



The Legitimacy of Didactic Philosophizing for Children in Light of the Digital Revolution

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Received: May 8, 2024

Reviewed: Aug 18, 2024

Accepted: Sep 1, 2024

Abstract

The cognitive and digital explosion in Western thought makes it imperative to reflect on the project of creating a young philosopher, by anchoring a strategy to establish critical thinking from childhood—in Algerian society. This approach reflects the sociocultural orientations of the learner, where the teacher plays a crucial role in shaping the child's consciousness, while addressing the challenges that hinder this process. For this, it is crucial to exploit Western experiences such as that of Matthew Lipman in the United States and Michel Tozzi in France. Algeria has the potential to become a model in the didactic, pedagogical, and cognitive foundations of philosophy for children. The philosophical project aims to develop critical thinking according to criteria of truth and falsity, by encouraging a culture of questioning based on children's skills and orientations. It is also about opening specific educational programs for children and improving their performance based on the principles of philosophy: problems, understanding, argumentation.

Keywords: Educational Programs in Algeria, Philosophy from Childhood, Digital Revolution, Critical Thinking, Didactic Philosophy

Recommended citation:

Fadhila, M. (2024). The Legitimacy of Didactic Philosophizing for Children in Light of the Digital Revolution. *International Journal of Kurdish Studies* 10 (2), 431-444,

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21600/ijoks.1530074>

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Introduction

Philosophical didactics aims to overcome the cognitive and methodological obstacles that hinder the learning process. Thus, it continually strives to improve its teaching and didactic performance, both in subject matter and method. With the global explosion of digital knowledge, it has become essential to think about a specific area of didactics: the teaching of philosophy to young children. This prepares future generations for a culture of questioning, refusing the system of pre-established answers, favoring modern teaching based on efficiency, contextualization of problems and philosophical argumentation. These educational data are strong justifications that intensify the efforts of educational philosophy for a particular type of education for young people. Algeria, like other Arab countries, has the necessary qualifications to localize this project and offer an innovative experience in this area that is far from repetition, immobility, and the routine, by focusing on the philosophical spirit inside the classroom.

Research Problem

The central question that we seek to address is the following: If there is an experience of teaching philosophy to children in Algeria, can it be effective in the educational field? And, what obstacles would turn this project into an apparent failure? Or has the digital revolution already played a crucial role in its crystallization? This study aims to answer these questions by following an in-depth analytical approach—a methodology comprising of an introduction, exposition, and conclusion.

A Philosophical “Child Project”

In this study, we will address the nature of philosophy within children, and its limits. It is well known that children naturally tend to ask surprising questions, which should be encouraged and developed rather than ridiculed. Social settings that stimulate these questions in children help secure their ideas and strengthen their intellectual immunity. Fostering critical thinking and its development is a major issue for those who engage in philosophy for children, working to orient and mature their minds. Children have intellectual needs as important as their biological needs, and it is therefore crucial to take both into account:

After a child’s questioning is initially confined to their family, their inquiries merge with those of new friends from diverse and varied backgrounds. Thus, questions evolve into a

series of inquiries and responses that enrich children's minds. The convergence and collision of these questions create a positive impact, enriching discussions aimed at exploring multiple answers. This undoubtedly expands the scope within which the human mind operates (Bani Amer, 2021:62). The process of preparing a child to philosophize and encouraging him to do so requires certain essential conditions, such as encouraging him to ask age-appropriate questions and expand his thinking. This initiative, aimed at anchoring philosophy in children, has an educational dimension, by cultivating healthy thinking and reasoning principles. It is a Western project supported by the American philosopher Matthew Lipman,* who advocates teaching children philosophy and developing their critical and moral thinking:

. . . what we can truly do for children is to teach them to think critically. If we are serious about teaching students to think, we must do so responsibly. This means providing them with reasoning practices through discussions that take place in classrooms and that include concepts shared by all subjects, not just those specialized in a particular topic. We believe that it is philosophy alone that can truly enable us to do this effectively (Lipman, 1988).

