The Use of Philosophical Texts in Extracurricular Activities in the Context of the Personal and Social Development of Children of Younger School Age[1]

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Abstract: The paper focuses on the issue of the cross-sectional topic Personal and Social Development in the After-school Activities of Children of Younger School Age when based on the concept of philosophy for children. In Slovakia, there are supporters of this concept who strive to implement it into the educational process. The presented text is a part of wider research, and it represents one of the results of the mentioned efforts.
The aim of the paper is to describe and analyse the course and results of qualitative research carried out during the after-school activity. We focused on the possibilities of using a philosophical text for children and subsequent discussion in the area of personal and social development.
The results of the research showed the suitability of implementing philosophy for children in conjunction with the cross-sectional theme in this type of non-formal education, as well as the relationship between the discussion based on the text and the cross-sectional theme. At the same time, some weaknesses and reservations of the use of philosophical texts for children were revealed.

Keywords: Personal and social development, philosophy for children, philosophical text, discussion, after-school activity

Introduction

The issue of reading to and with children has several aspects and intentions. The reading of (artistic) literature is primarily related to the development of aesthetic feeling, a sense of beauty, or the formation of taste.[2] These are also connected to emotional development. Reading literature influences the development of imagination and supports vocabulary enrichment, communication skills, and cognitive development. Literary texts, respectively work with it, can also focus on the formation of critical thinking or on personal and social development.
One of the types of literature is a text written for philosophical discussion with children. Its

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2   Cf. Erich MISTRÍK, *Vstup do umenia,* Nitra: Enigma, 1994, pp. 20, 27.

primary goal is the development of critical, creative, and engaged thinking. However, it also takes into account social and ethical aspects. Reading philosophical stories for children has a place in both formal and non-formal education.

Theoretical Background

Philosophical texts, respectively philosophical novels for children are a specific literary type with a specific purpose.

The first novels were written by Matthew Lipman, the founder of the concept of philosophy for children (hereinafter referred to as P4C). He looked for a way to help children develop thinking. He considered literature to be an appropriate tool and wondered what type of literature was appropriate. He came to the conclusion that these should be stories close to children considering several aspects:

> This would have to be something young people would discover for themselves, with little help from grown-ups. The children in the story would somehow have to constitute a small community of inquiry, in which everyone shared, at least to some extent, in cooperatively searching for and discovering more effective ways of thinking. It was my thought that the little band of children in the story could serve as a model with which the live students in the classroom might identify. Such a portrait, of children living together intelligently and with mutual respect, might give children hope that such an ideal was feasible.[3]

In the mentioned conception, such a text and its reading in a group became the starting point for the subsequent discussion in a group of children which Lipman called a community of inquiry. Its members work together to find answers to some questions and problems, because only truly close people, and not just a 'group of friends', can say without fear that they do not understand something.[4]

The discussion has intersections with Socratic dialogue. It does not begin with the analysis of the term (this part is usually part of the clarification of the question before the discussion itself), even if the process of defining the terms is usually part of it. The topic of discussion (question) is most often formulated after reading a literary text – a philosophical story created at P4C.

Working with a philosophical text for children and subsequent discussion appears to be one of the best ways to develop critical thinking. The issue of this type of reasoning is currently relevant not only in European countries but also in countries with other cultural and religious backgrounds.[5]

It is closely related to the development of reading literacy (as well as at an international level) which expresses the required basic skills of man in receiving and processing information from the text and their socio-cultural anchoring.[6]

P4C is intended to clarify and deepen thinking that eases decisions. Thus, it supports the development of critical thinking. Lipman characterises it as thinking which helps to make a judgement

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3   Matthew LIPMAN, On Writing a Philosophical Novel, in: *Studies in Philosophy for Children. Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery*, eds. Ann Margaret SHARP and Ronald F. REED, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992, p. 22.

4   Cf. Matthew LIPMAN, Ann Margaret SHARP and Frederick S. OSCANYAN, *Philosophy in the Classroom,* Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980.

5   Cf. © Sozan H. OMAR, Mastery Level of Critical Thinking Skills for Female Middle School Students in Saudi Arabia, *Journal of Educational & Psychological Sciences* 19/4, 2018, pp. 230–258 (online), available at: https://journal.uob.edu.bh/bitstream/handle/123456789/3441/8.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y, cited 15th November 2019.

