Philosophy in primary schools –
Developing teachers' manuals for different age groups

MSc Thesis *(Afstudeerscriptie)*

written by

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Abstract

There is a discrepancy between the main skills taught in primary education and those important in later life: In particular, *critical and creative thinking skills* remain insufficiently highlighted in primary education (van Geetsom, 2008). Nevertheless, it has been demonstrated that these skills can be developed at primary school age (Claxton et al., 2006; van Geetsom, 2008). One way to foster such skills is to offer a special subject in primary schools: *philosophy for children*. This subject aims, specifically, to give children the opportunity to form their own answers to questions, and to reflect on different views with each other (van der Leeuw, 1991).

Many primary school teachers might be enthusiastic about including philosophy in the curriculum, but currently, they do not have many tools or materials to implement this; existing teachers' manuals are in some ways inaccessible to people without a philosophical background. Hence, it would help to have an *introductory teachers' manual*, accessible to primary school teachers.

This study addresses that need. The aim of the study was twofold. Firstly, I acquired insights into how to implement adequate philosophy classes for different age groups, based on experiences gained in a primary school. Secondly, based on these insights, I designed two teachers' manuals that are accessible to primary school teachers without a philosophical background.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Problem statement

There exists a certain discrepancy between the main skills taught in primary education and the skills that are important in later life: In particular, *critical and creative thinking skills* remain insufficiently highlighted (van Geetsom, 2008). Critical thinking is defined as "reasoned, reflective thinking, focused on deciding what to believe, or do" (Ennis, 1996). Creative thinking involves consciously thinking in a pattern-breaking way (van Geetsom, 2008), coming with up with novel, original ideas, that are appropriate with respect to the context (Sternberg and Lubart, 1995).

A similar discrepancy can be found in the type of questions that are central: In primary education, these are mainly questions which have a *correct* answer; an answer that the teachers have (Rojas-Drummond and Mercer, 2003). A long division is right or wrong, by *'t kofschip* we know the suffix of the Dutch past participles, and the atlas tells us the European capitals. However, later in life, whether that is at university, in business organizations, as a voter, or simply in daily life, we encounter important questions which *don't* have an unequivocal answer. Examples are: 'When is something *just*?', 'to which extent do I have influence on my own success?', and 'what is the right thing to do, in situation X?'. Reflecting on such questions requires the aforementioned skills, which are underexposed in primary school.[1]

It has been demonstrated that the skills mentioned above can already be developed at primary school age (Claxton et al., 2006; van Geetsom, 2008). How can the described discrepancy effectively be reduced? In other words, how could children in primary schools be encouraged to think independently, so as to foster critical and creative-thinking skills?

One way to put more emphasis on independent creative thinking and critical reflection in primary education is to teach existing subjects in a different manner. Mathematics could be centered on discovering and inventing ones *own* solutions to a problem, as Polya (1973) and Lockhart (2009) suggest. In language classes, children could find out *by themselves* how sentences are built. And in world orientation (*wereldoriëntatie*) classes,

[1] This is not to say that factual knowledge is unnecessary, spelling unimportant, or mathematics useless; there is a discrepancy, no contradiction. In addition, it should be emphasized that the discrepancy applies to the national curriculum—some teachers encourage children already in critical and creative thinking from their own initiative—that is, a standard method is missing.

children could be encouraged to reflect on different forms of government. However, such changes are difficult to implement because they require a large shift of perspective from the teacher.[2]

Another way to foster children's creative and critical thinking skills is to offer a special subject in primary schools, *philosophy for children*, for which teachers do *not* have to carry out a change throughout the whole curriculum. This subject aims, specifically, to develop the above described skills: It focuses on asking one's own questions, exploring and formulating one's own answers, and critically and reasonably replying to other people's opinions (van der Leeuw, 1991). This is not a new idea: In the seventies, the American philosopher Matthew Lipman (1922-2010) initiated the movement *Philosophy for Children*.[3] Since the eighties, there have been various Dutch initiatives promoting and implementing philosophy in primary schools (see for example `www.wonderwhy.nl` and `www.wereldwijs.nl`, with the umbrella organization the *Centrum voor Kinderfilosofie Nederland* (`www.kinderfilosofie.nl`). Furthermore, a considerable amount or research to philosophy with children has been conducted, which demonstrates its positive effects on thinking skills (see for example Fisher (2001), Trickey and Topping (2004) and Lipman et al. (1980)).

I will now give a detailed description of 'philosophy for children'—what is it, what are its goals, and how does it differ from academic philosophy? I will also describe how it differs from other subjects in the school curriculum. Subsequently, I will discuss the goals and methods of the current research.

1.1.1 Philosophy for children

Philosophy for children is the subject in which children are encouraged to think critically about philosophical questions. These questions are not essentially different from the philosophical questions addressed in academic philosophy. Topics in the entire spectrum of philosophy can be covered: metaphysics, ethics, philosophy of language, epistemology, social / political philosophy, philosophy of mind, and aesthetics can all be addressed. Examples are 'do we have a mind that exists independently of our body?', 'What is the right thing to do in situation X?', and 'what defines my identity?'. Philosophical questions are always explicitly or implicitly centered on the question 'what should we believe or do?' (Glueck and Brighouse, 2008). Not coincidentally we notice a correspondence in the definition of critical thinking of Ennis (1996) mentioned earlier.

A difference between philosophy for children and academic philosophy lies in the study of existing philosophical texts. Academic philosophy is practiced on the basis of theories of 'the great thinkers', while philosophy for children merely focuses on the questions; for this, familiarity with the philosophical canon is not important. After all, the purpose is for children to construct arguments *themselves* and to critically reflect on classmates' positions. Philosophical themes lend themselves well here, because there is little emphasis on *knowledge* in answering philosophical questions; they appeal to exactly creative-thinking skills, reasoning skills and critical reflection on various possible answers.

[2] This problem is also observed in educational reforms in secondary education, see e.g. Bergen and van Veen (2004).

[3] He did this after he, as a professor at Columbia University, found that students were lacking in reasoning and judgment, and suspected that this could have, and should have be developed much earlier (Naji, 2003).

Difference with other primary school subjects

Philosophy classes differ from other subjects in the primary school curriculum with respect to both content and form.

