

Is it Really a Question of Preference?

Philosophy Specific or Non-Philosophy Specific Teaching Materials

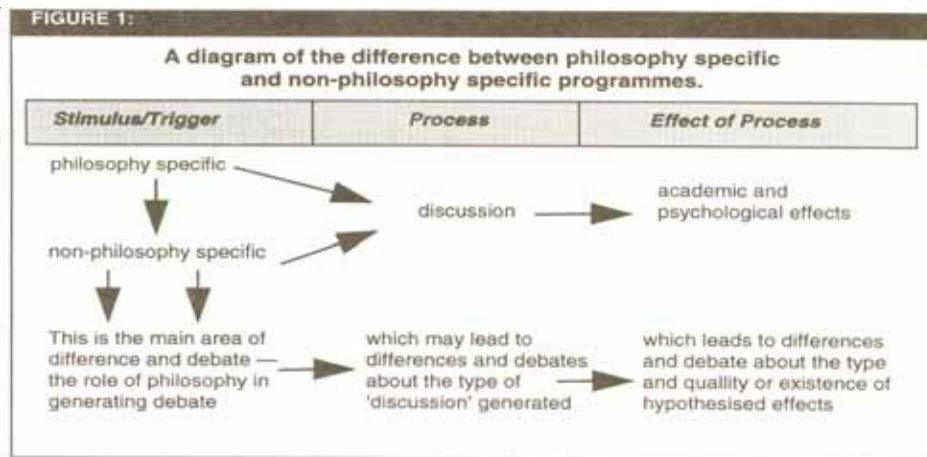
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Joyce I. Korczak Fields

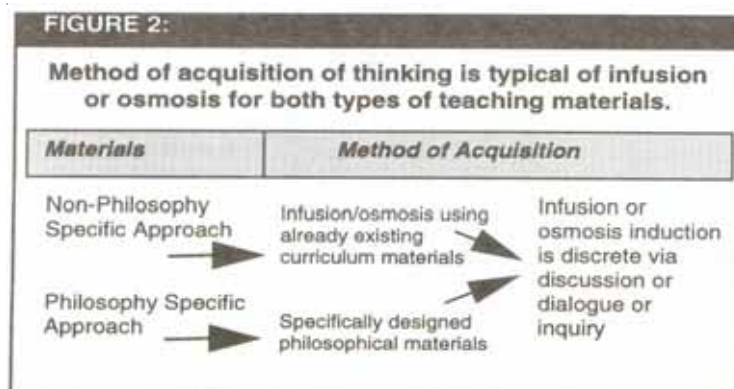
With the upsurge of interest in using philosophy with children since Matthew Lipman's visit in 1989 and the British Broadcasting Corporation television transmission of the programme *The Transformers*, there has developed a strongly contested debate as to the types of teaching materials most suitable for use in the United Kingdom. The debate centres around which teaching materials offers the most effective approach to ensure the enhancement of learning outcomes of the participants within the *community of inquiry* setting.

In order to distinguish between the types of teaching materials I have made the distinction by using the terms *philosophy specific* teaching materials, referring to materials specifically written and embedded in philosophy, such as Matthew Lipman's programme *Philosophy for Children*. Further examples are Catherine McCall's *Laura and Paul* and *Changes*, and also Mike Lake's *Brill the Brave* (a novel designed with a British audience in mind). The *non-philosophy specific* teaching materials are primarily Karin Murriss [1992] and her use of children's story books, such as *Not Now Bernard*, and children's literature suggested by Tim Sprod [1993] in his book *Books into Ideas*. Sprod, in Australia, developed his ideas and materials independently of Murriss in the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, both Murriss and Sprod believe that it is equally effective and possibly more desirable for teachers to be able to use well-known popular published children's books, which are readily available within the classroom, as the stimuli for philosophical debate. Whereas, Lipman [1994], Sharp [1995] and McCall [1994] would argue for the preferred usage of novels specifically written and embedded with traditional philosophical ideas, concepts and conventions.

The following diagram outlines the differences being made between philosophy specific and non-philosophy specific approaches, detailing the perceived stimulus, the process and the learning outcomes and effects of the process.



