At The Interface
Cutting-Edge Research

Creative Engagements:
Thinking with Children

Edited by

Daniel Shepherd

Inter-Disciplinary Press
Publishing Creative Research

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Thinking with Children

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Daniel Shepherd

Oxford, United Kingdom

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Introduction

On the morning of July 14th, 2005; a group of international philosophers, teachers, educational professionals, and educational specialists gathered at Mansfield College in Oxford, England for a conference entitled “Creative Engagements: Thinking with Children”. Many of the presentations from that conference are collected into this volume. These essays comprise a written record of the ideas which served as the initial foundation for further dialogue at the conference.

Even after the conference has ended, the dialogue which arose out of these essays continues to constitute a remarkable exploration of interdisciplinary perspectives on creatively engaging with children. However, in order to fully appreciate this conference record, the dialogue which sprung from it, and the professionals and thinkers which were its genesis, we must first pause and explore precisely why this conference initiated such a remarkable dialogue. To be sure, without the interaction which the conference facilitated, the dialogue would never have been possible. In this light, let us consider what may constitute a remarkable interaction and why it was so aptly translated into a dialogue concerning creative engagement and thinking with children.

* * *

Undoubtedly, interaction between subjects involves the potential for many disparate and unremarkable possibilities. These possibilities range from chance meetings to encounters motivated by sources external to the subject. However, interaction between subjects need not always remain completely unremarkable. That is to say, not every interaction shall be disparate; some will converge and draw subjects into a closer form of relation.

To this end, we may recognize several primary forms of convergent interaction which transcend the bare possibilities of the mundane and unremarkable. These convergences shall be immediately recognized by their *characteristic remarkableness*. The qualities of characteristic remarkableness within convergent interactions shall always transcend those disparate and unremarkable interactions.

In identifying those qualities of characteristic remarkableness within convergent interaction we may separate three primary qualities which exemplify ‘remarkableness’.

First, interaction which is remarkable shall never be divergent. Quite the contrary, remarkable interaction remains *convergent*. Convergent interaction halts those breaks which occur along traditional fissures such as class and economy. It unites subjects under a common cause or goal.

Second, interaction which is remarkable shall be *transcendent* of the mundane. That is, remarkable interaction lifts the subject past those common encounters that permeate their existence as subject. In transcendent interaction the subject finds themselves united with new and different interactions.

Finally, because of the qualities of the first two characteristics, a third quality arises which allows remarkable interactions to be comprehended within a greater understanding of their possibility. In this case we recognize that the interaction which is remarkable, being both convergent and transcendent, shall allow the interaction *itself* to become the embodiment of characteristic remarkableness- *a remarkable possibility*.

In this circumstance, we regard the becoming of the interaction that is remarkable as that which was once unremarkable. The transference from one paradigm of possibility to a new paradigm of possibility becomes that which, itself, bares new potential within the larger possibility of convergent interaction. Within the larger possibility of all convergent interactions, the characteristic remarkableness of the present convergent interaction becomes, itself, a remarkable possibility. The interaction, now a remarkable possibility, has become that which is *genuinely remarkable*.

Interaction that is genuinely remarkable is therefore unique and extra-ordinary. This interaction shall not hamper, divide, or remain common. Therefore, because of the nature of its qualities, the genuinely remarkable undoubtedly carries the subject beyond every possibility connected to disparate interaction.

That interaction which is genuinely remarkable will manifest itself under these qualities. However, with regard to the actual existence of this interaction, to which form shall we look? In other words, in which form will these qualitative logical classifications converge within our common organic experience?

In its primacy ‘interaction’ may be characterized as that meeting which takes place between subjects. In order that the meeting which takes place between subjects pertains to those qualities of a genuinely remarkable interaction, the interaction must yield a meeting that is unique and extra-ordinary. Furthermore, the subjects involved in the interaction must meet in a manner which will foster unity through convergence and transcendence.

The meeting which fosters convergence and transcendence through unity is *engagement*; engagement which is, in every sense of the word, unique and extra-ordinary is *creative engagement.* The potential for creative engagement becomes that which will present itself as a remarkable possibility. In this manner creative engagement is genuinely remarkable.

Let us pause and consider the proceeding argument more carefully. First, why is the meeting which fosters convergence and transcendence through unity necessarily engagement?

It is easy to recognize organic attributes in the meeting which takes place between subjects. When two or more subjects interact the interaction is derived from their coming together in space or time. For each subject this meeting represents, in its most basic sense, those potentials which may follow from any such organic coming together.

However, this potential becomes more clearly realized when each subject *them self* understands the meetings existence, that is acknowledges the meeting, as an acknowledged interaction. Acknowledged interaction realizes the potential which is shared between the subjects. This new unity of their potential becomes more fundamental than the common or mundane interaction which the subjects do not share. In their acknowledgment the subjects find unity. The unity offers them a greater possibility of interaction in their organic convergence. The unity offers them a greater possibility of interaction in its transcendence of those unacknowledged potentials.

In acknowledged interaction, because that which may be said to be engaged between the subjects is that which presents itself as a unity of potential, that classification which best describes this organic unity is 'engagement'. Thus, engagement becomes the unity of that meeting which takes place between subjects.

Subsequently, the subject may recognize the unity of engagement in their common parlances. In those cases when one may be said *to be engaged in that which they are doing*, for instance, the subject is unified with the task at hand. More fundamentally, the subject may recognize that to be engaged is to be *engaged in* the thing. Thus, the subject that is properly engaged is the subject who resides within the unity of the thing.

The subject that is properly engaged may also be characterized by those qualities of characteristic remarkableness noted above. When one is engaged as a unity one becomes converged with that in which they are engaged. In this convergence, the subject has left their divergence aside, thus transcending disunity to find unity. In this manner the interaction of subjects which are convergent and transcendent necessarily constitutes engagement as a unity.

Now we turn to the second question, why is engagement, which is, in every sense of the word, unique and extra-ordinary, necessarily creative engagement?

To discover this answer we must explore the 'creative' in its essence. The ability to be creative- the possession of that inclination that is defined by creativity- may be said to come from that subject who embodies these properties in a pure manner- a creator. In a significant sense, a creator is a subject who is the originating impulse from which further 'creative' dimensions arise.

This sense of creator as originating impulse is directly related to the Latin derivation of creator: *begetter.* The Latin term includes two modified roots, the *creator* or *creatrix*, which signifies the father or mother as the subject who begets. In this sense those who beget, *the creative ones,* are those who embody the sense of creativity as an organic originating impulse. Thus those who create must have the ability to beget and their creations shall be beholden to them as being begotten. Through the realization that begetter and begotten may be understood as being unified in the creative moment, creator and creation become a unity of engagement.

By incorporating the unity of engagement into that which is creative we find that what is creative must foster unity through convergence and transcendence. The creativity which shall adequately discover unity through convergence and transcendence will be the creativity which is extra-ordinary and unique.

A convergence may be said to be remarkable through its unique gathering away from that which is divergence. A transcendence may be said to be remarkable through its extra-ordinary movement past that which is unremarkable. In this manner that which is a unity discovered through unique convergence and extra-ordinary transcendence is necessarily creative engagement.

We recall that genuinely remarkable interaction shall always be recognized, as such, because it will necessarily carry the qualities of convergent rather than disparate interaction. When we consider the subjects involved in creative engagements, we find it necessarily true that through the unity discovered through unique convergence and extra-ordinary transcendence, the subject has become part of a convergent rather than disparate interaction. Consequentially, those subjects that are involved in creative engagement shall necessarily be involved in genuinely remarkable interactions.

Therefore, when we keep in mind the proceeding arguments, we may assert with confidence that creative engagement necessarily involves genuinely remarkable interactions between subjects.

At this point we have affirmed that interactions may either be unremarkable and disparate or remarkable and convergent. This latter type of interaction, because of the qualities which inform its characteristic remarkableness, leads the subject to interaction which is genuinely remarkable. We have also affirmed that one organic example which necessarily involves those interactions which are genuinely remarkable is creative engagement.

Therefore, having progressed in this manner, we tighten our inquiry by focusing on one specific interaction in which creative engagement takes place: thinking with children.

If one type of common interaction is the interaction with children, the possibility of 'thinking with children' represents a very uncommon manifestation of this interaction. To explore this point we contrast the unremarkable interaction with children against the remarkable interaction with children.

Because, as educators, philosophers, and social beings we are 'surrounded by' children, we are often wont to consider their existence as a mere corollary to our own existence. In this manner the interaction between the subject and the child remains merely the *thinking about the child*. That is, the subject's interaction with the child remains disparate because their thinking remains separate from the child.

However, if we consider the fact that we are 'founded in' the child, we must consider our interaction with them in a different light. In this way the interaction between the subject and the child becomes the *thinking with the child*. In this mode, the subject's interaction with the child becomes convergent and unified. In this unity the subject also affirms the genuinely remarkable nature of the interaction.

Because 'thinking with children' offers a genuinely remarkable interaction between the subject and the child, thinking with children is grounded in the subject's creative engagements with children.

As interaction, thinking with children has the potential to be genuinely remarkable. It is through creative engagement that thinking with children shall embody this potential in its fullest sense. In this volume, 17 different perspectives are given which describe interactions which seek to creatively engage thinking with children.

Taken as a whole, this volume becomes a record of the conference which took place at Oxford, England during July of 2005. For those who participated in the conference, many of whom may be found in this volume, the conference served as a touchstone from which a greater dialogue was generated. This dialogue itself became the foundation upon which a unity of interaction was formed. The conference participants expressed their approval of the positive aspects of these interactions. The unity which the interactions came to represent may be more appropriately categorized as the type of interaction which has already been described as genuinely remarkable. Consequently, in their unity, the conference participants became convergent in their ideas about thinking with children; in their unity the conference participants also transcended that which could have remained unremarkable in their interactions.

Taken in its constituent parts, that is, each individual essay, this volume becomes 17 strong perspectives which regard a one type of genuinely remarkable interaction: creative engagement as thinking with children. To this end, with the authors' indulgence, we may construct an artificial division between essays which represent a unity as convergence and a unity as transcendence.

According to the definition of convergence laid out above, those essays which represent a unity as convergence shall unite subjects under a common cause or goal. This commonality shall never be divergent and will serve to mend breaks along traditional fissures. Convergence will show that opportunities exist where they were not necessarily expected.

After noting the false assumption that creativity is limited to being a property of innovative products or exceptional individuals alone, Sharon Lee, goes on to show that creativity is a system of multidimensional thought germane to inventive thinking in any discipline and that creativity is a foundational element of learning. Lefkothea Kartasidou explores the questions that arise regarding special education and children with severe disabilities and discusses how creativity in its broadest sense can help a child with severe disabilities increase interactions.

By providing an account of the salient features of human-centered education, Deborah Whitford writes against hard-core materialist philosophies which may stifle children. In order to combat the view that philosophical thinking has no application to matters of the real world, Gilbert Burgh illustrates that the reasoning behind this view is mistaken and shows why the ability to think critically and creatively through philosophical inquiry will provide an intellectual context to those issues related to all areas of study.

Writing on the content-based study of English in Greek classrooms, Pericles Tangas shows how students combine the learning of English with other subjects to the effect of providing pupils with increased awareness of multicultural/multilingual aspects of language learning and develops a multi-faceted development of children and their social attitudes. After investigating sibling teaching in the context of sibling caretaking and play among Agikuyu children of Kenya, Maureen Mweru's study shows the possibility of siblings as guides in development.

Susan Weinstein examines the role of play in the composing practices of three young Chicago rappers by drawing on conversations of "freestyle" rapping and linking it to a theory of play that relies on trust among participants. Dr. Marie-France Daniel writes about an experiment which would verify whether five-year-old children can "philosophize" or hold a critical dialogue under teacher guidance.

According to the definition of transcendence laid out above, those essays which represent a unity as transcendence shall lift subjects past the mundane. Being lifted, the subject finds themselves united with new and different interactions.

Sarah Davey writes on how the process of letting the dialogue unfold through participant contribution leads to engagement; that engagement being critical, creative, and caring. By relating work concerning co-operation to creative theory, developing an interface that can inform teaching practice, and develop a larger body of work regarding co-operation for learning, Lynda Baloche answers the question of how one can build a context for co-operation with learning opportunities that allow for and encourage creative development.

Beatriz Tomsic Cerkez and Tonka Tacol discuss the method of enabling creativity through enabling individuality, thereby describing the values of individuality in the context of the community of inquiry. Chad Miller explores the theory and application of the University of Hawaii's adaptation of Philosophy for Children in a secondary English class, finding that this approach improves students' reasoning skills and encourages them to think for themselves.

Phil Fitzsimmons finds that a series of similar experiences underpin student's introduction to literacy and learning and discusses how the notion of empowerment and the ability to critically self-appraise texts with a 'significant other' became evident for a group of 13 gifted and talented students. Through an exploration of the modern lack of perception of the young child, Stephanie Burdick concludes that David Abram's ethic for regaining perceptions of the natural world may be used as a paradigm for responsible educational response.

Because advancements in internet and communication technologies have contributed to new frontiers in online education, Roya Foroughi and Thomas Rieger explain their development of a virtual character into an asynchronous learning platform with positive pedagogical impact. Giving the perspective that in Philosophy for Children the understating text in relation to context is emphasized in the specific mode of the relationship between argumentative and narrative thought, Valentina Martini argues that because this is a possible base for ensuring that members of a community of philosophical inquiry can participate in a practice and transform and actively produce it, creativity, critical thinking and critical literacy can go hand in hand towards an original formative experience.

Thus, through discussion of convergence and transcendence, the essays in this volume allow the reader take part in the discussions which began in Oxford, England. Reading through this volume shall give one a clearer picture of why thinking with children is important and in what ways it denotes that which is genuinely remarkable about creative engagement.

Daniel Shepherd
New Jersey, 2005

Part 1

Creativity, Engagement and Education

Creative Engagement: Where Teaching and Learning Meet

Sharon Lee

Abstract: It is often assumed that creativity is limited to being a property of innovative products or exceptional individuals alone? But it is an interesting question to ask not only what is creativity but to also ask where does creativity happen? This paper will first examine the belief of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi[1], that creativity is a system of multidimensional thought relevant to innovative thinking in any discipline, followed by the belief of John Dewey[2] that creativity is a foundational element of learning that requires an educational environment suited to its development. Using a combination of these views, I will argue that an emphasis on standardized curriculum and testing in the name of social development and job skills training not only hinders the creative problem-solving skills necessary to understand the structure of societal preferences but also diminishes the community of inquirers necessary to recognize, validate, and support the innovative thought necessary for the maintenance of positive social progress. I will conclude that creativity occurs where creative and critical thinking rather than merely the dissemination of existing knowledge are given priority in education.

Key Words: Csikszentmihalyi, Dewey, creative engagements, flow, personal creativity, social creativity, community of inquirers

1. What is creativity?

Whether it is a creative work of art, a creative device, or a creative thought, it is usually assumed that what allows something to be recognized as creative is its ability to alter or change the space, the functionality, or the knowledge that preceded it. Narrowly speaking, creativity is the ability to construct a new understanding or to establish a new skill or product. Now, it is possible that what is new to one individual is merely an existing element of societal knowledge, and as such does not really qualify as being creative in itself. When such knowledge is simply transferred from one to another, it is mechanical or involuntary knowledge. While such knowledge can be highly valued because of its certainty and truth or its societal meaning and relevance, it will remain inert knowledge until there is an opportunity to recognize why the information is relevant, and to recognize how to utilize that relevance. When this occurs, it becomes a personally creative process of learning because the individual is transformed by new knowledge or new skills that were not there before. Personal creativity then, simply put is the active engagement of an individual with his or her education. Active engagement or learning, as distinguished from copying or mimicking, requires the individual to be curious, with an intrinsically motivated willingness to participate in and accept open-ended questions.

Initially, engaging in such a process is a low risk activity and is usually readily identified with and accepted as the curiosity of childhood. Existing social norms however quickly magnify the risks involved in the choice to move beyond pure personal creativity to something that involves social interaction. A full understanding of the risk associated with creativity is a topic in need of its own paper but it should be noted that as one becomes more aware of the existing social structures, one becomes equally aware of the value judgments being made on one's actions and thoughts, especially if such actions or thoughts represent a leap of faith away from social norms. Often the result of taking such risks is social stigma, alienation, uncertainty, censure, or disapproval. Until success has been realized, quite often such creative endeavours are presumed to be weird, unfathomable, or even ridiculous. Of course once proven to be of value, the same unusual ventures are greeted with enthusiasm and admiration but it is generally accepted that the domain of creativity is one of detachment or difference. Current work by Csikszentmihaliyi has suggested that one reason that creativity is associated with risk is that we have two contradictory traits, namely "a conservative tendency for self-preservation and an expansive tendency for exploring".[3] With that being said, if creative endeavours are more risky than simply following the status quo, what motivates the desire to take creative risk?

When exploring the concept of creativity, Csikszentmihalyi found that highly successful creative individuals, from a variety of disciplines, all seemed to experience a similar sense of creative consciousness, what he has referred to as "flow".

> It was clear from talking to them that what kept them motivated was the quality of experience they felt when they were involved with the activity. This feeling didn't come when they were relaxing, when they were taking drugs or alcohol, or when they were consuming the expensive privileges of wealth. Rather, it often involved painful, risky, difficult activities that stretched the person's capacity and involved an element of novelty and discovery. This optimal experience is what I have called *flow*, because many of the respondents described the feeling

> when things were going well as an almost automatic, effortless, yet highly focused state of consciousness.[4]

This description by Csikszentmihalyi suggests that the desire to experience a creative release or "flow" far outweighs any risk involved in undertaking the experience. He furthers this understanding of creative consciousness by arguing that while creativity is not possible without an individual burst of brilliance, it is also not possible without the domain or sphere of influence that the individual wants to creatively adjust, or without the field of experts or gatekeepers who have the capacity to recognize and validate the significance of such an adjustment. What he fails to acknowledge however, is why some creative acts are more readily accepted by society than others despite the fact that the participants were able to reach this heightened state of creative consciousness. Where Csikszentmihalyi acknowledges the concept of creative flow and the importance of the interchange between individual, domain, and field, John Dewey's work anticipates this assessment and furthers it by recognizing that an educational environment needs to be created so that "the stream or flow becomes a train, chain, or thread."[5]

Dewey argued that we all have natural resources for training thought and it is the ability to think innovatively that forms the foundation for our cognitive skills.[6] For Dewey, natural curiosity begins as an expression of an abundant organic energy that he calls "a vital overflow"[7]. This forms the foundation upon which further intellectual activity can develop a more multifaceted level of curiosity that blends social stimuli with that initial sense of wonder. The final stage in this process according to Dewey occurs when this "germ of intellectual activity"[8] is allowed to rise above the merely organic and social stimuli of the first two stages to become what he refers to as "a positive intellectual force"[9] provoked by an insatiable interest in a problem or challenge.

With this understanding of thinking, Dewey famously developed a progressive vision of education[10] that places the learner, not the teacher, at its centre and that values both scientific problem-solving and experiential opportunities over static, inert knowledge. While it is true that Dewey can be accused of presenting a vision of education that favours the supremacy of science, he also set out to clarify the conditions that are most favourable to the establishment of a balanced education, namely that meaningful experiential learning combined with scientific problem-solving[11] can be universally applied to any educational experience thus giving the learner personal autonomy and ultimately the skills and aptitude to function as a democratic citizen. And anyone who has read through even a portion of his sizeable, though somewhat opaque collection of philosophical works should be able to attest to the fact that there is a dual thread that runs through all of his work; namely, a desire to establish the important educational interconnections necessary for the development of cognitive abilities, and to establish an environment that enables the creative engagement of these interconnections. Something Csikszentmihalyi also suggests by noting that 'creativity is enhanced by changes in the environment not by trying to make people think more creatively'[12]. Truly creative acts are only recognized when individual acts of creativity are allowed to interact and ripen as the creative process shifts from one that is personal to one that is social. So more broadly, creativity is the ability to construct a new understanding or to establish new skills or products, recognizing that with consensus or acceptance from others, such novelties have the potential to be socially transformative.

It is quite possible to imagine however, socially transformative ideas or actions that despite gaining social acceptance have been merely the authoritative or manipulative establishment of someone's ideas. So beyond recognizing the need for consensus, an understanding of social creativity must also take into account the engagement of creative thinking[13] with critical thinking[14]. To realize this commitment two elements are required: an individual desire to take creative risk and a societal desire to cultivate creative potential. And given the fact that some form of public schooling is a mandatory educational influence, in most democratic countries at least, the institution of public education is a good place to establish an environment capable of first facilitating personal creativity by giving priority to a curriculum that enables creative thinking, and then by enhancing personal creativity by combining this with a focus on critical thinking and social interconnections. So what would be necessary to create an environment capable of advancing the development of creative engagements as applied to thinking with children a century beyond Dewey?

Anna Craft[15] warns that any further thoughts on creativity in education must effectively deal with two professional dilemmas before proceeding. On one hand she suggests that educational institutions suffer from complacency, that is, she rightly argues that because many educational institutions currently have highly structured and codified educational programs that make reference to the importance of creativity, problem-solving, critical thinking, and so on, it is easy to assume that it is automatically being taken care of. On the other hand, she suggests that quite often, creative endeavours take on the role of resistance, by which she means that creative approaches tend to resist the analysing of creativity or the "technicising of education". When this occurs, false dichotomies are created and, as previously mentioned, this polarizes education but does nothing to advance it. With this in mind, if an understanding of personal creativity as an active engagement with one's education is acceptable, and if it is assumed that individuals are part of a larger social whole, then creative engagements should occur where personal creativity intersects with social creativity or in terms of education where active learning intersects with active teaching and any relevant discussion of creativity and education needs to establish how to recognize and manage such intersections.

2. The Community Inquirers.

Traditional approaches to education[16] tend to manage such intersections as one-way streets, where the teacher instructs the student under the assumption that development proceeds from the simple to the complex and must occur within the confines of a structured setting. There is a predictable transference of knowledge that is efficient, uniform, and quantifiable. Individuals come to know their place in society and societal arrangements are maintained. But progress tends to be passive and adjustments to the system are either negligible or are driven by political interests rather than educational ones. More alternative educational approaches[17] assume a teacher-learner interaction where the boundaries between teacher and learner are not so clearly defined. These approaches tend to build on individual strengths but can also be difficult to assess. Individuals are encouraged to help to form their place in society but there is also often a failure to appropriately manage the dynamic nature of such approaches. To avoid falling into the trap of extreme conservatism or extreme relativism, educators need to form a community of inquirers that first considers the need for creative thinking to realize the intersections where creative engagements occur, and also considers the need for critical thinking to refine and develop such intersections.

Of course this does not mean that education equals creativity or that every educational moment must contain a creative thought or must result in a creative product. It also does not mean that every creative act is a good one that should be unconditionally endorsed. Creative thoughts or ideas are best understood as the result of many years of cumulative experience with slowly evolving ideas that according to Csikszentmihalyi require at least five steps to be realized: a period of preparation, a period of incubation, insight, evaluation of insight, and elaboration. With that being said, he is also quick to point out that no successful creative engagement actually follows these steps in a linear or predictable fashion[18]. Creative engagements are realized through a complex set of interconnections that these steps uncover between personal experience, the requirements of the domain, and the conclusions that the community of inquirers come to. Just as it is not possible to realize creativity without a multidimensional system of inputs from the individual, the domain, and the field; it is also not possible to realize creative engagements without a flexible curriculum that addresses the needs of creative, critical, and programmed learning.

In devising a list of the thirteen thinking tools of the world's most creative people, Robert and Michele Root-Bernstein[19] have noted like Csikszentmihalyi, that no matter what the discipline, innovative ideas begin as personal intuitions that uncover "unexpected problems and unforeseen opportunities", followed by the need to connect with others in a meaningful and easily accessible way to formulate potential solutions or potential next steps. Based on their research they compiled a list of tools needed to turn a personal feeling or hunch into something that is socially useful.

Innovative Tools for innovative thinking:

1. Observing
2. Imaging
3. Abstracting
4. Pattern recognizing
5. Pattern forming
6. Analogizing
7. Bodily kinaesthetic thinking
8. Empathizing
9. Dimensional thinking
10. Modelling
11. Playing
12. Transforming
13. Synthesizing

Their paper expands on the individual meaning and importance of each of these tools but what this list as a whole represents is a set of tools that creative individuals have described as necessary in their creative endeavours. The first nine tools, they describe as the non-verbal, non-mathematical, non-logical tools that are essential to stimulating creative thinking because they enable the individual to transcend traditional areas of cognitive development to gain access to our more fundamental devices of intuition, perception, sensitivity, and so on. The remaining four are the composite tools necessary for translating the results of creative thinking into a socially accessible and useful format that not only connects with our basic assets but with our ability to interact with others as well. If used in a classroom setting, they suggest that these tools can move the teacher-learner experience beyond one of rote learning to one of creative engagement, somewhat like Dewey's positive intellectual force that enables the learner to move beyond mere organic and social stimuli to actually engaging others in a socially transformative process.

3. Why Creative Engagements?

If we consider Robert Sternberg's thesis that creativity is a decision to invest in ideas[20], then an educational system should be striving for the same equilibrium that Dewey was striving for a century earlier, namely, to invest in the balance between choosing to merely familiarize oneself with one's environment and choosing to actually shape one's environment. Sternberg has suggested that of course it is possible to acknowledge the individual educational advantages to be found when either the traditional appeal to teach for acquiescence or the alternative appeal to teach for ingenuity are treated as separate influences, but he argues that the best results occur when a balance is achieved between the two.

> In essence, intelligence is a largely conservative force within a culture that serves to help individuals in adapting to already existing environments. Creativity is a largely radical force within a culture that serves to help individuals in shaping and redefining these environments. And wisdom is a balancing force that seeks an equilibrium between intelligence (adaptation) and creativity (shaping)[21]

And in a publicly governed educational system where there is a desire to address the needs of both socialization and individual enlightenment, this pragmatic approach seems to be highly relevant.

One active area of educational research promoting just such a balance is the Philosophy for Children (P4C) program.[22] The P4C curriculum establishes an environment for reflective learning by using language as its impetus and philosophy as its tool. Children, with the teacher as a guide, develop reasoning skills through textual analysis and analytical skills through open dialogue and debate based on the premise that such an approach to education can develop an active community of learners. In a recent paper[23] that scrutinizes the value of incorporating P4C into the school curriculum, Nancy Vansieleghem warns however that care should be taken even when attempting to find a meaningful balance between training and exploration. While mindful of the many benefits that result from the incorporation of programs like P4C, she worries like Craft, that it is easy to become complacent. Vansieleghem argues that the real importance of such enhancements to the curriculum do not lie in its ability to form a new domain of facts or skills to assess and monitor but in the experience to be gained from realizing "the other". While reflecting on the need to balance educational choices, she argues that educators need to create spaces where individuals can openly associate and interconnect with other individuals and other ideas outside of or in combination with more traditional hierarchical relationships between teacher and student or between student and subject matter.

> The challenge for education is to create a space where children can encounter the other and where they can start the quest to find out what this encounter means. A space where the collective search for the question 'What happens to me, why does it happen, and what do I have to do with it?' can start. The answer to this question is not a matter of getting to know myself better or of building my own identity but of looking at my life as if I had not seen it before and of changing it. It is about looking for an answer to something that has confused me and where I, together with others, try to respond. [24]

She suggests that there is a strong motivation to bring together a community of inquirers in an educational setting because "every word in language is half someone else's"[25]. Our very ability to use language effectively is dependent on relations over time and requires a space that combines the need to build a framework for knowledge with the desire to take creative risks with that knowledge in a socially interconnected space.

The work of Elliot Eisner[26] and Howard Gardner[27] on education and the arts has also suggested that there is a necessity for the use of a wider mix of cognitive stimuli and a more varied collection of teacher-learner connections. They have argued for an understanding of multiple literacies or multiple intelligences that recognizes that there is more than one way to learn and as such, there should be more than one way to teach. One major aim of education according to Eisner

> is the expansion and deepening of the meanings individuals can secure in their life, and since [he] believes that humans have different aptitudes with respect to the forms in which meanings can be made, [he] believes that school programs should provide ample opportunity for youngsters to become 'literate' in a wide variety of forms. This will increase the meanings all

> students can secure and expand educational opportunities for those students whose aptitudes are most congruent with those forms now neglected.[28]

Rather than looking at the inclusion of the arts in educational settings as a release or as a bonus, what Eisner and Gardner have suggested is that creative engagements are essential to cognitive development, and learning through the arts is an essential component of creative engagements. When school policy is allowed to fragment thought into sub-categories like the basics, the arts, the sciences, and even more importantly when school policy is allowed to remove some of these sub-categories completely, the opportunity to realize creative engagements diminishes and "creative" work is seen as the thing to do on a Friday afternoon rather than a core component of learning in general.

In an investigation into the universal nature of creativity, Mark Runco[29] suggests that creativity is not equal to intelligence or giftedness; it is a kind of self-expression that sometimes involves "problem-solving", and sometimes involves "problem-finding". He does not suggest that everyone is gifted, or a genius, or even that everyone will ultimately be able to realize socially transformative creative acts or ideas but he does suggest that everyone has the potential to activate creative engagements with others and to benefit from that activation. If there is a minimal risk involved to invest in creative ideas, then more people will opt to take creative chances. In terms of education, if more people opt to take creative chances, creative engagements will be richer and individuals will not only be interested in 'the what' of education but also 'the why', 'the how', and 'the where'.

4. Conclusion.

This paper has combined Csikszentmihalyi's theory that creativity is a system of multidimensional thought with Dewey's design for a progressive educational system, to propose that creative and critical thinking should be granted the same status as the traditional educational goal of disseminating existing knowledge and skills. A standardized curriculum, while easy to deliver and assess, does little for the advancement of social progress because it removes the opportunity for teaching to openly interact with learning. The inclusion of creative and critical thinking as an integral component of the curriculum on the other hand provides an environment that promotes creative engagements where teaching and learning meet to activate personal creativity and to recognize a community of inquirers. In conclusion, an educational environment that cultivates creative engagements can effectively balance the ability to understand social and cultural complexities with the ability to contribute to these complexities as an autonomous member. An educational environment that cultivates creative engagements can move beyond merely stipulating what to learn by openly exploring the entire process of learning. And finally an educational environment that cultivates creative engagements can also cultivate an understanding of the need for a community of inquirers capable of overseeing positive progressive social change rather than dogmatic persistence or capricious decision-making.

Notes

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[2] John Dewey, *How We Think* (New York: Dover Publications, 1997 unabridged republication of original work published in 1910).

[3] Csikszentmihalyi, 1997.

[4] Ibid, p. 110

[5] Dewey, 1910, p. 3

[6] Dewey, 1910

[7] Ibid, p. 31

[8] Ibid, p. 32

[9] Ibid, 33

[10] John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985, originally published in 1916).

[11] What Dewey referred to as the logic of inquiry, for more see *Logical Objects* (1916), *From Absolutism to Experimentalism* (1930), *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (1938).

[12] Csikszentmihalyi, 1997

[13] Creative thinking would include: exploring 'feelings', observing & perceiving, collecting information, inquiring through active participation, predicting potential consequences, improvising, communicating, evaluating…

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[14] Critical thinking would include: reasoning & problem-solving, reflecting on appeals to authority, known entities, analyzing arguments on merits and strengths of argument not personal opinion, examining counter positions, dealing with polarized views, encouraging open-ended exploration, distinguishing between what ought to be and what is, was, or will be…

[15] Anna Craft, "The Limits of Creativity in Education: dilemmas for the Educator", British Journal of Educational Studies, Vol. 51, No. 2, June 2003.

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“Creativity in its broadest sense” and its Role in the Education of Children with Severe Disabilities – A Case Study

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Abstract: Creative thinking refers to the possibility that every human being has to express themselves, his or her preferences and choices. The question that arises regarding special education is the meaning of creative thinking and acting especially in the case of children with severe disabilities. In order to make it possible for children with severe disabilities to be part of all possible activities in daily school programs it is important to redefine the meaning of creativity. The opportunity to express preferences and to make choices is very seldom given to these children and the educational programs and environments are very restricted and controlled. This paper endeavours to show possible solutions for a teacher to integrate creative – aesthetic activities as rituals/ routines in special school settings in order to help children with severe disabilities to communicate and interact. The educational program took place in a special school setting in Greece for over 6 months and a child (9 years old) with severe disabilities (severe mental retardation, epilepsy, visual impairment) participated in this program. The results of this case study show that creativity in its broadest sense combined with daily routines can help a child with severe disabilities increase interactions. Further investigation regarding similar educational programs is to be considered for the future.

Keywords: Creativity, Interaction, Severe Disabilities, Ritual/ Routine

1. Introduction.

Creativity as a part of the aesthetic education refers to the possibility of every human being to express themselves, their preferences and their choices. In this way creativity is defined as a complex human behaviour based on the interaction between creative thinking and creative production and encompasses knowledge, ability, perception, understanding, acceptance, interaction and communication. One question that arises regarding special education is the meaning of creative thinking and acting especially in the case of children with severe disabilities. In order to give an answer to this question is important to define or redefine the meaning of creativity as part of aesthetic education. On the one hand aesthetic education refers to the Greek term “aesthesis”, that means “sense”, and on the other the etymology of the term creativity as a synthetic word (δημιουργϖ= δημοσ+εργο) signifies acting/ producing for the public, one term that refers to interaction and communication. Thus in accordance to Goll[1] and to the Greek etymology of *‘creativity’* this paper supports the view that the concept of creative activities including stimuli, senses and responses must be broadened in order to include also children with severe disabilities.

Although, according to Dewey, aesthetics is related to everyday experiences, educational programs meant for children with severe disabilities very rarely include creative activities and even then only as part of free time or of therapy programs. This happens because the education of children with severe disabilities constitutes a challenge for special educators, psychologists and more generally for all therapists. Children with severe disabilities have low intellectual ability, difficulties in verbal and non-verbal communication, psychomotor disorders, and they correspond minimally to visual, auditory and olfactory stimuli[2].

The school environments for these children are ‘overprogrammed’ regarding academic and therapy activities whereas creative activities in spite of its recognized pedagogical value do occupy the smallest part in the program. The special school settings for children with severe disabilities provide very few opportunities for interaction, and are controlling of students[3]. This is why recent research focuses on the benefit of communication opportunities in supportive environments that will enhance interaction between children with severe disabilities and their peers in inclusive classrooms[4]. Further, the opportunity to express preferences and to make choices is given very seldom to these children and the educational programs and environments are very restricted and controlled[5].

The severity of the disability is a decisive factor in the process of the time allocation and the frequency of creative activities regarding the different school program areas. In order to include creative activities in the curriculum for children with severe disabilities and to meet their educational needs the teacher must change his point of view and follow the model of incidental teaching. Incidental teaching is “an individualized and naturalistic intervention for improving young children’s behaviour and development”[6] and is employed “during unstructured activities for brief periods of time and typically when children have shown an interest in or have been involved with materials, activities or others”[7]. Regarding these findings the form of joint activity routines is being here suggested.

> “Joint activity routines consist of activities that a) have a simple purpose, b) are pleasurable, c) can be accomplished by taking turns with a partner, d) can be repeated

> frequently, e) allow for roles (or actions) of the two participants to be reversed and f) allow for simple variations in the exchange”[8]

This paper aims at suggesting possible solutions for teachers to integrate creative activities as rituals/ routines in special school settings in order to help children with severe disabilities to communicate and interact with the teacher, their peers and generally with the environment.

2. Method

A. Participant

For the purposes of the present research a case study was applied for 8 months, from October up to May 2004, in a special school and a boy, Achilles, with severe disabilities participated in this program.

Achilles Profile: A boy 9 years of age has severe mental retardation (an IQ of 40 WISC-R) and epilepsy (medical therapy). He has psychomotor (visual-motor, balance, fine and gross- motor) and visual disorders (myopia of 6 points and squint). He communicates non-verbally and because of the medication treatment he was following he had shown a passive behaviour at the beginning of the school day. He can eat without help, although he needs a little assistance in organizing self-care and body hygiene activities.

B. Setting

The aim of the program was to determine the factors of the educational environment and program that the teacher should take into consideration so that she/ he can increase the qualitative and quantitative experiences for the aid of pedagogic interaction between children with severe disabilities, their peers and the teacher. The teacher in the classroom was cooperating with an assistant. In the classroom except Achilles were five more students, two boys with profound mental retardation, one boy with moderate mental retardation and two girls with autistic disorders (one of them with epilepsy). Because the aim of this study was the development of an educational program for the increase of social interaction two peers with special needs from the same classroom were involved in this study. These peers were a boy, Vasilis, with moderate mental retardation and a girl, Katerina, with autistic disorders; both of them had verbal communication and were more active during the most time of the school day.

The Special School has its own spatial and time organization that it had to be followed. At the same time the variety of needs presented by the students who most of them had severe disabilities imposes a specific organization of the spatial and temporal dimensions of instruction, so that the study can be accomplished. In this case there was no change regarding time organization to its basic elements like arrival, luncheon and departure (see Table 1). The only adaptations refer to *time organization* was made regarding the organized activities: the time required for the various activities, personal time and rhythm of the child, and need for constant time organization. The *spatial organization* used in our case was based on the following criteria that refer to the whole class:

-need of children for movement
-removal of stimuli and objects that were observed as causing agitation
-preferences of children
-functionality of space

C. Creative Activities and Material

Many different activities were organized and for each activity different materials were used according to the response sensitivity of the child regarding the five senses, see, hear, touch, smell, taste. Creative activities with the sense of taste were integrated during luncheon and in that case no extra activity was organized or adapted. As it is shown in Table 1 for each of these activities background music was chosen. Since the goal is to establish interaction and communication through creativity than music as “musical interaction can be more than a context for communication, but can be communicative in it self”[9]. Thus music was chosen as a sign for the time plan for each activity so that the child can accept easily the structure of the plan.

The purpose of the different materials (cologne, sponges, soap of different colour and smells, music) was to be used as a combination so that Achilles will have a whole approach to the activities through all senses.

Table 1: Daily activities plan

TIME	*ACTIVITIES*	*Music Background from Tschaikovsky "The Nutcracker Suite"*
8:30-9:10	Arrival & luncheon	Overture miniature
9:10-9:30	Break	-
9:30-10:10	Body hygiene & Luncheon	Waltz of the flowers
10:10-10:30	Break	-
10:30-11:10	Creative activities	Chinese Dance
11:10-11:30	Break	-
11:30-12:10	Creative activities	Russian Dance
12:10-12:30	Break	-
12:30-13:00	Departure: preparation	Dance of the Mirlitons

D. Observation and measurements

The collection of reliable and valid data through direct observation or assessment of children with severe disabilities is "an extremely time consuming process, particularly if the experimenter is not familiar with each subject"[10]. According to this reference it was very important that the teacher of the classroom was participating and that the second observer was a former assistant who knew the children. Data collection was based on an intervention research, which included the following phases:

-Diagnostic assessment (3 months: October 2003 – December 2004)
-Formative assessment (3 months: January 2004 – March 2004)
-Final Assessment (2 months: April 2004 – May 2004)

Two kinds of observations and measurements were made: the first one regarding initiation and response with the teacher and the second one regarding the turn taking with two other peers with special needs that were involved in this study. Both data collection was made daily during break time. The first one was carried out from video tape recordings of interactions (initiation and response) at 11:10-11:30 throughout all phases of assessment.

