

# Philosophy for Children: An Alternative to Re-signify the Educative Experience

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*This article presents a section of Chapter 4 in the work presented at Ibero University in Mexico City as a Ph.D project titled «Filosofía para Niños: una alternativa para resignificar la experiencia educativa», (Philosophy for Children: an alternative to re-signify educative experience). The section presented is based mainly on the teachers' diaries during their participation in the Teacher Training Program at the P4C Center in Guadalajara, Jal., Mexico from 1993 to 1999. All the workshops were in the charge of the author.*

Some years ago I wrote a paper with some reflections about the meaning of teacher training which was published in this journal.<sup>1</sup> That paper was a result of my reflections about the process I experienced as a teacher trainer and also from reflections about the experience of others. That initial work led me to write a research project to compile evidence of the potential of the community of inquiry to facilitate the re-construction of teachers' experiences and personal transformation. In this article I'm presenting some thoughts about this research and a sample of how I'm trying find connections between the theoretical basis in P4C, the practice in teacher training, and some testimonies of teachers' views and experience.



James Hobbes

In the community of inquiry we have two basic elements: the development of reasoning abilities, and the development of social dispositions. These two components working together in a responsible dialogue and process of inquiry can generate a kind of experience that could be profound and significant. We can share our interest in inquiry, our points of view and our experiences. There are some things I see going on during a teacher training process: one of them is the mutual acceptance among the participants in a community

of inquiry which, I think, is a matter of trust. They reciprocally represent an opportunity to grow that can be compared with the growth opportunity given by the mutual acceptance between a newborn and his/her mother, which is not necessarily a blind obedience. In the same way a newborn expresses his/her necessity for food, older children and adults express their necessity for meaning, and what is a matter of trust is the belief in the good will, good intentions and good faith of the process of inquiry itself, and of the participants, trust emerged from the first experience of being loved. On this basis of trusting, in a community of inquiry, teachers learn one from another.

Closely related with this basic trust, another thing I perceive in the process is the way teachers talk about themselves, and the changes in their thinking and acting.

Given these elements in the community of inquiry it was more clear to me that when a teacher goes into a training process in P4C he/she gets involved and engaged in the same process he/she is going to facilitate with the students. Then, the teacher training was not necessarily to reach the children, but also, and perhaps mainly, to reach the teachers.

As trainers I think we have the responsibility to ask, to invite, to induce the teacher to inquire and reflect about his/her own meanings, experiences, knowledge and values, so they can be re-constructed. In this sense, the training process can develop as an educative experience and constitutes an opportunity for personal transformation. Since the P4C program considers the relevance of educative experience in order to make sense, we have to ask ourselves how can we get to know how teachers experience their own process during the training. This question can lead us to re-construct our experience as teacher trainers, and also to know if the teachers are re-constructing their experience too.

## ABOUT THE METHOD

The following paragraph may seem contradictory at first reading. However, I think a careful reading could help in understanding the meaning of my research. It has been difficult for me to explain what «I see is going on» in teachers during their training process in P4C - the re-construction of their experience, the consciousness of taking care and being cared for - first, because the nature, amount and consistency of the changes perceived sometimes are very subtle, thin. However, the presence, the going through the training workshops is meaningful for all of us. There is a process of transformation which is sensible, tangible and significant. Second, because, given the nature of the work we do in a community of philosophical inquiry, it is hard to measure how much more or less we are being reasonably caring. The «way of being» in the community of inquiry goes beyond a mere description of observable behavior.

Somebody can be silent but present in the dialogue. If we try to describe that silence in terms of minutes, is meaningless. However this silent presence can be in fact; highly significant for all. In a community of inquiry not everything has to do with argumentation. Asking oneself and asking of others supports much of the process of philosophical inquiry, but there are also the moments of silence.

The role of siletice in the reflection about one's self-process of thinking and one's reflection about the relationship with others is worthy. We learn how to listen to others when we are able, to some extent, to grasp the meaning of what they say. And in relation to ourselves, we learn to listen to ourselves when we talk to others in a dialogue, but also when, in silence, we think and reflect about the meaning of our own words.

