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## Abstract

This paper offers a critical exploration of the Philosophy for Children (P4C) movement, which aims at the expansion of critical, creative and caring thinking skills in students through philosophical dialogue. It describes that such a practice can motivate children to take responsibility in recognizing their thinking and their actions which shape who one is becoming. The paper outlines the historical development of this dialogical framework followed by concentrating on some of the challenges and solutions with respect to the practice of philosophy with children. Some of the dominating concerns raised by the critics of philosophical practice are addressed, before surveying the evidence to the effectiveness of such an approach using philosophical, sociological and psychological arguments. The paper offers a systematic critical review of studies that have implemented philosophical inquiry with children in different educational settings to find that its practice enables children to participate in an open community through reason. The concluding argument states implications for philosophical practice in the fields of implementation in education and future directions in research. The paper makes a final claim that engaged philosophical inquiry is a crucial and necessary means for the emergence and further social and emotional advancement in pupils where children can attain a stable sense of personal well-being.

Keywords: Philosophy for Children; Philosophical Inquiry; Community of Inquiry; P4C; criticism; Effects.

## Descobrimos a eficácia da investigação filosófica com crianças

### Resumo

Este artigo apresenta um estudo crítico do movimento da Filosofia para Crianças (FpC), que visa à expansão de habilidades de pensamento crítico, criativo e cuidadoso em estudantes por meio do diálogo filosófico. Descreve que tais práticas são capazes de incentivar as crianças a assumirem a responsabilidade no reconhecimento de seus pensamentos e ações, dando contorno ao que elas estão se tornando. O artigo delinea o desenvolvimento histórico dessa abordagem dialógica, para, em seguida, concentrar-se em alguns dos desafios e soluções a respeito da prática de filosofia para crianças. Algumas das principais preocupações levantadas pelos críticos da prática filosófica são abordadas usando argumentos filosóficos, sociológicos e psicológicos, antes de pesquisar a evidência da efetividade de tal abordagem. Este artigo apresenta uma revisão crítica dos estudos que implementaram a investigação filosófica com crianças em diferentes contextos educativos para considerar que esta prática possibilita às crianças a participação em uma comunidade aberta por meio da razão. O argumento conclusivo considera implicações para a prática filosófica tanto nos campos de

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sua implementação na educação quanto para futuros rumos na pesquisa. Esse artigo traz a afirmação final de que Pesquisa Filosófica Engajada é um meio crucial e necessário para a fazer emergir e promover crescimento social e emocional nos alunos, que podem alcançar um sentimento estável de bem-estar pessoal.

Palavras chaves: Filosofia para Crianças; Investigação Filosófica; Comunidade de Investigação; FpC; criticismo; Efeitos

### **Descubriendo la eficacia de la indagación filosófica con niños**

#### Resumen

Este trabajo ofrece una exploración crítica del movimiento Filosofía para Niños, el cual apunta al desarrollo de habilidades de pensamiento crítico, creativo y cuidadoso en los estudiantes a través del diálogo filosófico. El trabajo describe el desarrollo histórico de este marco teórico para luego concentrarse en algunos desafíos y soluciones relativos a la práctica de filosofía con niños. Algunas de las principales preocupaciones planteadas por los críticos de la práctica filosófica se dirigen a tal examen usando argumentos filosóficos, sociológicos e psicológicos antes de considerar la evidencia sobre tal enfoque. Este trabajo ofrece una revisión crítica sistemática de los estudios que han implementado la indagación filosófica con niños en diferentes escenarios educativos para averiguar que esta práctica permite a los niños participar en una comunidad abierta a través de la razón. El argumento conclusivo establece implicancias para la práctica filosófica y direcciones futuras para la investigación junto con un pedido final por la investigación filosófica comprometida como medio necesario y crucial para que aparezca y se desarrolle un crecimiento emocional y social en los alumnos.

Palabras claves: Filosofía para Niños, indagación filosófica, comunidad de indagación, fpn, criticismo, efectos.

