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Poli&ofia: A P4C Curriculum towards Citizenship Education

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Educating for Complex Thinking
through Philosophical Inquiry

Models, Advances,
and Proposals for the New Millennium

edited by Marina Santi, Stefano Oliverio

Liguori Editore

Impariamo a pensare

Collana diretta da A. Cosentino, M. Santi, M. Striano

Marina Santi, Stefano Oliverio (eds.)

**Educating for Complex Thinking
through Philosophical Inquiry**

*Models, Advances, and Proposals
for the New Millennium*

Liguori Editore

Comitato scientifico: Dario Antiseri, Franco Cambi, Daniela Camhy, Irene De Puig, Maria Luisa De Natale, Mario De Pasquale, David Kennedy, Walter Kohan, Luca Illetterati, Felix Garcia Moryon, Francesca Pulvirenti, Carlo Sini.

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Polisofia: A P4C Curriculum towards Citizenship Education

*Diego Di Masi, Marina Santi**

What does 'citizenship' mean? In legal terms, 'citizenship' represents the relationship between the individual and the State. Within this framework, 'citizenship' is a status that defines rights and duties, representativeness, and affiliation.

In education this idea of citizenship is the cornerstone of the traditional citizenship curriculum or, as McLaughlin said, a *minimal* approach to citizenship education [1992]. Minimal citizenship education provides information about the workings of democracy, its institutions, and the components of society. At the same time minimal citizenship education implies reflecting on a range of personal identities and a feeling of belonging to various communities, as well as the construction of new identities.

A more ambitious concept of citizenship education is the *maximal* approach [McLaughlin 1992] which «requires the development of a critical understanding of social structures and processes, [...] and 'virtues' that allow students to change them» [McLaughlin 1992: 238].

This second approach interprets citizenship in the broadest sense, namely as participation and engagement in public life. Maximal citizenship education, therefore, implies providing people with the skills they need to debate and to become involved in public deliberation by promoting opportunities for participation within and outside schools [Bolivar 2007].

At a cultural and personal level, citizens have to develop the competencies they need for authentic participation

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and active engagement with others; these competencies can be learnt through real experiences rather than through academic study alone.

Therefore minimal citizenship is a product, whereas maximal citizenship means exercising critical and reflective thinking in order to change society. Citizenship becomes a practice, «a social learning process in public spaces» [Bolivar 2007: 27]. In brief, the former approach interprets citizenship as a legal status, while the latter can be defined as agency-based.

Even though both the minimal and maximal approaches are part of the same democratic education project, their respective ideas of democracy are very different. In the first case, a status-based citizenship implies a representative democracy that conceives democracy as an «aggregative model» [Schumpeter 1947] based on a «system in which people have the opportunity of accepting or rejecting their leaders thanks to a competitive electoral process» [Mouffe 2000: 11]. Those who adhere to this school of thought believe that individuals are motivated to act only out of their own personal interests; popular participation should therefore be discouraged as a non-functional operating system in which, however, a fundamental role is played by organizations, such as political parties, which are responsible for representing the plurality of “groups of interests”.

However, agency-based citizenship is the pillar of a deliberative democracy model that promotes active participation in decision-making processes. Drèze and Sen [2002] put forward a form of democratic governance based not only on the smooth working-order of representative democracy, but also on the participation mechanisms that enable citizens to make themselves heard outside the electoral process as well. From Sen’s perspective, participation in public discussion and in the institutions that make this participation possible is not simply one example of democracy, but one of its requisites. This idea leads Sen to base the Capability Approach on the crucial role of social partici-

pation in promoting human functionings, i.e. the personal and collective agency and opportunity to decide what to be and do by themselves.

In line with Sen's approach, Crocker [2008] defines the two main aims of deliberative democracy. The first is «to identify and solve concrete problems or to devise general policies for solving specific problems. Second, deliberation's goal is to provide a fair way in which free and equal members of a group can overcome their differences and reach agreement about action and policy» [Crocker 2008: 310]. Within Crocker's definition of aims, we will look more carefully at four words, the meanings of which are extremely important to *Philosophy for Children: problem, fair, group, and action*. Our aim here is to highlight how the methodology of a "Community of Inquiry" (CoI), which lies at the core of philosophizing in the P4C educational proposal, coincides with the four areas of democracy identified by Crocker within the Capability Approach.

