

Teaching philosophical thinking in early Childhood Education^I

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Abstract

This study seeks to identify philosophical spaces in early childhood education and their use in promoting thought, as proposed by Matthew Lipman. The Philosophy for Children program, developed by this philosopher and his collaborators, consists of philosophical novels accompanied by manuals for teachers to explore philosophical themes and activities that motivate children of different ages. Through qualitative, descriptive, and bibliographical research, the study analyzes this material, focusing especially on Rebecca (1996) and her manual, as a didactic resource for introducing philosophical thinking in early childhood education. However, we also incorporate studies already conducted on the topic and theoretical suggestions from the philosopher who created the program and other scholars, including didactic experiences carried out by this author as an early childhood education teacher. Based on Lipman, philosophy stands out as an interdisciplinary field where dialogue stimulates reasonableness, reasoning, critical thinking, creativity, and care. This study highlights the didactic aspect of the proposal, allowing philosophy to unite with didactics to develop what is proposed in children's education, and doing so in those spaces identified as conducive to the practice of philosophy.

Keywords: Teaching methods; philosophy in childhood; philosophy for children; Matthew Lipman; Rebecca.

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Ensinando a pensar filosoficamente na Educação Infantil

Resumo

O estudo busca identificar os espaços filosóficos na educação infantil e a sua utilização para a promoção do pensamento nos termos propostos por Matthew Lipman. O Programa Filosofia para Crianças elaborado pelo referido filósofo e seus colaboradores é composto por novelas filosóficas acompanhadas de manuais dirigidos aos professores para a exploração dos temas e atividades filosóficas motivadoras às crianças de diferentes idades. Por meio de uma pesquisa com metodologia qualitativa, descritiva e bibliográfica, o estudo analisa este material focando especialmente em *Rebeca* (1996) e seu manual, como recurso didático para introduzir o pensar filosófico na educação infantil. Mas adicionamos estudos já realizados sobre o tema e as sugestões teóricas advindas do filósofo criador do Programa e de outros estudiosos, incluindo experiências didáticas realizadas por esta autora como professora da educação infantil. Tomando Lipman por base, a filosofia se destaca como campo interdisciplinar, em que o diálogo estimula a razoabilidade, o raciocínio, a criticidade, a criatividade e cuidado. Este estudo ressalta o viés didático da proposta, permitindo que a filosofia se una à didática para desenvolver o proposto na formação infantil, e fazendo isso naqueles espaços identificados como propícios ao exercício da filosofia.

Palavras-chave: Didática; filosofia na infância; filosofia para crianças; Matthew Lipman; Rebeca.



La ensañanza del pensamiento filosófico em la Educación Infantil

Resumen

Este estudio busca identificar espacios filosóficos en la educación infantil y su uso para promover el pensamiento, según la propuesta de Matthew Lipman. El programa Filosofía para Niños, desarrollado por este filósofo y sus colaboradores, consta de novelas filosóficas acompañadas de manuales para docentes que exploran temas filosóficos y actividades que motivan a niños de diferentes edades. Mediante investigación cualitativa, descriptiva y bibliográfica, el estudio analiza este material, centrándose especialmente en Rebecca (1996) y su manual, como recurso didáctico para introducir el pensamiento filosófico en la educación infantil. Sin embargo, también incorporamos estudios previos sobre el tema y sugerencias teóricas del filósofo creador del programa y otros académicos, incluyendo experiencias didácticas de la autora como docente de educación infantil. Según Lipman, la filosofía se destaca como un campo interdisciplinario donde el diálogo estimula la racionalidad, el razonamiento, el pensamiento crítico, la creatividad y el cuidado. Este estudio resalta el aspecto didáctico de la propuesta, permitiendo que la filosofía se una a la didáctica para desarrollar lo propuesto en la educación infantil, y haciéndolo en aquellos espacios identificados como propicios para la práctica de la filosofía.

Palabras clave: Didáctica; filosofía en la infancia; filosofía para niños; Matthew Lipman; Rebecca.



