



Patrycja Aurelia Młynek

ORCID: 0000-0001-7885-2834

Uniwersytet Śląski w Katowicach

Philosophical Activity of Students with Different Educational Needs

Aktywność filozoficzna uczniów o zróżnicowanych potrzebach edukacyjnych

KEYWORDS

philosophy for children, early school education, philosophy, child's philosophizing, student with special educational needs

ABSTRACT

Philosophy for children has long been an element of pedagogical research in which children's philosophizing is treated as a method of their educating. The conducted research shows that philosophical reflections of children bring benefits in the implementation of some teaching content or support the social and emotional development of children. This study presents the results of qualitative research carried out to understand the philosophical activity of younger school-age children with different educational needs. The main problem was included in the question: What is the philosophical activity of students of younger school age with different educational needs? Participant observation was used in the conducted research procedure. The results of the research carried out in a group of 15 students of the second integrated grade showed that, in most cases, the philosophical activity of the respondents was very diverse, regardless of their educational needs. The only exception included students with a certificate on the need for special education who attended the philosophy classes in a very limited scope. The conducted research is an example of children's philosophical reflections.

SŁOWA KLUCZE ABSTRAKT

filozofia dla
dzieci, edukacja
wczesnoszkolna,
filozofia,
filozofowanie
dzieci, uczeń
ze specjalnymi
potrzebami
edukacyjnymi

Filozofia dla dzieci od dawna stanowi element badań pedagogicznych, w którym filozofowanie dzieci traktowane jest jako metoda kształcenia. Prowadzone badania wskazują, iż filozoficzne rozmyślenia dzieci przynoszą korzystne efekty w realizacji niektórych treści nauczania, czy wspomagają rozwój społeczny i emocjonalny dzieci. W niniejszym opracowaniu zaprezentowano wyniki badań jakościowych, których celem było poznanie aktywności filozoficznej dzieci w młodszym wieku szkolnym o zróżnicowanych potrzebach edukacyjnych. Problem główny został zawarty w pytaniu: Jaka jest aktywność filozoficzna uczniów w młodszym wieku szkolnym o zróżnicowanych potrzebach edukacyjnych? W prowadzonym postępowaniu badawczym zastosowano obserwację uczestniczącą. Wyniki badań przeprowadzonych w grupie 15 uczniów klasy drugiej integracyjnej wskazały, że w większości przypadków aktywność filozoficzna badanych przedstawiała się bardzo zróżnicowanie, niezależnie od ich potrzeb edukacyjnych. Wyjątek stanowili uczniowie posiadający orzeczenie o potrzebie kształcenia specjalnego, którzy w minimalnym stopniu uczestniczyli w zajęciach filozoficznych. Przeprowadzone badania stanowią przykład dziecięcych rozmyślań filozoficznych.

Assumptions of children's philosophy

The child's characteristic curiosity and will to explore the world through countless questions are the basis for the belief that children have a natural disposition towards philosophical inquiries. However, it is not only considered as a certain possibility of children's intellectual inquiries. It is also an element of pedagogical research in which children's philosophizing is treated as a method of their educating. It makes it possible to develop children's mental independence and broadly understood openness to the world. There are many more positive aspects of children's philosophical considerations, which is the starting point of many assumptions concerning children's philosophy.

One of the promoters of the idea of children's philosophy is Mathew Lipman – the author of a pilot project in 1970-1971, aiming to determine the possibility of teaching reasoning to fifth-grade children. The impulse to implement the project was the author's observation of the imperfections of the education system. According to Lipman, school teaches individual subjects but does not teach independent reasoning. It teaches children to think about history, social sciences, etc., but it does not teach thinking about thinking. It does not encourage the formation of independent judgments and does not instill pride in having one's own point of view. According to the author, this is the case, among other things, due to the concepts of developmental stages of Piaget's

child's thinking. By specifying children's concrete thinking and suggesting concrete-based learning, activities for developing children's thinking/reasoning were limited (Lipman 1976). Children's philosophizing is treated as a teaching method of pedagogical influence that enables the development of the meditation skills.

