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Philosophy for Children as a Mediator of Internal Locus Control

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to explore the application of Philosophy for Children (P4C) as a distinguishable curriculum design and pedagogy in enhancing creative and critical thinking among learners. This can be achieved by capitalizing on children curiosity to engage them in philosophical discussions of conflicting points of view to nurture clearer reasons and justifications for their opinions through critical inquiry. The study found out that Philosophy for Children pedagogy is essential in enhancing internal locus of control, which refers to an individual's belief about control over issues that they face in life. Locus of control largely influences the lives of school going children, principally because their decisions in relation to academic achievement, career choices, interpersonal relationships, and health are affected by their awareness of control. The methodological approach of this paper is philosophical analysis. This study is of great significance in enhancing critical thinking and creativity among the children through the various discussions in the Community of Inquiry. Additionally, the study is essential in promoting the internal locus of control that is salient in cultivating an attitude of self-belief among the learners that they have the control and can influence the outcome of their experiences at the school thus boosting their self-confidence, self-efficacy and academic achievement.

Keywords: Internal Locus of Control, Philosophy for Children, Community of Inquiry, External Locus of Control

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1. INTRODUCTION

Philosophy for Children (P4C) is an instructional strategy that seeks to teach thinking in children in order for them to develop critical thinking skills. This pedagogical design began as an educational program initiated by Mathew Lipman. According to Vansieleghem and Kennedy (2011), Mathew Lipman dedicated P4C to investigate the correlation between the concepts of "philosophy" and "childhood," with the implicit practical objective of establishing philosophy as a distinct content area in learning institutions.

Primarily, the trajectory our lives take in as far as our achievement orientation is concerned to some extent determines our locus of control. Rotter (1966) who coined this term referred to the internal versus external control as the extent to which an individual believes that an outcome of their behavior or life experiences are dependent upon inherent characteristics that they exhibit as opposed to chance, fate, luck or under the control of other powerful individuals. Research seems to agree that an internal locus of control has the ability to enhance positive life outcomes compared to external locus of control.

As indicated by Rotter (1966), learning "contingencies" between behavior and outcomes is at the core of developing appropriate internality. Rotter proposed the following ideas: a generalized expectancy of internal control develops when reinforcement is perceived as dependent on the individual's behavior; once expectancy is established, "reinforcement acts to strengthen expectancy that a particular behavior or event will be followed by that reinforcement in the future and failure acts to weaken the expectancy. According to Rotter, parents serve as the main conduit for young children's contingency learning through "consistent discipline and treatment during their time together." This statement by Rotter alludes to the importance of building the Philosophy for Children right from home in contingency learning process with parents as the enablers.

1.1 Research Problem

Students may not always have control over the experiences and situations they encounter in life during the learning process; if they do, that control may come from internal or external sources. The notion of Locus of Control sheds light on how students see themselves in relation to their role and control over their academic performance and other life outcomes. The locus of control proposes a few ways that educators can aid students in comprehending this understanding. The goal of the current study is to investigate how Philosophy for Children may be integrated into the teaching and learning process to improve internal locus of control. This is important because the strategy helps learners believe in their own abilities to manage their circumstances and develop self-efficacy.

1.2 Research Focus

The focus of this study is to investigate the plausibility of Philosophy for Children as an inevitable and timely discourse that needs to be incorporated in teacher pedagogy in schools to not only enhance critical thinking but also internal locus of control.

1.3 Research Aim and Research Questions

(i) To explain the use of Philosophy for Children in enhancing internal locus of control.

