

**review 1****reviewer:** sofia nikolidaki**status:** publishable with revisions

## questioning techniques in a philosophical group-discussion scaffolding estonian preschoolers critical thinking and reasoning

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**1) adequação do artigo à *childhood & philosophy***

Sim

**2) pertinência e atualidade do tema**

Sim

**3) estrutura, argumentação e consistência do texto**

**3.1) o resumo sintetiza adequadamente os principais aspectos abordados no artigo?**

Sim

**3.2) a abordagem está adequadamente confrontada com bibliografia atual?**

Sim

**3.3) os objetivos do artigo estão bem definidos?**

Sim

**3.4) as ideias estão claras e bem desenvolvidas?**

Em parte

**3.5) os argumentos estão bem fundamentados?**

Em parte

**3.6) as conclusões estão expressas com clareza?**

Em parte

**4) outros aspectos**

There are several grammatical and syntactical errors that need to be corrected. For instance, p.3 conclusoins, efective/ p. 7 and can to be, consciously/ p.12 Tabel 1, About what can you understand that there is disturbance ?, Guides to tell..../ p.16 Another interesting finding surprised in this study... etc.

In addition, some references mentioned in the main text are not included in the reference list at the end (for e.g Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

### **general comments**

This is a very interesting and valuable piece of research that I read with great interest. The paper is certainly suitable for publication, provided that some revisions are made.

### **aims of the study**

One of the research questions posed is: Which questioning techniques, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours of a discussion leader, used in a group discussion, help scaffold children to answer and to reason?

In the discussion section, the author is encouraged to clarify and differentiate between questioning techniques on the one hand, and the discussion leader's attitudes and behaviours on the other. These elements are currently grouped together but may benefit from being analysed more distinctly, as they represent different dimensions of facilitation.

### **literature review**

The literature review could be made clearer in certain areas and more explicitly connected to the findings during the discussion section. For instance:

- Page 8: According to the text, "Wait Time 2" is defined as the time "between the child's response and the teacher's comment." Is it only the teacher who can comment, or might this be extended within the context of a philosophical community? How is "Wait Time 2" differentiated from "Wait Time 3"? Additionally, how do teachers determine how much time to allow before they respond or before allowing children to respond to one another? In this regard, the framework proposed by Walsh and Sattes (2005) seems more inclusive and coherent.
- Page 8: The framework of critical, creative, collaborative, and caring questioning could be effectively connected with the research findings in the discussion section. Drawing this link more explicitly would strengthen the coherence between theoretical framework and the research findings.

## **methodology**

### **participants**

It is not entirely clear how the children were divided into the five groups across the town and county kindergartens. For instance, were there three groups in the town kindergartens and two in the county kindergarten? Including a table that shows the distribution of participants across the different settings would help clarify this.

### **data collection**

It would be helpful to include a table showing how the 144 visits were distributed among the different groups of children in the town and county kindergartens. Additionally, further detail is needed on what each visit entailed. Did each visit involve carrying out the discussions, observing the children, taking notes, or all of these activities?

There is also a need for greater clarity regarding the number of researchers involved and their roles. Based on the current description, it appears that in some cases there were two researchers—one acting as the discussion leader and the other as an observer. The author should clarify these roles. Was the author of the paper the discussion leader? Who kept the research log, and when—during or after each session with the children?

The selection of the four specific occasions should also be clarified. Were they selected randomly or based on specific criteria? Similarly, the rationale for recording 20 observations needs to be explained. What were the selection criteria for the specific weeks (10th, 16th, 21st, and 25th)? Were these observations carried out by the second researcher? Were only these 20 sessions video-recorded, or were additional visits recorded or documented in another way?

### **topic selection**

The process by which discussion topics emerged also needs further clarification. The manuscript states: “Topics for discussion are chosen from the children’s environment, what is topical, age-appropriate, and raises questions.” This sentence would benefit from elaboration. Were the questions selected by the

discussion leader? Did the researcher follow a pre-determined agenda of topics? What served as the initial stimulus for each discussion with the children?

Moreover, were the children involved in selecting the topics, and if so, how? Clarifying whether the topics were chosen by the researcher, the children, or both would help the reader understand how the discussions were anchored in the children's interests and developmental levels. How was it ensured that the topics were relevant and meaningful to the participants?

Furthermore, presenting the weekly topics in bullet points would improve clarity and make the content easier to follow.

#### Content of Philosophical Group Discussions

The manuscript mentions that "the topic of philosophical group discussions was chosen according to the participants' age and interests and was related to everyday life and activities, as recommended in the Philosophy for Children (P4C) programme." Could the author elaborate further on these recommendations and cite relevant literature? Examples of how specific themes were linked to everyday contexts would also be beneficial.

### **data analysis**

#### **coding**

Could the author provide an example of a meaningful phrase from a child that was used as a unit of coding?

Clarification is also needed regarding how the coding process was conducted. Was the coding performed independently by two researchers and then compared? The manuscript states: "The coding of data involved two researchers. One researcher coded the entire data and the other 20% of the data to control and compare coding and categories. Differences were discussed and a consensus was reached in negotiations. Authentic examples of different observations are taken from all groups to illustrate results."