> "An initiation was defined as any verbal or gestural behaviour the target child directed to a peer or the peer directed to the target child that had not been preceded by another social behaviour from the same 'partner' within the previous 5 sec. …… A response was defined as any verbal or gestural behaviour directed toward an initiating peer or target child occurring within 5 sec after the initiation"[11].

The second data collection was carried out at 10:10-10:30 and at 12:10-12:30 during final assessment from a second observer that observed and measured turn taking with the other peers during break time.

> "Turn taking is generally assessed by counting the number of social turns that occur within an interaction.. A turn is defined as an expansion or elaboration of an initiation, or response that is followed by a response"[12]

3. Results - Final Evaluation.

The first difficulty encountered by the researcher during the program implementation was to make Achilles accept the new structure of the program and the stimuli that systematically were given to him for the first time. As shown in Figure 1 there was an increase regarding the number of initiations and responses during the three phases of assessment. Not only has the quantity of the initiation and response changed but also the quality of the interactions between Achilles and the teacher. Achilles was responding to teacher's instructions, through eye and body contact much better than he did at the beginning of the program (diagnostic assessment). The daily program was very stable since Achilles has shown a discomfort whenever something was not going as scheduled. The teacher was feeling very secure regarding the communication level between him and Achilles because Achilles has shown some signs of preferences and choices; for example he started to choose toys or to express needs (thirst, toilet).

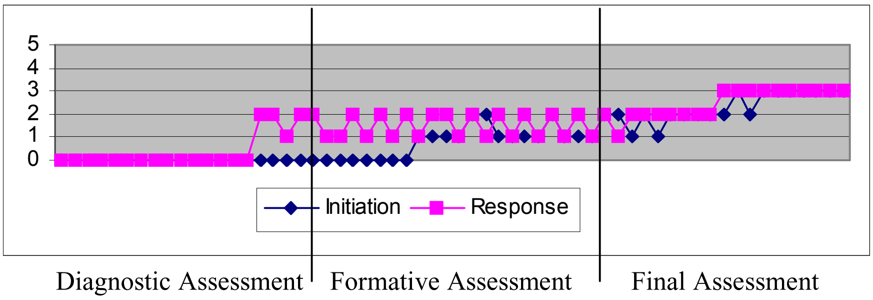

Figure 1: Number of Initiation and Responses during three phases of assessment

During diagnostic assessment Achilles did not interact with other peers. After the involvement of the two peers in the creative activities there was an increase of interactions between Achilles and these peers, Vasilis and Katerina.

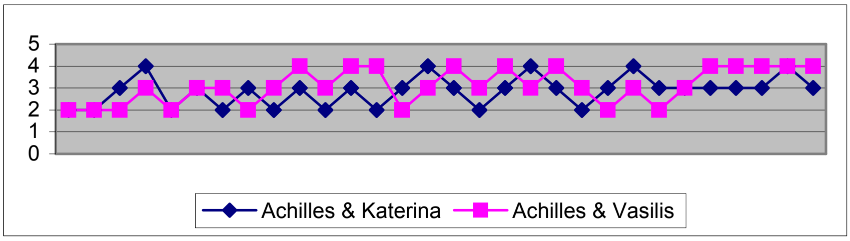

Figure 2: Turn taking during final assessment

During final assessment the observation results from the second observer during break time has shown that Achilles was interacting with Katerina in the classroom (10:10-10:30) and with Vasilis at the schoolyard (11:10-11:30). The quality of the social interaction is different for each child. Although we have same numbers of turn taking in the dyad Achilles & Katerina, Achilles is the one who initiates the interaction and Katerina responds. In the dyad Achilles & Vasilis, Vasilis is the one who initiates the interaction and Achilles responds.

4. Discussion.

The results of this case study show that *creativity in its broadest sense* combined with daily routines can help a child with severe disabilities increase interactions. Regarding the importance of interaction in the educational process of Special Education, these results can contribute to a future systematic research in the area of social interaction and also in the organization of programs aimed at increasing the interaction between teachers and students with severe disabilities. If we want to work towards equal educational opportunities *for all* then we must give to all children the chance to be part of the culture[13]. That means that in order to make possible for these children to be part of this cultural environment we must expand our thinking regarding the meaning of creativity. Further we should refer to Aristoteles who used the term ‘sensorium comune’ for creativity as a coordination and modulation of the perception through eye, ear, smell, taste, skin, and movement[14].

Integrating *creativity in its broadest sense* as a form of joint activity routines, we can help children with severe disabilities win a better *quality of life* through the acceptance of body and environmental sensory experience. We note that this study is limited in the fact that we focused on the initiations and responses of only one child with the teacher and two peers with special needs. Last but not least a potential aim for future educational programs for children with severe disabilities should be the structure and evaluation of pertinent programs.

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Human-centred Education

Deborah Whitford

Abstract: Education practices in developed countries, based on hard-core materialist philosophies as it is, prepares children for the limitations of the world in which they live. The children are stifled if successful and discarded if they cannot or will not jump the hurdles that are put before them. By contrast, human-centred education endeavours to understand each individual child and honours every stage of his or her development through a curriculum that balances academic and artistic activities in an atmosphere of respect for children's individual emotional and cognitive needs. Human-centred educational philosophy and practice were developed by Garry Richardson (recently deceased) who modified and extended Rudolf Steiner's ideas regarding the interplay of emotional, creative and cognitive experiences of young children at kindergarten and primary school levels. This paper provides an account of the salient features of human-centred education. My understanding of human-centred education is based on my study of Garry Richardson's writings on philosophy and education, and is grounded in my roles as both parent and teacher associated with a school in New South Wales (Australia) founded by Garry Richardson.

Key Words: Cognitive needs, creativity, human-centred, kindergarten, nature, philosophy of education, school, Steiner.

> It does not take much practice at entering the consciousness of a young child to discover several things. The world, to a child's consciousness, is wonderfully fresh and new, and wonderfully, incredibly exciting. What is more, young children, before they enter school, have an incredible desire to learn. It is this desire that draws them upright and teaches them to walk and talk, and urges them to ask the incessant questions that can drive adults to distraction.
>
> But how long do these aspects of the child's consciousness survive in the normal educational environment? Maybe a year or two - at most.[1]

My interest in education began with the search for a school for our daughter. We eventually chose the Steiner system because of its imaginative approach to teaching and its emphasis on the school community and parental involvement.

We moved some distance to attend a Steiner school. In the new house we came across a brochure detailing a local school called Korowal and went to inspect it. Within seconds of entering the Kindergarten classroom I realized that this school was right for our daughter and so we enrolled her. I immediately read Garry Richardson's *Education for Freedom* on which the school was based, and his philosophy of human-centred education has engaged me and informed my life ever since.

As I had a background in clothing and textile design, I started teaching craft in my daughter's Kindergarten class for one day a week. After a term I became the teacher's assistant for a further two days per week in order to learn the school's teaching methods. Following a period of training, I also worked as a relief teacher in the junior primary school.

As a student, as well as a designer, I had strong views about creativity and the teaching of creative arts. I believed that creative talent was not found in everybody and that some people could be taught 'creativity', but others not.

There was a radical turnaround in my understanding after I began to teach at Korowal. About six months into my first year, I was pinning up the children's art work and was suddenly struck by the realisation that every picture was a work of art. All the children were able to project their inner world onto paper using colour and form; in other words, they had all learned to communicate creatively. I was overwhelmed by this insight and spent weeks reviewing my beliefs about education - as well as my feelings about who I was in the world. I studied intensively the teachers who had developed their methods under Garry Richardson's guidance. I could see that within the framework of human-centred education each teacher had honed his or her own authentic way of teaching, and I set about finding my own way.

Garry had retired from the school before I arrived there, but he visited from time to time and during one of those visits I sought him out to discuss his writings and the principles underlying human-centred education. This meeting started a long working relationship which continued until Garry's death early this year.

Human-centred education flows from conscious action philosophy which holds that the universe is fundamentally spiritual. We cultivate conscious awareness of this and infuse it into all activities that engage us;

we are guided by our archetypal or spiritual love, as well as by our realistic self-knowledge, to care, to inform, and to transform. We maintain awareness of the universal wisdom and goodness that all human beings possess and are capable of expressing. We believe that this natural ability is a force that can change society for the better. It is a realistic but optimistic philosophy.

In a human-centred school all children are helped to realise their potential even beyond their school years; we work to broaden their abilities of mind, soul and body as a dynamic unity. While the unfolding abilities of each human being constitute a unique configuration, there must be a balance between this individuality and the child's place in the class and in the community. There must be both freedom and responsibility.

Therefore teachers work with the natural interests and abilities of the children in their class but also attempt to harmonise these with the group in an approach that balances ease with challenge and liberty with discipline. The children are encouraged to play, explore, and light their way towards their own sense of the sacredness of life.

Within human-centred education children benefit from play, time to day-dream and a slower start to formal teaching. A basic principle is the involvement of creativity in all activities and at all levels of learning. Artistic expression is part of the learning process throughout, thus retaining the sense of wonderment that is in every child and is a most precious human gift.

Now I would like to illustrate how these broad principles translate into activities in the classroom. For example: towards the end of the Kindergarten year, the children work slowly through the numbers one to nine, focusing on one number per week. Much of this is done through story telling that really captures the children's imagination. Thus Number One stands straight wearing a saucepan on his head, and with his heavy boots jumps everywhere. Most captivating was Number Eight: if you walked over its shape as drawn on the floor and recited "hurley, burley, cracker dunk" then your heart's desires would be granted.

Another example: the Kindergarten teacher laid out coloured blocks on the floor and the children were asked to count them. The teacher then covered the blocks, took one out and asked the children how many were now under the cloth. Each child came up with an answer and a vote was taken on the correct answer. Then the teacher lifted the cloth and the children all counted the blocks together. The activity continued through increasingly challenging versions of the exercise, involving all the children every time. At the conclusion of the activity, the teacher told the children that what they had been doing was actually mathematics. The children were amazed that mathematics could be such an engaging game.

Mathematics is indeed of special interest. It is often taken to be the polar opposite to art but in fact the two are closely related. The placement of simple forms on the page and the appreciation of their size represent basic concepts with which very young children work from the time they draw their first line and which they develop in more complex ways as time goes on.

We hold that there is a natural historical course of development of consciousness, and this applies to children also. This becomes evident when children create shapes with form and colour. The concepts of size and proportion - mathematics, that is - gradually emerge through the children's own perception and understanding. In human-centred education we do not criticise something that will change and develop of its own accord in due course. It is our joy as teachers to experience the child's individual development and it is our responsibility to know when to step in to aid and enhance the process and when to simply allow its course. Guidance must be given with the greatest of care and continuous effort should be made to see the world through the child's eyes, because what may seem inappropriate to an adult has often been well thought out and has real significance for the child.

Children need to develop loving and sensate relationships to the community and the world through creative activity that marshals resources of mind, soul and body in equal measure. Therefore we display the children's own artwork in their classroom and encourage their participation in making teaching aids like alphabet cards and counters. The children also design and make their own pencil cases, craft bags and cushions, thus experiencing the usefulness of their art and craft activities. The making of class books is another wonderful communal activity through which favourite stories are retold and re-enacted, and significant events commemorated through both individual and collective effort.

Nature is another basic concept which we develop in various ways. We use the tree as a symbol and teach the children to look below the ground line which they invariably make in their drawing of a tree. The children look into the earth around the tree, feel its roots and see the creatures that live in and around and on the tree, and observe the myriad of colours on the bark and in the leaves. Thus we connect the tree to the living world and its marvellous variety in an ongoing exercise of increasing complexity which continues over a number of years and coincides with the children's development. The children are learning about the interconnectedness within nature and the mysterious aspects of life; a concept we all marvel at, developed and enhanced through observation and creative activity.

During Kindergarten we teach the children to draw the sun as a ball of fire. We start with our deepest red crayon and build up a strong red circle until all children can get a sense of the heat on the page. Then we add a lighter red and do the same outside the smaller more intense circle. Next come dark orange, lighter orange, deep and lighter yellow. Thus we have six hot colours which lessen in intensity as we move out from the centre. The children can feel their sun's radiant heat and ask us to feel it also.

Each child has a representation of the ball of fire which lights and warms our cosmos and is essential for life. Though we never spoke of this to the children they understood the basic idea. After this lesson they drew various versions of the sun using combinations of their own way of drawing as well as the way we had taught them. What the children had gained from all this was an understanding of the sun which honours its significance, majesty and beauty - as well as a sense of belongingness to the universe of which they and the sun are a part.

Now to the relationship between human-centred education and the Steiner education system. We share many principles with the latter:

> -An acknowledgment of the spiritual nature of existence and the need to work with reverence for whatever engages us;
> -Our relationship to the natural rhythms of life, both internal and external;
> -Awareness of truth, beauty and goodness;
> -Regard for the evolution of consciousness and its importance for our teaching methods which include an unhurried introduction to formal learning through play;
> -Emphasis on human relationships which necessitates children and teachers staying together over some years;
> -Main lesson structure that fosters concentration and activities which integrate formal and artistic work;
> -All children are taught music, poetry, art and craft, and other subjects are elevated to an art and interwoven:
> -Balanced approach addressing all modes of learning;
> -Children are encouraged to reach their potential with a view of contributing to a changed and better social order.

Our major difference from the Steiner philosophy is that, although we both have a spiritual core, our structure does not have an explicit religious basis. We accept personal religious beliefs but maintain openness which is necessary to create an atmosphere of acceptance for everyone. It is a subtle but very definite from the Steiner philosophy and, I would like to emphasise, an essential element in our contemporary diverse world. It is important to maintain firm guidelines that are not in themselves dogmatic; we call for a balance of discipline - including, especially, self-discipline - and freedom for all involved.

Another difference is our understanding of the importance of human physical existence. Steiner's Anthroposophy elevates spiritual knowledge. By contrast, we feel that insight is better achieved through the harmony of body, mind and soul.

Whereas Steiner philosophy deems the spiritual order to be higher, we see it as joined with the physical realm into an integrated whole. In other words, we are philosophically monist.

Artistic creativity in human-centred education also differs from the Steiner approach. We place greater emphasis on individual interpretation and expression utilising techniques which are taught but are not prescriptive, so that the finished work becomes the child's authentic expression.

We also acknowledge the balance of light and dark within each individual - and the world as a whole - since human beings are complex, even as children. There are many areas we know very little about, including human consciousness and the soul. We are all grasping in the dark to some degree; it is honest to acknowledge this and not mask our ignorance or hide behind status. There is an almost brutal honesty to our endeavour but it is balanced with empathy and conscious effort to work with archetypal or spiritual love.

We encourage the development of all the senses as rational argument is never completely sufficient. Through utilizing the rich feeling senses we develop a deeper understanding and acceptance of other people and other cultures. Tolerance and joy in our diversity are integral aspects of human-centred education. It is our over-arching aim to develop children who are both knowledgeable and self-aware and thus free to explore the richness of life through creative interaction for the betterment of human society.

Our first question as teachers will always be - what is a child? We still do not have all the answers, and so that question keeps running like a thread through all our activities; it is the basis for our conscious actions towards the children and the wellspring of our love and regard for them.

Note

[1] Richardson, 2004, back cover.

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Part 2

Engagement with People, Process and Problematic Thought

From Socrates to Lipman: making philosophy relevant[1]

Gilbert Burgh

Abstract: There is a widespread view that philosophical thinking has no application to matters pertaining to the 'real world'. It follows from such reasoning that if the purpose of education is to prepare students for the real world, then philosophy has no place in schools or university courses, and by implication in everyday life. One of the aims of this paper is to illustrate that the reasoning behind this view is mistaken. The ability to think critically and creatively through philosophical inquiry provides an intellectual context for study and discussion of issues related to all areas of study. But the introduction of philosophy into the classroom is not without its critics. This paper, therefore, explores a major accusation aimed at philosophy, i.e., that it is necessarily adversarial. The final section of the paper argues that Matthew Lipman's approach to philosophical inquiry[2] offers much to remedy the more adversarial and limiting elements of the Western philosophical tradition. It is clear that we should not simply aim to reproduce traditional methods of doing philosophy in the classroom. The community of inquiry is an illustration of a positive direction in respect to participation, relatedness and relevance to those involved.
Key Words: Lipman, critical thinking, philosophical inquiry

1. Philosophy and Classroom Inquiry.

As educators we are faced with the challenge of reconstructing schooling to enable students to construct their own knowledge and apply it. What this requires is to 'go beyond behaviourist direct instruction to a *constructivist* approach, in which people are treated as if they have brains and ideas and are encouraged to use and develop what they have'.[3] Such a view is backed-up by educational rhetoric which emphasises collaborative inquiry methods, student-centred learning, self-directed activity, experienced-based project work, and internship. Yet direct instruction pedagogies still persist today, pervading classroom interaction in much the same way as in previous decades. Knowledge is seen as transmittable which by-and-large discounts students as '*constructors* of a continually developing view of the world and continually developing capabilities'.[4] Despite policy statements and guidelines that give force to a constructivist-oriented curriculum, there seems to be only scant appreciation of its application in practice. Offerings of in-service courses and teacher advisory networks have been ineffective in bringing about significant pedagogical change.

Philosophy has much to offer insofar as it is essential to the alignment of curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment of student achievements in terms of improved intellectual and social outcomes. Its effectiveness is threefold. First, it can assist schools, teachers, and curriculum planners to engage critically and creatively with challenges facing education in modern times. Second, in the hands of an experienced teacher as facilitator, it can engage students in an education with connectedness and relevance to everyday life. Third, it is also a guiding ideal for classroom practice in teacher education courses and professional development for teachers. Thus stated, the aims and objectives of contemporary democratic societies committed to educational reform can be met using philosophical inquiry as a structured problem-posing, inquiry-based pedagogy, and curriculum based on integrated, community-based tasks and activities that (1) focuses on immediate problems in learner's worlds, (2) equips students as future citizens in a democracy, and (3) are aimed at social action that has significance and value to students as active participants in shaping the future.

The guiding idea that informs the educational practice advocated in this paper is that *doing* philosophy, as distinct from learning about philosophy, helps us to understand the way in which we reason about the world, make decisions, and ultimately how we should live in it. This approach to philosophy means participating in a particular sort of communal inquiry in which students inquire cooperatively and collaboratively in a self-reflective and critical manner about issues of concern to all of them. Borrowing from Matthew Lipman my concern is with philosophy as a community of inquiry.[5] In a community of inquiry participants 'follow the inquiry where it leads and collaboratively engage in self-correction'.[6] Since the inquiry is a philosophical one, it is a *philosophical* community of inquiry. A community of inquiry, once established, generates its own agenda. That is, participants in a community of inquiry bring their own experiences to the discussion. When these experiences are brought into the philosophical inquiry participants are able to more freely express their own ideas.

One practical outcome of understanding how to think philosophically through collaborative inquiry is that it can assist in the development of critical and creative abilities. Critical and creative thinking are two essential elements of the thinking process. Both are integral to good thinking. Critical thinking is the process of carefully examining our own thinking and that of others to clarify and improve out understanding of the world. To think creatively is to develop ideas that are unique or novel, useful, and worthy of further elaboration. We need to use our imagination, 'seeing things from perspectives other than our own and envisioning the likely consequences of our position'.[7] Critical thinking is often associated with applying rules of analysis while creative thinking is often associated with breaking rules. However, much of the time we need to understand and, to some extent, follow the rules in order to move beyond them. Conversely, we often need creative insight in order to know how to interpret and apply the rules.

Western philosophy has suffered from mistaken identity. Perhaps through its association with formal logic as taught in universities, philosophy has been aligned with thinking based exclusively on analysis, judgement and arguments and that it lacks a creative component. This has led to one popular view that philosophy is necessarily adversarial.

2. Philosophy and its Critics.

One critic who has had a significant impact on teachers who have variously adapted his techniques to classroom practice is Edward de Bono.[8] He originated the concepts of *lateral thinking* and *parallel thinking* and developed many formal techniques for deliberate creative thinking, such as the *Six Thinking Hats*. His techniques are used not only with school children, but with senior executives of major corporations and governments. Unlike Lipman, de Bono does not locate philosophy as central to his teaching methods. Instead, he is more concerned with the practical operation of thinking or, as he puts it, the deliberate process of thinking.

In *Parallel Thinking: From Socrates to de Bono Thinking*, de Bono contrasts ‘traditional Western thinking with its judgemental and adversarial habits and ‘parallel’ thinking with its emphasis on possibility and designing forward’.[9] He uses the terms ‘traditional Western thinking’, ‘Socratic Method’, ‘adversarial method’, ‘traditional system’ and ‘Aristotelian emphasis on analysis’ interchangeably to describe what he considers to be the traditional Western mode of argument, ‘since there is no single term with which to refer to our traditional thinking system’.[10] For the purposes of this paper, the term the Socratic Method will be used. In its broadest sense the Socratic Method describes a thinking system or method that involves searching for the truth through the asking of questions. It is based on analysis, judgment and argument. De Bono is somewhat critical of the Socratic Method. He claims that it ‘uses adversarial argument and refutation to explore a subject’,[11] and that it is fashioned upon ‘dichotomies and opposites in order to force a judgement choice’[12] from which we seek to derive true definitions. The logic used in this type of adversarial argument relies on is/is not, true/false, either/or dichotomies. This type of logic is used to judge whether something fits a particular definition or not. In practice, one party points out a contradiction to force a judgment and prove another party wrong.

According to de Bono, this thinking system, which is now a ‘powerful thinking method’ that pervades Western thought, is ‘intrinsically fascist in nature, with rigid rules, harsh judgements, inclusion and exclusion, category boxes and judgements, and a high degree of righteousness’.[13] Further, he argues that whilst it has its place, the Socratic Method has deep-seated inadequacies and was not designed to deal with the kind of radical change that is a feature of the modern (or post modern) world. The increasing complexity of contemporary societies requires more than the search for truth. What is needed for modern life is a creative and more effective approach to problem solving. He introduces a fundamentally different method of thinking that he calls parallel thinking. His notion of parallel thinking rejects the adversarial framework in favour of cooperative thinking that he argues emphasises possibility and designing forward.

> Parallel thinking simply means the laying down of ideas alongside each other. There is no clash, no dispute, no initial true/false judgement. There is instead a genuine exploration of the subject from which conclusions and decisions may then be derived through a ‘design’ process.[14]

In parallel thinking choices are not limited to the rejection of one in favour of the other. If a problem cannot be solved by removing the cause, an alternative course of action is to design a way forward.

There are many formal techniques that can be deliberately applied to teach structured, parallel thinking. Lateral thinking is one such technique. Lateral thinking can be described as the restructuring of thought patterns so that new combinations arise. De Bono assumes lateral thinking to be the basis of insight and creativity, and that it is most effective prior to the use of vertical or logical thinking. It is especially invaluable in terms of problem-solving since it propagates alternatives, challenges previously held assumptions and institutes innovative thinking. He argues that people must learn to resist habitual thinking patterns, and that the effectiveness of our thinking can be changed through direct teaching of thinking as a skill. Differentiating between thinking and intelligence, de Bono argues for the development of metacognitive thinking skills. People need to be conscious of ‘how they think’. New thoughts can be applied only if one is aware of one’s own thinking or thought-processes, and if one understands new thinking techniques.

But is de Bono accurate in his description of the Western mode of thinking as argument and dialectic; where the opponent listens to a case put forward and then attacks it to expose its weakness? De Bono sees this process as one of merely attacking and defending. He claims that it is therefore flawed as it ignores generative and creative thinking. I contend that de Bono over emphasises the more extreme forms of adversarial argument apparent in some traditional methods of classroom practice, and he carelessly classifies all methods of discussion concerned with exploration of subject matter, including genuine attempts at Socratic dialogue, as strictly adversarial. The Socratic Method, if used properly, is not in the adversarial mode. De Bono raises this point himself, to which he replies, ‘if a method is so easily abused and so rarely used ‘properly’ then that method is faulty and there is little point in saying that it ought to be used “properly”’.[15]

One of de Bono’s mistakes is that he uses the term ‘Western mode of thinking’ interchangeably with the terms ‘Socratic Method of argument’, ‘Aristotelian emphasis on analysis’, and ‘adversarial method’. He assumes that Western philosophical thinking is necessarily adversarial. While it could be argued that in practice this has often been the case, philosophical thinking can be, and is, conducted in a non-adversarial way. A number of feminist theorists have addressed this issue and to their views I shall now turn.

Feminist philosopher Janice Moulton suggests that the Socratic Method has been confused, in philosophy, with what she calls the Adversary Method. The latter method, she claims, is ‘part of the larger paradigm that distinguishes reason from emotion, and segregates philosophy from literature, aligning it with science …’.[16] A feature of this method is that the parties involved in philosophical discussion endeavour to justify (defend) their own thesis (argument), and question (attack) or refute (put a hole in) the other party’s (opponent’s) thesis, by reasoned (i.e. rational) means, using established standards of evaluation (e.g. logic or vertical thinking). The most common way to do this is through posing hypothetical counterexamples whereby ‘one needs to abstract the essential features of the problem’ and construct an analogy that can ‘be considered dispassionately apart from the issue in question’.[17] This kind of inquiry tends to prioritise the logical structure of the argument over the plausibility of the claims or meaningfulness of the argument when viewed in a larger context. This is not to say that use of hypothetical counterexamples or analogical reasoning is never appropriate. Rather, it is crucial to realise that sometimes the complexity of the issue under discussion needs to be retained in order to appreciate elements that may be excluded if it were reduced to limiting analogies.

Similarly, the exclusion of emotion from the reasoning process should not necessarily be something to aspire to in philosophical inquiry. Genevieve Lloyd[18] has developed a comprehensive analysis of how reason has not only been privileged as a philosophical ideal, but how it has been defined by its very exclusion of women/femaleness/the feminine. Thus, if a woman prioritises reason over emotion she is often denied her femininity and seen to be as good as a man or, more contemptuously, ‘she’s got balls.’ It is not only women who have been excluded from the sphere of Reason.[19] Slaves, children, the working classes, colonised peoples and practically every non-white ethnic group has, at some time, been portrayed as lacking the ability to reason.

In discussing the separation of reason and emotion in Western philosophy, some feminist philosophers have proposed that emotions may in fact be helpful and even necessary to the learning process. While *uncontaminated* reason, that is, abstracted from the merely personal and particular, has been upheld as a way to attain universal knowledge, critics such as Alison Jaggar[20] and Susan Sherwin[21] challenge such assumptions. They argue that rather than aspiring to value-free theorising we should take the context in which we think into account. This includes our personal, social, historical histories that shape our ways of thinking. Such an approach embraces bias as a virtue but only in the sense that by recognising it and opening it up to inquiry we can be called upon to be accountable for our particular position in the construction and transference of knowledge.

Lipman’s approach to philosophical inquiry offers much to remedy the more adversarial and limiting elements of the Western philosophical tradition. It is clear that we should not simply aim to reproduce traditional methods of doing philosophy in the classroom. De Bono asserts that critical thinking as *the* complete form of thinking, in the philosophical tradition, can be dangerous because ‘[t]here is a silly belief, based on misinterpretation of the Greek master thinkers, that thinking is based on dialectical argument’.[22] However, doing philosophy need not be limited to narrow conceptions of critical thinking, i.e., sequential logical thinking. I concur with Lipman that philosophy itself can incorporate generative and creative thinking. Philosophy does not need to be adversarial and, therefore, is not necessarily a hindrance to creative thinking.[23] The community of inquiry is an illustration of a positive direction in respect to participation, relatedness and relevance to those involved.

A review of the literature on the theory and practice of the community of inquiry reveals that this position has much support. Splitter, for example, argues against intellectual ‘nit-picking,’ whereby one spends time ‘carping at other people’s arguments’.[24] He stresses that ‘this kind of characterisation leaves out the productive or constructive dimension of critical thinking which is ultimately of great significance’.[25] Lipman directly cites Moulton, regarding her argument against the Adversary Method, as support for his view of a community of inquiry.[26] This suggests that he does not identify his position and, by implication, his views on philosophical classroom discussion with the type of philosophical inquiry she is criticising. Instead of possessing a narrow conception of critical inquiry, he maintains that the community of inquiry ‘intermixes the critical concern with justice and the creative impulse towards caring. It produces respect for both principles and persons and thereby provides a model of democracy as inquiry’.[27]

Lipman's comments are also a vindication of the views of the justice and care approaches to ethical deliberation first outlined in Carol Gilligan’s *In a Different Voice.* Gilligan emphasises the difference between rights-based ethics (what she calls the justice approach) and an ethics of care. She argues that the former is symptomatic of masculine gender identity and the latter of feminine gender identity. Rights-based ethics have been criticised by many feminists as inherently adversarial. The having of rights sets boundaries between various rights-holders. In the event of disagreement or conflict the various rights need to be weighed up against each other in order to allow adjudication upon which rights are stronger.[28]

Another point to make in regarding de Bono's views about the adversarial model of philosophy is that he underestimates the power of genuine Socratic dialogue. After all, Socrates' aim was to show people how to think for themselves rather than to gratuitously destroy another person's argument. Moulton points out that,

> [u]nlike the Adversary Method, the justification of the elenchus [the method associated with Socrates] is not that it subjects claims to the most extreme opposition, but that it shakes people up about their cherished convictions so they can begin philosophical inquiries with a more open mind.[29]

In other words, a better interpretation of the Socratic Method is that it is concerned with a process of *unlearning* whereby students systematically question their beliefs to the point of discovering their own ignorance. From there, students are in a better position to become aware of the presuppositions and principles that underlie their convictions and beliefs. Indeed, Moulton also stresses the importance of the quality of acceptance in the Socratic Method, in terms of finding common ground between the inquirers in a philosophical discussion. That is to say, in order to engage in a meaningful way with one's co-inquirer, and possibly to convince them of one's views, it makes sense to find premises that both parties can agree with before proceeding. Such an approach assumes a more cooperative and creative attitude to philosophical inquiry than often occurs in practice. Moulton claims that Socrates' method has been misinterpreted under the influence of the Adversary Paradigm and, consequently, 'we have not been able to conceive of philosophy being done any other way'.[30]

So, not only does de Bono miss the more fruitful aspects of a genuinely Socratic method of philosophical inquiry, he is clearly not familiar with the theory and practice of the community of inquiry which offers much promise in overcoming the problems of traditional philosophy teaching. De Bono's challenge to traditional thinking is persuasive only when compared to existing educative systems that employ traditional teaching approaches, especially those that only use information-giving or teacher-directed techniques. There are, however, as we have seen in the case of Lipman's work, other alternatives to traditional teaching that centre on techniques of thinking or the deliberate teaching of skills that encourage creative and divergent thinking. While studies have shown that skill-centred approaches to teaching are more effective than traditional approaches,[31] de Bono presents no evidence that his methods are superior to these other alternatives to traditional teaching, and in the case put forward here, to the community of inquiry.

In comparing the views of Lipman and de Bono, it can be argued that de Bono emphasises the teaching of skilful thinking, especially in relation to practical decision-making, whereas Lipman emphasises questioning strategies and improving student's reasoning abilities and judgment by having them think about thinking through the discussion of concepts of importance to the students themselves. Not unlike Lipman, de Bono is also concerned with improving the value judgments of students, but his approach seems to stress efficiency and economy, whereas Lipman is more concerned with building democratic or moral character.

3. Conclusion.

Lipman can be said to belong to the tradition of reflective education; a tradition in which learning to think is central to educational aims and practices.[32] As noted, Lipman understands thinking as a process of inquiry, and conceived the classroom as a community of inquiry in which attention is paid to good thinking and its improvement. The community of inquiry provides a cooperative group learning context centred on dialogue and collaborative activity within which thinking can be shared, tested, and improved on, and in doing so promotes the valuing of inquiry. Students are encouraged to learn collaboratively through actively listening to one another, sharing their views, building upon each others ideas, considering a variety of opinions and perspectives, and exploring disagreements by paying attention to their own thinking and that of others.

According to Lipman, philosophy provides an effective model for the educational process as a whole. In one sense this means simply that philosophical education can make a fundamental and much needed contribution to the current school curriculum. But Lipman's vision also promises much broader horizons. He envisions philosophical inquiry as paradigmatically representing 'the education of the future as a form of life that has not yet been realized and as a kind of praxis'.[33] A particular strength of this approach to learning is that it provides a means of reconstructing the teaching of ethics by making it more accessible and appealing to students who can use the acquired skills to think for themselves and in many different contexts.

In addition, philosophical inquiry within the context of a collaborative community encourages, as Cam says:

> the social communication and mutual recognition of interests that Dewey identifies with a democratic way of life. Such an engagement develops the social and intellectual dispositions and capacities needed for active citizenship, while liberating the powers of the individual. That is to say, in learning to think together in these ways, students acquire the forms of regard and the practices of social exchange that help to sustain an open society at the same time as they learn to think for themselves.[34]

It is this aspect of inquiry, namely the link between education and democracy that urgently requires attention lest we suffer from a dearth of civic literacy.[35] It would be foolish to ignore this connection as it is the role of education to develop in students the kinds of attitudes, habits and dispositions required for autonomous, active, democratic citizenship.[36]

Alas, the education system fails in its obligation to teach people to think for themselves and to think well. The result is that more often than not 'individuals, families, organisations, communities and sections of society live with the consequences of poorly thought-out decisions, faulty reasoning, biased judgments, unreasonable conduct, narrow perspectives, unexamined values and unfulfilled lives'.[37] The task of teaching students how to think well rests formally on schools and the classroom teachers who work within them. The education system within which schools operate has a responsibility to fulfil the need for relevance in the school curriculum. A corollary is that the teaching profession, through collective efforts, needs to transform the ways in which curriculum and assessment are conceived. This is not to say that teachers cannot or should not work with existing curriculum, but rather that we need to re-conceptualise the ways in which we approach curriculum, teaching and learning.[38] What is required is a way to bring about pedagogical reform; to find better ways of engaging with students. A good starting point is to recognise the value of philosophy in education.

Notes

[1] For an expanded version of this paper, see Ch. 2, Gilbert Burgh, Terri Field, & Mark Freakley, *Ethics and the Community of Inquiry: Education for a deliberative democracy* (Melbourne, Aust.: Thomson/Social Science Press, forthcoming 2005). In this chapter we describe the relationship between the sub-disciplines of philosophy and substantive inquiry, and the links to ethics and the education of values.

[2] In the late 1960s Lipman developed an educational syllabus based on philosophical inquiry to improve children's thinking skills, which he believed would improve the relationship between deliberative judgments and democratic decision-making.

[3] Garth Boomer, *Designs on Learning: Essays on Curriculum and Teaching,* Green, B., ed., (Canberra, Aust.: Australian Curriculum Studies Association, 1999), 134.

[4] Ibid, 135.

[5] For more on the community of inquiry, see: Matthew Lipman, *Philosophy Goes to School* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988); Matthew Lipman, *Thinking in Education* (N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Matthew Lipman & Ann Margaret Sharp, eds, *Growing Up with Philosophy* (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt, 1994); Matthew Lipman, Ann Margaret Sharp, & Frederick S. Oscanyan, *Philosophy in the Classroom,* second edition (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980)' Laurance Splitter, & Ann Margaret Sharp, *Teaching for Better Thinking. The Classroom Community of Inquiry* (Melbourne, Vic.: Australian Council for Educational Research, 1995).

[6] Ann Margaret Sharp, 'Peirce, Feminism, and Philosophy for Children,' manuscript (April 1992), pp.1-24, published in *Analytic Teaching*, Vol.14, No.1 (1993): 15.

[7] S. Barnet & H. Bedau, *Critical Thinking Reading and Writing: A Brief Guide to Argument,* third edition (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1999), 4.

[8] Edward de Bono is Director of the International Center for the Development of Thinking Skills..

[9] Edward de Bono, *Parallel Thinking: From Socratic Thinking to de Bono Thinking* (Australia: Penguin, 1994), p.vii.

[10] Ibid, x.

[11] Ibid, x.

[12] Ibid, 216.

[13] Ibid, 6.

[14] Ibid, 36.

[15] Ibid, 32.

[16] Janice Moulton, ‘A Paradigm of Philosophy: The Adversary Method’, S. Harding and M.B. Hintikka, eds, *Discovering Reality. Feminist Perspective on Epistemology, Metaphysics, Methodology and Philosophy of Science* (Dordrech, Holland: D. Reidel, 1983), 163.

[17] Ibid, 159.

[18] Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason. ‘Male’ and ‘Female’ in Western Philosophy*(London: Methuen, 1984).

[19] Lloyd identifies this type of reason as ‘Reason’ (upper case R) in order to remind us that reason as we know it (i.e., Reason) is, in fact, narrowly defined.

[20] A. M. Jaggar, ‘Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology,’ in A.M. Jaggar & S.R. Bordo, eds, *Gender,/Body/Knowledge. Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989), pp.145-71.

[21] S. Sherwin, ‘Philosophical Methodology and Feminist Methodology: Are They Compatible?’ in A. Garry & M. Pearsall, eds, *Women, Knowledge, and Reality: Explorations in Feminist Philosophy* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 21-35.

[22] Edward de Bono, *Six Thinking Hats* (Aust.: Penguin, 1990), 13.

[23] San MacColl, ‘Opening Philosophy,’ *Thinking: The Journal of Philosophy for Children*, Vol.11, Nos.3&4, (1994), pp.5-9.

[24] Laurance J. Splitter, ‘Critical Thinking: What, Why, When and How,’ *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, Vol.23, No.1 (1991): 89-109.

[25] Ibid, 90.

[26] Lipman (1991), 257.

[27] Ibid, 254. For a feminist critique of philosophical methods of inquiry, especially in order to highlight certain features of the philosophy for children program, see Terri Field, ‘Philosophy for Children and the Feminist Critique of Reason,’ *Critical & Creative Thinking: the Australasian Journal of Philosophy for Children*, Vol.3, No.1 (March 1995): 9-12; Terri Field, ‘Feminist Epistemology and Philosophy for Children,’ *Thinking: The Journal of Philosophy for Children*, Vol.13, No.1, (1997): 17-22.

[28] C. Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982).

[29] Moulton, 156.

[30] Ibid, 157.

[31] E.P. Torrance, ‘Can we teach children to think creatively?’ *Journal of Creative Behavior*, Vol.6 (1972): 114-43; D.A. Rosenthal, S.M. Morrison & L. Perry, ‘Teaching Creativity: A Comparison of Two Techniques’, *The Australian Journal of Education*, Vol.21 (1977): 226-32.

[32] Philip Cam, *Twenty Thinking Tools* (manuscript, 2004), 3.

[33] Lipman (1988), 17.

[34] Cam, 4-5.

[35] Gilbert Burgh, G., ‘Democratic Education: Aligning curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and school governance’, Philip Cam, ed., *Philosophy, Democracy and Education* (Seoul, Korea: Korean National Commission for UNESCO, 2003), 102-120.

[36] Gilbert Burgh & Sarah Davey, ‘Learning for Democracy: Caring, dialogue and deliberative communities,’ *Proceedings of the Education and Social Action Conference*, Centre for Popular Education, University of Technology, Sydney, 6-8 December, 2004, 331-338.