(ii) To explore how Philosophy for Children can enhance internal locus of control

Various studies have revealed that introduction of philosophical content to children at a younger age offers a great opportunity to nurture their sense of wonder. In addition, P4C is useful in developing the ability of children to ask big questions and think independently (Brendan, 2018). Besides the big questions, children learn how to question themselves on the various issues that confronts them both at school and home. A child who is able to self-question is better equipped to observe and understand the implications of their thoughts, actions and feelings thus building an internal locus of control. Above all, P4C encourages children to be independent thinkers and to seek solutions for themselves since they have a strong belief that they are in control and that external factors have no place in determining their life outcomes.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW/THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

2.1 The concept of Internal Locus of Control

Locus of control refers to an individual's belief that they have control over their life events and experiences. As noted by Smith (2003), individuals who believe that they are personally responsible for things that happen in their lives are regarded internals. On the other hand, those individuals who feel that their life outcomes are determined by forces beyond their control are referred to as externals. Ideally, most of the individuals fall between these two extremes (Smith, 2003). In the school set up, locus of control has immense impact on the lives of learners, chiefly because their decisions in relation to career choices, academic achievement, interpersonal relationships and healthcare affected by their acuity of control (Muthoni, 2021).

Persons with an internal locus of control hold a conviction that they have a significant role in directing and shaping their behavior and events, which influence their lives. Besides, Rana et al. (2011) alludes to the fact that individuals with an internal locus of control have a positive ego and a strong conception of themselves and believe that they can direct their lives in whichever way they wish. This is because internals are guided by a conviction that the outcomes in their lives are dependent at least rather on their life choices and actions they make in life.

A study by Muthoni (2021) found out that people that exhibit external locus of control perceives that events affecting their lives are unpredictable, out of control and that life is defined by fortune, fate and chance. Conversely, individuals with internal locus control tend to be careful in life, ingenious, always alert, self-confident, and focused on success. Various studies have shown that externals lack self-confidence, display unsteady performances and are easily manipulate by external forces (Rotter, 1975). In addition, externals and internals do react differently to failure and success. Internals take pride in good outcomes; they are attracted to success, are committed to doing the right thing, and often feel ashamed when they fail, whereas externals are less bothered when they do not succeed.

Bandura (1982) found out that there exists a strong correlation between Internal locus of control with self-efficacy. To Bandura, self-efficacy refers to a conviction that once can effectively execute a given behavior. Smith (2003) on the other hand corroborates the fact that Self-efficacy has a greater influence on an individual's patterns of emotions and thought. Those individuals who lack self-confidence, mostly externals are often preoccupied with personal inadequacies and tend to misjudge some tasks to be more difficult than they really are, a fact that limits their ability to reach their potential thus leading to failure as a result of misplaced concentration (Smith, 2003).

Albert Bandura's Social learning theory suggests that locus of control orientation can change because of changes in reinforcement, the value of the reinforcement, or the situation itself. The implication here is that an individual's locus of control orientation will change with learning and life experiences (Bandura, 1977). Here, the school has a cardinal responsibility of providing various experiences to learner thus cultivating a sense of autonomy and less dependence on external agents like parents. Furthermore, philosophical discussions among the children can enhance internal locus of control by increasing the student's capacity for self-direction (Kormanik& Rocco, 2009).

Various studies have shown that internal and externals differ in a number of ways, particularly with regard to environment mastery and cognition. This is because internals are more receptive of various situations that confront them since they seem to exert more control over their lives in part by their knowledge of their environment (Smith, 2003). Besides, internals more easily embrace and utilizes information that is relevant to their goal situations even when it seemingly is not relevant.

Another premise often considered the same as Locus of Control is the Attribution Theory. It is a theory about how people explain things (Smith, 2003). No matter the cause, we have a strong need to comprehend and explain what is going on in our world. When we offer explanations about why things happened, we can exhibit either internal or external attribution. An external attribution assigns causality to an outside force or agent and claims that some outside thing motivated the event. In contrast, internal attribution assigns causality to factors within a person. For example, a child who has made a mistake would say "I am guilty, please, forgive me". An internal attribution claims that a person was directly responsible for the event (Smith, 2003)

A study by Knudsen (1993) on stress coping mechanism rated children who are internals as having a better psychosocial competence and exhibited superior coping behaviors. The research findings concluded that internals tend to employ cognitive avoidance, described as a passive coping response as one means of coping with stressful situations and observable avoidant actions as another means of dealing with stressful situations instead of resorting to aggression. Avoidant actions might include walking away from conflict or from hostile situations for the sake of peace. In a school set

up, internal locus of control abilities can be developed through social interaction with others. This orientation then exerted an influence on the Childs social relationships, motivation for achievement. Role-playing social situations can be of significance in helping the children to see the effect their actions, have on their peers, to interpret peer responses and to try alternative approaches. When a learner's perceptions of their internal control increased, they tend to see occurrences in their lives as more contingent upon their own behavior, thus making role playing an effective method of helping students to develop belief in their personal control in social relationships.