## UNCOVERING THE EFFICACY OF PHILOSOPHICAL INQUIRY WITH CHILDREN

### *The Origins of Philosophical Inquiry with Children*

Philosophy is often assumed to be a practice reserved for adults who possess encyclopedic knowledge, yet its characteristics lie in the questioning and criticizing of ideas that are immediately given, in an effort to extract wisdom- an act seemingly possible by any individual. This current, although mistaken, assumption is paradoxical when considering, Socrates, one of the founders of Western philosophy, would actively engage in philosophy simply by uncovering knowledge through ironic questioning (Daniel & Auriac, 2011). Similar to Socrates, Matthew Lipman, recognized as the founder of Philosophy for Children (P4C) in 1974, aimed to create independent discoverers of knowledge in children by reimagining philosophy to be made enticing and comprehensible for such an age group (Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children [IAPC], n.d.; Millett & Tapper, 2012). Lipman believed that instead of repetition and memorization of knowledge, children could draw from their own personal experience in order to acquire the ability to think critically (Millett & Tapper, 2012). To Lipman, good thinking was a technique to be practiced where children could express themselves in three equally important dimensions, either via critical thinking such as, attending to certain rules, criteria and reason; they could think creatively through generative attempts at inventing ways of expression, and going beyond safe concepts; and they could think caringly when prompted to feel empathetic and affective (Phillips, 2011). Such thinking skills can help children distinguish amongst all the information they receive, and integrate discovered insights cultivated on their own (Daniel & Auriac, 2011). Rather than soaking up beliefs and prejudices imposed by society, through the training of free and reflective minds, philosophical education holds the power to prepare everyone for the challenges in today's society (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2007).

The importance of reflective thinking resonates with developmental psychologist, Lev Vygotsky, who maintained development as unraveling through verbal exchanges among peers (Daniel & Auriac, 2011). Vygotsky influenced Matthew Lipman's interactive approach to philosophy between the deliberations of the adult and child, whereby zones of proximal development can be created (Kennedy, 2012). In this dynamic, the resulting level of confidence placed in the potential for rational thought in the child contributes to his or her zone of proximal development (UNESCO, 2007). The zone of proximal development shows the existing distance between the actual development of the child and the potential that is instilled in the developmental ability of the child (Edwards, 2005). When children collaborate with others and engage in activities that they could not have performed by themselves, they can gain conceptual understanding by internalizing the characteristics that makes their achievements independently possible (Edwards, 2005). Activities that may enhance the zone of proximal development of a child exemplify how knowledge can be created socially, and the potential that individuals can strive towards can be distinguished through working with others (Wertsch, 2008). The potential that is identified in the zone of proximal development refers to intellectual functions that are in the process of maturing. Therefore, since children of the same age can differ in their ability in achievement of certain tasks, educators are left with the difficult task of providing settings with qualities appropriate to the unique potentials of each child. Such an awakening of internal developmental processes that take place within a child during interaction and cooperation is a Vygotskian feature of cultural development where social practices are then internalized (Millett & Tapper, 2012). Similar to philosophical inquiry, the external expression of differing viewpoints in the Community of Inquiry can create a sense of shared active thinking that can then become internalized by its participants (Merçon & Armstrong, 2011).

When children engage in a community of philosophical inquiry, they can feel reason on their own, which satisfies the educational theory of John Dewey that

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education cannot be possible if the real interests of the child are not triggered (Kennedy, 2012). Dewey believed that dialectical relationships can result in the reconstruction of habits of belief, and the Community of Inquiry is effective in creating a space where children can relinquish their learned habits and opt to play with an alternative meaning of the world (Kennedy, 2012; Weber, 2011). Furthermore, philosophy among children is not just a truth-seeking process. According to philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, philosophical problems are not to be solved through new information, but dissolved by rearranging what has always been known (Murriss, 2000). Consequently, a Community of Inquiry gives children the freedom to take what has been learned and relate it to their own experience in new ways (Millett & Tapper, 2012). In an attempt to promote an extensive implementation of philosophical inquiry with children across the educational systems of today, the following will explore the prominent features and criticisms of Philosophy for Children and other similar philosophical programs for children, with a focus on the research dedicated to measuring the effects of such an approach, along with its significance and suggestions for future directions in this field of study.

