000 and 2006, Campbell 2003 and 2008, Papastephanou 2006). However, while ethics education has been introduced widely into the standard curricula of other professional formation programmes (Davis 1999), whether in stand-alone courses or 'mainstreamed' as part of an integrated curriculum, conventional pre-service teacher provision in South Africa, as in other parts of the world (Walters et al. 2017), provides little formal opportunity or time to enable deep reflection on these ethical dimensions.

General experience of teacher educators in South Africa suggests either a non-experience of ethics education; or some provision, but not necessarily understood as 'ethics education'. Rather, any focus on 'ethics' tends to be implicit within modules, for example in educational psychology or philosophy of education, rather than being explicitly taught as is the case in other forms of professional education. One author of this article, who works at a South African university, notes that 'ethics education' only became a stand-alone topic, within the Philosophy of Education, within the PGCE programme, approximately five years ago – when it became apparent that this was a neglected area. A scan of PGCE programmes on offer at other South

African universities reveals an emphasis on human rights and values but, except for one institution, no stand-alone courses on ethics in education.

That the ethical behaviour of teachers is nonetheless a matter of considerable public concern is evident in attempts to regulate the profession at national policy level. All South African teachers must register with the South African Council for Educators (SACE, 2002) which attends primarily to three objectives:

- to provide for the registration of teachers;
- to promote the professional development of teachers; and
- to set, maintain and protect ethical and professional standards for teachers by means of the functioning of the South African Council for Teachers (Act No.31).

However, SACE is the subject of severe criticism and widely deemed to be ineffectual. Firstly, it has been unable to deal with the high number of unqualified teachers in schools, whose behaviour is not governed anyway by teachers standards. Secondly, reports of unprofessional and unethical conduct by teachers are widespread (Davids, 2016) even though coverage of these ethical and professional standards is required during pre-service teacher education.

Seemingly of greater concern is whether or not professional ethics may be cultivated at all through a regulatory body's code, given the sheer range of challenging contexts faced in schools (Davids, 2016). The typical range of dilemmas confronting teachers in South African schools include: encountering physical and verbal abuse from both learners and peers, managing teenage pregnancies, reporting drug abuse, to exposing financial mismanagement (Burton & Leoschut, 2013) with arguably the greatest degree of challenge faced by teachers working in historically disadvantaged schools.

An increasing number of unethical practices are committed by teachers and principals. The seemingly endless list ranges from everyday occurrences of teacher absenteeism, tardiness, and not teaching, to financial mismanagement, cheating by providing learners with examination papers, illicit relationships between teachers and learners, and the perpetuation of violence. As reported by Mncube and Harber (2013), the most common form of violence perpetrated by schools against learners is corporal punishment. Although illegal since the inception of the South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996), it remains institutionally sanctioned at many schools, with some children, who might never have encountered physical punishment in their homes, exposed to it for the first time at school instead (Mncube and Harber, 2013, 14).

An annual report by SACE reveals that between 2016 – 2017 a total number of 593 complaints were received. The complaints show a steady ‘increase in the number of corporal punishment cases, sexual abuse of both male and female learners, both in school and outside school premises, assault of colleagues within the school environment, submission of fraudulent qualifications and other forms of unprofessional conduct by educators’ (SACE, 2017, 18). Seemingly, questions around the capacity of SACE to regulate professional and ethical conduct, are not unfounded. Hence, critics like Jansen (in Woerman, 2012) contend that it is only possible to instil ethics in teaching and learning if teachers simply do what is expected of them – that is, show up every day to teach. He maintains that sound teacher ethics is not born from policy decisions. Rather, it has to do with ‘the type of expectations that learners, teachers, and parents have of schooling’ (Jansen in Woerman, 2012, 92). The magnitude of the challenges is clear as well as daunting

There is no suggestion that ethics in education is not addressed at all in pre-service teacher education. However, with exceptions (e.g. Murriss 2016) teacher educators are unlikely to focus their teaching on approaches that enable student teachers to reflect fruitfully on experiences of dilemmas and conflicts that arise in their ongoing classroom practices; and quality of reflection is an issue. How can a professional ethics key note lecture of one hour given to a cohort of perhaps 150 – 200 student teachers even begin to disrupt established expectations student teachers have of schooling, steeped in illegal and unethical practices by teachers? Rather, engagements with PGCE students has tended to reveal an often reticent opinion and understanding of the necessity and value of ethics education, with many students identifying subject knowledge as their primary focus:

certainly, from the perspective of a number of students, there are certain types of knowledge not worth pursuing or having... students deem particular systems of knowledge (such as philosophy) unnecessary, and so they dismiss it, not realising that such a stance brings into serious question their own understandings of how both teaching and learning are constituted (Waghid & Davids, 2017: 15).

