

P4c pedagogy case study of buranda primary school



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According to John Dewey (1966; cited in Cam, 2018), the core of school education is to develop pupils' ability of thinking, which could be acknowledged by assessing pupils' ability of 'inquiry'. Hence, Dewey emphasizes the need for inquiry-based teaching and learning in schools, which offers a new pedagogy to contemporary education except for the traditional educational way that is to memorise, to recitation and to learn by rote (Cam, 2018). On the basis of Dewey's 'Theory of Inquiry' (1938), Lipman developed a philosophy-based model of inquiry and put forward 'Philosophy for Children (P4C)' to promote student's high-order thinking in education, while high-order thinking represents a 'fusion of critical thinking and creative thinking' (Lipman, 1991; cited in Cam, 2018). Since the 'Philosophy for Children' movement in the 1970s, academics have both supported and questioned the possibility of P4C as a means of developing student's high-order thinking skills in an educational environment. A successful example of applying 'Philosophy for Children (P4C)' in schools is a school in Australia named Buranda Primary School. Since Lynne Hinton became principal at this school and adopted the P4C in 1996, Buranda Primary School has been transformed into a thriving and inspiring learning community (Duigan & Gurr, 2007). This essay will illustrate the effect of the principal in the application of P4C pedagogy in a learning community; by the example that Lynne Hinton overcomes the challenges caused by the application of P4C pedagogy in schools. In this case study, schools represent a learning community. Moreover, this article will discuss the way the principal influences the student's learning. Biesta's *The Beautiful Risk of Education*, Dewey's '*Learning by Doing*' Theory and Vygotsky's *Theory of Zone of Proximal*

Development (ZPD) as well as other philosophical and psychological concepts will also be discussed.

Lipman's P4C is established based on the pragmatism of John Dewey that knowledge is not merely a learner's acquisition of external facts, but a learner's product of inquiry, which refers to a learner's experience of solving problems through evidence and inference (Millett & Tapper, 2012).

Therefore, the primary goal of Lipman's P4C program is not to induct children into academic philosophy by instilling any specific philosophical doctrines (Cam, 2018; Millett & Tapper, 2012). On the contrary, P4C is to provide children with an opportunity to use personal experience to engage in philosophical inquiry so that they are able to think critically, caringly, creatively and collaboratively (White, 2012), and to become a reasonable, reflective and democratic citizens (UNESCO, 2007; cited in Millett & Tapper, 2012). As Hand (2018) states, philosophical problems are usually divided into those that are marginal and those that are central to human life. Children occasionally ask philosophical questions of varying degrees of intelligibility and answerability does not prove that philosophy should be applied in schools as a new subject that is like Mathematics or Science (Hand, 2012). The P4C thus is adopted as a form of inquiry within a learning community. In particular, 'the community of inquiry involves the claim that deliberative and collaborative communities are exceptional in their ability to foster critical, creative, and caring thinking, leading to sounder reasoning, understanding, and judgement' (Lipman, 1998, p. 278). Therefore, philosophy for Children (P4C) movement used 'community of inquiry' as its primary pedagogy since

the 1970s while the effectiveness of 'community of inquiry' has been proved by abundant experimental evidence (Vansieleghem & Kennedy, 2011).

Holding the same purpose as the P4C to foster a child with critical thinking, spirits of confidence, reflectivity, respect and an eagerness to learn, Lynne Hinton — the principal of Buranda Primary School — decided to implement Philosophy for Children across the school. Fundamentally, Lynne trust Plato's says that 'philosophy begins in wonder' (Duigan & Gurr, 2007, p. 7), children's natural curiosity and the inquiry-based pedagogy so that she believes that the P4C would have a considerable rate to success. Through the exploration of the case study of Buranda elementary school, it is evident that the principal created an exclusive leadership model that uses leadership as a form of inquiry. In order to promote the school to become a community of inquiry, Lynn has been persevering in the exploration of teaching and maintaining a constant dialogue with students and teachers. Biesta (2013; cited in Lewis, 2014) argues that communication is a common, inter-subjective, accidental, and uncertain constructive act, not merely an exchange of information. When teachers neglect to create an inquiry-based learning environment because of their daily teaching work, Lynne will communicate with teachers in a timely and effective manner. Lynne also hopes to create a safe and open environment for children's learning through being the person who is trusted by children within the community. Therefore, she has set up a permanent opening policy to let students talk about their troubles and express their thoughts. Learning community constructed the connection based on the triangle relationship among principal, students and teachers. In Buranda, students still need to learn numeracy and spelling

(Duigan & Gurr, 2007). In order to effectively form high-quality learning, Lynne has high expectations for everyone in the school. At the same time, she made the students believe that they can do it, and finally, the students did. Here Lynne cleverly uses Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory (1977).

Furthermore, Lynne admitted that the most significant risk she took was to implement the Children's Philosophy (P4C) throughout the school (Duigan & Gurr, 2007). Lynne realized that students and teachers would have different beneficial ideas and encouraged them to take an 'adventure' in learning, teaching and inquiry; and to share their answers actively. Surprisingly, the social performance and academic achievement of students at the Buranda Elementary School have been improved because Lynne was willing to take risks and actively address the challenges of implementing P4C in schools.

Biesta's *The Beautiful Risk of Education* could explain the above phenomenon. Biesta (2015; cited in Santoro & Rocha, 2015) demonstrates that education is risky since education is an encounter between human beings, which is a random subjective event. In the meanwhile, Biesta (2013; cited in Lewis, 2014) suggests that educators should take the 'risk' in education seriously since education itself will disappear without risk. Risk in education is a gift for teachers to take responsibility.