Introduction

This article aims to present and analyze didactic approaches to the practice of philosophy in early childhood education, understood as an introductory form of teaching how to think, according to the proposal of the Philosophy for Children Program. The full set of materials was created by the philosopher Matthew Lipman (1923–2010) and his team of collaborators, among whom we highlight Ronald Reed, author of *Rebecca*, designed specifically for early childhood education. Regarding the theme of philosophy in childhood alongside appropriate didactic teaching for this purpose, Alves et al. (2022, p. 84) address philosophical interdisciplinarity: “Philosophy presents an interdisciplinary character in argumentation by drawing upon its holistic view in relation to other areas of knowledge and even common sense, in the refutation or affirmation of hypotheses” (Alves et al., 2022, p. 84).

Didactics can join philosophy when considering ways to construct knowledge within the classroom. The focus of this research will be to present the novel *Rebecca* (1996), written for the teaching of young children, which generated interest in the topic as it contributes to broadening teaching experience with children of this age group in the treatment of philosophy.

Regarding the construction of the Philosophy for Children Program, Rosa (2012, p. 45) points out that: “Lipman’s intention in proposing his Philosophy for Children Program is not to turn children into philosophers, but to develop the potential that allows them to think critically, to think well.” This and other concepts are grounded in the importance and the early onset of philosophical work right from childhood, together with didactic values in teaching, supported by the thought of Matthew Lipman (1990, 1994, 1998) as well as Libâneo (2004, 2015), who highlights: “[...] it is up to didactics to investigate the teaching-learning processes in their relationship with specific contents” (Libâneo, 2015, p. 641). Thus, this suggestion will be one of the focal points in our study, since,



through didactics, we intend to work on teaching philosophy in childhood using material tailored for this form of learning.

One of the main concepts within Philosophy for Children is the formation of students in a circle in the classroom, called a community of inquiry, presented by Alves and Muraro (2020) as follows: “One of the main components [of the community of inquiry] is dialogue, that is, a form of speech in which there is interaction between two or more individuals and whose objective is the development of adequate understanding and judgment” (Alves; Muraro, 2020, p. 21, additions ours). In this sense, the community of inquiry is the procedure suggested by the author and mentor of the Program as a classroom setup arranged in a circular distribution of students, fostering interactions and discussions around the philosophical themes observed by its members upon reading or listening to the novel. Thus, through the mediation of the teacher who prompts children to think and reflect on the themes drawn from the story, actions unfold through classroom dialogue that stimulates thinking skills and the formation of reasonableness.

Given the scarcity of didactic materials directed toward philosophy for early childhood education, we seek to answer the guiding question of our interest: What contributions can the use of the philosophical novel *Rebecca* bring to child development through a didactic teaching approach that enables children to develop their cognitive and ethical skills, epistemological curiosity, and aesthetic imagination? Guided by this question, the study presented fundamental concepts such as the attribution of new knowledge through daily experiences, driven by the emergence of hitherto unknown questions and thoughts, all found within the content of the philosophical novel. All these contents were interrelated and presented during the investigation, as this is a qualitative, descriptive, and bibliographical research. Based on these methodologies, Lima and Mito (2007) point out that bibliographical research is indicated for investigating themes that are still little explored in the scientific field. The authors emphasize that this type of study enables access



to a wide range of information from different publications, contributing to the organization of knowledge already produced and to the construction or refinement of the theoretical framework underpinning the investigated object. In the same perspective, Silveira and Córdova (2009) state that bibliographical research relies on previously elaborated theoretical frameworks, using existing academic literature as a foundation for developing the investigation. Thus, this study is grounded in scientific studies and publications that serve as a theoretical basis for constructing the dissertation. Thereby, this study aims to contribute to the insertion of children into educational processes that value questioning, listening, and the collective construction of meaning from the earliest years of life.

Thus, bringing the bibliographical perspective to the study made it possible to highlight texts from the scope of Matthew Lipman's philosophy (1990, 1994, 1998) and his collaborators, such as Ronald Reed and Sylvia J. Hamburger Mandel (1996), author of the Teacher's Instruction Manual. We also included Libâneo (2004, 2015), among other authors who contribute to analyzing the relationships observed in formative teaching aimed at stimulating thought. As a form of support for textual revision, ChatGPT was used as an Artificial Intelligence (AI) tool for a better analysis of ideas, textual structuring, and proofreading. We emphasize that the use of this tool was not responsible for the total construction of the material, serving only as support to advance the study. Furthermore, we add that the use of AI complies with the guidelines of the journal to which the manuscript is being submitted, not constituting a tool that could compromise the integrity of the study's content.