Two further complexities in the South African context warrant specific mention: student teachers are generally expected to complete between six and twelve weeks of practical teaching (compared for example with twenty four weeks on the equivalent PGCE programme in England) leaving them relatively short of practical teaching experience upon which to reflect. At the institution where one of the authors is based, student teachers spend only six weeks at school, with the remaining 34 weeks in class. Moreover, for the majority of these student

teachers – as is typically the case in historically advantaged institutions in South Africa - teaching practice presents the first opportunity in which they might encounter learners from different racial, cultural, religious, and economic backgrounds. More importantly, for many, this is the first time that they are confronted with the socio economic challenges, typified by severe poverty, poor parental involvement, substance abuse and violence, which permeate most schools in South Africa.

These realities, state Murriss (2016, 197), ‘provoke many professional controversial issues for student teachers to consider as part of their professional training, but universities fail to prepare them for this adequately’. The absence of ethics among teachers, particularly in poorer schools, where parents are less likely to be or become involved, is often equated to ‘no active commitment to teaching’ (Jansen in Woerman, 2012, 92). It is not unusual, therefore, to find that although teachers start their careers, with the hope of being agents of change, and making a difference in the lives of their learners, many of them face unprecedented challenges, ethical dilemmas, and vulnerabilities, leaving them to feel a ‘sense of inconsequentiality’ (Farber & Wechsler, 1991, 36).

### **Re-imagining P4T in South Africa**

P4T has developed through a series of initiatives piloted in England which attempt to promote ethical deliberation in new ways that relate directly to pre-service teachers’ experiences (see Orchard, Heilbronn and Winstanley 2016). Its advocates never claim that P4T alone can solve every problem with regard to the ethical preparation of teachers, or compensate entirely for the lack of time and space currently afforded teachers during their professional development. However, it offers a positive, tangible and potentially powerful way forwards, given the lack of alternatives. It continues as an experimental process, with those involved feeling their way into a mode of working that is characteristically discursive and dialogical.

Philosophy for Teachers (or P4T), as the name suggests, has been influenced by the well-known and highly regarded dialogical pedagogical model of ‘P4C’, or ‘Philosophy for Children’ (Orchard et al 2016). Indeed, the contribution of established practitioners of P4C/PwC in facilitating activities that are familiar to P4C in P4T workshops has been identified as one key element in its success. As Murriss et al (2011) have argued, by integrating P4C within teacher education so as to introduce student teachers to its theory and practice, the teaching of philosophy in the classroom is modelled by this means as well as opening up discussions about more general core issues in teacher education. In P4T this focus has been ethical.

Why explore the potential of P4T in South Africa? Karin Murriss (2012, 2014 and 2016) has already pioneered work on ethical deliberation in initial teacher education in her work with PGCE students along very similar lines, adapting her interest and expertise in P4C to higher education. How distinct are the two initiatives? Certainly the Deweyan notion of democratic practice as a 'form of associated living' is shared but taken to another level by the residential nature of P4T, whereby a temporary community is formed, acting as an adjunct to conventional pre-service teacher education provision. One practical advantage of this arrangement is that expert facilitation can be brought to the community; otherwise, perhaps all or many teacher educators need to be trained in P4C and this seems unlikely.

Secondly, while recognising and valuing P4C's influence, P4T is conceived more broadly as a means of promoting collaborative, philosophically-engaged professional learning through dialogic pedagogy. Hence experimental initiatives described as P4T have been undertaken with groups of teachers which move away from the P4C model specifically to reflect other dialogical pedagogies (see Orchard 2018 for further discussion of these initiatives). So while P4T draws benefit from pedagogical strategies developed through P4C, it isn't bound by the same specific framing. This leaves it under-theorised in the short term but freer in the longer term to develop flexibly. This possibility of re-imagining P4T as it develops seems particularly pertinent to the South African context, given recent and relevant concerns raised about the unintended racism implicit in the notion of reason being assumed in P4C, as a consequence of 'white ignorance' (Chetty, 2018).