[37] Cam, 1.

[38] Gilbert Burgh & Mia O’Brien, ‘Philosophy and Education: Integrating Curriculum, Teaching and Learning’, *Critical & Creative Thinking: the Australasian Journal of Philosophy for Children*, Vol.10, No.1 (Mar 2002): 45-58; Mark Freakley & Gilbert Burgh, ‘Improving Teacher Education Students' Ethical Thinking Using the Community of Inquiry Approach’, *Analytic Teaching*, Vol.19, No.1 (November 1998): 27-31.

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Part 3

Engagement and Inquiry

Creative, Critical and Caring Engagement – Philosophy through Inquiry

Sarah Davey

Abstract: This paper will give an overview of Matthew Lipman's Philosophy for Children program and the process of Community of Inquiry. The guiding principle of Lipman's Community of Inquiry process is 'letting the argument lead'. Although the facilitator of the inquiry has a responsibility to guide the discussion procedurally, this is at a level of co-inquirer and he or she should not lead the inquiry down a predetermined path. The paper will address how this process of letting the dialogue unfold through the participants' contributions leads to *engagement*. This engagement according to Lipman is critical, creative and caring. Creative thinking according to Lipman is involved with making meaning through ethical claims. Engagement of a creative kind occurs when we let the argument lead because the ideas must be developed by the participants themselves and not predetermined. The critical element of this engagement occurs when students have to examine their *own* arguments and the arguments of others to continue the dialogue. Because the inquiry rests on participants being reflective, this method naturally adopts a process of critical thinking. However, without engaging through care, an inquiry could not operate at the level of engagement that is beneficial to its participants. I would argue that without care, the critical and creative engagement could not occur. This paper does not privilege any one of the three types of engagement. Rather, it attempts to go someway to explaining how critical, creative and caring engagement occurs through an inquiry process that lets the participants in the inquiry engage through their own thinking.

Key Words: Philosophy for Children**,** Community of Inquiry**,** Engagement**,** Critical Thinking, Creative Thinking, Caring Thinking, Argument, Facilitation

> "The child does not become social by learning. He must be social in order to learn"
>
> -George Herbert Mead

1. Introduction – Letting the Argument Lead.

The guiding principle of Lipman's Community of Inquiry process is 'letting the argument lead'. Although the facilitator of the inquiry has a responsibility to guide the discussion procedurally, this is at a level of co-inquirer and he or she should not lead the inquiry down a predetermined path. This paper will address how this process of letting the dialogue unfold through the participants' own contributions leads to *engagement*. This engagement according to Lipman is critical, creative and caring. Letting the argument lead is a process of engaging with all three of Lipman's criteria, however I argue in this paper that it is in fact care that leads children to genuinely engage rather than just enlisting critical and creative skills. By caring for the process, they do in fact *become* critical and creative.

Engagement in dialogue comes from a discussion that is not simply a conversation - it is in every sense, engaging. By engaging in philosophical dialogue, children are taken to a level beyond their average classroom participation. But what sets a philosophical dialogue and a mere conversation apart?[1] According to Susan Gardner, the search for truth motivates participants in a dialogue, and is the whole purpose of the Community of Inquiry, and I would argue, of philosophical inquiry in general. There is, as Gardner points out,

> an obvious, although relatively superficial sense in which progress toward truth is vital to the practice of inquiry and that if such progress is not made, the term *community of inquiry* becomes a misnomer. Properly speaking, in order to "inquire", one must not only inquire about *something* … one must also make some progress – at least if such progress is possible.[2]

Gardner notes that if a dialogue is to be productive, then the participants must in fact produce something of substance, which, in turn, would make that dialogue substantive. This product is truth, and without the necessity of trying to reach it, a dialogue would have no direction and there would be no motivation for its participants. It should be reiterated that truth may not in fact result at the conclusion of the dialogue. However, as Gardner points out, having this as a goal gives the inquiry purpose. Justus Buchler also identifies that the conclusion of the dialogue is not as important as the process itself. Although we may not come to a *conclusion* (or find 'truth' in the Platonic sense of the word) he argues that "a product is inevitably established in any given hour of discussion".[3] He says "(s)tudents may have no right to demand final answers, but they certainly have the right to expect some sense of intellectual motion or some feeling of discernment".[4]

So how does engagement occur through this process? We are not trying to identify what engagement is in this paper, moreover, we will identify how it occurs through the process of critical, creative and caring thinking. Undertaking a conceptual analysis to find a conclusive definition of the term 'engagement' will bring us no closer to understanding how children engage through philosophical inquiry. However, perhaps Gardner offers some definition by way of claiming that the progress towards truth makes the dialogue substantive. Because the dialogue has a particular purpose rather than being unstructured talk, the substantive nature of dialogue and its meaningfulness leads to engagement. Perhaps the 'substantiveness' of inquiry is what we mean when we refer to engagement – connecting with substantive ideas. Perhaps if we look towards the commonsense use of the word engagement this may also give us a better idea. To engage is an 'interlocking' of two or more entities. Typically, when we think of engagement as a betrothal of marriage between one person and another, this is the bringing together of two individuals to one union (or marriage). This is important to our working definition of the term 'engagement'. Interlocking occurs between children in an inquiry, between a child and a creative idea, a critical idea or a caring idea, and the interlocking of all of these elements. In other words, this interlocking may occur between people or between a person and an idea, or the interaction of all of these things. Bringing together is what we hope to do when we aim for engagement in an inquiry. The nature of 'intersubjectivity' in the Community of Inquiry is perhaps what we mean here as a certain interlocking between the individual idea and the community thought.[5] Vygotsky offers us some further explanation of what intersubjectivity is when he discusses the process of internalization as the individual interacting with the community and how the thoughts of the community interact with the individual's own thoughts. The nature of intersubjectivity and internalization require further explanation, but for the purposes of this paper, they will help to inform our working definition of engagement. This process of engagement can occur because children must engage with each other rather than being directed by a teacher (at least, that is the aim of the Community of Inquiry).

Let us now look at what we mean by 'letting the argument lead'. Lipman took this to be the guiding principle of his process of inquiry. He took this direction from Socrates who believed that by following the dialogue where it naturally leads will enable a greater exploration of the argument (and perhaps, according to Plato, the arrival at truth). It is with this principle in mind that Lipman formulated the process of inquiry. The role of the facilitator in the inquiry is particularly important in letting the natural process of argument unfold with very little or merely procedural influence. The facilitator merely plays a clarifying and questioning role so that the discussion is guided by the children's own contributions. While there is more thinking to be done by the children themselves, there is also a deeper level of engagement in thinking than can be expected from normal non-participatory classroom routine. Children not only have to think, but they have to think on their own. As we will explore later on in this paper, thinking for oneself is an intrinsically creative process. The argument that leads the discussion has come from the children and their own abilities to invent arguments, but this is also coupled with a critical process of thinking. As we will explore further, engaging in classroom inquiry and engaging with arguments of others requires critical consideration of the argument as well as looking critically at the arguments of others to identify any falsities or fallacies.

2. Caring as Engagement in a Process of Critical and Creative Thinking.

We have looked briefly at two types of thinking but according to Lipman, there are three elements of engagement in a Community of Inquiry. Ann Sharp emphases a third type of engagement that is overshadowed by Lipman's main concentration on critical and creative thinking. She argues that while Lipman recognizes care in the inquiry, it is not given the same level of explanation in Lipman's curriculum. Sharp devotes an article entitled *The Other Dimension of Caring Thinking* to bring caring thinking to the forefront in the Community of Inquiry. Caring thinking she argues,

> suggests a certain view of personhood and a pedagogical process. It also suggests a particular environment for the cultivation of such thinking. I am referring to the process of communal inquiry and the democratic environment of the classroom community of inquiry. It is as if you can't have one without the other, if you are interested in cultivating caring thinking among children on a large scale.[6]

Sharp relates her theory of caring thinking as a pedagogical process to the Community of Inquiry. She says that "as we become more conscious of the social and aesthetic dimension of the inquiry process, we find that it takes on more and more meaning if we truly care about its process and its outcomes".[7]

Sharp reflects Nel Noddings' approach to caring explained below, in that it is more of a 'pedagogical care' than an emotional, popular view of care.[8] She argues that "knowledge is the growth in our capacity to care", and that "(w)hat we care about reveals to others and to ourselves what really matters to us".[9] However, from this particular view about caring being our capacity to care about outcomes and processes which is particularly helpful in this paper, Sharp precariously moves her definition of care in the pedagogical sense to a more emotional, popular view of care that has its basis in friendship and love. We are not concerned about this view of care in this paper, however, the perils of friendship and the Community of Inquiry is discussed in a larger paper entitled *Consensus, Community and Care*.[10] It is important to define care as a pedagogical caring rather than emotional insofar as we can see its benefits to the inquiry process rather than its personal and emotional value. We do not discount the importance of an emotional caring to children and adults, but the focus is on building a caring community rather than the cultivation of friendships. Suffice it to say, there is a larger argument that can not be dealt with in this short paper. From this point onwards, when I refer to 'caring thinking' in the Community of Inquiry I am referring to the pedagogical form of caring rather than the emotional view.

Noddings describes caring as having a regard for the views and interests of others.[11] Moreover, it also requires reciprocity. For caring to be fulfilled, the "one-caring" must receive some sort of validation from the "cared-for", in order for the act of caring to be complete. Caring, argues Noddings, "must somehow be completed in the other if the relationship is to be described as caring".[12] Lipman's Community of Inquiry also requires reciprocity, as well as a regard for the views and interests of others, which entails trust, tolerance, and fairmindedness.[13] Opinions or points of view can be truly received only when others engage with those opinions or points of view. Regardless of disagreement, if the relationship is a caring one, then a commitment to the process of inquiry becomes paramount. Caring is, as Noddings says, integral to the success of the dialogue, as it is this element that helps participants to accept different views.

> Through such a dialectic, we are led beyond the intense, and particular feelings accompanying our deeply held values and beyond the particular beliefs to which these feelings are attached *to a realization that the other who feels intensely about that which I do not believe is still to be received* (*emphasis* my own).[14]

In sum, caring helps participants value and accept different points of view.[15] Instead of placing importance on common interests, caring accommodates for differences. In an inquiry where participants may not share the same beliefs or values, they can still follow the dialogue from their own perspective and from the perspectives of others. In such cases, while participants acknowledge disagreement, they also are learning that the beliefs and values of the participants must be given equal respect and attention. Being accepted for having different beliefs or values is integral to Noddings' notion of caring.

3. Care in the Inquiry.

The idea of care as a form of thinking in the Community of Inquiry is twofold. It is both an act and a disposition. Noddings looks at the metadialogue and the processes of caring as being such things as listening, turn-taking, respecting, accommodating difference and so on, whereas Sharp recognizes caring as an attitude of caring for the process – what Gardner talks about when she identifies a dialogue as being particularly philosophical. Because the argument itself leads, the care for the process is paramount in an inquiry. As Sharp notes, the Community of Inquiry is intrinsically based on caring thinking as it, "calls forth [children's] care: their care for the tools of inquiry, their care for the problems they deem worthy to be inquired into, their care for the form of the dialogue, and their care for each other as they proceed in the inquiry itself". The caring for the process and the outcomes is paramount to a successfully engaging inquiry. With only limited facilitation in the inquiry and with the children themselves being responsible for the dialogue, they must care for the process to make it substantive or it would simply be a conversation (without purpose of finding truth). It is hence my assertion that in order for participants in the dialogue to engage fully, then they must care for the outcome of the dialogue and most importantly they must care for the process of philosophical inquiry; this process is a process of critical and creative thinking.

4. Engaging in Critical Thinking

Engagement can occur through critical thinking if it is not simply approached as a skill or activity. Lipman notes that when we think of critical thinking we often think of outcomes such as finding conclusive definitions or universal definitions. Lipman rather presents critical thinking in the Community of Inquiry as a process. It is not simply engaging in an activity that will give us a solution or make a decision. It is "*thinking that (1) facilitates judgment because it (2) relies on criteria, (3) is self-correcting, and is (4) sensitive to context.*".[16] To Lipman, being a critical thinker is much more important than the simple activity of, for example, conducting a conceptual analysis. While this activity does enlist critical thinking, being critical involves a process of being self-correcting in the creative process. It does involve, however, the narrowing down of certain concepts and the making of criteria. This forces participants to be concise in their thinking. Although Lipman does not have a Platonic view of finding a universal or absolute truth, he views that the aim for truth in some sense leads children to avoid "error and falsehood".[17]

We have drawn on the fact that engagement in the Community of Inquiry comes from letting the argument, and not the facilitator, determine the path of inquiry. The critical thinking element of this engagement occurs when students have to examine their *own* arguments and the arguments of others in the dialogue. Because the inquiry rests on participants being reflective, this method naturally adopts a process of critical thinking. Like care, being critical can be both an activity and a disposition. One can *do* critical thinking insofar as partaking in an activity of conceptual analysis. Lipman is vocal in his program not becoming a skills program, rather he promotes the program as creating dispositions.[18] So, one can do a critical thinking activity, but engagement is what makes a participant *be* critical. Caring for the process of the inquiry and its critical process takes an activity in critical thinking away from being a skill and further towards being a disposition.

5. Creative Thinking and Engagement.

Likewise, care for the process provides a basis for engagement in creative thinking. It is important to note that in this paper, creative thinking and creativity are not the same thing. Lipman shows us that while creativity is also important in thinking, creative thinking is central to philosophy inquiry. Creative thinking according to Lipman is involved with making meaning through claims.

We have already stipulated that Lipman sees letting the argument lead as engaging participants in the inquiry. This is intrinsically creative, as Lipman suggests when he says “I suspect it is, that thinking for ourselves is the most appropriate paradigm of creative thought”.[19] Perhaps Lipman describes it best when he points to ‘invention’ as being at the heart of creative thinking.[20] The dialogue is based on the ideas of the children and the argument that leads from it. Generating these ideas requires inventiveness on the children’s part and also such other elements as “originality, novelty, generativity, uniqueness, breakthrough, capacity, surprisingness, liberating quality, productivity, freshness, imaginativeness, inspiredness, capacity to synthesize”.[21] Engagement of a creative kind occurs when we let the argument lead because the ideas must be developed by the participants themselves and cannot be predetermined.

6. An Intersection of Caring, Critical and Creative Thinking.

This paper does not assert that critical and creative thinking are mutually exclusive categories. If we look at the diagram below, we can see that they are interrelated. Critical thinking does rely on a process of creativity. For example, in an inquiry, thinking of a creative counter-example is a critical thinking activity. It enlists both critical and creative thinking although it relies mainly on the participant being critical. Also, creative thinking relies on participants being critical of their own ideas before they contribute them to the dialogue. While making meaning is mainly creative, there is a level of critical thinking involved in coming through this process. Lipman similarly acknowledges that in his process of inquiry creative thinking should not be uncritical or irrational[22] and that,

> there is no creative thinking that is not shot with critical judgments, just as there is no critical judgment that is not shot through with creative judgments. We can, of course, construct abstract ideal types in which pure forms of thinking are delineated, but in actuality admixture is the rule.[23]

This paper does assert however, that it is care that envelopes these categories in a Community of Inquiry as shown in Figure 1.

7. Conclusions.

We can argue that the idea of letting the argument lead the discussion is in fact a creative process. Because the dialogue relies on the inventiveness and creativity of the participants in an inquiry to shape the arguments and hence the dialogue itself, we can assert that the inquiry rests on engagement in creative thought. However, even if making meaning in the dialogue is a process of creative thinking, participants must also enlist critical thinking in order to make such meaning. Applying criteria and being self-correcting are all critical thinking processes. Lipman recognizes that these two forms of thinking provide a basis for the philosophical Community of Inquiry. But *engagement* in dialogue happens through caring thinking. Caring for the process of inquiry means enlisting the processes of critical and creative thinking to further the dialogue. While having both critical and creative approaches to thinking are fundamental to the dispositions that Lipman hoped to integrate through his pedagogy, children must first care about becoming both critical and creative driven by their natural propensity to care for the process of philosophical inquiry and the outcomes that result from inquiring communally together.

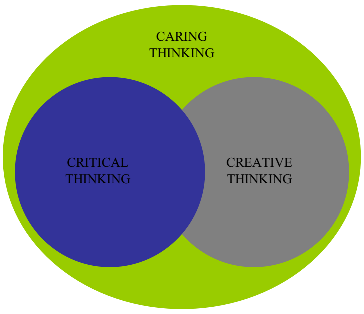

Figure 1: Intersection of Critical, Creative and Caring Thinking.

Notes

[1] For the difference between dialogue and conversation, see also L. Amir, "Don't Interrupt my Dialogue," in *Thinking Through Dialogue*, ed. T. Curnow (Surry, United Kingdon: Practical Philosophy Press, 2001), 239-42.
[2] S. Gardner "Inquiry is no Mere Conversation (or Discussion or Dialogue): Facilitation is Hard Work!," *Critical and Creative Thinking: The Australasian Journal of Philosophy for Children* 3, 2 (1995): 38-49, 38
[3] Matthew Lipman, *Thinking in Education*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 231.
[4] Ibid.
[5] See also T. Allen "Being an Individual in the Community of Inquiry," *Critical and Creative Thinking: The Australasian Journal of Philosophy for Children*, 6, 1 (1998): 28-36.
[6] A. M. Sharp, "The Other Dimension of Caring Thinking," *Critical & Creative Thinking* 12 (2004): 9-14, 9
[7] Sharp, 10.
[8] For more on 'pedagogical care', see R. Hutt "On Pedagogical Caring," *Educational Theory* 29 (1979): 237-43.
[9] Sharp,10
[10] S. Davey "Consensus, Caring and Community: An Inquiry into Dialogue," *Analytic Teaching* 25 (2004): 18-51.
[11] N. Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, (California, The Regents of the University of California, 1984), 9.
[12] Noddings, 4
[13] See Lipman, and Philip Cam, *Thinking Together; Philosophical Inquiry for the Classroom, (*Sydney, NSW, Hale & Iremonger, 1995).
[14] Noddings, 186
[15] See also J. Thomas "Community of Inquiry and Differences of the Heart", *Thinking: The Journal of Philosophy for Children* 13 (1997): 42-48.
[16] Lipman, 116. For more critical thinking activities, see L. Splitter "Critical Thinking: What, Why, When and How", *Educational Philosophy and Theory,* 23 (1991): 89-109.
and S. Wilks, *Critical & Creative Thinking. Strategies for Classroom Inquiry,* (Armadale, Victoria Eleanor Curtain, 1995).
[17] Lipman, 193
[18] See G. Burgh , 'Philosophy in Schools: Education for Democracy or Democratic Education', *Critical & Creative Thinking: The Australasian Journal of Philosophy for Children* 11, 2 (2003).
[19] Lipman, 204
[20] Lipman, 193
[21] Lipman, 205
[22] Lipman, 193
[23] Lipman, 194

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Part 4

Engagement, Language, Thinking

Creative activities in the Greek EFL Classroom

Pericles Tangas

Abstract: The aim of this paper is to highlight cross-curricular activities and projects that are employed creatively in Greek schools, following the implementation of the cross-curricular approach to teaching English in the public sector. The revised curriculum (2003) provides pupils with increased awareness of multicultural/multilingual aspects of language learning. In addition to the development of literacy and communicative competence, it focuses on the multi-faceted development of children and the formulation of social attitudes by exploiting information from various subjects. Thus, children work toward completing projects that combine the learning of English with other subjects, such as History, Geography, Art, Computers, P.E., Science, etc., in a creative, learner-centred process of active participation. Pupils are encouraged to do their own research and develop autonomy. Moreover, the study of English becomes more motivating, as it is presented in a meaningful context. The content-based study of English promotes communicative competence as it becomes a process of discovering the world, interacting with the local society, and learning how to learn in a pleasant and creative atmosphere. Examples of cross-curricular activities involve dramatization, educational games, turning texts into pictures and using new technologies and educational sites (e.g. “Xenios”).

Key Words: English language teaching, cross-curricular approach, projects, multicultural activities.

1. Introduction.

In the Greek educational system, English is taught in Primary schools for four years (grades 3 to 6). The introduction of English in grade 3 took place in 2003-04, but the language has been taught in Primary education since 1993 - although it had been introduced as a pilot scheme even earlier. In secondary education it is taught for another six years, in junior and senior high schools.

Educational approaches to teaching English in the Greek EFL classroom are now based on the principles governing the new Revised Curriculum of the English Language (2003).[1] The creative activities proposed encourage pupils to learn "how to learn". Therefore, teachers should not only be careful about how to teach, but also about how *not* to teach: this means that learners need to be activated towards conquering knowledge through participation and discovery, in a safe and pleasant educational environment.

The advantage of the cross-curricular approach is that it aims at combining information from various subjects. Thus, teaching English does not focus simply on skills development and knowledge acquisition but on the overall development of children’s personality. In this respect, English as a subject is now treated on a par with other subjects taught at school, as it offers a culturally different perspective on a variety of issues related to pupils’ lives.

2. The Revised Curriculum of the English Language.

According to the Revised Curriculum of the English Language, which is based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages,[2] the objectives of teaching English in the Greek public sector are:

A. *Literacy*

This aim concerns the acquisition of knowledge of the form, structure and functions of the foreign language, as well as the development of skills. Children get involved in oral and written exercises with a view to acquiring and exploiting information, knowledge and attitudes, while also learning to structure, organize and express their thoughts in every communicative situation. At the same time, they are trained in the correct usage of the graphemic and phonemic system of the English language, through selected activities.

B. *Plurilingualism*

This objective refers to the discovery of similarities and differences between languages and aims to acquaint learners with linguistic diversity and its function in different contexts. In this sense, a dynamic relationship with other languages is developed, as pupils practice skills involving the parallel use of mother tongue and foreign language - e.g. reading or listening to instructions in Greek and expressing a speech act in English. An example of a “multilingual” exercise from the *Funway* series used in the Greek primary school involves a listening comprehension exercise in which pupils listen to five children introducing themselves in Greek, English, French, German and Italian, and try to understand and write down each child’s name, country and city.

C. *Pluriculturalism*

This term pervades all forms of communication and refers to the familiarization of learners with linguistic as well as cultural diversity - the realization that there exist similar and equivalent social attitudes pertaining to different peoples of the world. By learning the linguistic code of a people, learners develop respect of cultural peculiarities and the cultural context of different countries and civilizations and accept this information as something that enriches their intellectual and spiritual world.[3] In the *Funway* series again, there are "pluricultural" texts (e.g. "Oscar lives in Peru…", "Fernando is from Spain…" or "In Bangkok, the market is the river itself…", etc.), in which language teaching becomes more meaningful, as it is directly related to conveying geographical, historical or environmental knowledge (e.g. matching exercises in which pupils read encyclopaedic information about certain animals and then match them with the pictures or definitions provided).

The philosophy pervading the teaching of English in the Greek public sector is summarized in the following learner-centred approaches:

A. "Learn how to learn".
B. Prepare for "life-long learning".

Within this framework, conquering attitudes for life becomes the long-term target, within the broader environment of a changing, multilingual and multicultural community. The methodology of foreign language teaching is blended with various subjects, in a cross-curricular approach, a process of active participation aiming at the development of methods of discovering, evaluating and processing information. From this aspect, learners become researchers involved in action programmes targeted at covering their needs both at school and in their social interactions.

Methodologically, a variety of alternative teaching approaches is proposed, based on consolidation, research and creation and aiming at providing knowledge in a pleasant and creative environment. Particularly in day-long schools,[4] this approach has become more feasible with the development of small projects as well as role-play/dramatization, reading stories, learning traditional songs from Anglophone countries, playing educational games, watching educational videos, etc.

3. Teaching Approaches.

A. Flexible learning

Cross-curricular activities respond to Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, and therefore they cover learners' needs - whether they are the linguistic type, the spatial, musical, kinesthetic, logical/mathematical, interpersonal or intrapersonal. The additional benefit is that alternative activities and forms of teaching also encourage learners to discover their different talents and inclinations.

In order to sustain pupils' interest and motivation, it is essential to change activities frequently. Another useful technique is to combine compulsory activities (telling all pupils to do a certain minimal part of the task) with optional material (for those who understand or have time and wish to do more). Furthermore, incorporating music, movement, dramatization, etc. into language teaching contributes to the creation of a relaxed and positive atmosphere, in which the teacher essentially facilitates the learning process, guiding children to meaningful communication. Examples of combined activities include:

-Writing and listening
-Listening to songs and singing as a chorus
-Reading stories and dramatizing them
-Watching educational videos (e.g. documentaries, Aesop's fables, etc.) and discussing afterwards or writing a summary

Audio-visual means - particularly videotapes - present realistic aspects of life, involve learners in stimulating conversations, and also offer variety and entertainment.[5]

On the whole, the teacher should provide weaker learners, too with opportunities to feel the joy of success by stimulating their interest with exercises and activities that are suitable for a mixed-ability class - which, for instance, is the case in day-long schools. Group work is ideal, as it enables students to learn from one another, practice oral fluency and feel less intimidated.[6]

B. Lesson planning

A teacher has to be patient and calm. However hard that may be in a class of vivacious young learners, it is essential to keep in mind the impact that the teacher's behaviour can have. Pupils often model their own behaviour on their pedagogues and that alone can be a frustrating element. The teacher ought to benefit from that by planning his lesson carefully and incorporating gestures, miming, etc., so as to create a more humanistic environment.[7] Bringing to class flash cards, magazine or newspaper clips, tapes, realia, etc. can also be helpful.

Example
Present Continuous
-What am I doing now? (T mimes slicing, chopping, stirring, etc.)
-You are cooking!

While planning the lesson, it is useful to bear in mind that alternating "stir" with "settle" activities is an important method of controlling tempo.[8] For instance, dictation and writing exercises help to maintain quiet in the classroom. In contrast, songs, role-play, choral responses and educational games are more lively activities. Above all, story-telling is a very important engagement, especially for primary learners.[9]

C. The Role of Translation

Translation improves learners' understanding of the differences between English and Greek, while it also sharpens their comparative skills and familiarizes them with intercultural aspects of language learning. Personalizing sentences to be translated is a useful method of engaging learners personally and helping them to feel they are related to as individuals.

Example
Present Simple
-Stelios visits his grandparents every weekend.
-Despina watches cartoons every afternoon.

D. Dramatization

Experience suggests that only entertaining activities - or those that involve pupils' background can motivate them and promote learning. As a rule, creative activities develop pupils' automatized learning.[10] Communicative activities reflect real-life English, as opposed to "classroom English", a term describing the old model that emphasized learning grammar rules instead of using the language in communicative settings.

Example
Giving directions
Dramatizing an extract from *Funway 2* (Primary School course book, Grade 5)
-Excuse me, where's the headmaster's office?
-Go straight ahead, turn left and then right. The headmaster's office is next to the library.

E. Cross-curricular activities

Cross-curricular activities promote learner autonomy as pupils get used to doing research and completing projects. *How* learners are involved in the learning process is more important than *what* they are taught.[11] Children participate in authentic situations involving experimenting, co-operating, suggesting solutions and verifying them. In this way, they develop their social skills and abilities at school, while the role of the teacher is to facilitate their research. Dialogue, conversation and collaboration are core elements of the cross-curricular approach. As D. Johnson and R. Johnson state, co-operation contributes more to children's mental and emotional development than competition or individual work, while it also promotes relationships between pupils and between pupils and teacher, thus contributing to the creation of an appropriate pedagogic ambience.[12]

In public primary schools, emphasis is more on teaching than testing, while pupils' progress is assessed by means of projects and a personal portfolio.[13] Projects are usually based on group work on various topics reflecting children's needs and inclinations. In this respect, projects are ideal for promoting co-operation in class, while they also connect school with society. What is more, when pupils are involved in meaningful activities they are better motivated, as they can identify with roles and settings that are relevant to their lives and interests, particularly when they are asked to do something or act. As House states, all these principles need to be considered by the teacher when he prepares his teaching material.[14]

Example 1
Bong's story
Pupils are assigned roles and mime voices as they dramatize an extract from the story with the aliens, at the end of each unit of their book (*Funway 1*, Grade 4).
As a follow-up, they are assigned the following exercise:
Imagine what houses look like on Bong's planet. Draw Bong's house and write the names of its rooms and furniture.

This activity combines writing (*Language*) with drawing (*Art*), while it also consolidates previously taught vocabulary. At the same time, it offers learners with artistic skills an opportunity to participate in the lesson.[15]

Example 2
Bilingual newspaper
According to Raimes, "writing is a valuable part of any language course", as it reinforces learners' structure, grammar and vocabulary acquisition.[16] In co-operation with their Greek and English language teachers, pupils are assigned to write short articles, jokes, announcements,

songs, poems, cartoons, etc. The "editors" collect the material and a bilingual newspaper is compiled, which can then be sold by the pupils. The project may also feature an interview from the local authorities (e.g. the Mayor).

Example 3
Tourist guide
Pupils work towards compiling a tourist guide of their area. They talk about the sights and places of interest that will be included in the guide, take photos or look for information about certain monuments, etc. and then write their own articles.

4. New Technologies and Language Learning.

The incorporation of computers into the educational process has facilitated the implementation of the modern pedagogic principle of the cross-curricular approach that inter-relates school subjects, thus surpassing the traditional attitude to knowledge. Using new technologies in class increases children's interest, as it offers learner autonomy and improves pupils' research and learning strategies. In addition, the teacher can adjust his lesson to the different needs of students. The Internet in particular is ideal for finding information and completing projects, while it also increases children's intercultural understanding. Learning a foreign language can therefore be enhanced with the use of new technologies, which transform it from an intensive and time-consuming activity to an exciting experience.

Examples of cross-curricular activities involving new technologies and English language teaching are presented below:

Example 1
Physical Education
Pupils surf the Internet and find information about a sport from an Anglophone country, e.g. cricket, golf, etc. and then a game is organized at school, with the help of the P.E. teacher.
In co-operation with the P.E. teacher, choreography is developed from an English song (e.g. "Hockey-Cockey" - or a traditional song from an Anglophone country).

Example 2
Pupils copy a text from their course book in a *Word* file and run spell check. Electronic word processing is not a "virtual" activity, because it allows pupils to complete their assignment in a more convenient interface and either co-operate or work individually, at their own pace, forming and formatting the content of their written assignments. Moreover, they learn to read faster and develop their skills in different reading techniques (scanning, skimming, etc.).

Example 3
Pupils get an e-mail address and then with the help of their teacher they send electronic messages to each other or to pupils from another school of their area (or even from another country).

Example 4
Learners use on-line dictionaries (for example the English-Greek and Greek-English dictionary at www.in.gr) to translate words/phrases from English into Greek and vice versa.

Example 5
The educational site "Xenios" (http://xenios.cti.gr)

This website offers a virtual tour of Europe, language practice and skills development exercises. It is available in three languages (English, French and German) and it is based on "a holistic approach for the application of Information and Communication Technologies in a classroom setting through an educational scenario-framework on the theme of a virtual trip to a foreign country".[17] The activities have been designed and divided into "phases" of the trip ("at the airport", "at the hotel", etc.) and teachers' focus on each phase may vary, depending on the theme or the level of the pupils. In addition, English language learners may explore *Xenios* and "visit" London's sights, e.g. the British Museum and its famous galleries. As a follow-up, pupils can write a short composition relating their impressions (connection with *Geography, History and Art*).

Activities of this kind enhance pupils' cultural horizons and conform to the principles of intercultural education. According to Kim, the intercultural person "represents a type of person whose cognitive, affective, and behavioural characteristics are not limited but are open to growth beyond the psychological parameters of his or her own culture…”.[18]

In general, the various multimedia applications that combine text, sound, graphics, pictures, animation, etc. are very attractive, while their built-in feedback makes them ideal for autonomous learning. However, it is the teacher’s responsibility to present activities to children in an organized and orchestrated way.

Example 6
Pupils find information about a British or American writer, artist/politician - or a city, area, etc.
Some of the Internet search engines pupils can use are:
Greek engines: In.gr (http://www.in.gr), Phantis (http://www.phantis.com), Evresi (http://www.evresi.gr), Go Greece (http://www.gogreece.net)
Foreign engines: Google (http://www.google.com), Altavista (http://www.altavista.com), Ask Jeeves (http://www.ask.com), Yahoo (http://www.yahoo.com)

The advantage of using computers to teach English is that the computer can assume different roles.[19] The key-word is “interactive”. Computers can receive and provide data; they can provide information and they can also play the teacher’s role in correcting pupils’ mistakes, for instance. The use of multimedia allows computers to talk to children or even communicate with them on a name-to-name basis, through specially designed software. Moreover, the internet offers immense opportunities, such as getting direct information about various issues from digital libraries or from educational sites or portals like those of BBC or CNN, etc. Thus children approach knowledge through more pleasant stimuli and learning becomes more creative and enjoyable.

5. Educational Games.

As stated in the revised Curriculum, educational games offer learners of all levels the opportunity to participate in the lesson, as even weaker pupils feel motivated to contribute to the success of their team. Educational games create competition in class and are therefore a significant alternative activity.[20] Apart from that, they usually combine language activities with movement (TPR), so they are more exciting. Games help children to express themselves, discover information in a pleasant way, offer and receive, learn how to organize and co-operate and, finally, identify with roles and situations. In addition, pupils develop their personality by interacting with their environment and learning how to communicate in various manners. Scheuerl characterized learning through play as the superior level of learning.[21]

A variety of games are used in the Greek classroom: *Hangman*, *Simon says*, *Taboo*, card games, puzzles, etc. The following game is a variation I have used successfully with Greek Primary learners.

Example
X-O-X (*“Triliza”*)

ticket *εισιτήριο* X		
	shirt *πουκάμισο* O	

The class is divided into two teams (e.g. boys-girls). Pupils come to the board and write an English word in one of the boxes, either as part of their spelling assignment from the previous lesson or for purposes of vocabulary revision. If they write the word correctly, they are allowed to write the sign of their team (X or O) in the same box. The level of difficulty can be increased if we also ask pupils to pronounce and translate the word before they are allowed to “score”. Then a pupil from the second team comes and writes another word in another box, trying to prevent the opposite team from getting three wins in a row (horizontally, vertically or diagonally), and so on. If the pupils of a team cheat or are noisy, they miss a turn.

Language games help pupils appreciate the importance of knowing some basic vocabulary. This is especially true when they have to guess something. Therefore the objective is not simply to entertain children but also to enhance their vocabulary and improve their knowledge, through a process of active participation.[22] Even though the language or the lesson itself may not be challenging on other occasions, the idea of “playing” holds their interest and keeps everyone participating.

6. Conclusions.

With the new Revised Unified Curriculum we have moved a step forward, without claiming that we have invented the wheel. One of the main ideas pervading this paper is that, without ignoring the positive traits of conventional methodologies, the teaching of English as a Foreign Language in Greece gives now more emphasis to content-based, meaningful teaching and learning - a characteristic, traditionally, of English for Specific Purposes.

The double aim of English language education is on the one hand the development of communicative skills and on the other the acquisition of linguistic as well as interdisciplinary knowledge through meaningful projects and activities encouraging creativity and co-operation. This can be more easily achieved in schools of the public sector, where pupils are taught a variety of subjects. However, the implementation of the cross-curricular approach presupposes "extramural" activity as well and more time for research and contacts between the learners themselves or between learners and teachers or other people from the local society.

Cross-curricular activities teach pupils how to use the English language as a means and not only as an object of learning, in a communicative environment which is not an end in itself but the vehicle to conquer knowledge of the English language and culture.[23] The core idea is that children should get involved in instances of communication, adopt roles and form attitudes on social issues (peace, justice, etc.), thus becoming better prepared for the exigencies of their future professional and social lives.

The way in which knowledge is approached becomes very important, as it influences the development of children's character. Therefore, teachers should be trained and assisted in their mission, which is to take into account pupils' prospective needs and teach them how to become active, energetic learners and citizens. In that sense, EFL overlaps with ESP - thematically, at least - as it covers pupils' needs in a more holistic way and develops their awareness of the inter-relatedness of school subjects and, ultimately, knowledge itself.

Notes

1. Greek Government Gazette 304, B', 13-3-2003. It should be noted, though, that the cross-curricular approach had already been adopted before the Revised Unified Curriculum was officially implemented, while the same approach is also applied to the teaching of other subjects in Greek schools.
2. Council of Europe. *The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
3. R. Ellis, *The Study of Second Language Acquisition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 715.
4. See also: Greek Government Gazette 1471, B', 22-11-2002.
5. Cf. M. Allan, *Teaching English with Video* (London: Longman, 1991).
6. Natalie Hess, *Teaching Large Multi-level Classes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 130.
7. Amy B.M. Tsui, *Understanding Expertise in Teaching: Case Studies of ESL Teachers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 25-28.
8. Penny Ur, *A Course in Language Teaching: Practice and Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 216-18.
9. Cf. G. Ellis and J. Brewster, eds. *The Storytelling Handbook for Primary Teachers* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991).
10. Ur, 19-20.
11. See also: J. Chryshochoos, N. Chryshochoos and I. Thompson, *The Methodology of the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language with Reference to the Crosscurricular Approach and Task-Based Learning* (Athens: The Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs & The Pedagogical Institute, 2002).
12. Johnson and R. Johnson, *Learning Together and Alone* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1994), p. 56.
13. As far as private foreign language centres (the so-called "*frontistiria*") are concerned - a thriving business in Greece - they are not particularly conscious of employing and implementing a cross-curricular approach and rather focus on preparing learners for the various examinations for language certificates. Their advantage is that they have more resources and are not limited to using a single course book (plus workbook and audio-cassette), as in the public sector. However, it should be mentioned that they are neither centrally guided nor officially assessed for the services they provide.
14. Cf. S. House, *An Introduction to Teaching English to Children* (Richmond Publishing, 1997).
15. Virginia French Allen, *Techniques and Resources in Teaching Vocabulary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 28-29.
16. Ann Raimes, *Techniques in Teaching Writing* (Oxford University Press, 1983), 3.

17. Margarita Dekoli, “Ekpaideytikes drastiriotites kai logismiko gia to mathima ton ksenon glosson sto scholeio” (Educational activities and software for the school subject of foreign languages), 1st Conference on New Technologies in Teaching: Educational Software and the Internet, Syros 11, 12, 13 May 2001).
18. Y. Kim, “Communicating Interculturally: Becoming Competent”, in *Intercultural Communication: A Reader*, eds. L. Samovar & R. Porter (Belmont, California, U.S.A.: Wadsworth, 1994), 337-346.
19. Cf. R. P. Taylor (ed.) *The Computer in the School: Tutor, Tool, Tutee* (New York: Teacher’s College Press, 1980).
20. Ur, 228.
21. H. Scheuerl, *Das Spiel* (Weinheim und Basel, 1979), 186.
22. French Allen, 52.
23. Diane Larsen-Freeman, *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching*, Second Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 137-142.