Regarding philosophy in the classroom, we rely on Rosa (2012, p. 14), who highlights that the discipline helps: "[...] children discover their own aptitudes, their tastes; whether for the arts or for the sciences." Furthermore, the discipline presents new forms of dialogue and stimulation of thought within a community of inquiry, where one learns to live in a group, discuss with respect, and value the contribution of others to our own ways of thinking.



The formation of communities of inquiry is one of the central focuses of teaching philosophy through the use of philosophical novels, which can become a didactic tool in the classroom across all age groups. The novels aim to introduce philosophical concepts to the reader through stories tailored to each group of students (in the case of early childhood education, listener-students), seeking to foster philosophical thinking and dialogue focused on critical, ethical, and aesthetic inquiry. This process of philosophical stimulation, listening, reading, and exchanging knowledge and information stemming from age-appropriate experience develops within the so-called communities of inquiry—the Program’s philosophical inquiry method par excellence—which ensures an atmosphere that is friendly and, at the same time, demanding in terms of encouraging criticism, creativity, and ethics.

Diving into practices focused on developing thinking in childhood alongside the tool of philosophical novels, the possibilities for classroom action have proven increasingly fruitful for early childhood education development. Materials such as the Instruction Manuals that accompany the Novels offer activities that support lesson planning didactics. Starting from the reading of philosophical novels, the construction of a community of inquiry can begin, where through practices such as a conversation circle based on dialogue, thinking, and learning about oneself and others, educational development occurs.

Regarding the contributions that all this material can bring to the realm of early childhood didactic and philosophical teaching, throughout the study we observed the possible approaches that the use of the philosophical novel affords—such as its contribution to cognitive development from early childhood, highlighting how children’s thinking and the expression of their thoughts and questions become favorable within the community environment at this age level. In the following sections, the observed content will be presented in greater detail.



On Philosophical Novels

In one of his citations, Lipman (1998, p. 22) informs us about how the beginning of his Program was triggered by a restlessness to understand how teaching was being presented in schools. Upon feeling mobilized to prepare children and young people for the next stages of their education, but in a way distinct from what he perceived as excessively traditional, repetitive, and non-reflective, the architecture of a grand educational Program was initiated. Following the occurrences of the protest movements of the 1960s in various countries, the author was prompted to offer an outlet for what he interpreted as general manifestations of irrationality. Thus, he considered fostering an educational intervention through philosophy, creating stories focused on the development of human thought from early childhood, grounded in the experiences of children and young people themselves, who are naturally rich in questioning, curiosity, and wonder before the world.

Within this universe of interests, we selected the age group pertaining to early childhood education. For the author: “The children in the story should somehow form a small research community, in which each one would participate, at least to some extent, in the cooperative search for and discovery of more effective ways of thinking” (Lipman, 1998, p. 22).

With this in mind, our author constructed his first philosophical novel and the subsequent ones that followed, forming a Program focused on creating stories by children for children, where they could form communities of inquiry around common interests during activities, assisted by well-prepared teachers and guided by the corresponding Instruction Manuals.

Such a community is described by Lipman, Oscanyan, and Sharp (1994, p. 72) as a pedagogical space specially organized for the exchange of knowledge between students and teacher. This occurs to foster a new perspective for thinking when using philosophical novels. In this context, the teacher bears the responsibility of stimulating thought, encouraging the formation of alternative



ways of interpreting a problem, and generating solutions within the classroom community to the problems analyzed and viewed from different angles. Authors such as Venturini and Schulder (2020, pp. 15-16) mention that it is up to teachers to present children with different worlds, enabling enchantment, a sense of responsibility for the school space, and attention to oneself, to others, and to reality through multiple perspectives.

Through these observations, we can perceive the power of philosophical knowledge as an instrument for human development regardless of age. In the case of early childhood education and its specificities, we can find richly fertile spaces for work of this nature. Bringing this form of teaching through a didactic lens, Alves et al. (2022, p. 87) clarify the contributions of this field to the teaching of philosophy: “In general, didactics translates into teaching methods and techniques and has the mission of enabling learning,” being able to suggest new strategies so that philosophical purposes can be achieved.