We have already seen that the content is different: In philosophy classes, questions from the entire spectrum of philosophy are covered—in other subjects, these questions are not addressed. Examples of topics for a philosophy class are friendship, time, fairness, beauty, truth, happiness, freedom, and identity. Not only are the topics different from other school subjects, the fact that only questions are asked which do not have an unequivocal answer, is also new. As we have seen, current education is mainly centered on questions that *do* have a *right* answer. In philosophy, questions are asked to which the teacher does not have an answer either—this is something children are not used to. Various answers are possible; the rationalizations behind the answer are important, rather than the correctness of the answer. It is important that children learn to think *for themselves* about the questions, and learn to formulate an answer *themselves*. Hence, it is not about factual knowledge, but more about the development of own ideas, about learning how to listen critically to others and respond reasonably, and about the realization that different opinions can all be doubted, questioned, and accepted. This entails the use of various skills and habits which will automatically be encouraged, including accurately verbalizing one's own thoughts, logical reasoning skills, listening skills, building coherent arguments, and the ability to shift to someone else's perspective.

The form of a philosophy class also differs from other subjects. A standard, internationally used method for philosophy for children is the 'community of inquiry'. This means that children collaboratively investigate both the meanings of concepts and answers to questions. The teacher adopts the role of conversation facilitator, who gives turns to children, and who stimulates the group to do this inquiry *together* (Anthone and Mortier, 1997; Lipman et al., 1980).

Hence, the teacher takes on a different role than usual: the one of a questioning conversation facilitator, instead of the person who teaches knowledge to the class. The teacher poses philosophical questions, gives children turns, helps children with formulating and structuring their thoughts when needed, and may decide to highlight certain comments from children, to keep the conversation moving, and to steer its direction.

In this role, the teacher avoids ventilating his or her point of view. Otherwise, students might think that is a desirable or correct answer, which would impede the space for children to formulate their own answer.

1.1.2 Current situation

We have seen that philosophy differs from other courses in the primary school curriculum with respect to both form and content. It requires familiarity with philosophical questions and topics from the teacher, as well as adopting an attitude that is different than usual. For this reason, the subject is not easily accessible to primary school teachers, which is why the subject is currently mainly taught by external teachers (Hand and Winstanley, 2008). These are mostly people with a philosophical background, teaching philosophy classes on a private initiative, such as the aforementioned philosophers of WonderWhy and Wereldwijs. As there are simply not so many philosophers who do this, the number of primary schools with philosophy in their curriculum stays low. It is unknown how many primary schools in the Netherlands offer philosophy classes, but we do know that it is an exceptional subject. If we want the subject to be introduced on a larger scale,

the solution would not lie in the current trend in which external people teach the subject—the effect of this intervention is only linear. For a broader impact, an intervention on a higher level is needed, enabling primary school teachers to teach the subject *themselves*.

Many primary school teachers might be enthusiastic about introducing philosophy in the curriculum, but currently, they do not have many tools or materials to implement this. Lipman et al. (1980) and Glueck and Brighouse (2008) argue that training and guidance are necessary to be a facilitator in philosophy for children. This could be offered in the program of teacher education (lerarenopleiding basisonderwijs (Pabo) in the Netherlands), so that all future teachers would be trained to do this, and possess the skills to practice philosophy with their class. However, this requires a large, national change. Instead, several philosophy manuals exist, such as *Filosoferen doe je zo* from Bartels and van Rossum (2009) and *Filosoferen op de basisschool* from Bouwmeester et al. (1992), which intend to provide such training and guidance as well. However, these manuals are quite voluminous, containing a lot of background information and long introduction for the teacher. This does not improve the accessibility of making the first steps in practicing philosophy with the class. It would help to have an *introductory teachers' manual*, accessible to teachers *without* a philosophical background. The experiences that teachers could gain with the help of such an introductory manual, could subsequently provide more insight in the use of existing manuals. Such an introductory teachers' manual does not exist yet.

1.2 Goal statement

This study aims at developing a teachers' manual satisfying the need described above. In this thesis, the realization of this manual is described. For this, we firstly conducted research to *how* adequate philosophy classes for different age groups should be structured.

As the effects of philosophy in primary school classes have been found very positive, we should go to the subsequent question, and ask: *What* does an adequate philosophy class look like? And: Is the answer to that question different for different age groups? This will be researched in the current study. The research question is: *Should philosophy classes differ for different age groups, and if so, how?*

The goal of this study is twofold.

Firstly, the study aims to gain insight in philosophizing with different age groups, as to be able to determine how to implement adequate philosophy classes for different age groups. Do different age groups have interest in the same philosophical questions, or not? Do they hold class conversations in the same way, or is there a difference? Do the same teaching methods[4] suit different age groups, or do they have their own preferences? By answering these questions, the second goal can be achieved.

Secondly, the aim is to develop—on the basis of these experiences—a teachers' manual which is accessible to teachers without philosophical background. We have seen that this is still missing, which is why philosophy in primary schools often depends on external people. For the design of this manual, results from the first part of this study will be directly translated to an implementation. It will thus be based on the interests and abilities of children as well as the knowledge of primary school teachers without a philosophical background.

[4]With 'teaching method' I refer to the type of activity during the philosophy class: debating in pairs, class discussions, creative assignments, group work, individual writing, et cetera.

1.3 Hypotheses

We discuss three plausible hypotheses that can make a prediction about the research question. The first hypothesis states that all school classes can get the same philosophy classes, as philosophical questions can be expressed simply and illustrated easily. This is the 'naive hypothesis'. The second hypothesis is based on the developmental stages of children, as classified by the developmental psychologist Jean Piaget (1896-1980). This theory describes the cognitive development of children in terms of different phases, characterized by different ways of thinking. Children in different phases will treat philosophical questions in a different way. The third hypothesis emphasizes the upbringing of the child: Children who are encouraged by their parents to think critically and to whom philosophical questions are sometimes asked will have a head start on the children who are not in such a situation. According to this hypothesis, an appropriate philosophy class is not so much age dependent, as it depends on their upbringing.

1.4 Methods

In order to answer the research question, a qualitative study will be conducted in a primary school. Both "groep vier" (this is comparable to second grade, with 7–8-year-old children) and "groep acht" (comparable to sixth grade, with 11–12-year-old children) will receive philosophy classes once a week, for a period of nine weeks. The same philosophy classes will be taught in the two groups (i.e., the same issues, questions, and teaching methods), so that we can determine whether they are equally suitable for the two groups. In this way we can compare the groups: Do they have the same interests? Should philosophical questions be asked in the same way? Are the same teaching methods suitable for both groups?