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Part 5

Engagement and Intelligence

Developing Co-operative Contexts for Creativity

Lynda Baloche

Abstract: How might one build a context for co-operation while simultaneously designing learning opportunities that allow for, and encourage, creative engagement? The purpose of this paper is to provide a glimpse into a large body of work focused on the development of co-operation for learning - especially as this body of work relates to loosely coupled models, bodies of research, and strategies that, collectively, are commonly referred to as co-operative learning. A second purpose, as the opening question suggests, is to relate work about co-operation to creativity theory by developing an interface that can inform teaching practice. This paper is not intended to be exhaustive, but rather, given my work as a teacher and teacher of teachers, I have chosen to focus on ideas that I have found to be particularly useful as I continuously seek to understand the dynamics of individual and group creativity within the context of co-operation.

Key Words: Creativity, co-operation, co-operative learning, intrinsic motivation, cooperative learning, cooperation

1. The Components of Creative Performance.

Social psychologist Teresa Amabile suggests that, although people don't always agree on what creativity is and are not always able to describe it theoretically, people know creativity when they see it—especially in an area in which they, themselves, have knowledge and expertise.[1] She also suggests that, while people do not always agree on what conditions foster creativity, they can examine the conditions that are present when "some thing" has been produced that is considered creative. She refers to this as a "consensual definition of creativity" and has used this concept frequently in her research. According to Amabile's componential model of creativity, individuals and groups are more likely to develop creative responses if they have: (a) domain-relevant knowledge and skills (if they know a lot about the field in which they are working); (b) access to creativity-relevant techniques that encourage perspective taking and the generation of multiple possibilities; and (c) intrinsic motivation. This paper will examine the social conditions that are likely to encourage intrinsic motivation - especially as those conditions relate to co-operation.

2. Factors that Influence Intrinsic Motivation and Creativity.

A. Co-operative Contexts

Research suggests that intrinsic motivation is more likely to develop when people work within an overall context of co-operation. It seems that when students work in cooperative contexts they are more likely to: (a) use contextual information, information that is available in the "world around them" but has not been given to them directly for their work; (b) choose harder, more challenging projects and problems; (c) be better problem solvers with problems that aren't "simple" and don't have a simple and well-defined path to solution;[2] and (d) report greater satisfaction with their work. This last finding is critically linked with intrinsic motivation theory and creativity trait theory. In studies where people have been identified as "creative" - either through historical analysis, the nominations of contemporaries, or though direct analysis of their work - a recurring theme is that those individuals who are identified as creative love what they do, they feel lucky to be able to do what they do, and they regularly describe their work as "there is nothing I would rather do."[3]

B. Psychological Safety

Abraham Maslow suggested that psychological safety is essential to creativity and psychological health.[4] The co-operative learning literature offers substantive, research-based ideas about how to establish overall feelings of co-operative context and safety. These ideas include (a) the use of base groups, (b) the development of Tribes, and (c) the work of The Child Development Project.[5] These ideas share common foci on the development of group longevity, heterogeneity, pro-social values, direct teaching of interpersonal skills, and the frequent use of co-operation for both learning and social support.

C. Perceptions of Equity

Early research into the nature of individualistic, competitive, and co-operative goal structures suggested that competitive goal structures were particularly disadvantaging to certain ethnic and cultural groups.[6] Consequent research does not, however, suggest that merely putting students into groups and telling them to cooperate is a solution. In fact, researchers know that such arrangements are more likely to replicate and reinforce the inequities of the larger social structure than to help loosen their grip. In groups, participants who are perceived as "less able" (a) tend to talk less or, when they talk, their ideas tend to be ignored by others; (b) have difficulty "getting their hands on" materials and information; (c) may look passive and uninvolved; or (d) may exhibit poor behaviour. In learning situations, low-status students learn less; this is a vicious cycle since, as these students learn less, perceptions that they are "less able" increase.[7]

Across co-operative learning models, there is agreement on the importance of equitable participation and simultaneous interaction. True co-operation cannot be established without establishing a context for, and understanding of, equity. Within any group, classroom, and community, all participants have a right to know that their voices will be heard, acknowledged, and valued. Likewise, classroom co-operation cannot be established without an understanding that interaction is not a "one at a time" recitation between authority and student but a process in which multiple students are simultaneously interactive with each other. In practice, this has meant the development of many strategies for organising student-to-student talk and engagement. These strategies have often been given descriptive names such as "Jigsaw," "Three-Step Interview," "Value Lines" and "Think-Pair-Share."[8] To some, such names suggest strategies that are a bit too simplistic or formulaic, perhaps even silly. However, such strategies can be useful as they provide teachers and students with ways to ensure that all students have the opportunity to develop their voices, all voices will be heard, and most importantly, all ideas will be considered by the group.

D. Complex Learning Opportunities

To encourage creative engagement and intrinsic motivation, students must be provided with learning opportunities that are complex - learning opportunities that don't have simple and prescribed paths to completion but rather require multiple, divergent responses. Philosophers such as John Dewey and Herbert Thelen, and humanistic psychologists such as Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, have long suggested such an approach, and have linked complex and authentic learning opportunities to preparation for an active civic life.[9] Ian McPherson, a strong voice in the co-operative movement in Canada and England, links such opportunities to the development of "associative intelligence," which he identifies as a necessary ingredient for positive civic engagement and social trust.[10] In the United States, and I fear in many other countries as well, the movement towards standards and standardisation is making it increasingly challenging for teachers to develop and sustain complexity in their classrooms and to provide for opportunities for sustained interaction that build the skills necessary for social trust.

E. Student-Centred Choices

To encourage creative engagement and motivation, it is essential that students are provided with opportunities to make meaningful choices. Complex learning opportunities have the potential to provide such choices and teachers can learn to develop those opportunities to their fullest potential for student creativity. For instance: research suggests that creativity is potentially enhanced when students have choices in how they go about a task. Yet, all too often, when students are given a task to do that is complex they turn to their teachers and say: "What are we supposed to do?" "How do you want us to do it?" When this happens, teachers may want to remember the power of the first example. Research suggests that when teachers give students a sample product, or a detailed rubric, they are likely to complete their own work in a similar way or, if the teacher points out the work of one group, other groups are likely to proceed in quite similar ways.[11] If teachers want work that conforms to a pre-determined, step-by-step format, such exemplars are ideal. They are far less ideal when the goal is for students to investigate problems and issues and develop solutions and products.

When I work with teachers, I suggest they try to resist providing an example or a suggestion. Instead, begin with student-generated ideas. A question such as "How might we do this?" is often a good place to start. It is then important to acknowledge - without judgement - all suggestions, often by writing them down and by encouraging quantity. It is important that students believe that the teacher, and their peers, want their suggestions; ample board space or large pieces of paper, plus ample time, are helpful. Once students have generated many ideas, they can evaluate and choose what seems workable and then make a plan to utilise these ideas.

When students are asked to work co-operatively, they may have a tendency to work with an initial, simple idea - an idea that has often been offered by a high-status, dominant group member without consultation with others. In creativity literature, this is called a "premature cognitive commitment."[12] To encourage creativity and equity, it is important for teachers (a) to use strategies to insure that all students share their ideas and (b) to formalise an idea generation period within group work, a time when groups list many possible ideas for how to accomplish their task and then develop a plan that incorporates more than one of these ideas.

When students are working together, the use of big paper and bold markers, to record their ideas and to develop their plans, can be quite helpful. Theorists such as Herbert Thelen have suggested that large formats help to create a sense of "our ideas, our plan" rather than "my idea, my plan." It is much easier to accept, reject, and combine ideas that have become group property than it is when ideas have remained personal property.

F. Interpersonal and Small-Group Learning Skills

To encourage co-operation and creative engagement, teachers need to plan for, and invest the time in, the direct teaching of interpersonal and small-group learning skills. These skills become critical when students are engaged in complex activities that provide them with choices and multiple paths to solution. Educational psychologists such as Noreen Webb, Alison King, and Angela O'Donnell suggest that detailed student talk - talk that centres on explanations of processes for how a particular solution might be reached, rather than simply telling the answer - is critical to developing interactions that support the learning of all participants.[13] Skills such as "ask for information and suggestions," "help to organise materials," "paraphrase others," "ask and/or tell why and how," "make a plan," "think out loud," "differentiate opinions," and "integrate ideas," are critical; they can be taught, and must be taught, as they do not simply emerge from group interaction.[14]

G. Use of Conflict and Controversy in Learning

To encourage creative engagement, teachers must be prepared for, welcome, and even foster, conflict and controversy. Often, teachers seem dismayed when, about two months into the school year, their students suddenly seem to be questioning their authority and student-to-student disagreements increase. These behaviours are often seen as a problem and teachers respond with increased reliance on authoritarianism and on learning opportunities that are more restrictive; they tend to provide less opportunities for student talk and restrict student decision making. However, group development theory would suggest that students have become more questioning, and perhaps even disagreeable, because they feel more safe, more included in the class, and are, therefore, ready to assume more - not less control - for their own learning.[15] Therefore, instead of becoming more restrictive and more authoritarian, it may be far more productive for teachers to respond quite differently - to respond by designing learning opportunities that encourage more student talk, more differentiation, and more examination of ideas.

Academic Controversy is one place, within the co-operative learning literature, that teachers can look to for ideas about how to utilise the power and complexity of controversy. In addition to providing students with more sense of power and opportunities for thoughtful talk, Academic Controversy also provides students with valuable perspective-taking practice.[16] The ability to view issues from multiple perspectives is critical to creative thinking and problem solving.

H. Student Expectations for Feedback, Evaluation, and Reward

Research about how the intertwined factors of feedback, evaluation, and reward effect creativity is quite complex. However, I think there are a few principles and ideas to examine that link well to co-operation; they have provided me with much to think about in my own teaching practice.

Expectations are based on prior experience. In general, it appears that student expectations about what kinds of feedback they will receive about their work, their expectations for how they will be evaluated, and their expectations for how they will be rewarded for their success, are critical, since it is student expectations that shape much of what students do and think.

Most people have been in situations where they have become disheartened by negative feedback. If, over time, one learns to expect negative feedback, one may try either to avoid the situation or put less effort into the related work. Therefore, we might assume that when one is in a situation where one expects to receive praise about ideas and work, one will be tempted to put more effort into the work and share more ideas. Well, this isn't quite the case when the work requires complex thinking and creativity. It seems that when the work is complex, and when the possible solutions aren't well defined, praise doesn't always help.[17]

How might teachers structure feedback so that it is more likely to foster creative responses? First, begin by having students reflect on their own work. Just as it may be important to avoid providing students with the first example for how they might complete a project, so it may be important to avoid providing the first feedback to students. This isn't always easy, but it can be done. When students ask for feedback, it may be helpful to begin by saying things such as: "Tell me about your work." or "Tell me what part of this was particularly interesting." When, during group work, a student turns away from a group and asks the teacher for feedback, teachers can refocus them on the group by asking the group to discuss similar questions. Second, avoid personal praise. Studies suggest that when expectations for feedback are based on praise such as: “You are a very good writer.” children produce less creative work than when expectations for feedback were based on specific task-oriented feedback such as: “Your use of descriptive adjectives helped me to see your setting quite clearly.”[18] Third, utilise the power of reflection. Multiple co-operative learning models acknowledge the importance of reflection and feedback for both content learning and productive group interaction. The careful use of group reflection or “group processing” has great power and potential to help create a climate that encourages, rather than discourages, creative responses.[19] Feedback should be both positive and specific. For instance, rather than asking students to “Thank your partner.” teachers can ask students to “Tell your partner something that is more clear to you now than it was when you began work” or “Go around in your group and each person please complete the sentence ‘Today I contributed to the group’s work when I. . . .’” Focus on the future. Instead of saying: “List one thing your group did well and one thing you could have done better.” Try: “Decide one thing that you did together that helped you learn and one thing you want to focus on for tomorrow.” Focus on the pleasure of learning. Ask students to: “Tell, in your own words, why it is interesting to learn this.”

Expectations for evaluation are similar to expectations for feedback. Research suggests that when, based on prior experience, students expect to be evaluated, the work they produce is later judged as less creative than the work that is produced by students who do not expect to be evaluated.[20]

How might a teacher develop evaluation so that the expectation of this evaluation does not have a negative effect on creativity? Give students time for unevaluated work. Structure evaluations to be descriptive, non-comparative and non-competitive, and based on technical aspects of the work. Make it clear that students will not be judged and evaluated for their creativity. Insure that the expectations of the evaluation are not secretive and they are not be so specific as to discourage creativity. Often times the use of rubrics discourages creativity because they are so specific in outlining what work is to be done and how work is to be presented.

In her work with Complex Instruction, Elizabeth Cohen has investigated, quite specifically, how to structure feedback and evaluation.[21] Complex Instruction requires students to work together to prepare “products”; these products, for instance, might be skits, posters, or demonstrations that manipulate and apply information and concepts. Cohen found that, typically, teachers focused this type of work by providing students with rubrics. Rubrics, however, tended to serve as a first example and, therefore, seemed to limit student discussion, negotiation, and problem solving. They tended to reinforce those students who were good at following directions and giving the teacher what the teacher wants. They did not support the concept of students discussing, interpreting, and applying information and negotiating the abilities of all the group members to create a piece of work that was complex and uniquely their own. Cohen also observed what sometimes happened when students did not have the kinds of clear expectations inherent in a good rubric. Without a rubric, (a) student work often seemed incomplete or messy; (b) the ideas that the students developed did not always focus on the academic content - in other words, their work may have been fun or interesting but irrelevant to the concept being examined; or (c) the students just settled on some idea that they “saw” or “did” somewhere else and “made it fit” without careful thought. In her research in classrooms, Cohen developed an alternative to the often stifling effects of rubrics and the often frustrating effects of a too open-ended task.

Cohen and her fellow researchers studied what happens when students are given guidelines that are clear but not too prescriptive. From published examples it seems that two to three guidelines might be optimal. First, a guideline that reminds students that they are indeed expected to refer to facts and information. Something such as: “Your work includes at least five relevant facts.” Second, a guideline that indicates students must go beyond facts and use the skills of application and analysis. Something such as: “Your work includes good reasons and rationales.” Third, a guideline that reminds students that their work is to be well planned, developed, and presented. Something such as: “Your work indicates careful attention to organisation and presentation.” Notice that these guidelines are positive and non comparative and do not violate the idea that creativity itself should not be evaluated.

Cohen’s research indicates that when students are provided with such guidelines, they actually talk about their work more, their teachers give them more detailed feedback about their work, and they learn more when their learning is measured by individual, written assessment. These are powerful results that support several principles that we have already examined, including the importance of student self evaluation and the importance of specific task feedback instead of praise.

George Prince, creativity researcher, wrote: “When a person is careless toward others it is highly probable that he is also careless and negative toward his own ideas and feelings.”[22] Careful uses of feedback and evaluation with students are critical for those who wish to encourage creative engagement. One benefit of co-operative work, linked with opportunities for creative engagement, is that talk becomes external. Teachers have opportunities to hear students talk about their ideas and the ideas of others. Such talk, plus guided student reflection, can help build the vocabularies and habits of careful and positive consideration of ideas and feelings - both for self and for others.

The expectation of a reward, like expectations for feedback and evaluation, has the potential to lower creativity and enthusiasm for future, similar tasks.[23] Seemingly simple teacher comments such as: "If everyone gets their work done, we will have ten extra minutes of recess." or "If you promise me you'll write a nice paragraph, I'll let you take a picture with the digital camera." can help to create the not-so-subtle message that "the work" or writing the paragraph isn't, in itself, interesting. This tends to be detrimental to the types of thinking and problem solving associated with creativity. Comments such as: "The group whose members gets the highest collective score on their quiz will get a homework pass." go even a bit further by creating a reward that is competitive. The potential difficulties with reward tend to be the strongest when a reward is expected, either through explicit promise or from past experience. Therefore, it seems reasonable to suggest that teachers consider ways to celebrate learning with students and celebrate learning in ways that the learning itself is the celebration that is shared by all the students and the teacher together.

3. Developing Creative and Co-operative Contexts.

Research suggests what teachers might do, each and every day, to create a classroom context that is more likely to encourage, than to discourage, creativity. First, teachers can invite creativity. When we signal students that creativity is valued and desirable, they will, indeed, be more creative. The use of simple phrases such as "be as creative as you can be" tends to elicit responses that are more creative than when creativity is not specifically invited.[24] Second, teachers can use the language of possibilities and perspectives and processes. This is language that Harvard psychologist Ellen Langer calls conditional language[25] and includes (a) words such as "could" "might" and "possible"; (b) phrases such as "how else" and "tell us more"; (c) questions such as "what other perspective" and "who did it another way?" Research suggests that when complex content is presented conditionally and when complex processes are presented as possibilities rather than iron-clad procedures, students tend to learn the content and processes more thoroughly and are able to apply them in more varied situations. Third, students can be asked to articulate those aspects of their experiences which have been satisfying and interesting to them, and then review these before their next work period.[26] Fourth, students can be given access to a variety of interesting objects and materials. Contextual stimulation and ready access to a wide variety of resources and materials are important.[27]

Research also suggests what teacher might do, each and every day, to create a classroom context that is more likely to encourage, than to discourage, co-operation. First, as with creativity, students need to be reminded of an expectation for co-operation, not competition. Second, there is a language of co-operation and students need to be taught this language, the skills that accompany the language, and reminded to use both the language and the skills. When asked, students who have not been taught this language are likely to think that "co-operation" means "do it my way" as this is typically what they have learned when they have been asked to "cooperate" with an authority figure. Specific skills for co-operation might be as seemingly simple as "stay with your group" and "use quiet voices" or more complex such as "ask everyone to contribute an idea" or "ask for rationale"; the point is that these are skills that can be taught and learned and careful attention to such skills is necessary. Third, students can be asked to articulate those aspects of their co-operative experiences which have been interesting and beneficial. Students need to consider how the work and ideas of others have helped them learn and they need to hear how their work and ideas have contributed to the understanding and satisfaction of others. Fourth, students need to work within an overall climate of co-operation. Teachers can examine the messages and meta messages of their classrooms and schools. Students are unlikely to believe that co-operation is valued if grading is normative, if students compete for rewards that they perceive as scarce and valuable, and if teacher attention and acceptance are viewed as conditional.

Perhaps most importantly is the model presented by the teacher and other adults. Do adults model passionate interests? Do students know about these interests? Research suggests that, when compared to the parents of their peers, the parents of highly creative adolescents have interests that they find time to pursue.[28] Do adults model co-operation? Do students see adults take the time to engage the perspectives of others and to work with, and help, others? Do students see adults reflect and adjust and learn? Do students see passion in teaching? I try to tell students when I am looking forward to reading their work, tell them when I have enjoyed listening to them discuss an idea, thank them at the end of the day for their contributions to the classroom community. It is reasonable that, if we want our students to develop a sense of interdependence with each other, we acknowledge and develop our interdependence with them as well.[29] Finally, it is important to remember patience. It takes time for students to trust that teachers aren't playing "guess what the teacher is thinking." It takes time for students to believe that considering more than one idea, one option, one possibility, can be worthwhile and even exciting. It takes time for students to learn to trust and to use their power, and it takes time for teachers and students, working together, to create high-quality co-operation and to explore creative possibilities.

Notes

1. Amabile, 1983; Amabile, 1996; Hennessey & Amabile, 1987.
2. Qin, et al., 1995.
3. Csikszentmihalyi, 1996.
4. Maslow, 1970; Maslow, 1976.
5. Baloche, 1998; Gibbs, 2001; Johnson, et al., 1992; Kohn, 1991.
6. Kagan, 1980; Kagan & Zahn, 1975.
7. Cohen, 1994; Cohen & Lotan, 1997.
8. Aronson et al., 1978; Baloche, 1998; Kagan, 1992; Lyman, 1992.
9. Dewey, 1956, 3-157; Thelen, 1981; Rogers, 1969; Maslow, 1968.
10. McPherson, 2002.
11. Cropley, 1992; Langer, 1989; Torrance & Myers, 1970.
12. Langer.
13. O'Donnell, 2002; O'Donnell & King, 1999; Webb, 1992.
14. Baloche, 1998.
15. Ibid; Glasser, 1986; Schmuck & Schmuck, 2000.
16. Baloche, et al., 1993; Johnson & Johnson, 1992.
17. Amabile; Hennessey & Amabile; Deci, 1975; Kohn, 1993; Lepper & Greene, 1978.
18. Amabile; Hennessey &Amabile.
19. Baloche, 1998; Johnson et al.
20. Amabile; Hennessey & Amabile.
21. Cohen, et al., 2002.
22. Prince, 1970.
23. Amabile; Hennessey & Amabile; Kohn, 1993.
24. Parnes, 1967.
25. Langer.
26. Hennessey and Amabile.
27. Dacey, 1989.
28. Ibid.
29. Palmer, 1997.

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Creativity and Engagement in Visual Art Education: A Permanent Comparison between the Obtained and the Deserved

Beatriz Tomšič Čerkez and Tonka Tacol

Abstract: Creativity described as a concept linked to the ideas of progress, novelty and originality may also be a sign of quality, even of cultural superiority. It is also possible to define it as the capacity to find accurate strategies when combining data in order to solve problems. In the context of the teaching - learning process, creativity reveals itself as a permanent comparison between the result we get and the one we are convinced to deserve. It is thus an individual characteristic that is essentially relative as the results may be described only in terms of engagement of the teacher and the pupils. The pedagogic process is a social process which depends on the individuality of the teacher and the pupils: no process is universally creative but can be defined as such, taking into account the interaction between them and the characteristics of their relationship in the context of the group. To enable creativity it is necessary to enable individuality (in all the aspects it can adopt as gender, cultural background etc.) and to describe its values in the context of the community of inquiry.

Key Words: Creativity in visual art education, individuality, creative teaching - learning process, engagement.

1. Introduction: Definitions of Creativity.

When trying to analyse the meaning of creativity as a concept closely linked to the educational process, the first question that opens is about its definition. As a matter of fact, the word "creativity" has many times been used in different contexts with meanings that do not necessarily describe objects and processes in a similar way or establishing any kind of relations between them. As far as many school subjects seem to be more intimately linked to creativity than others (like music, visual art education, literature etc.), meaningful questions open: Is creativity really a quality of the object (activity, school subject) or is it a distinction of the subject of education? Should it be defined in terms of a subject or as property of a certain productive process?

Creativity has in fact many times been described as a romantic concept linked to the ideas of novelty and originality. Creativity - the ability to create something and its synonyms as creative thinking and creativeness are also linked to words as ability, cleverness, conception, design, divergent thinking, fecundity, flight, fruitfulness, genius, imagination, imaginativeness, ingeniousness, ingenuity, innovation, invention, inventiveness, originate, out - of - the - box thinking, power, vision, even wizardry etc.

Obviously such definitions do not hide the underlying idea of "progress" which is particularly from the Illustration on, so often present in practically all cultural efforts in western culture. From this point of view, if there is no innovation in all the aspects of a work, it automatically looses its qualities because it does not represent a stage of progress in a certain field. The products of creativity must be able to promote new ideas, fresh, unusual and newly created or formed subjects. Creativity as a result of such conceptions may also be perceived as a sign of "great quality", even of cultural superiority.

The action of creating is more often than not a remembrance of God's creation of the world and as such it is many times referred to as an emulation of God's immanent power to create from a previous state of *tabula rasa.* An interesting example is the visualization of this idea in the famous picture by Michelangelo, The Creation of Man in the Sistine Chapel (1508-1512). The picture wishes to represent the very instant of creation, showing the image of God, the creator, and man, the created. As a matter of fact, it reflects only two main differences between the creator and the created: both belong to the same (human) species, one is old and clothed while the other is young and naked. The elder is always the creator, the younger - the created.

Imitation of God enacting his characteristics, being or looking like him is, as a matter of fact, not acceptable in many (mostly non-western) cultural traditions: imitation should in this case be understood as a copy of certain behaviour following somebody as an example. In fact, to think that any human being should be able "to create" is considered a sin.[1] In these cases creativity can hardly be linked to the original idea of novelty. Encyclopaedic (mostly western) presentations of the world many times show that cultures are considered to stagnate when they are not able to produce novelties.

Not all definitions focus on creativity from the point of view of the results. In spite of the fact, that these definitions are still current in many aspects of artistic activities and the "world of art", like critics, market, construction of art history etc., in the context of art education it is probably more accurate to consider the teaching - learning process that deals with creativity. In this case we can explain it as the capacity to find accurate strategies, when combining data in order to solve problems.

Many authors point out different aspects linked to the "requirements" of creativity: Bruner believes that individuals differ by the way they collect information. If someone collects a wide palette of information he/she is not directed to convergent production only.[2] Dörner thinks that the influence of the environment is a key for creativeness. The motivation of an open, free and exiting context is the key for creativity.[3] De Bono links creativeness with lateral thinking, similar to Guilford's definition of divergent thinking, considering the possibility to enrich primary perceptions. He thinks an individual is creative if he/she can successfully present his/her specific and unique perception of the word which is dependent of the amount of information he/she gets and the way he/she is able to process it.[4] Trstenjak links creativity to different structures of thinking: creative thinking is the result of cooperation between heuristic and epistemic structures of thinking.[5] Torrance sees creativity as a conglomerate of abilities, skills and motivation.[6]

However these ideas reveal a certain weakness of the concept regarding the methodological possibilities of its objective application: to recognize a process or its products as "creative", it is necessary to establish a comparison with at least an earlier ("uncreative") stage. The question that imposes is, can something be recognized as creative avoiding this comparative moment? Which should be the context and parameters of comparison and how should they be defined?

When trying to define creativity in the context of the teaching - learning process, it reveals itself as a permanent comparison between the result we get and the one we are convinced to deserve. Creativity is an individual characteristic that is essentially relative as the results may be described only in terms of engagement of the individual pupil and the teacher as well. Visual Art Education is one of the core subjects that deal with the development of creativity by each individual pupil. Its activation in all kinds of artistic expression is the key for transfer to other subjects and fields.

2. An Example: Creativity and Visual Art Education.

The subject "Visual Art Education" in elementary as well as secondary school programs includes contents from the artistic fields of drawing, painting, print making, sculpture and architecture. The goals of the subject include the development of observation, space representation, creativity, imagination, the knowledge of contents from artistic theory and history, artistic techniques, processes and materials, always rendering a direct relationship between practice and theory.

Learning takes place in two phases: perception, which includes acquiring the information and processing, which includes storing and making sense of the information. There are different ways or modalities in which information is perceived and processed. The ways information is perceived by the learners: concretely, such as feeling, touching, seeing or hearing; abstractly, such as mental, visual or conceptual models. Processing the information perceived is the next step: learners process the information by active experimentation, doing, manipulating or using the information or/and reflecting upon or thinking about the information. Within Visual Art Education, the teacher should enable gradual learning, on the basis of perception, experiencing and understanding, and processing of this information using visual signs in creative art expression.[7] That is why it is very important for all pupils to enrich the development of their manual skills and orientation, to experience with gradual understanding of visual art concepts and rules of visual signs' use within the visual art education process. These abilities should be already developed gradually and naturally[8] at the pre-school period and their importance should be additionally emphasized in elementary school.

Solving design problems at any school stage implicates a special connection between three inseparable aspects of the art work: the theoretic problem, the motif, materials and art techniques, each focusing on the cognitive, affective and psychomotor aspects of the task or problem to solve. Problems also enhance critical evaluation and pupils are independent at finding original solutions to the demanded tasks.[9]

In the particular case of Visual Art Education many aspects combine when trying to describe the aspects of creativity involved in the pedagogical process. B. Karlavaris defines six factors of artistic creativity which function as a concentrate of artistic competencies: originality, which means "unusual" strategies when solving problems, sensibility in discovering problems and understanding aesthetic structures, imagination in the redefinition of the role and value of elements, aesthetic elaboration and planning of ideas and solutions, fluency of ideas and flexibility in the arrangement of the means of expression.[10] What is particularly outstanding in this definition is that creativity in art education focuses on processes as well as on final products. In this way it is possible to take into account the different attitudes, interests and affinities of the various actors in the pedagogical process.

On one side, we should consider the individuality of the pupil and the teacher based on teachers' and pupils' specific characteristics: learning styles, expression style, psycho-physical abilities, teaching style etc. On the other, it is important to attend to the didactical aspects of the educational process: various teaching methods, preference for three or two dimensional work, preference for certain art materials, preference for specific motifs, space, time and goals of activities etc.

In this context, the criteria to describe creative practices become a wide question. In fact, the resulting art work is the basis for an accurate description of the creative process that originated it. It is the product of a dialectical process that connects the engagement of the teacher and the engagement of the pupil. Nevertheless, it does not always show a proportional relation engagement - results if we consider that the educational process is a combination of at least the series of factors mentioned above.

The evaluation of every aspects of the artistic work, especially the aspects connected with creativity, inevitably reveals itself as a comparison, in the case of the teacher, between the invested efforts and the resulting products and realized goals; for the pupil it is a comparison between the results he/she believes to be able to produce or is convinced to deserve and the effectively achieved (in his/her eyes). Creativity, if believed to mean originality, imaginativeness, ingeniousness, innovation, inventiveness etc. is also linked to a certain (positive) understanding of (creative) power that contributes to self esteem and to the construction of a positive image of the self. This is applicable to pupils and teachers as well: positive experiences motivate new creative engagements.

3. Individuality in the Focus of Creativity.

The pedagogic process is a social process which depends on the individuality of the different actors taking part in it, and it is in essence relative: no process is universally original or creative but can be defined as such taking into account the interaction between teacher and pupil and the characteristics of their relationship in the context of the group. So, to enable creativity it is necessary to enable individuality (and all the aspects it can adopt as gender, cultural background etc.) and to describe its values in the context of the community of inquiry.

In order to acquire the knowledge and skill to learn successfully, creatively and effectively in whatever learning situation (problem) he/she encounters, the learner should know his/her areas of strength and weakness: we are in a much better position to choose learning experiences and opportunities which suit us, or to develop our weaker styles in order to be able to extend the range of experiences from which we are able to learn and respond creatively. Individuals sometimes find that their ability to learn creatively is blocked for one or more reasons. The factors that can affect individual attitudes differ from pupil to pupil. Some possibilities are considered in the following list: factors connected with perception, the learner does not see that there is a problem; culture, the learner feels limited by the cultural context and its expectations; emotions, the learner feels fear or insecurity; motivation, the learners is unwilling to take risks; cognitive, nature of previous learning experience; intellectual, limited learning style and/or undeveloped learning skills; expression, poor communication skills; situational, physical such as place, time, unsupportive environment etc.

As a matter of fact, the ability to behave creatively can be also blocked for the teacher if there are any elements in the educational community that represent an obstacle for his/her creative engagement in the hole pedagogical process.

At the beginning we stated that to recognize a process or its products as “creative” it is necessary to establish a comparison with at least an earlier stage. This is important because it focuses on creativity as a process where everyone competes exclusively with him/herself probing the boundaries of his/her abilities, skills and engagement and means the culmination of the auto-evaluation of the pedagogical process. This also defines the parameters of comparison: the parameters are put by each actor in the process individually; they never originate from a *tabula rasa.*

4. Conclusion.

In the conclusion, however it is important to focus on the questions that remain open: how to “reconceptualize” individual motivation in search for creative solutions, when there are not evident motivating factors in solving certain problems, and how to deal with the recognition that to be creative means to undertake the “effort” to develop individual competencies, understanding difficulties as problems, recognizing its elements, creating meaningful links between the elements of a problem in order to solve it efficiently and independently, considering a holistic view of education. It is also important to consider the social aspects of the process of teaching and learning when we foster strong differentiation and individualization and its didactic implications.

Dynamic socio - cultural changes affected artistic expression of all kinds; debates about the cultural identity of minority groups, issues of national identity, rapid changes in technology, and the advent of the post-modern philosophy of fragmentation and plurality reshaped assumptions supporting creativity in art and education. These transformations affect the way we approach and learn about visual arts. The traditional dimensions of learning are still present in our practices, but at the same time we investigate alternative concepts. Old paradigms based on technical skills, (which prevailed when the subject found its way in school programs two centuries ago), encyclopaedic knowledge, or mere self - expression are not responding to the demands of the society now. It is important to approach art education from critical perspectives regarding the complexity of the “visuality” deeply integrated in current, everyday life. Not only are we all bombarded with visual images, but we must respond to them at every step, making decisions that involve creativity, originality, spatial visualization, motivation, and imagination.

Art education is a relatively new subject: little by little school curriculum in some countries recognized that (visual) art education is necessary for the full development of children and youth. However, art education is not seen as a core subject, it has been more or less marginalized and many times it is seen as leisure time. There is still an almost incredible misunderstanding of the effects of art education upon learning. Art education might be a way to promote learning experiences, develop understanding and create holistic representations of the world, as well as creative and critical thinking through aesthetic dimensions.

Considering art expression as (an aesthetic) problem to solve is probably one the elements that should be transferred to other aspects of life: problems always call for creative solutions. Problems are obstacle that must be hurdled over. We face them every day and come up with creative solutions. The "beauty" of problems is that they can precede a solution in any aspect of life. This component of creativity is not just for painting a pretty picture or composing a beautiful song. It can be applied to engineering, to relationships, and to society as a whole.

Notes

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[3] D. Dörner, *Die Kognitive Organisation bei Problemen* (Bern: Huber, 1974), 68-73.

[4] E. De Bono, *Tečaj mišljenja* (Ljubljana: Ganeš, 1992), 59-71.

[5] A. Trstenjak, *Oris sodobne psihologije* (Maribor: Založba Obzorja, 1971), 371.

[6] E. P. Torrance, *The Search for Satorie and Creativity* (New York: CEF Inc., 1979), 56.

[7] Leslie Cunlife, "Learning How to Learn, Art Education and the Background", *Journal Of Art And Design Education,* 18, 1 (1999): 115-121.

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Part 6

Engagement and Play

Sibling Teaching in the Context of Play

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Abstract: Researchers have acknowledged the uniqueness of the sibling relationship as one of the most potentially important influences on a child's development especially in societies where sibling caretaking is employed. In the interactions between older and younger siblings during sibling caretaking and play, younger siblings learn various values, knowledge, and skills from their sibling caretakers. Very little research has been conducted in the area of sibling teaching especially in the context of sibling caretaking. This paper is therefore based on a study that set out to investigate sibling teaching in the context of sibling caretaking and play among Agikuyu children of Kenya. The sample consisted of sixty seven older siblings aged between three and a half and eleven and a half years who were videotaped as they interacted with their 34 two-year-old toddler siblings. In the context of play, the children were seen to demonstrate teaching skills according to their age with older children displaying more advanced teaching skills. This study showed the possibility of siblings as guides for each others development. This means that if children are taught they can be teachers of each other, their skills can be used to help their younger siblings.

Key Words: Siblings, sibling teaching, sibling caretaking, Agikuyu, children, Kenya.

1. Introduction.

Researchers have acknowledged the uniqueness of the sibling relationship as one of the most potentially important influences on a child's development. This is especially so in non-industrial communities where sibling caretaking is employed. In these societies, young children spend the best part of the day under older siblings care with even children as young as five or seven years old taking on the role of sibling caretakers.

In the interactions between older and younger siblings during sibling caretaking and play, younger siblings may learn various values, knowledge, and skills from their sibling caretakers. Older siblings are always in charge and their more advanced capabilities result in the expectation that they help younger siblings[1]. Older siblings' tendency to protect and assist their younger ones may also originate from a sense of duty especially in the case of African settings where there is a sense of duty in helping among kin. Providing assistance to family members is so highly valued, that some East African communities even provide training for responsibility and helping[2].

Training for responsibility therefore takes place with older siblings often being delegated responsibilities for the care of their younger siblings. During caretaking sessions, the seniority principle that governs social relations in non-industrial groups officially grants older children authority over their younger siblings. Birth order will therefore play a role in sibling relationships with unequal status in power being conferred by birth order to siblings. Parents often entrust the first born with power and responsibility and cultural norms may establish certain roles for older siblings for example, an older brother may have the greatest seniority and younger siblings are taught to respect older siblings and to obey them as they would a parent[3]. Older siblings therefore have higher status.

It can therefore be assumed that siblings and other family members play a great role in any child's life. However, although extensive research has been carried out on sibling relationships, very little research has been conducted in the area of sibling teaching especially in the context of sibling caretaking and play. This paper is therefore based on a study that set out to investigate sibling teaching in the context of sibling caretaking and play among Agikuyu children of Kenya.

Since helping is highly valued in non-industrial communities and there is a sense of duty in helping among kin, it was assumed that the sibling teaching sessions in the context of play would include instances of older siblings helping the toddlers with older children providing more assistance than younger children. It was also hypothesized that older siblings would use more manipulation than younger siblings as the seniority principle governing social relations in non-industrial groups officially grants older children authority over their younger siblings. Although there are studies proving older siblings have influence over younger siblings, none of these studies unlike the present study tried to identify the different ways in which older siblings would try to manipulate younger siblings during sibling teaching in the context of play.

2. Method.

Gatundu North division of Thika district in the Central Province of Kenya was the study site. Gatundu North division was selected because it provided a fairly homogeneous rural community. Most of the families in the area live as extended families although there are also quite a number of nuclear families.

All the participants in the study belonged to the Agikuyu tribe. The Agikuyu are the largest ethnic group in Kenya. This community was chosen because like many communities in Kenya, it is a community that employs sibling caretaking with older siblings often young children themselves tending to their younger siblings from infancy.

Thirty four homesteads participated in the study. The participants were recruited on a volunteer basis after a research clearance permit had been obtained from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. The researcher and a research assistant approached the selected participants after the research assistant helped identify suitable families having both two-year-old toddlers and older siblings aged between three and a half and eleven and a half years old.

The data collection phase was undertaken from November 2002 to February 2003. This period was proposed because Kenyan children have the longest school holiday from November to January each year. Since one of the aims of this study was to examine cultural teaching by older siblings, it was important to collect the data when the older siblings were at home and possibly engaged in caretaking of the toddlers. The period November 2002 to February 2003 was therefore the most ideal for data collection.

The sample frame included 67 older siblings and 34 toddlers. The older siblings were aged between three and a half and eleven and a half years and included 38 girls and 29 boys. The toddlers were all around two years old with their ages ranging from 20 to 33 months. There were an equal number of toddlers according to gender that is, there were 17 boys and 17 girls.

Two year olds were chosen for this study because two years is the age at which children begin to enjoy playing near other children and also join in others play activities[4]. It was expected that the two year olds in the selected sample would be engaged in play with older siblings. At two years, children have a vocabulary of several hundred words therefore can communicate with other children through the use of two to three word sentences. Having a sample consisting of toddlers who can communicate is also important when qualitative data analysis of verbal discourse variables is to be undertaken. Two year olds also begin to engage in simple dramatic make-believe play involving the home and will engage in imitation especially of their parents and guardians. They also have a great interest in learning how to use common items therefore they provide an ideal sample for studying how cultural teaching takes place.

Video recording was done as older siblings interacted with the two year olds. However, before the actual fieldwork began, the researcher and research assistant prepared a schedule for two visits to each home which were not communicated to the families in order to get the most natural situations. The actual data collection was carried out during the second visit while the purpose of the first visit was to familiarise the families with the researchers in order to minimise any disturbances that may have been caused by their presence when the actual videotaping began later on.

The children engaged in a variety of activities during the videotaping sessions. At times they just ran or sat around and at other times they played games such as ball games, rope skipping, hide and seek or played with stones, bottle tops, old car tyres, soil and mud. Some children also integrated song and dance into their play activities while others engaged in pretend play. There were also feeding sessions where older children fed the toddlers or the children ate together from one plate and in some instances the children fed farm animals such as cows and hens.