### *Criticisms of Philosophical Inquiry*

Although UNESCO (2007) recognized discussion and the asking of questions as fundamental skills to be learned for autonomous and critical thinking development in children, Philosophy for Children (P4C) continues to be practiced in many countries but rarely as part of the main curriculum, even though its engagement encompasses critical, creative, and caring thinking skills in children (Bleazby, 2012; Millett & Tapper, 2012). The Community of Inquiry method lends children a space to justify their views, generate new ones, and enhance communication skills as well as empathy. Such opportunities suggest that philosophical inquiry can be a desirable mode for fostering transferrable skills such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, and emotional intelligence (Trickey & Topping, 2006). The atmosphere of the space that is created

during philosophical inquiry is inclusive where children can take risks without feeling intimidated by their own lack of knowledge.

However, the notion of practicing philosophy with children has suffered from criticisms. For example, skeptics view philosophy as an abstract discipline suitable only for academically-minded adults, because children are deemed incapable of critical and reflective thinking. This faulty assumption regarding childhood is due to the theory of cognitive development by Piaget, labeling children under the age of eight as incapable of taking the point of view of another person (McLeod, 2009; Millett & Tapper, 2012). However, children do seem to have knowledge of the other since as early as three years of age, they understand that people can communicate inaccurate information and can indicate some individuals as being more reliable sources than others (Heyman, 2008).

Yet, others consider philosophy as an inappropriate practice for children since it entails the recalling of abstract facts. This is ironic since Socrates himself began by reflecting on life through a dialectic method of inquiry than exhausting himself over fact retention. Meanwhile, abstract ideas are usually developed through a systematic manner of thinking that not only children, but also non-philosophically trained adults find difficult to do as well. Therefore, it is the training in philosophical inquiry that should be taken into consideration when doubting the ability of an individual to engage in philosophy, than the age of a child (Murriss, 2000). Perhaps critics have mistaken learning traditional philosophy, which requires autonomy of thought and philosophical knowledge, with Philosophy for Children's only demand that the child brings an intrinsic motivation to participate in dialogical exchange (Daniel & Auriac, 2011). Indeed children may lack a wide array of vocabulary upon expression of their ideas, but lack of language should not be mistaken with an inability to learn philosophy (Long, 2005). Therefore, critics must refrain from comparing the way of thinking of a child to adult reason, because the way a child invents meaning could be more fantasied than less rational (Murriss, 2000). Instead, adults should welcome the naivety and vagueness children bring into the Community of Inquiry because the

practice gives them the freedom to question and inquire into the significance of their lives. This is a valuable aspect of philosophical inquiry since children are without knowledge of the conventions of society and must start from scratch when thinking of philosophical questions, and as a result can invent answers even more fruitful than adults.

The philosophical stories used by facilitators as stimuli have left some critics assuming that students are discussing topics they have experienced second-hand, which can be an overly logical approach (Millett & Tapper, 2012). However, within the community of philosophical inquiry the facilitator is not limited to using novels, and has the option to apply any relevant medium, such as an image, game, film or any activity that can serve as a stimulus in awakening the interest of the child in the discussion (Topping & Tricky, 2007).

Moreover, some critics advocate refraining from philosophical practice with children for it exposes them to the dark realities of existence and prevents an optimistic transition from childhood to adolescence. What such skeptics fail to consider is that philosophy gives children an opportunity to gradually extract meaning; therefore, preparing them for the different phases of their development. In addition, many children at five years of age may not experience cognitive conflicts due to not sufficiently comprehending some abstract concepts. Instead what can result is the stimulation and sharpening of the views of children during that age (Daniel, Gagnon, & Pettier, 2012).