The explicit aims of the project translated to the South African context remained very similar, at least from the perspective of the organisers. These were to:

- create space and time for critical reflection away from the 'busy-ness' of schools;
- create a community of practice in a residential 'safe-space' conducive to this kind of work, where potentially confidential concerns could be aired;
- develop independence and confidence among student teachers on how to manage examples of ethically complex and potentially challenging classroom situations;
- address existential concerns which arise typically among beginning teachers when dealing with challenging behaviour by their pupils, including burnout, and sustaining motivation and a sense of 'moral purpose';
- offer teacher educators a form of professional development in the methods of dialogic teaching and learning, and in the value and possibilities of such engagement. (Orchard, Heilbronn and Winstanley 2016: 48)

It was explained to participants that they would see P4C activities modelled through the workshop, of particular significance where they had not previously encountered dialogical teaching pedagogy. Notably, the South African participants' evaluations dwelt less on the value of this opportunity than their English counterparts and more on the meeting and discussion of matters of ethical significance with people who faced a number of common concerns, while also being very different.

### **Philosophy for teachers in South Africa: key findings**

The following observations are partial and subjective responses to the re-imagining of P4T which took place. Synergies are noted with themes to have emerged from the pilot workshops undertaken in England, although at the level of detail these appear to have played out quite distinctively in the separate contexts. One key distinction, partly because of the post-apartheid history at play and partly reflective of our own identities as philosophers and teacher educators in the moment, were how issues of teacher identity in general and intersectionality in particular arose so starkly as the workshop unfolded.

#### *1. Time*

As in England, the workshop in South Africa extended over 24 hours, a luxury afforded by generous funding. The quality of time and opportunity for depth of experience of inquiry and deliberation differed markedly from what many, though not all, of the student teachers had experienced previously in their conventional PGCE sessions. Time was spent, as it had been in England, using P4C strategies to build up the community, going deeply into the issues raised by dilemmas which the participants themselves had chosen to explore, drawing connections and clarifying meanings.

The timing of the workshop was deliberate, taking place during October when all PGCE students in South Africa had already completed their teaching practice. This optimised time for reflection on the relatively limited amount of time spent in school on the South African PGCE compared with England. Difficulties in finding time to engage with ethical issues in teacher education in South Africa is more likely to stem from competing and established curriculum demands than 'busy-ness' in school life as in England, given how heavily the programme is weighted towards time spent in a university. However the net result is the same, with the workshop squeezed into the participants' personal time, despite the pressing need for ethical deliberation.

#### *2. Environment*



The venue was an important factor in the event's success, offering for many a welcome break from the routine of student life. Given the deeply disparate South African contexts, it was not unexpected to find that for two student teachers this was their first visit to Stellenbosch and, for three, their very first stay in a hotel – a luxury far removed from their regular life-worlds. It was significant to observe the transitioning of individuals as their confidence and willingness to share grew as time progressed; as well as the shift in group dynamics, as people began to engage with others outside of their respective institutions.

The relative luxury of providing a space of this kind poses considerable challenges to advocates of P4T; for the costs entailed, of time as well as accommodation are considerable. Moreover, Murriss has demonstrated clearly how P4C can be incorporated successfully, potentially at far lower cost, within a conventional PGCE programme, arguably to similar effect. Certainly Murriss' model is being explored actively by advocates of P4T, trialling philosophy with teachers workshops of varying lengths and for purposes other than ethical deliberation activities (see, for example, Orchard 2018).

However, a significant contribution that the residential nature of **the workshop** made was in bringing together participants from both historically advantaged and disadvantaged institutions for the first time, therefore engaging them in an embodied encounter with otherness as an aspect of ethical deliberation. The workshop also brought together student teachers from primary and secondary phases in schooling, introducing a further layer of difference to the group's dynamics. Some (temporary and less than ideal) degree of levelling and 'equality' seemed to be established between them as a result of being situated in the same place. This, while not neutral, represented less established territory for any of the participants than would have been the case on campus. Moreover, the non-conventional pedagogy and physical space created a new environment in which to engage with unfamiliar voices, contexts, perspectives and experiences which felt significant.