Similarly, the preferred *pedagogy*, teaching technique, to be adopted needs to be clarified, i.e. what is taught and how it should be taught to be most effective. It would seem that in order for effective methods of acquisition of thinking skills, techniques typical of infusion or osmosis teaching methods are used by both types of approaches. Infusion or osmosis acquisition is whereby participants are exposed to discrete, yet a wide variety of experiential learning experiences, which are absorbed and transformed by the recipient. This type of acquisition of thinking processes demands *ownership* and a deliberate, conscious effort to be made by the respondent during and after discussions and debates decided upon within the community of inquiry. The following is a diagrammatic definition of the above.



Having very briefly outlined the perceived differences of teaching materials, and in order to give a foundational understanding to the problem and the subsequent research, it is helpful to detail the experimental design developed and executed, along with the underpinning rationale for specific elements within the design, such as repeated measurement of changes.

RESEARCH DETAILS

The current research arose out of a consideration as to the above briefly outlined debate. It seemed that it was essential to obtain answers to the claims made by both approaches, viz: exposure to their teaching materials enhances improvement in academic subject attainment; was there identifiable dif-

ferences between male and female students; was there identifiable differences as a function of socio-economic background; was there identifiable differences as a function of personality trait, and was there transfer of learning acquired from local thinking skills. If so, was it possible to identify the cause and effects to accurately account for the changes in the quality and depth of thinking?

Using quantitative research methodologies a repeated measures field study was designed with the following independent and dependent variables academic subjects; gender; socio-economic background; personality trait and transfer of learning tasks. Statistical analysis using Analysis of Variance and Analysis of Co-variance was executed on the dataset to obtain information related to any significant changes. Similarly, two separate questionnaires: *Computers in the Home* and *Philosophy*, were developed. To obtain data for changes in behaviour an independent observer conducted spot checks on the behaviours displayed in the school yard by randomly selected students in the experimental groups.

RESULTS

The volume of quantitative and qualitative data collected is vast and will take sometime to analyse. A concise yet precise statement of the results to-date is that the difference results were initially ranked on a group-by-group basis. This gives a clear overall picture of the position each experimental group achieves in the specific academic subject [see Figure 3]. This numerical calculation gives the reader a *feel* for the possible results before more robust accurate statistical analysis were conducted.

Subsequently, the post-test and delayed post-test results for the experimental groups indicated that only philosophy specific groups had significant results in science, mathematics, reasoning and the transfer of learning tasks. None of the experimental groups under the conditions of non-philosophy specific or controls had significant results in any of the variables. Further, there was a significant correlation in

FIGURE 3:

Relative difference results ranked on a group-by-group basis.

	Group	Spelling	Reading	Reasoning	Science	Maths	English	Turtle	Mean
Phil [State]	1	3	3	1	1	1	1	2	1.7143
Phil [Priv]	4	4	2	6	4	2	6	1	3.5714
Non [State]	2	2	6	2	3	4	2	4	3.2857
Non [Priv]	5	1	1	7	7	7	7	6	5.1429
Con [State]	3	5	5	3	5	6	5	7	5.1429
Con [State]	6	6	4	5	6	5	4	5	5.0000
Con [Priv]	7	7	7	4	2	3	3	3	4.1429

the observed behaviour patterns of the students exposed to philosophy specific teaching materials, but none for the non-philosophy teaching materials. This result was found to be true under both kinds of socio-economic conditions: high and low family incomes. Based on the results of this research it was not

possible to up-hold entirely Lipman et al's claims as only certain areas proved to be significant. It was not possible to uphold any of the claims made for the use of non-philosophy specific teaching materials. This seems to be strong evidence that philosophy embedded ideas, concepts and conventions actively enhance the performance of participants

FIGURE 4:
Summary of Results after exposure to Philosophy specific and Non-Philosophy specific teaching materials

Test Results from	Experimental Condition Group		
	Philosophy	Non-Philosophy	Control
Exposure to teaching materials	Sig.	N.S.	N.S.
Gender	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.
Social Class	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.
Personality	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.
Independent Observer	Sig.	N.S.	N.S.
Teacher's Checklist	Sig.	N.S.	N.S.
Computers in the Home Questionnaire	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.
Philosophy Questionnaire	Sig.	Sig.	—

DISCUSSION OF UK DEBATE

Within a very short period of time a debate has developed in the UK, covering issues such as the use of which preferred children's stories and/or literature is claimed to be the more effective; the use of illustrations; elements within the training of the facilitator; issues of pedagogy; appropriate and inappropriate assessment and testing; and lastly, children *can* and do philosophise. It is intended in this article to briefly outline the main arguments within each of the identified areas of debate, as both camps, i.e. philosophy specific and non-philosophy specific, use stories as their catalyst for philosophy, but from a very different standpoint. This will be followed by a summary of my views based upon my extensive research.