The spaces found in early childhood education remain little explored in activities of a philosophical nature. What is most frequently observed in this regard is the encouragement teachers should demonstrate in developing new activities and stimuli, based on the National Common Curricular Base (Brasil, 2018, p. 36) regarding, for instance,

[...] by welcoming the experiences and knowledge built by children in the family environment and in the context of their community, and articulating them into their pedagogical proposals, [these spaces] aim to expand the universe of experiences, knowledge, and skills of these children, diversifying and consolidating new learning, acting in a complementary manner to family education [...] (Brasil, 2018, p. 36).

Based on this idea, teaching in early childhood education takes as its starting point the foundation of varied knowledge that the child has built throughout life. Given this, this study will explore some skills that the BNCC (Brasil, 2018) presents as one of the objectives to be achieved in early childhood education, focusing on philosophy.



In light of this, regarding the context of teaching philosophy in childhood, we can strive to ensure that didactics is not restricted to strategies for content transmission, but involves creating situations of dialogue, problematization, and inquiry that awaken curiosity and stimulate critical thinking. Thus, the teacher acts as a mediator, planning activities and methods that favor the collective construction of knowledge, utilizing philosophical novels to act toward teaching how to think within a community.

From the foregoing, we affirm that the community of inquiry must be introduced based on children's thinking and the exchanges of their experiences, with the philosophical novel serving as a channel for instigation, knowledge construction, and new ways of thinking and engaging in dialogue. The novel *Rebecca* can serve to help us understand this possibility of forming a community of inquiry in a didactic manner, through questioning and impulses toward children's thinking. Based on Mandel and Santana (1996, p. 8), the grouping of students in a community constitutes spaces where children inquire together and learn how to inquire about a topic that emerges from their experience represented in a given novel. The community of inquiry is a fundamental basis for the Program and for the introduction of philosophy in early childhood education, since it is within it that learning occurs based on the understanding that we think better and refine our ideas through the exchange we establish with our peers. From this model, we can evaluate other equally promising sources for this purpose.

The Novel *Rebecca* and the Instruction Manual

As mentioned, Ronald Reed's novel *Rebecca* (1996), directed at young children, features the little girl Rebecca who, based on her characteristics, is of the same age group as the children for whom the story was created and intended. The novel is divided into 37 episodes. In each episode we find a part of the story, accompanied by an activity or question related to what was presented, aiming to engage imagination, element identification, quantities,



sequences, as well as the relationship and differentiation of elements—factors appropriate to the development of the age group in question.

The entire narration of the story is conducted by the main character. She has as her neighbor and friend, Beto, who is always with her in all her experiences. Questions arise in the story narrated by the character Rebecca herself, in a way that always includes Beto through his point of view and experiences, leading Rebecca to compare her own questions with Beto's ways of thinking.

The narration of the entire story is grounded in the events, living experiences, and background of the characters. Venturini and Schulder (2020, p. 18) offer some comments on this theme of play, lived experiences, daily life, and the relationship of play in childhood: "Children always play, and they play with whatever they have, even if it is with themselves, their body, their hands, with the world surrounding them, with what they possess." Children's play relates closely to the reality of each child, as well as their experiences and thoughts. The questions narrated in *Rebecca* (1996) are similar to those of children in the age group for which the story is intended.

When we read and reflect on the story, we are reminded of the creativity, wonder, and curiosity about the world that children naturally bring with them, and Rebecca shows herself to be a reflection of all this. The child's way of thinking is termed by Venturini and Schulder (2020, p. 12) as a "childlike thinking" (*pensar crianceiro*). This way of thinking in childhood is distinguished by how the world is perceived through a child's perspective. It is possible to observe that the entire content of *Rebecca* (1996) was formulated to capture this child way of thinking.

In each chapter of the story, along with its illustrations, activities and questions characterized by critical thinking are presented—ranging from questions related to Rebecca's narration (1996) to activities such as connect-the-dots, cut-and-paste, coloring, among others—making that material not just a children's storybook, but a broader workbook containing both the story and



numerous activities for developing thinking skills linked to children's hands-on tasks.

