cover: picasso, *las meninas* (1957)

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dossier "philosophy with children across boundaries"

training preschool education students to listen philosophically to children

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abstract
This paper presents a qualitative study exploring how training in philosophical listening enhances student-teachers' capacity to identify and engage with young children's philosophical moments. This is part of a larger research (2021–2022) in local kindergartens in Rethymno, Crete, Greece, however the findings presented in this paper are published for the first time. The study involved 125 second-year undergraduate student-teachers completing semester-long internships as part of their Bachelor of Arts program in Preschool Education at the University of Creta. Through structured laboratory sessions, student-teachers were trained to observe children's dialogues attentively, identify abstract concepts, and frame philosophical questions. Observations targeted moments in children's conversations that revealed critical thinking, originality, and collaborative reasoning. The findings highlight the transformative potential of this training. Student-teachers exhibited an increased sensitivity to listening and identifying philosophical elements in children's comments, as well as the ability to design activities that foster deeper inquiry.

Reflections on their role revealed the importance of balancing teacher intervention with creating space for children's self-regulation. This study emphasizes the value of integrating philosophical practices into teacher training. It highlights how equipping future educators with the skills for attentive listening and inquiry facilitation can nurture children's reasoning capabilities and promote meaningful dialogue in early childhood education.

keywords: listening; preschool education; teachers' training; emergent philosophizing; philosophy for/with children (p4wc)

treinando estudantes de educação infantil para ouvir filosoficamente crianças

resumo

Este artigo apresenta um estudo qualitativo que explora como a formação em escuta filosófica aprimora a capacidade dos futuros professores em identificar e interagir com momentos filosóficos de crianças pequenas. Este estudo faz parte de uma pesquisa mais ampla (2021–2022), realizada na Educação Infantil local em Rethymno, Creta, Grécia; contudo, é a primeira vez que os resultados apresentados neste artigo são publicados. O estudo envolveu 125 estudantes de licenciatura do segundo ano, que realizaram estágios com duração de um semestre como parte do programa de Bacharelado em Educação Pré-Escolar na Universidade de Creta. Por meio de sessões estruturadas em laboratório, os futuros professores foram treinados para observar atentamente os diálogos das crianças, identificar conceitos abstratos e formular questões filosóficas. As observações focalizaram momentos nas conversas das crianças que evidenciaram pensamento crítico, originalidade e raciocínio colaborativo. Os resultados ressaltam o potencial transformador dessa formação. Os futuros professores demonstraram uma sensibilidade ampliada para ouvir e identificar elementos filosóficos nos comentários das crianças, bem como a capacidade de elaborar atividades que incentivam uma investigação mais aprofundada. As reflexões sobre seu papel evidenciaram a importância de equilibrar a intervenção docente com a criação de espaço para a autorregulação das crianças. Este estudo enfatiza o valor de integrar práticas filosóficas na formação de professores. Além disso, destaca-se como capacitar futuros educadores para uma escuta atenta e facilitação da indagação pode fomentar as capacidades de raciocínio das crianças e promover diálogos significativos na Educação Infantil.

palavras-chave: escuta; educação infantil; formação de professores; filosofar emergente; filosofia para/com crianças (fpcc)

capacitando a estudiantes de educación pre-escolar para escuchar filosóficamente a niñas y niños

resumen

Este artículo presenta un estudio cualitativo que explora cómo la capacitación en escucha filosófica mejora la capacidad de futuros docentes para identificar y comprometerse con momentos filosóficos de niñas y niños pequeños. Esto forma parte de una investigación más amplia (2021–2022) en jardines de infancia locales en Rethymno, Creta, Grecia; sin embargo, los hallazgos presentados en este artículo se publican por primera vez. El estudio involucró a 125 estudiantes de pregrado de segundo año que realizaron prácticas semestrales como parte de su programa de Bachelor of Arts en Educación Preescolar en la Universidad de Creta. A través de sesiones estructuradas en laboratorio, se capacitó a los futuros docentes para observar atentamente los diálogos de los niños, identificar conceptos abstractos y formular preguntas filosóficas. Las observaciones se centraron en momentos de las conversaciones infantiles que revelaron pensamiento crítico, originalidad y razonamiento

colaborativo. Los resultados destacan el potencial transformador de esta capacitación. Los futuros docentes demostraron una mayor sensibilidad para escuchar e identificar elementos filosóficos en los comentarios de niñas y niños, así como la capacidad para diseñar actividades que fomenten una indagación más profunda. Las reflexiones sobre su rol evidenciaron la importancia de equilibrar la intervención docente con la creación de un espacio que favorezca la autorregulación de niñas y niños. Este estudio enfatiza el valor de integrar prácticas filosóficas en la formación docente, subrayando cómo dotar a los futuros educadores de las habilidades para una escucha atenta y la facilitación de la indagación puede potenciar las capacidades de razonamiento de niñas y niños y promover un diálogo significativo en la educación infantil.

palabras clave: escucha; educación preescolar; formación de docentes; filosofar emergente; filosofía para/con niñas y niños

training preschool education students to listen philosophically to the children

what does listening philosophically to the children's emergent philosophizing mean?