So, in trying to pick up and show somehow those things that are «seen and not seen» at the same time, I turn to qualitative research methods. In Social Science methodology is the way of doing research, and we select one or another on the basis of the suppositions and aims of the study of a social phenomenon. There are two main theoretical perspectives, the positivism «... where facts and causes of social phenomenon are searched with independence of subjective conditions of individuals.»<sup>2</sup> And the phenomenological perspective in which «... we want to understand the social phenomena under the own perspective of the actor.»<sup>3</sup>

In P4C we emphasize that philosophical inquiry doesn't lead to «universal truth», but «better understanding of experience». In this sense, it would be consistent and pertinent to use a phenomenological perspective. What I mean is, a qualitative methodology, phenomenological oriented, could give us elements to pick up teachers' perception of themselves and their educational practice during the workshop, enabling us to understand the possibilities that at this level represent the formation of communities of philosophical inquiry.

The phenomenological perspective is related to different frames of reference but among the precursors of symbolic interactionism we can find John Dewey and G. Mead, two thinkers strongly considered by Lipman in the development of the P4C program.

In symbolic interactionism a basic relevance is given to social meanings that individuals assign to the world and three main premises are pointed out:

- Individuals act in relation to things and others based on the meaning those things and persons have for them.
- Meanings are social products emerged during interaction. We learn how to see the world, we learn from and with others.
- Social actors assign meanings to situations, people, things and themselves through an interpretation process.

From the historical and philosophical perspective, I think this approach is useful and consistent with the process we try to generate among participants in the community of inquiry. It is precisely this significant interaction that allows the process of re-construction of experience, which is fundamental to human growth, and is the means and end of P4C.

Many times the difference between one moment and another in the process of training is not big or evident; however, it could make a definite difference. Carlo Ginzburg<sup>4</sup> explains how three different ways of thinking, in three remarkable persons, can be related, pointing out the way in which these persons make use not of the obvious, but of small, tiny incidents that help to determine who is the responsible actor of a particular action. When we try to compare objects or persons on the basis of obvious characteristics, the comparative method and analysis is also obvious. But when trying to compare on the basis of a small sample, tiny details form a whole that can point out a significant difference. Although these differences may not be perceived by all, the phenomenological method is more accurate, however conjectural, and demands critical thought.

Somehow, the experience and its phenomenological analysis under the light of the theoretical foundations of P4C have that conjectural character. It is given by the established relation among small details, tiny progress indicators in building a community of inquiry, which in a certain moment, allows us to state that an internal transformation has taken place in the teachers. Things that would not have been said before, now are said. They are thinking in a way they did not think before. They begin to express thoughts that reveal who they are, and how they came to think what they think. An aim in P4C is to help people to think for themselves and to value their personal perspective.

#### THE PERSONAL DIARY: AN ELEMENT IN THE TEACHER TRAINING MODEL

In order to know and follow the thinking processes of teachers during their training I used three instruments:

- Teacher participation during the inquiry sessions.
- Transcriptions of the sessions they had in the classroom.
- The trainer's daily pedagogical journal.

However, I needed another instrument to systematically pick up the teacher's processing under his/her own perspective, as the actor of the process, that helped me to grasp the meaning of becoming a member of a community of inquiry. I started to ask teachers to keep a personal diary under the following instructions:

*«I want you to write a diary, in whatever way is easiest for you. The idea is that you can talk about what happened in the P4C session, what held your attention, what things you realized. You can write it as a letter, a song, a tale... the important thing is that you take your time to write your impressions about the work we did together...»<sup>5</sup>*

Writing implies thinking, and the writer exercises many mental operations that should be well coordinated in order to, on one side, show what is intended, and on the other, allow the reader to have

access to the meaning of the text. To write promotes personal growth since it is a vehicle to interpret, arrange and reflect about experience. It is also a social action that takes place in the daily, common world. To write presupposes the existence of a community that shares the same language of the writer, that reads and interprets texts from different perspectives. The piece of writing has the possibility to convince, inspire, persuade, explain, describe, etc. the experience of the members of the group and can become a shared experience.