6   Cf. Mária LALINSKÁ, Eva STRANOVSKÁ and Zdenka GADUŠOVÁ, Instruments for Testing Reading Comprehension, *IRCEELT 2019: Proceedings book from the 9th International Research Conference on Education, Language and Literature*, ed. Natela DOGHONADZE, Tbilisi: International Black Sea University, 2019, p. 249.

as it is criteria-based, self-corrective, and context-sensitive.[7] Lipman does not stay at that level, though. He states that it is the development of multidimensional thinking that aims to strike a balance between reason and emotion, between the perception and conception of notions, between the physical and the mental element, between elements governed by rules and those not governed by rules. It is the intersection of critical, creative, and engaged thinking. *Critical thinking* looks for reasons (causal and purposeful), and works with the content and scope of the concept, with judgments, conclusions, definitions, etc. It is intended to prevent quick generalisations and prejudices. It is based on Aristotle's logic, and it represents a tool and a stepping-stone for two other types of thinking. The qualities of creative thinking are originality, productivity, imagination, independence, experiment, expressiveness, self-transcendence, ingenuity, integrity, etc. *Engaged thinking* requires the participation of the emotional sphere, interest in the problem, passion in solving the problem, and empathy. It is emotional and normative thinking. In practice, these three types of thinking cannot be separated; it is only a methodological division.

The social and ethical dimension is evident in P4C. On the one hand, the stories address issues related to the mentioned two levels of life. On the other hand, the discussion itself concerns both the ethical and social aspects of the group's reality.

In contemporary Slovak (and Czech) education, ethical and social development is an issue that is incorporated mainly into the cross-sectional theme Personal and Social Development (in the Czech Republic, Personal and Social Education). The state educational programme enables the introduction of a cross-sectional theme into teaching as a separate subject, but, most commonly, its content and goals are implemented across a subject. However, both forms can be combined. The correct implementation of the cross-sectional theme should contribute to a positive social climate of the school and good relations.

At the same time, it is a topic that is currently closely linked to the requirements for the development of specific professional competencies of teachers. It concerns the competencies focused on the factors of learning with an effect on the individuality and development of the student's personality.[8]

The objectives of the cross-sectional theme Personal and Social Development[9] direct a pupil to be able to:

- *understand oneself and others;*
- *optimally manage one's own behaviour and expression of emotions;*
- *favour friendships inside and outside the classroom;*
- *acquire, use, and further develop skills of communication and mutual cooperation;*
- *acquire basic presentation skills based on gradual knowledge of one's assumptions and apply them in the presentation of oneself and one's work;*
- *acquire and apply basic social skills for the optimal solution of various situations;*
- *respect different types of people, their views and their approaches to problem solving;*
- *prefer the basic principles of a healthy lifestyle and risk-free behaviour in one's life.*[10]

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7   In the same way competences and key competences are mentioned in the European context, M. Lipman states that it is necessary to acquire several types of skills during the educational process, one of which is 'the thinking skills'.

8   Cf. Mária LALINSKÁ and Eva STRANOVSKÁ, Proposal for a Reference Framework and Tools for the Evaluation of Teachers' Professional Competences in Slovakia, *International Journal of Economic Research* 2/2018, pp. 289–298.

9   The goals of the cross-sectional theme Personal and Social Education in the Curriculum in the Czech Republic are also formulated in a comparable way.

10   © Štátny vzdelávací program – primárne vzdelávanie (online), available at: http://www.statpedu.sk/files/articles/dokumenty/inovovany-statny-vzdelavaci-program/svp_pv_2015.pdf, cited 18th March 2019, p. 11.

Although cross-sectional themes are embedded in curricula, 'the effectiveness of their work can be enhanced by relevant extracurricular activities'.[11] We used this aspect during an after-school activity which was attended by younger school-age children. After-school activities, as well as the activities of school facilities in Slovakia, are governed by the educational programme of each facility, and it is formed by each facility independently of the other. There is only recommended but not binding content, so the ideas for the topic Personal and Social Development can be inserted in extracurricular activities with the aim of non-violent and natural acquisition of communication and other soft or interpersonal skills (also referred to as soft skills), ethical behaviour, and emotional and spiritual development.

The combination of reading philosophical novels and the subsequent discussion during the after-school activity proved itself to be suitable for fulfilling the goals of the cross-sectional theme in question.

'Reading, as an expression of a personal focus on a certain kind of receptive activity, is reflected in its quantity and quality in the overall way of behaving and acting of a person in all his roles.'[12] Thus, from the research point of view, we were interested in the relationship between the philosophical text for children (respectively the process of reading, reception, and understanding of its content, and subsequent discussion) on the one hand and the children's personal and social development on the other.

Empirical Part

At the time of the after-school activity realisation and during the empirical research in Slovakia, several P4C supporters sought to mediate it to the pedagogical academics. The results of efforts to increase awareness of this concept are visible especially in the academic environment at universities in Nitra, Ružomberok, Banská Bystrica and Bratislava in the form of (relatively under-represented) publishing activities and conference papers, but also, for example, the introduction of an optional subject of philosophy for children at the University of Ružomberok intended for students of preschool and primary education, or a summer school organised by the Faculty of Education, the University of Matej Bel in Banská Bystrica. However, the concept of P4C and the texts used in it are still not known to teachers in pre-school and school education. One of the steps towards implementation is the introduction of an after-school activity based on this concept at a primary school in a town in central Slovakia. At the same time, there was no research in the field of implementation of cross-sectional themes at primary and secondary schools.