Children's philosophy also comes from the conviction that children, as novices in the world, constantly experience the need for orientation. They have faith in the meaning of asking and seeking answers. They do not boast that they know everything and that everything is obvious to them. They are able to ask questions in order to know the answers. Moreover, they sense that there are answers in which adults are better informed than they are. Childish ignorance, the will to know and cognitive trust make it possible to equate the philosophizing of an adult and a child.

Thus, children can undertake a step-by-step process of collective philosophical reflection that is highly instructive (Martens 2011). Children's fresh eyes, honesty, and spontaneity are undoubtedly significant assets, but the possibilities of adult philosophers cannot be forgotten. Thus, each side has something important to contribute, making it particularly important for children and adults to philosophize together (Matthews 1979). In this approach, children's philosophizing complements the philosophical investigations of adults. The philosophical contemplations of children and adults can complement one another. Philosophizing together is beneficial for both children and adults.

In the opinion of Maria Szczepska-Pustkowska, children's dealing with philosophy may be understood as their natural inclination to ask (philosophical) questions resulting from being surprised at the world and as (co-) philosophizing within an inquiring community, such as a school class. The indicated (co-) inquiry with children can be treated as a method of didactic work that uses children's natural tendency to ask questions about the world. However, as the author points out, although everyone who is familiar with the reflection on the world, its condition, and its own place in it, is capable of philosophizing, not everyone philosophizes in the same way. Hence, two categories of philosophizing can be distinguished: professional and unprofessional. Professional philosophizing is characterized by being rooted in the thinking of other philosophers, and it is characteristic of adults. Unprofessional philosophizing remains unaware of its philosophical tradition, and it is characteristic of children (Szczepska-Pustkowska 2008). In this model, children's philosophizing is also complemented by the inquiry of adults, and school is the place for such a meeting. The educational space of the class becomes an inquiring community.

The benefits for both the child and the adult are indicated in the assumptions of children's philosophizing mentioned in this article. However, the view on children's philosophizing does not limit itself to its positive aspects. In deliberations on this subject, one can find positions that perceive the philosophy of children in a different

way. An example is Richard Kitchener's statement that young children may engage in certain activities that appear to be philosophically mature but become primitive on closer acquaintance. They are just the beginning of a lower-level philosophy. This opinion is not about downplaying the importance of these early actions, as they facilitate subsequent actions and share many of their features. However, due to the lack of numerous qualities necessary for practicing authentic philosophy, children of a certain age can only practice philosophy at a lower level. Operational thinking is not enough to practice philosophy or science because these disciplines require higher metacognitive skills (Kitchener 1990).

Discrepancies in the opinions on the value of childhood philosophy will most certainly be a permanent feature of considerations about philosophy as a science. However, from the perspective of the process of educating children and adolescents, the analysis of the very value of children's thoughts seems to be more important than their position in building philosophical sciences.

The value of children's philosophical investigations in children's development

For philosophers, it is essential to answer whether children's reasoning can be considered a philosophical activity. For educators, children's philosophizing is analysed from the point of view of values in didactic and educational interactions. For this reason, children's philosophizing – philosophy for children (P4C) is the subject of numerous pedagogical studies that verify its value in didactic and educational interactions. The conducted research includes, among others, recognizing whether and how philosophical activity of children influences selected areas of their development and fulfilment of educational assumptions.

An example of such research includes studies on the influence of children's philosophy on the development of critical thinking and self-efficacy in a group of older students. The research results showed that philosophy classes for children had a positive impact on the critical thinking of the surveyed students. Moreover, it was also observed that the students' motivation and interest did not decrease. The students eagerly continued the discussion for even more extended periods, e. g. seventy minutes. The level of curiosity and the propensity to ask questions grew among these students. The research results also showed a positive effect on the children's sense of their own effectiveness. It can be concluded that by explaining and discussing their beliefs and opinions, the students who participated in the study obtained a more precise and obvious picture of their skills and capabilities.