The teaching episodes in the video tapes were extracted from the longer tapes before transcription was carried out. It was important to extract the teaching episodes from the longer tapes because not all the contents of the videotapes were considered to be teaching episodes for example, the children sometimes started to interact with adults or neighbours children in the middle of sibling interactions. From the 34 hours of tape, 14 hours, 43 minutes and 32 seconds of teaching episodes were extracted.

Teaching was defined as any activity the older siblings drew the toddlers' attention to that could have had the possible effect of transmitting cultural knowledge. Therefore both verbal and nonverbal actions were considered as teaching activities. The teaching sessions were considered to have begun when the older siblings verbally or nonverbally tried to get the toddlers attention while the ends of the teaching sessions occurred when either the toddler or the older sibling who was interacting with the toddler left the scene without returning. Teaching episodes were also considered to have come to an end when either of the children changed tasks and began a new episode with a different activity.

The children's interactions were analyzed by qualitative data analysis. Qualitative data analysis was used in order to assess the children's cognitive and socio-cognitive levels as they interacted with each other. The children's discourse was therefore measured by verbal and nonverbal variables. The discourse measures were developed after reading through the transcripts and watching the videotapes to ascertain which verbal and nonverbal variables the children used in their interactions. The verbal discourse variables included the words the older siblings said to the toddlers whereas the nonverbal discourse variables were the older siblings' actions as they interacted with the toddlers. However, some discourse variables included words and actions and these were put in a third category which was named the verbal, nonverbal or both category.

The verbal discourse variables included commands, praise, feedback, explanations and descriptions. Commands are the orders older siblings issued to the toddlers. Examples of commands included statements such as "Feed the cow!" Praise included all words or phrases the older siblings said which showed approval or admiration of the toddlers for example the words "Good girl" or "Good boy". Feedback included instances when the older siblings made positive or negative comments that guided the toddlers' behaviour. It also included instances when older siblings responded to the toddlers' questions. There was therefore positive feedback, negative feedback and feedback to a question. A statement such as "Yes Marcos, like that!" is an example of positive feedback while the words "Not like that!" are an example of negative feedback. Explanations and descriptions were all statements uttered by the older siblings to enable the toddlers understand the activities the children were engaged in or words uttered by the older siblings in order to tell the toddlers what something was like or what was going to happen.

The nonverbal discourse variables included task simplification and guiding the toddlers' body. Task simplification includes instances when the older siblings broke tasks into simpler parts so that the tasks were easier for the toddlers for example when an older sibling plucked leaves off a branch and gave the leaves to the toddler rather than handing the whole branch to the toddler. Guiding the toddlers' body included instances when the older siblings touched the toddlers' bodies to guide them in performing specific activities for example when an older sibling held a toddler's hands, pushed the toddler's fingers towards her palm and also pushed the toddler's thumb upwards so that the toddler displayed the correct hand gestures in a song and dance game.

Talk with demonstration was included in the verbal, nonverbal or both categories. This included instances when the older siblings carried out activities while at the same time describing to the toddlers what was happening or should happen for example during a play session with a ball when an older sibling said to a toddler "Hit it (ball) like that!" and also moved her leg backwards and forwards to illustrate to the toddler how he should kick the ball.

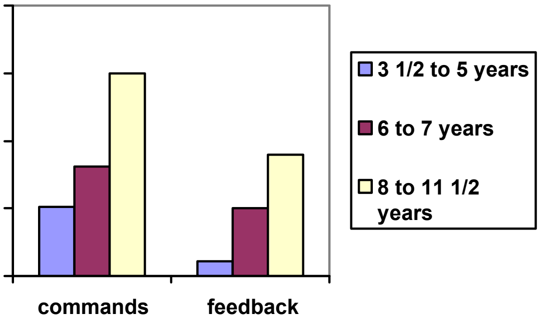
The discourse variables were further grouped into two categories according to the assumption of the study that they fell under. The two categories were support or help and manipulation. Some discourse variables occurred very rarely therefore were not included in the categories. These included praise which occurred only a total of three times and task simplification which occurred only once. The manipulation category included all variables the older siblings used to influence the toddlers in order to get the toddlers to behave in certain ways while the help or support category included all variables the older siblings used in order to facilitate what the toddlers were doing or saying. A detailed presentation of the variables included in the two categories is shown in the table below.

Discourse Variables

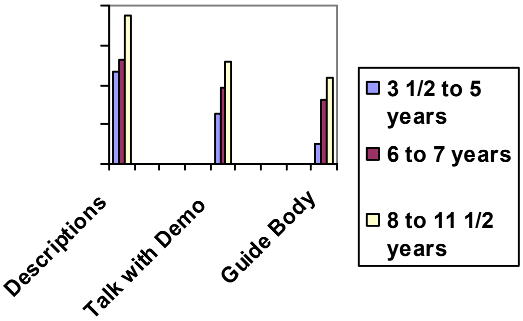
Help or support	Manipulation
Descriptions/Explanations Talk with demonstration Guiding toddlers body	Commands Feedback

3. Results.

Three groups were compared. These were the three and a half to five year olds who were in preschool, the six to seven year olds who were attending lower primary school and the eight to eleven and a half year olds who were in the upper primary school. These results are shown in the diagrams below.



It is clear from this figure that older children gave more commands and feedback than younger children.



The second diagram also shows that older children tended to offer more help, that is, they used more descriptions and explanations, talk with demonstration and guiding of the toddlers' body.

4. Discussion.

The results showed that the older siblings demonstrated their abilities according to their age and social status. Older children provided more support or help to the toddlers in terms of using descriptions and explanations, talk with demonstration and guiding of the toddlers' bodies. It is probable that the older siblings' willingness to assist their younger siblings may have been due to the realisation that the younger siblings have limited abilities and were therefore trying to help them.

The tendency to provide assistance among the Agikuyu children involved in this study probably also stemmed from a sense of duty to help the toddlers. This tendency to help is not unusual as training for responsibility of the older siblings had already started taking place when they were left in charge of the toddlers. The adults in the homesteads were not always in the background and the older siblings knew they were responsible for the toddlers and had to take care of them when the adults were not present. The helping behaviour displayed by the children in this study may be a reflection of the sense of duty to help found in the wider Agikuyu society. However, helping younger members is not the only characteristic of the Agikuyu society. Respect and obedience for elders are another characteristic and this seems to have been socialized by use of commands and feedback by the children in this study that is, by use of manipulation.

The data showed that older children gave significantly more commands and feedback than younger children. This is probably because the Agikuyu social organisation and status put the eldest children in charge therefore they had the right to issue more directives to the younger ones. Development of socio-cognitive abilities may have been one of the reasons why the older siblings had more advanced skills[5]. These increases were evident across the years of middle childhood and they could perhaps also have been due to the effects of language development.

The fact that there was virtually no praise is not a surprise as this is characteristic of the Agikuyu social interactions. The older siblings were probably just reflecting the society's mode of social interaction by not using praise in their interactions with the toddlers. This study also tells us of the structure of the children's social relationships which are a reflection of the society's hierarchical relationships for example; the older siblings were always in charge. These relationships exhibited in the children's play are therefore the foundation for later adult relationships. Therefore, as the siblings interacted, they were socializing each other to behave in culturally appropriate ways.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study demonstrated that teaching, and not just learning, develops. The children in this study demonstrated teaching skills according to their age with older children displaying more advanced teaching skills. This implies that the children's teaching skills were developing as they got older.

This study also showed that children have the capability to use different teaching strategies which can either be verbal, non-verbal or both. The study also demonstrated that teaching occurs in a cultural context. The children displayed social relationships which are a reflection of the wider Agikuyu society as they interacted. They also demonstrated teaching skills according to their social status. The children's social organisation therefore reflected that of the greater Agikuyu society, their hierarchical relationships were actually the foundation of later adult relationships.

In addition, the daily activities that the children were engaged in such as feeding farm animals further showed that the Agikuyu children's daily activity structures are similar to those of adults. This is a major difference in comparison to western or middle class societies where children's activities are segregated from those of adults. Therefore, when alone, Agikuyu children do engage in activities similar to those of adults. This study demonstrates that children can be cultural transmitters to their younger siblings in Agikuyu society. The Agikuyu community is one that readily employs sibling caretaking especially when parents are engaged. This means that children can be important socialization tools to their younger siblings when left in charge of them. Agikuyu children can therefore be regarded as cultural teachers to their younger siblings.

The children in this study taught their younger siblings how to sing, dance, feed animals and even play. These children therefore had an influence on their younger siblings and parents must therefore be aware of the role children can play as cultural transmitters of everyday activities. It appears that as children were being socialized by their parents, they were also socializing their younger siblings. Parents should therefore encourage and guide children to help their younger siblings.

This study has shown how children teach their younger siblings and has therefore shown the possibility of siblings as guides for each others development. This means that if children are taught they can be teachers of each other, their skills can be used to help their younger siblings. This could perhaps even prove useful in the education sector for example in tutoring activities. Tutoring activities could be tailored so that children assist their younger siblings with their schoolwork and educationalists or teachers could inform parents of the possibility of encouraging children assist each other with homework.

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Embracing the Child at Play

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Abstract: Nietzsche emphasizes a focus on the *moment of decision* rather than choice. The moment of decision allows the individual to focus on beliefs and interpretations rather than simple outcomes associated with choice, thereby inducing positive development. Nietzsche focus on the moment of decision allows the adult a less limited understanding of the seriousness of the child at play. The seriousness expressed by the adult focuses on the moment of decision. The serious child at play also focuses on the moment of decision. Thus the adult understands that the seriousness of the child at play is not dissimilar to the seriousness they express in their own lives. Each focuses on the moment of decision. The 94th aphorism in Friedrich Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil* (BGE) reads "Mature manhood: that means to have rediscovered the seriousness one had as a child at play." Though short, the aphorism stimulates us, as adults, to reflect deeply on the earnestness of the child at play. Adults who focus on a difference between 'adult' and 'child' seriousness misunderstand the child at play, thereby loosing a positive connection with the child at play. By focusing on the moment of decision, the adult is able to embrace and better understand the child at play.

Key Words: Nietzsche, Play, Child, Decision, Meaning, Being, Embrace

1. The Child at Play.

The 94th aphorism of Friedrich Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil* (BGE) may seem cryptic in its succinctness: "Mature manhood: that means to have rediscovered the seriousness one had as a child at play."[1] It is my view that Nietzsche's allusion to 'a child at play' has important implications for our perception of children because it speaks to a common comparison between the seriousness of childhood and the seriousness of 'manhood'. In this paper I will explore 'the child at play', its relation to our conceptions of 'seriousness', and that which will allow us to embrace the child at play properly: the moment of decision.

First I will show how Nietzsche emphasizes what I will distinguish as a moment of decision. A focus on the moment of decision is different from a focus on the choices and actions that array themselves before and after any situation. The difference is that by focusing on the moment of decision one is able to pass over that which would have them yield. When one focuses on choice or action they are unable to pass over and must yield.

Then I will show precisely why focusing on the moment of decision allows the individual to pass over that which would have them yield. The moment of decision is a precise moment of power that allows one to focus on beliefs and interpretations. A focus on choice and action does not involve beliefs and interpretations -- only measurement and prescription.

Next I will explore the adult's interpretation of the serious child at play. When adults come upon the child at play, they approach the seriousness of the child through a re-discovery. Nietzsche warns against approaching the serious child at play with too much earnestness. When adults approach the child with too much earnestness, they focus on choice and action rather than the moment of decision. This path hinders the adult because it highlights the difference between the seriousness of the adult and the seriousness of the child at play. Conversely, following a second path, when adults focus on the moment of decision, they may pass over this difference and fully embrace the seriousness of the child at play. When adults embrace the seriousness of the child at play, they come to understand the child's seriousness as having commonality with their own seriousness.

That which should not be focused on -- the choice and action against which Nietzsche warns as being too earnest -- will not allow the adult to favour that which comes along with the embracing. Thus, I will complete my study by exploring the proper embracing of the 'seriousness of the child at play' in 'mature manhood'. Focusing on the moment of decision allows adults to embrace the child's seriousness as common to their own and favour that which comes along with the embracing. According to Nietzsche and several important Nietzschian commentators, that which comes along with the embracing is the proper search for meaning.

Nietzsche claims that the seriousness of the child at play is no different than an adult's seriousness. To consider either as different would be to value one over the other. Therefore, if we are to follow Nietzsche, we must not value one type of seriousness over the other. Following this path will lead to an ability to embrace a proper search for meaning. The proper search for meaning is made manifest when one focuses on the moment of decision rather than on choice or action.

2. The Moment of Decision.

In his discussion of the psychologist who considers the human soul, Nietzsche employs the metaphor of a 'big-game hunt'. Nietzsche's analysis reflects an endemic problem for the 'lover of the big-game hunt' who would attempt to *flush out* the secrets of the soul. The boundaries of the human soul are extreme; "its frontiers, the compass of human inner experience in general attained hitherto, the heights, depths and distance of this experience, the entire history of the soul hitherto and its still un-exhausted possibilities . . .” The psychologist, being singular, possesses limited resources. Yet his resolve to flush out a meaning for life remains strong. “And thus he wishes he had a few hundred beaters and subtle well-instructed tracker dogs whom he could send into the history of the human soul and there round up *his* game.”[2]

By conceiving the psychologist’s study of the human soul to be a problem of insufficient resources, Nietzsche explores the genesis of the psychologist’s thought process. The psychologist has come across his problem because his thought process includes, as I see it, choices, a moment of decision, and actions that follow decision. Taken as a complete process, choice leads to decision which, in turn, leads to action. This is not an unusual manner of considering our interactions with the world. However, I will interpret Nietzsche by considering each part of the process separately.

The process begins with choice. The conditions of the soul stretch out boundlessly before the hunter. The hunter realizes the magnitude of the ‘entire history of the soul’, “[saying] despairingly to himself: ‘one man! Alas, but one man! And this great forest and jungle!’”[3] When the hunter realizes what spreads out before him, he is faced with a problem of too many choices and too few explorers.

Having appreciated the vastness of choice, the hunter comes to a decision. His decision is expressed in the form of a wish for ‘a few hundred beaters’ and ‘subtle well trained dogs’. However, the wish only takes a moment to pass and the hunter does not pause to focus on his decision.

Instead, the hunter moves directly to the action that follows decision. Because the task was so great, the hunter’s action consists in enlisting a great number of scholars to investigate the human soul with him. However, when he attempts action, the hunter becomes frustrated because those he was able to enlist for the task lacked any use “where the big hunt, but also the big danger, begins.” The hunter realizes that the scholars he would have used as beaters and dogs lose their “keenness of eye and keenness of nose” with time.[4] He discovers that the scholar’s prescribed action, to measure the human soul, is difficult and time consuming. He also discovers that infinite choices will not be forced ‘into formulas’.

The problem is that the hunter has attempted to capture the infinite through his band of subtle scholars. As Nietzsche goes onto remind the hunter, reality has set in: “who could have the time to wait for such servants?”[5] The hunter, *having focused on choice and action*, is limited by the properties of his task. He becomes frozen in his inability to act: a yielding which fails to pass over.

Nietzsche offers a similar analysis in his discussion of the mightiest men and their deference to the saint. The mighty man’s decision to bow before the “enigma of self-constraint and voluntary final renunciation,”[6] a focus on choice and action, is another example of a yielding which fails to pass over.

First, we trace that which proceeds the moment of decision, the choices with which the mighty men are faced when they confront the saint. The mighty men perceive certain qualities in the saint, such as his “superior force that sought to prove itself through constraint” or “the strength of the will”.[7] They also perceive certain qualities in themselves, such as how

> They recognized and knew how to honor something in themselves when they honored the saint”, or “a suspicion . . . [of] a very great danger about which the aesthetic, thanks to his secret visitors and informants, might possess closer knowledge.[8]

The mighty men are faced with many choices in the truths they perceive about themselves and the saint. The choices that array themselves before the mightiest men lead to a precise moment in which they reflect on the preceding information and make a decision regarding those choices -- the moment of decision. “Enough, the mighty of the world learned in face of him a new fear, they sensed a new power, a strange enemy as yet unsubdued . . . ” But the mighty men do not pause to focus on their decision.

Instead, the mighty men move directly to the actions that will follow their decision. The mightiest men “halt before the saint.”[9] Focusing on the truths they perceived in themselves, they focus on their unworthiness in relation to the saint. In relation to themselves, they perceive the saint as being more pious, more holy, and more worthy of fearful respect. The mighty men, yielding to that which they perceive in the saint, limit themselves to a fearful, comparative piousness.

3. Beliefs, Interpretations, and the Moment of Decision.

If, in his warning about the hunter and the mighty men, Nietzsche asks us to focus on the moment of decision, what is the *significance* of the moment of decision? In Nietzsche’s view, the moment of decision allows one to pass over that which would have one yield. One is able to pass over because one focuses on beliefs and interpretations when one’s focus is on the moment of decision.

By focusing on choice and action the mighty men did not question their motivations. They simply perceived saintly qualities, such as “strength of the will,” a “new power, a strange enemy as yet unsubdued.” However, if the mighty men had focused on the moment of decision, they would be able to pass over the saint’s unsubdued strength of will. A focus on the moment of decision allows one to pass over that which would have them yield.

Had they focused on their moment of decision, the "mighty of the world [would] *learn* . . . a new fear."[10] If the mighty men were to focus on this moment of decision- this learning- rather than their reaction to the fear, the mighty men could question their choices and actions. They could move to a point of change. They could begin to consider their beliefs and interpretations surrounding the saint rather than being held hostage by them.

Thus, the significance of the moment of decision is that it allows us to pass over. The power of the moment of decision is that it does not yield to the problematics of choice and action. The moment of decision moves to a point of change, the point where the surrounding facts may be questioned positively. A focus on the moment of decision allows one to come to this point of change and pass over that which would have them yield.

In another instance, Nietzsche shows that we approach this point of change when we come across the seriousness of the child at play. In a similar fashion as his interpretation of the hunter and the mighty men, Nietzsche shows that from this point one may either focus on choice and action or the moment of decision. The proper focus will determine how well we understand the seriousness of the child at play.

4. Re-discovery at the Point of Change.

How does the adult perceive the serious child at play? The German word for seriousness that Nietzsche uses, *Ernst*, translates into a sense of solemnity or gravity. Adults are often amused by the seriousness that children exhibit toward their imaginary games or manipulations of objects. This is a common observation of the qualities of children at play.

However, Nietzsche moves past the common observation to note a deeper assumption. He writes that the seriousness of the child at play is found again (*Widergefunden*) in the maturity of manhood (*Reife des Mannes*). As adults we see the seriousness of the child at play and re-discover the memory of our own childhood seriousness. In this moment we approach a point of change.

This point of change enables the individual to recognize what remains in the past as well as what takes place in the present. The man who was a child recognizes the seriousness that he had for play even as he remains in the maturity of manhood.

The point of change is a critical moment for the adult because the re-discovery allows for two potential paths. Down one path the seriousness of adult life becomes different from the seriousness of childhood play. On this path adults have re-discovered the seriousness of the child at play but retain a difference between 'adult' seriousness and the child's seriousness at play. Nietzsche warns against this path.

The problem with this path is that it leads the individual to focus solely on difference, and therefore choice. The common perception is that adults are much more serious in their adulthood than the child is in play. The adult sees the serious child at play ironically, because the child is being very serious about something that is very far from the adult's own conception of seriousness. If this is the path the adult takes from re-discovery, then the adult is faced with only one choice- they must remain separate from the child.

This path is limiting because, in the adult's separation from the child, the adult becomes too earnest. Nietzsche is explicit in his warning against this earnestness. The aphorism of the serious child at play occurs within a context where the perils of earnestness are being discussed more widely. The 92nd aphorism asks, "who has not for the sake of his reputation - sacrificed himself? -"[11] while the 99th warns, "The disappointed man speaks. - 'I listen for an echo and I heard only praise -."[12]

In both aphorisms, the common theme is Nietzsche's warning against individuals who take themselves too seriously. He cautions that sometimes we do not gain what we expect to gain from our earnestness.

Adults tend to focus on choices and the deliberations behind those choices. According to Nietzsche's example, adults who re-discover the seriousness of the child at play and interpret this as different from their 'adult' seriousness, are focusing on the choices. They see that one may accept either their own earnestness or the child's earnestness, but not both simultaneously. The actions they derive from these choices will continue to stress a difference between 'adult' and 'child' actions. According to Nietzsche, to take this path is to interpret oneself and the child with too much earnestness.

Therefore, heeding Nietzsche's warning, the recommendation is to follow a second path from re-discovery -- the moment of decision. This path will not separate us from the child at play. If one follows Nietzsche's warning and guards against too much earnestness, one will find communion with the child's seriousness of play.

The child's seriousness of play is true to the moment of decision rather than choice because the child simply makes the decisions necessary for play, rather than deliberating about how to play. The child with blocks does not calculate the height-potential of the block tower, but simply becomes engrossed in building a block tower until it falls.

When the child plays with such seriousness the child does not focus on choices or actions. Focusing on choice and action leads to deliberation about which choice is better made. If deliberation continues the moment of decision does not take place. However, the serious child at play does not deliberate, but simply plays. The focus remains on the moment of decision.

Adults who approach the child at play too earnestly take the child's seriousness to have different meaning than their own form of seriousness. They assume that their 'adult' seriousness is unlike the child's seriousness.

Adults cannot become engrossed in the stacking of blocks. They perceive the innocent child to have grown into an adult with responsibilities. In this manner, adults perceive themselves as different from the child at play. However, if adults would see that their seriousness shares a commonality with the child in that both can focus on the moment of decision; adults would see that they are not very different from the child.

The commonality that both adults and children share in their seriousness is the ability to focus on the moment of decision. The moment of decision does not limit. Therefore, the adult who focuses on the moment of decision is not separated from the seriousness of the child at play. The adult who is not separated from the child will be able to pass over the boundaries associated with differences between children and adults. The adult will be able to embrace the seriousness of the child at play.

Focusing on the moment of decision allows adults to embrace the child's seriousness as common to their own. The adult will then favour that which comes along with the embracing. According to Nietzsche, that which comes along with the embracing is the proper search for meaning. The adult can only embrace the seriousness of the child at play by finding the proper search for meaning.

5. The Proper Search for Meaning.

Ability to embrace the seriousness of the child at play means focusing on the moment of decision. A focus on the moment of decision will be complete when one knows oneself. In order that we do not remain unknown to ourselves, we must be able to understand the meaning behind our Being. Thus, a search for proper meaning will ready the individual to embrace the child's seriousness. Those who know themselves will be able to embrace the child fully without focusing on the choices or actions that separate the adult from the child.

According to Nietzsche, many do not search for meaning in the proper way. Those who fail to find meaning cannot know themselves. Nietzsche warns that if we do not know ourselves what remains unknown will lead to chaos.

Walter Kaufmann writes of Nietzsche's conception of the chaos, "There remains only the void. We are falling. Our dignity is gone. Our values are lost. Who is to say what is up and what is down? It has become colder, and night is closing in."[13]

That which becomes meaningless and chaotic in its relation to us has implications in the way we conceive our Being. Those who do not know themselves will search for meaning by valuing that which they perceive to be richer than them- a subterranean valuation. We should not value "a more comprehensive, stranger, richer world beyond the surface, an abysmally deep ground behind every ground, under every attempt to furnish 'grounds.'[14] The false 'richness' of these subterranean depths represents extreme chaos in our search for meaning

The proper search for meaning will not search deeper. Instead it will value that which spreads outward, that which indicates constant differentiation, assembling, and assimilation. Nietzsche values the continual unfolding of meaning: not the *representation* of life, but the true being of life- *the eternal recurrence*.

We must diminish and de-value that which forces us to conceive 'adult' and 'child' seriousness as different. These valuations are negative because they will not allow the adult to fully embrace the child's seriousness as common to their own.

A de-valuation will only take place within the unlimited boundaries of the moment of decision. A focus on choice and action forces the individual to yield to limits and impose a difference on the child. A focus on the moment of decision allows individuals to pass over that which would have them yield and promote the communal nature of child and adult seriousness.

Therefore, in order to understand ourselves as 'Being', we must follow the path of those ever new unfoldings rather than dig into subterranean depths. We must look beyond the surface of the subject -- careful not to guess at the subjects themselves -- and concentrate on a study of the decisions that mark the subject's life. These decisions are traced equally through every individual who faces existence - from children to adults.

This is the proper search for meaning that will allow us to embrace the seriousness of the child at play. The child can access the same kind of Being as an adult. The child is no more meaningful or sacred than the adult. The child is the adult's equal because both face existence.

Notes

[1] Friedrich Nietzsche. *Beyond Good and Evil*. (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd, 1973), 94. "Mature manhood: that means to have rediscovered the seriousness one had as a child at play."

[2] Ibid 74

[3] Ibid 74

[4] Ibid 74

[5] Ibid 74

[6] Ibid 79

[7] Ibid 79

[8] Ibid 79

[9] Ibid 79

[10] Ibid 79

[11] Freiderich Nietzsche. *Werke in Drei Banden.* (Passau: Buchdruckerei AG Passavia, 1955), 92. "*Wer hat nicht fur seinen guten Ruf schon einmal - sich selbst geopfert*? - " which I translate as, 'Already, who has not for their good name at one time - their self sacrificed?-'

[12] Ibid, 99. "*Der Enttauschte spricht, - 'Ich horchte auf Widerhall, und ich horte nur Lob* - " which I translate as, 'The disillusioned speak, - "I listen for an echo, and I hear only applause"-'

[13] Walter Kaufmann. *Nietzsche Philosopher Psychologist Antichrist* (New York: Princeton University Press, 1968), 97-8. Kaufmann continues by commenting on the symbolic nature of this perspective, "without seeking to explain away Nietzsche's illness, one can hardly fail today to consider it also symbolical." He adds a line from Zarathustra to orient the 'chaos' of his description: 'Not only the reason of millennia- their insanity, too, breaks out in us' (cf. Zarathustra I, section 22)

[14] Alphonso Lingis, "The Will to Power," in *The New Nietzsche,* ed. David B. Allison (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1985), 38; (cf. BGE 289).

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The Impact of Philosophy for Children in a High School English Class

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Abstract: This paper explores the theory and application of the University of Hawaii's Philosophy in the Schools Project's adaptation of Philosophy for Children (P4C) in a secondary English class. The structure and foundations of P4C are discussed through a brief theoretical review of the community of inquiry, intellectual safety, reasoning and philosophical dialogue. The literature is used to examine, construct and assess a 10-week study that subjected 32 students to P4C 5 times a week. The findings are hopeful and indicate this philosophical approach to the secondary curriculum improves students' reasoning and engages them with the academic content by encouraging them to think for themselves. The intellectually safe community of inquiry allowed the students to explore, practice and internalize the aspects of "good" reasoning through the activity of philosophy, thus making them self-creators and good thinkers who could construct meaning on their own. With the improved ability to personally create meaning, the students were able to make school relevant to their lives outside of the classroom. As one student said, "I actually use what I learn in this class outside of class."

Key words: Secondary, philosophy, children, engagement, meaning, reasoning, inquiry, community, thinking, Lipman

> "…children hunger for meaning, and get turned off by education when it ceases to be meaningful to them."[1]

Education is in a crisis. The media reminds us of this every day with stories documenting recent test scores, annual yearly reports and teacher layoffs. However, the problem is much larger than these reported or any that lie in problems of funding, standards implementation or literacy scores. Classrooms around the country are filled with bored, apathetic and unmotivated students who see little meaning or usefulness in school. The purpose of school has become solely an extrinsic one; "I have to go to school so I can get a good job." Schools must move from being institutions that give students extrinsic meanings to institutions that provide students with the necessary circumstances and tools that will allow each to personally construct meaning in their own learning and lives.

The continued irrelevance and disregard of the students' experiences, questions and ideas by schools has too often left them with the inability to think responsibly for themselves; the school has told them what to think and why to think it. The meanings students strive to attain have been pre-packaged by the textbook curriculum, and when they attempt to reason for themselves, they are given no time or tools to do so. In short, the school, teachers and curriculum do not trust the student or view their questions and insights as having educational significance.

> What the school does succeed in introducing into the child is… a distrust of any intellectual powers of his own other than what it takes to cope with problems formulated and assigned to him by others…The child distrusts not only his own intellectual capacities, but those of his classmates as well.[2]

Schools encourage students to be uncritical consumers of information rather than people who can think for themselves. This causes students to develop an identity that encourages them to rely on outside influences to create who they are. They are told what to do in order to be "successful," while being robbed of an opportunity to create and/or find their identity within the structure of academics. In the traditional idea of the school, the student's *personhood* is completely ignored; their interests, questions, comments, experiences, beliefs, and curiosity, all of which are aspects of the person, are disregarded. The institution does not rely on or even use these elements of the person in their own "education." It simply provides the student with the "meaningful" things that will make them a successful person. How can you make a successful person if you do not even know what that person needs to be successful, or do not explore what is meant by "success"?

To determine if these attitudes characterized my students, I administered a survey on the first day of class to examine their reasoning skills, attitudes towards school and how significant they think school is to other areas of their life. On these initial surveys, in addition to providing little or no reasoning to explain their answers, an overwhelming majority of my students thought school, as well as my class, had no meaningful connection to their lives outside of school. They believed school was boring, but necessary to go to college and "make a lot of money." Sounds familiar doesn't it? Although it is important for the curriculum to prepare students for life after high school, it does not necessarily mean school has to be boring and disconnected.

By no means am I suggesting that the curriculum be thrown in the trash and the students be given free reign in the classroom! However, what I sensed was needed to make school personally meaningful for students was to provide them with tools that help them develop their ability to construct meaning for themselves, in addition to a nurturing environment in which it is safe to do so. Until these necessary conditions are established, it seems to me, schools will fail to provide what the student really needs, and these consequences will be far reaching; a nation full of people who rely on medicine, alcohol, drugs, constant career changes and broken families in order to search for a instrument that will provide them with the meaning they never learned to create on their own.

> Something must be done to enable children to acquire meaning for themselves (sic). They will not acquire such meaning merely by learning the contents of adult knowledge. They must be taught to think and, in particular, to think for themselves. Thinking is the skill *par excellence* that enables us to acquire meanings.[3]

1. How do we get there? Philosophy for Children.

The solution does not involve teaching students *about* good thinking or reasoning skills through pre-packaged programs with workbooks and worksheets, nor does it mean structuring the curriculum only around students' interests. To address problems in engagement and reasoning, the curriculum must encourage students to personally construct meaning through the practice and improvement of their thinking and reasoning; enter Philosophy for Children.

It is virtually impossible to categorize Philosophy for Children (P4C) simply as a curriculum or program. It has grown well beyond Matthew Lipman's original approach, into a limitless and extensive worldwide movement that has been adapted and expanded to serve the various populations across the globe. However, P4C remains a disciplined effort to teach children to think more deeply by engaging them in thoughtful discussions with each other. "It is based around the notion that they must construct meanings for themselves, rather than simply accept those which are handed down to them."[4] The use of philosophical dialogue in an intellectually safe community of inquiry sharpens students' abilities to think for themselves, allowing them to create personal meaning in the world around them.

2. The Community of Inquiry.

> "At the heart of philosophy is…dialogue… This is why education cannot be divorced from philosophy and philosophy cannot be divorced from education."[5]

In doing P4C, reasoning skills are not taught out of context, but through dialogue in a community of inquiry. For this to occur the community must be intellectually safe. "In an intellectually safe place there are no put-downs and no comments intended to belittle, undermine, negate, devalue or ridicule. Within this place, the group accepts virtually any question or comment, so long as it is respectful of other members."[6] This understanding gives way to a respect for opposing viewpoints and claims that often arise out of an inquiry. Rather than having differences divert the direction of the inquiry into an argument or popularity contest, an intellectually safe class will recognize, examine and celebrate them. This awareness is necessary to create a less intimidating classroom environment, allowing for all students to be active contributors to the learning process.

To foster an intellectually safe classroom, I began to lay the groundwork by arranging the desks in a large circle, allowing each student to better see and hear one another during the course of the inquiry. Additionally, this allowed them to see each other's nonverbal mannerisms, which often increased their understanding of one another because they could see *how* they were saying it. Furthermore, on the first day I introduced the idea of intellectual safety and emphasized that any act that infringed upon the community's safety would not be tolerated because this class would rely on students feeling comfortable taking risks, showing emotion, asking questions and giving personal insight.

On our first day together we created a "community ball," which would be used as a tool to facilitate discussion.[7] The ball gradually empowered the students to feel comfortable calling on each other, which gave them increasing ownership of their inquiry. The rules of the ball were to be understood and followed by all; the person with the ball could pass it to whom ever he or she wished, however, no student was obligated to speak and had the absolute right to pass. The ball enabled each student to have a voice and assured they were heard by all members of the community.

Another important feature of the P4C community is its self-corrective nature. In order to gauge the community's growth towards being intellectually safe for all students, the community conducted routine reflections and evaluations. These reflections assessed the direction and depth of each inquiry, individual thinking and personal participation, as well as the overall "safeness" of the community. Rather than relying on the teacher to be the sole source of assessment, the students' own evaluations contributed to directing and maintaining the community.

From the beginning, students' interests, questions, concerns and experiences were the directing force behind the inquiry. *Their* ideas were to be considered, heard and tested by all members of this community. The direction of knowledge on a topic would not be controlled by the teacher, school or textbook, but developed sensitive to the progression of the students' reasoning and thinking, expressed in the form of their questions, comments and shared experiences presented in the dialogue of the community. I hoped dialogue conducted in this way would encourage deeper thought and expose students to experiences and ideas, which were often different from their own. The exchange of ideas would give birth to a forum where students would be able to practice using and honing their ability to reason.

3. Good Reasoning Through the Use of the Good Thinker's Toolkit.

It is necessary to understand that in P4C, improved reasoning and thinking occur in conjunction with dialogue in the community, not independently of it. In a successful P4C community, good thinking and dialogue develop together. In this context, students become willing to take risks, honing their ability to reason, thereby contributing to the learning community as a whole. In this setting, students learn more from each other than they would from a textbook, novel or the teacher.

To learn in concrete ways what improved reasoning involves, the students were introduced to and were provided multiple opportunities to practice Thomas Jackson's Good Thinker's Toolkit (GTTK).[8] Students learn to be prepared to back up any claim or insight, such as an inference, with relevant evidence or reasons to identify hidden assumptions and so on. These are dispositions necessary to construct personal meaning, as well as essential elements in inquiry.

4. What Happened?

Shortly after introducing the ideas of a community of inquiry and the GTTK, the students read their first short story. From here, the students were to participate in an activity called "Plain Vanilla."[9] Essentially, every student was to pose a question about the story using the Good Thinker's Toolkit and the students were to vote on the question they most wanted to community to focus their inquiry on.

The results were at once revealing and discouraging. No question used any aspect of the GTTK and some students chose not to participate. The majority of the class voted on the general comprehension question of "What is the story about?" The ensuing "inquiry" consisted of one student's interpretation, for which she offered no evidence to support it. This student gave her interpretation and the rest of the students were ready for me to tell them what it was about. The students assumed the teacher had the single "right" answer and felt they were wrong if they did not provide the exact answer the teacher was looking for, regardless of the supporting evidence. At this point, the students relied on one student to test her idea and were then ready for me to do the reasoning for them, as they had seen it done so many times before. "Ok already! Tell us what it is about."

This indicated the students still held the assumption that the teacher was the provider all of the answers. It was now clear that these students needed much more practice using these new reasoning abilities to break long established habits and conditioning before they could use them as a way to interpret the world around them.

In an effort to accomplish this, I introduced a series of challenging texts[10] to help the students internalize some of the reasoning skills found in the Good Thinker's Toolkit. Activities such as journaling, discussion and essay writing encouraged the students to internally draw upon their thoughts and ideas to interpret the text. Instead of learning simply about the content of a text, the text became a medium through which thinking and exploration would occur. Through these activities, the students learned not only to form their interpretation of the story by using aspects of good thinking, but they assessed their own interpretation as to how their evidence compared to their peers'; they were thinking about their thinking. This was a clear indication that the community of inquiry was developing. Each student began to demonstrate their ability to use the GTTK to create personal meaning and to actively listen to how their peers interpreted the same text, adjusting their own interpretation as they saw fit. The next step was to apply these skills for a prolonged period of time in order to "scratch beneath the surface" of a single text.

The class began reading Laurie Anderson's *Speak*, a young adult novel which depicts a fourteen-year-old girl who has stopped speaking. The author does not clearly state the reasons for the girl's disposition and angst, leaving the majority of the book free for multiple interpretations and questioning. It was evident that the reasoning skills learned in the previous activities had carried over as the students welcomed the ambiguity of the story. Less time was formally spent on using and practicing the GTTK, however, good reasoning continued to be the means students used in order to be successful in the class; they would not be tested on facts from the book or write a book report. Instead, they were responsible for generating questions and comments that would help the community personally interpret this novel.

To help accomplish this, students were to complete a bookmark[11] with each of their assigned readings as a way to individually apply the skills used in the community. The questions, comments and thoughts raised on their individual bookmarks became the source of our inquiries about the text. Student examples include:

> -"*What does she mean by* truth?" -Cassy
> - "*If* Heather was Melinda's friend *then what are the reasons* for her to not stick up for Melinda in the bleacher scene?" -Jodie
> -"I *inferred* that Melinda's parents are kind of rich *because* she said the closest they came to worship is the trinity of Visa, MasterCard and American Express." -Trevor
> - "Where is the line between friends and just popularity drawn? Does she really want friends for companionship or for popularity? -Darcie
> - "Melinda doesn't get the message to go to the library, so she ends up being very late. This reminds me of how scared I was my freshman year about being late to classes." -Emi

Note that in these questions and responses, nowhere will you find "what is this book about?" as was the case in the beginning of the study. This indicated the students had internalized good reasoning skills and were learning to think for themselves.[12]

5. Discussion: Becoming Good Thinkers.

Over time, after being exposed to this approach to literature, the students began to break the routine that had been established by their prior teachers and classes. The class moved from the notion that their thoughts, ideas and questions were only "right" if they aligned with those of the teacher or textbook, and that some authority figure had all of the answers and would explain "what the story is about" once they had finished reading. As the students were able to overcome these assumptions and realize that their personal experiences and views, properly supported by reasons and evidence were being listened to and taken seriously by their peers they began to seriously engage with the literature.

The intellectually safe environment provided students the comfort to challenge others' interpretations of texts by questioning or providing alternate evidence, reasons and examples. Additionally, the students were using the same evidence to support far different claims which shows they not only were growing comfortable with ambiguity, but also more confident in the their ability to think for themselves. Their interpretations were grounded in personal connections supported by reasons indicating they were no longer passively subservient to authority, but willing to challenge from their own reasoned point of view.