The Instruction Manual (1996), prepared for teachers who wish to work with the story of Rebecca, is viewed by Mandel and Reed (1996, p. 7) as a type of literature that "[...] fits into the proposal of philosophical inquiry of Education for Thinking," aiming to bring new knowledge to students in the classroom in a pedagogical manner while exploring the philosophical aspects it entails. The 37 chapters of the novel correspond to the suggestions found in the Manual, where main ideas on how to approach the material with students are presented. Furthermore, we find exercises and a discussion plan to serve as a guide and provide a foundation for teaching action. This material assists teachers who do not hold a degree in philosophy to work with knowledge in a manner consistent with what Matthew Lipman established in his Philosophy for Children Program, tailored to the specificities of different age groups and their compatible philosophical interests.

Relating these activities to the objective of Education for Thinking alongside didactics, we are concerned with current teaching needs regarding new forms of learning in light of world transformations. Libâneo presents that:

Current didactics has drawn upon these investigations in search of new theoretical contributions to meet present educational needs, especially those related to teacher training, considering that basic school continues to be one of the places of cultural mediation for schooling (Libâneo, 2004, p. 115).

With the support of didactics, this approach of teaching for thinking, as we have presented, brings a new perspective to the possibilities of bringing these two fields together. Connecting this teaching framework with didactics, the story of *Rebecca*, and its Manual aimed at teachers, we emphasize that this material was designed to support the professional in having better didactics and ways of conducting their classes, allowing for a better-trained mediation. Such an initiative proved necessary for a more effective teaching process that guarantees both philosophical and didactic substance. Regarding the teacher



or instructor leading the proposed classes, Lipman, Oscanyan, and Sharp (1994, p. 119) state:

To be successful, the teacher must not only know philosophy, but must also know how to introduce this knowledge at the appropriate moment through questioning that assists students in their effort to understand.

In this sense, this point constitutes a factor of a certain vulnerability depending on a solid philosophical background of the teacher—hence the necessity of the Manual designed for the professional. Supported by the guidelines and factors highlighted, the teacher will be able to make good use of all the activities and suggestions offered by the novel.

To analyze the contributions of the suggestions on the subject, we turn to the founder of the Program himself, who points to the possibility of philosophical thinking for young children:

The discovery that children can do philosophy—and that they do it competently and with pleasure—emphasizes, on the other hand, the need to develop philosophies of childhood. For if children can reason when they begin to speak, and if they can do philosophy when they begin to reason, the current alliance between philosophical ethics and developmental psychology will begin to show welcome signs of strength (Lipman, 1990, p. 218).

From this citation by the author who proposed the Program, we gain support in demonstrating the contributions of philosophy in the classroom through philosophical novels—via a didactic teaching model where class material, preparation, and planning are grounded entirely in students' experiences under the comprehensive guidance of a well-trained teacher.

Practices for Thinking Alongside Philosophical Novels

To contextualize and exemplify pedagogical practices starting from the introduction of philosophical teaching through novels, we offer suggestions for action that encourage students to express their thoughts regarding the narratives presented to them. In this sense, we can establish practices to guide pedagogical actions in the classroom, considering the relationship between



didactics and philosophy based on Matthew Lipman's concepts, especially those proposed in the aforementioned Instruction Manuals that complement the philosophical novels. In the case of *Rebecca* (1996), in the corresponding Instruction Manual (1996) previously referred to, we find guiding practices that are feasible to implement in the classroom with children. Regarding the context of early childhood education, the delivery of content must take into account curiosity, imagination, and childhood lived experiences—childhood characteristics found in the novel and compatible with real students.

Presenting some experiences and practices based on the community of inquiry, we can consider the philosophical novel as introductory material for the conversation circle. This is a early childhood education activity highly appreciated by children. Certainly, through the insertion of a philosophical novel, it will be possible to work on various themes to stimulate thinking in childhood. Thus, the Instruction Manual for *Rebecca* (1996) helps us highlight several themes to be addressed in the classroom, such as feelings. In the Manual, Reed (1996, p. 34) addresses the topic of “crying.” When the story's main character refers to this reaction, he states: “We cry out of sadness, joy, or frustration. Sometimes we don't know why we cry. Does everyone cry for the same reasons, in the same situations?”. Based on these questions about crying, which are narrated in the episodes of Rebecca's life, it is possible to work on feelings with students. As a teacher, I observe that children consistently exhibit various emotional traits daily, but often do not know how to name what they feel. By working on this theme in the classroom, we address a better understanding of what they feel with the students and achieve one of the objectives of the National Common Curricular Base (Brasil, 2018) regarding its learning field of experience “the self, the other, and the us.” This represents an opportunity for students to understand themselves and others. This activity is a way to bring the concepts worked on by Lipman in the novels and in his Program into alignment with the lived experiences of early childhood education.



