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# The study on challenges of teaching philosophy for children

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**Abstract**

In recent decades, philosophy and children has been proposed under various titles including Philosophy for Children (P4C), Philosophy with Children (PWC), Philosophy and Children (PAC) in the field of education and philosophy. Given the importance of education for children in contemporary philosophy, this study examines challenges and solutions with respect to the philosophy and teaching philosophy for children. According to the above objective, 30 challenges were identified as the most important of these challenges can be included: the concept of philosophy as a discipline, lack of trained and skilled instructors to teach philosophy to children, breakdown between existing social values and norms ,the ambiguous role of the teacher in this kind of education, to use precipitately philosophy for children's education, family's unawareness of education philosophy for children, lack of children's cognitive development to understand abstract concepts of education philosophy programs  for children.

*Key words:* Philosophy for children, challenges of teaching, challenges;

## Introduction

At first, the term of "Philosophy for Children" seeks to bring out philosophy from abstract situation and to bring it the community. Secondly, it wants to provide a new approach to education system in order to solve fundamental problems and weaknesses of the education system which appears incurable long ago. In attempting to utilization of philosophy and practical teaching of critical thinking, the newest and the most important steps is likely Philosophy for Children which are aimed at strengthening and enhancing the reasoning, judgment and distinguishing skills. The aim of philosophy for Children differ from other applied Philosophy. It will help students to think and solve their problems individually (Lipman, 2003).

Children, who engage philosophy, can see the world and themselves in a new perspective they can get ideas which May otherwise impossible come to their mind (Fisher, 1995). So, philosophy is not slowly to learn the history of philosophical ideas, everyone must tie abstract concepts in tangible experiences. (Leeuw, 1993) Jespersen believes that philosophical texts should be narrative for children and adolescents, and you and your students enjoy it and finally say this is really a good story let's hear it again (Jespersen, 1993). Jackson and Deutsch (1978), showed in their study, which carried out on 1000 primary school students of Hawaii, the higher scores of    New Jersey reasoning skills test belonged to who participated in the philosophy class than control group and students who didn't participant in this class.

Daniel (1998) investigated the "Philosophy for Children" program and its effects on student's critical thinking. The results showed that students who participated in of 9 and 15 weeks course (2 hours a week) got better performance in critical thinking than control group. Malmhester (1999) designed a program (used to Philosophy for Children

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Program)in a long-term study which lasted for 6 years in 4 elementary schools of Stockholm, Sweden, and During his study, experimental group participated in philosophy classes and control group studied normally. The study results indicated that experimental group performance differed significantly from control group performance and they were better in various tests such as academic achievement of mate, reasoning test of New Jersey and reading.

Trickey and Topping (2004), in the article as "Philosophy for Children" reviewed systematically to surveys from 1970 to 2002 and indicated the positive effects of the program in reading, critical thinking, reasoning skills, self-esteem and cognitive abilities and math. What certain is that the new design" philosophy and child'" provides a suitable background to offer various ideas and opinion and analyzes most of educational issues and problems of children. Alongside this new project which can solve many educational issues and problems of children, it mustn't be ignored the challenges and possible inconvenience. Any projects initially faced with some obstacles and problems that the project philosophy for children is not exceptional case of these rule. The challenges of teaching philosophy to children and offering solution regarding "teaching philosophy to children," 29 challenges are define that 8 challenges of them are presented because of their importance with more explanation. In other cases, challenge with solution is offered.

1 – In the history of psychological theories, such as Piaget and other developmental psychologists, childhood is not the abstract thought period, and basically sciences such as philosophy, are not considered suitable to this period. Therefore, to state practically the Philosophy for Children program has been faced with this challenge, but in P4C program, it is tried that instead of addressing a specific content and philosophical theories, to be addressed the specific methods philosophical thinking.

2-In the program of teaching philosophy to children, the role of teacher is very determinative and indirect. The teacher should able to guide philosophical arguments and discussion. Therefore, the teacher him/her is a challenge in this program. In traditional education, a teacher is a person who knows the correct answer and he/she should correct mistakes. In other words, the teacher is pivotal. First in P4C system, it is emphasized to conversation. Second, answers to the questions, are not the certain and predetermined answer that just the teachers know; rather it is emphasized to the discussion. To overcome this challenge, teacher must learn how to lead philosophical discussions. They must learn how to use practices, how to address the issues and topics, and how to persuade students, to think for and about them, and think about the purpose of philosophy for children and what the operational process, its methods and styles as well as instrument are.

These questions are important and challenging issues in the past three decades. Awareness of the nature of philosophy for children precedes to seek its methods and patterns. For example, some believes that "Philosophy for Children" is closer to the logic than philosophy; however, some researchers argue that the logic is the main framework to, philosophy for children. Besides, there are differences in its methods among connoisseurs.