To analyze this in detail, all classes will be recorded on video. After each class, an evaluation report will be written based on the gained experiences and the video material. Furthermore, the classes will be evaluated with the learners as well as with the group teachers at the end of the series. Based on the course of the classes and the reactions from children and teachers, we will be able to determine on which aspects philosophy classes for the two age should differ.

With this method, we will only be able to test the first two hypotheses. Since the philosophy classes are taught in one primary school, and since we will only analyze differences between two age groups—, we will not analyze differences between children within one class—the third hypothesis cannot be tested.

Designing the teachers' manuals will take place after this study. It can already be determined which parts were suitable and how the class could be improved after each class. Yet, we will only draw general conclusions about philosophizing with different age groups after the series of classes has been completed. These conclusions will be translated into rules of thumb for teaching philosophy classes, respectively for second grade and sixth grade. Taking these rules of thumb and the experiences of the classes into account, two teachers' manuals will be composed: one for grade two and one for grade six.

1.5 Most important results

During the course of lessons, we soon found that it was not possible to give the same lessons to both groups, because philosophy classes in the two groups appeared to have a different character. For grade two, the philosophy classes were exploratory; the children were introduced to questions that have no clear answer, and learned to reflect on several possible answers. Not much discussion took place; the emphasis was on thinking for themselves and listening to others. For children in grade six, philosophy classes went a step further: They already knew what philosophy was, wanted to join in discussions, and came up with questions and topics they wanted to discuss. The latter resulted in an adjustment of the philosophy program for grade six; I followed the interests of children, as it seemed good to encourage their input and to discover how a class on a topic or question suggested by themselves would come along.

The naive hypothesis appeared to be *too* naive—different age groups need different philosophy classes, not so much because of other interests, but rather because of the different characters of the classes. We will see that the Piaget hypothesis can explain some of, but not all, the differences between the two groups.

Based on these findings, I designed two teachers' manuals—one for grade two and one for grade six—which teachers can use to teach philosophy to their class. The teachers of both groups in which I taught the classes were enthusiastic about these lessons, and confirmed that they would be able to give the lessons themselves.

1.6 This study situated in the Master of Logic

This research is conducted as part of the graduation of the Master of Logic at the University of Amsterdam. The Master of Logic is situated in the Institute for Logic, Language, and Computation (ILLC), in which cognition is a key theme.

Examples of cognition studies which find themselves in the intersection with logic, are studies in pattern recognition, human reasoning, problem solving, and the ability to create general theories from particular instances. A famous example of cognitive research within a logical framework is the study to human logical reasoning using the Wason selection task, demonstrating that more than 90 % of people have trouble with the correct application of inference by contraposition (Wason, 1968). More recent research, also conducted at the ILLC, has been done on human deductive reasoning. An example of this is the study of Stenning and van Lambalgen (2008), on the influence of how a logical problem is interpreted on solving the problem. Research that focuses specifically on the reasoning powers of *children* is done in collaboration with *Talentenkracht*, a research program focused on the development of skills in the field of science and technology (`www.talentenkracht.nl`). One of their research projects involves the study to children's abstract thinking and deductive skills, using 'Rekentuin' (Maths Garden), an educational math game, which can be used in primary school education (Gierasimczuk et al., 2013, and further work).

This thesis contributes to this field, as the qualitative research can provide insight in the cognitive abilities of children in second and sixth grade, and the differences between their cognitive abilities. Since philosophical, often abstract questions are addressed, the logical reasoning skills of the children will automatically come to the surface (we will encounter some examples). However, the method used in this study differs considerably from the usual approach at the ILLC. The insights that will be gained will thus not be limited to one specific

form of reasoning as in the above studies; additional skills are examined as well, such as the ability of children to put themselves in someone else's place and the ability to explore hypothetical situations. Hence, we will get a broad picture of cognition which is suitable for the development of a teaching method, but provides less support for formulating a formal theory on logical thinking. Nonetheless, the insights gained in this qualitative study can be used to design future studies to investigate these abilities in more detail.

1.7 Outline of the thesis

This thesis is organized as follows: In chapter 2, previous studies with philosophy for children will be presented and earlier findings on the effects of philosophizing with children will be discussed.

In chapter 3, I will explain the research question mentioned earlier: "Should philosophy classes differ for different age groups , and if so, how?". In this chapter I will also explain what this study adds to previous research, and how the resulting teachers' manuals are a valuable addition to the existing manuals.

In chapter 4 I will discuss the three hypotheses explained before in more detail, of which the first two will be tested with the current research. The research design is described in chapter 5.

In chapter 6, for each of the hypotheses, I will explain which results would support or refute the hypothesis.

Then I will describe the conducted philosophy classes in the two groups in chapter 7. For each class I will describe whether the different parts of the class were suitable for the group, possibilities for improving the class, and other special features of the class. In addition, I will describe the evaluations with the teachers of the classes, as well as the reflection on the lessons with the children from the two classes.

In chapter 8, the experiences of the two grades will be compared, according to which I will explain the main differences between the two age groups.

The conclusions of the study are presented in chapter 9. The results will be summarized, and will be placed next to the two hypotheses. I will also describe possible future research.

Lastly, in chapter 10, I will describe the development of the teaching manuals, designed in accordance with the findings of this study. Based on the gained experience and the comparison between the two groups, I set out some rules of thumb for teaching philosophy classes. Grade two and six will have their own set of rules of thumb. These serve as a step towards the two teaching manuals.

The thesis contains eight appendices:

1. Evaluations of the classes in grade two (groep vier)
2. Reflection on the classes with the children from grade two
3. Reflection with the teacher of grade two
4. Evaluations of the classes in grade six (groep acht)
5. Reflection on the classes with the children from grade six
6. Reflection with the teacher of grade six
7. Teachers' manual for grade two

8. Teachers' manual for grade six

Chapter 2

Context and previous research

Philosophy for children arose in the seventies, and received its first attention in the Netherlands in the eighties. What are the original objectives of the earlier initiatives? What effects could philosophy for children bring about? Are there any objections to philosophy in primary schools? These questions are central in this chapter. First, in 2.1, the rise of philosophy for children will be described, as well as the current state of affairs in the Netherlands. Subsequently, several arguments for philosophy for children will be discussed in 2.2. As we saw earlier, this would stimulate various skills, such as critical and creative thinking (these are arguments for the *child*), it could enhance the school atmosphere (these are arguments for the *school*), and it could take the place of citizenship education, which means that it could get an important function in society (these are arguments for the *society*). Then, in 2.3, I will explain why philosophy would be the most appropriate subject to bring about these possible effects, instead of a subject such as 'critical thinking' or 'citizenship education'. Lastly, in 2.4, the three most common objections to philosophy for children will be discussed, and replied to. I will explain how they can be either rejected or resolved.