Delving further into this theme of feelings and making use of the content available in the Instruction Manual for *Rebecca*, Mandel and Reed (1996) present that children habitually express themselves through facial, bodily, and even verbal expressions. It is possible to utilize such a suggestion, for example, using a mirror, where changes in the students' facial expressions can be observed as they convey a feeling. Such an activity serves as a way to systemize learning regarding the identification and features of feelings, while also fulfilling the goal of the BNCC learning field (Brasil, 2018) on "body, gestures, and movements," which demonstrates that learning occurs through bodily movement within physical spaces.

Emphasizing the importance of these classroom practices and connecting those mentioned earlier, we highlight that thinking is the primary focus in introductory philosophical education. We return to what Mandel and Reed (1996, p. 30) highlight regarding thinking, stating that children think even without realizing it, thereby fostering the development of thinking individuals. Through the actions presented, we believe that thinking is developed autonomously, as knowledge is constructed through one's own individual perceptions.

Another practice related to introducing philosophy into early childhood education is the teacher's utilization of the curiosity and imagination that children bring with them. Considering philosophical novels as a tool to stimulate children's imagination, we suggest the following: after reading a passage from the story, we suggest asking students to indicate what in the stories might be a fact or not. Mandel and Reed (1996, p. 14) defend this practice, highlighting that: "[...] the children themselves will say that this story is not real, but rather a fantasy story." Taking into account that many philosophical novels are narratives adapted to children's language and worldview, children may tend to imagine what is presented to them with greater naturalness. Such practice helps develop argumentation, listening, thinking, and reflection within a classroom community of inquiry.



As a way to systemize knowledge, we understand that record-keeping activities are very important. In this sense, during childhood, children can also use drawing as a form of expression and documentation. Drawing inspiration from the practices in the Instruction Manual (1996) for *Rebecca* (1996), these records are considered meaningful activities. The act of drawing can contribute to cognitive development and serve to exercise this form of expression. Another practice that can also serve as a method of knowledge systematization is the classification of objects and creations. Mandel and Reed (1996, p. 12) highlight that:

Perceiving and knowing how to express similarities and differences is a fundamental skill for good thinking, and children should become accustomed to looking for similarities and/or differences in the most diverse situations. It is through similar (or different) characteristics that classifications are made in science and mathematics, for example.

Through the exercise of classification and differentiation, skills such as thinking well, knowing how to observe attentively, comparison, and categorization by appearance can be developed in the individual, thus allowing some philosophical characteristics to be utilized and developed alongside highly didactic instruction.

Based on all the practices described up to this point, which utilize the introduction of philosophy through philosophical novels, we demonstrate that education framed in this manner should not be limited solely to these specific narratives; other narrative sources may also be explored, which must obviously be selected with thorough criteria.

Contributions of the Philosophical Novel *Rebecca* to Child Development Alongside Didactics

To introduce the contributions of using the philosophical novel *Rebecca* in the early childhood school environment, we highlight the introduction that Mandel (1996, p. 7) provides in the Instruction Manual (1996) aimed at teachers:



To engage in philosophical inquiry is to go deep into questions that belong to everyone, without stopping at particular cases. The objective is not to try to discover why Rebecca said this or that, but rather what people would do, or should do, in a situation equivalent to Rebecca's [...] (Mandel, 1996, p. 7).

In this quote, we observe the suggestion that the teacher should encourage children to devise different solutions to the situations experienced by Rebecca, problematizing and seeking alternatives as if it were an event that the child themselves were experiencing. This can help them become more empathetic, supportive, creative, and sociable. From reading the material, the teacher is placed in a position to mediate instruction, strengthening relationships within the community of inquiry, while also needing to be prepared for the questions posed by children and other educational actors. In the studies of Gomes and Vieira, we highlight these concerns:

On several occasions, we are confronted as teachers with questions about what correlations can be expected between philosophizing with children and the development of their thinking skills and competencies, what impacts emerge in students' academic results, and how philosophizing can prepare children for citizenship and for the development of critical thinking (Gomes; Vieira, 2021, p. 11).

