

Written evidence

Members of the Oracy APPG will consider written, verbal and audio-visual evidence and oversee oral evidence sessions. All evidence will inform the final report.

The extended deadline for submitting written evidence is 20th September 2019. We would appreciate if the submissions would follow the following guidelines:

- Be in a Word format
- No longer than 3000 words
- State clearly who the submission is from, and whether it is sent in a personal capacity or on behalf of an organisation
- Begin with a short summary in bullet point form
- Have numbered paragraphs
- Where appropriate, provide references

Please write your evidence below and email the completed form via email to inquiry@oracyappg.org.uk with the subject line of 'Oracy APPG inquiry'

Emma Worley & Peter Worley

Full name:

The Philosophy Foundation (on behalf of)

School or Organisation:

Co-CEOs and Co-founders

Role:

Written evidence:

- We consider the importance of oracy on employment, life skills and democracy (impact).
- We look back to the Ancient Greeks and their language development for learning and democracy (impact).
- We give an overview of The Philosophy Foundation's work as an external provider of oracy skills in schools across the UK (provisions and access).
- Finally we consider the resources and training available for teachers, and the problem of assessing group talk (barriers).

Impact of oracy on employment and life

1. Children are told that if they work hard and do well in their exams they will have the opportunity to go to a good university and succeed in work afterwards. This may be true to a certain extent, those who go to University are more likely to end up in well paid professions afterwards, as shown in the latest CBI report 'Educating for the Modern World'¹.
 - a. "The value of graduates to business is clear, with graduates having higher levels of employment, lower levels of economic inactivity, and higher levels of earnings on average compared to non-graduates." Chapter 5, Key Findings for Higher Education
2. However, research has also shown that children who come from less privileged backgrounds are still less likely to do well after University. Sam Friedman, sociologist of class and inequality at the LSE said on BBC 2 documentary, '*How to break into the Elite*'
 - a. "There are some pretty striking stats on this, so for example when we look at those who have been to Russell group universities ...those from privileged backgrounds that get 2:2 degrees, second class degrees, are still more likely go into top occupations than those from working class backgrounds who have gone to the same university and got a first....Top organisations are not rewarding what our education system is rewarding."
1. These children do not have the "polish" that many of their middle-class colleagues and children who go to private school have. These skills include social confidence, being able to problem solve, think critically and articulate their ideas well in front of others.
2. In November 2018 a joint dialogue was held considering 'How are Schools Developing Real Employability Skills?'²
 - a. "There have been numerous studies asking employers 'what they really want' in terms of workforce skills. These often show that employers express concerns about students' skills level in certain areas, for instance, communications."

¹ <https://cbicdnend.azureedge.net/media/1171/cbi-educating-for-the-modern-world.pdf?v=20190529.1>

² https://www.educationandemployers.org/research/joint-dialogue/#_ftn3

3. Educational research in both the UK and EU has persistently expressed concern about children's communication difficulties and the effects on behaviour, learning, emotional relationships and future employment. Between 50% and 75% of children excluded from school have significant difficulties with oral language. These children grow up to be the significant percentage of prison population across the UK identified with very low levels of language and communication.
4. In our current political climate it can be seen how vital the need for good oracy is – both speaking and listening to one another, evaluating arguments and being able to critically analyse what we are told and what we believe. Good oracy skills are important for a democratic society.

Democracy, Oracy and the Ancient Greeks³

5. Language development was prized in Ancient Greece, it was central to their culture and not only enabled the flourishing of Greek writing, it also played a central role in learning and their democratic society. It wasn't just that the Greeks liked to talk, it was the sophistication of their language that enabled them to develop their ideas as far as they did. They also began to systematise how to best use their language by developing the arts of rhetoric, poetry and dialectical philosophy. Aristotle kickstarted the science of logic, that which still to this day underpins thought and language, their use and how we understand and evaluate both thought and language.
6. The Greeks stood at an important time of change in terms of language development. They had come from an oral (and therefore aural) tradition, but they were moving into a new written epoch. This tension is best caught in Plato's Phaedrus dialogue in which Socrates says - in a written book, of course - that philosophy cannot be done properly in writing because the words are fixed, they cannot respond to objections, qualify or clarify. He thought that philosophy can only really be done through living, breathing speech between people. Philosophical Enquiry is a dialectical approach to doing philosophy and so it is dynamic and so, in some way, it is organic. Philosophy in this way grows, unfolds.
7. Our experience tells us that the children can go so much farther through a conversation that they own than they could ever go through the study of written words or through writing exercises. As Socrates might say, understanding, it seems, travels closely with talk.
8. Oracy is not only about having a voice, it is also about understanding that there is a corresponding responsibility that comes with having a voice. We hear a great deal about the right to be heard in democracy but we hear less about the responsibilities and duties that are necessarily implied by this right. Very basically, if I have a right to be heard, then so do others, but it must also be the case that if I have a right to put forward my ideas, then I must also be held accountable for those ideas. And in a classroom, this may be nothing more than being asked to say why one thinks what they think (with deference to good evaluation criteria), but it may also be by gently ensuring that an objection is not overlooked but responded to after careful consideration. These demands may lead to some discomfort, but a necessary discomfort for individual growth, for the community and society at large.