This paper is part of a larger qualitative research conducted with undergraduate prospective preschool teachers at the University of Crete (2021–2022). The study focused on developing the ability to discern philosophical elements in children's remarks during play and activities in kindergarten. The purpose of the research was to emphasize the importance of cultivating a philosophical attitude and recognizing philosophical moments that naturally arise in kindergarten classrooms (Nikolidaki, 2023). These moments may arise when adults are not always present or do not actively *listen* to children as they play, chat with friends, or whisper secrets in corridors and other hidden spaces within schools (Haynes & Carvalho, 2023). Both teachers and students often lack the attentiveness and flexibility necessary to perceive children's ideas through a philosophical lens (Nikolidaki, 2023). As Lone (2021) argues, adults frequently hear children but do not truly *listen* to them, as they fail to pause, reflect, and deeply engage with what the child is attempting to express. The adults often fail to "fully *being-in* the moment and *co-being with* the child" (Johansson, 2022, p. 18).

This oversight prevents them from highlighting children's questions and incorporating these into their teaching practices, which are often rooted in child-centered education principles. Philosophically significant comments from children frequently offer profound insights and opportunities for meaningful dialogue. However, these moments are often "hidden" and disregarded as a result of educators' focus on delivering as much content as possible (Nikolidaki, 2022, 2023).

Emergent philosophizing refers to the spontaneous and exploratory philosophical inquiries and thoughts of young children (Nikolidaki, 2023; Theodoropoulou & Nikolidaki, 2017). Engaging with children in this way helps educators develop the skill of listening for these philosophical moments. This approach, which I term *philosophical listening or listening philosophically* (Nikolidaki, 2023), highlights the importance of recognizing and valuing philosophical

reflections that emerge naturally in children's conversations and interactions highlighting the "here and now". Emergent philosophizing is a new concept used to describe these moments, grounded in theories of thinking as: (a) action in the Deweyan sense, (b) questioning as a way of life, and c) emergence as articulated by Deleuze (1964) (Nikolidaki, 2023; Theodoropoulou & Nikolidaki, 2017;).

Emergent philosophizing posits that children naturally ask philosophical questions or express philosophical thoughts during play and interaction, often without being aware of their philosophical significance. Children's philosophizing, whether emerging through their dialogues and play or facilitated by P4C inquiries, requires a distinct mode of listening. *Philosophical listening* is a form of attentive engagement that enables adults—particularly teachers and parents—to approach children's ideas with naiveté, openness, and alertness. This type of listening allows them to:

- Perceive children's ideas as if encountering them for the first time, seeking to clarify and explore them further while striving to understand these ideas from the child's perspective.
- Recognize potential philosophical elements within children's dialogues, comments, questions, and play.
- Elaborate on children's ideas by asking follow-up questions and actively listening to their responses (Nikolidaki, 2023).

Adult educators often ask children, *"What is it?"* as if assuming that children's thoughts must correspond to something that can be perceived by adults or at least something that can be translated into words (Haynes & Carvalho, 2023). In their attempts to interpret children's ideas, adults frequently "translate" what children mean by asking questions such as, *"Do you mean...?"*—ultimately imposing their own perspectives on children's words (Lone, 2021). This raises a critical question: Are teachers genuinely fascinated by children's ideas, or are they more captivated by their own abilities as listeners and interpreters of meaning? As Haynes and Carvalho (2023) point out, *"The rush of discovering, naming, owning, showing, sharing... are these obstacles to listening?"* (p. 5).

Philosophical listening extends beyond careful attention to children's words; it requires an openness to the philosophical depth that may be subtly embedded in their ideas. By fostering this mode of listening, educators can

formulate follow-up questions that clarify and deepen children's philosophical engagement. Moreover, engaging in philosophical listening allows teachers to develop a more profound understanding of children's ways of thinking while simultaneously reflecting on and reshaping their own perspectives in response to children's insights. Ultimately, philosophical listening offers a transformative approach to engaging with children's philosophical exploration. This type of attentive listening highlights the essential role of future educators in supporting children as they articulate their thoughts, pose questions, and engage in meaningful conceptual exploration connected to their experiences (Hand, 2009).

Philosophy for or with children (P4wC) typically takes place in structured sessions facilitated by an adult, such as a teacher or P4C practitioner, with the deliberate aim of engaging in philosophical dialogue. However, this approach often rests on two implicit assumptions: (a) that philosophy is introduced into schools by teachers, and (b) that philosophy does not already exist naturally among children (Haynes & Carvalho, 2023). In contrast, *emergent philosophizing* refers to unplanned, spontaneous philosophical reflections that arise organically in everyday interactions (Johansson, 2022; Nikolidaki, 2018, 2023). These emergent moments can either serve as a springboard for more formal P4wC sessions—if recognized by the educator—or be valued in their own right, without the need for formal structuring. They are particularly valuable as they reflect children's immediate needs and interests. Unfortunately, such moments are often overlooked because educators have not been trained to notice and respond to them (Nikolidaki, 2023). Teachers are not accustomed to listening and engaging in mini-philosophical dialogues with a child or a group of children during an activity that was not selected for philosophical inquiry. Thus, emergent philosophizing is not opposed to but complements P4wC. It underscores the importance of attentive listening on the part of the educator, ensuring that the philosophical potential of children's remarks is not lost.

Listening philosophically is rooted in the concept of listening as a form of thinking (Fiumara, 1995). This demands the listener's active engagement, requiring them to focus, interpret the message, and relate it to their prior knowledge and beliefs (Fiumara, 1995). Listening, therefore, becomes a simultaneous act of meaning-making. For prospective preschool teachers, the

ability to listen philosophically enables a deeper understanding of children's perspectives and fosters a child-centered approach to lesson planning (Nikolidaki, 2023).