At the centre of deliberation lies the practical 'problem'. In a deliberative democracy, citizens start a discussion about practical problems in order to find solutions. This type of discussion emphasizes the public use of reason and offers the members of a community the opportunity to share their opinions. According to Crocker, deliberative democracy offers a method for finding solutions to practical issues and also enables fair decisions to be taken. Here 'fair' means an opinion of value not regarding a decision's content, but rather the procedure that envisages the involvement of everyone making the decision; this involvement enables all of the people who are entitled to express their opinion, as they are directly involved in the decision-making process, to express themselves and to be heard. The inclusive dimension of *fair* deliberation emerges as a fundamental component of the democratic process, and is manifested in terms of opportunity for all people to be involved, both as entitled persons and as accountable points of view.

As deliberative democracy focuses on a 'group' – the community – it offers an alternative model to the aggre-

gation of demand that is the hallmark of representative democracies, in which it is interest groups, rather than autonomy, freedom and individual wellbeing, that dictate the public agenda. Furthermore, the involvement of the community in decision-making processes enables it to exercise control in order to prevent the possible authoritarian and high-handed policies that may even tempt democratic regimes, especially in times of crisis.

Finally we come to 'action'. The objective of deliberation is to produce change, to transform and resolve what is felt and judged to be problematic. The result is not therefore a simple agreement based on a summary of different ideas or preferences, but a rationally built consensus that motivates people to act. Deliberative democracy offers, thus, the context and the opportunity to develop and exercise individual agency by accepting the challenges that another person and the context offer in terms of limits and potential.

Despite criticism and the limits of the participatory approach [Cooke & Kothari 2001], deliberative democracy currently remains the only model that ensures citizens can make a social choice through public deliberation [Crocker 2008]. This opportunity is provided by the participation method, which is created during the process of discussion, information-gathering, implementation and evaluation by a group directly involved in an activity; it is a method through which the participants directly involved in the action are called to make a decision, to make a choice [Alkire 2002].

Polişofia Project

The Polişofia Project is the embodiment of Lipman's vision, which saw democracy not merely as an ideal but as a praxis, a manner of acting and thinking. According to Lipman [2003], the main aim of democracy was not only to solve problems, but also to promote an inclusive and

participatory process that took a problem and produced and evaluated alternatives in order to reach a shared decision that complied with democratic values, such as justice, respect, equality and freedom. In this light, the act of philosophizing becomes a means of cultivating democratic thought.

By taking democracy to mean participation in a public and deliberative debate [Crocker 2008], and by using a maximal approach, citizenship education should develop along two lines: the former should offer the opportunity to participate in a public and deliberative dialogue, the latter must develop the specific skills needed to guarantee genuine participation in this deliberative dialogue. We will show how these two dimensions have been developed in the Polişofia Project¹, in which the “community of philosophical inquiry” as a methodological and pragmatic expression of Lipman’s idea of democracy of thinking is combined with an authentic democratic context, namely children participating in their local community.

Polişofia combines the experiences of Municipal Councils of Children² (context) with the P4C curriculum (competences) and its worldwide results in order to offer a possible educational design based on democratic participation. In accordance with the *Philosophy for Children* (P4C) program, the Municipal Council of Children (MCC) and the classes of its elected members were turned into a “commu-

¹ Polişofia is a Citizenship Education project and a Doctoral research thesis. It was conducted in Rovigo between 2008 and 2010 with the support of the Doctoral School in Educational Sciences, University of Padova, in collaboration with the Municipality of Rovigo. It was financed by the CARIPARO Foundation.

² The Municipal Council of Children (MCC) is a local government tool to promote the participation of younger generations in the democratic life of their community in collaboration with schools. The MCC is an elected body whose composition, age and number of councillors is defined by the rules and regulations adopted by each local institution. Girls and boys aged between 9 and 13 years are usually elected, and the number of councillors depends on the number of District Schools. The councillors, elected by their classmates, can choose a Mayor to represent the MCC at official meetings. Once installed, the councillors can work in small groups (commissions) in order to draw up proposals for the MCC.

nity of philosophical inquiry” to propose dialogical-reflective activities based on constant argumentation, negotiation and shared deliberation, and to improve deliberative dialogue skills [Walton 1996; Gregory 2007]. The inquiry approach aims to improve “complex thinking” (*critical, creative, and caring*) and the competences needed to participate in both present and future democratic processes [Lipman 2003; Santi 2006].