To write is a cognitive process that may help one learn and think critically. It includes metacognition (to think about one's own process of thinking) and a variety of thinking abilities implied in observation, comparison, analysis, synthesis and evaluation.<sup>6</sup>

Writing also helps us to develop «our own voice»; to know that expressing what one thinks is significant for others; to know what one writes will be read carefully. In this sense, the reading of the personal diaries helped to make evident the «presence» I mentioned at the beginning of this paper, as a responsibility of the P4C teachers' trainer.

This work of writing was meant to facilitate the cognitive and metacognitive process, to facilitate the teachers to hear their own words, to facilitate their discovery of meaning and how they are affected when going through their training process. For me, this work facilitated my approach to the meanings world of teachers in my genuine attempt to understand and to make sense of my own professional work in two lines of thought: the development of the necessary abilities to lead the workshop, and an ethical concern about doing things in the right way.

Teachers wrote their diaries throughout the process of training, so if we had ten sessions (three or four hours long) by the end I received 10 papers from each teacher. When teachers took two or three workshops, or if they became part of our permanent community of inquiry at the Center of P4C, I had 20 or more papers. During the process, the reading of the diaries could show the teachers' experience and those tiny indicators of change and transformation that could be translated into words and meanings.

In my research I include five diaries to analyze. In this paper I present only one diary to illustrate my point.

#### A DIARY ILLUSTRATION

The italics designate the text written by the teacher in her diary. My comments are in regular font.

H is a teacher in elementary school. She came to visit the community of inquiry at the Center to get an idea about P4C. That day we were working with Lisa, episode 17, where Lisa is talking with her

father about things that are right, perfect, fair and the relationship among these concepts. In one paragraph, Lisa's father remarks, «Don't worry your head about it, Lisa, it'll be all right. Maybe not perfect, but all right.»<sup>7</sup> The episode ends when Lisa's father has to go in an ambulance to the hospital. The session that day was really an intense and interesting one. The participants were more engaged in the dialogue than in other sessions perhaps because it was about a kind of evaluation of the things we had done during our lives, and it leads to reflections about something explained by Dewey in terms of the moments in which a person has a sensation of well being, that goes beyond the process of thinking - it is a kind of religious experience in the sense that it integrates the sense of belonging and the consciousness of our being a small but meaningful element in a universe we don't understand at all. The teacher didn't participate directly in the dialogue, but she was carefully observing the others.

An entire school year passed without my hearing again from this teacher, but after that time she decided to become part of a group working in an introductory level. She handed on sessions reports and dialogues with her students, but in her diaries she only made reference to the activities we had at the workshop: read an episode, write some questions, etc. She went on to the intermediate level in the teacher training program. She started to share a little more about her own process, and by the end she wrote:

*«The most relevant things I've learned in this time working with P4C program at the workshop are the following:*

*1. I have always tried to make my life 'transparent' and to be aware of all the things implied in what I say, makes me think about the different interpretations people can have, according to their own views. From that, I can see the relevance in trying to be clear in what I say, and to be explicit so wrong interpretations could be avoided.*

*2. More tolerance toward other points of view which are different from mine, and more openness to integrate them to my own vision. I've lost some of my shyness in expressing myself because now I can see that my idea is what is exposed to the group, not me.*

*3. A nice surprise to be aware that before participating in philosophical inquiry, I saw things through a small lens, and suddenly this lens has become bigger and wider and I can see much more than before.*

*4. A great joy in discovering I'm able to ask myself, to wonder, to think about... this has increased my sensibility and my empathy toward others.*

*The work we have done here (during the workshop) consists in the reading of Harry, the leading of sessions for each of us, but I think it consists also in the creation of a space and a place to think together. Moreover, a space that allows us to unveil our way of thinking so we can move to thinking well or at least, to thinking better... I'm thankful for this experience of discovery.» (June 97)*

In this exposition we can appreciate some elements considered as progress indicators in a community of inquiry, and also some remarks made by Lipman about the capacity to wonder as a necessary element in the P4C teacher. When this teacher reports she is aware that the ideas are what is to be analyzed, thought about critically, but not herself, we can recall this perception as an important characteristic in a community of inquiry and one of its functions.