Lastly, some teachers may hesitate to practice philosophy with their younger students because they fear the fostered imagination of children can affect all subject areas by complicating the content, resulting in a disruption to a curriculum focused on the accumulation of facts (Bleazby, 2012). Surely, the anxiety felt by teachers is due to the standards of the school district that have been set by policymakers. However, teachers should not feel apprehension when the children of today are faced with multiple messages through the television, internet and other media, and

philosophical deliberation among children strengthens the ability to respond to conventions and to self-correct habits of thought, feeling and action (IAPC, n.d.).

### *Philosophical Inquiry in Practice*

Philosophical inquiry with children unfolds in a space with the teacher representing a facilitator, who assists in building a constructive dialogue involving rational questioning, agreement and disagreement in the exploration of meaning and attainment of shared understanding (Millett & Tapper, 2012). Instead of reading the works of renowned philosophers, sociocognitive questioning is a powerful tool in teaching children how to philosophize by asking open-ended questions that stimulate their need to ask further questions (Millett & Tapper, 2012). What is learned is internalized after a group effort in the reconstruction, exploration, and self-correction of the philosophical beliefs of each individual (Kennedy, 2012; Millett & Tapper, 2012). The circular positioning of children in the Community of Inquiry has a built-in social dimension where children are not only required to practice democracy through listening and responding respectfully, but it also encourages the conveying of emotions through evident facial and behavioural displays between participants (Schertz, 2007). Consequently, empathy can flourish as children engage in a relational field with others during emotionally powerful topics, for it causes others to remember similar feelings and emotionally relive those events (Schertz, 2007).

It is especially the responsibility of the facilitator to remain conscientious of the exchanges to not spiral into a conversation, where evaluation of perspectives does not take place. Facilitators must also refrain from imposing authoritative views, which can infect the space of freedom and safety created in the Community of Inquiry. According to Paul Freire, teachers must engage in common reflection and action with their students and create a knowledge of reality where in this dynamic the teacher is no longer the one who teaches, but is taught in dialogue with students (Scrimsher & Tudge, 2003). Rather, children in the community are exercising cognitive skills in search of questioning by partaking in dialogue that is constantly being transformed,



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and leading to increased meaning. Through dialogue, participants in the Community of Inquiry achieve freedom, because they are given space to experiment with doubt, to share opinions, and to be especially attentive to similarities, differences, and contradictions. Overall, through philosophical inquiry, children can gain a deeper understanding of views different from their own, which empowers them to lend space to the other in the community of dialogue and to embrace differences of opinion.

### *The Effects of Implementing Philosophical Inquiry*

Much research has been dedicated to measuring the impact of the practice of a community of philosophical inquiry with children. In the assessment of cognitive reasoning skills in over 18 primary schools participating in weekly inquiry for 16 months, Keith Topping and Steve Trickey (2006) found an increased average of six standard points on cognitive abilities. In fact, when the students left primary school and received no further weekly inquiry opportunities, their improved cognitive abilities were sustained for up to two years. Other researchers have found similar results by analyzing 18 studies which implanted a Philosophy for Children approach and found improvements in reasoning skills. This is notable, given Philosophy for Children was practiced for just one year in all of the studies reviewed (Garcia-Moriyon, Robello, & Colom, 2005). A similar study focusing on children between 10 to 12 years of age found, that compared to non-intervention controls, weekly philosophical collaborative inquiry lead to gains in verbal cognitive ability and quantitative reasoning ability, regardless of school and gender (Topping & Trickey, 2007a).

However, one may argue that results of philosophical inquiry can vary depending on differences in teacher understanding and implementation of the program. The study by Shipman addressed this issue by assessing the thinking skills of 2,200 students between 5<sup>th</sup> through 7<sup>th</sup> grade in the New Jersey school system, and even after adjusting for teacher differences between groups, those students in the

Philosophy for Children program had higher formal and informal reasoning skills, in contrast to their non-intervention peers (as cited in IAPC, n.d.).