[i] Preferred children's stories and/or literature

There is much controversy in the UK as to why children's literature should not be used in place of philosophy specific novels and philosophy specific teaching materials.

Whilst Lipman and Sharp [1978] are very dismissive of using existing children's literature, this is not upheld by Matthews [1993], who focuses on classical philosophical themes in children's books which are common in children's literature. Examples of philosophical themes in for instance, *The Bear That Wasn't* by Tashlin. He identifies themes, such as, a concept of knowledge, an understanding of reality - being and non-being. Matthews [1993] avocates that there are very good children's poems and stories that demand to be considered as purposeful resource materials for philosophical discussions. Whether these are or can be seen as truly philosophical as opposed to general discussion topics, Matthews does not state. Thus, if using these resources the onus would inevitably be upon the skills and understanding

of philosophy by the facilitator in order to gain maximum effect from their usage. Not all facilitators/teachers, however, would have such knowledge, expertise and experience.

In a similar vein, Doderer [1993] argues that fictional characters in stories such as Andersen's *The Emperor's New Clothes*; and Grimms' *Fairy Tales* provide the young emergent philosophers with different points of view to consider and relate to, through presenting a variety of controversial moral dilemmas, issues and incidents familiar to them through popular folklore.

Giving full support to this, Murriss argues that philosophy is not culture based. It supersedes society and class. This stance is also taken by Stephens [1992], in support of Murriss. He believes that authors/writers of children's literature inevitably give expression to and are influenced by the cultural interpretation of the social, moral, ethical and political values of that given society.

If this is true, surely the social, moral, ethical and political values of Western philosophy must differ from those of, say, Eastern philosophy! This stance validates my findings and concerns that in order to claim to be truly culturally free it is not only desirable but absolutely essential for the use of folklore, fairy tales and legends from other countries to be integrated within all types of philosophy with children. Participants from ethnic minorities or from other competing cultures, would then be enabled to identify with recognisable historically accurate and present day traditionally accepted themes, characters endemic within their heritage, as well as those of the authors. Restricting the power of the community of inquiry to the culture and society of the author would by necessity be less effective in a multicultural participatory discussion.

Contributing to this debate, Cam [1995] believes that one way of identifying books for use in the community of inquiry would be to use the criterium that any general question, issue or problem that does not look as if it could be settled simply by observation, by calculation, or by reference to established fact, should be explored through philosophical inquiry. If this criterium is accepted, then it presents the philosophy for children movement with the need for research to identify philosophical concepts and ideas. Then, placing such concepts and ideas into some stage of progression process of philosophical thought, because all too often teaching materials and resources are aimed at specific age ranges without regard for experiential learning prior or after the input. This is not good sound educational practice. There must be a continuum along which participants within the community of inquiry explore and develop quality thinking.

[ii] Illustrations

One of the central issues is whether or not illustrations should or ought to be incorporated in the teaching materials. Lipman *et al* [1980] appear to be arguing against themselves when responding to Egan's [1993] challenge for not allowing illustrations and pictures in their novels, because he feels that *the other side of the child's mind*, i.e. the imagination and the emotions, is neglected. Lipman [1988] does state that specifically written teaching materials should produce enthusiasm, excitement and a yearning

that invites reflection and inquiry through being emotionally stimulating. If imagination and emotions are inextricably intertwined, then the addition of visual imagery must add rather than detract from stimulating this liaison. From the evidence available, it would seem to imply that Lipman does not believe that children do not actively become involved when they are viewing pictorial representations of story-lines. The crux of the problem lies within the degree and/or the quality of involvement resources can generate. And according to Lipman et al this is best served through philosophy specific written novels.

Egan [1992] is adamant that creating pictures in books is an inferior activity, because such artists are interested only in their personal interpretation of what objects/characters ought to look like, or portraying a stylised cartoon, but not in what such objects/characters really are. He goes on to state that imagination is the capacity to think of something possibly being so, meaning that there should be no bounds to the horizons that the individual can explore. Whereas, Sharp [1991] concludes that the community of inquiry approach assumes that *meaning-making* is a dynamic social, historical and linguistic activity. The problem for me is that if she genuinely believes this to be so, why does she not argue for the use of illustrations. Why does she argue so strongly against the use of pictorial representations?