Lewallen (2012) noted that Ultraism and locus of control are correlated. According to Lay and Hoppmann (2015), altruism is considered as a selfless behavior in which the concern of others wellbeing becomes an individual's driving force to doing good without any expectation of benefits to oneself. Individuals with internal locus of control believe that they are capable of positively making an impact on the life situations of others through their voluntary actions. An internal is more likely to help someone needing legitimate assistance, and is more likely not to give in to the demands of an individual seeking illegitimate. This is because internals have a self-drive to creating a positive impact in the life of individual who are seeking for genuine help. Furthermore, internals tend to be optimistic individuals who are characterized by positive outlook and expectations on the effect of their action taken on others (Olukayode & Uba, 2019).

The research surrounding the significance of the internal locus of control gives push to the incorporation of Philosophy for Children both in teacher training and in pedagogy.

2.2 Philosophy for Children

Philosophy for Children (P4C) is a pedagogical approach that refers to a cognitive development strategy that utilizes dialogic pedagogy to enhance reasoning, critical thinking, ethical thinking and social skills among the children. Children have for long been viewed through deficit lenses compared to adults based on the view that they lack knowledge and have a lowered decision making and rational capacities. P4C not only champions the creation of an enabling environment that invokes young children's philosophical inquiry, but also takes cognizant of and advances the young one's philosophical interests and abilities (Archard,2015).

Lipman (2003) argued that children are capable of philosophizing as a result of their inherent inquisitive nature, and that what they are doing is legitimately philosophy. When children engage in philosophical dialogues, what they are doing is not proto or quasi philosophical, it is the real thing (Lipman, 2003). He also reiterates that it is difficult to categorize philosophical thinking as cognitively mature or immature. Therefore, children are capable of thinking philosophically in a way that resembles adults and bringing philosophy in to the classroom gives them a chance to practice reasoning and develop moral judgment. Burdick-Shepherd and Cammarano, C. (2021) concur with Gareth B. Matthews, The Child's Philosopher, who analyzed transcripts of children's dialogue to show their philosophical thinking and created story beginnings based on the insights and arguments of the children he spoke with and then concluded that indeed children philosophize.

According to Costa and Kohan (2019), the pedagogy used in P4C is the Community of Inquiry (CoI). The adoption of a Community of Inquiry in Philosophy for Children as a collaborative exercise holds the view that children in a group have the capacity to think together and that they can build on their peer's ideas during philosophical discussions.P4C is guided by the notion that knowledge ought to be collaboratively constructed since learning is a social and communal process requiring students to construct and reconstruct their understanding based on the perspectives and responses of others.

Lipman promoted using stories and narratives with philosophically interesting content that are appealing to students as a catalyst for discussion in the Community of Inquiry. As noted by Jasinski (2018), a typical Philosophy for Children pedagogy is guided by the following components. At the start, a stimulus, which is an excerpt from the philosophical novel (story), is used by being read loudly by the learners. The objective is to generate open-ended questions. The questions raised should be relevant to them depending on the topic of the day like what is fairness or justice. Thereafter, the teacher facilitates the identification of thematic philosophical questions (agenda); the learners are actively involved and they take charge of the question selection process. Subsequently, the agenda is discussed through dialogic conversations (Community of Inquiry). Thereafter, the students are invited to reflect on the text (Assessment). Finally, there is the practical part with exercises to articulate what was learnt in the real world. The text is not necessarily for a P4C discussion, many may begin with a group activity, thought experiment or just introducing a concept such as fairness or friendship that children are familiar with.