In the Polișofia Project, the MCC can be interpreted in two ways: if we interpret it as an *activity*, it may be considered as a space for public deliberation in which philosophical dialogue is the main activity promoted by *Philosophy for Children* (P4C); if considered as a participation context, then it may be read as a model for deliberative democracy that focuses on the Community of Inquiry (CoI).

In the former case, the focus is not on philosophy, conceived as the history of philosophers’ ideas, but on philosophizing, i.e. «a reflective activity that uses refined everyday language to give a deeper meaning to the world and humanity» [Santi 2006: 56]. The philosophical dialogue at the core of the P4C proposal becomes primarily an authentic dialogical activity which implies the presence of at least two voices/points of view, where shared meanings emerge as the product of the difference between them [Bakhtin 1981].

In the theory behind Polișofia, dialogue is considered not only as a sustainable dialectical communicative exchange, but also, and principally, as an ethical relationship that needs to be established among the participants. The latter idea refers to ethics as highlighted by its etymological origin and underlined by Agamben: «The Greek word *ethos*, from which we derive our word *ethics*, is formed by the reflexive pronoun *he* (*himself*) and the suffix *-thos*, which is used to form nouns. *Ethos* simply means ‘selfness’, i.e. a relationship of self with self or, in other words, the operation and the process by which ‘a self’ is constructed. *Ethics* is not possible unless there is a relationship with the self, an ‘intimacy’ that is always crossed by the presence of otherness» [Agamben 2008].

The Polişofia Project and its ensuing practice also interpret philosophical dialogue as a discourse activity that can be used to question both our established knowledge and common sense [Jedlowsky 2008]. Philosophical dialogue questions knowledge through the knowledge procedure of questioning, thus encouraging doubt in a self-correcting practice that is criteria driven and context sensitive [Lipman 2003]. When acquired knowledge is sedimented in culture it becomes common sense, i.e. what is considered to be obvious, «what everyone thinks» [Jedlowski 2008: 20]. Common sense is the collective thought in which we are immersed.

Philosophy, therefore, by questioning common sense, allows the subject to emerge from anonymity and become an identity in relation to others and to his/her own ideas and position in the dialogue. In philosophical dialogue within a Community of Inquiry, each person is called by name; everybody is mentioned, their existence and that of others is confirmed, thus building the conditions to be recognized and to make a difference. This dimension, which Habermas calls *emancipatory*, allows us to think of ourselves as agents who can transform the real world.

Finally, philosophical dialogue is a creative-thinking process which produces a new question for each given answer [Lipman 2003; Bakthin 1981]. It promotes the search for new solutions and alternatives [Sharp & Reed 1992] and the construction of new concepts [Deleuze & Guattari 2002] which open alternative perspectives and views of the world, and read possibilities into a multiple textual reality. In this perspective, dialogue becomes a hermeneutic activity which allows us to express ideas without fear of the disorientation produced by questioning.

These dialogical, hermeneutic and emancipatory dimensions of philosophical activity [Santi & Di Masi 2010] correspond to the critical, creative, and caring dimensions attributed to “Complex Thinking” by Lipman [2003], which lies at the core of P4C’s educational proposal.

A CoI can be seen as a historically and culturally given context, in which the child learns through communication between peers and between children and adults [Lave & Wenger 1991; Rogoff 1995, 1996; Vygotsky 1978]. In a CoI learning-context, the weight of thinking is shared among participants. Knowledge is constructed within a CoI as the result of the interpretation and negotiation of meanings shared in a dialogue, which occurs when dealing with practical and concrete problems [Dewey 1927/1984; Lipman 2003; Santi 2006]. A CoI is a place for shared reflection upon experience and co-construction of new meanings; moreover it is a privileged place that facilitates dialogue based on an interpersonal exchange of thoughts, thus seeking to reach a consensus and not simply an agreement.

The Research Design

Aims

Polişofia adopts a “maximal approach” to a citizenship curriculum [McLaughlin 1992] and to the democracy of *complex* thinking [Lipman 2003] to develop an agency-based educational proposal. In particular the curriculum aims to support children’s agency in terms of context and competences that will help:

- develop moral thinking (value judgment) and empathy (recognition of another’s emotional/affective presence), and construct rational justifications that will achieve a “caring” consensus;
- improve argumentative strategies focused on dialogical commitment [Santi & Giolo 2009];
- promote authentic participation in the deliberative process by adopting the specific pragmatic argumentative communication rules of “Inquiry Talk” [Santi 2006] in a CoI;
- develop creative thinking in a dialogical perspective [Di Masi 2011];

➤ design and implement materials and activities which facilitate and support children's agency within their world.