They have learned to patiently and thoughtfully face the challenges prepared by their teacher and classmates, and to modify their thoughts to achieve their goals. The analysis of the research results confirms the research results obtained by other scientists who also focus on this topic. However, as indicated by the authors of the research, the results cannot be applied to other age groups; therefore, further actions are recommended to investigate the impact of teaching philosophy to children in other age groups (Rahdar, Pourghaz, Marziyeh 2018). The effectiveness of childhood philosophizing on the development of critical thinking among 5 and 6-year-old children is also confirmed by the research conducted by Filiz Karadağ and Vesile Yıldız Demirtaş (2018). The results of the research carried out in public and private institutions showed in both experimental groups that the general results in critical thinking in the pre-test were at the “average” level, and in the post-test they were at the “high” level.

Another example of extensive research is the one carried out by Durham University researchers at Key Stage 2 (7-11-year-old students) in England. The study covered 48 primary schools, where at least 25% of students come from families with a low economic status. In addition, in at least 10 schools students were below average in English and Maths. In the surveyed institutions, classes in philosophy for children were conducted for a year. The obtained results did not unequivocally prove that children’s philosophy classes positively impacted the student’s performance in Maths and reading skills.¹ In contrast, it is significant that teachers and students have generally found that P4C positively affects broader outcomes such as students’ speaking confidence, listening skills, and self-esteem (Gorard, Siddiqui, See 2015: 9, 32-33).

As indicated earlier, for educators, philosophy for children is a method of work that enables the achievement of specific educational goals. One of such goals may be the development of healthy eating habits. The fulfilment of this goal became the basis for designing, implementing, and evaluating the influence of an educational programme based on Philosophy for Children (P4C) on the ability of 6th-grade primary school students to think about eating healthy breakfast. The research was carried out among 120 students in the control group (60 students) and in the experimental group (60). According to the analysis of the research results, the implementation of the educational program “philosophy for children” that promoted healthy eating habits among sixth-grade students had a positive and significant impact on increasing the average score in the area of critical, creative, and caring thinking about the need to

¹ The study’s authors indicated that participation in philosophy classes contributed to certain progress – the students made about two months of progress in reading and Maths. The results suggest that P4C had the most significant positive impact among disadvantaged students (eligible for free school meals). At the same time, the Cognitive Test Analyzes (a different measure of score, not focused on achievement) showed a minor positive effect. Moreover, disadvantaged students appeared to have benefited less from P4C than other students. The differences in the results were difficult to justify.

eat a healthy breakfast. In other words, the developed and implemented educational program based on philosophy for children made it possible to achieve the educational goal of shaping healthy eating habits (KarimiRad, Maghami, Hosseinzadeh, Madadzadeh, Khodayarian 2022).

The influence of children's philosophical investigations was also analysed in terms of reducing the symptoms of psychosomatic disorders among boys aged 9-11. The study involved 45 students diagnosed with psychosomatic disorders, and the respondents were divided into two groups (control and test). During 12 sessions (1 hour a week), the study group participated in joint philosophical inquiries. In subsequent sessions, the children read stories on topics related to fear, anxiety, anger, prejudice, friendship, and other problems related to the students' real life, which could reflect their anxiety and psychosomatic symptoms. Then, an analysis of the issue was carried out, which encouraged the children to think about irrational beliefs and false judgments, and evaluate their thoughts with other children. The research results after the completion of all the sessions showed that the implementation of this program had a significant influence on reducing the symptoms of psychosomatic disorders in the test group (Shatalebi, Hedayat 2016).

The cited research results concerning philosophy for children constitute only a tiny part of analyses conducted in various parts of the world. As Paweł Walczak (2017) points out, the vast majority of the conducted research on the effects of P4C programs provides data that can testify to the advantages of this method, allowing it to be considered an attractive tool in supporting the educational process. The experience gained so far from the practice of philosophical inquiries with children and youth at school indicates that their most significant advantage is the change in the communication paradigm in the classroom. According to the basic assumption of the method, the class should be transformed into an inquiry community in which everyone is an equal participant in the discussion. However – as the author points out – the issue of the evaluation of P4C effects raises many doubts. The reasons for this are problems with determining the competencies to be evaluated and the adequacy of the methods used to measure them, interpret the results or implement the effects. Despite various disputes concerning the reliability of selected studies, the fact is that many of the analyses support the effectiveness of P4C. This study includes another description of the research concerning philosophy classes for younger schoolchildren.