It is time to adopt the French and American experiences while preserving the cultural specificity of Algerian society. The model is not strictly philosophical but aims to establish a thoughtful education that cultivates philosophical thinking in an accessible way while respecting educational characteristics, such as the transition from concrete to abstract and from simple to complex. We teach to think rather than just convey ideas, which we mean by the "Little Philosopher's Project":

The goal of philosophy is to develop thinkers, which cannot be accomplished through the mere acquisition of skills. Our goal is not only to sharpen students' abilities for critical analysis, but also to make the dramatic intellectual life, allowing these students to form a community of critical inquirers capable of discussing ideas of common interest. Thus, children will become independent and rational thinkers through this shared reflection (Lipman, 1988).

* Matthew Lipman (1922-2010) was an American philosopher, educator, and founder of the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC) in New Jersey, USA, established in 1974.

Teaching children critical thinking means guiding them in an engaging way to master healthy thinking skills, distinguish right from wrong, compare, and develop logical reasoning while meeting their emotional and psychological needs. This is achieved through workshops that use active learning and educational methods through play, despite their lack of self-awareness at this age. The child is a malleable material capable of generating various ideas, without aiming to impose doctrines on their education and thinking. Stimulating critical thinking through the exercise of questioning and thinking is essential to meet current economic, social and digital demands, and to adapt children to complex socio-cultural developments. Thus, the philosophical presence has become essential in philosophical cafés, school education and artistic education.

The expansion of philosophical teaching for children has become urgent. The principles on which competency-based teaching is based find their legitimacy in pragmatist philosophy, fueled by democratic systems and globalization. This requires training a new generation according to the proposed model, which was designed in the 1960s in the United States by Matthew Lipman. Algeria is constantly seeking to improve its education system and adapt to global challenges, exploring experiments that ‘philosophize, wake up and awaken your minds, and let others philosophize, may God bless you’ (Al-Nashar, 2010:32). This approach focuses on the practice of philosophy for children, taking up Kant's idea that one should not teach philosophy, but learn to philosophize. Thus, this project has become a must for any educational institution whose objective is to promote childhood, by developing the teaching of philosophy among children. Algeria is one of the countries committed to this path.

2. Didactic in the Teaching of Philosophy to Children

The key element to consider is the role of the teacher in the educational process. It is essential to focus on the teachers’ education and training. This would make it possible to intensify research in this area and overcome learning difficulties encountered with children. In addition, it is necessary to develop programs adapted to the age of children and promote research on the teaching of philosophy. It is necessary for state institutions and teachers to work together to stimulate the intellectual abilities of learners and encourage critical thinking.

It is time for Algeria to integrate this teaching into educational programs and curricula. Philosophy must be seen as an essential and fundamental subject. Indeed, it shapes the child's personality and refines his behavior. We must therefore encourage this teaching:

What is regrettable is the total absence of this teaching in the Arab world. There is no center dedicated to teaching philosophy to children. This raises questions, especially since Arab philosophers addressed fundamental questions in the Middle Ages, which are still studied today, notably on the relationship between reason and faith. This should encourage the creation of such centers in Arab countries and the introduction of philosophical education for young people as quickly as possible (Malik, 2016:103).

In the total absence of this type of teaching for young people, it would at least be possible to reserve sessions at school aimed at building the individual and making philosophy an educational mission instilled from younger age. This would make philosophy present, even in a simple way. This is how the foundation phase of philosophical teaching based on dialogue and the art of questioning begins. This founding moment would make it possible to achieve the following objectives:

1. Development of thinking skills.
2. Using generation as an effective method for discovering ideas in depth.
3. Encouragement of independent thinking in the learner (Belaalam, 2009:15-16).

This means that the most motivating way to teach philosophy is to transform it into a Socratic moment and an educational method. In Algeria, this involves practicing reflection at school and promoting critical thinking based on questioning, dialogue and argumentation. To clarify, it is necessary to set up workshops to achieve this educational objective, which has become a major issue in schools, while drawing inspiration from other experiences.