The nature of a community of inquiry implies that the participants must be ready to offer their ideas to the group to be judged in a constructive way, and that the possibility to accept them as viable will depend on their survival of the inquiry process. But individuals are safe. This has to do also with what the teacher refers to as «the lens has become bigger and wider» simultaneously with understanding and empathy to others.

The teacher became a member of the permanent community of inquiry at the Center. One day, talking about the decision to come to the workshop she said: «It took me time, because from the first visit I felt it was not only a matter of learning a program, it was about something really challenging in another, I think deeper, level.» We were working with *Pixie*, and she wrote:

*«... We read the «mysterious creature» of G. It was interesting, it helped me to know her a little more and made me think about liberty, responsibility, the meaning of rules and obedience. She made me think about my concept of liberty, responsibility, freedom and the way I experience them in the way I'm living in my house, with my family, in my work... in this session something happened to me that has happened before in the P4C sessions, I'm feeling more free and more convinced about how worthwhile it is to act according to what you think, and about how, when one acts consistently, the following consequences are assumed with serenity, even more, with pleasure... « (October 97)*

It is interesting to see how the work of reflection that is going on in the different members of the community of inquiry becomes an integrated element of the thinking of others. The possibility to build upon others' contributions as a progress indicator in a community of inquiry, it seems to me, is clearly shown in the teacher's diary. The teacher didn't share that during the dialogue, she didn't talk about it the next session, and the diary helped a lot to see what was going on in her own process, which I consider a reconstruction of her experience.

The work we do in a community of inquiry is not limited to an exercise in the teacher's class, we want and hope that it will affect significantly the way of acting and responding to different conditions in the individual's daily life. I mean, we are trying to facilitate the formation of a moral character which allows us to act reasonably and critically when the occasion arise. We can also notice in this diary the connection made by the teacher between an act and its consequences, pointing out that acting upon well reasoned decisions helps us to have a better disposition with which to go through the consequences. In this sense we find a concrete expression of another aim in P4C which is to educate for better citizenship.

The teacher goes on:

*«It held my attention when we had an inquiry session about the «mysterious creature» of Mvr. That works with adult education in business. Everything she was saying made me think about my own teaching practice. Some things «clicked» in my mind. I realized there are many inconsistencies in the school I work as well as good practices. I keep thinking that sometimes it is we, the teachers, who sell the idea that education is important to get a better job, to get better employment, to be somebody. Could that be right or wrong? At the moment I thought it was wrong, but later I remembered Pablo Freire's work. It could be true that to have better education, instruction and culture helps people to be aware of manipulation, injustice, oppression ... .and in that way, people can do something to make it different. Many revolutions have started in intellectual groups that were able to think differently due to the studies they were doing..*

*....The philosophy of my school is actual but I think it goes beyond having the classroom cleaned and prepared, with educative materials in a convenient progression and order, I think it goes beyond specific didactical procedures....*

*I think, contrary to the common idea, that the child today has a great need of wonder about nature, the child needs to feed her/his spirit, to contemplate... and the school should be like a space in the middle of the chaos, to give the children the opportunity to have spiritual experiences and values even if they appear contradictory to the things they find out there. Could P4C provide that space and respond to that deprivation? I had the feeling that it could. « (October 97)*

I find interesting the attempt of the teacher to integrate the reflective experience done in the community of inquiry with the concepts and philosophy of the educative institution in which she does her job. It seems to me that going from her personal experience, she starts to perceive P4C as a space that could cover some deprivations in the growth and development as human beings that elementary schools are not taking care of.

*«I kept on thinking in this last session, of time and its relation to my life. I thought maybe it was not that important to know if time 'Is', or 'goes' or 'runs' or whatever, but what is really important is to know what happens to me 'in time', if I'm going further, or if I stay always in the same place, or if my time will be over, or if there is a level in which time doesn't exist since we are eternal... I think that 'time' is a hard topic, I wish we could have another opportunity to talk more about that... « January 98)*

To 'do philosophy' understood as looking for meaning, as a search for better understanding of experience is something present in ordinary people. That the teacher is integrating her daily experience, the philosophical ideas, the projection of her decisions and practical implications is evident in the previous paragraph. It has to do with the approach to philosophy as an attempt to understand our living experience and to re-signify it in order to live better.