There are three primary benefits from listening to children philosophically.

First, when children feel that their voices matter, it boosts their confidence in expressing their thoughts and ideas, thereby enhancing their self-esteem. Research suggests that participating in philosophical discussions can significantly enhance children's self-esteem and contribute positively to their socio-emotional development (Haynes, 2008; Sasseville, 1994; Trickey & Topping, 2006). When children are listened to and valued, they are more likely to continue articulating their thoughts and refining them, particularly with the teacher's facilitation (Splitter & Sharp, 1995). This process fosters children's ability to listen deeply to themselves and others, enabling collaboration and motivating them to engage more actively in the learning process because it aligns with their needs and interests (Haynes, 2008).

Second, listening to children philosophically helps them gain a deeper understanding of themselves and others. This practice benefits both children and philosophy itself. Children learn to reflect on their experiences, articulate their arguments, and provide reasons for their perspectives (Haynes, 2008; Kennedy, 1999; Laverty, 2004). At the same time, philosophy gains from children's fresh ideas, novel perspectives, and diverse viewpoints, which are worth further analysis and respect (Gregory, 2009; Murris, 2016). Philosophizing becomes an integral part of children's lives—through play, reflection, questioning, admiration, respect, and inquiry (Cam, 2020).

Finally, listening to children philosophically enables teachers to better understand their students' needs and interests, design meaningful activities, and participate in philosophical dialogues. These dialogues allow time for reflection on their role as educators (Lipman, 2003). More importantly, teachers learn to appreciate and celebrate the philosophical moments that arise in the classroom, which serve as reminders of their essential role—not merely delivering lesson plans but being inspired and learning from their students (Kennedy, 1999; Splitter & Sharp, 1995). Philosophical moments also reconnect teachers with their own

childhood experiences and help them keep their inner child alive (Egan, 1988, 1993; Haynes, 2008; Murris, 2016).

The study was conducted during the academic spring semester of 2022 and centered on training student-teachers to listen philosophically to preschool children during their obligatory kindergarten practicum. The research addressed the following questions:

- Can student-teachers identify philosophical moments that occur or could potentially occur among children in the classroom?
- Can student-teachers develop questions and activities that promote children's philosophizing and further their thinking?

research design

This study involved 125 second-year undergraduate student-teachers completing internships in public kindergartens in Rethymno, Crete (Nikolidaki, 2023). As part of the Bachelor of Arts program at the Faculty of Preschool Education, University of Crete, students are required to complete internships in local kindergartens. The internship program is organized into three stages. During the first stage, students work in groups to observe teaching practices and children's learning processes. In the following stages (second and third), they design and implement lesson plans in kindergarten settings. The research specifically focused on training first-year students to develop observational skills, practice attentive listening, and recognize philosophical moments within the classroom context (Nikolidaki, 2023). While the methodology has been extensively detailed in a previous paper (Nikolidaki, 2023), this study presents aspects of the methodological approach that were previously underexplored. Additionally, the findings are original and being published here for the first time.

For clarity, the term "student-teachers" refers to the second-year students in the preschool education program. The terms "children" and "teachers" refer to kindergarten pupils and their educators, respectively. The term "student-practitioners" designates four-year undergraduate students who, as part of their coursework, implement lesson plans in kindergartens and are observed by the second-year student-teachers. This study explores the integration of philosophizing with children into the education of prospective preschool teachers,

with a particular emphasis on its incorporation into their practical training. During the semester-long internships, student-teachers observed children during both play and structured instructional activities. This observational practice is well-established in Rethymno's kindergartens, and children are accustomed to having students present in their classrooms. The student-teachers recorded comments, questions, and dialogues among the children that were, or had the potential to be, philosophically significant. When children inquired about the purpose of the note-taking, the student-teachers explained that they wanted to ensure that such meaningful thoughts would not be forgotten.

Qualitative data for the study were collected through the students' written observations and my own fieldnotes. These data were gathered across three main contexts: (1) laboratory lessons designed to prepare student-teachers for their internships; (2) kindergarten classrooms where the student-teachers' observations were conducted; and (3) laboratory sessions aimed at facilitating student-teachers' reflections on their observations based in kindergartens (Nikolidaki, 2023).

The student-teachers were already familiar with observational methods and maintaining a research log. During the preparatory phase, prior to entering the kindergartens, students participated in introductory laboratory sessions where they were introduced to Lipman's theory of philosophical thinking, which emphasizes critical, creative, caring, and collaborative thought. Additionally, they were trained in recognizing philosophical questions (Cam, 2006; Haynes, 2008). Students were also familiarized with philosophical incidents among children, drawing primarily from my experience as a P4C practitioner and preschool educator. Drawing on my experience as both a researcher and a former kindergarten teacher, I provided examples of children's emergent philosophizing from my time in the preschool classroom. Students were tasked with analyzing these examples to identify philosophical concepts, evaluate children's arguments, and propose questions, follow-up inquiries, and activities to extend children's thinking (Nikolidaki, 2023).