We understand that it is due to these and other inquiries that teaching work should rely on the aforementioned materials and those of other researchers who have broadened the discussion, especially those linked to other disciplinary and academic contexts. With all this support, teachers continue their training by strengthening their understanding of the contributions of philosophy in school and the possible ways in which teaching can be executed, bringing it closer to didactics and integrating theory and practice within the classroom. Alves et al. present that:

Philosophy contributes to the insertion of the individual as a transformer of their reality, helping them to interact with other humans and with the world. In this light, knowledge must be constructed together with the student, rather than deposited into their head as in static knowledge (Alves et al., 2022, p. 84).



In this sense, we understand that philosophy goes beyond the classroom, conferring upon school relations qualities of a more democratic collective life driven by shared interests. When working through the reading of *Rebecca* (1996) with young children, we are prompted to stimulate their thinking beyond the temporary, to instigate their imagination, and to help them perceive quantities, construct sequences of ideas and facts, and relate and differentiate through elements of the story.

When we are in the classroom, we have spaces that can be used in a formative manner to develop young children's thinking—such as conversation circles and storytelling—which, through the introduction of the novel, allow us to better develop thinking while contributing to students' cognitive learning and their critical, ethical, and aesthetic sense. Thus, in several chapters of the novel, listeners and/or readers are invited to imagine the narrated events.

As previously mentioned in our study, within early childhood education guidelines, activities aim to cover the so-called fields of experience, which the National Common Curricular Base (Brasil, 2018) presents as guiding framework containing the necessary objectives for instruction. Regarding the practices previously mentioned in our study, we cited two of these fields: “the self, the other, and the us” and “body, gestures, and movements.” These fields share the objective of developing knowledge of oneself, others, and one's surroundings. Alongside the movement toward introducing philosophy and philosophical novels, achieving these goals is possible by developing activities rooted in each student's pre-existing knowledge, where thinking is exercised when students are asked to express prior knowledge and connect it with the aforementioned fields.

Authors such as Alves and Muraro (2020, p. 9) observe that: “Philosophy is a field of knowledge that values the process of thinking through concepts with a view to creating meanings that guide human activity.” As emphasized, teaching through customary activities of drawing and imagining contributes to childhood creativity, this action being one of the most common and routine practices



during this stage of life and one that is vital for human development. Thus, the contribution of thinking and imagining through the use of the philosophical novel in the age group addressed here becomes even more enriching.

We find in Mandel and Reed's Manual (1996, p. 30) that:

We all think. We do this even if we do not realize we are doing it. Children also think, and they too do not always realize they are doing it. For the goals of Education for Thinking programs to be achieved, it is necessary for children to perceive themselves as thinking beings so that they can later become people who think for themselves.

Based on these authors, we can evaluate how thinking operates as an introduction to cognitive development. Thinking is something we engage in daily from childhood, yet we often do not know how to do so reflexively; in the case of children, we see that it is essential for them to understand that their thinking is vital to acquiring new knowledge. Such instruction should be made available to them from a very early age.

The philosophical introduction carried out through the novel encompasses new forms of knowledge, but our emphasis rests on thinking, which we believe to be the foundation of all learning, supporting what Matthew Lipman calls "reasoning skills"—namely: "[...] classifying, defining, formulating questions, giving examples and counterexamples, identifying similarities and differences, constructing and criticizing analogies, comparing, contrasting, and drawing valid inferences" (Lipman, 1990, p. 99), alongside the ethical and social skills developed within the community of inquiry.

Such skills can be addressed in the chapters of the novel *Rebecca*, thereby bringing a philosophical perspective to the school environment of younger children who, despite their young age, display wonder and curiosity toward childhood questions. Libâneo (2004, p. 115) states that: "Changes in ways of learning affect ways of teaching, given the subordination of teaching practices to learning activity and to actions of learning and thinking." In this way, the proposal of philosophical novels, when integrated with didactics, privileges children's active participation.



Regarding thinking, Matthew Lipman clarifies in his book *Thinking in Education* (1995, p. 13): “[...] thinking well is thinking in a precise, consistent, and coherent manner; for others, it is thinking in an expansive, imaginative, and creative way.” From this expanded understanding, thinking is viewed as an action encompassing various purposes focused on knowledge.