2.1 The emergence and development of philosophy for children

Philosophy for children was introduced in the seventies. The American philosopher Matthew Lipman (1922-2010), who initiated the movement 'Philosophy for Children' (also known as *P4C*), is recognized as the pioneer. He wrote the first manuals for philosophy as a primary school subject, each with a different emphasis: logic, metaphysics, ethics, and aesthetics. The first and best known is called "Harry Stottlemeyer's Discovery" (Lipman, 1974). In 1974 he founded the 'Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children' (IAPC) at Montclair State College in New Jersey, to develop philosophy courses and to promote research in the effects of philosophy in schools (Montclair State University, 2012).

In the eighties, philosophy for children was introduced in the Netherlands. In 1989, the *Centrum voor Kinderfilosofie* (`www.kinderfilosofie.nl`) was established, as an initiative of Karel van der Leeuw and Pieter Mostert of the Philosophy Faculty of the University of Amsterdam, which was soon joined by Berrie Heesen (Heesen, 1990). The aim of the center was to coordinate and stimulate initiatives in the field of philosophy for children. The center started by translating Lipman's material, but nowadays it serves

mainly as an umbrella organization, offering professional education in 'philosophizing with children and young people, and encouraging contacts between different initiatives (Centrum Kinderfilosofie Nederland, 2013). Indeed, there is a number of small independent initiatives, such as *WonderWhy* (`www.wonderwhy.nl`), *Wereldwijs* (`www.wereldwijs-filosoferen.nl`), and *de Filosofiejuf* (`www.filosofiejuf.nl`). Some of such organizations implement philosophy in primary schools themselves (such as WonderWhy and de Filosofiejuf), others organize workshops for teachers and persons who are interested in philosophizing with children (such as WonderWhy and Wereldwijs).

Most primary schools do not have philosophy in the curriculum (it is unknown how many schools offer the subject). And when a school *does* offer philosophy in the curriculum, it usually has the status of a subject *on top of* the actual school curriculum, which makes it a subject with low priority. In addition, it is often dependent on an external teacher; primary school teachers do not easily teach the subject themselves (Hand and Winstanley, 2008). If we want philosophy to be offered in more primary schools, we should aim at an intervention enabling the primary school teacher to teach philosophy classes themselves.

For this, teacher training colleges (Pabo's) could offer the subject 'philosophizing with children'. Most Pabo's do not offer this in the standard curriculum, such as the Pabo at Hogeschool Rotterdam and the Pabo at the Marnix Academy in Utrecht (p.c.). An exception is the Pabo in Alkmaar, which has been offering philosophy for children as a compulsory subject for years. At the Pabo of the University of Amsterdam, education on philosophizing with children is offered to a lesser extent within the compulsory course 'Onderwijs in Onderzoekend en Ontwerpend Leren'. For this course, students are required to carry out two sessions of philosophy in primary school classes. (p.c.)

A teachers' manual, which could assist the primary school teacher without philosophical background, is another possible intervention. Regarding the latter, this research hopes to contribute to the promotion of philosophy in primary school. We will now first look at various reasons to introduce philosophy in the primary school curriculum.

2.2 Reasons to introduce philosophy in the primary school curriculum

There are several reasons to introduce the philosophy subject in primary schools. In this section, I will discuss these reasons on three levels. Firstly, it aims to foster the development of various skills, such as critical and creative thinking, of which we have seen in 1 that these are insufficiently highlighted in the current regular primary education. These are arguments for the *child*. Secondly, philosophy in the curriculum could have benefits for the school: It could have a beneficial effect on other subjects in the curriculum and would also contribute to the class atmosphere (Trickey, 2007). These arguments apply to the *school*. Thirdly, philosophy could take the place of citizenship education—a subject that primary schools in the Netherlands have been required to fulfill since 2006 (Bron et al., 2009). Philosophy classes would enable children to acquire and develop important citizenship skills (Bartels, 2013). In this way, the subject could also play a role in the *society*. The arguments will be explained in this chapter on these three levels: the skills that the *child* develops, the benefits to the *school*, and its role in the *society*.

2.2.1 Developing skills

In 1.1.1 we have seen what philosophy for children is. By thinking about philosophical questions together, children learn how to express and substantiate their thoughts. For this, it is important that children listen to each other, that they can reflect on different perspectives, and that they can ask themselves and others critical questions. Hence, several skills are encouraged with philosophy. In this section, I will discuss, in this order: concept building and understanding, critical thinking, creative thinking, and communication skills.

Concept building and understanding

Meanings of a word cannot be given by a book, they need to be acquired by *using* the word. "They are *capta*, not *data*" (Lipman et al., 1980, p. 13). In a philosophical discussion, it is very important that the meaning of the terms at issue is clear. When it comes to concepts such as 'thinking', 'fair', or 'the *I*', then what is exactly meant? These concepts would have to be analyzed by the group, by considering different possible meanings, and by specifying the different meanings for each context. This would not only include philosophical concepts; also (seemingly) simpler concepts, such as 'animal', 'real', and 'nothing' sometimes require clarification, as philosophical arguments depend on the proper use of such words.

Hence, the meaning of concepts and the relations between words are therefore discussed in the philosophy class, so that it becomes clear that everyone is talking about the same, and so that everyone becomes aware of the different possible interpretations of the words. When careful attention is paid to this during philosophy classes, the classes will positively contribute to the vocabulary of children, and to concept building and understanding. This is empirically demonstrated in several studies, see for example Fisher (2001), Lipman et al. (1980, study of Hope en Haas, cited in appendix), and Johnson (1984).

Critical thinking

We have seen that critical thinking is defined as "reasoned, reflective thinking, focused on what to believe or do" (Ennis, 1996). A critical thinker reflects on various possible perspectives, and is motivated by reasons, according to Siegel (1988). Philosophy for Children aims at fostering precisely these skills. In philosophy, it is important to provide a motivation for an opinion, to take other people's views into consideration as well, and to listen critically. Winstanley (2008) notes that philosophy goes hand in hand with critical thinking skills. Philosophical activities appeal automatically to critical thinking, as children are constantly encouraged to critically reflect on questions, situations, and different viewpoints.