Thus, learning in the philosophical domain is based on stimulating the learner to think and discover truths from within, rather than passively receiving them from outside sources (Belaalam, 2009:13).

This method of learning is called Maieutics. Maieutics means awakening the child's mind, recognizing his right to develop independent thinking. It is the right to think and express one's inclinations freely. Philosophy is necessary because the child naturally philosophizes by asking questions like "Why were we created?" or "Who is God?" Accordingly, educational support and supervision are necessary.

The art of dialogue can be formulated as follows: The art of asking questions requires the art of dialogue, which leads to the formation of a childlike curiosity capable of philosophizing. This depends on training in philosophy and encouraging the acquisition of educational skills.

According to Lipman:

Methods of teaching philosophy to children include seven stories that take into account major philosophical questions on one side, and the age of the children on the other side. Each story is accompanied by a book for the teacher, which reinforces the children's knowledge through dialogue, and contains various exercises which are non-binding suggestions (Malik, 2016:100).

The first approach begins with teaching through stories that contain philosophical questions appropriate to the children's ages. Jean Piaget, in his work on cognitive psychology and development, stated:

The age at which the child begins to use logical thinking is twelve years old. At this age, the child can formulate hypotheses and engage in deductive and inductive reasoning. Importantly, these mental operations do not require physical objects to be present; they occur at a cognitive level (Piaget & Inhelder, 2004:103-120).

This method focuses on the child's mental age and the type of stories, particularly the phrasing of questions that stimulate and motivate learning, as mentioned previously.

According to Lipman, the objective of this is to develop the art of questioning, to strengthen philosophical problematization at school, and to promote the story and its narrative role. It also

aims to create harmony between children and the story and then practice persuasion through dialogue as a tool.

The second method can be summarized as follows:

Specific tasks are distributed among learners and, sometimes, intellectual demands with a philosophical bent (such as problematization, conceptualization and argumentation) are asked of them. This proposed innovation in the teaching of philosophy at the nursery and primary education levels is accompanied by socialization and research (Malik, 2016: 101).

Each method complements the other. The dialogue is nourished by problematization, conceptualization and philosophical argumentation. However, it is important to respect the age of the child, while preserving their cultural specificity. We must focus on history as an educational tool that contributes to the construction of one's personality and psychological balance. This allows the child to become a fulfilled person, capable of expressing himself democratically and respecting civic values, by fulfilling his duties and taking possession of his own rights.

The teacher should propose a topic that interests the participants. The teacher then expresses his desire to know the opinion of the children, who have ten minutes to give their opinion using a talking stick, in the presence of the teacher who remains silent. The session is recorded and then listened to by the group, with the possibility for the learners to intervene at any time to again express their opinion (Malik, 2016:104).

These methods should be followed in any project aimed at teaching philosophy to children, which should be done with a belief in their thirst for knowledge. Curiosity is the path to spontaneous philosophy. All philosophers support this idea, recognizing that children have an inherent capacity for learning. Concerning the cultivation of the imagination, it is certain that children have an incredible capacity to imagine. This capacity must be nourished and expanded by stories, but it must also be guided by rules. Children's imagination should not be left inactive (Kant, 2005).

The goal of this project is to locate an Algerian project that embraces critical thinking. All the components of reflection are present. Although the child in Algerian school implicitly studies reflection, self-esteem, freedom of expression and tolerance as values, he must express them publicly in the form of a workshop. Then, thinking mechanisms such as analysis, synthesis and comparison are brought into play. Thus, the child passes from innate philosophy to real philosophy. The question remains as to how to bring thought into the public sphere.

Lipman notes:

We find no place for reason in the curriculum and we wonder why the principles of thought are not taught like the principles of sexuality? Why don't we take care of the child's mind as we take care of his body? He also believes that children are treated as incapable of philosophical thought, although they continually ask questions. Yet we keep them away from philosophy and neglect their love of knowledge (Al-Nashar, 2018:296).

These incentives encourage teaching philosophy to the child by developing critical thinking and focusing on everyday issues, while connecting philosophy to the external environment.