Additionally, dialogical interactions do promote an ability for children to transfer their strengthened skills to other subject areas, since Lipman, Sharp and Oscanyan studied 200 children between the ages of 10 to 13 years undergoing philosophical inquiry for two years, and found significant improvements in reading, mathematics, creative thinking and logical reasoning, when compared to a similar group who did not participate in Community of Inquiry sessions (as cited in Society for the Advancement of Philosophical Enquiry and Reflection in Education [SAPERRE], n.d.).

Other research has found the Community of Inquiry to result in students being more able to accept their own mistakes with fewer behaviour management problems, along with gains in self-esteem across schools (Millett & Tapper, 2012; Trickey & Topping, 2006). Similarly, Collins compared the results of pre/post-test questionnaires focusing on justificatory thinking in 133 ethnically diverse children and identified a growth in their ability to think of issues empathetically and a higher frequency of reflection towards consequences for all members involved after engaging in philosophical inquiry (as cited in Millett & Tapper, 2012).

In fact, contrary to the conception of cognitive development suggested by Piaget, impressive effects of Philosophy for Children have been observed in children 5 years of age who demonstrated a greater ability to verbalize their thoughts, understand their peers' points of view and react dialogically, in comparison to children who did not take part in the P4C program (Daniel et al., 2012). The positive impact of this program is even more promising when Topping and Trickey (2007b) measured the effects of weekly Philosophy for Children sessions on 10 and 11 year-olds over the period of 16 months in more than 300 classrooms using tools such as Cognitive Abilities Test (CAT), Myself as a Learner Scale (MAL), video analysis and questionnaires to find that, in comparison to a control group, P4C can raise students' chances of achieving a significantly better grade by 20-25%.

In another field of research, Philosophy for Children has been used within a clinical psychology framework. In 2000, Doherr evaluated the effects of Philosophy for Children on children undergoing Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). The skills necessary for producing a successful outcome from CBT involve the ability of children to name different emotions and to link thoughts with their feelings. Doherr found that those children who had been regularly involved in Philosophy for Children outperformed their peers in all elements of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. Even when the children were matched for IQ scores, those who had used Philosophy for Children outperformed their controls. This suggests that the practice of philosophical inquiry can be beneficial to children's emotional well-being as well as in aiding a positive outcome for those undergoing psychological therapy.

Even previous and post-treatment measures amongst preschool children between the ages of 4 and 5 years, found that children who received Philosophy for Children practice significantly improved in emotional comprehension and social competence (Giménez-Dasí, Quintanilla, & Daniel, 2013). Philosophy for Children has also been known to develop the listening and speaking skills in children at a faster rate, leading them to become more patient with others and reflective about their own feelings and behaviours (Millett & Tapper, 2012). Furthermore, philosophical inquiry has been associated with an increase in positive feelings in children about their abilities, since one study indicated increases in self-confidence and academic self-esteem in children between 11 and 12 years of age, along with reduced dependency and anxiety after only seven months of practice (Trickey & Topping, 2006). Additionally, the study by Author and Delsol focused on 4 and 5 year-old children engaging in philosophical practice, discovered increased usage of words during expression, and the ability to associate emotions not just in observable forms, but also to recognize the role others play in the emergence of their own emotions and its social significance as well (as cited in Giménez-Dasí et al., 2013). To bring awareness of emotions means to involve children in a special form of discussion to enhance their thinking, learning and language skills.

### *The Significance of Engaged Philosophical Inquiry*

The research on the effects of a community of philosophical inquiry provides promising motives for incorporating philosophical dialogue as common practice in school curricula. Firstly, bringing philosophy to schools is one way of directing effort towards the sense of disconnectedness and alienation many young people experience throughout their academic years. The exchanges that take place during dialogue provides for the growth of empathy within individuals. Meaning, empathy requires imagining the perspectives of others, thereby leading members to transform reality. By transforming reality through individual efforts, children interact with the environment more harmoniously and feel an increased level of personal happiness. Dewey believed that communal inquiry is objective because it integrates diverse perspectives that are examined in a broader field of experience; therefore, it is more likely to be effective than individual inquiry (Bleazby, 2012). It is important for students to learn not just how to think critically, but also how to become skilled in cooperative dialogue by contributing their own ideas in shaping the evolution of discussion (Schertz, 2007).