Methodological assumptions of the author's own research

The research subject was the philosophical activity of younger schoolchildren with different educational needs. The main research problem is included in the following question:

- What is the philosophical activity of students at younger school age with different educational needs?

The following specific questions constitute a more detailed description of the leading research problem:

- What is the involvement of children with different educational needs in philosophy classes?
- What is the frequency of utterances of children with different educational needs during philosophy classes?
- How do children with varying educational needs express themselves in philosophy classes?
- Can children with different educational needs analyse the suggested situations and how do they analyse them?

The conducted research was qualitative research which enables the observation of various phenomena in natural conditions. In order to collect the research material, the participant observation method was used. It involves the researcher's participation in authentic situations and allows them to enter into natural interactions with the students without creating artificial conditions for their activity (Juszczak 2013: 169-170). Thanks to participant observation, in which the researcher played the role of a participant (trainer), it was possible to establish an authentic relationship within a community involved in shared philosophical investigations.

The research was conducted from January to April 2022 in a group of 15 students in the second integrated class. The research material was collected during a series of 8 philosophy meetings for children².

Various educational needs characterized the study group. The individual (varied) needs of the students were identified by the educational achievements of the students

² The topics and scenarios of individual classes were taken from suggested philosophical classes for children developed by various centers promoting P4C. The following suggestions were used for individual meetings:

Classes 1: <https://filozofuj.eu/lukasz-krzywon-po-co-te-pelerynki-konspekt-zajec-z-filozofowania-z-dziecmi>.

Classes 2: https://1129b89a-040f-49f9-95aa-25a6f5046e08.filesusr.com/ugd/08f286_4e471539e74344e4bad38a36d8958887.pdf

Classes 3: https://www.thinkingSPACE.org.uk/_files/ugd/08f286_a1f388de654f49febfdf26bb6302e6ed6.pdf.

Classes 4: https://1129b89a-040f-49f9-95aa-25a6f5046e08.filesusr.com/ugd/08f286_6e814a95feab8329b465e84a72a5e7d.pdf

Classes 5: <https://filozofuj.eu/krystian-karcz-wyrzuty-sumienia-scenariusz-lekcji-etyki>.

Classes 6: https://1129b89a-040f-49f9-95aa-25a6f5046e08.filesusr.com/ugd/08f286_40c1168b6a334d1997acbb4ff34efe17.pdf.

Classes 7: <https://filozofuj.eu/krystian-karcz-sprawiedliwosc-na-trybunach>.

Classes 8: https://1129b89a-040f-49f9-95aa-25a6f5046e08.filesusr.com/ugd/08f286_511d46fe8d0746a2b6ab741381e295e4.pdf.

based on the results of the diagnosis after the first grade in Polish language and mathematical education³. Moreover, the students' decisions and the forms of psychological and pedagogical help were taken into account. Detailed characteristics of the group are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Detailed characteristics of the research group.

Individual students	Results of subject diagnosis in Polish language education after the first grade	Results of the subject diagnosis in mathematical education after the first grade	Certificate of the degree of disability. Forms of psychological and pedagogical support
S1	20/25 pt	6/16 pt	
S2	25/25 pt	14/16 pt	
S3	21/25 pt	8/16 pt	Participation in didactic and compensatory classes
S4	14/25 pt	10/16 pt	
S5	20/25 pt	14/16 pt	
S6	19/25 pt	7/16 pt	Participation in didactic and compensatory classes
S7	21/25 pt	11/16 pt	
S8	4/25 pt	4/16 pt	Participation in didactic and compensatory classes
S9	25/25 pt	16/16 pt	
S10	25/25 pt	13/16 pt	
S11	18/25 pt	9/16 pt	Certificate of the degree of disability – mild mental retardation
S12	24/25 pt	14/16 pt	

³ As philosophical inquiries are based on verbal communication skills, the characteristics of the group take into account the results of the subject diagnosis separately for mathematics and Polish language education.