> Philosophy offers children a chance to discuss those concepts, such as truth, that cut across all other disciplines but are openly examined by none. It provides a forum in which children can discover for themselves the relevance to their lives of the ideas that have shaped the lives of everyone.[13]

The combination discussed above of both tools and context to allow students to think for themselves resulted in the students *doing* philosophy. The students' thoughts and questions often pushed the community's inquiries and discussions to that of the "philosophical." The students examined issues and paralleled arguments professional philosophers have been writing about for over 2,000 years. In response to the texts probed, the students raised and discussed issues regarding happiness, freedom, religion, trust, friendship, love, courage, reality and existence. In the beginning, I never imagined the community would be moved to examining existence or artificial intelligence by means of a young adult novel. The students' improved reasoning within an intellectually safe community of inquiry set the stage for class inquiries that became both extremely personal and rigorous. The students examined their own values, beliefs and experiences enabling them to meaningfully connect with the text and the philosophical concepts that had been presented. Hearing other students' examples, reasons and interpretations allowed the community to explore these difficult topics openly with each other and, as many students indicated, they developed and expanded their own beliefs.

6. Conclusion.

At the beginning of this study, these students had no interest in exploring anything more than the summary of a story. The questions they posed, as well as their lack of interest in participating in an inquiry, were clear indicators of their unwillingness to engage complex issues that lack single correct answers. The end of the study reveals a very different community than this. Not only were the students discussing and weighing ideas about these philosophical issues, but they came about after examining a young adult novel not known for its deep philosophical content. The students were able to use the tools practiced in the community as a way to examine their own lives, values, beliefs and experiences, which allowed them to create personal significance to the academic content. More significantly, the students not only recognized their intellectual growth, but also expressed a relevancy of my class that they had previously denied.

It is very clear that depriving students of the classroom structure and tools to personally construct meaning disconnects them from the academic content and alienates them from their own learning. The addition of a thinking skills program and the injection of the idea of "community" into a curriculum will not, by itself, improve the students' ability to reason and create meaning. These components need to be utilized in conjunction with dialogue, which will allow the students to explore, practice and internalize these aspects of reasoning through the activity of philosophy, thus making them self-creators and good thinkers who can construct meaning on their own. Once students take ownership of these skills, personally constructing meaning will become a natural part of the learning process, in conjunction with, or in spite, of the schools.

Notes

[1] Matthew Lipman, "Philosophy for Children. In *Thinking children and education,* ed. Matthew Lipman "Dubuque, IA, 1993),

[2] Matthew Lipman, "Philosophy for Children. In *Thinking children and education,* ed. Matthew Lipman "Dubuque, IA, 1993), 376-377.

[3] Matthew Lipman, Ann Sharp & Fredrich Oscanyan, *Philosophy in the classroom*. (Philadelphia, PA, 1980), 13.

[4] Lawrence Splitter & Ann Sharp, *Teaching for Better Thinking*. (Australia,1995), 99.

[5] Matthew Lipman & Ann Sharp, *Growing Up With Philosophy*. (Philadelphia, PA,1978) 259.

[6] Tom Jackson, The art and craft of "Gently Socratic" inquiry. In *Developing minds: A resource book for teaching thinking* (3rd Ed). ed. A. Costa. Alexandria, VA, 2001), 460.

[7] Ibid, 462.

[8] Reasoning behaviors defined by Sharp, 1993; DeBono, 1976; Dewey, 1910; Jastrow, 1931; Paul, 1989; Toulmin, Rieke & Janik, 1979, shed light on Jackson's (2001) Good Thinker's Toolkit: "Giving and asking for *reasons*, detecting *assumptions*, anticipating *consequences*, reflecting on and the use of *inferences*, asking for clarification, and seeking evidence and *examples* as well as *counterexamples*" (p. 463).

[9] Jackson, 2001, 462.

[10] Various photographs, artwork, music and short stories, including Calvino's "Happy Man's Shirt," Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants" and Kincaid's "Girl" were used as the medium to practice and become comfortable using the Good Thinker's Toolkit as a way to interpret literature.

[11] Bookmarks allow students to record thoughts, questions and interpretations as they read. Students are to use the Good Thinker's Toolkit as a means to look for clarity and reasons, make inferences, provide evidence, question assumptions and make personal connections to the text.

[12] These responses from the bookmarks are not only typical of a large majority of the class, but the deep comments and questions occurred on a more consistent basis for each student throughout the seven assigned bookmarks.

[13] Matthew Lipman, *Philosophy goes to school*. Philadelphia, PA,1988), vii.

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Part 7

Engagement with the Writing, Reading and Thinking Process

Finding the Architecture of the Conditions of Engagement: Giving Voice to Creative Young Writers

Phil Fitzsimmons

Abstract: This paper discusses a project, which sought to understand the people and processes that contributed to the writing development of a group of 13 gifted and talented children aged between 10-12 years. In interviewing these children it became clear that a series of similar experiences underpinned their early introduction to literacy and learning as a whole. Through this cyclical discussion the notion of empowerment and the ability to critically self-appraise texts with a 'significant other' came to the fore and the ideals engagement and creativity within what Cambourne[1] would term Natural Learning also surfaced. Through the interactions developed with the significant other in these children's lives, these natural learning processes became an entrenched focus of mind, providing a schema or structure of viewing and engaging with text.

Key Words: children, creativity, writing, natural learning

1. An Entrée to Family Memories: A Preface to the Creative Experience.

Some of the following notions, themes and beliefs have all been partially described or alluded to over the past decades by education researchers and writers such as Mooney, Wilford, and Clay, Cambourne and Harris, McKenzie, Fitzsimmons and Turbill. This chapter is different in that the following pages represent the recollections and memories of children. While acknowledging the possibility that such memories may be tainted by context, or mood, the long term learning to be literate accounts contained in this chapter were, as Perinbanayaga[2] attributes such forms of reporting, robust.

More importantly, for the voices of the focal children that form the framework of this chapter, the particular aspects of literacy and writing memories were not only robust, but formed a continuous set of thematic memory that not only reached back into their past, but form the scaffold of their present outlook regarding teachers, learning, literacy learning in the classroom, and in particular what it means to be writer. As I talked to these children they often related their ability to write, and their understanding of how this developed through narrative. Hence, to fully understand this scaffold of recursive narrative memory it's important that you first of all understand my story.

……………………………………………………………….

It was a cold wet miserable Sunday afternoon in the depths of winter. With all the books having been read, all the videos watched and nothing on television but re-runs of Laurel and Hardy, in order to appease the burning boredom of my children I took them to the local shopping mall. As they fought their way through levels of computer wizardry on a demonstration machine, I began to wander aimlessly through the shopping centre. Meandering around a corner pondering the financial cost of this little excursion, I literally bumped into a familiar face. As fate would have it, she was a parent of a child I was to start working with the following day at one of my former schools. As it had been a village school, I had known Sandra as a face in the small crowd that met their children every afternoon, and her daughter Lucy by reputation. I had never had the opportunity to know them personally. From the moment I backed into Sandra's shopping trolley this situation changed.

I had been invited back to the school to start up a 'gifted and talented writers' program. Sandra explained that Lucy could not wait for the weekend to finish and get back to school to start writing.

> Phil, she's been driving me crazy! She's really looking foreword to tomorrow, but she's been following me around the house all morning complaining that she's got writers block. I got so frustrated that I threw the Mills and Boon that I'd been reading at her and told her to go and read that. Then I went shopping. - Sandra

After some considerable time of chatting, I gained an enormous load of information about Lucy's writing habits. Besides being a prolific writer she was the self-appointed reporter, editor and salesperson for the neighbourhood newsletter. But as I continued my wanderings around the mall I could not help but wonder at what Lucy was up to at this very moment? Would she read the Mills and Boon? What would she do with it?

Wanting to gain an understanding of how these children wrote and an overall context of their learning environment I decided to spend time in their classroom observing. As I sat in the back of the classroom the next morning, Lucy arrived with the following draft and shared it with her class.

> Owen's warm breath fanned my rosy cheeks. His words came out with a whoosh. The seams on our jean were touching. Owen cupped his hand around my chin, as he passionately kissed

> my dry lips. The snow flakes fell upon us. We were interrupted by Emma McRood. Her tight mini purple dress ran perfectly down her perfect figure. Her blond hair danced in the wind, like birds flying free. Owen slapped me hard on the back, as if to say its over and walked off with Emma.

As I sat in the classroom reflecting on what I had seen with Lucy's handwritten manuscript in front of me, the simple task of working with gifted children took on deeper proportions. I was worried.

It was obvious that Lucy, as Louise Rosenblatt[3] would have contended, had 'transacted' with the text that her mother had thrown at her. She had maintained the essence of the genre and features of the register, but had not copied the Mills and Boon love story. She had apparently created something new through an interactive blending process of interpreting the text by filtering it through with her own understanding and inertextual knowledge.

I was now confronted with the burning questions, what were the origins of this writing ability?

2. Piecing Together Creative Engagement: The Children's Voice.

For the next six months I quizzed these gifted children as we wrote, edited and proofread together: Where do you get your ideas from? What are you thinking now? What have you read and written this week?

The constantly recurring theme, point of reference and apparent inspirational source of their writing appeared to stem from the earliest (and continuous) interactions with parents and the family environment.

> Mum and dad always read to us. That's where my ideas came from, to start with anyway. I guess I still do use books and how we talked, most of the time when I write. We'd talk about my writing as well, this keeps coming. – Andrew

A series of marathon interviews appeared to confirm these children's contention that their motivation and ability stemmed from their family. As we sifted through forgotten memories it became apparent that the relationship between these children's writing and the family's input was in itself a transactional process. Revealing Smith's[4] understanding of the reading-writing connection, this process was an overarching means of reflection on memories in action. This resulted in what appeared to be automatic writing at times but as can be seen in the following diagram, was in reality writing built on series of nested, reflective and recursive principles, practices and procedures.

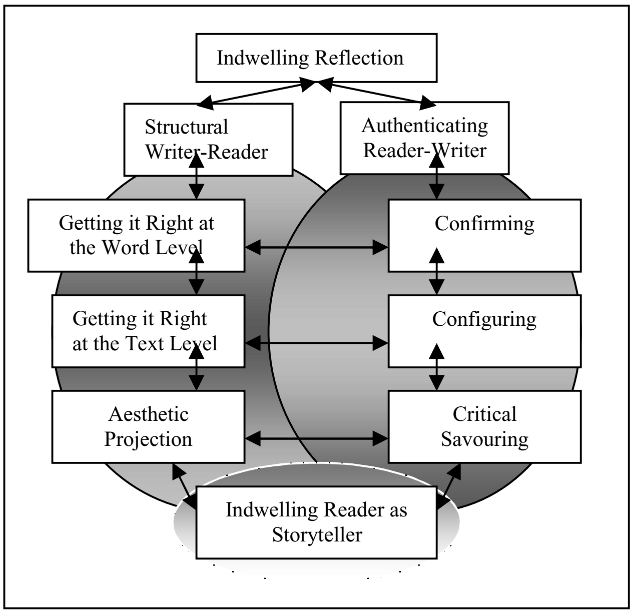
Indwelling Reflection
Structural Writer-Reader
Authenticating Reader-Writer
Getting it Right at the Word Level
Confirming
Getting it Right at the Text Level
Configuring
Aesthetic Projection
Critical Savouring
Indwelling Reader as Storyteller

Figure 1: Writing memories in action

A. Indwelling Reflection

All of these children reported that given the right circumstances and environment soon after they began to write they would begin to slip into a 'Flow' like state in that, to summarize Csikszenmihalyi's[5] understanding, 'they lost all track of time, and they were extremely focused and contained an emotional awareness'. As one of the children, Kelly, stated, this state of focus "was like the movie the Never Ending Story, where the boy falls into the book". Another used a metaphor that was something akin to 'tunnel vision:.

> I don't know I'm doing it until it happens. It sneaks up. One minute I'm writing and then, … I'm thinking this is a good, and I think about what I've read before. If it's not good then nothing happens. If I like it it's like I'm reading with binoculars, through a tunnel kind of. My eyes are looking down, I'm really getting into it, but my heads in the story. Its weird, I'm seeing the words but its like, … all I can see are the words and then I feel really relaxed but at the back of my head I imagine what I'm seeing. -Liz

While a few reported that they could 'fall into text' in relatively noisy situations such as the classroom, by and large they all sought quiet places such as bedrooms, lounge chairs in the back rooms of their house or garden seats under a tree. These places of seclusion that were quiet and removed from possible distraction, None of them could put an actual time frame in regard to how long it took before they entered this apparent state of 'flow', but it would appear that it was generally a short space of time. Once in this state if they reported that time stood still and they were often surprised that they had been writing for so long. Once they were totally focussed they generally reported that only loud noises or actual interruptions by teachers, parents or siblings would shake them from their total immersion.

> I know there is stuff going on around me, I can hear birds, my cuckoo clock ticking in the background and sometimes dad mowing the lawn, but on cold rainy days I just write, and it goes on and… I get sidetracked. I get totally lost. I forget I have to do stuff and go places. But I love it. It's happened (sic) a couple of times at school as well. I hate maths, I can do it I just don't like it. I pulled a book out and wrote on my lap. I didn't hear a word of what was going on. Mr 'P' busted me but he's great. He just told me to get focussed. - Danny

This 'falling into text' is apparently far from a mindless activity though. As detailed in the following sections, these children reported that while in this state they were aware of the words in a much more heightened reflective sense, where the meaning that was being generated in a highly visual sense and for the most part they were aware that they often flip flopped or 'bootstrapped' their way from concentrating on the language and genre, a Structuring Writer-Reader, and concentrating on developing and engaging text that the reader could almost visualise, an Authenticating Reader-Writer. All claimed that they thought it came from the reading sessions with their parents prior to coming to school. It was in these informal but focussed discussion and reading situations that they believe that the language of the books they were absorbed in began to become a natural part of their thinking. Hence, when it came to writing, they simply fell into the text. When they came to school, it was a process of intense focus they constantly returned to when they began to write.

B. Structuring Writer-Reader

The first sense awareness these young readers reported related to the actual word usage and grammar they initially began to employ. It was the 'feel' of these two elements that drew them into their own text, and if they chose to continue to write this reflective process acted as a confirming agent throughout the entire writing-rereading experience. This process of reading and reflecting on the structure of the text at both word and text level while maintaining meaning had three overall components which allowed them to "think about and enjoy the way the writer had written their story", as well as "think about whether the story was believable" - Jacquie. These three reflective components included what I have termed, getting it right at the word level, getting it right at the text level and aesthetic projection.

Getting it Right at the Word Level involved drawing on their apparent intertextual experiences of the past and memories of interaction with their parents, they apparently began to reflect on the appropriateness of the words employed using a self questioning approach taken from the dialectic processes employed by their parents. This resulted in an apparent rhythm and emergence of the language that they believed would enable the reader to finally visualize the text. Overall, it would seem that if the language was mundane or in some manner clichéd, a barrier was placed in their thinking in action which stemmed the 'flow' process. For the most part they would continue writing on to see if they still could engage with the text or see if the language use improved.

> As I begin I just can't help but think about how good or bad the words are. Sometimes the story is good but the way its put together isn't and so I read, I read just for the story and it' I dunno (sic) I read but I don't get right into it. After a while, if you read a lot you get to know what's good and what's bad. -Alexandra

Getting Right at the Text Level involved an extension of the previous notion. If these children chose to continue to write, the process of thinking about the language used was carried on and extended into reflecting on larger chunks of text. This would appear to operate at the paragraph level and text level. While not an explicit aim as such, they did reflect on a dual process of " what mum used to ask me, seeing what was the same as other books and what was missing from story. "Writers don't tell you everything and they don't tell the truth. You have to do this yourself" -Tammy. Tammy's assertion represented the overall consensus of this group that the language served to not only enhance the enjoyment of the narrative, but also helped create a resonance with text read previously and a highly personal sense of the current setting and personality of the characters. For these children, the language used and the overall match with the genre was an important tool of engagement in the entire writing-reading process. Overall they looked for and appreciated succinctness, appropriateness and minimalism so that the reader could fill in the gaps. These children loved to concentrate on the salient features of the text by creating word different word usage at key points so that the story and characters came alive but one in which the reader had to re-create for themselves as opposed to having every detail given to them. As Lucy stated, "this is what I learned from my dad. He showed me how his favourite author's wrote, and I just kept trying."

> Aesthetic Projection was a reflective tool that was founded on overall meaning. Having undertaken the meaning making process based on previous immersion on another author's use of language, and reflection and comparison with their writing, this cohort of young readers believe that they then develop a sense of believability. As long as the language used is relatively consistent in form, and the overall structure of the text was coherent then these children believed they gained a sense of "being taken along by the story" - Amy.

C. Authenticating Reader-Writer

As shown in Figure 1 and detailed in the previous section, for these children their language use was an immediate precursor and entrée into entering a focused appreciation of their writing. However, if they felt that their writing was going well, quite soon into the writing process they claimed they entered a parallel reflective process. This reflection focus appears to be a narrative in itself, a process of self storying in which this group of young writers began to try and visualize what was actually happening in the story as they wrote. While their were degrees of apparent ability and different conditions that facilitated or hindered this process, if these reader-writers began to 'find the fit' as well as appreciate the rhythm of their language use, they reported, as outlined in the ensuing sections, that also began to gain a sense of being able to reach out and emotionally taste, touch and enter the text. As one of the younger girls stated, as I write I want to know if its real, or if someone will believe me. - Jenna

Having begun to appreciate the language being used, it would appear that these children also began to reach out with their imagination and begin an initial sensory reconnaissance as they write. As a form of conformation of the inhabitants and physicality within the story, the plot and the way these two elements intersected, they described these initial forays into the text in terms of reaching out and touching the words and elements in the text in order to get a personal understanding of the physical place the characters were living in and the way they thought.

Thus a confirming process of reflection began where these children seemed to be asking themselves constantly, is this going well? Combined with the structural appreciation elements of writing as a structural writer-reader, if these readers believed that their text was worth continuing to as to become engaging for the reader, and providing the environmental conditions were conducive, overall the claimed that they began to engage with the story at an even deeper level in which they make comparisons with the character's actions, thoughts and beliefs and their own understanding of what they thought each character should behave and think. They mostly reported that by this time they had lost track of time and had quite often had begun to see the text through the eyes of the main character or one of the character they had engaged with. They also began making assumptions about elements such as what were the characters main attributes as well as their flaws and failings. It would also appear that they commenced making judgments about other peripheral elements such which characters may take over the central frame of the plot, which or characters may assume a central roll in developing the main character. They were essentially corroborating the overall validity of the characterisation. This too was linked to their past experience with text.

> Its (sic) like when mum and dad used to talk to their friends about the books they were reading. I used to just listen, and take sides. I think I learned to, to write in the same way. I always talk to myself and ask is this good or bad?

This self-talk then seems to lean into a configuring process. Essentially a proofreading practice, apparently if all of the previous conditions fell into place these young writers would then enter a concentrated writing-reading state in which they were totally immersed and would then begin to see the text but also begin to fully visualize the story they were reading. This would often necessitate rewriting of certain elements of the text. While some reported that they 'lived' the narrative through the eyes of the main character and didn't want to make changes, other reported that they often saw what was unfolding from an external or birds eye view. As Lara stated,

> It's like I'm really there, I'm seeing it all like a video, there is sound sometimes… but I sometimes want to reach in and touch the words. Then you notice things you have to change. Its (sic) stuff that makes sense to you but maybe not to others.

D. Reading as an Indwelling Story Teller

Interestingly, ten out these thirteen children reported that once having entered this intense writing-reading-reflection state, they also began to consider what elements of the text they could use in their writing at a later stage. It would seem that while writing as some form of narrator, these particular children locked onto select elements that they believed they saw as well as individual words or chunks of text they thought were particularly engaging. Apparently acting as a textual platform for future drafts these children would use a plan or approach that they would play with and manipulate. It would appear that for these children their writing is never really completed. Even text that would appear to be completed is viewed as being unfinished. While not acting as a form of sequel the reflective process is one that never subsides. As one of the children said,

> Most of the stories are mine, but the things that go in it, can come from other writers. It's not stealing… it's using. I can't remember everything that I've read but I kind of know when I'm writing what feels good and that comes from what I've read, I think. – Stephanie

3. Implications.

While recognising that the themes described in this paper are based on childhood memories and need to be investigated through further research, these elements of memory do raise important issues in regard to writing development, the nature of the optimal school experience to develop writing and the conditions that could operate to advance optimal creative growth.

At the very least, these children's views reveal that learning to be a creative writer, and perhaps learning to be creative in general, is a social triptych. These facets, consist of real life text jointly explored in a shared book experience, hinged together as a single frame of reference on which print becomes an ever growing canvas of discovery, with discussion the instrument of application. An enriching pro-active environment such as this appears to develop what Neuman and Roskos[6] would call more internally driven children, which is in direct contrast to many of the school based learning models that are founded on external motivational practices.

In line with Cambourne's[7] argument that learning ought to be barrier free and as uncomplicated as possible, so too I would argue that learning to be creative, as exemplified in this case, also needs to be of the same ilk. This is not to say that learning to be creative is without its struggles, but the data supplied by the children in this project reveal that the struggle to learn was engaging and possibly even enjoyable. Certainly, Lala's[8] the joy of achievement is a theme of memory that underpins the children's discussion and memory of the learning environment and process.

To this point, I want to conclude by returning to where I started this paper and give voice to Lucy's ideas of learning.

> I really enjoyed school and my teachers were really great but ... I really wish they'd given me the freedom to explore like mum and dad. Just to read and write.

Notes

[1] B.L Cambounrne, *The Whole Story: natural learning and the acquisition of literacy*. (Auckland,1988), 33
[2] R.S. Perinbanayaga, "The definition of the social situation: An analysis of the ethnomethodological and dramaturgical view", *Sociological Quarterly*, 15, 1974, 533.
[3] F. Smith, *Writing and the Writer*. London: Heinemann Educational Books: 1982, 100.
[4] L.M. Rosenblatt, *The reader, the text, the poem: The transactional theory of the literary work.* Carbondale, Il: Southern Illinois University Press 1978, 41.
[5] M. Csikszentmihalyi, *The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. New York: Peregrin 1993, 4.
[6] Neuman and Roskos, Literary objects as cultural tools: Effects on children's literacy behaviours in play. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 27, 224.
[7] Cambourne, 1988, 4.
[8] R. Lala, *Joy Of Achievement: conversation with J.R.D. Tata*, Bombay, India :Penglishuin 1992, 87

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Deep Education

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Abstract: David Abram, noted philosopher, ecologist, and magician, makes the claim that that modern humanity has severed an ancient, reciprocal, and perceptual link with the natural world. Abram regards the loss of sensual language, the impact of writing, and the advancement of technology to be critical indications that this severance entails the loss of perception. In order to rectify this severance Abram incorporates the phenomenological philosophy of Merleau-Ponty, in which he explores an ethic for regaining our perceptions of the natural world. Abram argues that until we are able to perceive nature as phenomenon we will not be able to respond to it responsibly. This is an accomplishment that proponents of deep ecology have lauded. However, if one can find the same lacunae of perception within the modern conception of the child as Abrams found in the modern perception of the natural world, then Abram's environmental ethic has benefit to educators beyond the ethics of deep ecology. The following explores this modern lack of perception of the young child, concluding that Abram's ethic then can be used as a paradigm for responsible educative response. Until we, as educators, can hear, see, smell, touch, taste, and sense that which be, *child*, any educational response will remain inadequate. To this end Philosophy for Children can provide much insight. The theory of the philosophical community of inquiry posed through a shared text, an equalization of power, a commitment to communal knowledge, and the act of perception-sharing of, by, and with children; can be considered one form of responsible educative response, as it considers the phenomenon, child.

Key Words: Abram, David, Phenomenology, Perception, Philosophy for Children, Matthew Lipman, Environmental Ethics

One day, on the way to work, I stopped at a crosswalk with a kindergarten class. "We are on a first-day-of-spring-walk and we are combining our safety route with it," their teacher remarked proudly. I turned and asked one of the children, "And do you enjoy taking walks?" "Oh yes," he replied. The light changed and the class crossed. I noticed the head teacher walked first. The children all followed behind him in a single line, and an aide brought up the rear. The teacher walked at a very quick pace and the smallest children trotted behind.

What sort of spring did the children notice marching along at a fast clip behind the hulking presence of their teacher? Did they notice the smell of rain in the air? Did they touch the first spring sprouts of grass? Did they hear the robin's call? Bundled up in their pink scarves, blue gloves, and striped coats we may wonder if they even noticed it was rather chilly for the first day of spring.

I am not advocating the rule that children must never walk in lines, teachers must always walk slowly, and aides should allow children to unbutton their coats on 40 degree Fahrenheit spring afternoons. Yet, I notice two problems plaguing this 'spring' walk. One is the lack of perception among the children and the second is the teacher's lack of perception of the child. The children seem hardly aware of their surroundings, and the teacher perceives the child as some*thing* that can walk at an adult pace and perceive 'spring'.

Each problem involves a lack of perception more than the simple perceiving that is the perceiving of living beings. More appropriately addressed, the problem centres on the perceiving of deep perception, the 'doing' perception where one is able to notice, reflect, articulate, and project perception.[1] An educative response that addresses these problems will be one in which children are able to critically and creatively perceive while allowing educators to perceive children critically and creatively.

Is there a role for this deep perception within modern education? David Abram in his book, *The Spell of the Sensuous,* gives us insight into the modern problems of perception. Not only does his theory elucidate many of the issues surrounding perception; his ethic of sensuous ecology outlines a way of life that addresses the need for a perception-based response.

I would echo Abram's response of sensuous living adding that it is possible that perception as an educational ethic is also needed. Abram leads us here as well, in his work, *The Eclipse of the Sensuous.*

> The child's somatic solidarity with others is inevitably a tentative and tenuous phenomenon, a layer of experience that emerges only when a child is free to engage, with the whole of her or his muscled and sensitive organism, in the animate world that immediately surrounds her. This quietly empathic layer of experience can arise, that is, only when the child is free to explore, at her own pace, this terrain of scents, shapes, and textures inhabited by other sensuous and sentient forms (by trees and insects and rain and houses), and so to discover, gradually, how to resonate with the other palpable presences that surround.[2]

Therefore, by delving into Abram's claims concerning the decline of perception of the phenomenon of the natural world and analogously applying those claims to the project of education we can conclude that Abram's environmental ethic is also an educational ethic.

Abram claims, "The everyday world in which we hunger and make love is hardly the mathematically determined 'object' toward which the sciences direct themselves".[3] To those of us living out normal everyday experiences, the 'objective' sciences have very little relation to us. Yet as we develop within a continually intellectualized, science orientated, and overly documented culture we interpret the objective experience of the sciences as the only way in which to perceive the world around us. Thus, we (no longer) retain the ability to see the living field of our experience.

For Abram, our world is so consistently bombarded by cold 'hard' facts we no longer experience reality as real. Abram writes, "It was Husserl's genius to realize that the assumption of objectivity had led to an almost total eclipse of the life-world in the modern era."[4] We experience reality as something to be diagnosed, measured, and ordered; something separate from ourselves. As such, we lack a more "real" perceptive relationship with the world.

Abram notes that the causes of this lack are centred on the language of our response to the environment. This language reflects a moving away from actual experience, a reliance on writing and non-oral technologies, and the abstraction of ideas.

Language occurs in a communal relationship to our placement in the world. As such the world affects the way in which our language develops and language then influences the world. Abram notes, "We always retain the ability to alter or suspend any particular instance of participation. Yet we can never suspend the flux of perception itself."[5] Thus the way we use our language can lead to a change in how we perceive our language. As humans, our very language makes it possible for us to distance language from language.

Our first language is an embodied and moving language. As Abram explores, our very language, as embodied cannot be understood from some outside, objective, no-body isolation.

> We appropriate new words and phrases first through their expressive tonality and texture, through the way they feel in the mouth or roll off the tongue, and it is this direct, felt significance - the taste of a word or phrase, the way it influences or modulates the body- that provides the fertile, polyvalent source for all the more refined and rarified (sic) meanings which that term may come to have for us[6]

Our language begins to reflect a separation from this embodiment if we stop participating bodily with the natural world; if this separated language is again used to create more language which distances us, it may even become value-laden *against* embodied language.

Our modern language then removes us from our perceptive relationship to the world. Abram considers the development of the Hebrew alphabet as evidence of an embodied language which gradually changed into a spoken symbolic language that first creates the notion of specialty to the human language, a gift separating humans from the animal world.

The ancient Greeks moved this spoken, distanced language to an alphabet far removed from the embodiment of its first conception. Writing becomes a technology that severs us from knowing the perceptive base of our own language. Abram claims that this new power allowed such grand figures as Socrates and Plato to create "the collective thought-structure appropriate to the new technology"[7]. When a word is written down it begins to take on its own meaning separate from the parties which used it. As such, the word itself can be dissected, taken apart, and picked over for its meaning.

Why is the advent of writing so detrimental for us? As Abram argues, our very concepts are originally tied to the sensible world. Separation from this then implies that one regards the trees and wolves and birds as existing outside of the sensing and sensible world. Eventually, we come to regard the tree as something that does not affect us in any way. Our world does not affect the tree.

There also becomes a noted difference between the way we speak and the way we write. Not only are we separated from our experienced language, but we write of our experiences in a method that detracts from the experience. Speaking is not writing. As Abram writes,

> In the absence of any written analogue to speech, the sensible, natural environment remains the primary visual counterpart of spoken utterance, the visible accompaniment of all spoken meaning…we can no more stabilize the language and render its meanings determinate than we can freeze all motion and metamorphoses within the land [8]

Abram's description of the oral tradition of indigenous peoples, where "the spoken discourse of traditionally oral, tribal cultures remains bound to the expressive sounds, shapes, and gesture of an animate earth"[9], further explores his commitment to a sensuous earth that lies beyond the modern literary concept.

For Abram, this non-literary knowledge allows us to regain the sensuous experience of language. Abram's elucidation of this claim is made explicit as he relates oral-speaking culture's non-abstracted conceptions of time and space. The locus of the lost sensible world can be found in the myths told by oral storytellers of traditional peoples.

Abram argues that when we neglect to regard the natural world as capable of acting upon, creating, and forming us, we neglect our very selves. "We conceptually immobilize or objectify the phenomenon only by mentally absenting ourselves from this relation, by forgetting or repressing our sensuous involvement" [10] Thus, it is by breaking our attention away from the confines of technology, writing, and abstract language where we will find ourselves in a new world of 'speaking' objects. As such we will be able to respond to them responsibly.

Abram gives an example of what this may look like by focusing on a non-abstracted form of non-literary knowledge. This is why his is a deep ethic. Abram does not simply ask us to perceive the world around us better. The ethic calls us to a place beyond the usual reach of our abstracted and distanced way of knowing. The deepness entailed in these non-abstracted and embodied acts of perception would enable one to recognize that, "Intelligence is no longer ours alone but is a property of the earth; we are in it, of it, immersed in its depths" [11] Intelligence is not part of our language but part of the world we are immersed in already.

As such, it is quite logical for Abram to turn to the phenomenological project. Abram follows the more radical conception of Merleau-Ponty: "Merleau-Ponty invites us to recognize, at the heart of even our most abstract cogitations, the sensuous and sentient life of the body itself" [12] Thus the phenomenological work includes perceiving the world at its most basic level as it acts with the body. As Abram notes, Merleau-Ponty's work entails a theme of reciprocity that allows for a movement of perceptive bodies to interact upon one another. "Neither the perceiver nor the perceived, then, is wholly passive in the event of perception".[13]

It is possible that the environment is not all that needs the infusion of this deep ethic. Through our discourse, our writings, our teaching responses, our conceptions of the child, our very language; a distance is created between the adult and the child and the child and the world. This distance seems to follow a direct lack of perceptive awareness similar to Abram's description of our abstracted relationship to the environment. We are like the children and teacher on their spring walk, who are unable to see spring and each other.

Abram recognizes that the child and the natural world have much in common; they are those subjects we have turned to mere datum and cold hard facts. We test them, we prod them, we poke and rattle and pollute and superfund them. And yet, we do not perceive them, we do not experience them as phenomenon.

What is more difficult to face is that in this lack of experience, we do not experience ourselves and we neglect to have an educational response that allows children to perceive the world around them as relative phenomena.

Following Abram, we must note that our education today, like our environmental response, does not take into account the embodiment of our relation to the world: in its language, its writing, and its concept of the child.

Compare the traditional method of learning a word through a vocabulary sheet with a recently witnessed example of a six year old learning the word, *anticipate*. Having heard it read to her once, she had little concept of the word. However, she used the word in a variety of contexts: ANTICIPATE! She screamed loudly. Anticipate she softly slurred. An….ti…ci…pate she sounded out with her tongue rolling. I came home and played with the word myself. This seemingly simple and everyday word took on new meaning for me. And I resisted the urge to tell the child the conventional meaning. Somehow, her meaning seemed greater.

Take this same child as she continues her education. As a young child she has little trouble playing with words; yet when she enters into the world of writing and reading school, the magic of words may fail her. The young child who tells thousands of stories before bedtime can hardly write a descriptive sentence about a bird for her teacher.

One problem is the abstraction of our written language from our spoken and living language. The correct manner of writing will contain a relation between the subject and predicate that differentiates between the two. The subject describes what something happens to, or on which something does. The predicate is that which is done or experienced. But does this difference exist in deep perception?

For, example, when I see my cat sitting next to the window I might write, 'My cat sees a bird'. However, while this is correct written English, it hardly sounds engaging and is not exactly what I perceive my cat to be doing. If I were to express what I truly perceive I might write, 'cat-birding she'; my written language, though grammatically ambiguous does relate much more than my first sentence. You now know that my cat is not merely seeing a bird, she is doing the thing that cats do when they *see* a bird.

The problem is that children are not usually allowed to express their experiences in this manner. Instead they are tied to grammatical rules that further distance them from their experienced life.

Our writing now permeates each aspect of our speaking world (I can go for days communicating entirely with my colleagues through email alone). Using our computers, we can ask another human being to write down their thoughts and send them to people far outside speaking range. What is more, we can keep a record of what they "say". No longer are words 'ours'. [14]

As adults we who use this abstracted language also abstract the concept of children from ourselves. We place them into a sensing, messy world out of which we want them to grow.

Is there an educational response which recaptures the sensing world of the child? I will argue that the practice of Philosophy for Children as outlined through the IAPC (Dr. Matthew Lipman and Dr. Ann Sharp) curriculum *can* offer a method of education focused on perceiving deeply. However, I must note that this is a specific reading of the curriculum and is one that expressly considers the exploration of phenomenon and experience as the central components of the curriculum. The curriculum can be structured to be simply a practice of further abstraction and a language of separation and dis-embodiment. This second reading of the curriculum is a reading of which I am deeply critical.

If, however the curriculum is centred on the phenomenological, it is a powerful and needed curriculum which provides a responsible education. I note four main components of the curriculum which allow for this.

We must first note the equalization of the teacher/student dynamic. Philosophy for Children occurs in a community of inquiry. As such the role of the teacher and student are quite different than the traditional roles normally prescribed. Both the student and the teacher are co-inquirers. They discover and wonder about the world together - both 'unknowers' of some things and 'knowers' of others. As the community of inquiry neutralizes the power roles both the child and the teacher may have, the child and the teacher may drop many of their enforced roles. As each begins to drop the social constructs and layers of obscurity from one another, they are able to allow their perceptions to act and react on a relative, less-distanced, and embodied scale. The child and the teacher perceive each other not as *child* and *teacher*; separate knower(s) of the world but as relative phenomenon engaged with each other in the world.

Secondly we note the sharing of multiple perspectives. This sharing, occurring against a common theme, allows students and teachers to see how the same word, meaning, act, or text is perceived in a multiplicity of ways. As such, students begin to see that there is more than one method to perceiving the world. This is shown through multiple examples in the curriculum. In the novel, *Suki*, Harry and Suki portray this: Harry is a logical, scientific, and concrete-minded child who looks at the world and makes sense of it by figuring out the possibility and impossibility (and always siding with the most possible). He works in a world of laws, rules, and abstract meanings. Suki, on the other hand, a poet, regards the world as metaphor and deep subjective beauty. As the novel progresses, both learn to regard each method of perceiving the world as important. The sharing of multiple perspectives may also help point out the layers of abstraction occurring in perceiving.

Thirdly we note that the curriculum central to a response of perception is a curriculum focused upon oral dialogue. The oral tradition in a circle keeps our perceptions embodied and concrete. Within the community students must pay attention to the words and dynamics of the process. Body language becomes paramount to interpreting and moving beyond the surface parts of the inquiry.

Fourthly we must note that not only the practice of the IAPC theory, which allows for a deep perceptive response, but the curriculum as well can be itself a philosophical study of experience and phenomenon: Many of the novels, though primarily *Suki* and *Kio and Gus*, allow for deep inquiry into the phenomenological. The example of Kio and Gus creating a peach out of clay is a widely used example.[15] But the novels portray many kinds of perception based inquiry. For example Gus imitates the animals around the farm. She pretends to be Roger the cat in a way that allows us understand what it means to perceive, deeply. "There is a sense in which a child plays at being a cat, a snake by becoming those things as it were 'from the inside' as contrasted with mere imitation, which is looking at an object from the 'outside'"[16]

As an example of the kind of philosophical discussion with children centred on the phenomenological as a direct response to the IAPC curriculum I offer the following: Working in a philosophy session with a group of first, second, and third graders having just read Kio's description of the peach, I brought a small box into the philosophy session. I called on the students to observe the box and tell me what they were sensing. At first we moved through simple descriptions of size and shape; yet soon we were moving to different types of perceptions. When I asked what was around the box many of the students answered, "Our circle, our circle is around the box". Yet, a few said, "Everything is around the box!" When some of the students questioned this response as impossible one student asked, "Why did we just stop at circle, when does 'around' stop?" His question asked his peers (and me) to regard their answer as unnecessarily limiting. In equalizing the power dynamics, exploring a multiplicity of perceptions, and sharing them in the present, orally our philosophy session moved quickly into the metaphysics of space and a variety of meanings.

The traditional method of education has been to teach children what we as adults need them to know about the world. As teachers we require them to distinguish between a 'safe' place and an 'unsafe' place. Thus, we trick them into taking ‘spring’ walks when what we really intend to show them is a safe route. It is more important that they learn the *grammatik* of walking in an orderly line than it is for them to feel spring sprouts.

This traditional method is flat and meaningless because it neglects our embodied relationship within the world. Instead, if our education were to emphasize the new fresh sprouts of spring, it would be an education where students and teachers would notice, reflect, articulate, and project in a connected, deep, and meaningful manner. In this case, perhaps the fresh sprouts are not always ‘safe’. But the experience is phenomenologically rich.

Notes

[1] I believe my use of the word perception and Dr. Matthew Lipman’s use of the word experience may have similar connotations. Matthew Lipman, in his introduction to the manual to Suki, speaks on the meaning of experience: “By “undergoing” is meant what happens when an individual encounters or endures something. “Doing” describes what happens when one contrives, arranges, or initiates. In other words, in anyone’s life-experience, one is sometimes agent, sometimes patient, and sometimes both. It is not always easy to distinguish those aspects of experience which are actively initiated from those which happen to someone without any complicity on his part.” Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp. *Writing: How and Why*. (Upper Montclair: IAPC, 1980), vii.

[2] David Abram, “The Eclipse of the Sensuous,” *Tikkun* Vol. 18 Issue 5 (Sept/Oct. 2003): 8.

[3] David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), 32.

[4] Ibid, 41.