Instance, Lipman argues that we must enlist the logic in philosophy of the children, while others, believe to develop philosophy program through the literature and psychology of children. It seems that every country must select options on the basis of its culture and characteristics in this field.

3-To hurry in applying the teaching philosophy for children: preparation and social acceptance is very important in implementing of this plan. This project as other educational projects requires pondering, study and researching deeply in order that this project doesn't lead to imbalance in sections and undermine it of society. Conversely, if the project is cautiously and carefully implemented, the project will success and achieve to its purposes and results in less damages otherwise, it may upper most fall due to lack of comprehensive understanding of its implementation. . (Tajbakhsh, 1387). To counter this challenge, it is noted that one of the most important criteria of implementing each project is social acceptance which can help its efficiency and effectiveness educating and informing through the media/press and public education.

4-Another challenge –which is related to the above challenge and considerable in Iran's education- is that unfortunately most new educational programs including "Teaching Philosophy for Children" will delay

, than accelerate without any readiness in suitable context including competent teacher training, supplying books and good stories, so the project will lose its efficient. To conquer this obstacle first, it must properly understand the project theoretical basis, be completely discussed and be considered in academic level and studied it. In the next level, be offered some academic courses in universities in this field and then be established the discipline of philosophy for children and some institution act in this field. After all these works, it turns to public level of education, teachers and people. Finally, it turns to pilot implementation when academic and mental readiness is generalized.

5- Family awareness of the "teaching philosophy to children" project:  education is necessary in order to familiarize families with, "Philosophy and Child" project and to inform them. If informing will not be done correctly, and the public interest will not be done by families, the project's goals are not come off. You do not get the correct information, and the public interest is not done by families, plan their goals rounds will. In this training child's attitude must be impulse toward critical thinking and questioning. By families and families accept that their children grow mentally (Tajbakhsh, 1387)

6 - Breaking current social values and norms:  Besides posing above issues by families this question arises that is it true in which social values and norms are extirpated? No society likes to spurn its present authenticity and values, and to void them, and to break its educational status in its aims, value and norms because cultural authenticity of a society is tied up with valued funds of the society and to spurning the values and norms could shake cultural basis of the society, and damage social-cultural structure of the society seriously (Tajbakhsh, 1387). Therefore this point is posed that to overspend critical thinking and to question unreasonably of children bring them out of socializationing and leading to norm breaking. So, we will encounter a patient and sick society which will press destructive effects to the public. However, if p4c plan will be implemented correctly and constructed its educational foundation its cultural enrichment, negative feedback is reduced.

7-Lack of trained and skilled instructors to teach philosophy to children: It is so important to teach children with trained and skilled instructors. Therefore, at first, it is a priority to train skilled and competence instructors aimed at achieving the projects goals of teaching philosophy to children. Instructors play a critical role as the first basis of discussions in classes and as leaders of the project. If instructors will do clumsily in training, some moral and behavioural problems such as frustration, humiliation, low self-esteem, worthlessness, loss of identification, unsuitable pride and so on are too dangerous for this new project. While instructors will not been properly and they have not passed in-service courses, the success is impossible.

8 - The Challenge of philosophy as discipline: It is too old debate whether philosophical discussion is suitable for children.  This debate is   still continued because of mixing of two concepts: doing philosophy as a discipline" such as "to study the great thinkers' ideas since ancient Greek age, and "to philosophize" such as thought philosophically about any question. Several critics of teaching philosophy to children argue that children couldn't learn philosophy, whereas supporters consider an opposite concept. Today, there is a clear distinction between "teaching for thinking "and "teaching about thinking". The first one, teaching for thinking, is emphasized for children. Teaching for thinking means that thought process through questions and thinking could involve anything even thought. But "teaching about thinking" would not ensure to improve one's cognitive ability, indeed teaching about the oceans and butterflies do not so, and these teaching would not alter children to skilled thinkers (Lipman, 1988).

**Results Summarizing and research data:**

 Results Summarizing and research data offer in the form of challenges table, solutions will be presented too.

Table challenges and solutions for teaching philosophy to children

| Issue | challenges | solutions |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Inappropriate   philosophical concepts to culture and   society | To applying   philosophical concepts    which are   suitable to social |