Individual students	Results of subject diagnosis in Polish language education after the first grade	Results of the subject diagnosis in mathematical education after the first grade	Certificate of the degree of disability. Forms of psychological and pedagogical support
S13	17/25 pt	10/16 pt	Certificate of the degree of disability – mild mental retardation
S14	11/25 pt	14/16 pt	Certificate of the degree of disability – central hearing loss
S15	25/25 pt	16/16 pt	

The empirical data collection was carried out through the description of the studied phenomenon immediately after finishing the philosophical meetings. In addition, individual meetings were audio recorded, and then analyzed and interpreted.

Students' philosophical activity – research results

The analysis of the collected research material included the determination of the frequency of students' statements during the philosophical investigations conducted during individual classes (Table2).

Table 2. The number of utterances made by individual students during the class.

Students	Number of students' utterances during individual classes							
	Classes 1	Classes 2	Classes 3	Classes 4	Classes 5	Classes 6	Classes 7	Classes 8
S1	Absent	0	0	0	Absent	1	Absent	0
S2	0	0	1	2	1	3	3	3
S3	5	5	4	2	2	1	1	0
S4	Absent	Absent	0	1	Absent	0	0	Absent
S5	1	1	3	3	4	5	5	5
S6	2	2	3	4	Absent	5	5	5
S7	Absent	0	3	2	Absent	1	1	0

Students	Number of students' utterances during individual classes							
	Classes 1	Classes 2	Classes 3	Classes 4	Classes 5	Classes 6	Classes 7	Classes 8
S8	5	5	4	4	0	2	2	Absent
S9	3	3	4	Absent	3	4	5	5
S10	Absent	1	2	Absent	4	6	6	5
S11	0	0	1	0	Absent	0	Absent	0
S12	2	Absent	Absent	4	6	6	4	5
S13	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
S14	Absent	0	Absent	Absent	Absent	0	Absent	0
S15	2	2	5	5	5	6	5	Absent

Source: the author's own research

The analysis of the obtained research material regarding the frequency of students' utterances showed that the following subjects demonstrated the lowest activity: S13, S11, S4, and S1. Most of them were students who received a lower number of points in the diagnosis in Polish language education. However, we cannot conclude that there is a direct relationship between poor academic performance and philosophical activity because, in the study group, high philosophical activity was demonstrated by the student (S8) who achieved the lowest result in Polish language education. The analysis of the results also showed a specific development of the philosophical activity. In the case of subjects S15, S12, S10, S6, and S5, an increase in activity during subsequent classes was observed. There was also an opposite situation, in which an apparent decrease in students' activity can be seen. The subjects S3 and S8 participated actively in the discussions during the initial few meetings, while in the later ones, they were less active. The explication of the activity of the studied group indicates various models of students' activity, which are not related to their cognitive abilities.

The analysis of audio recordings from the conducted classes aimed to determine how individual students expressed themselves during the philosophical classes. Based on the analysis of the recorded audio material, the manner in which individual students expressed their thoughts was as follows: single words, simple sentences, and complex sentences. A detailed analysis of the most common ways of students' utterances is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Detailed analysis of the way in which students spoke during the classes.