In the community of inquiry, knowledge is offered from a social context and agreement between the inquirers is necessary for legitimization of that knowledge unlike the traditional models of inquiry that tend to be individual and solitary quests to know a static unchanging world.

P4C can be an ideal tool of enhancing ethical values and citizenship ideals among learners if introduced in the Kenyan curriculum. This is because it improves children's critical, creative and rigorous thinking, helps children to cooperate with others in searching for meaning, and promotes

deliberate communication. Moreover, it offers educators an opportunity to teach values concerns independent from other academic subjects.

Philosophy for Children introduces critical education into the curriculum by having students experience the process of reasoning about philosophical problems. Critical education is essential in providing them with a tool set that learners could apply in their daily lives to solve new problems. Students would thus be more equipped to make rational choices that take into account the interests of others and themselves.

Philosophy for Children has been largely situated in liberal education framework, one that promotes democratic values with the aim of preparing the students for their future citizenship through the creation of a community of inquiry (Funstone, 2017). In a community of inquiry, children learn to be honest, flexible reasonable and respect other people's opinions. They learn to accept or reject different opinions with reasons.

Community of Inquiry is a model of democratic environment or a model of democracy itself due to freedom, open debate, pluralism and self-management. Here, children take part in a common public questioning and experience dialogue with others as equal partners and autonomous individuals. On the other hand, (Ndofiperi & Musengi, 2019) contend that in the uninterrupted inquiry, children respectfully listen to each other, consider the opinion of others when constructing their views and where each child supports and helps one another in defining presumptions.

The Community of Inquiry has the moral repertoire that makes citizens autonomous capable of making objective moral judgments and engaging in voluntary cooperation. Here, people think for themselves, people have independent minds but infer their decisions on their interactions with others. Concomitantly, young learners in a Community of Inquiry can be molded to have dispositions of self-control, mutual respect, self-correction, tolerance, and self-criticism. These dispositions contribute to making informed moral decisions and actions (Ominde, 2022).

P4C also enhances critical thinking. Critical thinking skills are defined as abilities to objectively analyze existing information by considering personal experiences and identifying the impact of social values peers and media on personal behavior (Rahdar et al., 2018). To judge and review and improve the quality of judgmental person employs a set of cognitive skills known as cognitive thinking skills. These skills include analysis, interpretation, inference evaluation and self-regulation. Furthermore, critical thinking empowers one to interrogate their decisions and chose that which matter or whether to commit an act or not. Thus, one sieve through the issues and choose to focus on only important ones; those which will benefit the community.

Tillmanns (2022) assert that children should have the right to parrhesia, which allows them to speak their minds without fear of being punished or put to death if they are thought to be disrespecting a higher authority. They will be able to speak truth to authority as a result, essentially helping the person in authority who lacks perspective on the situation's reality. According to BerrieHeesen's book *Filosoferen met kinderen op de basis school: eencomplexeactiviteit*, teaching philosophy to kids is similar to parrhesia (which is speaking freely or frankness of speech) in that it encourages kids to express themselves freely. This implies that when kids are allowed and encouraged to express themselves in their own way without judgment and shaming, they learn to view themselves as the key determinants of the course of their lives.

Parrhesia alters the parent-child interaction. When adults as full-fledged human beings treat children seriously, they are given the opportunity to do the same and are held accountable for their thoughts and feelings. Children learn to listen critically to others as well as to themselves by explaining their thoughts and feelings and by listening to those of their peers. They gain an increased sense of self-worth as they learn that what they think and feel matters and that they matter to both themselves and others (DaVenza Tillmanns, 2022). Children also create their own standards of reality during this process. Furthermore, self-examination gives us a sense of purpose and direction, helps us feel complete, and grounded in who we are. This essentially builds their internal locus of control and increases their chances of enjoying positive life outcomes.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Benji and Hanan (2023) point out that philosophical analysis embraces different steps and techniques that give meaning and clarification to philosophical texts. In the initial step of a philosophic interrogation, there is a thorough scrutiny of the text to decipher the authors' ideas, claims, and arguments. In the subsequent phase, there is a focus on laying bare and clarifying each section of the text to establish their assumptions, inferences, and, conclusions. Besides, there is the critical scrutiny of the philosophic texts, providing an alternative view, implication and results. Finally, in philosophic interrogation, there is a need to have not just an unbiased and elucidative synthesis, but also an informed summation of the texts' point of view. Further, as advanced by Zakirova (2023), conceptual interrogations ought to engineer a crystalline meaning for concepts by delineating their extremities, references, and associations among terms.