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| | conditions and to imitate of philosophical concepts of other countries | culture to train philosophy to children |
| 2 | Acceptance of a particular concept of philosophy, where the children cannot learn philosophy. (Ghaedi, 1386) | To define as thinking and minding includes all people from childhood to oldness. |
| 3 | To Consider philosophy as a discipline (Bagheri, 1379) to learn philosophical information as philosophy | To consider philosophy as developing creative thinking |
| 4 | Weaknesses in thinking (Gharamaleki and Amy, 1384) the lack of reasoning power in children | To emphasis on thinking in the class and to encourage discussion in the class (Lipman, 2003) |
| 5 | Unnecessary and inconclusive debate and to failure to conduct discussions | Teacher participation and conduct discussions on philosophical topics |
| 6 | Teachers rely on the knowledge of the authors (Bernie shot, 1383) – considering ,teaching philosophy in abstract template | To analyze, conceptualize and simplify concepts |
| 7 | Presentation of the text, to prevent children from thinking. (Sharpe, 1992) | To provide adequate philosophical stories (Nagy, 1383) |
| 8 | to pay attention to the ideas of philosophers alone and do not involve children in discussions about philosophy | To speech and discuss Lively between teacher and children, and the children together |
| 9 | Say philosophical concepts, regardless of the age of children. Presenting shocking and difficult puzzles (Nagy, 1383) | To proportionate philosophical concepts to children at their age, and its arguably discussion (Sharpe, 1992) |
| 10 | To consider philosophy as knowledge framework (Nagibzade, 1377) to emphasize on the adoption of certain beliefs or ideas | To consider philosophy as a way of life |
| 11 | To use a specific pattern for all children in a class | There are thinking patterns in so much of children |
| 12 | Teachers speak alone in the class. The absence of leading correctly in the class discussion (Fisher, 1385) | To activate children in class discussion (Fisher, 1385) |
| 13 | To limit the philosophy and principles of clear thinking in a certain period of time. | To expand philosophy, since the beginning of education |
| 14 | Disregarding the true meaning of philosophy .To consider the philosophy, the concept of study and analysis of philosopher's ideas | Philosophy means to think and how to think |
| 15 | Doing things without thinking and blindly .To provide a final answer for children ( Jespersen, 1992) | To encourage children to question and to engage their minds with questions (Jespersen, 1992) |
| 16 | Lack of understanding of adults, in relation to appropriate concepts by understanding children | To proportionate philosophical concepts of, with the children's understanding to analyze, to organize and to interpret it (Fisher, 1995) |
| 17 | Disregarding the children's idea (Jespersen, 1993) do not listen to the words and phrases children | The children learn how to think at higher levels (critical and creative thinking |
| 18 | Inappropriate texts for understanding of philosophical concepts to children (Jespersen, 1993), instructors' doubt to use stories to make children think | Training of teachers and trainers to use concepts which are suitable for children and leads them to think |
| 19 | Considering Piaget's stages of cognitive development that children can not learn philosophy | Reconstruction of Philosophy for children in accordance with their aptitude and interests |
| 20 | To limit Philosophy for Children, To the analysis of propositions | To create philosophical questions, conceptualization skills, reasoning, and searching for children |
| 21 | Lack of sufficient consistency in philosophy for children, for example, some argue that "Philosophy for Children" is much closer to the logic | Countries could choose in this regard accordance with their own special culture and characteristics |
| 22 | To neglect the true ideas methodology to children, adolescents, youth and adults | To teach children to think correctly |
| 23 | To snap to use teaching philosophy to children | To educate and to inform through the media and the press, and public education. To implement research/seminars and to produce and to publish journals |
| 24 | To understand philosophy difficultly | -Placing reasoning -based experiences in education<br>- reconstructing philosophy for children according to their talents and interests |
| 25 | Teachers aren't familiar with the program | To overcome this challenge, the teacher should have in- service courses to learn how to conduct philosophical discussions, she/ he must learns how to use from exercises and discussions to plan and how to encourage children to think for themselves and about |

| | | themselves. |
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| 26 | The program has an artificial content | To determine the role of philosophizing in practical life for all the people |
| 27 | To overspend in Critical thinking ,to question unreasonably of children bring them out of socializationing and leading to norm breaking | If p4c will be implemented correctly and properly and judiciously and constructed its educational foundation with cultural enrichment, negative feedback is reduced. |
| 28 | Shortage of qualified and skilled teachers to teach philosophy to children | While instructors will not been trained properly and they haven't passed in-service courses, the success is impossible. |
| 29 | Unawareness of families of p4c | To inform accurately to families |

Bagheri and Bagheri (2008) have also identified three challenges in Philosophy for Children program in their study: philosophical, psychological, and educational challenges. The philosophical challenge is due to the point that philosophy is mainly dependent on the history of philosophy and thoughts of preceding philosophers. Psychological challenge is rooted in the approaches of developmental psychology that to emphasize on phases in human thinking. Accordingly, abstract methods of philosophizing cannot be used in the childhood period. Educational challenge is related to basic cultural values that might be shaken in the process of philosophical interrogations. In general, the philosophy and thinking in a society is not something independent of historical and social conditions that community. It is often believed that philosophy, is a discipline in the row of other academic disciplines, and education can help to improve it. But the philosophy and thinking, not an academic discipline, but also is the original spirit, a historical tradition, a civilization, a culture. School, as a key component of the educational system can make profound impact on thinking process and mental skills and learning styles of students. In many countries, the philosophy is still as knowledge, not as a skill. That should be changed this outlook.

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