In this paper we will present the results of the first aim in order to make a contribution to the P4C debate concerning the development of caring thinking as a fundamental and wide dimension of complex and democratic thinking by highlighting the role of moral judgment and its emotive-affective component in the deliberative process [Di Masi 2012].

Method

Participants and setting

The Polişofia Project involves the Municipal Council of Children of Rovigo, a town situated in the North-East of Italy. The Council involves 41 children elected by peers from their own school and the classes of the 41 children elected (31 classes, 802 subjects, from 4th to 8th grade – 9 to 13 years old). The schools are distributed among the 6 educational districts of the city.

Target and control groups were selected from the 31 classes involved in the Polişofia Project. The target group comprised three 6th grade classes, two from Alpha, one from Beta, (58 children) and the control group of another three 6th grade classes, again two from Alpha and one from Beta, (54 children). The P4C Program was implemented in each target classroom (1 hour per week, over nine months) under the supervision of a CoI facilitator - expert *Philosophy for Children* trainers - who used specific materials designed for the project in accordance with P4C curriculum guidelines.

Results

In order to assess whether participation in the community of philosophical inquiry promotes the development of ca-

ring thinking, i.e. moral judgment and empathy, we chose the Moral Judgment Test [Lind 1999] and the S.A.R. – Roman Alexithymia Scale – [Baiocco *et al.* 2005].

The Moral Judgment Test (MJT) measures moral competence (C-index) and is based on a dual cognitive-affective approach [Lind 1985; 1999]. The MJT is composed of two moral dilemmas. After reading the stories, subjects have to judge the protagonist's choice and the arguments offered to justify it, using a Likert scale from "completely wrong" to "absolutely right".

The S.A.R. [Baiocco *et al.* 2005] is a test based on the definition of alexithymia, a Greek word that means literally "without a word for emotions" *a-* (lack), *lexis* (word), *thymos* (feelings). It is composed of five dimensions:

1. Somatic Expression of the Emotions (SEE)
2. Difficulty to Identify their own Emotions (DIE)
3. Difficulty to Communicate to others their own Emotions (DCE)
4. Externally Oriented Thinking (EOT)
5. Difficulty Empathizing (EMP)

It consists of 27 items and uses a temporal Likert scale ("never", "sometimes," "often" and "always"). The S.A.R. is a useful education tool as it helps assess activities that aim to promote emotional and relational development.

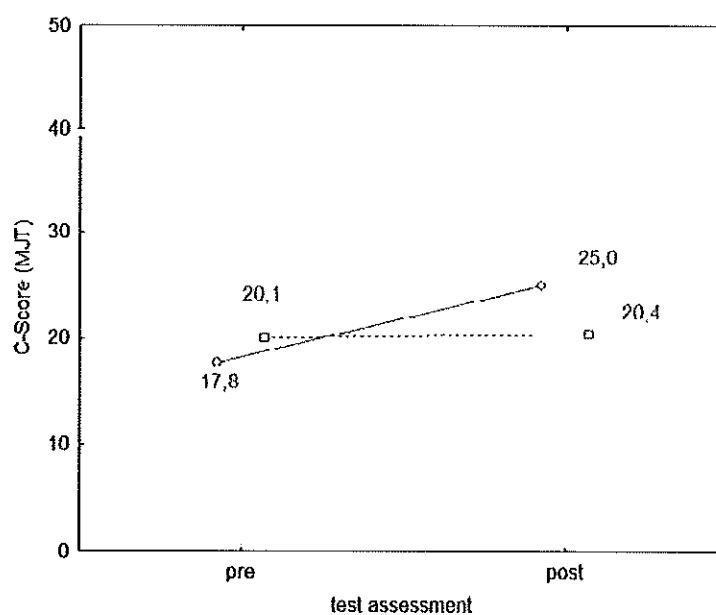
Both tests were administered at the beginning and at the end of 20 sessions. The pre-test was administered individually in February 2009 and the post-test in April 2010.

Two schools – Alpha and Beta – were used in the research. The results presented in this study refer to two groups (N = 112): the first is the target group consisting of three classes of 6th grade pupils, two from Alpha school, one from Beta school, (N = 58 Mean = 11.36 SD = 0552); the second is the control group, again two from Alpha, one from Beta, (N = 54 Mean = 11.54 SD = 0638). At the "Alpha" school, Sections A and D were the target groups and Sections C and E the control groups; at the "Beta" school, Section A was the target group and Section C the control group (Table 1).