The increased awareness that ensues from empathy fosters social and personal growth; yet imagination, which is integral to the development of empathy, is not prevalent in the design of curricula in educational systems and is often “sidelined by agendas that are more urgent” (Bleazby, 2012, p.103). Neglecting spaces that can foster imaginative growth in children is denying them opportunities to imagine alternate possibilities with others, which in turn can empower them to imagine socially reconstructive ideas. Since engaged philosophical inquiries enable the capacity for imagination, children are less likely to fear problems because when they experience any ideas that doubt their own beliefs, they are able to respond imaginatively and create a new understanding, rather than react defensively. In other words, children become inclined to be open-minded to alternative beliefs and more prone to readily self-correct (Bleazby, 2012).

This notion of flexible and creative thinking referred to, as imaginative thinking by Matthew Lipman, can be beneficial to marginalized groups of children in helping them feel acknowledged. For such children, the embracing of the imagination may be highly valued because often their interests and personal experiences are not echoed in the dominant culture. Indeed, the capacity to empathize is essential for multiculturalism, since empathy is viewed as being the “emotional reason to engage in democratic dialogue with the other” (Schertz, 2007, p.186). The need to cultivate more empathetic minds in young children is especially significant as multiculturalism is becoming increasingly prevalent in Western countries, and with it demands more interpersonal and interactive relationships.

Besides its previously mentioned cognitive effects, engagement in philosophical inquiry can have emotional effects as well, such as the enhancement of emotional intelligence in individuals. This is a critical asset because emotions immensely impact the sense of identity and self-esteem of an individual, along with the shaping of interpersonal relationships (Giménez-Dasí et al., 2013). The successful development of the emotional intelligence of a child is especially important because researchers such as Edwards, Manstead and MacDonald (1984) have found that children who have an understanding of emotions and can recognize the causes of their own emotions as a result, are more likely to be accepted by others in their schools. In fact, the more they engage in conversations about their emotions, the better able they are in regulating their own emotions.

To provide children opportunities to engage in philosophical inquiry is to liberate them from the traditional norms of the classroom where teachers are the sole form of authority. Children partly shape their identities, thoughts, and actions by conforming to the ideas they have implicitly derived from a teacher, who has also embodied his/her ideas from certain institutions (Merçon & Armstrong, 2011). Through engaging in dialogue with peers, children understand that they are not forced to accept adult-derived conceptions of moral truths, and instead they are being supported in moulding their own views, which they can transfer more readily to

other situations outside of the classroom since those values feel authentic to them. By inquiring into the problematic, philosophical inquiry gives space to children to realize that they are a part of the society at large, and to value the importance in challenge and reason in one's life and with others (Cassidy, 2012).

Modern ideology admires those individuals who do not need the help of others, and such conjured independence can threaten specific individuals in society. As long as contemporary culture displays intolerance towards admitting to one's vulnerabilities and views such qualities as indicators of weakness, many individuals are left to suffer as society relegates responsibility for fragilities to the personal sphere, rather than the social one (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2012). Since philosophy predates psychotherapy, with more emphasis given to collaboration and inquiry, perhaps the engagement in the inclusive atmosphere of philosophical dialogue at a young age can be a path for individuals to air the most conflicting problems facing them. After all, the proponents of the philosophical counselling movement view their patients as investors who as a result get greater returns on their investment in living (Raabe, 1999).

Some may criticize the research exemplifying the benefits derived from philosophy with children since they may presume self-reports to be an unreliable measurement of values in children. However, the effects that take place after engaging in philosophical inquiry are demonstrated through actions of children as well, such as improved self-esteem as a learner, empathy, and social behaviour. Such qualities are not only reported by children, but observable and largely confirmed by teachers as well (Millett & Tapper, 2012). Additionally, in one study, the improved quality of dialogue amongst students prompted teachers to reassess the capability of their students and to doubt standardized testing as a reliable indicator of the academic ability of a child (Jenkins & Lyle, 2010). Furthermore, the use of philosophical dialogue with children can provide a clearer depiction of the mentality of a child than self-report questionnaires, or other methods that transmit techniques to children. In these scenarios, the adult no longer conveys knowledge, but the child

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reflects in dialogue on social and emotional questions by pouring the processes in his/her mind.