By May 1998 there was a change in the community of inquiry - some teachers left, some others came back. By that time we were working with Kio and Gus. The teachers are sharing their experience with the program in high school and a teacher writes:

*«I find it interesting the kind of reflections that older students have in class and the profound way they treat a topic when the teacher gives them enough elements and a `space' (or time?) to think about something. «*

It is interesting to see how the teacher is a little more strict with her own process of thinking. She asks herself about the use and meaning she is giving to an specific word: Space or time?

*'Justice is an endless topic. It is what we need most to live together on this planet, and what we have the least of. I don't know what is needed to be just or what we can do to make each person his/her own judge, so we get to a state in which an outside judge won't be necessary.*

*If there is going to be justice what must lead us should be mercy. Mercy goes with human nature. I believe in God and belong to the Catholic Church, where it is said that God is just, maybe it is because He is also merciful. If we were created in His image and resemblance, I think we can expect from humankind mercy and justice.*

*The Kio and Gus episode helped me to think about my home and its meaning in my life and in the lives of others, not only human beings, but also in changes. What is implied in changing for oneself and for others?*

*Taking again the topic of time and space, I'm confused. I think it is something really hard to understand. Could it be that things happen in different but overlapped time and space? Could it be that things happen simultaneously but we only are able to perceive part of them? Could we change space and time to our pleasure?*

*I notice an important change in our community with Ly's presence, and I miss N, I hope she'll be back soon. « (May 98)*

We mentioned before that the possibilities of a community of inquiry go beyond the developing of reasoning skills and social dispositions, there is also an affective component and special ties are created among participants. Analyzing this diary we can find also that a sentiment of trust has been developed. Writing it is not a mere requirement of the workshop, it becomes a vehicle to share important things in the process of making sense, beliefs included, that are openly shared with the teacher trainer.

All this sharing represents to the trainer a big responsibility. The thought always present when a teacher writes as H did, is the same thought expressed in *The Little Prince*: I'm the owner of a flower that I water every day, I have also some volcanoes and I clean them too, so, it is useful, it is worthy for them to be mine.<sup>8</sup> The Little Prince is talking to the business man who is counting stars to see how many of them are there, but being counted doesn't affect the nature or quality of the stars. And I think the question of care in *The Little Prince* is a pertinent question for teacher trainers: Is it useful, worthy for

the teachers to work with me? Am I doing what I'm supposed to do? Am I doing the service implied in NO There are strong bonds created when one honestly shares meaning with others. I think this is one of the important possibilities of working with the program.

*«Monica, I want to tell you I'm writing my diary some days after the session. I want to mention I notice in AP and G, and MT a need to find out answers to the questions raised in the community. I recalled when in some sessions we talked about being afraid of philosophical inquiry, to be open to doubt. I'm getting used a little to uncertainty, not only in P4C sessions, but in my daily life, in the relationships with other persons and in the things that may happen one day or moment. Is that good?*

*Also thinking about Zubiri's idea 'an intimate violence and struggle to deliver yourself into truth', maybe to have an answer provides you a feeling of safety, and to realize that not all experience is like that, that you abandoned some views, that there are examples and reasons that make your 'truths' useless, scares a lot, but then you see that there are not definite answers and to the extent you lose certainty, you get closer to something more certain... Does it sound crazy?» (March 99)*

This comment from the diary shows the intense nature of truth as it is conceived in the pragmatic frame of Pierce, Dewey and in Lipman's approach in the P4C program. In fact our only certainty is the acknowledgment of the great uncertainty we live in, and truth is something we build up in the community.

It is also interesting to see how H goes back in her own process in the community of inquiry, and how it helps to notice and to understand the process of the other participants. In this sense I think her experience in the community of inquiry becomes a real source of reciprocal companionship in our attempt to have a better understanding of our lives, knowing that almost anything we accept as truth is only temporary, and we have to keep on thinking together.