In this scholarly undertaking, conceptual and logical analysis will be the guiding principles. A theoretic probe, "What do you mean?" and an inferential review of the question "How do you know?" will be advanced (Benji & Hanan, 2023). Conceptual interrogations are at the heart of philosophers' arguments with the aim of creating precise understanding. Philosophical interrogation anchored on the conceptual analysis approach have a core objective of manufacturing an extensive understanding of postulations through a clear illumination of their inferences, borders, and literature basis (Hanna, 2024).

The absence of theoretic precision undermines the assembly of rationality, retards the formation of theories, and hinders the researcher's ability to confront the study's concerns, viewpoints, and conclusions. Philosophy for children and locus of control terminologies are widely used in this study. Similarly, conceptual examination is at the heart of apprehending theoretical frameworks of justifications and deductions, particularly ideas of educational practices that must be closely scrutinized (Deutsch, 2021).

Clear-cut explanations of various terminologies were employed in this study to assemble validity and advance comprehension. In addition, the construction of postulations and foundations the efficacy of P4C in cultivating internal locus of control relied on having clear-cut translations of notions and terminologies. The connotations of those concepts were pivotal in the illustration of the relatedness of P4C to internal locus of control and how it appertains to education, specifically on academic achievement and life outcomes fronts.

Philosophical interrogations are anchored on elucidation of concepts and the appraisal of evidence through the lenses of logical analysis to authenticate points of view (Les, 2021).

This approach focuses on the evidence used to support a conclusion and aims to determine whether a conclusion drawn from particular arguments or pieces of evidence logically flows from them. In order for a conclusion to flow logically, it must be true or at the very least conceivable, or it must be logically valid (Benji & Hanan (2023). Moreover, philosophical interrogations have several shortcomings. On one hand, Fosl and Bahggin (2020) hold that philosophical connotations are dented by bias clarifications of philosophic texts. Philosophers tend to employ cryptic and polysemic

language that fosters varied clarifications and understanding of texts.

On the other hand, Williamson (2020) recapitulates that philosophical interrogation is void of absolute and irrefutable answers to philosophical questions. Philosophy is a flexible and continuously evolving discipline that is vulnerable to revisionism. In spite of their shortcomings, philosophical interrogations are a crucial mechanism for fostering philosophical knowledge and conception of philosophical issues.

4. DISCUSSION

This study's results illustrate that P4C is a notion that should be embraced and integrated as a framework to parent children's phisolophical absorption and abilities through the creation of an enabling setting for the advancement of thier internal locus of control.

Further, the obtained results indicate that Philosophy for Children can enhance their locus of control, due to the ever-changing school environment, the society and work, learners need to be equipped with life-long attitude that encourages them to think for their problems and have a greater desire and ability to take charge of shaping their destiny (Ab Wahab et al., 2022).

Besides, Zulkifli and Hashim (2020) through a quasi-experimental design, explored the impact of P4C on learners' critical thinking. This study's findings are in line with Zulkifli and Hashim's (2020) findings that P4C bolsters learners' critical thinking. Similarly, Isiklar and AbaliÖztürk (2022) interrogated the impact of P4C curriculum on critical thinking in a study that involved 40 Turkish elementary school learners aged 5-6 years. Through the evaluation of the learners' philosophical inquiry and problem-solving skills, it was affirmed that P4C bolsters the critical thinking level of learners.

The findings of this study hold that P4C impacts the locus of control and they are in agreement with findings of Ab Wahab et al. (2022) which state that the primary goals of P4C are bolster learners' natural curiosity, assist them in making reasonable conclusions, and empower them to philosophically evaluate problems and questions. That is, to draw personal experiences through philosophical judgment where skills like creativity and thought-through and caring thinking take center stage.