The Algerian Practice of Teaching Philosophy to Children: Between Realization and Non-realization

At this point, the Algerian child has an innate ability to think, based on the practice of dialogue, the art of attentive listening and discussion. Thus, we can say that Algeria, through its various educational subjects such as civic education, history and geography, strengthens the spirit of citizenship and carries out communication action, while anchoring the values of peace and tolerance. The child philosophizes without even realizing it, that is to say he philosophizes outside the framework of philosophy. These are collective and participatory philosophical activities open to other sciences, which used all the psycho-pedagogical data and the philosophy of education. With this system, it is necessary to officially announce the project of teaching philosophy to children in a country that has all the assets. It is therefore necessary to introduce new missions for the school:

These are the missions of the school and its educational challenges, which place through the culture of the question and forms on the one hand, and the creation of the community of research on the other hand, the meaning of knowledge and social links and political relations at the center of learners' learning (Tousiz, 2016).

It is therefore necessary for the Algerian education system to take the above development into account. However, it is enough to address ethical and political issues as mentioned previously. The Algerian experience is pioneering in this area, particularly with regard to civil education and the rooting of the concept of identity. We must intensify training in the field of critical thinking and create a climate favorable to this by encouraging free dialogue which establishes respect for the opinions of others; philosophy is multiple and varied. Accordingly, "Learning to philosophize from a young age is possible; and even very desirable for philosophical, political, ethical and educational reasons" (Qusha, 2009:43).

This project stimulates independent thinking and develops critical and skills in reflection in children. We believe that Algeria should present a paradigm that serves as an example to Arab countries and in addition to benefit from the experiences of pioneering Western countries in this area. There is also a need for further research in the arena of values, modernity and post-modernity, coexistence and human rights. This experience gives the young learner an active feeling of belonging to the society in which he is situated through understanding its positions and ideas, and by realizing the solidity of the argument. This develops in him a sense of responsibility, helping him to face the various problems of his daily life and he is able to propose practical solutions: "Thus, reflection based on oneself supposes a journey of return to oneself which problematizes, understands and argues rationally. "This is philosophizing" (Qusha, 2009:15).

Algeria, in the educational field, has expressed its experience by emphasizing the political aspect and the concept of the model citizen. Currently, primary schools use theater to reinforce the spirit of citizenship. Perhaps this is in reaction to negative prejudices which consider philosophy to be reserved for men and children, while women are unfit to philosophize. However, this deprives the child of an essential quality that he possesses: critical and independent thinking. Practicing

dialogue opens the way for the child to freedom of expression and the rejection of violence in all its forms. To quote al-Layeq and Baskin:

Teaching philosophy to children enables them to comprehend the significance of the various life experiences they encounter. This addresses both their minds and their hearts... This is why reflection from the first steps is the basis on which progress and diversity in education are based. It is therefore essential to focus on building healthy, logical and free thinking in today's education (Al-Layeq & Baskin, 2019:596).

We can say that the present project is nothing more than preparatory in anticipation that the child will participate in making simple decisions, and have a basis for future intellectual independence. Another technique to achieve this is to employ entertaining and engaging stories, where the child feels enjoyment and the desire to go on with stories of this kind, such as in investigation or in a research group. This concept is derived from John Dewey, who aims to build a thinking system and strengthen intellectual judgment, and starts with his vision of the research group. . . in the investigation group, a story passes through three stages: first reading, where roles are distributed among the children and each child reads their role aloud (feeling a sense of belonging to the group). The second stage involves presenting ideas and questions noticed by the children during the reading (selecting an idea and judging its suitability). The third stage involves discussing ideas, questions, and even topics that may arise during the discussion (Al-Layeq & Baskin, 2019:599).

The Algerian education system should pay particular attention to the child, because he is the man of tomorrow. He has to develop his thinking so that he feels a sense of belonging to the group, that he is an integral part of the problem he is experiencing, with all his emotions; and that he is an active member with rights and duties in a participatory framework that recognizes the individual and others, in a spirit of peaceful coexistence and living together.