Student observations in kindergartens took place once a week over an eight-week period. These observations were supplemented by eight laboratory sessions in which student-teachers: (a) engaged in oral analysis of philosophical concepts emerging from children's interactions, (b) examined children's dialogues

and arguments, (c) developed philosophical questions and follow-up activities to stimulate further philosophizing, and (d) reflected on the roles of both the teacher and the student-practitioner. Student-teachers were given the opportunity to engage with children in kindergartens and, in some cases, to intervene by asking questions to stimulate further thinking. However, they were instructed not to interrupt organized activities led by the classroom teacher or the student-practitioner. Regarding data analysis, the researcher collected student-teachers' observations from kindergartens and categorized their responses during laboratory sessions using content analysis. Detailed examples of this content analysis, as applied to student-teachers' responses and reflections in university laboratory sessions, are presented in the findings.

ethical approval

Ethical approval was obtained from all participants. Specifically, permission to conduct the research was granted by the Chair and the Assembly of the School of Education, Department of Preschool Education at the University of Crete. Student teachers consented to the use of data collected from their teaching interventions and observations in kindergartens, which would be further processed and analysed by the researcher. To protect the identities of children and preschool teachers at the kindergartens, all the data has been de-identified.

findings

The students' observations in the kindergartens uncovered numerous moments from children's daily experiences that either embodied or had the potential for philosophical exploration (Nikolidaki, 2023). Below, I present three philosophical moments among children as recorded by the student-teachers during their observations at kindergartens and discussed further during the laboratory lessons at the university.

1st recorded incident title: rainbows!

Lina was painting a rainbow when Rena sat down next to her. She picked up some pastel crayons and started drawing a rainbow too. Lina began to complain and the following dialogue too place:

R: What are you drawing?

L: A rainbow.

R: I am going to draw a rainbow too. *(She moves her chair closer to Lina and starts to draw.)*

L: What are you doing? *(She speaks loudly.)* Why are you copying me?

R: I am not doing that. I am drawing my own rainbow.

L: NO, you are copying me. You want to draw the same rainbow as me.

R: No, that's not true. Mine is different. I am going to use different colours.

L: But we have the same colours. How can it be different?

R: I' ll add clouds and a unicorn so that it won't be the same as yours.

L: Good, then. Let's paint.

2nd recorded incident title: too dirty to be a king

Two girls, Maria and Kalliopi, are playing in the playground. Maria is pretending to be the princess and Kalliopi is the princess's daughter. Paul approaches them and asks to join, wanting to play the king. The girls, however, disagree leading to the following dialogue:

M: You can't play with us.

P: Why not? I can be the king.

M: You are too dirty to be a king. *(The girls point to his dirty clothes)*

Paul begins to cry

Student-practitioner: What's going on here? Why is Paul crying?

M: We don't want him to play with us.

Student: Why not? We have agreed that all the children are friends and can play together.

K: He wants to be the king, but he can't be a real king.

Student-practitioner: Why not?

M: His clothes are too dirty.

Student-practitioner: Well… maybe this king doesn't have any servants and has to do the work himself— that's why his clothes are dirty.

(The girls pause to think for a moment)

M: Fine, then. He can play with us. Come on Paul, let's play!

3rd incident title: dolls are for the house

Diana, a preschool girl, brought her dolls to school, even though it is against the rules. This is the dialogue between the teacher and the girl.

Teacher: Diana, why did you bring your dolls to school?

Diana: They are new. My aunt gave them to me as a present yesterday.

Teacher: They are very nice, but we have agreed that we don't bring our toys to school.

Diana: I wanted to show them to my friends and play with them.

Teacher: There are plenty of toys to play with at school. Dolls like these are meant to stay at home. *(The teacher takes the dolls and walks away).*

The three incidents were further discussed at the laboratory lessons. Students were invited to work in groups of 3–4 people. Each group selected one of the three incidents. They were invited to: (a) identify philosophical concepts that emerge from each incident, (b) formulate philosophical questions that could explore further each incident and involve children into critical and creative thinking through philosophizing and, (c) develop activities that could further children's thinking. Table 1 presents excerpts from the student discussions during laboratory sessions at the university.

Table 1. Philosophical concepts, questions and activities by the student-teachers during the laboratory lessons

	Philosophical concepts that emerge from each incident as identified by the student-teachers	**Philosophical questions formulated by the student-teachers**	**Potential activities, suggested by the student-teachers that could further children's thinking**
1st Recorded incident: "Rainbows"	Copying - Originality Same – different Right and wrong Identity	• Can two rainbows be the same?	*Play the "right and wrong game":* Show children pictures depicting actions that are either right or wrong. Discuss what makes each action right or wrong. Some

		• Is it wrong to draw what your friend is drawing?	examples could include: a) A child crossing the street when the traffic light is red. b) A child eating too many sweets, etc.
2nd Recorded incident "Too dirty to be a king"	Kings and Princesses Real Dirty-clean Friendship Being and pretending to be	• What makes a king, king? • Are the children real kings and princesses? • Can a king be dirty? • Who decides who is the king and the princess? • Can all children be friends with each other?	*Play a Quiz with Children on What Makes a King:* Discuss the qualities that make a king, such as wearing a crown, wearing beautiful clothes, holding a royal scepter, being kind, being powerful, and having a kingdom, among others. Do these qualities hold the same importance? Children provide arguments.
3rd Recorded incident: "Dolls are for the house"	Rules- Agreements Sharing Right and wrong	• What is a rule? • What are the rules for? • Is it wrong to bring toys from home at school? • Who decides which are the rules? • Who decides what is right or wrong?	*Organize a Weekly "Show and Tell" Session:* Allow children to bring toys from home to play with and share. During the session, they can discuss why they chose these specific toys and what makes them special to them. Comments that could be philosophically fruitful may emerge.