Whilst Lipman argues against illustrations in his novels, my research found that Lake's [1991] and Murriss' [1992b] illustrations stimulated and helped the participants to establish starting points and explore a wide variety of avenues. Especially Lake's *Brill the Brave*, where the illustrations conjure upon all sorts of imageries. These were very powerful, and thought-provoking, because they do not represent a *definitive postcard picture* of the text. They were springboards that allowed individual students to use their imagination to extract or add to their content and context.

Similarly, Graham [1990] referring to Bumingham's picture book *Grandpa* states that the life of the imagination or make-believe, merges with reality so easily in childhood. Thus, it gives direct access to and perhaps a better understanding of, for instance, the double page spread in *Grandpa* where the Grandfather's quite reasonable assumption that the brown soil which he is *eating* is chocolate ice-cream draws a strong rebuke from the small girl that: *It's not chocolate, it's strawberry.*

Graham [1990] cites Bettelheim, when she [Graham] is arguing the case that some picture books, such as *Where the Wild Things Are* by Sendak, are like giving a performance of a concerto without an orchestra. Because text and pictures can be so inter-dependent in some books, and others are not, Graham states that Bettelheim is against using illustrations mainly for the following reasons. Illustrated storybooks do not serve the child's best needs, because the illustrations are distracting rather than helpful. This assumption is based upon the results of studies of illustrated primers, which demonstrated the pictures diverge from the learning process rather than foster it. This conclusion was based on the fact that the illustrations directed the child's imagination away from his/her own experience and interpretation of the story-line. The illustrated story was robbed of much content of personal meaning, when the child applied only his/her own visual association to the story-line, instead of those of the illustrator. Graham prefers that the user exercises caution and discretion by exercising his/her own professional judgement.

Egan [1988, 1992] suggests that children's imagination are best served with incidents and issues that are not within their everyday experiences. He states that children on the whole enjoy gruesome bloodthirsty detailed films, frightening horror movies and similar books. Whilst such materials and books are attractive to many children for a variety of reasons, this type of content does not necessarily constitute philosophy, or stimulate philosophical debate, although there may be issues within them which a skilled facilitator can extrapolate. However, not all facilitators/teachers would have this ability, therefore, it would be considered a serious flaw in Egan's argument.

Obviously, Lake [1989] is very much in favour of illustrations as his book, *Brill the Brave*, used in my research, is wonderfully illustrated. As a professional psychologist and a trained philosopher, Lake would place his reason for offering illustrated books into Bruner's [1986] theory that human beings must use their imaginations in order to make sense of their experiences and the world in which they live. To him reasoning and imagination, stories and folklore are intrinsically intertwined in the whole being of a person. Bruner states that stories of literary merit are about events in a *real* world, but they render the world newly strange, rescue it from obviousness, fill it with gaps that call upon the reader, in Barthes's sense, to become a writer, a composer of a virtual text in response to the actual. In the end, it is the reader who must write for him/herself what he/she intends to do with the actual text.

Like Bruner [1986] Lake sees books and illustrations as inviting the reader to enter into a meaningful relationship. Such books, therefore, have two sides: a verbal aspect that guides reaction and prevents it from being arbitrary, and an affective aspect that is triggered or restructured by the language of the text. It is by responding to visual stimuli that human beings develop and create their individual understandings.

The arguments offered above are strong support for Murriss' [1992 b] contention that the use of selected picture books, video tapes and children's literature is preferable to teaching materials that do not have illustrations despite their philosophical pegs. In order for thought-provoking philosophical inquiry to take place, Murriss believes that the child's emotions and whole being must be stimulated. Whilst an admirable sentiment, the reality at the present time is that only a limited amount of books actually have video tapes to accompany them. And most of these are for designed for use with young children. This has obvious disadvantages as new refreshing materials cannot be introduced. Neither would the user be able to develop deeper understandings as most of the books cited by Murriss do not cater for juveniles. There are fewer older children's and young adults books and video tapes available.

In summary, my research found that Lake's and Murriss' illustrations stimulated and helped the pupils' imaginations. This stimulation of imagination in turn helped the children's dispositions towards enhancing their abilities in the discussions within the community of inquiry. This was especially true of Lake's *Brill the Brave*, where the illustrations conjured up all sorts of imageries. These were very powerful, and thought-provoking, because they do not represent a *definitive postcard picture* of the text. They allow individuals to use their imagination to extract or add to their content and context.