Further, P4C's impact on the locus of control has been reaffirmed by previous findings by Cassidy and Heron (2022), Leng (2020), Choobforoushzadeh et al. (2023) and Prasetya (2020), Pala (2022). Cassidy and co. argue that P4C fosters and bolsters thinking and reasoning skills. Consequently, can not only debate a topic, but also construct submissions as well as provide examples to articulate those claims. That way, students won't shy off from airing their points of view, and teachers would encourage their students to provide captivating evidence-based assertions. Abdolahzadeghan and Sardary (2023) interrogated the application of P4C on elementary school learners' creative self-motivation and self-efficacy through a quasi-experimental design and they found that P4C is central to the improvement of children's self-determination.

Garret and Maynard (2021) are of the view pupils will have a clearer understanding in contexts that advance judicious thinking and analysis. Similarly, Abdolahzadeghan and Sardary's (2023) study employed a quasi-experimental design in the interrogation of the efficacy of teaching philosophy for children and found it enhances basic education pupil's self-determination and staunchness. Besides, the findings by Pouraghai et al. (2022) augment the findings of this study by stating that P4C program shapes a pupil's locus of control in terms of academic motivation and engagement. Moreover, Pouraghai et al. (2022) found that P4C triggers the development of a pupil's thinking skills, ability to sharpen their life skills, and positive behavior regulation.

According to previous findings, a new school of thought that P4C shapes learner's locus of control emerged. The view that when pupils are allowed to learn and philosophize, they develop a superior control over their surroundings points to the fact that P4C is a remedy to learned helplessness, which is an underlying hindrance to learners' personal ambition and motivation.

This study's findings have far-reaching practical implications for teacher intellectual training and curriculum remodeling as Kenya transits from the 8-4-4 to the CBC system. CBC requires substantial instructional shift that places philosophy as the cornerstone owing to the fact that problem solving and critical thinking are part of the seven major competencies. In this pedagogical approach, learners are motivated to employ a logical and evidential problem-solving approach, and become creative and innovative.

To this end, there is great need to introduce Philosophy for Children to learners from a younger age so as to support schools and learners shift their focus from merely academic achievement to other positive life outcomes that are triggered by this pedagogical approach. For instance, Siddiqui et al. (2019) agree that children can learn coping behaviors, skills, and attitudes that are relevant for the rest of their lives inside and outside schools through the study of philosophy.

Nevertheless, this study is limited by two factors. Firstly, the study's context is Kenyan-based meaning other geographical scopes are excluded. Secondly, sources that are older than six years were excluded yet some might have useful data thus limiting the depth of literature review.

5. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study concluded that Philosophy for children is a productive pedagogical approach that influences learner's locus of control. The aforementioned advantages of teaching and engaging in philosophical practice for children, is also a value transmission approach to moral education, with a goal to encourage students to accept a predetermined set of core values. This offers a different approach to teaching morals and value systems to children in addition to the ones currently in use. For instance, P4C gives children an opportunity to learn from each other, thus cultivating a culture of shared or communal problem solving, a fact that is critical in shaping their worldview and a new thinking paradigm with regard to academic difficulties that they encounter in school.

Furthermore, P4C has the ability to cultivate the attitude of self-belief and academic resilience among learners. This is because real discussions that take place when philosophical questions perplex both the teacher and the students may help the learner to reorganize their thoughts. In the process, learners can discover gaps in their understanding and form

counter explanations that will inform on how they view themselves thus promoting self-awareness and self-esteem.

Despite the continued focus on attainment, there are clear efforts in countries like England to take into account other, non-cognitive outcomes of education, such as students' growth in civic engagement, trustworthiness, and critical thinking. There is, however, scant research on how school-based interventions can improve such non-cognitive outcomes. This means then that if P4C is inculcated in the curriculum at the onset of children's education then it is possible for children to enjoy the benefits of an internal locus of control.

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