Table 1. Description of target and control groups

School	Group	Male	Female	Total
Alpha	A (target.)	6	10	16
	D (target.)	7	14	21
	C (control)	9	9	18
	E (control)	12	6	18
Beta	A (target.)	7	14	21
	C (control)	10	8	18
	Total	51	61	112

The analysis (MANOVA) of our sample shows that intervention (philosophical discussion, i.e. a Community of Inquiry using the *Philosophy for Children* methodology) produces an increase in the target group's moral judgment competence, which remains essentially flat in the control group (Fig. 1).

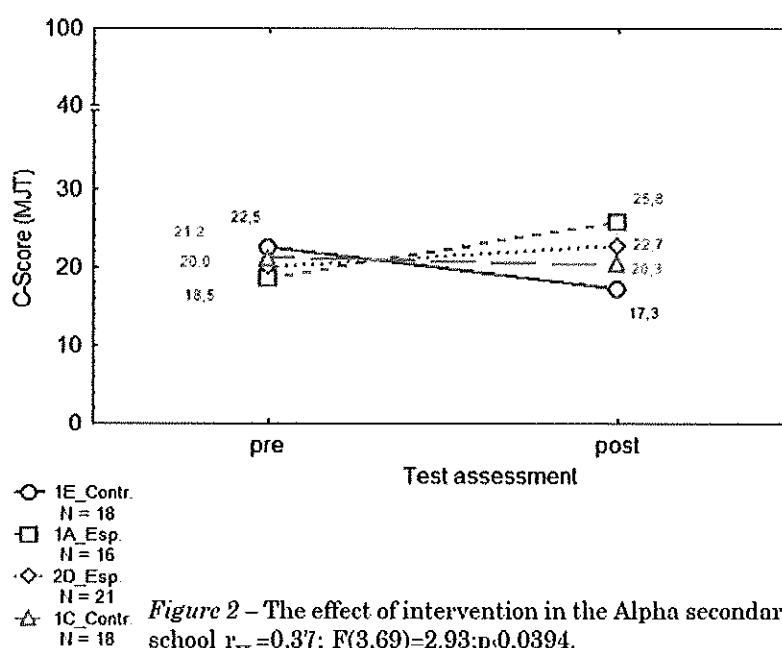


—○— experimental groups (N = 58)

—□— control groups (N = 54)

Figure 1 – The effect of intervention. $r_{xy}=0,23$; $F(1,110)=6.14$; $p<0,015$

When compared to the effects on the classes at “Alpha” school, Fig. 2 shows how the C-index grows in target classes. Sections A and D have an increase of 7.3 and 2.7 respectively, while the control group classes in the C-index decrease to 0.9 in Section C and to 5.2 in Section E.



As for the results at the “Beta” school, we noted an increase in the C-index values in both classes. However, the increase in the target class is greater than in the control class (Fig. 3).

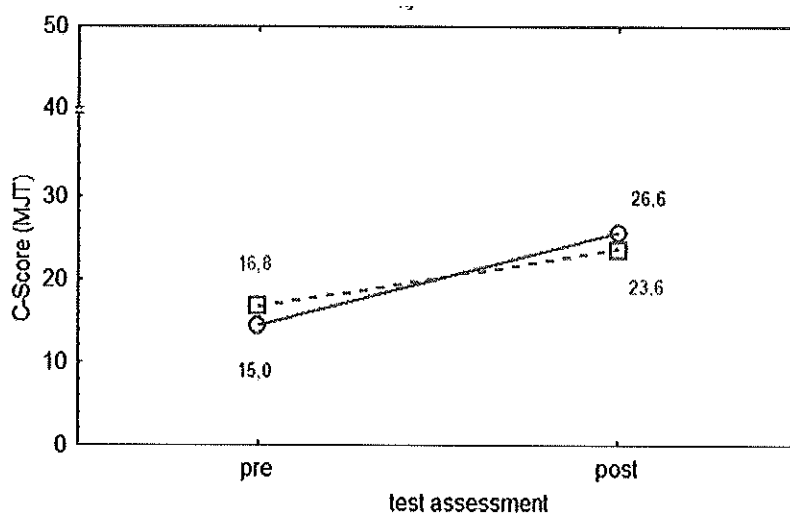
The C-index value in the Section A pre-test is equal to 15.0 and in the post-test it is 26.6, an 11.6 increase. However, although the Section C pre-test starts with a higher C-index value than Section A (16.8), in the post-test the C-index reaches a value of 23.6, a 6.8 increase.