Student-teachers were also invited to discuss each further incident. As far as the first incident is concerned, student-teachers analyzed each sentence of children's argumentation and shared their ideas, comments and further questions. Regarding incidents 2 and 3, student-teachers were invited to comment orally on how the student-practitioner (incident 2) and the classroom teacher (incident 3) tried to resolve each conflict. Tables 2, 3 and 4 summarize the collaborative work done on each incident during the laboratory lesson.

Table 2. Analyzing the 1st incident with the student-teachers during the laboratory lesson.

Children's words	**Analysis and interpretations of children's words by the student-teachers**	**Student-teachers' comments/ questions**	**Researcher's comments/ questions for further thinking**
L: Why are you copying me?	Question that addresses a problem	"It's Lina's interpretation of what Rena does. She thinks that her friend copies her rainbow." "This is the starting point of a quarrel."	
R: I am not doing that. *I am drawing my own rainbow.*	Denial of the problem (copying her friend) Giving an explanation	"Rena emphasizes the phrase "my own rainbow" "Yes, I agree. She implies that each rainbow is unique."	
L: NO, you are copying me. *You want to draw the same rainbow as me.*	Rejection of the explanation (problem of copying remains) Statement that shows Lina's objection.	"I believe the second sentence is central to the quarrel. Lina wants to be unique and insists that no one else should draw a rainbow like hers."	
R: No, that's not true. Mine is different. *I am going to use different colours.*	"Rena rejects Lina's comment and insists that her rainbow is different." Forming an argument: Using different colours to distinguish between the two rainbows.	"Well, Rena presents a valid argument here, but often we fail to pay attention to what children say, or even recognize that they have arguments to support their opinions."	
L: But we have the same colours. *How can it be different?*	Counter argument: We all have the same colours Question that requests the criteria of being different while using the same materials	"The thought that we have the same materials and the question of how we can differentiate them is truly crucial and philosophical. However, when such moments arise, the philosophical element may be missed if we do not pay close attention."	

R: I' ll add clouds and a unicorn so it won't be the same as yours	New argument: The addition of extra elements that differentiate the two rainbows.	"The more you add, the more distinct you become." "This is not a 'less is more' approach, but it appears to be a compelling argument"	
L: Good then. Let's paint.	Resolution: "It appears that Lina was persuaded by Rena's argument, allowing them to resolve the issue without the teacher's intervention."	"Children resolved their own quarrel."	• Shall we allow time for children to self-regulate? • What impact such incidents have on you as a teacher? • How do you find the process of analyzing children's discourse?

Table 3. Students' reflection on the student-practitioner's interventions in the 2nd Incident

Student-practitioner's interventions	**The reason for the student-practitioner 's intervention, according to the Student-teachers**	**Does the student-practitioner listen philosophically to the children? (Student-teachers' answers)**	**The researcher's comments and further food for thinking**
What's going on here? Why is Paul crying?	Asking the reason/ Trying to resolve a Conflict situation	Yes, because the children are invited to describe what is going on	
Why not?	Asking for clarification	Yes, because children are invited to defend their choices	
Why not? We have agreed that all the children are friends and can play together.	Resolving the situation Reminding the children of the established rules and agreements in the classroom	Yes, because the student-practitioner underlines what has been mutually agreed *(most students agreed with this idea)* No, because the student provides an answer and the children do not speak.	• Who are the 'all'? • Can all the children be friends with each other and play together? • Who provides the answer? • Are the children thinking for themselves?
Well… maybe this king doesn't have any servants and has to do the work himself- that's why his clothes are dirty.	Providing a creative reason that can help children resolve the situation	It is the student –practitioner who gives the answer. Isn't it though a creative way to resolve a conflict?	• Who is being creative, the student or the kids? • Who is providing the answers? • Who is solving the problem • Are the children thinking critically for themselves?

Table 4. Student-teachers' reflection on the teacher's interventions in the 3rd incident

Teacher's action	Reason for teacher's intervention according to the Student-teachers	Does the teacher listen philosophically to the children? (Student-teachers' answers)	Child's response	Child's response as interpreted by the student-teachers
Why did you bring your dolls to school?	Question. Looking for clarification	The teacher is ready to listen to what the child has to say. This is not necessarily philosophical listening.	They are new. My aunt gave them to me as a present yesterday.	Child's Explanation: New toys/ Recent present/ Present given by a beloved person
They are very nice, but we have agreed that we don't bring our toys to school.	Double statement: The teacher acknowledges the dolls but also reminds the children of the established classroom rules.	She has listened to the child and responds	I wanted to show them to my friends and play with them.	Justifying the reason the child has brought her dolls at school (show and play)
There are plenty of toys to play with at school. Dolls like these are meant to stay at home.	Offering a new alternative. Dogmatic statement: Dolls are for house Resolving the conflict by taking away the dolls	No. The teacher sticks to her own perspective.		

Below there is an extract from the dialogue in the classroom among the researcher and the student-teachers referring to the last incident.

Researcher: Did the teacher listen to the children philosophically? What do you think?

Student-teacher1: The teacher could have allowed some time for children to play with the dolls. She sticks to her point of view and didn't change her mind. Perhaps, she could have been less strict.

Student-teacher2: Yes, but what if every child brought their toys to school? They could be lost, stolen, or broken and these are valid reasons for further quarreling among children.