Students	The most common ways of speaking during individual classes							
	Classes 1	Classes 2	Classes 3	Classes 4	Classes 5	Classes 6	Classes 7	Classes 8
U1	Absent	NS	NS	NS	Absent	OW	Absent	NS
U2	NS	NS	CS	CS	CS	CS	CS	CS
U3	CS	CS	CS	CS	OW	OW	OW	NS
U4	Absent	Absent	NS	OW	Absent	NS	NS	Absent
U5	OW	OW	CS	OW	CS	CS	CS	CS
U6	CS	OW	OW	CS	Absent	CS	CS	CS
U7	Absent	NS	CS	CS	Absent	OW	OW	NS
U8	CS	CS	CS	CS	NS	OW	OW	Absent
U9	CS	CS	CS	Absent	CS	CS	CS	CS
U10	Absent	OW	CS	Absent	CS	CS	CS	CS
U11	NS	NS	OW	NS	Absent	NS	Absent	NS
U12	CS	Absent	Absent	CS	CS	CS	CS	CS
U13	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	OW	NS	NS
U14	Absent	NS	Absent	Absent	Absent	NS	Absent	NS
U15	OW	CS	CS	CS	CS	CS	CS	Absent

Where: OW – one-word utterances, SS – utterances made up of single sentences, CS – utterances made up of compound sentences, NS – no student utterances.

Source: the author's own research

The analysis of the utterances shows that the students with the majority of statements in the form of compound sentences obtained high results in diagnosing the performance in Polish language education: S9 – 25 points, S12 – 24 S15 – 25 points. The development in terms of the form of expression was observed in the respondent U5. During the first classes, the student expressed himself in single sentences, while during the following classes, the statements took the form of complex sentences. It is worth noting that speech development coincided with the increase in activity during subsequent classes. The opposite situation was observed more often, in which during the initial classes students expressed themselves in full sentences, and during

subsequent meetings their statements were limited to single sentences (S3, S7, S8). The students who had the disability certificate only spoke sporadically or they did not make any statements. Their single utterances took the form of individual words.

Due to the application of participant observation, it was possible to assess students' involvement in the classroom directly. On this basis, several attitudes of students were distinguished that represent their commitment:

1. The students with the certificate showed very little commitment to the activities undertaken during the classes. Usually, they sat in a circle, watched the initial course of the class, and then tried to play with objects located near them. When the course of the activities required all participants to speak, their answers were limited to a single word or statement.
2. Some of the respondents showed outstanding commitment during all the classes. The students expressed their satisfaction and joy when each philosophical classes were beginning. They listened to the teacher carefully; there were situations in which they gave orders to other children to sit in a circle or prepare props. Moreover, these students were very eager to share their thoughts and observations.
3. Another group of respondents was characterized by increased involvement during the initial classes. However, during subsequent meetings, a certain kind of boredom and lack of interest in the issues raised were observed among them.
4. The last group showed less involvement in the initial classes, and then these respondents were more and more willing to express themselves. During the first class they seemed to try to get to know the formula of joint inquiry, and they watched other participants. Later, they started to fully participate in the deliberations undertaken.

Individual models of respondents' involvement did not always reflect their school achievements. Despite their poor school performance (S8), some students initially expressed themselves very willingly, in complex sentences, and only later did their involvement decrease. There is no doubt that the least active and engaged group were students with disability certificates. In case of the remaining students, it was impossible to connect involvement with their educational achievements during the classes.

The final stage of analyzing the collected empirical material consisted of verifying the students' statements in terms of the analysis of the suggested situations. In the statements formulated by the students it was possible to notice that, in some situations, the children were influenced by the opinion of others. An example may be the answers to the question: What would you do if you were invisible for one day and could do whatever you wanted?

S1 – “Racing cars”

S3- “Me too, racing in illegal competitions; that we are racing without a permit”

S8- “I would be driving illegally at competitions.”

However, in the vast majority of cases, students made individual thoughts based on their own experience. An example would be a brief discussion between two students about justice.

S12- “My unfair situation is when my brother gets a new phone all the time, and I get it from my mother or from my brother. And it’s so unfair “

S10 – “In general, I understand (student’s name), but still I don’t, and I have a proof of it. I have the same thing that my sister gets a new phone all the time and I get one from my mother, but I understand them, because she is, you know, seventh grade. She always goes to some classes alone and needs a specific phone so she can get through to us. We are small and we cannot go anywhere, wherever we want, we do not need a particular phone”.