### *3. Building a 'Community of Enquiry'*

As before, attention was paid to the establishment of a positive sense of community as well as coverage and discussion of ethical subject matter, such that participants appeared more at ease with each other by the end of the workshop than they had at the outset, better able to deliberate openly, despite their different backgrounds and stages of development as teachers. Deliberate attention was paid to the additional demands of ensuring representation from across different major universities from the outset during the planning stage. One participant travelled from England to help co-facilitate the event, having been involved in a responsible capacity with all three previous P4T workshops.

Only some student teachers have the opportunity to spend time at schools in both historically advantaged and disadvantaged contexts, as has already been highlighted so the building of a diverse community presented particular sensitivities. Where pre-service teachers are able to exercise choice, experience suggests that they are likely to opt for teaching practice in the types of schools which they previously attended, providing some sense of familiarity and security and aligning themselves with a culture of schooling and models of teachers and teaching with which they clearly identify. Deliberate attempts are made by most universities to ensure that pre-service teachers complete their teaching practice at a school with which they are unfamiliar, however these attempts are often met with resistance from both students and their parents.

The clear problem with this convention, one which informs the importance of this workshop, is how many pre-service teachers miss out on experience beyond that which is already known to them. In the case of Black pre-service teachers, they typically prefer to complete their teaching practice at Black schools – arguing that they would not feel comfortable or welcome at historically White or Coloured schools. Similarly, White pre-service teachers cite issues of acceptance and safety in justifying their choice of historically White schools.

Although South African schools have desegregated since 1994, Black schools have remained largely the same, Coloured and Indian schools have seen an influx of Black learners, while White schools have seen the most significant shift in learner demographics, due to better facilities, resources, smaller classes, and extra-mural activities (Soudien, 2004). Yet the same types of shifts are not reflected in teacher demographics, with Jansen (2004) explaining that the problem at former White schools is not the accommodation of Black learners, but the absence of Black teachers. Seemingly, this absence is already evident in school choices by pre-service teachers.

During the workshop, then, the diverse backgrounds of the participants allowed for complex and previously uncharted conversations for a number of the participants. Values were explored (as they had been in England), allowing insights and thoughts to be shared, and new perspectives to be developed; however the force of the disparate directions and deepening of understanding was somehow more powerful. Not only did they come from very different life-worlds, but in spite of the fact that they were postgraduate university students, many of them shared that they do not necessarily engage with people who are different. For although institutional apartheid ended more than 23 years ago, student teachers continue to function and socialise in groups, who look and are like them, often based on historical

constructions and images of race and identity. Against the backdrop of a society, which has yet to fully transition from its apartheid society, it was inevitable that much of the initial discussion among the students, in the initial stages of the workshop, centred on issues of race and belonging. This could not have happened to the same degree had the experience not been structured in terms of time and space mentioned.

#### *4. Expertise in deliberative practices*

A key element of the workshop was its leadership, shared three-ways on this occasion. The choice of a co-facilitated community was deliberate, combining the expertise in P4C and local knowledge of one facilitator with the more specific expertise in P4T of another. A third facilitator took clear responsibility for more practical arrangements, ensuring that these roles were shared across the groups and not specific to any one person or institution in particular. All three facilitators self-identify as philosophers of education engaged actively in teacher education; in other respects their personal and professional identities are different, ensuring a good and complex range of contributions, perspectives and insights.

Those facilitating were accustomed to leading workshop activities to promote deliberation and creating a shared space of enquiry; as philosophers, all three co-leaders had an overview of the field of philosophical questions and issues that particular 'stories' could illustrate. In the particular experiences under discussion, each could recognise the tensions, synergies, arguments and positions of varied accounts and general philosophical questions and took it in turns to help draw out participants' ideas. This was especially important in light of the immense and multi-layered diversity in the room.

An established emphasis in P4T on identifying questions, rather than supplying solutions, honoured the contingency and complexity of ethical dimension of teachers' work. The discussions did not patronise participants with easy answers, rather it legitimised their sense of difficulty. The exact detail of activities undertaken during the workshops varied, as they were attended by different groups of students and tutors (and 'outcomes' achieved were varied too), tailored to their particular interests and needs, as might be expected in student-centred learning.

Personally experienced ethical dilemmas proved a fruitful and effective starting point for deliberation once again (Orchard, Heilbronn and Winstanley 2016), using well-rehearsed P4C strategies, including paired and small-group activities. for 'private' clarifications and conversations before ideas were shared with the wider community. No-one was coerced to

share their stories. Participants were advised to tell stories on the behalf of others where the group judged it important to protect an individual's identity.