Research Objective

The aim of the research was to find out and describe how a philosophical text for children can be used in extracurricular activities for children's development in the context of the cross-sectional theme Personal and Social Development.

We included the specific goals of examining attitudes, experiences, and behaviour of the participants after reading the text, and the subsequent discussion in the context of personal and social development.

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11 Ibid., p. 10.
12 Kateřina HOMOLOVÁ, Dospívající mládež a dvě hodnoty čtenářství, in: *Mládež, hodnoty a volný čas,* ed. Helena POSPÍŠILOVÁ, Olomouc: Hanex, 2010, p. 94.

Research Questions

Given the fact that we have chosen qualitative research, which is characterised by its circular nature, the issue of formulating research questions has been modified, respectively we reformulated those questions[13] according to the emerging topics/categories in the transcripts of the discussions during the initial analyses. Monitoring the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural side of children during the functioning of the after-school activity proved to be an important aspect (with regard to the emerging topics). It also became a part of the questions.

In cooperation with the research goal, we formulated the following research questions:

1. What is the attitude of the participants to the issues related to their personal and social development after reading the literary text and during the following discussion?
2. How does the content of the selected literary text and the subsequent discussion about it affect the personal and social development of the participants?
3. What kind of literature, respectively the text for discussion, is proposed by the participants themselves, taking into account the aspect of personal and social development?

The Research Sample

The research sample consisted of two groups of pupils of younger school age attending a Church primary school in a district town (up to 30,000 inhabitants) in central Slovakia. From the research point of view, we were interested in the results of all of the children and thought of them as one unit. From a formal point of view (with regard to text coding), we have marked the group from the first year as A and from the second as B. The first group of students completed the after-school activity in one school year and the second group in another (2013–14 and 2014–15). In group A, there were eight fourth class pupils and group B consisted of nine pupils – four fourth class and five fifth class pupils. In the results of our study, we did not eliminate the fifth-year children because the age differences of the participants were not relevant.

Type of Research and Methods Used

We have chosen qualitative applied research to meet the set goal and to find answers to the formulated questions. As we only noticed certain phenomena in the perception and experience of the participants, we chose interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA).[14]
The basic method was dialogue – both conversations and discussions. In addition to these two methods, we also used the creative activities of the participants. Given the objectives of this paper, however, we eliminated them.

The Course of Research

The research began with the introduction of the after-school activity. Its content and course

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13   Cf. Roman ŠVAŘÍČEK, Klára ŠEĎOVÁ et al., *Kvalitativní výzkum v pedagogických vědách,* Praha: Portál, 2007, p. 69.
14   Cf. John W. CRESWELL, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design. Choosing among Five Approaches,* London: Sage, 2013, pp. 77–83; also Jonathan A. SMITH, Paul FLOWERS and Michael LARKIN, *Interpretative Fenomenological Analysis. Theory, Method and Research,* London: Sage, 2013.

corresponded to the concept of P4C.

There were 28 meetings, most of which had a classic structure (as implemented in P4C). It started with reading the text. Depending on the language, it was read by the researcher or the participants. If necessary, the participants asked questions related to understanding some words. This was followed by the formulation of questions for discussion. It is a type of questions similar to Socratic ones,[15] but they are asked by the children and not by the teacher (who plays the role of facilitator or coordinator in the discussion process).[16] The process of their creation has its criteria, and their use in P4C has its specifics.[17]

During the after-school activity, the children could choose whether they wanted to create the questions themselves, in pairs, or in a group of three. They wrote the formulated questions on the board. When the questions were written, the creators read them again. They explained to others which part of the text relates to which particular question and the meaning of the question. In this part, the already mentioned clarification of some words, with possible reformulation or the merging of questions (if they were almost identical), took place.[18]

The process continued after the questions were adjusted and explained by voting – by choosing one of them according to the highest number of votes. If there was enough time, other questions were discussed according to the assigned number of points.

From the very beginning, certain rules applied to the after-school activity, which the participants themselves formulated. One of the rules was that only those who asked for a word in an agreed manner could speak. It also meant that one would not interrupt the speech of another, that swearing or vulgar words would not be used, that they listen to others without disturbance, and so on. For the discussion process itself, it was true that one would use examples for one's statements (or counterexamples), would ask other questions, would react to each other, would not deviate from the topic, etc.

Each discussion was followed by a reflection. The participants evaluated the asked questions and reaction sequence. They assessed other points such as who used the example, who used the counterexample, who defined the word/term, which question, answer, or reaction was aimed at children's involvement, who drew a conclusion (synthesis), or deviated from the topic/questions (and who pointed it out), etc.