It is therefore not surprising that there are indeed empirical findings demonstrating the improvement of children's critical thinking as a result of offering philosophy in the weekly curriculum. It has been shown that children acquire the ability to provide rational arguments for their opinions and ideas, and that their logical reasoning skills improve (Fisher, 2001; Winstanley, 2008; Trickey, 2007; Lipman et al., 1980; Trickey and Topping, 2004).

Creative thinking

Creative thinking has been defined earlier as consciously thinking in a pattern-breaking way (van Geetsom, 2008), coming up with novel, original ideas that are novel, original, and appropriate with respect to the context (Sternberg and Lubart, 1995). In philosophy classes, it is explicitly clear that there is no *correct* or *expected* answer; children are encouraged to develop their *own* ideas. Philosophy appeals to the imagination, and the willingness to approach situations from different perspectives. The fact that the philosophy class provides space for all possible ideas enables children to develop their creative thinking. Several studies have shown that children do indeed develop their creative thinking skills when they are taught regular philosophy classes at school (Trickey and Topping, 2004; Lipman et al., 1980).

Communication skills

In the philosophy classes, children are stimulated to translate their thoughts into words. If the facilitator pays careful attention to this, helps the children find structure in their thoughts, and guides them to accurate words, this ability is likely to develop. But not only is it important for children to think for themselves, it is also encouraged to be open to other people's ideas. By questioning each other, or by formulating counter-arguments, standpoints might become stronger and more nuanced. During philosophy classes, children can learn a lot from each other. It is important that during the classes, attention is paid to these values: listening to each other, moving yourself into someone else's perspective, and interacting reasonably and respectfully with each other.

The more this is practiced, the more these communication skills can develop. This has also been demonstrated by several studies (Trickey, 2007; Fisher, 2001).

2.2.2 Benefits for the school

For the school, there are two advantages of philosophy in the school curriculum: Firstly, it might have a positive influence on other subjects in the curriculum, and secondly, it can enhance the atmosphere in the classroom and at school.

Influence on other subjects

Because children could develop their thinking skills in philosophy classes, other subjects could automatically benefit from this. Philosophy can lead to a better understanding of the matter, as children learn to deal with the material in an active way: They learn to ask questions and to reflect on the matter, since this is encouraged in the philosophy classes. Empirical studies have shown that especially proficiency in mathematics, history, and reading could improve through the skills that could be acquired in philosophy classes (Trickey and Topping (2004), Lipman et al. (1980, study of Educational Testing Service Princeton, cited in appendix), Fisher (2001), Heesen (1990)).

At a higher level, philosophy may give children insight in the relations between the various subjects in the curriculum, according to Lipman (1991), because in philosophy classes children learn to make connections. Additionally, in philosophy classes, children could also be encouraged to reflect on the curriculum

by discussing questions such as "why do we actually study history?". This allows children to gain a better understanding of the material they learn in school.

Class atmosphere

We saw earlier that philosophy classes entail certain values: It is important to respect each other's opinions, to give everyone an equal voice, and to reasonably respond to everyone. Cooperation and mutual respect make philosophical conversations possible. This can be made clear explicitly during the philosophy classes. Thus, it is not surprising that there are indeed indications that the atmosphere in the group improves with philosophy classes: Children would become more inclined to solve disagreements with fairness and respect, and they would become more tolerant towards each other, also outside of the philosophy class (Trickey, 2007; Bartels, 2013; Lipman et al., 1980, study of the Educational Testing Service Princeton, cited in the appendix).

In addition, regular philosophy classes could also improve the relationship between the teacher and the children. Since the teacher adopts a different role in the philosophy class—the role of a listening, and questioning facilitator—children may notice that they are valued as an equal discussion partner. The feeling that they are being taken seriously, and the realization that the classes are centered around *their* input, could give them confidence (Splitter and Sharp, 1995; Trickey, 2007; Trickey and Topping, 2004; Fisher, 2001). Furthermore, the teacher also gets the chance to get to know the children better, which could also result in a stronger relationship between the teacher and the children (Murris, 2008).

2.2.3 Philosophy as citizenship education

We have seen that philosophy in school can lead to the development of certain skills and can increase the classroom atmosphere. On another level, philosophy in primary schools could also play a role in *society*: It could take the place of citizenship education.

One of the core aims of (Dutch) primary education is to prepare children for critical democratic citizenship (Onderwijsraad, 2003). Since 2006, citizenship education has been a compulsory part of the Dutch primary school curriculum (Bron et al., 2009). However, it is not stated how this should be implemented and this appears to be a difficult task. It is still unclear which methods are appropriate and effective. Therefore, an actual implementation of citizenship education stays behind in many schools (Onderwijsraad, 2012). The purpose of requiring citizenship education in primary education was to promote *social bonding*, to educate children to be socially engaged, who take "responsibility for community interests" (Bron et al., 2009). The former minister of Education, Culture, and Science (OC&W) van der Hoeven explained that active citizenship entails "the willingness and ability to be a part of the community, and to make an *active contribution* to the community". She also stresses the importance of diversity (Bron et al., 2009).

Philosophy for children, when it is properly guided, appears to be able to meet exactly those goals, and could thus function as a suitable implementation of citizenship education. This connection was already established by Matthew Lipman, the founder of Philosophy for Children, who considered philosophy in primary schools as a necessity for "reasonable" citizens in a democracy; by philosophizing together, he reasoned, children get the opportunity to develop this reasonableness (Lipman, 1991). Yet, philosophy for children is not only

focused on reasonableness. It also aims to develop critical thinking and judgment skills, as well as to promote dialogue and mutual understanding. With his study *Learning Democracy with Philosophy* (Democratie leren door Filosoferen), Bartels (2013) has shown that philosophy classes succeed mainly in the latter. In his research, different schools using the teachers' manual *Filosoferen doe je zo* (Bartels and van Rossum, 2009) were followed and analyzed. This method is specifically designed to foster citizenship skills and attitudes. The study demonstrated that teachers were convinced of this realization of citizenship education. They pointed mainly to discussion skills as focal points of the philosophy class. The main purposes of philosophy, according to these teachers, were understanding someone else's perspective, respecting each other, responding reasonably, and listening to other people's opinion. The space to develop their own opinion was mentioned as an important feature of the classes. Critical thinking or individually reflecting on different viewpoints were seen as less important by both the teachers and the children.