Deep ethical discussions developed through this process. One memorable example concerned the influence of religion in relation to abortion. A student teacher shared how she had discouraged a learner from having an abortion, because of her own deeply-held religious beliefs. Sharing her story evoked strong emotions within her, as she continued to wonder whether she had acted in the best interest of the learner, or whether she had simply imposed her own beliefs onto someone in a clearly vulnerable state.

A second example centred on the experiences and struggles of a student teacher who is openly gay, as he tried to navigate his way through a school space which presented hostility towards his sexuality. This student also articulated grappling with balancing his own struggles against those of his learners – that is, he was unclear about the extent to which he should allow his sexual identity into a classroom space. In turn, he recognised the dominant ethos of South African schools, which prides itself on strong images of masculinity, and typical sports, such as rugby. As such he was sensitive to learners in whom he identified and against whom he witnessed discriminatory practices.

#### *5. P4C in teacher education or P4T: is there a difference?*

P4T is evolving from the premise that teachers' capacity to deliberate ethically will change for the better through exposure to philosophy. This is not to suggest that explicit initiation into philosophy is needed by everyone learning to teach (although many do find it instructive and desirable); but that teachers should be aware of implicitly philosophical dimensions to their work, particularly where professional ethics is concerned. Philosophical expertise can help non-philosophers to identify the nature of educational debates, what kinds of questions or concerns are at stake, moral or ethical, sociological or psychological, thus the kinds of answers that might be sought.

Where these are moral/ethical concerns, philosophers within a community of enquiry can model rigorous but non-combative ways of arguing the issue in response. For example, at one point, a religious matter arose whereby a structured and philosophically-informed input from a community member was possible within a much wider discussion. While that discussion did wander around somewhat, entering intellectual cul-de-sacs which a more didactic teaching approach might have closed down, the process of intellectual wandering

around the issue nevertheless engaged the participants in deeper reflection on the issue than might have been the case otherwise.

Participants with formal philosophical training have been present at each workshop, engaging philosophically with the discussion, probing, clarifying and helping participants to develop argued positions. By this means, student teachers have observed and/or participated directly in educational debates to a depth that would not normally feature as part of their training.

Participants also developed marked confidence in disagreeing with one another quite significantly, whilst maintaining an open and cordial atmosphere as the workshop proceeded. They saw and approached the experience as an alternative method of studying and understanding education. In this sense, they were comfortable in the language of philosophy, and were keen in understanding in how they might adopt the workshop idea into their own teaching. Upon reflection, this certainly eased the flow of the workshop, and opened opportunities for deeper conversations.

Less clear is how radically what has been described as P4T differs from P4C applied to teacher education, beyond a looser affinity to P4C's specific theoretical underpinnings in favour of a broader commitment to the value of dialogue, community and teachers' engagement with philosophy. This is particularly complex, given the explicit adoption of P4C pedagogical strategies and the close involvement of P4C/PwC practitioners in the P4T that has developed so far. P4T certainly has much more still to learn from Murriss and others in developing pedagogical practice in conventional teacher education so as to find appropriate ways to integrate philosophy.

For now, P4T has offered provision that is adjunct to the PGCE core, identifying 'leaky spaces' (Orchard, Heilbronn and Winstanley 2016) in provision for workshops. A workshop adjunct to regular provision ameliorates the need to change pre-service teacher education more radically, when radical change could be what is ultimately required. Currently, P4C in teacher education is relatively uncommon and would require wholesale reform of ITE were it to be integrated fully as a standard entitlement; adjunct provision represents a pragmatic, if modest, way forward. Moreover, in acknowledging that P4T, as an even more recent phenomenon than P4C, lacks an established theoretical positioning, in the longer term this fluidity and relative agnosticism offers advantages as the project develops, allowing it to respond to those criticisms and concerns about P4C/PwC that have been articulated (see

Haynes 2011 for a helpful summary) and flexibility in relation to appropriating other dialogical pedagogies that might also have much to offer teachers in the context of higher education.