Connecting everything presented thus far, we are committed to delving deeper into the issues mentioned here that involve the teachings of Lipman and other authors who supported our explanations, as well as gaining a better understanding of the narratives included in the Philosophy for Children Program to consider other rich alternatives for teaching—aiming to obtain a set of materials that place thinking as a central educational objective. We understand that teaching practices must consider the acts of learning and thinking, which leads us to observe that working with philosophical novels becomes a fertile path, allowing children’s curiosity to guide the construction of meaning for people’s lives.

We believe there are opportunities within early childhood education settings to develop pedagogical practices grounded in philosophical materials and ideas. By using a philosophical novel, for instance, we initiate the learning process through storytelling—a practice widely present in early childhood education that constitutes an important resource for introducing philosophical themes. In the case of the philosophical novel *Rebecca*, its plot presents several questions that can stimulate children’s reflection and foster the establishment of the classroom as a community of inquiry.

One of the spaces that enables the circulation of these questions and shares characteristics similar to those of a community of inquiry is the conversation circle. In this context, children can dialogue about the narrated story, share ideas, raise hypotheses, and collectively build reflections. Authors who study Matthew Lipman’s concepts devote much attention to the topic of dialogue, such as Phillips (2011, p. 19), who notes that the philosopher understands it as a process through which “[...] students become accustomed to questioning



one another and seeking reasons and opinions, developing the ability to listen to each other carefully and to build and elaborate upon others' ideas." Thus, incorporating elements of philosophy into early childhood education can provide introductory experiences of philosophical reflection, making use of spaces and practices already present in this educational stage.

It falls upon the teacher to mediate these experiences, favoring the development of investigative thinking, dialogue, and the collective construction of meaning from the earliest years of schooling. At the same time, we believe the teacher can act as an attentive mediator, creating conditions for dialogue and for the development of critical thinking from childhood, incorporating philosophy as an indispensable resource within their professional training repertoire.

Conclusion

Considering the development of the study up to this point, aimed at observing didactic approaches to introducing philosophical education for children's thinking through the use of philosophical novels, it was possible to highlight that advancements can extend beyond school knowledge. This occurs because children bring examples from their daily lives—provoked and revealed through the novel—which enriches the dialogue among them and fosters their return to the social environment in a more developed manner, in addition to encouraging classroom practices that stimulate thinking based on students' background knowledge and experiences.

The proposal presented and discussed here can be implemented in early childhood education in a didactic manner through conversation circles, storytelling based on the novel's chapters, dramatization, discussion, and debate, thereby boosting the contribution of instruction to speech, listening, sociability, creativity, and thinking well. Furthermore, we emphasize the use of imagination nurtured in the activities suggested throughout the novel's chapters—such as drawings representing places, people, and objects—giving



children the opportunity to reason and understand what unfolds before them based on the characteristics and information available to them.

Thus, it is possible to answer the guiding question of this study: What contributions can the philosophical novel *Rebecca*, or another of the same genre, bring to child development through a didactic teaching approach for children? Starting from this question, we respond that the contributions of using the philosophical novel *Rebecca* as didactic material for children bring enrichment not only to students, but also to teachers, who gain an additional rich resource and a robust way of teaching their young learners. Moreover, it affords new ways of looking at available school spaces and paying attention to other modes in which teaching can be developed in the classroom. This manner of introducing philosophical education provides a necessary foundation for the child's cognitive, ethical, and moral development—these being some of the pillars of “reflective, higher-order, or multidimensional thinking,” as proposed by Lipman as a result of his studies and the creation of his Program.

It is evident that all these mentioned advancements require professional guidance consistent with the magnitude of the objectives proposed for this school period and for subsequent levels of schooling. Teachers must become familiar with this material and Lipman's concepts so they can study didactic strategies for classroom action focused on the development of thinking. It is also important that children are continuously nourished cognitively and culturally, thereby shaping human beings in harmony with the knowledge that constitutes an ongoing educational process toward a better society. In light of what has been said, in our view, the teachings of philosophy must walk hand in hand with didactics through a beneficially constructive approach to human cognitive and social knowledge.



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Note

- 1 Statement on the Use of Artificial Intelligence – Gemini, an artificial intelligence tool developed by Google, was used to assist in translating this article into English. The translated version was fully reviewed and adjusted by the editorial team to ensure fidelity to the original text, terminological accuracy, and compliance with the journal’s editorial standards. The tool was not used to generate the article’s arguments, analyses, or academic content.



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