We can say that Algeria has an experience, but it is incomplete and poorly defined, tinged with a political-ethical color studied in the social sciences. It is therefore necessary to make it public according to our cultural specificity, to respect religion, and to use modern technologies to show

their effectiveness in activating the teaching of philosophy in children. In the forthcoming chapter, we will explore this topic in depth.

The Digital Revolution and the Teaching of Philosophy among Children as a Cognitive Challenge

The teaching of philosophy always aspires to improve the level of performance of the child. It therefore looks for a practical means that serves its objectives and achieves a cognitive skill consisting of preparing a child capable of philosophizing. Technology represents the most stimulating means for learning the mechanisms of philosophical thought. This means finding a method that encourages them to think for themselves from early childhood, an issue that raises questions about their ability to philosophize and tackle intellectual topics. However, this requires an integration of the educational process, that is to say the didactic triangle: teacher, learner, cognitive subject.

Technology enhances the educational process through advancements in all its forms, adding a narrative and enjoyable dimension. By harnessing technology positively, children are encouraged to explore the unknown and pose critical and thought-provoking questions. Al-Baghdadi says:

For instance, reflective teaching, where students preview course content at home and use class time for discussion and interaction, exemplifies this approach. Technology's visual and cinematic capabilities effectively consolidate and elucidate ideas, surpassing the limitations of traditional paper-based methods (Al-Baghdadi, 2014:65).

Al-Baghdadi's above comment leads us to improve the cognitive development of the child at a sensitive stage that requires special attention from educational personnel and even the family, despite the complexity of the subject, especially with regard to thinking about thinking itself, which is the summit of thought, given the subject's lack of intellectual maturity. However, the activation of the educational process for this particular type of teaching has led specialists in childhood didactics to innovate more effective means.

Fortunately, the Internet has made it possible to keep up with the latest developments in the world in a reasonable way and to quickly connect with other educators interested in children's philosophy. Unfortunately, many websites do not last long, but you can check the Internet Resources section below for reliable sites that may offer links to useful sites (Pritchard, 2018:19-20). Any authentic didactics must adapt its teaching to the spirit of the times, such as technology and the use of critical scientific epistemological approaches. It is therefore necessary to adopt a strategy with an education system that respects contemporary transformations and their developments. Knowledgeable societies place great importance on teaching and learning, creating a direct connection between them and these tools to achieve high quality, organize ideas, refine personality and achieve harmonious balance for a conscious individual of its specificities and following the Islamic religion according to the principle of diversity and cohesion. This new culture focuses on the image, the screen and the caricature, which helps to bring understanding closer and simplify the culture of the issue. Given that the era of the image has supplanted the era of written text, the Algerian experience must prioritize ongoing research within its educational systems. Specifically, teaching philosophy to children has become an ethical imperative, highlighting the crucial role of philosophy in this context.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be stated that the Algerian education system is endeavoring to reform itself through the implementation of digitalization and information technology for teaching philosophy to children. This nascent project aims to implement such didactics. What we can deduce from it is that philosophical thought, in general, must devise effective methods and approaches tailored to the socio-cultural composition of Algerian society.

Adopting the philosophical mindset is essential for both the teacher and the learner. It also depends on the role of the teacher who must train the child to philosophize. Therefore, by developing his abilities to practice critical and interrogative thinking, reflecting a philosophical spirit rather than withdrawal, he achieves adaptation to the outside world. This activates dialogue, promoting belief in cultural diversity and democracy under the principle of “Let him think, let him speak.”

Philosophy must therefore abandon its abstractions for a flexible and simple pedagogy, maintaining logical coherence according to the three philosophical processes (conceptualization, problematization, argumentation). Thus, the child experiences pleasure in philosophizing.

Diversifying teaching paths and methods is essential to improve this type of teaching. This topic requires even more study, research and support from parents, government and educational staff. Investing in the minds of children represents a positive asset for realizing man's humanity and his independence, thus strengthening his spirit of belonging to the State, enshrining values of tolerance and acceptance of others. It is the intellectual ferment of the future that serves as the vital reservoir of society, ensuring its cohesion and advancement.

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