The practice of philosophy with children is not only used as a measurement tool, but also as an intervention on its own. For example, Camhy used collaborative philosophical inquiry as an effective treatment in an experimental study about xenophobia where it yielded in significant improvement in open-mindedness and tolerance towards foreign people (as cited in IAPC, n.d.). A recent analysis examining 13,737 students found empathy to be dramatically declining by an average of 40% among American college students since 1979 (Konrath, O'Brien, & Hsing, 2011). Perhaps the increase in sensitivity arising from the Community of Inquiry method can be incorporated into programs designed to combat problematic behaviours such as bullying.

In another study, Sasseville (1994) compared gains in self-esteem between 124 children who practiced Philosophy for Children and 96 students as controls, and he found the largest improvements in self-esteem to be amongst students who had the lowest self-esteem. Perhaps philosophical inquiry with children can serve as an intervention for children with low self-esteem to find value within themselves by having members of the community critically listen and support their ideas. Despite the United Nations Convention declaring children as members of society and their right to have something to say about the matters that affect them, unfortunately many classrooms do not enter into an interactive teaching style, and instead the teacher relies on talking at students than *with* students (Cassidy, 2012; Topping & Trickey, 2007b). In a Community of Inquiry, however, it is vital that educators remain curious about the ideas of children and to inspire them to grasp the practice of reasoning.

### ***Conclusion***

Not only must children become responsible in interacting with the dissimilarity amongst the individuals that they encounter, but teachers must also be flexible with students who suffer from social exclusion and should incorporate ways

to create belongingness. Unless teachers, as facilitators, do not welcome a sense of acceptance and confidence within the process of inquiry, shy and hesitant students will continue to doubt their own contributions. As philosophical practice becomes more prevalent, and when it comes to harmonious implementation of philosophical inquiry with children, a potential obstacle facing this field is the maintenance of a balance between engaging children in accordance to the needs of their cultural groups and appropriate teacher training and resources.

Different fields of research can benefit from philosophical inquiry with children as a methodology to uncover a window to the perspective of the child. Future research can address a gap in the literature of philosophical inquiry with children by conducting greater longitudinal research, since most studies examine the effects of this practice throughout the span of one year. Perhaps longitudinal research that goes beyond one year can detect if and when the development of higher-order thinking skills will either plateau or continue to surpass those children who never receive similar inquiry practice. Society is responsible in the development of successful individuals and an attempt to bridge intergenerational differences can be through the Community of Inquiry practice. In the Community of Inquiry, the child demonstrates courage by daring to go beyond what is given based on personal doubts and wonder. Yet one essential initiative requires society to shed itself of preconceived biases of philosophy as solitary thinking, and to instead view it as an activity that is accessible with defining features of relevant dialogue, embodiment and imagination catered to children (Murriss, 2000).

In a society of multiculturalism, children immigrating to different countries can benefit from philosophical dialogue. They are given an opportunity to belong, practice English but also imagine how the world appears to the other and oneself. Philosophy is an activity of clarification that can promote awareness of the importance of cultural diversity in a global world. As common practice, the outcome of engaged philosophical dialogue amongst children can foster the ability to reason, question ideas, recognize relationships, and develop new concepts. But such



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pedagogy can also enhance the sensitivity in children and harbour empathy. Equipping the next generation of adults with empathy enables children to make an effort to understand the struggles of those around them and brings an understanding of humanity as a whole. With greater empathy and inquiry, young people can be socially and cognitively prepared to make rational judgments and prevent discrimination. This bridging of different views liberates the future generation to become critical, sensitive, and originate alternative ways of thinking in order to seek meaning in an ever-changing world.

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