*«Monica, I think I'm confused, and half is because of P4C. Do you remember the last session? We were talking about happiness and about things pre-determined for us, and the possibility of decision making. The whole week I've been thinking if I am happy, and I realize I'm happy when I do the things I like, and I do them well. That made me think about pre-determined things and I thought that maybe the only thing pre-determined for me, is to do things the best I can in the place and moment in which I am. Maybe that is happiness.*

*Then, I was reading the other day a philosopher with a personalized approach, and he said we have to search for the acknowledgment of the individual with everything he/she involves. This implies the recognition of the other, in the Christians sense, and that leads you to integrity and happiness (that is my conclusion). Does it sound familiar? Remember Teresa de la Garza's conference about ethical behavior? Suddenly everything fitted together, maybe to assume your responsibility for others is what the others expect from you when they get to meet you, and maybe that is another pre-determined thing, to be responsible for others, and maybe that is also happiness. « (April 99)*

Again, I'm impressed and moved by the sincerity in the process of inquiry shown in this diary, and I think it clearly expressed the cumulative character of this process of growth, of learning from oneself and others' experiences pursued in P4C.

I'm including the last two writings of this teacher. I think they put together her whole process, her perception and her experience in the teacher training program. I don't think they need any comment on my part.

*«What has it meant for me to do P4C? I think we always reflect about things that happen, things we see, experience, and the consequences they have upon our life. However I had felt alone with my thoughts. I had some friends to share with and always looked for experiences of growth at the Church groups that helped and supported me. But since I became a member of a community of inquiry I feel good, more secure about my opinions, with more self-confidence, and it helps me a lot to put myself under others' perspective, knowing they are thinking about the same things I'm thinking about. As I had said, it is like moving from being alone, kind of lost, to being with somebody that thinks with me, and that's important. The fact of having a space dedicated to thinking, it's important.*

*I have developed thinking abilities of reflection and relationship with others; I find myself stronger because I've been thinking about the reasons and criterion to believe in something or to say something. Somehow I've taken in account other views. I am more tolerant of the way others think and that is good.*

*I discovered that Philosophy is not distant me... Its wonderful to be aware of that! I appreciate and value the individual's quality to be sensitive to the world, to be open to receive and enjoy what life, nature and people are willing to give you. I value the capacity to be moved by things like others' feelings, the beautiful things around you... The work we are doing with P4C is rescuing that part of myself. Maybe I've always have those qualities, but the daily life, the people around me don't lead me to growth in that sense, on the contrary, sometimes it suffocates me, and the space we have in P4C rescues me. In few words, to be part of a community of inquiry at the Center, and think with you all, with my children at the school, help me to discover that «... the secret is in me... I carry the mysterious light of all secrets'(Amado Nervo) « (June 99)*

*«I've always like to study, to read, I enjoy silence and my own company, but among my friends and family I'm considered as `rare' Would you rather read than....? was one of their frequent questions. Little by little I've kept an internal, private dialogue and I've always looked for answers... that's why I read and study so much. In this continuous searching I found P4C. At the beginning it was difficult for me to really feel I belonged to the community of inquiry, but not now. What happened? I don't know, but it could have been something like:*

*Being aware that I was not the only one thinking a thousand things in my head. We all do that!*

*Listening to others talking aloud in the same way I talked to myself, understanding there are no answers for everything.*

*The most important thing, P4C makes me free. From what? From prejudice, guilt, mental rigidity, from the lethargic sleep in which I was living. It has given me an impulse to look further than my nose. It doesn't matter if what I see is darker than what I saw before.*

*The context of a community of inquiry is incomparable to anything else, there is not another space like that. To share our true and honest doubts and our philosophical questions is like unveiling things that matter and inquiring upon them. We could think this kind of sharing makes us vulnerable, but it doesn't happen in a community of inquiry.*

*To find out with others' help the reasons to think or act in one way or another is a way to make our beliefs stronger, even if we modify them. There is no danger in modifying when you*

*find out good reasons to do that. And you are able to change when you develop the disposition to include in your own view others' perspectives.*