Hence we see that the effects that can be achieved with philosophy in the classroom fit well with the objectives of citizenship education. We also see that philosophy classes may entail certain values which are at the same time core values for a democracy. Equality, recognition and tolerance of difference, diversity, and freedom of speech are important democratic principles, which can be put forward clearly in philosophy classes. This way, children can get the opportunity to become acquainted with the workings of a democracy, as they can experience *how it is* to follow these principles; they do not merely learn it 'from a book'. A philosophical conversation, when guided properly, is a democratic practice in itself, in which differences are accepted, children are motivated to form a substantiated opinion, and everyone is treated equally. The skills and attitudes fostered in philosophy classes are exactly the skills and attributes necessary for critical democratic citizenship Bartels (2013).

The Onderwijsraad (2012) indicated a lack of a proper teachers' manual suiting the purpose of citizenship education, which is confirmed by two primary school teachers of different schools. One of them, of a public primary school in Dordrecht, explained that they integrate citizenship education with other subjects: It gets a place in geography, history, and social skills. In these courses, attention is paid to historical awareness, freedom of speech, and different forms of government. The other teacher, of the Sint Antoniusschool in Amsterdam (this is the school at which the current research is conducted), said that they use the manual 'Leefstijl' (see Leefstijl (2010a) and Leefstijl (2010b)). However, she was not very content with this manual, as it would often expect politically correct answers of children. Furthermore, she explained that the advantage of philosophy is that children also learn to listen to each other, and to formulate answers to questions that do not have a clear answer. The series of philosophy classes conducted for this study were, in her opinion, more "complete" than the Leefstijl method.

2.3 Why then philosophy?

We have seen that philosophy can play a role in the development of various skills. But are there no other possible subjects that can take on this role? Why is precisely philosophy the best subject to bring about the aforementioned possible effects? After all, there are also methods that specifically pursue skills such as critical thinking, in which analytical skills and logical reasoning are practiced. The advantage of philosophy is that it entails certain values: Respectful conversations, accepting differences, honesty, and fairness are all important in philosophy classes. These values are implicitly assumed in a philosophical conversation, but

can also be explicitly discussed, for example, when someone slates someone else's opinion. Hence, children are encouraged to actively exercise these values. This dimension is absent in specifically designed thinking methods. And, as Curren (2000) and Fullinwider (1989) confirm: These values can be developed by actively using them, they do not emerge by reading about them or by simply having them explained.

Another advantage of philosophy is the fact that no prior knowledge is required. As a consequence, the focus is not so much on the correctness of an answer, but rather on the reasoning behind the answer. A political debate can be won simply because one person has more information, while a philosophical debate can be won by providing good arguments and valid reasoning (Heesen, 1990). Hence, philosophical themes are suitable to highlight these skills.

We have reflected on the possibility of the philosophy subject to prepare children for critical democratic citizenship. But there are also specifically designed teachers' manuals for citizenship education, such as Leefstijl (Leefstijl, 2010a). Why would we practice philosophy if there are methods that aim precisely at citizenship education? Again, we see the merit of the actual carrying out of important (civic) values in philosophy classes: Children learn to resolve and accept disagreements and they are encouraged to listen to one another and to understand other people's opinions. Also, values such as equality and respect are central to philosophy classes.

The effects that can be achieved with philosophy are in line with the goals of citizenship education. Moreover, it enables children to *actively* practice citizenship skills (critical thinking, interacting reasonably and respectfully, etc.) rather than passively learning them from a book. Again, the relevant skills may arise through the active use of them, instead of by reading or hearing about it once.

2.4 Objections

The most common objections to philosophy for children usually have to do with the idea that children's cognitive capacities do not meet those required to practice philosophy or with the idea that it interferes with religion. In this section, I will discuss both objections. Lastly, I will explain possible practical objections of schools and teachers.

2.4.1 Philosophy: too difficult for children

The first objection stems from the fact that philosophy is known as a difficult subject requiring complex thinking skills, which children simply do not have yet. It might be reserved for the gifted children, but most children will not be able to practice philosophy yet.

Nevertheless, this objection is based on the misconception that children *must already have* the skills that can be acquired in the philosophy classes (valid reasoning, substantiating an opinion, etc.). However, this is not presumed at all. For mathematics, it is neither expected that children can already apply addition and subtraction; they *learn* this in the subject. Besides that, the goal of philosophy is not to educate little philosophers; the goal is, as we saw earlier, to foster certain skills that are involved with the subject.

Furthermore, there is much evidence that philosophy classes are possible with all age groups: children of all ages participate enthusiastically in philosophy classes (Matthews, 1994; Lipman et al., 1980; Splitter, 1993;

Trickey and Topping, 2004; Fisher, 2001). We will also see that the current study is a counterexample of this objection. Additionally, children are *particularly* interested in questions that are at issue in philosophy classes; they want to understand the world around them, and they are often inclined to ask questions and express doubts about everyday situations (Splitter, 1993; Matthews, 2008). Philosophy nicely suits this natural curiosity, and is often strongly appreciated by children for this reason (Heesen, 1990).

Another misconception which might have led to this objection is the idea that philosophy is a very difficult subject—it would find itself in the ivory tower of science. Whether this latter is the case is not relevant here; we have already seen that philosophy for children is different from academic philosophy, where difficult theories of Kant are analyzed. Philosophy for children is not essentially more difficult than other subjects in primary schools—besides that, it is aimed at acquiring certain skills, which are not presupposed beforehand, as explained above. Therefore, higher cognitive capacities are not required (Hand, 2008). All children can practice philosophy, as it deals with everyday concepts and situations, not requiring specific factual knowledge. Each child has ideas about fairness, or happiness.

In short, philosophy is not too difficult for children. All children can think about the questions that could be addressed, and all children can participate in the philosophy class.

2.4.2 Religious objections

Doing philosophy in schools implies thinking about some fundamental questions which are also addressed (and sometimes answered) by religion. For that reason, the second objection is that moral and religious values and beliefs could become a subject of critique or doubt, when children think and talk about these questions (Law, 2008).

However, philosophy and religion are not incompatible. In fact they go together well. In philosophy, the emphasis is on the *way* of thinking: The coherence of arguments, valid reasoning, and understanding of others people's opinions are important. It is not so much focused on the conclusions of the philosophical discussions, but rather on the *path to* the conclusion. This does not exclude the possibility of having fundamental moral beliefs. Moreover, religious beliefs are often being supported with reasoned, coherent arguments. In addition, the values in the philosophy classes often reflect important general religious values: Honesty, empathy, and respect are very important for many religions.