[5] Ibid, 59.

[6] Ibid, 75.

[7] Ibid, 109.

[8] Ibid. 140

[9] Ibid. 178.

[10] Ibid. 56.

[11] Ibid 262.

[12] Ibid. 45.

[13] Ibid 53.

[14] Abram does, however, offer one modern counterexample to this problem of writing; the art of Chinese writing. However, for the most part Abram considers the advent of the literary age to be one in which the human connection to the sensible world had been greatly severed.

[15] See William Harrick. “Phenomenology and the Philosophy for Children Program” in *Thinking*. ed. Matthew Lipman (Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Co, 1993), 412.

[16] Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp . *Wondering at the World.* (New Jersey: First Mountain Foundation for the IAPC, 1986), 46.

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Part 8

Engagement with Space, Place and Case

Free Style: The Role of Play in Rap Composition

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Abstract: "Wordplay" examines the role of play in the composing practices of three young Chicago rappers: TeTe, Jig, and Crazy. The author draws on conversations with these three siblings in which they describe the process of "freestyle" rapping, a (usually) competitive oral form of rap that relies on verbal dexterity, associative thinking, and wit. Connecting these descriptions to D.W. Winnicott's theory of play as a process of free association that relies on trust among participants, the author argues that attention to the playful aspects of composition has the potential to alter the level of student engagement in writing classrooms.

Key Words: Adolescent literacy, rap, writing, African American youth, play, orality, urban education.

This presentation is part of a larger ethnographic study of ten Chicago youths who write for purposes not directly related to schooling (for the purposes of this study, the term "write" is used to refer to oral, written, and hybrid forms of composition). The ten writers primarily compose poetry and song lyrics, and my aim was to document these practices through field observation and notes, informal interviews, conversation, and examination of collected artefacts. Through the course of this work, I was able to identify a number of key themes that provided insights into why, when, how, and with what results the writers composed.

I also identified specific characteristics of certain genres of writing, and this presentation focuses on one such characteristic of one such genre - the central role of play as both motivation and outcome of rap composition, particularly the sub-genre of rap known as freestyling. Freestyle is improvisational composition, usually created and performed orally, though as we will see the Internet provides an interesting site for a hybrid sort of written orality, of fixed improvisation. Of the ten writers in my larger study, four are rappers; of those four, three will be featured in this talk: Crazy, a former student of mine at a south side Chicago alternative high school; Jig, his older brother; and TeTe, Jig and Crazy's younger sister. These three are part of a rap collective called The Maniacs, which includes a number of their close friends as well.

1. The Maniacs.

A. Crazy

Crazy started writing during his second year at *LJ*, and continues to write both poetry and rap lyrics: "I was given the challenge to write a poem one time, and I liked the challenge. Next thing I knew, I was writing, and kept writing . . ." While Crazy does a lot of creative work (graphic design, playing the keyboard), he says that he has found certain specific satisfactions in writing:

> You can take certain things that [happen in] life and alter them into a different certain way. It's like a puzzle, you gotta piece everything together, and if you don't get it, you won't understand it, and if you don't look deep enough inside it, you won't get the true meaning.

B. Jig

Jig is Crazy's older brother, and the acknowledged leader of their musical/entrepreneurial group, The Maniacs. His younger sister TeTe likens Jig's role in the group to that of a father. He says,

> I've always been into music to begin with, but I started writing poetry in second grade. Ever since then I've been getting better and better, and when I got into high school, I started winning contests, like whenever I would enter a contest with my poetry I would always win, so people would always tell me I need to get my poetry published and have a book or something like that. And then my friends, they was already rapping, and they told me that since I had been writing poetry for so long, that it's basically rap. Just have to put it to a flow, or put it to a beat. And so I did it, like, a couple times, then we made a couple songs, and then they let people hear 'em; they was like, "You good, you ought to keep on going."

C. TeTe

At fifteen, TeTe is the youngest of the three Maniacs in this study (Jig is twenty-one, and Crazy is eighteen). She shares her brothers' good nature, intelligence, and love of music and writing. She says:

> I always wrote poetry, 'cause I get that from my momma. But when I heard my brothers rapping—and I always knew how to rap—but I heard my brothers rapping, I'm like, 'I could

> do that.' So I wrote my stuff down, like yeah, okay. [Now] I think I could be like equal to my brother Crazy, on my best day. [Laughs, then points to Jig] [But] I can't touch him.

2. Theoretical framework.

The fundamental framework for this study is provided by scholarship in the field of social literacies.[1] Writers in this field argue that reading, writing, and verbal communication are all deeply contextualized activities that, as such, can only be understood by exploring the people, places, and powers that surround and infuse them. The field also emphasizes the multiple nature of literacy (hence the pluralizing of the term), challenging the traditional wisdom that one is either literate (meaning that one can read and write in the dominant linguistic codes) or not.

Working within this general framework, a number of writers[2] have explored the kinds of reading and writing that adolescents engage in for purposes not directly related to the classroom. These studies have delved into a variety of texts, including graffiti, how-to manuals, video games, and notes to friends. In each case, the authors demonstrate that despite the panic over low test scores, low standards, and low skill levels, children and teenagers from across class and ethno/racial categories eagerly read and write when they see a purpose to it and when they get something out of it.

In her article, " 'To be part of the story': The literacy practices of gangsta adolescents," Elizabeth Moje posits graffiti tagging - the most basic form of graffiti - as an "unsanctioned literacy practice" which, though dismissed or even criminalized by many adults, accomplishes important expressive and educational work for the adolescents in her study.[3] Like tagging, rap is an oft-criticized practice - rap and graffiti, in fact, are both part of the cultural movement known collectively as hip hop, the other two elements of the movement being DJ'ing (a.k.a. scratching) and break-dancing.

The fact that hip hop as a whole is historically and culturally connected to African-American dialect, music, and performance makes it unsurprising that the movement has received much negative attention from the press, from activist groups, from the government, and from law enforcement, even as rap in particular rakes in cash for production companies, advertisers, and music video channels. The fact that Hip-hop as a whole started out as, and is still primarily, a youth movement makes it unsurprising that many older African Americans find it objectionable - rap in particular foregrounds many of the elements that have historically been sites of struggle for African Americans. For example, rappers are unapologetic about their use of Black Vernacular English; the highly sexual nature of many popular rap songs plays into old and often-damaging stereotypes of Black men and women; and themes of violence and drugs reinforce stereotypes of Blacks, and Black youths in particular, as dangerous, immoral, antisocial beings.

Yet, given both the political implications of assuming rap's negative nature and the intense engagement with writing that rap can inspire in teenagers, it is critical to recognize that a concept like "unsanctioned" is a matter of perspective. For the writers in this article, rap - and the hip hop culture that spawned it - is an absolutely central discourse, sanctioned by their peers and by the artists they admire.

3. "Like me being a kid again."

Crazy specifically uses the word "fun" to characterize the feeling of being in a rap battle, a competition that pits two freestylers against one another:

> Oh, it's fun, it's almost like you're a kid all over again, talking about somebody, like you back in elementary, bringing back the kid inside, it's just fun . . . I don't take it serious. I just know that they're trying to make me get mad. Like me being a kid again, like I can keep poking you just to try and get you mad [he mimics a child's mocking tone]: "I'm not touching you, I'm not touching you."

Crazy explicitly equates fun with being a child, suggesting that there is an innocence to play that allows one to get away with certain kinds of behaviour that might be read differently outside of the playground - literally, the *ground* set aside for *play*, the ground on which everything that occurs is understood as play. This is significant given that battle-rap is founded on play-transgression, much like The Dozens, the traditional African-American oral form of verbal insult-play most commonly known as the source of "yo' mama" jokes. Off the playground, an insult to someone's "mama" is dangerous indeed; but on the playground - whether the jointly-recognized ground of The Dozens or of battle rap - "yo' mama," and everything else, is fair game. This is exactly because the message is never really about anyone's actual "mama," but about "the humour, the creative pun, the outrageous metaphor".[4]

Winnicott[5] suggests that the earliest manifestations of play in infants are directly connected to trust. In fact, he says, "playing implies trust."[6] This suggests that the level of play possible between individuals is closely related to the level of trust in their relationship. Take, for example, Jig, TeTe, and Crazy's description of a marathon rap battling session Jig engaged in with a friend:

> *SW*: How long will you guys go for?
> *Jig*: I think one time . . .
> *Crazy* [yelling over from the computer]: SIX HOURS.
> *TeTe*: Six hours straight [all laugh].
> *Jig*: We were freestyling. He said something about me; we just went back and forth, until like seven in the morning.
> *SW*: Did you go to the bathroom?
> *Jig*: We wouldn't even sit down; we were just standing up going back and forth . . .
> *Stella* (TeTe's friend): Nothing to drink?
> *Jig*: You don't even think about it. It's just that moment, the whole world changes; it's just you and that person.
> *Crazy*: Like in *The Matrix*.
> *TeTe*: Like you in the rap matrix.
> *Jig*: Your thoughts come a lot easier; everything comes a lot easier . . . you'll start going into your zone; that's the only thing you see at the moment. Everything starts to work a lot easier, a lot quicker.

The centrality of trust and comfort to this kind of deep play might explain why Jig and his friend can happily "battle" for six hours, lost in pure flow. These two young men have known each other for years; they have developed their rapping and writing skills together; they both understand that their play battles are just that - play - and that what sound like attacks on the surface in fact represent a deep affinity. The lack of such a history and established camaraderie would also explain why public rap battle events follow established routines, such as set time limits and clearly identified rules for naming winners - rules are required where trust cannot be assumed.[7]

When such trust, respect, and/or rules exist, the pleasure of rapping is often that it creates an arena for individuals to play with roles that would not normally be either available or appropriate to them. TeTe demonstrates this when she talks about her rap persona (TeTe is her rap name, not her real name):

> I'm the type of rapper, I'm like a boy, I want you to notice me. And TeTe, she like the total opposite of me, I don't usually shout . . . but TeTe, she loud and ghetto and proud of whatever she is [laughs]. And she gets anybody's attention, and she said what she said, and you won't understand, or you just won't be able to look [. . .] You're like, "Ooooo," or I'll try to chew somebody up, and everybody be like, "Ooooo."

By playing her rap persona against her everyday identity, TeTe is able to draw a response from her audience that adds to her pleasure. Play provides a site where she can safely play at transgressing the rules of gender, where she can play at different ways of "doing" sexuality and aggression in front of an audience that implicitly understands that it *is* play - a performance that they are not to take literally or expect her to live up to once she leaves the (literal or figurative) stage.

The way Jig, TeTe, and Crazy tell it, the whole point of rap battling is to provide maximum pleasure for both the performers and the audience. When I ask how they can gauge the audience's appreciation, they answer by *becoming* the audience - by performing the audience's reactions:

> *TeTe*: It makes people, like, "Ooooo." If you on the floor and you can make everybody like, "oooo," you wonderful.
> *SW*: Can you tell the difference between when people think it's just okay and when they're blown away by it?
> *Jig*: Yeah. They'll get more elaborate with it. Instead of saying, "That's cool," they'll [say] a whole lot more, like "it made me think of such and such…"
> *TeTe*: [Or they'll say] "Oh my *god*, that was *ignorant*!" [Ignorant in this case being a very good thing, since it suggests that one has gotten in a powerful dig at one's opponent.]

Winnicott tells us that parts of playing involve unrelated thought sequences - what might look like nonsense to an observer. "Free association that reveals a coherent theme is already affected by anxiety, and the cohesion of ideas is a defence [sic] organization."[8] It is striking to me how close Jig's description of freestyle rap is to this definition; he says that when one is in the middle of a freestyle session, "your state of conscious thought over what you are saying is gone." While I don't believe that Winnicott's psycho-therapeutic view of play-as-free-association maps exactly onto the current topic of play-in-composition (especially as "cohesion of ideas" is implicit in the very definition of most kinds of composition—from freestyle raps to doctoral dissertations), it is useful to consider that a premature emphasis on form, structure, and organization in classroom activities related to writing may eliminate the possibility for students to play with new ideas - to be deeply creative.

When teachers get cookie-cutter essays with predictable topics, organization, and transitions ("first/second/finally"; "conversely"; "in conclusion"), it is either because that is what they have directly requested or because the students have not had the time, space, or tools for initial play with the material. Either that, or - to use Winnicott's terminology - the students have developed an anxiety about schooling that causes every assignment and activity to be carried out "defensively," in a way that is safe enough to get them by and to protect them from embarrassment, humiliation, censure, or failure.

Notes

1. David Barton, Mary Hamilton, & Roz. Ivanic, *Situated Literacies: Reading and Writing in Context*. London: Routledge, 2000; Suzanne de Castell, Allan Luke, & Kieran Egan, *Literacy, Society, and Schooling: A Reader*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986; James Gee, *Social Linguistics and Literacies: Ideology in Discourses*, 2nd edition. London: Taylor and Francis 1996; Michele Knobel, *Everyday Literacies: Students, Discourse, and Social Practice*. New York: Peter Lang, 1999; Brian Street, *Social Literacies: Critical Approaches to Literacy in Development, Ethnography and Education*. London: Longman, 1995.
2. Knobel, 1999; Elizabeth Moje, "'To Be Part of the Story': TheLiteracy Practices of Gangsta Adolescents." *Teachers College Record* 102 2000; Thomas Newkirk, *Misreading Masculinity: Boys,Literacy, and Popular Culture*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann 2002; Michael Smith & Jeffrey Wilhelm, *'Reading Don't Fix No Chevys': Literacy in the Lives of Young Men*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann 2002; Susan Weinstein, *"That Ain't How I Write": What Teenagers Know About Literacy and Learning*. Unpublished dissertation, University of Illinois at Chicago 2002.
3. Moje, 651.
4. Robin Kelley, *Yo' Mama's disFUNKtional!: Fighting the Culture Wars in Urban America*. Boston: Beacon Press 34.
5. D.W. Winnicott , *Playing and reality*. New York: Basic Books, 48.
6. Ibid, 51.
7. A good example of structured battles can be seen in rap superstar Eminem's 2002 movie *8 Mile*.
8. Winnicott, 1971.55-56.

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A Virtual Character for Face to Face Interaction with Children in E-learning

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Abstract: In the past few years advancements in internet and communication technologies have contributed to reaching new frontiers in distance and online education. In the context of asynchronous learning, despite the increasingly improved features and infrastructures, these environments often remain uninspiring and too serious to provide a suitable learning environment for children. In this paper we present the integration of a virtual character into an asynchronous learning platform that interacts with children during their learning process, providing them with personal greetings and useful feedback messages and real time information on their learning performance. This feature can be considered as a complementary element aiming to compensate for lack of face to face contact with the teacher. The presence of this talking virtual human apart from providing a fun element, serves in provoking motivation and in praising children on their learning success. In realizing this work, current standards in the area of computer supported instructions have been taken into careful consideration in order to comply with the architectural requirements and common data exchange between content and runtime environment. This ensures reusability and ease of integration of our virtual character in any standard conform learning environment. The paper will discuss the pedagogical impacts and educational benefits of this work in the context of children education and will also provide an insight into Learning Management Systems, common standards in the area of E-learning and their importance for this work.

Key Words:

1. Introduction.

Avatars have been introduced in Virtual Learning Environments (VLE) in many forms. The classical use of avatars is in the area of *Edutainment*. Edutainment combines entertainment and education. Here, the objective is to reach an intended learning outcome through implementation of a learning process within an entertaining and engaging interactive multimedia program.

Another area is *Digital Story Telling* where the objective is to teach a lesson through telling stories in a digital environment, using graphics, sound and animation.[1] In the above cases, where avatars are present, they usually represent one or more of the characters in the game or the story and the user accompanies and sometimes interacts with these characters throughout the game or story.

In the area of e-learning, avatars have mainly been implemented in custom made applications for the purpose of on the job training, where the training is conveyed through role play scenarios with instructions.[2] Here, the main interactive avatar normally represents the learner and depending on the training task, other avatars play other people involved in the learning scenario. Although these applications could all be of considerably high educational values, their use is relatively limited in that they are created as content and context specific. That is for each different lesson or learning scenario; new settings, new avatars and new processes have to be created. That is, each time, a complete new program is created.

The motivation for this work is twofold; our first motivation for this work was to create a pseudo face to face environment for learning where the learners get the impression that the talking character who is present at all times as they learn, knows them personally, and is accompanying them through their learning session. The idea is to simulate the familiar classroom setting to some extent within the VLE. Here, one can say that the triangle consisting of the 'learner', the 'instructor' and the 'educational content', present in classroom setting is reconstructed. In such an environment the learner will receive feedbacks not from the *system* but from a third *person*; the avatar. Also, unlike the environments mentioned above, the avatar does not assume the role of the learner but rather the instructor.

Our second motivation for this work was to have this animated character as a compatible component that would add a touch of edutainment to many existing VLEs. We wanted this talking character not as an integrated part of a particular learning content but rather as a reusable and context-free component that can be easily integrated and used together with any learning content. We investigated the implementation of the avatar within standard conformant platforms. In order to prototype the implementation, we have used the SCORM Runtime Environment that has implemented the relevant standards in this field.

In the next section, we will explain the significance of this implementation in terms of its educational values and benefits; we will then proceed to describe a typical VLE and the significance of the standards in this area. Subsequently, the avatar itself and its integration into the VLE are explained. Finally we will conclude the paper with a summary and our future work plans in this context.

2. Educational Significance.

In asynchronous VLEs, learners are left to learn by themselves and their only communication is with the system and the learning content. In such environments, prompts and feedbacks constitute the communication on behalf of the system and the content. These prompts, to some extent, play the role of a tutor or a coach who in face to face teaching would guide, confirm, encourage, warn, and inform the learners. Feedback is a necessary element for learning, "one cannot learn without knowing when he has made a sound response".[3] Many studies have investigated and reported on effectiveness of feedback in different educational settings and context.[4] [5] Presence of an avatar, the talking character, can reinforce the effectiveness of the feedbacks, since the feedbacks are given to the learners with animation and sound rather than standard text prompts.

A well known and widely used work in the context of instructional design, *Keller's ARCS model of motivation* also emphasizes on effective feedback as a means of promoting motivation in learners which will ultimately result in enhanced performance.[6] ARCS is acronym for Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction. These elements, according to Keller, influence learner's motivation.

Keller suggests three methods for achieving higher motivation in each of the four categories above (See table1). We show that according to Keller's ARCS Model, the presence of the avatar of together with the right choice of feedback prompts can contribute to increasing learners' motivation and improve their performance. Robert Mills and Nanette Sorensen in their implementation of ARCS model in *Kids College 2004*, an educational software program for learning through sports.[7] We followed their approach in showing the relevance with the ARCS model through corresponding elements of our avatar system. (See table1)

Table 1- Keller's ARCS and the Avatar's Corresponding Elements

ARCS	Methodology	Element
Attention	Perceptual Arousal Inquiry Arousal Variation	Audio Graphics Animation
Relevance	Familiarity Motive Matching Goal Orientation	Personalized Environment
Confidence	Learning Requirements Success Opportunities Personal Responsibility	Prompts Feedback
Satisfaction	Intrinsic Reinforcement, Extrinsic Rewards Equity	Motivational feedback Fun

Perceptual arousal can be attained through provocation of sensory level reactions. Here the combination of audio, graphics and animation will ensure that children's 'attention' is captured. Familiarity is achieved as the avatar calls the learners by their first name and communicates information on their personal progress and performance. Thus 'Relevance' is also accounted for. Right prompts at the right time ensure that requirements for providing 'Confidence' are met. Finally 'Satisfaction' of the learners can be met through *intrinsic motivation*, as the learning experience in itself becomes a more enjoyable activity and also through motivational feedback. Here, *extrinsic motivation* in children can be triggered through communication of good results and praises.

Another widely popular concept, *Flow* of the psychologist Csikszentmihaly defined as a "holistic sensation that people feel when they act with total involvement"[8] is also frequently used in instructional design and in web design.[9] According to Csikszentmihaly in order to reach this level of engagement during an activity, there are several prerequisites that should be met. These include amongst other clear goals, direct feedback and control.[10]

Therefore, within a VLE, given suitable learning content and design, by conveying prompts and feedback via a virtual character, one can expect an increase in the quality of learning and performance.

3. Virtual Learning Environments.

A Virtual Learning environment typically comprises of a Learning Management System (LMS) and a Runtime System (RTS). A Learning Management System in turn is a set of software tools allowing operations such as student administration tasks, course authoring, course packaging, a sequencing engine for delivery of courses according to a pre-designed flow, assessment related tasks, and tracking of learner activities. An LMS usually includes a local database system with all student records necessary for administration, tracking and assessment. Educational content and resources are stored either in a local database or a file system. Additionally the LMS may provide access mechanisms to external repositories. The LMS uses the RTS in order to launch the learning content and to conduct all communications between the components and the learner.

4. Interoperability and Standards.

As the Internet opened new possibilities in the area of distance education and on line learning, and became accessible to the mass, soon after the development of the first learning platforms, it became evident that there was a need for common standards. Staring in the late 80's, the first organizations with the mission to achieve standards in hardware and later in content structure for such systems were founded. The number of these efforts increasingly grew resulting in several national and international organizations; some examples are AICC, Dublin Core, IEEE, IMS, and ALIC. These organizations typically consist of various working groups concentrating on various technical aspects. The members of these working groups may be individuals from commercial or non- commercial, academic or industrial sectors. In order to bring these efforts together and create convergence and synergy between these organizations and to win support in common practices in the industry, in 1999 ADL group was founded. The Sharable Content Object Reference Model (SCORM), developed by the ADL group is founded upon several specifications and standards and aims at creation of reusable learning content as *instructional objects* within a common technical framework for computer and web-based learning. Today SCORM is widely accepted and practiced by the developer communities in the area of E-Learning.[11]

In order to define common usability and integration of the avatar with standard conform platforms, we integrated the avatar directly in the SCORM runtime environment. Of particular importance to study here was the standard; *data model for content object communication*. "This Standard describes a data model to support the interchange of agreed upon data elements and their values between a learning-related content object and a runtime service (RTS)".[12] The data model includes, among others, data specifications for *descriptive elements* including id's, names and definition type data, *progress related elements* such as scores and completion status of learning activities and *time and duration related elements* including timestamps, max-time allowed and time spent on learning objects in each session.

In other words, this standard specifies the common communication that occurs between the content and the runtime system, therefore defines the type of information that may be captured and conveyed to the learners by the avatar (See Figure 1).

5. The Avatar System.

The Avatar presented here is a 3D anthropomorphic character, which allows for human-computer interaction with the explicit presence of emotional aspects contained in every communication using mimics, gestures, and poses.[13] This platform consists of three components; the *Presentation Manager,* the *Behaviour Controller* and a *Speech Synthesis module*.[14]

The *Presentation Manager* provides the functionality to present animated artificial characters, to perform facial animations, and to achieve lip synchronization. Hereby, a wide space of facial expressions can be provided, while the parameterization of the face is kept simple and can be realized with just a few key values. Key frames defining the state of the animated character may consist only of a small number of such values and playback is possible even over low-bandwidth networks and on small portable devices.

While the Presentation Manager allows for the control of the avatar on the fundamental geometric levels, the *Behaviour Controller* provides an interface on a more abstract level. Tasks and even motivations can be specified and the corresponding actions are performed automatically. Examples for such actions are gestures and movements of the avatar, but also more complex facial expressions with temporal aspects. In addition, behaviour patterns for specific motivations or moods can be activated. This corresponds to a sometimes rule-based, sometimes non-deterministic activation of behaviour elements.

An important requirement for the avatar to achieve a realistic appearance is speech output with lip synchronization. Since the dialogue with the user is not known in advance, pre-recorded animation sequences with lip animation can not serve as a solution. Instead, real-time lip synchronization with the audio output generated by a *speech synthesis module* has to be realized. A transparent system working with a speech synthesis for several languages is relatively easy to implement. We use gestures and mimic in order to emphasize the content of the speech. For this purpose we analyze the prosody of the text based on the generated phonemes. Depending on the emphasis in the spoken text the avatar performs supporting actions such as moving the eyebrows and the eyelids.

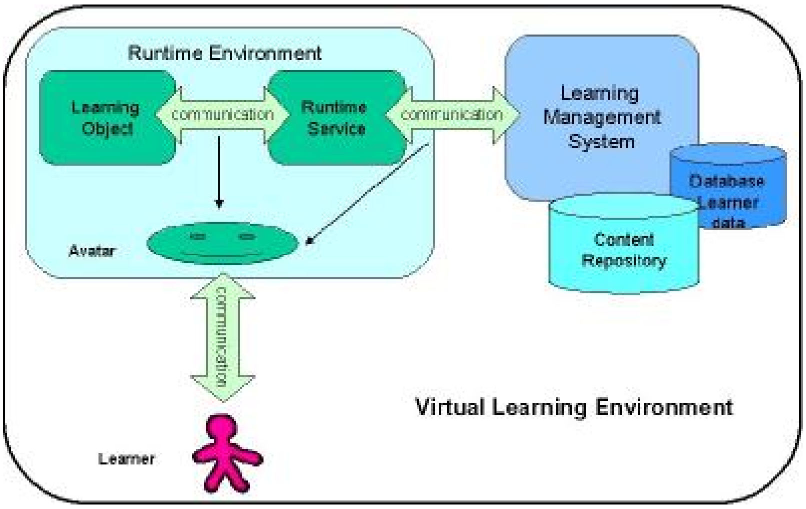
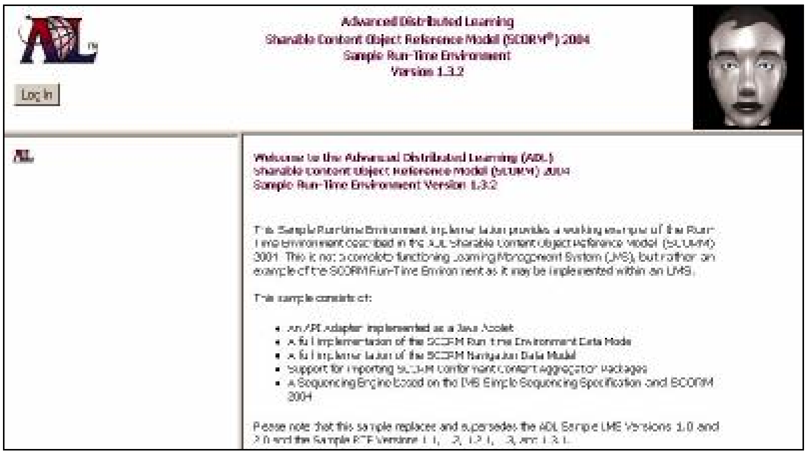


Figure 1 - Communication Flow within a VLE

6. Integration of the Avatar in the VLE.

The avatar is integrated within the runtime environment and is visible to the learner at all times during a session. The avatar greets the learners as they enter the VLE and is further activated each time a message has to be conveyed to the learner during a learning session. Messages can be captured at any level of communication as depicted in Figure 1.



Advanced Distributed Learning
Sharable Content Object Reference Model (SCORM®) 2004
Sample Run-Time Environment
Version 1.3.2

Welcome to the Advanced Distributed Learning (ADL)
Sharable Content Object Reference Model (SCORM) 2004
Sample Run-Time Environment Version 1.3.2

This Sample Run-Time Environment implementation provides a working example of the Run-Time Environment described in the ADL Sharable Content Object Reference Model (SCORM) 2004. This is not a complete functioning Learning Management System (LMS), but rather an example of the SCORM Run-Time Environment as it may be implemented within an LMS.

This sample consists of:

- An API Adapter implemented as a Java Applet
- A full implementation of the SCORM Run-Time Environment Data Model
- A full implementation of the SCORM Navigation Data Model
- Support for importing SCORM conformant Content Aggregation Packages
- A Sequencing Engine based on the IMS Simple Sequencing Specification and SCORM 2004

Please note that this sample replaces and supersedes the ADL Sample LMS Versions 1.0 and 2.0 and the Sample RTE Versions 1.1, 1.2, 1.2.1, 1.3, and 1.3.1.

Figure 2- The Avatar in the SCORM Runtime Environment

7. Conclusion.

In this paper we discussed the educational and technical implications of integration of a platform independent avatar into a standard conformant LMS. We argued that the avatar as user interface for conveying of feedback in VLEs, in conjunction with the right content design and the right choice of feedback, plays an important role and can contribute to increasing the learning motivation and therefore enhance the learning performance.

The main elements present in a typical VLE were described and the role and importance of standards for this work and in general were explained. We further described the avatar system, and finally the relationship between all the above was depicted. At present our avatar is a German speaking character. As future work we intend to expand the speech capabilities of the avatar to include English, Italian and French. Furthermore we intend to create a plugin from the virtual character and its necessary software to further ease the integration operations into VLEs.

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Notes

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Part 9

Philosophy and Children

Learning Philosophical Dialogue in Preschool

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Abstract: This text presents an experimentation that was completed according to the Philosophy for Children (P4C) approach, which was put forward by Matthew Lipman. The purpose of the experimentation was to verify if five-year-old children can "philosophize" or, in a more operational manner, if they can hold a critical dialogue, under teacher guidance. The participants were a group of 20 five-year-old preschool children from Quebec. The experimentation took place over a three-month period, from mid-February to mid-May. P4C sessions were held each week and lasted approximately 45 minutes. The material used was a collection of philosophical tales The Tales of Audrey-Anne, written in the Lipmanian tradition. Two transcripts of exchanges illustrating the children's discussions, from the beginning and from the end of the experimentation, were analysed. The analysis was of a qualitative nature; it was based on a typology of exchanges named: anecdotal, monological, non-critical dialogical, semi-critical dialogical and critical dialogical exchanges. Results of transcript analyses indicate that at the beginning of the experimentation, the children exchanged in an anecdotal manner, whereas by the end of the experimentation, under teacher guidance, some children exchanged with their peers in a semi-critical dialogical manner. These results are linked to the development of epistemology: as the experimentation progresses, the children show more skill in justifying their statements, in listening to peers' points of view and in criticising them if need be.

Key Words: Philosophy for Children; Classroom exchanges among 5 years old children; Critical dialogue.

This paper presents an experiment with 5-year-old Quebec kindergarten children who experienced the Philosophy for Children (P4C) approach for the first time. The experiment was short-term, lasting from mid-February to mid-May. Its objective was to study preschool-aged children's capacity to dialogue. The questions that oriented our research were: *When guided by an adequate philosophical approach, are 5-year-old kindergarten children able to dialogue (dia-logos) with their peers? Can they be critical?*

In this paper, we first describe the theoretical framework on which our experiment was based. Then, after introducing the methodology, we present the results of our analysis and finally, our conclusions.

1. Theoretical framework.

From a Deweyan and Lipmanian perspective, a dialogue differs from a conversation[1]. In addition, dialogue is not a spontaneous mode of exchange, as conversation is; thus, it necessitates systematic and regular learning, by means of a *praxis*.

A previous research project conducted with Australian, Mexican and Quebec pupils aged 10 to12 years[2] reveals that exchanges between pupils who use philosophy in elementary school are not homogeneous. On the contrary, they can be distinguished as belonging to five types: anecdotal, monological, non-critical dialogical, semi-critical dialogical and critical dialogical[3]. The objective of this study is to verify whether the exchanges of five-year-old preschool children could fall within the scope of this typology. Following is a description of each type of exchange.

A. From Anecdotal Exchange to Critical Dialogue

An exchange is considered *anecdotal* when youngsters "speak" in an unstructured manner regarding personal situations. In this case, the pupils are not in a process of inquiry, they do not strive towards a common goal, and they are only slightly or not at all influenced by peer interventions. Furthermore, they do not justify their points of view, and their opinions are presented as conclusions.

Anecdotal Type of Exchange - Criteria
- Exchange with a plurality of subjective objectives (no common goal)
- Exchange that amounts to a series of personal anecdotes
- These anecdotes are essentially directed toward the teacher
- Discourse highlights a concrete thought based on perceptual experience
- Youngsters are incapable of justifying their statements, even when stimulated by the teacher
- Incomprehension of abstract concepts when the teacher introduces them in the exchange
- Limited interest in peer perspectives; questions are not asked
- The classroom amounts to a group of isolated individuals (rather than a micro-society or a community of inquiry)
- The children just talk

The exchange is considered *monological* to the extent that the pupils begin to enter a process of inquiry, but one that is essentially aimed at searching for "the" correct answer. Each pupil intervention is independent from the others. Pupils find it difficult to justify their opinions.

Monological Type of Exchange - Criteria
- Pupils' answers are brief (a few words rather than a complete sentence)
- Answers are independent from each other, as though each person pursues an internal monologue
- Statements are not spontaneously justified. They are justified only under teacher stimulation
- Solving problems amounts to searching for the correct answer
- According to the pupil, the teacher knows all the correct answers
- Pupil satisfaction resides in teacher approval

An exchange is considered *dialogical* when pupils begin to form a community of inquiry, in other words, when they construct their interventions based on those of their peers, and they invest themselves in reflection through their motivation to solve a common problem as a group. The experiment with Australian, Mexican and Quebec pupils allowed us to note that a dialogical type of exchange was not critical *per se*. Thus, we identified three types of dialogical exchanges.

An exchange is considered *non-critical dialogical* when pupils aged 10-12 years old respect differences of opinion, construct their point of view based on those of their peers, and begin to justify their remarks. But at this level, the pupils do not evaluate the points of view or perspectives at stake, and they do not evaluate the validity, the usefulness or the viability of statements or criteria.

Non-Critical Dialogical Type of Exchange - Criteria
- Beginning of a community of inquiry among pupils
- Pupils dia-logue
- Respect for differences in points of view
- Construction of ideas based on peer ideas
- Statements are justified when the teacher guides them in this direction
- Points of view are more complex
- Quantity (rather than quality) of statements seems to be the pupils' goal
- Validity of viewpoints is neither evaluated nor questioned

An exchange is considered *semi-critical dialogical* when, in a context of interdependence, some pupils are sufficiently critical to question peer statements, but the latter are not sufficiently critical to be cognitively influenced by the criticism dispensed, so that this criticism does not lead to the modification of the point of view or perspective.

Semi-Critical Dialogical Type of Exchange - Criteria
- Common question to be solved (the common goal serves to bring reflections together)
- Links between pupil interventions (interdependence of points of view)
- Critical questions, however, they do not influence peers
- Statements that are not always completely justified
- Listening to others and respecting them are not completely integrated
- The result is that the initial idea is improved but not modified

An exchange is considered *critical dialogical* when the pupils not only improve the group's initial perspective, but they also modify it. They are then capable of considering the other as the bearer of divergence and, as such, as a necessary participant to the enrichment of the community. Momentary uncertainty is accepted as being a part of any interesting discussion, and peer criticism is sought after in itself, as a tool to move forward in comprehension.

Critical Dialogical Type of Exchange - Criteria
- Explicit interdependence between interventions
- Process of inquiry is established
- Search centered on the construction of meaning (vs. truth)
- Search for divergence
- Uncertainty does not create uneasiness
- Evaluation of statements and criteria

- Open-mindedness towards new alternatives
- Spontaneous and complete justifications
- Moral preoccupations
- Statements in the form of hypotheses to be verified (vs. closed conclusions)
- Modification of the initial idea

In sum, dialogue *(dia-logos)* is a complex activity with an intent characterized by reciprocity. It occurs by means of an intention of equality, through intersubjectivity. Dialogue is not only used to communicate, but primarily to construct meanings together. It is in critical dialogue that ideas are formed and that perspectives are enriched and transformed. Without being of a distinct nature, the critical dialogical type of exchange is different in its intent and in its modalities from the anecdotal and monological types of exchanges.

Are five-year-old children capable of dialogue? Are they able to dialogue in a critical manner? This is what this study attempts to establish.

B. Context and Sequence of P4C Sessions

The context of the experiment was related to “primary” prevention of violence. In other words, P4C was intended for a “healthy” clientele, unaffected by violence. Both the families and the school considered that philosophical reflection on concepts related to the body and to violence would likely have a preventive effect. The material used was *The Tales of Audrey-Anne*[4] as well as a philosophical guide intended for teachers, *Philosophising on Body and Violence: A Step Towards Prevention*[5]. The collection of tales includes 16 short philosophical tales written for children aged 4 to 7 years, and more or less explicitly related to various types of manifestations of violence (physical, verbal, environmental, sexual, etc.).

During the very first philosophical session, the teacher tells the children, using words that are easily understood, what the P4C sessions will be about (reading of a tale, gathering questions, discussions and activities), what she expects of them (listening, respect of divergences, active participation, etc.) and what their goal is (learning to think better with the help of others, to better understand the world, etc.).

Subsequently, the sessions, as experienced by several kindergarten classes from the Montreal area, develop as follows. Firstly, the teacher puts on a puppet show to tell the children one of the tales from the collection, and then she asks the children to tell the story in their own words to make sure they understood. Secondly, the teacher asks the children to question some situations in the tale in which they had a particular interest, and which they would like to discuss as a group. As these are formulated, the teacher writes the questions down textually on the blackboard (in words for those that can read and in symbols for those that cannot) taking care to identify the child’s name (even if they cannot read, they can recognize the letters in their name), which is important to them. If a child poses a question that has already been formulated, his or her name is added beside the other child’s name. The teacher asks questions of the children to help them specify their own question, and to ensure that it is related to the tale and that she has correctly understood its meaning. Usually 10 to 15 questions emerge. These two activities (reading the tale and gathering questions) will often last from 45 to 60 minutes, or one full session.

In the next session, the teacher begins to deal with the children’s questions one at a time. Indeed, children this age devote much time and effort to formulating questions, so dealing with all of the questions becomes a matter of respect. An exchange on a question regarding text comprehension will rapidly be solved, whereas an exchange regarding a question that consists of a real problem or a philosophical issue will be debated at length. In sum, a tale can sustain the children’s reflection during two or even three weeks. Dealing with questions is essentially done through exchanges, but in kindergarten, introducing or concluding the exchanges with an activity (role-playing, comparison exercise, drawing, physical activity that favours awareness of the body, working in teams of two, etc.) is highly recommended. Naturally, this activity must be related to the content of the question and bear philosophical teachings. It was observed that kindergarten children from certain socio-economic backgrounds that do not value discussion, or children with learning difficulties or language problems, learned just as much with philosophical *activities* as children in regular classes with philosophical *exchanges*[6].

2. Method of Analysis.

Our research is exploratory. It consists of a case study with a classroom of 20 five-year-old children. The children attended a school in the Montreal suburbs and came from an average socio-economic background. The facilitator for the philosophy sessions had received no previous training in either philosophy or Philosophy for Children (P4C), but was assisted on a weekly basis by the researcher, who guided her in her class preparation.

The P4C sessions took place each week, between the first week of February and the third week of May. The duration of the sessions varied according to the children’s concentration levels; on average, they lasted 45 minutes. Each session was tape-recorded and immediately transcribed in full. Written parental consent was provided. In the transcripts, the names of the children and of the facilitator were changed to a code to ensure confidentiality.