Student-teacher3: Maybe the teacher did not listen philosophically to the children but she prevented a potential quarrel. Isn't that important?

Researcher: What do you think?

Student-teacher4: Perhaps we need to find a balance. I think the teacher was polite but firm. I liked the earlier suggestion about the "show and tell" activity. It strikes a good balance—once a week, children can bring their toys, share them with their classmates, and discuss them. This could create opportunities for deeper philosophical questions to emerge from their toy presentations.

Student-teacher5: Yes, I agree. It is a win-win situation. The children get to bring their toys and share why they're their favorites. By listening carefully, we can learn more about their needs and interests. This is philosophical on its own, isn't it? I mean, maybe we become better teachers by simply listening to them.

Student-teacher2: I agree, but there's still a chance that toys could be mistreated, and arguments might arise. Sure, we should create space for the children's interests, but we also have a curriculum to follow. We can't spend too much time on this.

Student-teacher6: I think we are more flexible with time compared to primary school teachers. What's wrong if we spend time on something that children are genuinely interested in? Isn't that what we're supposed to aim for anyway?

discussion

This study is primarily exploratory and qualitative, relying on self-reported reflections and the researcher's observations. Consequently, there is no external validation or comparative measure to confirm the research outcomes with absolute certainty. However, observations by student-teachers in kindergarten settings suggest that they effectively learn to listen attentively to young children

and to identify potential philosophical moments. In other words, these student-teachers become capable of recognizing philosophical opportunities that might otherwise go unnoticed.

For instance, activities such as drawing rainbows, bringing dolls from home to school, or accepting "kings" with dirty clothes are not immediately recognized as straightforward philosophical incidents. Yet, by practicing philosophical listening with openness and naiveté, student-teachers are able to discern children's perspectives, diverse points of view, and underlying issues that may lead to potential conflicts. For example, while an adult might consider the act of copying a rainbow insignificant, children regard it as serious and strive for originality to differentiate themselves. Why is it that when children copy one another it appears trivial, yet when adults replicate another's work it becomes a serious issue? What if adults copy someone else's work without proper citation—would that not be classified as plagiarism? Could it be that children are similarly incorporating elements from the adult world into their play and activities? Such subtleties might go unnoticed without the deliberate application of philosophical listening.

In addition to formulating philosophical questions, student-teachers have shown the ability to analyze children's arguments and design activities that encourage deeper thinking. They contended that engaging in philosophical inquiry allows children to articulate their ideas more effectively while also enhancing teachers' understanding of children's thinking. The research questions appear to be answered positively, as students demonstrated the ability to recognize philosophical moments occurring—or potentially emerging—among children in the classroom. This is evident in the incidents they documented and discussed during university sessions throughout the semester (Nikolidaki, 2023).

In their written reflections, student-teachers indicated that the introductory lessons on the principles of Philosophy for/with Children helped them distinguish philosophical moments from those that were more psychologically oriented. They also highlighted that listening enabled them to discern philosophical elements in children's comments by focusing on the following:

- Are abstract concepts mentioned or implied in children's dialogues?

- Do children ask puzzling questions that are difficult to answer?
- Do children make thought-provoking comments?
- Do student-teachers feel awkward or perplexed by unusual, unexpected, or challenging statements from children?

Student-teachers emphasized that adopting a mindset of alertness and focus enabled them to identify such moments more effectively. They redefined "listening" as a deliberate, open, and attentive process—what they termed listening "care-full-y." In their view, this constitutes philosophical listening. This perspective aligns with Lone's understanding of a good listener as someone who is willing to "re-examine one's own opinions and, potentially, to have one's self, one's character, transformed by what one hears" (Lone, 2021, p. 173).

Regarding the second research question, students could develop questions and activities that promote children's philosophizing. One such activity, "show and tell," provides a platform for children to share their favorite toys, discuss them with peers, and potentially generate philosophical dialogue. When incorporated as a weekly routine, this activity encourages children to articulate their thoughts and listen attentively to others. Student-teachers also proposed activities such as discussing books children borrow and read over the weekend, which could similarly foster philosophical thinking and listening.

From a methodological perspective, training in philosophical listening offers significant benefits for student-teachers. It helps them focus on what might otherwise be overlooked in children's dialogue and enables them to probe deeper into children's thoughts by asking questions that encourage elaboration. Although the training is brief, it is highly structured with clear objectives. Students reported that learning to listen philosophically is a valuable skill that gives purpose and meaning to their teaching practice. However, they also noted challenges, particularly the effort required to maintain constant alertness. Initially, many students were unsure about what to look for or whether certain incidents held philosophical significance. This uncertainty aligns with Barrow's argument that practitioners must cultivate and sustain critical reflexivity to avoid adopting an instrumental approach to philosophizing with children (Barrow, 2010). Some students expressed the need for occasional breaks during their time in

kindergartens. Nevertheless, many participants reflected that, over time, the process became less demanding as they developed a habit of attentive listening. They concluded that philosophical listening is challenging both to teach and to learn, yet it remains highly valuable for their personal development and for the children they instruct.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of this teaching and research project? The project presented several advantages for the student-teachers involved. During the laboratory lessons, students engaged in the philosophical conceptual analysis of children's dialogues. This included identifying arguments, analyzing their structure, and categorizing the types of arguments used by the children (see tables 2, 3 and 4).