### **Nuances of the South African experience**

The significance of bringing such a diverse group of pre-service teachers and their tutors together through a residential P4T workshop of this nature should not be under-estimated. One unintended outcome was the extent to which participants, on the surface at least, appeared to move away from race as a cornerstone or single signifier of identity during the workshop when brought together under these conditions. South Africa's complex history of colonialism, followed by apartheid, has created intricate understandings and perceptions of race, not only in relation to dichotomous conceptions of white 'competence' and black 'incompetence', but also in terms of perceptions of how different particular racial, cultural, religious and ethnic groups might be more prone to unethical conduct than others.

Remarkably, in spite of the complexities surrounding these maligned historical imageries, and although the workshop only lasted 24 hours, the space created during that time did feel like one in which the group seemed able to engage directly with contentious issues and share within their 'community of enquiry'. No one left before the end of the workshop, many participants felt able to share deeply personal professional stories without feeling compromised; and many enquired when the next opportunity to meet together could be provided. In a context where learning to live with difference better is such a crucial part of public life, this finding is not insignificant and warrants further investigation.

And while the workshop in South Africa nurtured substantive dialogue around ethics and ethical conduct in teaching as was the case in England, the experience necessitated more attention to interpretation of concepts, such as ethics, ethical judgment, respect, care, and recognition, expressed in English. South Africa is home to eleven official languages, with at least four different mother tongues represented in the workshop: English, Afrikaans, Xhosa, and Sotho. The workshop was conducted in English, and students responded in English, while smaller group or pair discussions often occurred in student teachers' mother tongue revealing overt complexities of linguistic and cultural differences. Participants offered different understandings of what it means to act ethically as a result; some understood it as 'being good' and 'acting with integrity', others tied the concept to 'religious beliefs', and 'childhood rearing'. Members of the group disagreed about the interpretation of concepts, such as respect and compassion, in ways which laid bare particular cultural beliefs and practices.

For example, those who subscribe to the Xhosa and Afrikaner cultures, for example, may interpret notions of respect as deeply embedded in constructions of patriarchy and age, with males and elders afforded respect, regardless of any other factors. Students shared particular practices and rituals from their parents' homes to explain the dominance and authority of the male figure – in relation to decision-making and discipline; and how they took these understandings into the roles and identities as teachers, and their tendency to associate leadership with male dominance. Xhosa student teachers specifically understood compassion as being synonymous with *ubuntu*, understood in terms of African philosophy, as recognising the humanity of the other. *Ubuntu*, explains Waghid (2014), is etymologically explicated as a concept that has both an individual and a communal orientation— individual, in the sense that people act with their individualities (attitudes, beliefs, understandings and ways of seeing the world) and therefore have something to say or contribute, and communal, in the sense that their association with other individuals in a collective is important when acting or doing things. In this sense, the student teachers understood compassion as inextricable from the cultural, and hence, their interpretation of teacher identity.

## Conclusion and Future Directions

This experiment established, albeit briefly, an open-ended, critical and self-reflective and diverse community of enquiry in a South African context, focussed on shared ethical concerns bearing similarities to those previously held in England. The space and time created enabled participants to reflect on ethically complex issues that had arisen in a variety of circumstances they had experienced at early stages in their teaching careers. The experience also brought student teachers from different universities together for the first time in ways that threw up wider professional ethical questions related to teacher identity.

Naively perhaps, the complexity of the differentiated ways in which language and culture influenced conceptions of both identity and ethics had not been anticipated. This was especially evident in the differences in participants' understandings of core ethical concepts and issues which arose out of discussions, such as respect, compassion, and what it means to act 'ethically'; indeed the word 'ethics' itself was the focus of much cross cultural debate. Through dialogue, deeply-entrenched and alternative cultural influences and discourses between us became clear, which shape how those matters we agreed to discuss are interpreted and enacted.

Take 'respect', for example, which is an uncontested given within the African discourse of cultural patriarchy, feeding in to a broader hierarchy of communal and tribal standing. The unfolding discussion of respect seemed particularly insightful for those students, who came from Xhosa and Afrikaner backgrounds. When questions were raised by some participants about the implicit gender bias that such an understanding of respect evokes, they were able to acknowledge on one hand the potential for inequality, while at the same time viewing the questioning thereof as potentially disrespectful. The students expressed their surprise at the levels of common experience and understanding; yet were equally aware of the continuing influence of apartheid, which was so intent, and successful in rendering these two life-worlds (Black/Xhosa and White/Afrikaner) as not only separate, but irreconcilable. Inasmuch as apartheid put in place stark divisions of people along racial lines, and despite the fact that this was the first time that these students came together, they did appear to wish to recognise that as new teachers they shared certain common perspectives and values.

