



Big Picture and Little Pixel Thinking

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Listening to the voices of children

A famous study in the UK

found that 4-year-olds ask on average 20 – 30 questions an hour,

but this figure drops dramatically when they go to school.

Young Children Learning, Tizard and Hughes (1984)

Is that still true and, if so, why?

Does your own experience tend to confirm this finding?

Which of these possible reasons seems the strongest to you?

- 1. there are just more children in school than at home*
- 2. children are frightened to speak in large groups*
- 3. the curriculum does not allow enough time for children's questions*

My argument for change in education

1. *Things are changing fast for us, both as individuals and as societies.*

2. *To cope well with change we certainly need to gain in knowledge, but we also need to gain in **wisdom**.*

3. *“The development of the general ability for **independent thinking and judgement** should always be placed foremost, not the acquisition of special knowledge.”*

(Albert Einstein)

“Life is really simple, but we insist on complicating it.”

(Kung Fu Tzu)

I do believe that many important questions have simple answers, e.g:

How to be successful in life?

*“Success depends upon previous preparation,
and without such preparation there is sure to be failure.”* (Kung Fu Tzu)

But, alas, many simple answers are not so simple.
We have to ask further, more precise, questions, e.g:

What counts as success in life?
For what exactly should we prepare?
Is preparation a single act or many?

The success of P4C (Philosophy for Children / Colleges / Communities)

*“No programme I am aware of is more likely to teach durable and transferable thinking skills than **Philosophy for Children.**”*

(Robert Sternberg, Former President of the American Psychological Association)

How is this success achieved?

Again, the answer is simple in one way and complicated in another!

The simple answer is that its central practice - **the Classroom Community of Philosophical Inquiry** – is a model pedagogy for the 21st Century.

Now to complicate things again!

Classroom Communities of Philosophical Inquiry

draw on modern research in **educational psychology** (especially Vygotsky's theories) to enhance the ancient **discipline of philosophy** (especially Socrates' practices).

Philosophical inquiry gives students the best practice in 'yo-yoing' between

'BIG PICTURE' questioning and reasoning
and **'little pixel' questioning and reasoning.**

This capacity to think in ever more detail, whilst not losing sight of their overall aims, enables students to be better prepared for school tests, but also for their careers and for life in general.

Philosophy's big, enduring questions

How can I make the best choices for my life?

How can we make the best of our lives together?

How often do these questions come up in your own lives?

Back to P4C's simple aims

“The aim of a thinking skills program such as P4C is to help children become more thoughtful, more reflective, more considerate and more reasonable individuals.”

- Philosophy in the Classroom, p. 15



Matthew Lipman
(1924 - 2010)

Philosophical Teaching rather than Teaching Philosophy



Ann Margaret Sharp on P4C

*“Philosophy for Children aims not only to strengthen
good **reasoning, inquiry and concept-formation***

*but to cultivate an **intellectual and social virtue,***

to bring about the transformation of persons

*into more **reasonable individuals** committed to
the creation of a **reasonable world.***

*Another way of saying this is to say that
Philosophy for Children aims at the **cultivation of wisdom.**”*

Ann Margaret Sharp

Lipman's Summary of Philosophy for Children



“The approach that I have created in Philosophy for Children is not about prescribing any one philosophy to children,

but about encouraging them to develop their **own philosophy**, their own **way of thinking** about the world.

It is about giving the youngest of minds the opportunity to **express ideas** with confidence and in an environment where they feel **safe to do so.**”

Matthew Lipman (2009) *A Life Teaching Thinking*

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