Regarding the first incident (see table 2), students reported that the detailed analysis of children's arguments during the laboratory sessions facilitated the identification of potential philosophical themes (e.g., copying versus originality), which might have otherwise remained unnoticed. It appears that analyzing children's dialogues and reflecting upon their comments, even retrospectively during the laboratory lessons at the university, enables student-teachers to develop a heightened awareness of the significance of children's words and ideas. Although the students may not yet possess the ability to extract philosophical concepts or pose philosophical questions during live dialogues with children, the practice in laboratory lessons allows them to recognize and highlight key moments when they occur. The more frequently this practice is undertaken, the more effective the student-teachers become as listeners. Listening becomes a habit, an 'exis' in the Aristotelian sense. Furthermore, the student-teachers recognized that children can engage in self-regulation and present reasoned arguments during their dialogues, rather than merely engaging in unstructured conversation. The student-teachers noticed that the researcher's questions—such as those examining the impact of these incidents on their roles as educators—enhanced their appreciation of children's perspectives and underscored the critical importance of attentive listening to what might otherwise remain hidden. They expressed gratitude for the researcher's feedback and inquiries, which enriched their understanding of how philosophical questions can be meaningfully framed and posed in educational contexts. Furthermore, some students highlighted the

significance of listening not only to what children explicitly say but also to what they choose to withhold or express through silence (Spyrou, 2016).

With respect to the second incident (see table 3), the student-teachers reflected on the student-practitioner's interventions, emphasizing the importance of discerning when to intervene and when to allow children the time and space for self-regulation. This reflection contributed to the development of metacognitive skills, such as recognizing and supporting self-regulation processes in children (Daniel et al., 2005). However, a dilemma persisted regarding the student-practitioner's intervention. The majority of the students regarded the intervention as both creative and necessary, while only a few acknowledged that it was the student-practitioner, rather than the children themselves, who had provided the solution. This suggests that there remains a strong belief that the teacher should be the one to offer the most creative and effective solutions to potential problems. Was the explanation offered by the student-practitioner incorrect? The proposition that a king, having few servants, must perform much of the work himself, thereby resulting in his dirty clothes, is indeed creative. However, one might question whether the children themselves could have posed the question, "Can a king have dirty clothes?" and explored the concept further. According to Kizel (2016), philosophizing with children (and, by extension, listening to them philosophically) can promote self-directed learning both within and outside of schools. In this particular example, learning arises from the children's own questions rather than from supplying them with a set of predetermined answers (Kizel, 2016). The student-practitioner could act as a coordinator rather than as a "judge."

Concerning the third incident (see table 4), the student-teachers observed that the teacher's intervention could have been approached more philosophically by offering alternative activities or posing deeper questions. Nonetheless, this incident prompted a stimulating dialogue among the student-teachers regarding the boundaries of such interventions. Should children be permitted to bring toys to school? While procedural issues such as the potential loss, damage, or theft of toys could arise, these concerns might also give rise to valuable philosophical improvisational dialogues and offer opportunities for addressing conflicts through conversation. The teacher regarded the dolls as a potential disruption, perceiving

their presence as illegitimate in the classroom and thereby reinforcing the social boundary between home and school. A "show and tell activity" instead, within a community of inquiry, could serve as a "cognitive shelter" for children's sharing their ideas and experiences (Chetty, 2014). However, does holding a "show and tell" activity once a week create sufficient time and space for children to express their thoughts and be truly listened to? It appears that allocating a single weekly session is inadequate, considering that children deserve continual opportunities to be heard, just as adults are. While adults may grant permission for children to "show and tell," this does not guarantee that children will be genuinely listened to. Moreover, adults often maintain certain assumptions about children or childhood that can affect how accurately they listen (Kennedy, 2015). Even when children are heard, student-teachers are encouraged to re-examine what it means to listen to them. As Haynes and Carvalho (2023) inquire, "are we listening for particular (right) answers or (suitable) behaviours, rather than listening to children from a position of genuine curiosity?" (p. 10).

Student-teachers found the process of extracting abstract concepts and formulating philosophical questions particularly engaging. While they did not always pose such questions directly to the children, they reported in their written reflections that these practices enhanced their flexibility and capability in asking meaningful questions, building on children's comments, and developing follow-up questions. Student-teachers were often astonished by the depth and originality of children's thoughts, as well as the potential for philosophical discussions in early childhood classrooms. This sense of surprise suggests that they had not anticipated young children to produce such insightful and thought-provoking remarks. This, in turn, may reflect an implicit assumption that young children lack the capacity for philosophical thought, or it may indicate an underlying model of distance and hierarchy between adults and children—one in which adults facilitate and children are facilitated—a dynamic that does not reflect a genuine attitude of listening (Haynes & Kohan, 2018; Lone, 2021). As Demozzi and Ilardo (2020) aptly observe, "children may be freer than us, but they are living within our 'frames'" (p. 15). It is, therefore, the responsibility of prospective teachers to ensure that children's voices are carefully listened to, even when the

questions they raise are unsettling or challenging to address (Chetty & Suissa, 2017).

Philosophizing in the classroom demonstrates that abstract philosophical concepts can connect meaningfully with children's everyday questions and lived experiences (Lipman, 2003; Matthews, 1980). Learning to listen philosophically can help student-teachers challenge their preconceived notions about what children can discuss. The main advantage of this research is that it provides an example of a teaching methodology for listening, enabling students to recognize and appreciate philosophical comments made by children and integrate these moments into their teaching. In essence, training in philosophical listening encourages student-teachers to "unlearn" entrenched beliefs about education and children's capacities (Kohan et al., 2017).