Similar nuances were evident in approaches and understandings of what it means to exercise care and compassion. For, while the values of compassion and care might be taken for granted as desirable within some cultural contexts, framed by democratic assumptions society, students from a Xhosa background understood these two acts as an obligatory manifestation of Ubuntu. For them, to exercise care and compassion is a marker of their 'Africanness', therefore inseparable from their personal identities. While it is not immediately apparent whether or not this understanding is different to a liberal, western one, it should not be assumed that the two are equivalent. . However, what is worthwhile and distinctive to note is that practices of care and compassion are accepted as ubiquitous to what it means to be African.

**Anticipated** concerns about whether the participants would feel safe and free to engage with each other – due to South Africa's segregated history proved unfounded, given the emotional maturity and trust which participants brought into the workshop, taking personal responsibility for managing these dynamics collectively. **As we reflect on this, we recognise that we were as careful in how we communicated the aims and objectives of the P4T workshop, as we were about our expectations from potential participants. Furthermore, the students who participated, were accompanied by one of their respective PGCE lecturers and came in small groups who knew each other, so that there was a certain amount of familiarity and regard which preceded the coming together as a P4T workshop. These pockets of familiarity could have played a role in easing some of the expected barriers and awkwardness.**



However, what we also found and witnessed was students intuitively gravitating towards one another from across the three universities represented. These interactions often took place in the unstructured social moments of the workshops – as in who certain students chose to share a meal with, or chose to sit with during a break. It would seem to us, that based on the group dynamics and on the extent to which students had prepared to engage with the other, in so doing expecting to make themselves vulnerable, that there was a strong commitment to wanting to get to know and to understand one another. We would go as far as saying that within this self-selecting group, pre-disposed to intergroup encounter, the divisions imposed through apartheid had not undermined a deeper curiosity among the students in this group, to come to know, and be known by one another.

Benefitting from skilled and experienced facilitation modelled on established P4C strategies, an appropriate and conducive space was created for discussion . As Murriss (2008: 671) argues, for a community of enquiry to be capable of continuously renewing, transforming or diverging practice, it must be able to respond to the thoughts of its members in ways that are ‘genuinely open-ended, critical and self-reflective. This requires facilitator(s) who ‘actively seek opportunities to be ‘perplexed, numbed and open to change through reflection and self-reflection’. Extensive training, experience and principled commitment to working in this way are needed in effective facilitators on this model.

With regard to the residential dimension of P4T, sustainability and scalability remain significant issues. Nonetheless, it seems to us that that the residential nature of the programme, away from regular work and home in another space, and experienced intensely over 24 hours can offer a considerable, potentially transformative experience. A key concern in South Africa experience is the deep-seated need for new and current teachers to engage in spaces, where they can deliberate, share and debate with the ‘other’. In this context particularly, P4T presents an opportunity for pre-service teachers across significant divides to engage in self-reflection and re-imagining together.

Advocates of P4T, less committed to a specific model of P4C/PwC are keen to explore other models of facilitated dialogical pedagogy which might also be developed to good effect to include philosophical and ethical elements for the benefit of teachers. For example, might a virtual online community of enquiry bringing people together across not only institutional but national and international divides for ‘difficult dialogues’ of the type being developed by the Generation Global project <https://generation.global> be adapted to the context of higher education represent a positive way forward in South Africa, if encountering otherness is such a significant ethical issue in that context? Were this the case, would this continue to be P4T

or something else? Through further experimentation and thought the intention in a future article is to offer some kind of answer.

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#### Acknowledgements

This work was supported by the National Research Foundation of South Africa under Grant 105899 and the generous financial support of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain. We wish to thank Karin Murriss, of UCT, who acted as a co-facilitator for the event with great expertise and our PGCE colleagues Kate Angier (UCT) and Conrad Potberg (CPUT) whose support for the event was invaluable. Thanks are also due to Steve Brammell, Richard Davies, Ruth Heilbronn, Carrie Winstanley and other members of the PESGB for their enthusiastic support of the project throughout. Finally, our thanks go to all the participants who engaged so thoughtfully and whole-heartedly with the enquiry process.

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