At the end of the discussion, the participants evaluated the course and respect to the rules. They expressed their experiences or attitudes with respect to the activities during the after-school activity.

All of the activities were recorded on video. Based on this, research data were created following the transcripts and notes taken on the course of the after-school activity and on working with the transcript.

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15 Cf. © MiYoung LEE, Hyewon KIM and Minjeong, KIM, The effects of Socratic questioning on critical thinking in web-based collaborative learning (on-line), in: *Education as Change*, 2/2014, pp. 285–302, available at: https://www-tandfonline-com.proxy-ub.rug.nl/doi/full/10.1080/16823206.2013.849576, cited 20th January 2020.

16 On the other hand, the issue of the Socratic question or the Socratic dialogue is not clearly defined in pedagogy. In their characteristics, different aspects are taken into account by different authors. (Cf. © Josef PETRŽELKA, Sókratovská metoda na internetu, (on-line), in: *Pro-Fil. an Internet Journal of Philosophy*, 1/2000, available at: https://www.phil.muni.cz/journals/index.php/profil/article/view/1509/1782, cited 22nd June 2020).

17 Cf. Eva ZOLLER, *Učíme děti ptát se a přemýšlet*. Praha: Portál, 2012.

18 We consider it necessary to note that the formulation of questions for discussion initially caused problems for the children. The questions were either closed or worded in such a way that the answer was explicit on the basis of the text (these were mainly questions to remember), respectively the creators of the questions knew the answers and wanted to know the answers of others. It was necessary to give examples of questions based on the text and, at the same time, questions which would encourage discussion. The active participation of the teacher was a necessity in this case. After about a month, however, the children were able to formulate questions with the capacity to develop dialogues, respectively discussion, and were able to assess for themselves what type of questions they had formulated.

For research purposes, we changed all the names (including their diminutives) of the children in the transcript in order to guarantee their anonymity. This was followed by the process of coding and subsequent saturation of emerging topics. We numbered each line of the transcript and marked the emerging topics in colour. Subsequently, we created a new column next to the transcript, in which we wrote only colour-coded words or phrases. Subsequently, we created another column containing analysis. In the next column, we wrote our own notes focused on the context, the sequence of topics development, and the relationship between emerging topics. We included notes about specific individuals as well.

We read the text several times and started following the vertical line. We created a new level of coding in the form of new categories, to which we assigned already created topics. The number of categories was then reduced in comparison with the topics. We filled in the categories during the next reading.

In the next step, we used the NVivo 10 program. This step was caused by the finding that many texts – statements of children – can be classified into several categories. Such processing allowed us to search for common themes across the examined transcript. The created categories were, for example, *emotions with a subcategory – cognition* (when the children talked about emotions or experience) and a *behavioural component* (we recorded manifestations of emotions). Another subcategory was the *classification of emotions*. Also, there was *verbal communication*, which we followed from a linguistic point of view, that is, it included subcategories such as formal and informal words, swearing, interjection, questions, etc. Another category was *critical thinking*. Subcategories were, for example, questions (this is an example where one topic fell into two categories), definitions, arguments, examples, counterexamples, etc.). A further category was, for example, *school*. Its subcategories include attitudes towards the school, teacher, examination, evaluation, classmates, etc. And another category contained topics related to *relationships*, etc.

After completing the categorisation and saturation of all topics, we obtained a large amount of data. It became the basis for creating new research problems and questions. One of them was the relationship between the text and the social and personal aspects, that is, the topic of the presented paper. Due to the basic research question, we also looked at enriching topics and the topics which ensure clarity.[19] For the analysis process, we have selected those that relate to research questions.

Literary Texts Used

We read texts which were directly intended for philosophical discussion, but later, in the course of the after-school activity, we decided to use other literature in accordance with the views of other P4C supporters.

As the literature in the field of P4C has not been translated to Slovak, and the original Slovak works with the stated intention have not been published yet, we decided to read Czech translations and to use Slovak translations of Czech texts for the purposes of the after-school activity.

The Czech text was read by the researcher, the Slovak texts were read by the participants. The used texts included *Grégoire et Béatrice*[20] and *Fabienne et Loïc*[21] by P. Laurendeau, and stories from the book *Elfie*[22] by M. Lipman. Another text was *Hitler's Daughter*[23] by J. French. The book

19 Cf. SMITH, FLOWERS and LARKIN, *Interpretative...,* pp. 79–103.
20 Cf. Pierre LAURENDEAU, *Blanka a Jirka*, České Budějovice: TF JU, Centrum filozofie pro děti, 2011.
21 Cf. Pierre LAURENDEAU, *Lukáš a Lenka*, České Budějovice: TF JU, Centrum filozofie pro děti, 2011.
22 Cf. Matthew LIPMAN, *Eliška*, České Budějovice: TF JU, Centrum filozofie pro děti, 2012.
23 Cf. Jackie FRENCHOVÁ, *Hitlerova dcera*, Praha: Mladá fronta, 2009.

is not explicitly intended for P4C, but the content and way of writing correspond to philosophical novels for children. The book was published in a Czech translation, but we translated the text into Slovak for the needs of the after-school activity.