Therefore, philosophy and religion can coexist perfectly. Even more, religion often goes hand in hand with philosophy, since many people support their religious beliefs by reasoned arguments. And as religion is often involved with questions about life and moral dilemma's, philosophy is in fact an aspect of religion. In conclusion, philosophy and religion are compatible since the former concerns the way of thinking, whereas the latter concerns the content of beliefs—and one can philosophize about different meanings and interpretations.

2.4.3 Practical concerns

Lastly, there are practical objections to philosophy in the primary school curriculum. This is an objection of a different caliber as it is not concerned with philosophy for children as such, but it is concerned with its practical implications. The main practical concerns are the fact that the curriculum is overcrowded (this goes together with a lack of time) and the fear of having a lack of knowledge.

The first concern is a common problem in primary schools: The school and the teachers are overwhelmed with obligations and requirements. Adding an extra subject would seem to increase these pressures even more. However, philosophy does not entail more than running the classes; it requires no grading and evaluation sessions, as the skills that are fostered by philosophizing together are the most important. In addition, philosophy can support other subjects, as we have seen, since general thinking skills can improve by philosophy. Thus, time can even be won at that point.

Another practical concern is the fact that teachers do not consider themselves capable to teach philosophy, since they have no background in philosophy. Then how can they suddenly be able to teach philosophy lessons to their class? Firstly, it is important to state that the teacher will not *suddenly* be able to practice philosophy with their class. Nevertheless, they do not need to be familiar with the ideas of the great philosophers—we know that they do not play a role in philosophy for children. However, it is important that they become familiar with the purpose of philosophizing in the classroom so they can actively pursue this, and that they become familiar with taking on a philosophical attitude. This means that they need to acquire the role of the conversation facilitator, in which they mainly ask questions and take no position themselves. They have to get used to asking questions and helping children to formulate their ideas. Good guidance or training for the teacher is a requirement to achieve this. This study hopes to contribute to that by developing introductory teachers' manuals.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter we have reflected on different arguments for philosophy in schools. Firstly, it can contribute to the development of certain skills, such as critical and creative thinking, logical reasoning, and communication skills. Secondly, other subjects in the curriculum could benefit from the skills that could be acquired in the philosophy classes. It could also have a positive effect on the school atmosphere, since children would become more understandable and respectful towards each other. Lastly, we saw that the subject creates an opportunity for children to develop as critical, engaged citizens. Hence, it could take the place of citizenship education. In short, we have seen arguments on the level of the development of the child, on the level of the school, and on the level of society.

We have also looked at the most common objections to philosophy in the school curriculum. The first objection is that philosophy is too difficult for children, whose cognitive capacities are still underdeveloped. However, this objection overestimates the difficulty of the subject: It has often become clear that all children are capable of thinking about philosophical questions. Besides that, it is not expected that children already possess the philosophical capacities; the aim is to develop these *with* the philosophy classes. A second objection is that philosophy can conflict with religion since philosophical questions are sometimes also addressed by the different religions. However, this does not imply that the two are incompatible. After all, philosophy is concerned with the *way* of thinking, and does not exclude the possibility to have fundamental beliefs. Moreover, people often practice philosophy within religion, whether this is about the meaning of life, the interpretation of a belief, or the meaning of certain religious practices. Lastly, we have reflected on the main practical concerns. The overcrowded curriculum of primary schools does not have to be a problem, as philosophy can have a positive influence to other subjects—the earlier mentioned thinking skills are applicable in other fields as well. In addition, philosophy does not cost much more time than the time of

the classes, as there are no test or assessment sessions involved. Another practical concern is the teachers' lack of philosophical background. They do indeed need a good preparation and a teachers' manual in order to teach philosophy classes. They do not need to learn factual knowledge, but rather they need to become familiar with their role as conversation facilitator. Teacher education institutions could play a role in this. The current research hopes to contribute by developing an introductory, diverse teachers' manual, designed specifically for teachers without a philosophical background. In the next chapter, the research question and the goal of the study will be explained.

Chapter 3

Research question

I have explained above that earlier studies have shown that philosophy can be valuable in primary education for various reasons. However, these studies do not elaborate much on how philosophy classes are actually implemented. In which topics are children interested? What questions should one ask to children? Which teaching methods are suitable for a philosophy class? And how do the answers to these questions differ for various age groups? This study attempts to answer these questions and to determine what an adequate philosophy class looks like, for various school groups. The research question is:

Should philosophy classes differ for different age groups, and if so, how?

This question can be answered by conducting a number of philosophy classes in different primary school classes. From the philosophical discussions in class and from the participation and responses of children, we will deduce whether the subject, the questions, and the teaching methods at issue are suitable. This will thus be a qualitative study.

3.1 Existing manuals

Existing manuals implicitly answer the research question by giving their suggestions for philosophical activities. This does of course not imply that this is the best way of philosophy in the classroom. Nevertheless, it is useful to know how existing methods approach the various school age groups.

Filosoferen op de basisschool ('Philosophy in primary schools') (Bouwmeester et al., 1992) (also known as "de SLO-map") has been designed in cooperation with the Centrum voor Kinderfilosofie Nederland, and contains a variety of classes for each school class. Classes consist of stories (partly based on Matthew Lipman's original material), video clips, completing worksheets, and discussions. Moreover, it includes an extensive explanation of the idea behind philosophy for children, and of how the teacher can guide the philosophical class discussion.

Filosoferen doe je zo ('this is how one philosophizes') (Bartels and van Rossum, 2009) is the most recent, and comprehensive philosophy manual, specifically designed to meet the recent interest in citizenship education. It is a guide for the entire school period and consists of four parts. Part 1, for group 1 and 2 (kindergarten),

is centered around asking questions. Part 2, for group 3 and 4 (1st and 2nd grade), is mainly concerned with the dialogue. Part 3, for group 5 and 6 (3rd and 4th grade), is centered on valid reasoning. And the last part, for group 7 and 8 (5th and 6th grade), contains themes that have to do with democracy. Various topics are covered (e.g., knowing vs. thinking, bullying, real and fake, jealousy, music or noise, 26 letters and infinitely many words), and various teaching methods are used. Mainly the introductions and the conclusions of the classes are often different: These could consist of reading a story, watching a short movie, filling in a worksheet, or directly talking about a philosophical question. The philosophical class conversation is a central activity in each class. Each class is described for the teacher with background information, an elaboration of the philosophical questions with sub-questions, and explanations of philosophical activities for the children.