Lipman believes that student's high-order thinking would not be improved unless they participate in philosophical thinking (Cam, 2018). In order to avoid the various degrees of philosophical issues, Lipman wrote a set of philosophical novels that covers philosophical issues associated with students' real life to motivate students to ask questions and exchange their ideas. This laid the foundation for inquiry-based discussions. However, some <https://assignbuster.com/p4c-pedagogy-case-study-of-buranda-primary-school/>

educationalists critiqued that discussing the issues in the philosophical novels does not enable students to truly participate in the philosophical thinking, because students are unable to express their real thoughts when they do not experience the same problem listed in the novels (UNESCO, 2007). At Buranda Elementary School, instead of making use of the philosophical novels that are similar to Lipman's materials for P4C, students raise questions related to their campus life based on their exploration of real life and conducted an inquiry-based discussion to solve them. For example, several seventh-grade students had a conversation with Lynne (principal) to outline the 'unacceptable bullying behavior' and to discuss the suggestion to address school bullying (Duigan & Gurr, 2007). As a result of this inquiry-based discussion, the issue of the inappropriate and unfriendly bullying behaviors was resolved (Duigan & Gurr, 2007).

On the one hand, according to the theory of Vygotsky's theory of Zone of Proximal Development (The Theory of ZPD), children can achieve a 'potential level of development' at the level of 'real development' with the assistance of more capable people. Principal Lynne provided a collaborative dialogue (Vygotsky described as 'scaffolding') with students to explore specific measures to prevent school violence to help students solve problems related to school violence. On the other hand, students have interacted with the social environment in conversations with their peers or principals, their communication skills have improved, and their knowledge of the concept of 'violence/bullying' has grown. Moreover, students have further improved their knowledge acquisition on the prevention of school violence by exchanging their ideas with their peers, namely 'shared recognition'. According to

Lipman (1998), students within the community of inquiry will recognize that their experiences and values are shared, which is conducive to social solidarity, and indirectly shows that the P4C pedagogy can effectively bring social benefits. Besides, in order to think about measures to solve school violence, students need to analyze the violent motives of school violence violent people through ' transposition thinking, which enhances their imagination, empathy and logical thinking ability. In general, students' learning is mainly reflected in the gradual internalization of the knowledge they acquire from the principal and translates into their knowledge. More significantly, students' high-order thinking skills have been increased through student's real inquiry-based discussion.

Another the main obstacle of introducing P4C which is the lack of appropriate teacher training and teaching resource, could not be ignored (Millett & Tapper, 2012). Lipman (1998) mentioned that some teachers complain that it is difficult to have a dialogue with some students since these students are unwilling to participate. The reason that students not actively engaging in the conversation is illustrated by Lipman (1998) as the fact that students are not aware that their ability to inquiry relates to their experience, thoughts and imagination. Lipman's explanation neglected a discussion on these teachers' approach to introducing P4C. In the process of implementing P4C to Buranda, Lynne has always been concerned about the role of the teacher. P4C has a high standard of requirements for teachers. Biesta (2006; cited in Santoro & Rocha, 2015) points out in *Beyond Learning* that, the role of educators must be understood from perspectives of taking responsibility, that consists of assisting the unique creature ' coming into the world' and of

respecting the world of diversity. In the Buranda, teachers have to lead learning through creating an environment of questioning, wondering, imagining and puzzling moments (Duigan & Gurr 2007). Lynne assisted teachers in creating a passionate and inquiring learning environment by designing teachers' vision of a school partnership and exploring the achievement of this vision. Lynne's concern on teachers is in line with Lipman's idea of offering a variety of discussion plans and activities to teachers in order to involve students in the 'community of inquiry'.

In addition to the above action, Lynne advocates that everyone in Buranda is a learner, but some learners are responsible for improving the learning of others (Duigan & Gurr 2007). Thus, the directive role of the teacher has been gradually cut down (White, 2012). In order to enhance the quality of teachers, Splitter (2006) proposed support for incorporating the pedagogy of P4C — 'community of inquiry' — into teacher's pre-employment training. Apart from it, Lynne requires all teachers to perceive additional training and encourages them to obtain advanced certificates (Duigan & Gurr 2007). Inspired by Dewey's 'learning by doing' theory, Lynne prefers to be in a state of constant inquiry and to make decisions based on the varying degrees of the importance of the problems that occur at each stage, rather than develop a consistent strategic plan (Elkjaer, 2009). Lynne evaluated each of the educational innovation programs in Australian schools and selectively implemented some of them, intending to address the cost-effectiveness, which commonly exists in P4C. In order to ensure that teachers can maintain their enthusiasm for inquiry, in a state of continually challenging themselves and developing their professional skills and

knowledge, Lynne devoted 65% of the school findings used to renovate the building's exterior to train teachers. Therefore, teachers can maximize the role of his 'scaffolding' and take the 'risk' of education.

Many surveys have found that P4C as a pedagogy adopted in the schools contributes significantly to the high-order thinking and discursive reasoning of individuals and to building a democratic community. However, the focus of this essay is to figure out how could a school become a thriving learning community after applying the P4C pedagogy. In this case study, my targeted 'learning community' is the Buranda Primary School in Australia, which is a school that students have made considerable progress in academic achievement and social behaviour since the implementation of the P4C in 1996. P4C's success in the learning community of Buranda Elementary School is inseparable from Lynne Hinton, the principal of this school who dares to overcome the risks in education. She adopted a unique model of leadership that leadership is seen as a form of inquiry to create a safe learning environment for teachers and students and encourages students to explore life events actively. Consequently, she solved the problem of applying P4C materials in school-philosophical novels and the debates on the quality of teachers who should introduce students P4C.

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