In this paper, we present the analysis of three transcripts of exchanges: the first one and the last two. To this end, we did not retain the sequences related to reading the tale, nor to gathering questions by the children, since these were individual activities, and thus did not meet the objective pursued by the research, namely the analysis of children's dialogue-learning process. Neither did we retain, for analytical purposes, the sequences characterized by physical activities, arts and craft activities in teams of two and team games which, to be valid, would have required more sophisticated recording techniques and audiovisual equipment. For the purposes of our analysis, we retained only the sequences that included verbal exchanges among pupils. In other words, the excerpts reproduced in the appendices and analyzed in this article were specifically chosen because they significantly reflected the children's exchanges.

3. Results.

In this section, we present the transcripts of children's exchanges which were analyzed one by one. The qualitative analysis of the children's exchanges was based on criteria inherent in the five types of exchanges previously described.

A. First Transcript - Mid-February

With regard to the analysis of children's interventions, we note that the first exchange between the children, because it is well controlled by the teacher, surpasses the expression of personal anecdotes that are unrelated to the question asked. Indeed, the children's interventions are well targeted. However, we note that, most of the time, their interventions are independent from one another, each one contributing a different point of view. Therefore, there is no perspective construction, but rather a juxtaposition of points of view. In addition, these points of view are directed toward the teacher, not toward peers.

I Let's move on to another situation. Which is more pleasant: when you gently push a friend, or when you violently push a friend?
El Gently push.
I Can anyone help El and say why it's more pleasant?
Mel It's more pleasant because it hurts less.
L-S You won't really feel like playing with that friend anymore.
AA It can make him really mad.

We noted two exceptions to the juxtaposition of points of view: firstly, when a child (Ch) completely disagrees with a fact that another child (AA) stated. Only then do they address each other.

I Why do you say it can make him really mad?
AA Because he might bite you.
Ch It's not a dog. Friends don't bite. It's just dogs that bite.

Secondly, when the teacher gives the children to understand that AA is mistaken, three other children (LS, Br, Ch) state points of view in relation to AA's intervention, as if to help him make sense of his remark.

I AA, did you make a mistake with the question about dogs? It doesn't matter.
LS We're here to learn.
Br I've seen someone bite another person.
I Br, you say it's possible for a person to bite another person.
Ch Mostly babies.

In the last two cases, we can assert that the children are interested in the perspectives of their peers because they react. Nevertheless, here again the exchanges involve, respectively, only two and three children. We cannot say that the object of the exchange represents a common objective for the majority of pupils. In addition, the reactions are very succinct and remain without reply.

Another point to be noted is that the children's interventions are essentially based on perceptual experience, that is, they consist of a few words or of incomplete, if not ill-structured, sentences. It remains that the children are capable, when stimulated by the teacher, of justifying their point of view using concrete elements.

I Which is worse, being bitten by an animal or by a person?
Mel By an animal.

I Why do you say that?
Mel Well, because animals have sharper teeth.
Si Because all our teeth are flat except for two, and in animals, they're all sharp, that's why animals can bite harder than humans.

The request for a justification by the teacher, because it generates cognitive conflict in the children's minds, leads them to use more complex thinking skills, such as specifying (Mel), and comparing and using arguments (Si).

Overall, the first exchange analyzed in the experiment is anecdotal and the children's epistemology appears to be related to egocentricity[7].

B. The Second Transcript - Beginning of May

Some 10 weeks later… In this transcript, the teacher helps the children generalize their questions and their statements to guide them toward more constant conceptualization.

The exchanges are constructed around a problem that is relevant to them *"Why do older kids tease younger kids?"* The end of the session reveals a dialogical type of exchange in which five children, a quarter of the classroom, participate (Ch, A Ju, LS and AA). We note that the children participating in the dialogues are not always the same. Although not situated on a conceptual level, nonetheless, the exchange has an interesting level of abstraction for children of this age group, in that the beliefs on which their statements are based do not reflect sensory perceptions but rather a more rational grasp of reality. In this excerpt, the pupils form a community of inquiry around the criteria that define friendship. Because they do not share the same vision, a socio-cognitive conflict is created, and they attempt to solve it through a dialogical exchange, which is conducted in a relatively autonomous manner. The following criteria regarding friendship emerge: liking each other (Ju); knowing each other (LS); seeing someone and knowing the person's name is not enough, you have to play together to be friends (A); and friends don't tease each other (AA). It should be emphasized that these criteria remained implicit for the children, and were not evaluated by the community of inquiry.

Several complex thinking skills are brought into play in this excerpt: a solution hypothesis (Ch), a logical reason (A), the formulation of a paradox (Ju), a stand regarding the tale's content (A), the enunciation of a good reason resulting from the tale (LS), a detail added regarding the tale and a distinction between two criteria of friendship (A), and a deduction based on a causal relationship (AA).

I Regarding the first question, "It's not nice for older kids to tease younger kids," I would like to know "Why do big kids sometimes tease smaller kids?"
Ch Maybe its because they're big and they're not nice.
A Because they don't like smaller kids.
I Does everyone agree with Ch and A?
Ju I don't agree.
I Why?
Ju Because they're his friends and they don't like him. That can't be.
A No they're not friends.
LS Yes they're friends because Vincent knows them.
A No. He knows them but they aren't friends. He only sees them, they don't play together.
AA I agree with Ch but not with A.
I Can you explain why?
AA What was it that A said?
A I said he only knows them. He often sees them, they told him their names and they don't play together. And now, they don't like Vincent.
AA They aren't his friends because they laughed at him.
A That means you agree with me.

Furthermore, we note that the exchange is de-centered from personal experience. The children's statements presuppose an analysis of the feelings of the older children (*maybe they don't like the younger kids*,) they rest on an analysis of the tale's content (*… because Vincent knows them; he only sees them, they don't play together*) and they imply a generalization, a simple reasoning (*they aren't his friends because they laughed at him*). Consequently, the exchange is rather complex, and represents interesting progress on the conceptual level (without, however, being based on concepts).

Finally, we note that the children still speak to each other through the teacher (AA) and that criticism does not influence them to readjust their points of view (A). Furthermore, the purpose of their argumentation is to show that they are right.

In sum, the exchange is oriented around the definition of a friend, which becomes the common problem to be solved. Children's interventions are interdependent from one another, statements are sometimes critical, children do not truly consider criticism yet they adjust their points of view. We are not able to verify whether the initial classroom perspective was modified later, as often happens in discussions, even among adults. The teacher was not able to seize the opportunity to synthesize, to place the points of view or the criteria in a hierarchy and to ask the pupils to reformulate their definition of a friend, after the exchange. The statements are generally justified, although not spontaneously, and the children's arguments serve to show that they are right. We are therefore situated in an epistemology oriented towards relativity (see the previous footnote), which is already a very interesting advance for kindergarten children. This can be qualified as a semi-critical dialogical exchange.

C. The Third Transcript - End of May

The last transcript was drawn up after a role-playing exercise produced by the teacher in which five children participated. The excerpt presented below is rich on the epistemological level. A first solution, more related to egocentricity, is focused on personal well-being (Mel), two others, more related to relativity, are focused on the well-being of others (Ca, AA), and yet two others, more related to intersubjectivity, are oriented toward straightforward communication (LS, AA). Furthermore, we note that the children's interventions become lengthier, more complete and better organized. Justifications are sometimes spontaneous and sometimes at the teacher's request, but they generally constitute a good explanatory reason for the viewpoint.

I	Let's do another game to think about our solutions. Here is the situation: Jojo doesn't like the candy her aunt gave her, but she eats it anyway because she doesn't want to disappoint her aunt. According to you, is this a good solution?
Ca	I think it's a good idea (...) because she won't be sad.
I	Does anyone agree or disagree with Ca?
Mel	I don't agree (...) I would take the candy and drop it in the garbage and say I finished the candy. (...) because I don't want to eat mints I don't like. (...) This way, she won't know I didn't eat them.
I	Do you agree with the ideas that were just said?
LS	I don't agree with Mel because if my aunt gave me some candy I don't like and I threw it away, when she throws something away, she will look in the garbage and see the candy and she would be angry with me.
Mel	If we put them way, way, way down in the bottom and put some stuff over them and then close the lid...
LS	I have another idea. All you have to do is tell your aunt "Could you change the candies?"
AA	I don't agree with Mel because when you put the candy at the bottom of the garbage, you can get your hands dirty.
I	Well then, what would you do?
AA	Well, I would eat them even if I don't like them. If I really, really, don't like them, I'll give them back to my aunt without telling her I don't like them.
I	Why is it important for you to be truthful?
AA	Because if not, my mommy won't believe me anymore.
Z	Well, I would eat a little bit.
I	And what would you do with the rest?
Z	I would give it away.

Finally, we note that in this excerpt, the children make cognitive efforts to reach a practical and realistic solution that does not penalize anyone. This type of exchange is semi-critical dialogical (Mel, LS, AA), indeed even self-critical (LS). As interventions are made, the solution becomes more nuanced and refined. The general point of view was not summarized, but we can observe that there was a double starting point (eating candy you don't like to avoid disappointing an aunt (Ca) vs. putting the candy in the garbage to fool the aunt (Mel)), whereas the final point of the discussion is oriented toward a compromise resulting from a reflection (trying to eat a little and if I really don't like them, I'll give them back to my aunt (AA), and eating a little and giving the rest away (Z)). In sum, this session is the most successful of the three from the linguistic, cognitive and epistemological points of view.

4. Conclusion.

In sum, the results of the analysis indicate that the classroom group progressed to the extent that it was closely guided by the teacher. The group evolved with regard to the quality of exchanges, particularly in the transition over time from a first exchange of an anecdotal type to dialogical and semi-critical dialogical types of exchanges. Thus, by the end of the experiment, the children's discourse, without becoming conceptual, surpasses one or two word answers to reflect more complex interventions, that is, more elaborated, better articulated and more reasoned interventions. Is the concrete character of the children's discourse a sufficient criterion to invalidate the dialogical and semi-critical character of the exchanges? *A priori*, our answer is that it is not sufficient, since semi-critical dialogical criteria concern the form of the exchange, whereas vocabulary essentially concerns content. Additional studies will be required to provide other clues to fuel our reflection on the subject.

Also, the analysis indirectly brought to light the fact that, with teacher stimulation, the children are able, within the space of a few months of philosophical *praxis*, to surpass: a) egocentricity in which each person is isolated in his interior monologue and is not the slightest bit influenced by peer opinions, and b) negative relativism where each opinion is juxtaposed to the previous ones with the intent of accumulating as many points of view as possible, but without recognizing any hierarchy among these points of view. We observed that the exchanges underscored the following complex thinking skills: justifying points of view, active listening, using logical reasoning, considering peer points of view when construction one's own, evaluating relevance, and criticizing peer statements. We can therefore maintain that the effects of P4C indeed favour the development of reflexive thought in five-year-old preschool children.

The method proposed by Lipman, and adapted in the Teacher's Manual partly explains the cognitive evolution. Indeed, by proposing activities of an educational nature between philosophical discussion sessions, we can fit in moments of learning that are necessary to the development of children's cognitive skills. To perfect this philosophical discussion-learning articulation, the teacher should be trained in P4C's subjacent epistemological stakes.

In sum, this study was exploratory, taking into account only one classroom-group. Its limits are therefore significant. A further study should include a larger number of classrooms, be divided between experimental and control groups, and include various data collection instruments including, in particular, pre-tests and post-tests.

Notes

[1] Laurance Splitter and Ann-Margaret Sharp. *Teaching for Better Thinking (*Melbourne, Australia: ACER, 1995).

[2] This Research Project was realized under the direction of Marie-France Daniel, in collaboration with L. Lafortune, R. Pallascio, P. Mongeau, L. Splitter, C. Slade and T. de la Garza. A Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) of Canada subsidy, from 1998 to 2001, made this possible.

[3] Marie-France Daniel, Laurance Splitter, Christina Slade, Louise Lafortune, Richard Pallascio and Pierre Mongeau. « Are the philosophical exchanges of pupils aged 10 to 12 relativistic or inter-subjective?" *Critical and Creative Thinking,10*(2) (2002): 1-19.

[4] Marie-France Daniel, *Les contes d'Audrey-Anne (*Quebec City : Le Loup de Gouttière, 2002).

[5] Marie-France Daniel, *Dialoguer sur le corps et la violence : un pas vers la prévention* (Quebec City: Le Loup de Gouttière, 2003).

[6] Michael Schleifer, Marie-France Daniel, Emmanuelle Auriac and Sarah Lecompte. « The impact of philosophical discussions on moral autonomy, judgment, empathy and the recognition of emotion in 5 year olds." *Thinking, 16*(4) (2003): 4-13.

[7] In a previous research project, we have elaborated the learning process of critical thought, which is anchored in four thinking modes (logical, creative, responsible and metacognitive) that are subdivided according to three epistemological perspectives, which we named egocentricity, relativity, and intersubjectivity. *Egocentricity* presupposes that exchanges among pupils are of an anecdotal or monological type, and that their thought still needs concrete support in order to manifest itself. Furthermore, these pupils do not manage to justify their points of view, even when stimulated by the teacher. Criticism is non-existent in their exchanges. The second perspective is *relativity*, in which pupils manifest reflection, tolerance towards divergent peer points of view and willingness to understand. However, points of view are juxtaposed rather than evaluated, criticized or placed in a hierarchy. Thus the pupils find themselves, at the end of the exchange, with a collection of points of view or criteria, and are unable to choose the most adequate or the most relevant; they all seem equally relevant. The third perspective we named *intersubjectivity oriented towards meaning.* This is a complex perspective in which pupils' points of view are presented as hypotheses (vs. conclusions); pupils manifest doubt and open-mindedness, critical evaluation is continuous, and justifications are complete and spontaneously accompany

points of view. The objective of so many socio-cognitive efforts on the pupils' part seems to be personal construction of meaning (see Marie-France Daniel, Laurance Splitter, Christina Slade, Louise Lafortune, Richard Pallascio and Pierre Mongeau.. « Dialogical critical thinking: Elements of definitions emerging in the analysis of transcripts from pupils aged 10 to 12 years." *Australian Journal of Education, 48*(3) (2004): 295-313.

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Daniel, Marie-France, Laurance Splitter, Christina Slade, Louise Lafortune, Richard Pallascio and Pierre Mongeau.. « Dialogical critical thinking: Elements of definitions emerging in the analysis of transcripts from pupils aged 10 to 12 years." *Australian Journal of Education, 48*(3) (2004): 295-313.

Schleifer, Michael, Marie-France Daniel, Emmanuelle Auriac and Sarah Lecompte. « The impact of philosophical discussions on moral autonomy, judgment, empathy and the recognition of emotion in 5 year olds." *Thinking, 16*(4) (2003): 4-13.

Splitter, Laurance and Ann-Margaret Sharp. *Teaching for Better Thinking.* Melbourne, Australia: ACER, 1995.

Appendix

1. Excerpts from the Mid-February Session

The children discuss a story in which Nick pets his neighbour's dog, Whisker, so energetically that he hurts him. He ends up pulling Whisker's hair and ears while bursting out laughing. Whisker doesn't appreciate Nick's treatment and wonders "What kind of petting is that, Nick? Are you allowed to hurt me, even if it's just for fun?" After reading the tale, the teacher, referred to as "I", suggests an activity for the children.

I	Which situation is most pleasant: gently petting Whisker's nose or petting Whisker by strongly pressing on his nose?
AA	Softly petting his nose.
I	Can you tell us why?
AA	It makes us happy
Mel	And it makes the dog happy
Br	When you pet a dog, and you do it too fast, it can hurt him and he can bite you.
I	Explain yourself.
Br	Because the dog can be mad.
I	Let's move on to another situation. Which is more pleasant: when you gently push a friend, or when you violently push a friend?
El	Gently push.
I	Can anyone help El and say why it's more pleasant?
Mel	It's more pleasant because it hurts less.
L-S	You won't really feel like playing with that friend anymore.
AA	It can make him really mad.
I	Why do you say it can make him really mad?
AA	Because he might bite you.
Ch	It's not a dog. Friends don't bite. It's just dogs that bite.
I	AA, did you make a mistake with the question about dogs? It doesn't matter.
L-S	We're here to learn.
Br	I've seen someone bite another person.
I	Br, you say it's possible for a person to bite another.
Ch	Mostly babies.

I	Which is worse, being bitten by an animal or by a person?
Mel	By an animal.
I	Why do you say that?
Mel	Well, because animals have sharper teeth.
Si	Because all our teeth are flat except for two, and in animals, they're all sharp, that's why animals can bite harder than humans.

2. Excerpts from the May 4 Session

After reading the tale *Vincent and the gang of older kids* in which Vincent, a kindergarten pupil, is surrounded and teased by third graders (8-9 years), the children ask the following questions and make the following statements:

AA	It's not nice when big kids tease smaller kids.
Ch	Why were the older boys playing games to upset the children?
Za	Why were they circling Vincent?
A	I would change the question...
Ch	...Why do the older kids circle the children?
AA	Why are the children playing with stones on the sidewalk?
I	You generalized your question from the start. Well done!
PL	What did she say? I didn't hear because she wasn't speaking very loud.
I	You can look at AA and ask her.
PL	What did you say AA? I didn't hear because you really weren't speaking very loud.
AA	Well, I said, Why are the children playing with stones on the sidewalk?
PL	O.K., now I understood.
Ch	Why do the children's feet sink into the sidewalk?
PL	That doesn't exist.
Ch	Well, I had another one, but it was AA's question.
LS	In the tale, why does it say: I know them, they're big kids from the third grade?
PL	Yeah, you don't need to say "from the third grade". You could say first or second graders.
I	Regarding the first question, "It's not nice for older kids to tease younger kids," I would like to know "Why do big kids sometimes tease smaller kids?"
Ch	Maybe its because they're big and they're not nice.
A	Because they don't like younger kids.
I	Does everyone agree with Ch and A?
Ju	I don't agree.
I	Why?
Ju	Because they're his friends and they don't like him. That can't be.
A	No they're not friends.
LS	Yes they're friends because Vincent knows them.
A	No. He knows them but they aren't friends. He only sees them, they don't play together.
AA	I agree with Ch but not with A.
I	Can you explain why?
AA	What was it that A said?
A	I said he only knows them. He often sees them, they told him their names and they don't play together. And now, they don't like Vincent.
AA	They aren't his friends because they laughed at him.
A	That means you agree with me.

3. Excerpts from the May 18 Session.

During this week, the final philosophical session took place. "I", the teacher, suggests a role-playing activity in which Ch and AA draw, but they only have one crayon which they must share. Ch has the crayon in her hand when AA also wants to draw and asks for the crayon. Ch answers blah, blah, blah. After the role-playing, the children in the classroom who observed the role-playing take part in an exchange.

Mel	That's happened to me before. I wanted someone to share a crayon and the other person said blah, blah, blah.
I	And how did that make you feel?
Mel	I was upset and I didn't like it.
I	How did you solve your problem?
Mel	I told my babysitter, and she had some new crayons and she lent them to me.
Za	AA should have used another sheet of paper.
Mel	But with the crayons, what could you do?
Za	You could take another one.
Ch	It makes me sad.
I	When we're feeling sad, what can we do?
W	In karate, I learned something to make you calm. You kneel down and do this, and close your eyes and it calms you down.
W	You can say Stop that, or Please, stop that.
Ch	You say Stop that. And if he doesn't stop and just keeps on doing it, you say Stop that again and then if he still does it, you tell your mom.
LS	Or your teacher.
A	All you have to do is walk away from the person that says that.
I	Let's do another game to think about our solutions. Here is the situation: Jojo doesn't like the candy her aunt gave her, but she eats it anyway because she doesn't want to disappoint her aunt. According to you, is this a good solution?
Ca	I think it's a good idea (...) because she won't be sad.
I	Does anyone agree or disagree with Ca?
Mel	I don't agree (...) I would take the candy and drop it in the garbage and say I finished the candy. (...) because I don't want to eat mints I don't like. (...) This way, she won't know I didn't eat them.
I	Do you agree with the ideas that were just said?
LS	I don't agree with Mel because if my aunt gave me some candy I don't like and I threw it away, when she throws something away, she will look in the garbage and see the candy and she would be angry with me.
Mel	If we put them way, way, way down in the bottom and put some stuff over them and then close the lid...
LS	I have another idea. All you have to do is tell your aunt "Could you change the candies?"
AA	Well, I would eat them even if I don't like them. If I really, really, don't like them, I'll give them back to my aunt without telling her I don't like them.
I	Why is it important for you to be truthful?
AA	Because if not, my mommy won't believe me anymore.
Z	Well, I would eat a little bit.
I	And what would you do with the rest?
Z	I would give it away.
I	Let's say Jojo tells her aunt she doesn't like the candy she gave her. How do you think her aunt will react?
AA	She would feel bad inside.
I	Why?
AA	Well, maybe the candy was expensive (…) because she spent a lot of money for the candy.

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Narrating the Reasons Why

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Abstract: The purpose of this research is to explore the possibility of a fuller integration between the narrative and the reasoning dimensions in the practice of the *Philosophy for Children* (*P4C*). In particular, we envision the return to narration by the research community (for instance, the creation of brief stories connected to the themes present in the dialogical-reasoning experience) as a further possibility of negotiating meaning and opening up new and diverse developments. This complementary approach to P4C is based both on the recognition of the two-fold nature of the human mind (reasoning and narrative), and on the fundamental role that play, emotion and creativity have in the formation of a critical and autonomous self. This investigation, based on the thought-language relationship proposed by Vigotsky, is divided into two parts: the philosophical and the psycho-pedagogical. This work – in which critical thinking and critical literacy go hand in hand – intends to present to the scientific community an exploratory research hypothesis, which will be followed by experimentation in educational contexts

Key Words: Philosophy for Children, narration, Lipman, Hermeneutics, argumentative and narrative

> "…I have been man, woman, old, young, I have been the crowds in the grand boulevards of the western capitals, I have been the placid Buddha whose peacefulness we envy, I have been myself and all the others, all the others that I could be … No regrets for the Self I have been."
>
> Pessoa, 1993

1. Preliminary Remarks.

This research aims at exploring a possible way of developing the *Philosophy for children* approach (hereafter referred to as P4C), in relation to one of the themes that characterize the recent philosophical debate, namely, the relationship between narrative and reasoning capability.

Starting from the importance of narration in P4C as the instrument for enabling a dialogical-reasoning experience, the general hypothesis along which we will proceed is centred on the cognitive, meta-cognitive and interactive value of the creation of narrations by the research community, as well as on the acknowledgement that the narrative form assumes a special value as a way through which we can, in the process of building the Self, make experience meaningful and open this experience to others.

What is the value of a return to narration, once from the characters and the philosophical stories of Lipman we have arrived at an argumentative and dialogical plane aimed at generating reasonable and negotiated beliefs? And what is that value? Is it mainly on the cognitive or meta-cognitive plane or does it also profoundly impact the plane of construction of the self and personal growth? These are the main questions we will try to answer in this work, mainly from the theoretical standpoint, with some additional observations deriving from specific studies based on practical experiences.

The background of our study is both the new philosophical interpretation of the concepts of 'thought' and 'knowledge' and the current psycho-pedagogical theories about cognitive development and learning.

2. Vocabulary and Linguistic Games

Hermeneutics and analytical philosophy, the two great constituents/components of 20th century philosophy, find a strong element of connection in the concept of "linguistic play". Through this concept we learn how to "make sense of the world"[1] and to be part of its numberless "forms of life"[2]. Language and the world are inseparable because each sense and signification can show itself in the light of "precomprehension" and "grammars" of the world of life. Therefore it is not possible, according to the scientific method, to consider language from the outside either as "instrument" or "environment": each experience has an intrinsically linguistic nature and is an inexhaustible experience of truth (from both the hermeneutic and analytic perspective) that goes beyond the range of the cognitive procedure of science. Language, as a multiplicity of meanings in continuous transformation, as a complex system of interacting symbols, is not outside action: it is the action itself, "praxis"[3] of the world and not in the world. This is made possible by the rules of signification that the complex system of symbols offers.

Action and its linguistic-conceptual justification are therefore inseparable. Vocabulary, Repertory, Almost Text, a complex system of symbols, language as the original ontological dimension of every possible subjectivity is, then, necessarily *common* language: the "I" utters sentences only because it is supported by and part of a "we": no language can be private and no dialogue is possible without a common language. If language is the real existential dimension in which the subjectivity-inter-subjectivity of the individual develops, its transformation occurs in the dialogue whose function should be not to make our point of view prevail, but to open out and listen to others. Only in this way is “critical” thought made possible; that is, only through a “hermeneutic educated conscience”[4] open to new comprehension can we become aware of our pre-comprehension. Our involvement in dialogue implies the recognition of its value for the formation of our critical thinking, because it is precisely the awareness of the contingency of “decisive” vocabulary that makes us willing to activate processes of transformation of this contingency. This willingness has philosophical premises: the awareness of the contingency of our words is in contrast with our expectation that they correspond to reality. On one hand there is an “ironic” attitude that accepts the meta-stability of our own vocabulary, which, even if ‘decisive’ does not define the meaning of life and the world; on the other hand, there is a “metaphysical“ attitude that makes each word (concept, category) of our vocabulary correspond to something endowed with its own objective essence. The criterion needed to establish a boundary line between these two perspectives is provided by the possibility of having or not having a meta-vocabulary that can redescribe ourselves and others in an objective and definite way. The hermeneutic view, which considers philosophy as a “constructing” activity (producing meanings and creating concepts) and not as a set of steady cognition, perceives dialogue as a transformative process. The only way of improving critical thinking is therefore a sensible intervention (aimed at precise directions) able to work in a creative and unpredictable way on criteria, original cognition, interests, perspectives and points of view.

This should be the aim of an education which sets a high value upon thought, allowing its continuous transformation: critical thought is able to transform itself but at the same time shows itself in its three main qualifying features: its criteria, its capacity for self-correction and its awareness of the different contexts in which problems must be creatively solved. If we are able to grasp the inherent essence of things, we can open the way for those forms of thought founded on a continuous search for meanings both through a cognitive and meta-cognitive attitude in dialogue and interaction with others and the productive use of the possible worlds of imagination.

In the field of psychopedagogical research and in 20th century philosophy, poetic and literary culture (albeit with different premises and justifications) has been given a high value because it is endowed with conceptual energy and power comparable, though on a different level, to that of the great philosophical theorizations. By broadening the limits of our imagination it is possible to create, to interpret, to modify and to negotiate sense and meanings that give substance to our existence.

Language as a complex system of symbols in continuous transformation, as a continuous experience of creation and imagination, can’t be related to the objective truth since accepting and being open to the difference is peculiar to language. To favour the development of critical thought it is necessary to act in constant juxtaposition between logical-argumentative experiences and creative-imaginative ones through a series of different approaches able to enhance the specificity of the forms of intelligence.

3. Producing, Sharing and Narrating Meanings.

> A tale, or story, is an extended metaphor, and therefore a process of metamorphosis (Rella 2004). The metaphor is the nuclear element of a tale: creating two themes with different potentials for intensity, it produces a spark, which casts a new light upon them both. In a tale, as in the metaphorical process, there is a transfer, a multiplication of meanings through images. This process brings to light aspects, qualities and values of reality which cannot normally be expressed in merely descriptive language, and which can be told only though a complex interaction between the metaphorical enunciation and the regulated transgression of the usual meanings of our words. Narrative plot and metaphor are not simply the expression of creative skills used for aesthetical goals, but a rhetorical process by which discourse can liberate the capacity – peculiar to some functions – to redescribe reality.
>
> Ricoeur 1983

The plural temporary nature of existence is reflected in narrative thought since the latter is essentially metamorphosis, transformation: the “when” that starts a narrative generates a movement towards the heterogeneus and the possible. In any tale we can find a surplus of reality, of whatever is beyond any logical comprehension, rational description and direct narrability of the experience; a wandering, though, that is in search of its own necessity amongst the multitude of possible fictions. In fact, any tale is a process of metamorphosis that in its movement liberates and generates profound and pertinent meanings, which would otherwise be destined not to be born. This movement creates ‘thought’, which - even though it keeps a grip on reality – is not frozen in fixed and stable meanings, because the non-permanence of the world makes its narration infinite.

Even in narration there is an endless re-writing of the past, which opens up ever-new understandings linked to the movement of subjectivity oscillating between the past and the present. Narrative thought is a constituent mode, which unveils the comprehension of reality and the negotiation of its multiple meanings. From our perspective, critical thought is formed both on the basis of the capability to negotiate meanings in specific contexts and – more importantly – on the transferability of this ability to other contexts. Therefore, thinking in a critical way does not mean using procedures that are universal and fixed as far as argumentation is concerned, but consists mainly in knowing how (and wanting) to use utterances appropriately and successfully in the always changing/different shared experience of comparison and dialogue.

The transfer of argumentation to a narrative plane helps to develop critical thought which is critical not because it is founded on fixed argumentative structures which are “used” in the comparison with the other, but because the argumentative process is constantly in search of a balance that, whenever it appears, suddenly presents itself in new terms, forcing us to begin a new search which in reality never ends.

From our perspective, this never-ending search can be effectively transferred onto the plane of narration and the writing experience. It is precisely in the space between argumentation and narration that a double movement of getting closer to and farther from reality can be generated, where on one hand we conquer the world (by grasping it cognitively and metacognitively) and on the other hand we lose it, giving space to the generation of possible worlds (through the imagination which abandons objective truths previously conquered).

Our hypothesis aims at highlighting a more profound and balanced relationship between these two forms of thought, the argumentative and the narrative, which are both present in P4C. The return to the narrative plane, after the commitment on the planes of discussion, is founded on the logical value of an activity aimed at translating philosophical problems, originating within a research community, into a tale. In the production of a fictional text, which might be carried out in a variety of ways that can be planned and experimented on in a specific way, we activate a complex multiplicity of competences that will become more and more refined as the short tale is realized.

Writing requires a logical-linguistic activity to re-shape previously shared meanings and open them up to ever new declensions. In the choice of an adverb or of the names of the characters, the sequential (or non-sequential) order of the events, the construction of the dialogues in the syntactic structure, we are able to both improve the comprehension of the conceptual nuances that are present in everyday language and experience the emotion of writing. Thus, in the construction of a text – no matter how short or linear – a complex multiplicity of abilities and skills is activated: it must excite, stimulate, evoke, or simply entertain and, in the meantime, introduce the fundamental terms of a problem. Narrative thought refers to argumentative thought, activating a semantic circle where the boundaries between logic and creativity are erased. A narrative text requires special aesthetic care which makes its interaction with the need to bring to the surface the argumentative structure of the themes taken into consideration on the different planes fertile and interesting, and sets the research community on a meta-linguistic (as well as meta-cognitive) plane where language and its use are discussed. If the methodology of P4C aims essentially at realizing a metacognitive experience, then the metalinguistic aspect that we assume gets its very specificity, in the sense that any meditation on language certainly has a value from the standpoint of the capability to understand one’s own cognitive processes.

At the same time, it fosters the development of competences such as *problematizing* (what is the problem dealt with in a fictional story?), of *conceptualizazion* (what are the main aspects that must be introduced through narration?), of *actualization* (how can we present that specific problem today?), of *interpretation* (what possible meanings can be captured by the narrated events?) and, finally, of *metaphorization* (what images and signs must we create to express concepts and problems?)

The logical precision of the discussion, on which the community has spared no effort, becomes, in the narrative game, something which suggests: turning the world into the subjunctive mode while creating possible worlds moves the linguistic game into a territory where meanings are conveyed through fragments and in hidden ways, therefore violating the rules of logos that is founded on unity, cohesion, and consequentiality of formal reasoning that publicly shows premises and logical connections. Naturally, this does not mean that in narrating the *reason why* the logical structure is dissolved, permitting the free proliferation of all possible and a-logical meanings whose sole criterion of formulation is the free creativity of the individual or the group.

An experience of individual or group writing on shared themes is certainly not pure invention beyond the boundaries of meaning. There is a ‘fair’ fiction that does not weaken the principle of non-contradiction, but moves it onto a plane on which meanings and concepts find it possible to express themselves through their co-existence with elements that are contradictory, discontinuous, apparently gratuitous and marginal according to normal logical procedures.

In formative terms, this means fostering a flexible and varied cognitive development, which is open to creative applications and – even more crucial – emotional experience. In the narration of the complexity of the world and of life, there is a fair fiction which is similar to truth and which has a character of necessity in the same way as the critical and rational thought which develops within an orderly and rigorous logical procedure. It is not the experience of a lesser truth, but of an imaginary truth that intersects the plane of its possibility with the planes of the factual issues to incorporate them according to a logic that is developed and completed within the time of the narration, according to a narrative way of thinking that opens new horizons of meaning.

4. Narration and Construction of the Self.

In the practice of P4C, the development of narrative thought becomes valuable both from for its ability to refine logical abilities and from the perspective of the processes for the construction of the Self and for the openness to the Other. Bruner wrote, "any new creative act can raise the man to a new dignity... since it is implicit, I believe that the creative act of a man is the act of a full man"[5] Bruner thus introduced the controversial debate that would involve the psychological disciplines: to overcome the traditional dualism between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, between heart and intellect, and so promoting the notion of man as a being gifted with wholeness.

In this scenario, the notion of intellect assumes new connotations[6]: thought does not end in syllogistic reasoning (the only 'strong' model of thought offered by the western philosophical tradition), but rather finds its fulfillment in the argumentative dimension. We witness thus a sort of relativization of the concepts of 'reason' (understanding) and 'knowledge': knowledge is in the world, in the relationships that interconnect it. Furthermore, the evolution of cognitive psychology and the latest advances of the neurosciences have allowed us to appreciate the value of emotion and the emotional context within the cognitive process in a new way. Since, as suggested by Vygotskij, language is both an instrument and the expression of thinking, it seems extremely restrictive to apply pure formal logic, which founds the proof of validity of reasoning on deduction, to language; recent philosophical and psychological studies have confirmed that formal logic excludes from its evaluations all "aspects pertaining to the practice of logic, that is, what we do when we reason, think and discuss"[7].

This is the 'cognitive revolution' experienced in the last forty years by contemporary psychology: from the analysis of mental representations to the analysis of dialogical practices as a primitive and constitutional space of the processes of the construction of the Self.

> The Self, is not just inside you, but in the world … and in this sense is both public and private… The Self is actually shaped by interaction with the world, and is not something immutable; in other words, it is a product of the transactions and of the language… Our system of the Self is intrinsic and self-preserving, but we elaborate it and we reconstruct it with the purpose of maintaining and stabilising our relations with the world.[8]

Bruner defines the Self as a 'cultural function' that regulates and stabilises interpersonal relations, characterized by the same constituting elements of a story laid out according to the most classical narrative structures.

> Recall that a story, canonically defined by Burke for fiction, by Hayden White for the story and by Ricoeur in general, represents the interaction of the following components: a special Agent with some degree of freedom; an Action undertaken by the former with a Purpose whose achievement it pursues; Resources to carry out the challenge in an Environment that includes all the components with a presupposition of legitimacy, whose infringement will put things at stake[9].

Bruner reminds us that "changes in the narrative conventions may also alter our notion of possible Self… What becomes clear is that our concept of identity, as well as our ways of structuring our private experience of the Self, evolve in accordance with the changes of the narrative conventions"[10]. Memory and imagination lead to the narrative form that best unveils the possible constructions or evolutions of the Self: the autobiography becomes its privileged instrument, because it allows a meta-cognitive and retrospective research that brings us to contextualise our memories, moving beyond our personal story.

The need to narrate and listen to stories can be noticed in children's curiosity when speaking of their families, which is their most important life experience due to its self-referential nature. This autobiographical reflection and comparison with others' narratives become a fundamental way of reading one's present in the light of the past and in view of the future. Children start quite early to know the world of narration, both from the receptive and productive sides: they talk, listen, interiorise, and re-elaborate what they hear and live. The writing gives them a new codification of knowledge in a systemic way, by formulating assertions that emphasize logical relationships[11].

Consequently, spoken and written language demand different skills: spoken language exhibits the flexibility that derives from the contextual negotiation of meanings and from the expectations of the interlocutor; written language claims a more explicit dimension: there is not room for ambiguity because it must enable the linguistic and logical instruments (assertions, argumentations, deduction, analyses) that lead to the construction of statements that help give a systemic appearance to the study disciplines.

When he/she is born, the child starts to be involved in a 'socialisation' process that, in an immediate way and without any mental effort, allows him/her to access the understanding of his/her (spoken) mother tongue. As soon as he has learned to read and write, he will be stimulated to activate specific cognitive skills that will affect his eventual cognitive style, that is, those meta-cognitive and logical-formal skills that characterize Western culture. Schooling teaches him to pay attention to the literal and explicit context of the message, without necessarily creating a link with his own experience, thus separating the external events from personal reactions.

> When the names cease to strictly adhere to their referents and become symbols, we can understand how meaning varies in relation to the speaker… the road to the autonomy of the symbolisation processes and to thinking in terms of possibility opens, because we make broad use of the language outside the immediate reference to the context, we often speak about things that are not immediately present, and we communicate in an ever more articulated symbolic manner[12].

In reading, imagination is driven by its own notion of the Self, which tries to find aspects in the narrative that it can identify with. The processes of initiation to reading and writing go hand in hand and cannot be separated:

> learning to read and write is not a sudden and mysterious event, but rather the result of a long path that children begin long before going to school. Therefore, it is not a sharp transition from one state of unawareness to a state of awareness… The so-called 'exploration' of reading and of writing happens when children overcome the hurdle of the *code*, when they understand that each symbol of writing corresponds to a sound smaller than the syllable[13].

The act of spontaneous written production we ask of a child during his school experience must be considered a complex cognitive activity. Research by Hayes and Flower emphasizes some basic steps that are common to all written production: 1) the planning of ideas as a result of the organization of the materials according to a sequentiality criterion; 2) the construction of complete sentences; 3) the review and correction of the text according to orthographical, syntactical and lexical conventions. The approach to the narration and to the reading should be, first and foremost, a pleasure. Reading itself gives a pleasure that is peculiar to the architecture of our mind, and that derives from the thought process. It is a pleasure that springs from two main fonts: the identification of known, familiar elements in the text with which one's Self finds an affinity, and the encounter with new elements.

Indeed, the critical dimension of literacy has to do with the socially constructed nature of all human practices and meaning systems. One of the main aspects of critical literacy is a matter of understating texts in relation to contexts – to appreciate their meaning, the meaning they need to make in order to be appropriate, and what it is about given contexts of practice that makes for appropriateness or inappropriateness of particular ways of reading or writing. From our perspective, in P4C this aspect of literacy is emphasized in the specific mode of the relationship between argumentative and narrative thought. The critical dimension of literacy is one of the possible bases for ensuring that members of a community of philosophical inquiry can not merely participate in a practice and make meanings within it, but can in various ways transform and actively produce it. So creativity, critical thinking and critical literacy go hand in hand towards an original formative experience.

Notes

[1] Gadamer

[2] Wittgenstein

[3] Wittgenstein

[4] Gadamer

[5] Bruner 1973

[6] Bruner

[7] M. Santi, *Ragionare con il discorso*, La Nuova Italia, Firenze, 1993

[8] J. S. Bruner, *The self across Psychology: self-recognition, self-awareness and sel-concept* tratto da 'Annals of The York Academy of Science,' vol. 818, 1997 (ed. J.Snodgrass - R. Thompson).

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Olson 1977

[12] C. & M. Pontecorvo, *Psicologia dell'educazione*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1986

[13] Ibid.

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