

Assessment of Philosophy for Children (P4C) in Catalonia

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Philosophy for Children (P4C) has been working in Catalonia for more than 25 years, under the name *Filosofia 3/18*. GrupIREF, as the teachers' non-profit organisation, has adapted and translated P4C curriculum into Catalan. GrupIREF has also developed other P4C programs. Nowadays, more than 200 schools work with this educative proposal. In 2012, The *Consell Superior d'Avaluació de Catalunya* and the ICE (from the University of Barcelona), with the assistance of GrupIREF, have developed research to assess this large practice.

P4C is an educational proposal for kindergarten, primary school and high school. Its main objectives are the development of the students' thinking skills, the awareness of the intellectual heritage they have, and the improvement of their abilities to participate in a democratic society.

Today, we have a large and systematic curriculum. It is focussed on the general wish of teaching thinking skills, through the Community of Inquiry methodology in order to encourage critical, creative and caring thinking.

P4C has philosophy discipline at its core.

Traditional philosophy has always focused on a specific group of ideas considered to be very important for human life and human knowledge.

These ideas include justice, truth, goodness, beauty, the world, personal identity, time, friendship, freedom and community, among others.

An idea that regulates this proposal is that reasoning is probably the most important feature of an educated person. Democracies need to boost this, as they don't work well when people tend to be irrational.

The objective is not to turn students into philosophers, but to turn them into citizens with the ability to make decisions and anticipate the consequences of their actions and be more thoughtful, considerate and reasonable.

The conceptual background of P4C is the history of philosophy itself: the questions and ideas that have been (and still are) part of the philosophical reflection. For example, What is a good argument? How can we tell if a statement is true or false? What does being beautiful mean?, or in Kant terms: What can we know? What can we do? What can we expect?

Commemorating the 25 years of experience, it was considered that a broad and institutional supported study was needed, including the opinion from experts, teachers and management teams from the schools where the Filosofia 3/18 has been put into practice. For this reason a broad and deep assessment has been done. It takes into account four aspects: interviewing experts in philosophy, didactics and ethics; surveying schools in which the project is being practiced (asking management teams and teachers); and, finally, interviewing some schools that have been working P4C curriculum and methodology for many years and have become good references of its practice.

Aims of the research

The aim of this research is to assess the practice of P4C in different schools of Catalonia and the Balearic Islands.

In the following part, we present a summary of the research results presented by the Assessment Board of Departament d'Ensenyament de la Generalitat de Catalunya, in April 2012.

The assessment takes into account the following points:

1. Educational potential of P4C

- It empowers reasoning as a basic skill through accuracy, argumentation and conversation.
- It encourages students to read and talk, thoughtfully and critically. The students get used to asking for and giving reasons for their point of view.
- The students see themselves playing a leading role in their learning process.
- It promotes the skills of drawing conclusions, troubleshooting, giving examples and counterexamples.
- In the viewpoint of social skills, the project fosters that one matter can be seen from different points of view. It also fosters emotion management and the value of respect as a part of a conversation.
- It develops a sense of tolerance, the ability to listen to others and going through a conversation.
- It improves the pupils' self-esteem and the group's cohesion.
- Almost 90% of the teachers acknowledges that P4C fosters students' personality-building process.

2. Innovative potential of the project P4C

According to experts:

- The project bases itself on the constructivist and active learning.
- It has an up-to-date methodology.
- The results from the students are innovative themselves.
- It is still innovative to ask the group of students to form a circle to maintain a deliberation on ethical matters as a group.
- The project is considered to be open and there is the possibility to add new materials.

3. Applicability in the Catalan school reality.

- The project's aims are substantial enough to be put into practice in different cultural environments. The materials are flexible and can be easily adapted.
- A large number of schools (very different from one another) integrate the project P4C in their EP.

4. Characteristics of P4C curriculum

- P4C curriculum is considered to be necessary, pertinent, clear, systematic and efficient. It also makes easier the planning and the evaluation.
- Narrative novels stimulate reflective thinking. It is also considered as an essential mean to from a particular to universal.
- The stories fascinate students, but perhaps some of them should be revised. It is acknowledged that they are very dense and training is needed to work with them.
- The guides are very useful, as they give some clues, suggestions and encouragement.
- Planning the sessions is not simple because teachers cannot anticipate what is going to happen and which interest students will raise.

5. Reasons to work with P4C and expectations

The main reasons provided to put the P4C into practice are:

The lack of reflective thinking and reasoning among students (75% of teachers and 82% of management teams agree or totally agree).

Poor oral communication (57% of teachers and 54% of management teams agree or totally agree).

The need of respectful relationships (35% of the teachers and 47% of management teams agree or totally agree).

6. Results of practicing P4C in the school

Improving reasoning

Most teachers said they agree in the following matters (in order of intensity):

- Students are more capable to find reasons for their opinions (94%)

- They show more respect for other students' ideas (92%)
- They participate more constructively, creatively and carefully (92%)
- They have more flexible opinions (87%)
- They improve listening and speaking skills:

Specific substantial improvements in comprehension and speaking skills:

- They analyse the meaning of the concepts more deeply (72%)
- They use more accurate words (60%)
- They speak more carefully (58%)
- Improved intellectual autonomy

Specific improvements in intellectual autonomy (in order of the percentage of agreement among teachers):

- They make better argument (90%)
- They make better judgements more often (73%)
- They give more examples and counterexamples (67%)
- They improved their democratic participation

Regarding the democratic participation, the specific improvements are:

- Students improve their ability to listen and talk to each other (87%)
- They are more capable of going through a conversation (86%)

Regarding students' responsibility, the specific improvements are:

- They build upon their ideas more (79%)
- They reassert or correct their own opinions more often (77%)
- They accept their own mistakes easier and review their opinions (72%)
- Improved social skills
- They are more tolerant towards other students' opinions (88%)
- They participate more often and more seriously (85%)
- They communicate and investigate more collaboratively and cooperatively (82%)
- They make better observations (82%)

- They help each other and cooperate more often (81%)
- They show more respect towards their classmates (78%)
- They think more seriously about their speeches before asking for permission to speak (78%)
- They have higher self-esteem (78%)

7. Proper training

87 % of Teachers and management teams agree or totally agree

3% Disagree or totally disagree about:

- More teachers' training sessions are needed.
- Teachers' trainers are a good support and strengthen their motivation
- Some of them also think that P4C improves their personal development.

8. P4C's General contributions to education

- Improves students' reasoning (94%)
- Contributes to their personality building process (88%)
- Educates emotionally (85%)
- Contributes to develop citizenship and democracy awareness (82%)
- Through its content and strategies, P4C takes into account the students' diversity, (79%)

9. Proposed evaluation in P4C: Figure-analogical evaluation

Teachers' opinion regarding the evaluation in the project terms

Agree/ totally agree

- Evaluation is useful to improve the practice 79%
- It is easy to follow the instructions to evaluate the sessions 64%
- The figure analogical evaluation is practiced 61%
- Students evaluate themselves more rigorously 61%

10. Situations that can attempt P4C 's success according to management teams

- The lack of continuity in teaching staff (68%)
- The lack of specific curricular periods (48%)
- Scheduling problems (39%)
- An excessive number of students in each group class(33%)
- The lack of proper spaces (20%)

You can find the entire text in catalan:

- GrupIREF <http://www.grupiref.org/cat/informe.htm>
- The Departament d'Ensenyament. Generalitat de Catalunya. [Document](#)