In addition to this literature, we also used books translated into Slovak which were not primarily intended for P4C. Due to their content and focus, they seemed to be appropriate. We also knew from experience that children like to read these books. Among these were stories of *Frog and Toad* by A. Lobel.[24]

Another source was the stories of the hare and frog *Priesemut and Nulli* by M. Sodtke[25] and a tale about courage by L. Pauli.[26] These stories are in German, so we chose the possibility of working with a text translated into Slovak for the purposes of the after-school activity only. Participants received a printed text in Slovak. Books with an original German text were on the floor in the middle of the discussion circle. These titles are used in the implementation of P4C in German-speaking countries.

The next text was more or less an experimental step. It included the open-ended detective stories by H. Conrad (2006), the *Whodunit Crime Mysteries*.[27] These books have not been published in Slovak, but after our experience with reading philosophical novels in Czech, we used reading in Czech. The participants had no problem with this.

The choice of another text is connected to the fact that M. Lipman encouraged the followers of P4C to modify already written (and translated texts) according to the cultural context and to create the stories themselves. Another reason for such a choice is the fact that, at present, there are challenges to use other texts if it appears that working with them could meet the objectives of P4C.[28]

Thematic Analyses

In the analyses, we present only selected parts related to the subject matter.

Via the first research question *What is the attitude of the participants to the issues related to their personal and social development after reading the literary text and during the following discussion?* we monitored those statements and reactions of the participants that are related to personal and social development (hereinafter PSD). We focused on the cognitive and emotional aspects. We were interested in reflections, characteristics, arguments, reactions, etc. In the process of coding and categorisation, topics appeared that we could also include in the goals of PSD: *understanding ourselves and others*; *acquiring and using communication and cooperation skills*; *applying social skills in problem solving*.

After reading the story of Frog and Toad, a discussion developed over an issue. The question was *whether there is a difference between a sleepy head and a slouch?* After reading the story about courage, children discussed the question: *Why do some people do unreasonable things?* The children took the text personally. They compared themselves with the characters, but they also expressed their desires and concerns. Many statements reflected their own behaviour which, in some respects, was evident during the after-school activity. One participant, who had spoken negatively

24   Cf. Arnold LOBEL, *Kvak a Čľup sú kamaráti*, Prešov: Slniečkovo, 2008.
25   Cf. Matthias SODTKE, *Gibt es eigentlich Brummer, die nach Möhren schmecken?* Oldenburg: Lappan, 2011.
26   Cf. Lorenz PAULI, *Mutig, mutig*, Zürich: Atlantis, 2006.
27   Cf. Hy CONRAD, *Kdo je pachatel?* Praha: Portál, 2006.
28   Cf. Lenka MACKŮ, *Filozofický rozměr literárního příběhu: uplatnění literárního příběhu v programu Filozofie pro děti,*. České Budějovice, 2010. Masters thesis, University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, Faculty of Theology, thesis supervisor Assoc. Prof. Ludmila Muchová, p. 48.

about the topic of learning before (in the sense that he does not like learning, that he does not want to learn), described a slouch as someone who *'does nothing and just lies down'* (A2929). Another participant, who had expressed his interest in the racetrack before, described a slouch as *'the one who gets up only through the remote control'* (A2941). According to another participant, a slouch is the one who *'does not move a finger'* (A2965). Another one said about himself: *'So I am lazy, and I have to get out of bed. When I finally get out of bed, I will overcome myself'* (A2891). Another participant responded to that statement with the sentence: *'He cannot do that, because otherwise he would not be lazy'* (A2904).

On the topic of *courage*, a participant responded: *'I would be afraid to jump into the water'* (B2182). After reading a story from Hitler's Daughter, it was discussed *whether we are too small for some things and too big for others.* The children talked about themselves, and they expressed themselves honestly and realistically. They said how they perceived themselves, and in what reality they lived. We expected that they would consider themselves too big for the topic of reading fairy tales, but the participants' view of themselves was different from our assumption. The participant stated that he is not too little to read fairy tales because *'... for example, you have a little brother, so you can tell him a lullaby or a fairy tale'* (A6508). Another one said that he is not too little to read fairy tales, because *'children have more imagination than adults'* (A6547). Another responded that *'we are not small, because we can read already'* (A6560).

The answers to whether they are too little to drive a car also surprised us, because we expected a clear 'yes'. The children's responses also reflected their own experiences at home: *'Yes, we are little, but we can drive'* (A 6750). *'We are still small. We can drive only with someone. I drove a truck with my father, my father was with me. We can drive a small car'* (A6756).