It would be useful to briefly justify why coding 20% of the data is considered sufficient to ensure inter-coder reliability. A reference here would help support this decision. Additionally, the phrase "to control coding among the researchers" could be clarified. While the intended meaning seems to be that the

second researcher verified the consistency and validity of the categories, it is not entirely clear as currently phrased.

## **results**

### **general**

There is no need to restate one of the aims of the study here, as they have already been clearly outlined in the introduction.

#### Table 1: Codes of Philosophical Dialogue Content

One of the most challenging aspects of content analysis lies in how codes are defined. In Table 1, certain codes appear to overlap or are insufficiently differentiated. For example:

- Code 3 (“guides to explain the concept”) and Code 4 (“guides to explain or to explain through description”) are not clearly distinct. Isn't a concept often explained through description? It would be helpful to clarify how these two types of guidance differ in practice.
- Code 7 (“guides to infer”) seems to involve reasoning. How is it different from Code 6 (“guides to reason”)?: The distinction between inference and reasoning should be better elaborated.
- Similarly, Code 9 (“guides to describe”) may significantly overlap with Code 4. Clearer distinctions are needed.

One possible way to address these overlaps is by selecting more precise, non-overlapping verbs and providing concrete examples for each code. If perfect separation is not feasible—which is often the case in qualitative analysis—this issue could be acknowledged in the limitations section.

#### **table 2: question types - open vs. closed**

A key concern involves the definition and classification of closed-ended questions. Further clarification is needed regarding how such questions are used in this study. Typically, a closed-ended question can be answered with a simple "yes" or "no" or a brief response. However, if it is followed by a probing or open-ended question (e.g., “Why?”), then it transforms into an open-ended inquiry.

For instance, codes 5.3 and 5.4, which involve hesitation and explanations from children, do not seem to fit the traditional definition of closed-ended questions. If follow-up questions were commonly used, it would be useful to explain how they were integrated into the dialogue and how they shifted the dynamic from closed to open questioning.

This point is central to the interpretation of the findings. If closed-ended questions in this study led to extended reasoning by children, this may be due not to the nature of the initial question, but rather to the follow-up interactions that prompted elaboration.

### **specific points:**

- Page 17: The statement that “some closed-ended questions guided children to compare two aspects” (e.g., function 2 in Table 2) also requires clarification. A comparison question may not be closed-ended, depending on how it is phrased and responded to. For example, asking “Must God lead, protect, or direct us?” could be closed if children are limited to choosing from those options. However, if they are invited to justify or reflect on their choice, it effectively becomes open.
- The formulation of the specific question itself may be leading. The phrasing could be seen as limiting children's responses to three predefined concepts, which may not align with their perspectives or interpretations.
- Page 18: When stating, “children gave answers to these questions in longer verbal responses and verbal reasons (groups 1, 4, 5 from 15th and 16th discussion),” it would greatly benefit the reader to include authentic examples of children's responses from these discussions.

### **on the discussion leader's role**

- Pages 18–19: The sentence “They also thought about the topic before the discussion, as they had prepared questions...” may create confusion. It seems to suggest that the children had prepared questions, which is unlikely. If, in fact, the researchers or the discussion leader prepared the questions in advance to avoid sharing their own views, this should be

clarified explicitly. Additionally, this practice may raise concerns regarding the spontaneity and philosophical openness of the dialogue, potentially limiting the dialogic character of the sessions. A more detailed explanation in the methodology section would help clarify the process.

### **on time for thinking and agreements**

- Page 19: The statement “Another questioning technique that is related to the topic was to give the children sufficient time” needs clarification. Allowing adequate time for thinking seems more a matter of facilitation attitude or practice rather than a “technique” per se. The author may wish to reconsider the term used here or justify its categorization.
- Similarly, the description of what children did as a “thinking experiment” could be questioned. It seems more accurate to describe it as formulating a hypothesis, especially in the way it is framed in the text.

### **discussion**

As a general comment, there should be a clearer connection between the goals of the research and the extent to which these goals have been achieved. Additionally, the findings should be more explicitly linked to the literature review. While this has been done to some extent, strengthening this connection would further enhance the study.

**Page 20:** I appreciated the inclusion of the figure, as long as it is understood as a single example that models how questions may function within a philosophical inquiry – not as a general norm to be followed in every inquiry with children. Perhaps this point could be included in the limitations section or added as a note to the figure on the same page.

**Page 22:** The author writes: “These closed-ended questions which guided children to compare, to explain, and to hesitate are contributing to reasoning skills in a similar way as an open-ended question.”

I agree with this observation; however, in this case, the so-called closed-ended questions are not truly closed anymore. A question remains closed

only if it receives a short answer with no further elaboration. When follow-up questions are added – such as "Why?" or "Can you give a reason?" – the original question transforms into an open-ended one. This transformation should be acknowledged.

### **conclusion**

There is not a conclusion at all. The author could include a conclusion which would benefit from a summary of the study's most important findings and strengths, as well as suggestions for future research. This would help to frame the significance of the work and its potential contribution to the field more clearly.