³ Edited from Peter Worley's new book with Roman and Littlefield 'Philosophical Enquiry' due out 2021.

Philosophical enquiry as oracy provision

9. Initiatives aimed at improving children's communication and thinking skills tend to focus on either a democratic exchange of opinions (e.g. circle time) competitive debate or script learning (drama, presentation skills). While all have their benefits, in order to deepen understanding on a given topic and then communicate effectively a combination of the personal reflective nature of some of these initiatives and the rigorous reasoning of others is needed. This dimension can be found in Philosophical Enquiry that develops not only speaking and listening skills but also other aspects crucial to understanding and communicating effectively such as complex reasoning, abstract thinking and metacognitive skills. Furthermore, philosophy's key development is enabling young people to think for themselves in the moment (rather than say, learning a script for a debate or play) and articulate their thinking to the group.
10. The Philosophy Foundation's model of Philosophical Enquiry (PhiE) aims to develop higher-order thinking through philosophy by cultivating a 'philosophical aptitude' in the children that will enhance their learning as a whole. Aspects of a philosophical aptitude include encouraging them to re-evaluate complex ideas from fresh perspectives, giving them the ability to construct and evaluate arguments, and to develop ethical and moral reasoning skills. All of our work is conducted through communities of enquiry with trained and accredited philosophy facilitators. We believe that the best way to help people think well is to invite them to think together. The collaborative aspect of philosophy is not only what makes it enjoyable, but also what stretches each thinker beyond what they could achieve on their own. Our community approach therefore develops cognitive, social and affective skills, improving well-being and quality of life all through oracy skill development.
11. The Philosophy Foundation conduct philosophical enquiry with nursery, primary and secondary school children in school with teachers present and in extra-curricular clubs. Since forming as a social enterprise in 2007 we have worked directly with over 48,000 young people in schools - helping them to develop vital cognitive and affective skills that enhance their school work, and their life beyond school. Over 90% of our schools have more than the national average of children on free school meals (with 56% of our schools having more than double the national average) and are in areas that serve communities with a wide mix of language and educational needs mainly in London. Funds have been declining considerably in education over the last 5 years, and despite this we have maintained an average re-contract rate with schools of 91% since 2010 (when we became a charity) - and last year managed to maintain 92% of our schools. This demonstrates the high level of impact and value schools place on our work, as they pay for it from their own budgets. This year we started working in other areas of the UK including Warwick, Stoke-on-Trent, Sheffield, Manchester, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Portsmouth, Isle of Wight, Jersey, Leeds and in 2019 and beyond we aim to continue this growth.
 - a. "Philosophy with my Year 6 class was a revelation. Children who have never felt confident enough to speak up came out with such insightful comments that others had no choice but to start to take them seriously. Every school should have philosophy as part of the curriculum." Amanda Crook, John Ball Primary School, Lewisham.