Some of the children’s statements showed thoughts related to their own lives. In reflections on life plans for the future, one could hear the following statements:

S15 – “Well, for now we can’t be totally sure about our plans. Because it changes over time, for example, when I was smaller I wanted to be a cook, and now I prefer to be a designer”.

S7 – “And I really want to be in a gang, rob a jeweler, a bank. But it may or may not come true. In the gang, they can even kill me”.

During the classes, it was also possible to observe changes in the choices made by students, which resulted from the reflections and discussions. Such a situation occurred during the last class. The respondents analyzed a suggested situation in which the fictional protagonist had to decide what he would do if he witnessed breaking the rules and watching the answers from the test. During the first choice, four students decided that the results could be viewed in specific circumstances. However, nine decided that the teacher should be informed about everything in such a situation. After discussing the situation and re-selecting the course of action, only one student remained with the original decision to inform the teacher: “You have to be honest and tell the teacher.” On the other hand, twelve students changed their minds. They decided that in the suggested situation it is best to keep silent and not tell anyone: “I changed my mind so as not to lose my friend or colleague”; “It’s better to remain silent because the teacher, sooner or later, will find out about everything anyway”.

Undoubtedly, the interpretation of the students’ statements showed that the students were able to analyze the suggested situations and reflect on them. Although in

some situations the duplication of certain statements can be observed, the overall composition is dominated by the individual thoughts of students.

Conclusion

The series of philosophy classes for children in the second integrated grade provided many exciting insights into children's way of thinking. As pointed out earlier, it is debatable for many philosophers whether children can and are able to undertake philosophical reflections. This issue will undoubtedly be the subject of further considerations in philosophical circles. However, from the pedagogical point of view, it can be said that children's philosophizing has an exceptional value in the socio-emotional area. The conducted research did not focus on recognizing whether and to what extent children's thoughts affect their cognitive development. The subject of the analysis was the philosophical activity of children with various educational needs.

The analysis of the frequency, involvement, ways of speaking, and the ability to perform an analysis showed that, in most cases, the philosophical activity of the surveyed students of the second integrated grade was very diversified, regardless of their educational needs. The only exception included the students with disability certificates who were characterized by the lowest level of philosophical activity.

The observation of students did not confirm the conclusions of Rahdar, Pourghaz, and Marziyeh (2018) according to which, during philosophical classes, students' motivation and interest did not decrease. The students eagerly continued the discussion, even for extended periods of time, but in the group of students with different educational needs, the interest in the classes gradually decreased.

Since the philosophical activity of students was entirely voluntary, it was possible for the students with special educational needs to express themselves on specific topics. However, such actions should be undertaken with particular care. Excessive pressure to speak may cause children to equate philosophy classes with school education. This situation may limit students' freedom of expression and thought. The leading teacher must also remember that no one can be forced to philosophize.

Undoubtedly, the priceless value of philosophical research is the ability to observe the analysis of the proposed situations by children, which brings us closer to their perception of the world. The ability to make decisions and analyze one's own beliefs makes philosophy classes an excellent means of supporting the social and emotional development of children. Thanks to a joint discussion and the exchange of their beliefs, children have the opportunity to get to know themselves better and see other people's points of view.

Philosophy for children is also beneficial for the teacher. The suggested form of discussion and freedom in selecting topics enables the teacher to learn more about the students. In most cases, the fulfillment of the teaching content included in the curricula makes it impossible for the teacher to choose such a broad scope of topics for discussion. Also, the formula of the classes and the lack of school grading allows the students to express themselves freely.

Based on the observation of the philosophical activity of students with different educational needs, one can undoubtedly confirm their positive value in pedagogical interactions. However, different possibilities of the students' philosophical reflections should be taken into account. Since the conducted research was qualitative, their results cannot reflect the attitudes of the entire population of second-grade students. However, they certainly are an exciting example of children's philosophical activity.

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ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE

Patrycja Aurelia Młynek
Uniwersytet Śląski w Katowicach
e-mail: patrycja.mlynek@us.edu.pl