*All I mentioned shows up in one's way of acting. There is more clarity in my thinking, self-confidence to express and compare opinions, ideas. You start to ask yourself, genuinely, about what you live, and see and hear, not to bother anyone, but because you really want and need to understand and because you want to share with others the experience you have in the community of inquiry. This is not always well accepted by others.*

*I feel free to say, to behave, to believe or not believe, and I think it is because you get used to taking in account the others and the differences among us, and nothing happens if we both think carefully. I can accept another person, which doesn't mean we think the same. If I can do this, I can also do it to myself.*

*I don't see myself anymore as 'rare', I see myself as capable of thinking, to ask, to value mine and others' points of view and this has given me a kind of 'presence' in my work and with my friends, they want to know what I think, I can help them to think too. This is a big responsibility! But it also shows that there is something in me that helps them to make better distinctions, to see things more clearly. I owe that to P4C.*

*In my professional practice P4C offered an absolutely different view. It showed me the profound thinking of children, and made me realize that if there is in me a lack of desire to think and know as they do, I have nothing to offer as a teacher. Why would they want to go to school? What is the use of my being there? What am I doing? Filling them with information? They can do that themselves! In fact they do that in different places with different people. Of course it takes time to modify my teaching practice, my habits, but I'm trying and I have to be patient.*

*I've seen you (making reference to the trainer) worried about things, you think a lot about many things, and see further than many people. I told you once I was impressed a lot because of your capacity to be moved by things and people. I think P4C rescued that part in me. When you stop wondering, when nothing leads you to ask and think, when you are not able to being touched by others, you can die. Don't you? If you don't react is like being dead. When I think about all this, I know P4C helps me to feel alive, like if life doesn't*

*just pass through, but engages me, take it into my hands, get conscious about my living. I think that is what is worthwhile to facilitate with children, they already have that disposition, I just have to tune my self with them.*

*What I talked about before is just one aspect of all the work, there is also, equally important, the rigorous thinking, logic, looking for reasons, identifying criterion, all that cognitive work is developed a lot with this program more than with any other I've used before. Well structured thinking is a tool for the rest of your life, really as a teacher, I'm not the one to indoctrinate, but to provide with the tools and to offer the information so they can work with, think about, find their own conclusions.*

*What I can say is that after all the time I've been 'in' P4C I feel myself stronger. I'm happy to work with the children at school. I'm happy to be a teacher. I know I have a safe space in which I can think and talk and not be judged but helped by others. A space in which I can change my mind and not feel guilty. This space is my community of inquiry». (September 99)*

## FINAL COMMENTS

As I read and analyzed this diary and the others, I think again about Dewey's attempt to understand human experience and the need for reconstruction. I keep thinking about Lipman's philosophical and pedagogical proposal and find much meaning working as a P4C teacher trainer.

The attempt to get closer to teachers' experience presented in this article can be analyzed even more to find a better way of doing teacher training in P4C. The elements given by the social sciences and research-in-action approach are useful and consistent with the kind of work we are trying to facilitate.

In its phenomenological and conjectural perspective we have the risk implied in any interpretation; we can't overlook the internal limits, and we have to be careful in making strong claims. But teachers' interaction in the workshop and the reflection about their own experience under their particular and intimate way of looking, as it is expressed in the diaries, helps them to re-signify their own life process, and helps us, teacher trainers, to do the same. Being involved directly in the process of teaching, we have also a phenomenological understanding of the things we do. The diaries may assist in our own introspection and give perspective to our interpretive process. We have to take into account not only what we think we are doing, but how the actors experience it.

I don't mean to imply that P4C is the only way to accomplish re-signification of the teaching practice; I don't mean either that integration of the personal diary of the teacher is the only or more objective way of knowing what is going on, but I found that this approach, integrated with the other instruments I was using before, can draw a larger picture about the teachers' processes in a more profound way than the didactical procedures. Through the diaries I had access to events and meanings I believed were going on, but couldn't show and share. These diaries allowed me to emphasize the possibility and power of the community of inquiry that goes far beyond reasoning skills and social disposition. My work with the the diaries indicates that the community of inquiry can and should be an educative experience in the whole sense of this concept. The educative potential of community of philosophical inquiry is infinite. It is worthy of great effort and hard work.

## NOTES:

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