Even in the question expressing whether they are too small to go to school alone, their own experience manifested itself: *'I would go alone, but my mother drives me. She works here at school'* (A6799). *'Because I am nine, and my mum has allowed me to go alone since the third class.' 'We are not small for that, because we already know – we are careful about the coming cars. We just know how to go'* (A6831).

After reading the text of the book Grégoire et Béatrice, the question *'What does it mean that people are the same and yet not the same?'* was asked. The participant's question was almost identical to the text, and *he expressed great dissatisfaction*: *'But how is it possible that people are the same even if they are not the same? It does not make sense.'* This question sparked a very lively discussion; the children often gave examples from their own experience: *'It makes sense, because someone doesn't like something, and another likes it...' 'But I thought that people are the same, and also they are not. Is it possible that they are the same, when they are not?'* (B3942–3952). *'I have classmates, a boy and a girl, who are twins. And they are not the same. They have different hair, clothing, and body shape. They were born on the same day, week, and month. So, they are the same, because they were born on the same day. But, they are not the same in other things'* (B4021–4025). Even though we knew that most children were from Christian families, we did not expect them to use religious knowledge as an argument in the case of this question: *'God created us all as humans. So, we are the same. But we are not the same, because we are all different'* (B4068–4070).

On the subject of isolating people (Hilter), a debate developed over the question who is isolated, and why people are isolated by someone: *'We isolate the sick from the healthy, so that they will not get infected and isolated, and we also isolate heat from cold'* (A9351-9354). *'We isolate the mentally ill to prevent harm'* (A9386). *'Children need to be isolated from the computer when they go crazy over it'* (A9417).

The first question is also connected with the goal of PSD *acquiring and using communication and cooperation skills* and with the issue of *argumentation* which appeared during the after-school activity sufficiently.

In Hitler's Daughter, the children were interested in the game played by the literary characters. The participants were interested in the theme of the game, and the question was formulated *whether everything we do can be a game*. We assumed that the children would have a clear distinction between what is a game and what is not a game. During the discussion, though, it turned out that they associate the game with fun, and therefore an activity that is fun is a game. When we asked if going to school is a game, the participant responded: *'When you are looking forward to playing with someone there, then yes.'* Another participant reacted: *'Or when you can talk to someone.'* Then the reply was: *'But you never look forward to school.'* And then another participant, a girl, said: *'When a classmate, a friend, is there, then you look forward to it'* (A7637-A7642). Another answer was: *'Computer lessons are basically a game.'* Then someone else replied: *'It is not a game ... because we also learn something there'* (A7675-7686). When asked if the learning process at school could not be a game, some participants said: *'It can.'* There were those who said no as well, because *'everyone certainly doesn't enjoy school'* (A7723-7727). From this point of view (i.e., it is everything that we enjoy), the participant was able to conclude that: *'Everything can be a game. But I don't mean things like war, I mean normal things. These have to be like a game'* (A8015-8016).

We also included the issue of social skills aimed at *solving various situations* in the first research question. The development of this skill was given space after reading the parts of the detective stories. One of the questions was whether we should let strangers into our homes and how to deal with them when they say they need help. Children are taught by families and in school that we should not let strangers into the home. Thus, they also presented such answers: *'I do not think that we should let strangers inside.' 'Because we do not know what they are capable of!'* However, the discussion also led the participant to the question: *'And if there is an injured strange person from the street, a very injured person, what to do then?'* The others defended their claims, looking for arguments to support it: *'No, I would get the disease from him.' 'So, I would call an ambulance and wait. I would leave him outside'* (B33513–33569).

The second research question relates to the issue of experiences and behaviour after reading the texts and subsequent discussion. We were interested in how the content of the used literary text and the subsequent discussion affect the personal and social development of the participants in terms of emotional and behavioural aspects.

One of the goals of the cross-sectional theme, which is linked to this question, is *to guide one's own behaviour and emotions*. A frequent topic after the reading was the question of rules – those that we formulated together in the after-school activity and the ones mentioned in the used text.

The story of Hitler's Daughter states that certain rules apply. One of the questions in the discussion was *what would it be like if there were no rules?* The participants reacted differently. They seemed to respond on the basis of their own experience, on the basis of the perception of prohibitions and regulations especially: *'It would be great!'* (A28136). But another participant responded: *'Without the rules, it would be terrible'* (A8144). We felt that the children who had behaviour problems at school reacted spontaneously against the rules. Conversely, those who were good students at school stood up for the rules. However, during the discussion, they agreed that rules must exist in order to be able to live together normally.

At the cognitive level, participants showed knowledge of the rules. The practical rules set out

within the after-school activity, though, became a problem. Especially, it was acceptance, letting one speak without interrupting, sometimes also the usage of swear words and nicknames. The participants expressed verbal and often non-verbal experiences of such disrespect during the after-school activity itself.