[iii] Role and Training of the facilitator

Another aspect of the current debate is that, Murriss claims any material can be used, thus she is adamant that the facilitator must have a philosophical background, and must have undergone training in philosophical inquiry. The picture books suggested are in the main already in classroom, and could be seen as an advantage as they are a cheap resource, and are readily available to many children. Like Lipman, Murriss provides teacher's instructional manuals that identify and develop philosophical ideas. However, time is needed to evaluate the usefulness of the materials, as well as to incorporate them into the curriculum implementation of the UK National Curriculum requirements. So this could be perceived as a disadvantage to using stimulating teaching materials.

Although Lipman does prefer the facilitator to be trained in his method, his approach using philosophy specific teaching materials, considerably lessens the need for the facilitator to have philosophical background. This is because of the philosophical content of his novels. It is argued that the work has been done by an expert, i.e., a professional philosopher with much experience and expertise has written the materials, therefore, it would seem by using such an approach the facilitator can change discussion into philosophical discussion. This assumption is based on the facts that the participants in the community of inquiry are emulating the characters in the novels and because of the many philosophical *pegs* embedded within these novels, thereby greatly lessening the reliance on expertise, experience and abilities of the facilitator. However, such an argument can be reversed and equally argued that this in turn could also deprive the facilitator of his/her own *modus operandi*. Rather than being a first rate Miss X or Mr. Y, he/she could become a second or third rate replica of the Lipman method.

Further, Leeuw [1991] argues that it can be a danger for adults to know too many philosophical conventions and traditions. He also advocates that children's lack of knowledge of many of culture's conventions might put them in an advantageous position. This fact could be used to argue that facilitators need not be trained or have expertise in philosophy. Moreover, Leeuw goes on to state that children's inexperience of life and conventions is an advantage rather than a disadvantage when they do philosophy. This stance is supported in part by Mulvaney [1993] who argues that one of the tragedies of the adult is his/her loss of a sense of wonder, curiosity and playfulness, in short, the loss of childhood. If it is proven that these emotions are considered central to philosophical inquiry, Murriss advocates that by starting philosophy earlier and continuing its mastery throughout life, adults will rediscover what she describes as suppressed reservoirs of playfulness and leisure.

Similarly, sceptics could argue that it is the adult interpretation of the ideas and concepts expressed by participants in the community of inquiry that is deemed to be philosophical, as opposed to what the children are in fact expressing. Their assertions are based on the argument that there may be some substance in the fact that children ask questions for a variety of reasons, that may or may not be for the same reasons as adults. For example, Leeuw and Mostert [1987] identify two reasons why children may be asking questions: the first kind is simply to sustain a conversation. The other is directly related to interests, concerns. Adults respond according to their perceived needs of the child and the situation of the moment as perceived in an adult form.

My research found that Murriss' recommended stories were very short even when supported by a video, and they certainly raised the participants expectations and stimulated them to respond very quickly and spontaneously, as well as extremely positively. This allowed for each book to be studied in one session, which was very satisfying from the children's point of view. It is also important to acknowledge that there may well be recurring themes within the books Murriss and Sprod recommend. This can be seen as helpful given the constraints and demands of the UK National Curriculum. Whilst my research has not been able to uphold Murriss' claims for increase in attainments in academic subjects, the children exposed to her materials certainly enjoyed them very much indeed.

From the experiences gained from my research it was apparent that the facilitator must have a fundamental willingness to actively listen to *what* children are saying, as opposed to pre-empting or listening sufficiently to gain the general gist of the argument. There must be an openness and acceptance that children *do have a right to contribute and to be heard*. It is difficult for some adults to talk *with* children rather than talk *at* children. Whilst this point may seem very obvious, my observed experience is that many teachers throughout the UK seldom exercise this fundamental need.

(iv) Appropriate Assessment and Testing

The argument centres around the definition of philosophy and the fact that to-date there is no recognised standardised assessment of philosophy, or indeed whether using a test of academic subjects is a realistic measure of philosophical understanding. This argument is based on the fact that philosophy is seen first and foremost as an activity, therefore, it is essential to examine the extent to which students engage in philosophical debate. This it is believed will give a more accurate assessment. Tests in other academic subjects can only indicate the extent to which philosophy has improved the pupil's performance, but this does not tell us much about children's progression in philosophy itself. Miller [1986], therefore, argues that there can be no objective tests to assess the quality of philosophical reasoning, as most rely on teacher's testimony, which can be based on selective bias, and that teachers may succumb to the temptation to include only that evidence which is conducive to the fulfilment of their expectations.