12. We achieve our mission through working directly with children in schools in disadvantaged areas, delivering weekly philosophy sessions in the classroom. We train and accredit philosophers to work with children in schools and other learning environments, and we develop resources and training for teachers. We are proud to work in some unique settings where education is not straight forward, including: Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital School; Special education needs schools, and with looked-after children.
13. By working with disadvantaged young people and communities, we are bringing philosophical thinking and oracy skills to those who will benefit most from having them. Independent research carried out by the Institute of Education in 2013 into the impact of our philosophy sessions showed that just one term of philosophy with us improved the reading ability of children on free school meals, as well as improving communication skills, higher-order reasoning and confidence. Alongside these benefits, young people consistently find philosophy engaging and of intrinsic value to their lives. Recent feedback from 200 students taking part in our sessions showed 85% of them saying they enjoyed the philosophy, and 100% saying that other children should learn critical thinking (CT) skills through philosophy, even if they said they didn't enjoy learning the CT skills themselves!
 - a. "Yes, I think philosophy should be taught to others, because if everyone did philosophy everyone would think better, and would think more of life, and if you do it enough it can make you a better person." Year 6 Pupil.
14. Feedback from teachers show that our classes give children skills that help them in their learning across all subjects, and give them social and problem-solving skills that can be used beyond the classroom.
 - a. "Particular thanks for the inspiring philosophy sessions you run for Dalmain's pupils. I've always thought that philosophy is the only subject that is fully inclusive. It shouldn't be a surprise but the children who achieve so well with you are often the children we miss understanding through other subjects." Liz Booth, Dalmain Primary School Headteacher
 - b. "In philosophy, I have noticed a gradual improvement in the quality of the children's responses, from 'every opinion is valid' to a more comparative approach, relating responses to others' and grouping responses. They are also using the metacognition sentence-stems they have explicitly been taught."
 - c. "Overall, the sessions have been totally brilliant. The children have looked forward to them and taking part in the sessions. It was very noticeable, over the course of the weeks, how the children's approach and level of thinking deepened and they showed an increasing maturity with their levels of thought. They responded well to one another's ideas and suggestions, often beginning their answers with: 'I agree with what xxxx said', or 'Following what xxxx said, I think/believe...'. There has been a marked improvement with the way they approached the concepts and ideas."

15. Feedback from parents, headteachers and teachers for the IOE research into The Philosophy Foundation's work undertaken by qualitative researcher Dr Jon Swain in 2013, after one term of philosophy across 12 classes / 8 schools⁴:
- a. "Parents were largely supportive. Around a third thought that their child was now more articulate and put their point of view across more clearly, while others reported being aware of positive changes in their child's listening, reading and concentration.
 - b. "The headteachers (8) had noticed many developments, notably in the children's speaking skills, but also in the way that philosophy had developed their higher-level thinking, their logical reasoning and ability to formulate questions. However, four of the headteachers also stressed the importance of some of the 'softer' benefits such teaching children to listen to each other more carefully, look at each other when they are talking, listening to and respecting each other's opinions, waiting until someone finishes speaking before putting a hand up, responding to the views of others and realising that there is not always one answer.
 - c. "All of the teachers (12) said that they had noticed changes in the whole class in regard of their level of confidence, and by the end of the programme almost all of the children were participating more and prepared to talk in front of the class. Many teachers had also noticed children develop in their speaking (with their answers becoming 'longer and more thoughtful' and their ability to ask questions becoming 'more critical' and also in their general listening skills."

Barriers

16. Both the Cambridge Primary Review and the Rose Review suggest that the lack of improvements in reading, writing and arithmetic are due to an emphasis being put on teaching to test rather than deepening understanding. These education reviews emphasised the importance of linguistic ability in learning. Being able to talk through and explore concepts and ideas as crucial to understanding and problem-solving. More recent reports by the business and education community also state that current Government policy, such as the narrower curriculum and increased content and exam-focus of GCSEs and A levels, are standing in the way of young people developing the skills necessary for working life⁵.
17. Teachers need the time in their curriculum, training and support to help them develop skills to run in enquiries across the curriculum. There are numerous resources available

⁴ <https://www.philosophy-foundation.org/validation-research>

⁵ https://www.educationandemployers.org/research/joint-dialogue/#_ftn3

online and in bookshops that support enquiry based learning and philosophical enquiry (e.g. The Philosophy Foundation members page⁶, shop⁷, SAPERE⁸ and P4C.com).

18. Learning how to question well in order to develop good speaking and listening skills in the classroom can take time, but we have seen it transform teaching and learning in our partner schools. It can be supported through whole school initiatives, where teachers are encouraged to use enquiry across all aspects of the curriculum and children develop a philosophical attitude. The Philosophy Foundation's training in Open Questioning Mindset (OQM) is training in good questioning for enquiry in all subjects from maths to poetry: not only what questions to use and when; much more importantly, it is about cultivating the right questioning attitude in order to use the right questions as effectively as possible. OQM is about how to become a 'listening teacher' in a high-pressure environment.