The second issue is also related to the topic of PSD, that is, *the preference for friendly relationships in and out of the classroom*. In this topic we find intersections with the topic of understanding oneself and others. The topic of friendship and the questions related to it appeared after reading the story Can There Be Such Meat Flies That Taste Like Carrots? and also after reading the story from the book Fabienne et Loïc.

The issue of friendship between classes at school emerged in the discussion. It turned out that during school, classes are hostile to each other: *'We are angry at each other. Dodos, those from the other class, stopped being friends with me'* (A12583). *'Yes. They were friends with me, but they only played with me when I had sweets'* (A12591). *'dodos – it looked like they were put in the same B-class. And us, the good ones, we were put in a different class. Dodos are the ones who would sell themselves for one potato snack. We were, on the other hand, put in the class where we are real friends. I call them dodos'* (A12622–12631).

Despite the fact that PSD does not include the issue of *spiritual education*, topics related to this issue also appeared in the discussions: after reading a text from the book Grégoire et Béatrice, where various gods appeared in a dream, the participants asked during the discussion: *'But I would like to know names of these gods. I would like to know the name of the God who created Adam and Eve'* (B30777–79).

The answers to the third research question relate to the *attitudes of the participants towards the used text*. The answers appeared spontaneously but also after asking questions. So, this question is not just an analysis of discussions. The children very often commented on the text during the reflection.

Many attitudes were noticed in the Emotions category. After reading some of the texts, the children wanted to carry out the activities that took place in the story: *'Are we going to play this game too?'* (A6459). In the case of another text, the participant expressed interest in the book. At other times he said that he would write such a story himself. At the beginning of one of the sessions of our after-school activity he said: *'Well, I wrote something similar to my mum on her name day'* (B16039). Some commented on the text right away: *'And you wrote this story? I liked it'* (A4002) However, another participant responded to it: *'But it was like something intended for two-year-old children, for those in kindergartens'* (A 4009). In the case of another text, a participant said, *'But this is not a serious story, it is just an invention. Hitler could not have a daughter, because he would have murdered her'* (A9210). During one session, the participant pointed to the book and said, *'Maybe I will get it on my birthday. I already asked for it at Christmas'* (B17708–10).

When evaluating the after-school activity, the participants also commented on the reading: *'I was fine because we read and drew'* (A8400). *'I was fine, I liked the story ...'. 'I was fine because we drew and read'* (B8276-8283). [Regarding the after-school activity] *'I liked it very much and mainly because of the story'* (B2387). *'I liked the whole story, the whole after-school activity'* (B2392).

Several evaluations appeared regarding the selection of the text itself: the children liked the after-school activity, because *'we read the detective story ...'. '... I like it the most for those detective stories too'* (17639–17641). *'We learn to think the most with those detective stories'* (B17649). *'The*

detective story reading was excellent' (B17673). When asked if they wanted to read Grégoire et Béatrice or detective stories at the next session, they answered: *'Detective stories'*, *'Inspector'* (B17720-17728).

Results

All the topics that arose during the dialogues and also those that began to take shape during the coding were related to the stories used. The dialogues conducted in the group of children revealed the cognitive and emotional side and encouraged behavioural expressions.

The first question focused on finding out the attitudes of the participants. These included *attitudes towards the issues related to their personal and social development after reading the text and the subsequent discussion*. It has been shown and confirmed at the same time that children bring attitudes from the family environment and present them when thinking about individual topics. However, during the discussions, there were some shifts, especially in the cognitive area. The text itself often inspired the children to give examples, arguments, comparisons, and to create other questions during the discussion.

The second question was aimed at *changing behaviour and expressing emotions after reading the text and subsequent discussion*. We have noticed short-term and individual changes in behaviour and the expression of emotions. From the results of this second question, new questions arise that could be the subject of further research: What is the appropriate text concerning philosophy for children if one wants to engage all members of the group (seeking community)? It turned out that not all of the children were always involved in the text. Another question could be directed towards the composition of the children in the group. It seems that interest in the text stems both from personality qualities as well as from the mutual relationships in the group. Relationships sometimes marked the process of the reading of the text or its perception. To a certain extent, these findings also apply to the third question.

If we relate the first and second questions to the stated goals of the cross-sectional theme of Personal and Social Development, it turns out that children understand the issues of their own competencies, rights, and responsibilities. They can distinguish them from those which belong to adults as well. They can also assess the activities for which they are mature enough compared to younger children. They know how to express themselves on the question of their future profession and express their desires and attitudes. They understand the difference in gender and, partly, the role of men and women. Appropriately to their age, they are able to look for answers and arguments in favour of their claims. To a large extent, the activities revealed a natural potential to understand oneself and others during the activities.[29] The topics of the individual stories and the subsequently formulated questions and the ongoing discussions were supportive in this respect.