The findings also support the idea that philosophy and philosophizing provide fertile ground for early childhood education. Preschool teachers, who tend to be more adaptable, improvisational, and open to experimentation than teachers of older students, may be particularly well-suited to engaging in philosophical dialogue with young children (Kenyon, 2019).

Despite its advantages, the project also had notable limitations. As a case study, its findings are not generalizable without further research. Additionally, the study lacks statistical evidence to support its conclusions, and there is room for methodological refinement, particularly in the training of philosophical listening. Due to the structure of the module and the requirement that all student-teachers receive the same training, it was not possible to divide the group into control and experimental groups. Although all students were trained to recognize philosophical moments, a comparative study could not be conducted to determine whether this ability develops as a result of the training itself or is an inherent skill.

Furthermore, the assessment involves a degree of subjectivity, as the data are based on student-teachers' self-reports, reflections, and the researcher's field notes. This reliance on self-reported data may introduce bias or inconsistencies in determining what qualifies as a "philosophical moment." Additionally, identifying what is or could be considered philosophical in children's words—and who has the authority to make this determination—remains a challenge. Finally,

the analysis of children's dialogues with student-teachers reflects the latter's subjective interpretations of what children express.

One identified challenge is helping student-teachers learn to refrain from solving problems themselves, as seen in the second incident. They often intervene more than necessary, failing to allow children the opportunity to self-regulate. This behavior reflects a teacher-centered approach, wherein the teacher is perceived as the sole problem-solver in the classroom. Although the solution provided by the student-practitioner in the second incident was creative and well-received by the children, student-teachers could benefit from learning to step back and encourage children to take more initiative in resolving their own conflicts.

Moreover, there is a need to further convince student-teachers that philosophical listening, while demanding and challenging, yields significant long-term benefits for both teachers and children. Research has shown that philosophical listening requires educators to adopt a mindset of openness, patience, and sustained attention, which can lead to deeper engagement and more meaningful learning experiences for students (Haynes, 2008; Lipman, 2003). Many student-teachers acknowledged the value of philosophical listening; however, they also noted its initial difficulty and the effort required to consistently maintain focus and patience, a challenge often cited in the early stages of implementing Philosophy for Children (Kennedy, 1999).

In conclusion, while the project demonstrated the potential of philosophical listening to enrich early childhood education, it also highlighted areas for further improvement and research. The findings align with existing literature suggesting that with continued training, guided practice, and reflective dialogue, student-teachers can develop the skills and mindset needed to foster meaningful philosophical dialogue in the classroom (Canuto, 2015; Murris, 2016; Splitter & Sharp, 1995). Furthermore, such training not only benefits children but also contributes to the professional growth of educators, as they learn to navigate the complexities of facilitating philosophical inquiry (Haynes, 2008; Kennedy, 1999).

conclusion

This paper emphasizes the significance of preparing future kindergarten teachers to engage with children's voices through a philosophical lens. By

attending to the emergent philosophizing that naturally arises from children, teachers can transform their teaching practices, making them more engaging and meaningful for both students and educators. When children experience careful listening, they come to understand that their thoughts are valuable and worthy of attention, which enhances their self-esteem and confidence. Such experiences also encourage children to listen to others and treat their peers with respect. Over time, they develop into thoughtful individuals who carefully consider others' perspectives and use reasoned arguments to support their views.

For trainee teachers, listening attentively to children provides valuable insights into the assumptions and diverse ways children think. This practice not only deepens teachers' understanding of their students but also strengthens the teacher-child relationship. By listening closely and providing children with the space to philosophize, teachers can adapt their lessons to better align with children's interests and needs, ultimately making learning more engaging and relevant. More importantly, teachers develop the ability to truly listen to their pupils, fostering both their personal growth as individuals and their professional development as educators.

There remains significant room for further research on how philosophical listening could be systematically integrated into core pedagogy courses. However, this study offers practical recommendations, summarized as follows:

- Philosophical listening is a key skill in pedagogy and early childhood education courses and should be explicitly introduced by: (a) assigning readings by P4C philosophers, theorists, and practitioners on philosophical listening to help student-teachers grasp its theoretical underpinnings, and (b) incorporating case studies and transcriptions of children's dialogues to illustrate the impact of philosophical listening on children's learning and development.
- This study demonstrates that laboratory workshop sessions enabled student-teachers to actively listen to and reflect on children's arguments, identify philosophical concepts, pose philosophical questions, and design activities that further children's thinking.

- Integrating philosophical listening into student-teachers' kindergarten classroom observations allowed them to: (a) practice real-time philosophical listening to children's natural dialogues, (b) identify moments where philosophical themes emerged, (c) occasionally engage in dialogues with children by asking follow-up questions, (d) analyze children's reasoning and arguments, and (e) assess and reflect on their own listening approach.
- Fostering a culture of inquiry and reflection may be proved to be a long-term benefit for student-teachers, as it enables them to share and analyze philosophical moments they encounter.

Even though listening philosophically to pupils is demanding and requires attention, focus, patience, and persistence, it is an essential skill for prospective teachers to develop. While it may be frustrating that student-teachers are not always able to respond to children's comments philosophically in real time, consistent practice helps them become more focused and attentive listeners, ultimately enhancing their effectiveness as educators.

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