There is a serious danger that many of the philosophical nature of the children's comments pass unnoticed. As Miller [1986] states in support of Pritchard when he considers the probability that someone who does not know what to look for, and/or does not want to see it, will not find genuine philosophical insights in the children's conversations without help. Hence, a sceptic could be exposed to examples of good philosophical discussions by children and come away unconvinced. He/she could fail to see the philosophical content of an actual conversation due to his/her own prejudice and/or lack of training. To overcome such circumstances Pritchard minimised the likelihood that the philosophical content of the transcript would not be clearly understood and seen by providing plenty of commentary. He, therefore, punctuated the children's dialogue, which he used to illustrate his points, with philosophical commentaries examining various issues raised in their discussions. But, again this raises the same question of whether it is the adult's interpretation of the children's dialogue, or is it that the children have truly philosophised. Without an agreed definition or a test of what constitutes philosophy it is very hard to argue for or against the question of whether children can and do philosophise.

Young children obviously do not have the wealth of experience and knowledge many adults acquire, but they are able to discuss critical issues in a balanced critical manner. Perhaps not as finely tuned as an experienced adult, but nevertheless, the dialogues demonstrate much in-depth appreciation of the *hidden issues or factors* which need to be taken into consideration when philosophising. This would seem to validate the need for open-ended flexible freedom to develop independence of thought through following *unexplored waters, uncharted lands and maps and to allow children opportunities to explore such issues*. [Fields, 1993].

Embedded within the above argument is the need for a definition of philosophy per se. Because without an agreed definition, it is impossible to even attempt to devise acceptable methods of assessment. For example, Wilson [1992] criticises the *Philosophy for Children* programme for not defining what is understood by philosophy. Brochures from the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children [IAPC] state that 'conceptual analysis plays a major role... [and that] thinking that is skilful and deliberate, thinking that employs relevant criteria, is self-correcting, and is sensitive to context ... it is critical thinking' WC brochure, 1996, pp. 1-2].

Whilst arguing for the need for a precise definition, Wilson also argues that the following questions need to be addressed and answered:

- What exactly is *philosophical* thinking?
- What is a *philosophical* question?
- What is a *philosophical* truth?
- How do we know we have got something *right* when doing philosophy?

None of the programmes designated philosophy specific or non-philosophy specific define or attempt to offer answers to these questions, although Kantian, Cartesian philosophical themes can be identified within the text.

Based upon this lack of definition Kitchener [1990] argues strongly against using philosophy with children as philosophy and, therefore, philosophers ought to approximate to the following:

- thinking about a philosophical issue
- raising philosophical questions and being puzzled by things ordinarily taken for granted.
- reading the great philosophers
- constructing arguments in support of certain kinds of conclusions.
- engaging in various kinds of conversations about philosophy
- not being able to stop philosophising. and to him children are incapable of such exactitudes.

Whereas, Evans [1978] argues from an opposite stance that because children follow certain procedural principles that make philosophical inquiry possible using the various teaching materials, they are in fact doing philosophy. This leads on to the next area in the current debate, i.e. the question of whether or not young children can and do philosophise.

[v] Can and do Philosophy

Miller [1986] discusses the scepticism he encountered when advocating that children can philosophise. He argues that the resistance to belief or even attempting to believe, is founded in the fact that the value of philosophical input is not easily seen by non-philosophers. Because of this stance using philosophy with children can be seen as simply one more teaching style offering the advantage of philosophical-type inquiry.

Kitchener [1990] strongly argues that children cannot truly think philosophically. And where evidence is offered to suggest that they are capable of *concrete* philosophy, he argues that they are certainly not capable of *abstract* philosophy. He further argues that Lipman and other proponents of using philosophy with children, can at best be said to demonstrate that children are capable of concrete philosophising when citing examples, such as, pants having feelings. He is adamant that this is a distinction that none of the proponents make.

So Kitchener advocates that this distinction *should* and *ought* to be made if genuine credence is to be given to the claims made for using philosophy with children. This stance is based upon the fact that children do mathematics, history, geography in primary school, whilst not at a similar level to professional mathematicians, historians, geographers it is argued that the specific subject matter covered is not *real* mathematics, history, geography. Could the whole debate centre around not an *either-or* dilemma, but is in fact centred around a question of *degree*. To be able to handle philosophical questions more appropriately is not guaranteed by simply growing and developing. Whilst there is a difference between adults and children's capacity and capability to do philosophy, this in itself does not diminish the fact that children are capable of philosophizing.