- a. "The invention – for that is what it is – of the concept of Open Questioning Mindset is a remarkable contribution, not just to the pedagogy of Philosophical Inquiry with Children but to good pedagogy in any context. It is in the true tradition of education – the drawing out of understanding (or misunderstanding, that can be corrected), as opposed to the inculcation of ideas that have no meaning to a child. In an unassuming, but extremely elegant, way, Peter Worley has matched the much more famous pedagogical contribution, 'Growth Mindset', of Carol Dweck. Indeed, it could be argued that a teacher who models and encourages OQM contributes more directly to a child's intellectual growth than one who models and encourages GM. At any rate, a child might be more likely to become a fully self-directed learner through developing an OQM of her own, than merely developing a GM. For it could be through – and only through – the practice of OQM that one might develop the capacity, in the metaphor of Plutarch, to 'light the fire of learning' in and for oneself." Roger Sutcliffe, founding member SAPERE.

19. Another barrier for oracy education is the assessments – not that oracy development cannot be assessed, just that so much emphasis is put on written as opposed to verbal assessments in schools. It is hard and time consuming to individually assess children in group work. However, if we are to assess oracy well we need to look at young people's ability to talk together as they build on each others ideas and arguments – in fact the ability to listen, respond and add to or evaluate another person's idea is a higher-order skill that can only be assessed in relation to others.

20. At The Philosophy Foundation we use qualitative assessments from teachers and philosophers to consider the progress of the group. We have used pupil tracker progress forms in the past, where teachers assess individual development over time (one session

⁶ <https://www.philosophy-foundation.org/members>

⁷ <https://www.philosophy-foundation.org/shop>

⁸ <https://www.sapere.org.uk/resources.aspx>

at the beginning and one towards the end), marking down contributions made by pupils, whether there were reasons given, whether they are elaborating their answers where necessary, and listening for understanding. However, this takes time to do and needs to have the same teacher marking the sheets at the beginning and end of a programme in order for this qualitative data to be compared.

Peter and Emma Worley are willing to give oral evidence to the inquiry.

Additional guidance:

Value and impact

1. Given many teachers recognise the importance of oracy, why does spoken language not have the same status as reading and writing in our education system? Should it have the same status, and if so why?
2. What are the consequences if children and young people do not receive oracy education?
3. What is the value and impact of quality oracy education at i) different life stages, ii) in different settings, and iii) on different types of pupils (for instance pupils from varied socioeconomic backgrounds or with special educational needs)?
4. How can it help deliver the wider curriculum at school?
5. What is the impact of quality oracy education on future life chances? Specifically, how does it affect employment and what value do businesses give oracy?
6. What do children and young people at school and entering employment want to be able to access, what skills do they want to leave school with?
7. What is the value and impact of oracy education in relation to other key agendas such as social mobility and wellbeing/ mental health?
8. How can the ability to communicate effectively contribute to engaging more young people from all backgrounds to become active citizens, participating fully in social action and public life as adults

Provision and access

21. What should high quality oracy education look like?
22. Can you provide evidence of how oracy education is being provided in different areas/education settings/extra-curricular provision, by teachers but also other practitioners that work with children?
23. What are the views of teachers, school leaders and educational bodies regarding the current provision of oracy education?
24. Where can we identify good practice and can you give examples?
25. What factors create unequal access to oracy education (i.e. socio-economic, region, type of school, special needs)? How can these factors be overcome?
26. Relating to region more specifically, how should an oracy-focused approach be altered depending on the context?

Barriers

27. What are the barriers that teachers face in providing quality oracy education, within the education system and beyond?
28. What support do teachers need to improve the delivery of oracy education?

29. What accountability is currently present in the system? How can we further incentivise teachers to deliver more oracy education to children and young people?
30. What is the role of government and other bodies in creating greater incentives and how can this be realised?
31. What is the role of assessment in increasing provision of oracy education? What is the most appropriate form of assessment of oracy skills?
32. Are the speaking and listening elements of the current curriculum sufficient in order to deliver high quality oracy education?
33. What is the best approach – more accountability within the system or a less prescriptive approach?
34. Are there examples of other educational pedagogies where provision has improved and we can draw parallels and learn lessons?