On the other hand, awareness of limitations and awareness of failure or dissatisfaction with one's performance has been proven to be an obstacle to further action. It seems that the self-image of the participants also reflects the attitudes of parents or teachers, and the children internalise them.[30] This applies especially to the moral and spiritual realm but also to attitudes towards oneself. At specific moments, there was little belief that they could achieve change. A low level of self-efficacy

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29   Cf. Carl R. ROGERS, *Být sám sebou,* Praha: Portál, 2015; also Martin E. P. SELIGMAN, *Learned Optimism. How to Change Your Mind and Your Life*, New York: Vintage Books, 2006.

30   Cf. Kristina R. OLSON and Carol Sorich DWECK, A Blueprint for Social Cognitive Development, *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 3/2008, pp. 193–202.

appeared which may be related to the issue of self-esteem, flexibility, but also with little experience.[31] At the cognitive level, the children have shown a relatively high level of understanding of themselves and others, but, on the other hand, they do not understand some problems. This concerns issues which they have no experience with, and new knowledge that deviates from their algorithms of understanding. It is the result of adopted patterns of thinking, attitudes, but also the habits from the family environment. It can be caused by a low level of cognitive empathy as well. The aspect of emotionality and behaviour showed the *suitability of the discussed topics resulting from the text and subsequent activities*. When the children succeeded in the activities and tasks and found a solution, they encouraged and guided others to come up with it as well. They showed joy with their own idea and, at the same time, supported others. Success and the accompanying positive experience created a good climate. On the other hand, when they were able to propose solutions or solve a problem successfully, the joy turned into the spontaneous act of pushing the boundaries of discipline and violation of the rules of behaviour.

The participants were able to name their experiences, but the problem was to direct emotions and solve problems accompanied by emotions. Sometimes, instead of solving problems, participants engaged in defensive or impulsive reactions, as it was difficult for them to accept guilt or failure as well as a need (for example, of a friend in a group).[32]

As for the third question, that is, what kind of literature children prefer to create questions for philosophical discussion, although the texts for reading and their suitability is verified by peers in pre-research, it cannot be said that they would be interesting for the whole group. We found out that many texts do not connect with today's children, or they are translated literature that was originally intended for readers from other cultural backgrounds. The children were most interested in the literature which was accompanied by a certain tension, but also in the one that had a strong effect on experiencing.

Conclusion

Due to the fact that the research was carried out during free time activities, the children were able to work in a much freer and more relaxed atmosphere than they do during the education process at their school. Their behaviour was also more authentic. They manifested themselves in the cognitive, emotional and behavioural areas. There are many possibilities of application of the cross-sectional theme of personal and social development in this form of education. The implementation of the P4C methodology proves to be suitable.

Philosophical texts for children proved to be suitable for the creation of discussion questions and the subsequent expression of attitudes connected with personal and social development.

The aspect that the text itself does not have such an impact on changing children's behaviour turns out to be problematic. Rather, behaviour is influenced by the subsequent discussion.

Our research shows that participants know a lot, and that they can fight for some attitudes and beliefs. The dominance of the cognitive side over the emotional and behavioural side was significant. Children have a lot of knowledge (they can analyse, evaluate at their level), but they have a problem to process their emotions and guide their behaviour.

Given the used texts, it turned out that not all titles were appropriate. When commenting on the

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31   Cf. Dale H. SCHUNK, Developing children's self-efficacy and skills: The roles of social comparative information and goal setting, *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 1/1983, pp. 76–86.

32   Cf. Anna BISSIOVÁ, *Všemocné emoce? Jak poznat a zvládat vlastní emoce,* Praha: Paulínky, 2014.

literature, the children did not explicitly express a negative opinion regarding any title, but there were negative responses in the discussions. It seemed that not all texts were attractive to children. During the reading, it seemed that some of the texts were not enjoyable for the participants. Their interest needed to be aroused during the discussion. Nobody commented negatively on the detective stories. On the contrary, when the choice was possible, everyone clearly voted for detective stories.

It is worth considering the appropriateness of the used texts. Matthew Lipman created the texts which he considered most appropriate. However, he himself states that it is necessary to read stories that are close to children considering the problems they solve themselves. We perceive that there is little (didactic) literature in our environment, respectively none. However, the translated literature for P4C that we used did not prove to be engaging. If the literature is a suitable tool for the development of multidimensional thinking and personal and social development, it is necessary to use texts which contain current problems of today's children in the Slovak environment.

If we want to deepen personal and social development, the texts should be enriched with this very issue. The original literature is supplemented by extensive methodological manuals. In the case of the use of suitable Slovak texts or the creation of new texts, it would be necessary – given the goals of the literature for philosophical discussions with children – to create methodological manuals for them as well.

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