McCall [1990] presents an impressive transcript of philosophical inquiry with a class of infants to support her claim that young children aged five years discuss and reason about philosophical concepts, and that they also originate philosophical topics for discussion. She demonstrates that there are many meta-cognitive processes at work during discussions in the community of inquiry. She cited as evidence the fact that they take care to show the structure of the dialogue as they speak. This involves paying close attention to whom has said what, remembering the content and the person who originated the idea, while also thinking of their own contribution. This is a complex cognitive task for anyone, and although the five year old children did make mistakes, it was surprising how often and how accurately their recapitulation of the structure of the dialogue was.

Further, McCall [1990] continues with evidence that young children often open up *cans of worms* with their questioning and with the interferences they make. Therefore, McCall [1990] believes that five year old children are capable, and can articulate the relationship of one idea or argument to other ideas, although she tempers this statement by clarifying her position when stating that they do not share the professional philosopher's language skills or vocabulary, or his/her ability to develop the implications and consequences of the issues raised. Nor is their reasoning as sophisticated. But they do raise and address the same questions.

Thus, if the above arguments are to be believed, caution must be exercised as researchers' must not be tempted to evaluate children's thinking by the quality of language used, and by comparing the quality of that language synonymously with the quality of the thinking, with that of adults. According to McCall [1990] there is a need for what she describes as an *authentic* environment. This is essential because she believes that children are inquiring into issues about which there are no definitive answers, and so the procedure of inquiry, in contrast say to asking the teacher or consulting an encyclopaedia, is a generation procedure.

Summarising the debate I quote from a *Letter to the Editor*, The Guardian, 18 June, 1996, p. 14 Mary Midgley, a philosopher, responded to Jenny Turner, a journalist, when she rejected the idea that children *can* and *do* philosophise:

Of course children's arguments are not the same as the discussions of university students. But then neither is a child's eager participation when his or her parents are mending the garage just like the work which that child may do later as an engineering student. In both, what matters is to pick up the general spirit of such activities, to start seeing them as interesting and possible. And if one does not do this as a child, it is much harder to do it later. Philosophy has never been a quarantined enclave for professionals, any more than literature has, and it would die if it were to become so.

CONCLUSIONS

It is very apparent to some educationalists, adults and parents that young children display a natural curiosity and ability to ask questions. [As de Bono [1988] states, human beings would seem to progress through stages of *thinking development*: the accepting age, the questioning age.] It is equally apparent that by the age of 11 years a radical change has overcome the same children. I have written elsewhere [Fields 1994]: There is a startling, and easily detectable absence of this initial thirst for knowledge, and this early curiosity and puzzlement. Such children's behavioural patterns are discernible as being much more submissive and accepting lacking very little attempt at wonderment and curiosity. There appears to be little or no challenging and questioning of the reasons given by adults by way of explanation for doing or not doing given activities. Likewise, there appears to be little or no attempt by this age of child, to take ownership for his/her own learning, and to take responsibility for his/her own actions, be they socially acceptable or unacceptable behaviours. There is, however, clear evidence of *blind acceptance and submission to the dictates of the given*

society, and the damage done by the attitudes and dispositions of adults towards children [Fairbairn 1993]. What has caused a dampening of a thirst for knowledge? What has caused this lack of amazement, wonderment and curiosity, and in some cases, this total extinction? As both types of approach claim can either philosophy specific or non-philosophy specific teaching materials re-instate this thirst?

Harre [1987] believes that what he describes as *rights to display* can be a contributing factor. By this he means that each individual must be afforded opportunities to *show themselves off to their best advantage*. Such rights can be attributed to, and are closely determined by the given sociological setting of the individual. To him the influence of the societal needs and aspirations dictate the acquisition and execution of such competencies and thinking skills.

Fairbairn [1994] commends the idea of encouraging young children to think, and therefore, argues parallel to Harre's assertions above, that adults in their everyday interaction with young children, on the whole, deny children their rights to opportunities for philosophical discussion and debate. Adults are at times less respectful of children than they might be by being intentionally or unintentionally, condescending or patronising by not allowing children choices. This in turn denies children opportunities to decide and think for themselves. He attributes this lack of enhancement directly to an adult bias, or the theoretical allegiances that professionals may have in their everyday interactions with children. Whilst these may contribute to those same constraints, and to the lack of opportunities denied young children, Fairbairn is of the opinion that young children, who develop the habits and disciplines of critical thought through the practice of philosophy, are more likely to apply these skills in other academic subject areas, and in a variety of familiar and unfamiliar situations in their lives. It is vital, therefore, for this to happen that young children's views and ideas are taken seriously by adults. And it is equally vital that they are not summarily dismissed or diminished as being of little consequence due to lack of experience.