The first step of the S.A.R is a descriptive analysis of the control and target group (pre-and post-test).

Later, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was carried out. The result shows how in the Alpha school alone, where moral judgment competences increase, the empathy dimension is significant ($F = 4.294$, $Sig. = 0.041$) in the post-test. The graph shows a mean comparison (post-test) between the control and the target groups.

Tab. 2 Pre-Test and Post-Test analysis

Dimen- sions	Pre-Test				Post-Test			
	Control		Target		Control		Target	
	Mean	Stand Dev	Mean	Stand Dev	Mean	Stand Dev	Mean	Stand Dev
ESE	5,69	2,119	5,40	2,207	5,51	2,341	5,52	2,105
DIE	5,15	2,265	5,17	2,028	4,92	2,295	5,04	2,172
DCE	5,76	2,062	5,57	2,114	5,81	1,900	5,88	2,040
POE	5,87	1,766	5,43	2,015	5,77	1,996	5,87	2,001
EMP	5,54	2,025	5,82	2,277	5,14	1,848	5,80	2,213



1A_Esp
 N = 21
 1C_Contr
 N = 18

Figura 3 – The effect of intervention in the Beta secondary school $r_{xy} = 0,14$; $F(1,37) = 0,66$; $p = 0,4213$.

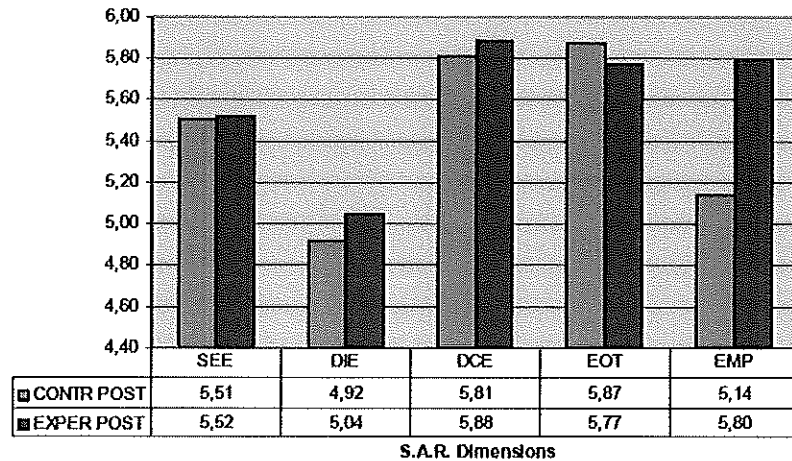


Figura 4 – Mean Comparison Post-Test at Alpha school.

Discussion

This paper presents the Polișofia Project as an example of the citizenship curriculum. The project combines a maximal approach with P4C. Agency is promoted within authentic contexts of deliberative participation by using the critical, creative and caring dimensions of Complex Thinking. The paper also presents some of the results of research conducted in a Municipal Council of Children and in the classes of its elected members. Within this scenario, the participation of children in Communities of Philosophical Inquiry that focused on dialogue and decision-making was believed to foster the development of key active citizenship competences. Attention was focused on the caring dimension of Complex Thinking, which is considered to be a means for expressing moral judgments, as well as personal emotions and empathy.

Data showed that P4C is a useful methodology and context for the development of moral judgment and empathy. In fact, the results of the MJT and S.A.R. showed that target groups which were involved in a Community of Philosophical Inquiry significantly increased both their em-

pathy and their ability to make moral judgments, and this happened to a much lesser extent in the control groups.

A maximal approach enables citizenship to be reconceptualized in terms of agency; this means that a citizen is not just a duty owner, but also a subject with the ability to transform society. This kind of transformation implies the presence (moral) and the voice (empathy) of others. In accordance with Mouffe [2000], passions and emotions played a crucial role in the deliberative democracy at the heart of the public deliberative process.

When adopting a maximal approach to citizenship, we recognize that encouraging participation on its own is insufficient and that empathy and moral competences also need to be developed so that participation in the deliberative processes becomes an authentic example of democracy. The P4C perspective adds the CoI to this approach, in which it is used as a methodological tool and an effective context that offers opportunities for these experiences and promotes active citizenship competences.

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