Also, when the young child's hypothesis seems to be illogical and flawed, it is an interesting exercise to pursue the *illogical way* [Fields 1994]. That is, by talking to the child ascertain how he or she reached the conclusions they did. In the experience of the author, many times the conclusions reached are in fact extremely logical, accurate and understandable when the process of thinking which the child took is sought. Once this exploratory process has been achieved very often with the unintimidating assistance of the adult, the children will reflect and re-evaluate, in the light of the additional conceptual information provided by the adult, their interpretation of events or hypotheses. They will and do re-examine their initial conclusions by adjusting and amending their thinking about the whole problem and/or parts of the problem.

Philosophy can be seen as an activity which children naturally engage in for themselves without adult intervention. However, when adults participate in philosophical discussions with children, as opposed to imposing an outside influence upon the children, it becomes a two way process which is or can be mutually benefiting. By working and talking with children, as opposed to talking at children, and by respecting children's points of view, this exercise can enhance and clarify the thinking process of the adult. This is especially evident when adults are observed when exercising the need to simplify their precise use of language to convey clarity of meaning.

By acknowledging that young children have a gift for asking the most obvious simple questions, thereby, touching the heart of the topic under discussion, it can also be equally evident in regard to adult pre-conceived biased attitudes and ideas. With this positive type of support children can develop into skilful questioners and producers of hypotheses. Clear evidence of children's abilities as developing reasoners, and their development of ideas, which have been refined, can be seen when reading or listening to dialogue being shared with another child or an adult.

As Matthews [1983] states, what has not been taken seriously, or even widely conceived, is the possibility of tackling with children in a relationship of mutual respect, the naively profound questions of philosophy. He hopes that what followed in his book, would convince his readers that children can help adults to investigate and to reflect on interesting and important questions and that the children's contributions may be quite as valuable as any adult may have to offer.

Young children need to be guided and nurtured to the realisation that reality is something which is and not which it is felt *ought* to be. There is a need, therefore, that whilst learning cultural social, moral or ethical values young children need to be assured that to have doubts and not to be able to resolve difficulties and problems is equally acceptable. They must be given opportunities in order that they should recognise that there are many facets of life which do not fall into neat solvable packaging. The notion that there are many uncertainties can be experienced by young children whilst exploring a variety of possible outcomes raised by the question ...I wonder what will happen if. ...? There is equally, the need for repeatedly revisiting concerns and discussions as this is of paramount importance if young children are to succeed in achieving a spiral *understanding of their own thinking* [Ennis 1987].

Equal in paramount importance is the fact that young children are given voice and are listened to and grow up with the right of expectation to be treated with respect and taken seriously by all adults. Because young children are capable of thinking and offering quite complex solutions to problems they must be treated firstly as a person in their own right, and then secondly as a child within a given community. The crux of the problem would seem to be, therefore, that it is not young children's ability or lack of ability to think, but the ways in which adults perceive children and respect their *rights to display*.

Based upon these arguments it is not a question of preference. It is a question of right and necessity. From the experiences of my research the best results are a marriage between Lipman's novels; Lake's illustrated books, Murriss' use of illustrations and video tapes and Sprod's books into ideas. By starting with exciting, colourful illustrated teaching materials embedded with a few philosophy themes and ideas, and developing onto more structured philosophy embedded novels, and/or a combination of all three at various times, would enhance children's involvement in philosophy, if such involvement is considered desirable. By using materials in this way an inverse pyramid of philosophical pegs expanding upwards and broadening outwards could be effectively developed. This way philosophy being taught to young children would gain from the best of all types of teaching materials, teaching and learning styles.

In conclusion, rather than have these polarised debates, if each camp could, without self-interest and bias, come together to inform present day endeavours by contributing their understanding and knowledge, expertise, discoveries, this would result in being a most effective way forward in equipping children to embrace the challenges in the Twenty First century.

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Address correspondence to:

Joyce I. Korczak-Fields
Institute for Learning
University of Hull
Cottingham Road
Hull HU6 7RX, United Kingdom
e-mail: J.I.Fields@EFL.hull.ac.uk