Klein maar dapper ('small, but brave') (Heesen, 1996) is a collection of stories accompanied by philosophical questions for children up to 9 years old. Hence, it is not specifically designed for education. Stories often contain imaginative concepts (such as "the great problem forest", "the baby diploma", and "wolf eggs at the lake of tears"). Presumably, the assumption is made that children are sensitive to imaginative stories, which could maybe get them to practice philosophy.

Kinderen filosoferen ('children philosophize') (Heesen, 1998) is written for children over 10 years old, and also contains different stories. There is an accompanying teachers' book, which describes philosophical questions for each story. The starting point of the teachers' book is the group dialogue. Each class starts by reading a story, followed by answering questions and a philosophical class discussion. Questions are asked in a childish way: "Can we catch words in a net?", "is a plastic tulip an image of a real tulip?", or "what is a 'speelstoutwinkel'?". My presumption is that children, including young children, do not necessarily need such childish questions to keep their interest, and that such questions might even distract them from philosophizing.

As described in 1.1.1, the 'community of inquiry' is the standard teaching method in the philosophy class. For this, the teacher adopts of the socratic conversation facilitator, and space is given to the children to develop their own ideas (Anthone and Mortier, 1997). The group investigates questions and concepts together. The teaching manuals described above take the philosophical class conversation as a starting point of each class. The philosophical class conversation is also central to philosophy classes of WonderWhy and Wereldwijs—two independent initiatives in the Netherlands, that organize both teacher trainings and philosophy classes themselves. It is interesting to investigate whether this teaching method should indeed be the center of philosophy classes, and whether this would be different for different age groups.

We see that there is no introductory teachers' manual for philosophy, specifically for the primary school teacher who wants to do a philosophy class for the first time. *Klein maar dapper* by Berrie Heesen is a collection of stories with philosophical questions—which is not specifically designed for education. *Kinderen filosoferen* by Berrie Heesen is slightly outdated, and only for older schoolchildren. Additionally, both of these manuals contain mainly childish questions (see above), which could distract children from philosophizing. The other two manuals are very extensive and are, in my opinion, suitable for those who are experienced with philosophy for children. In short, we still miss a manual which can serve as a stepping stone to these existing manuals.

3.2 Goal of this study

The goal of this study is twofold. Firstly, the aim is to gain insight in practicing philosophy with different school classes, in order to determine what an adequate philosophy class should look like—both in terms of subjects, questions, and teaching methods—for different age groups.

Secondly, we aim to implement the findings from this study directly by designing teachers' manuals in line with the interests and capacities of the different age groups. The findings of the research will determine whether, and if so, in which aspects, the manuals for different age groups will differ from each other. The manuals will be specifically addressed to primary school teachers who have no philosophical background. After all, it is remarkable that *if* a primary school has philosophy in its curriculum, this is taught by external people most of the time (Hand and Winstanley, 2008). Only few primary school teachers teach philosophy classes themselves. From a small informal inquiry, I gather that this is not only due to unfamiliarity with the subject and the possible role it can play in the development of critical and creative thinking and in other areas (as we have seen in the previous chapter). Several teachers mention the lack of a clear, introductory, diverse philosophy manual as a reason: They might be enthusiastic about philosophy for children, but simply do not know how to implement this in their class. Although this has not been explored on a larger scale, it certainly indicates a need for a manual specifically addressed to teachers without a philosophical background. This could serve as a stepping stone to existing manuals, which could be less accessible. By designing this manual, we aim to write clear explanations of philosophical activities, to formulate several follow-up questions for each philosophical question, and to create a short introduction explaining why one would practice philosophy with children and especially *how*.

Chapter 4

Hypotheses

We will consider three hypotheses that can make a prediction on the research question: the 'naive hypothesis', the 'Piaget hypothesis', and the 'nurture hypothesis'. I briefly clarify them below.

4.1 The naive hypothesis

The naive hypothesis is based on the idea that everyone is both interested and capable to philosophy about the same issues, regardless of age, intelligence, and education. After all, philosophical questions are easy to formulate and can always be illustrated by examples: 'What is thinking?', 'what makes a person happy?', and 'when is something fair?'. The great philosophers break their heads over such seemingly simple questions, but a six-year-old child can also think about it. The same questions, problems, and dilemmas can presented to every beginner in philosophy. Thus, the hypothesis concerns the kind philosophical topics and questions that appeal to people—and says that this is the same for everyone—and it does not so much concern the level of philosophical thoughts and discussions.

When we apply this theory to the current research, this leads to the hypothesis that the same philosophy classes can be taught to all classes (groep 3–8, or grade 1–6) in primary school. After all, a six-year-old child can philosophize about whether it is fair that there are rich people, while there are poor people as well, and a twelve-year-old child can do this as well. Although they might give different answers and arguments, the philosophical questions that are interesting and suitable for the younger children are also interesting and suitable for the older children, and vice versa.

This hypothesis is naive in the assumption that the cognitive development of the child does not play a role in the suitable philosophical questions or themes. The following hypothesis takes, on the contrary, the different development stages as a starting point.

4.2 The Piaget hypothesis

The Piaget hypothesis is based on the theory of the Swiss philosopher and developmental psychologist Jean Piaget (1896-1980), who divided the cognitive development of a child into four stages. With this hierarchical classification, he tried to explain how a child perceives, understands, and organizes the world around him. The theory states that a child keeps developing new mental structures by means of interaction with its environment. This theory is applicable to the current research, as it describes *ways* of thinking, instead of the *contents* of thoughts. (For this subsection, I used chapter 6 from Verhofstadt-Denève et al. (1995) and chapter 6 from Crain (1995)).

The stages as described by Piaget are as follows:

1. **The sensorimotor stage (0-2 year-old children)**

   During this period, children experience the world around them based on physical interactions with their environment. They are egocentric and cannot take on someone else's perspective. This stage is irrelevant for the current study.

2. **The pre-operational stage (2-7 year-old children)**

   Between age two and age seven, children develop an awareness of their own identity. Despite this, for children in this stage, it is still difficult to view things from someone else's perspective, as they still have an egocentric worldview. In this stage, a thought structure with mental images arises, in accordance with the development of language, but children still make reasoning mistakes. They are influenced by direct observations, and cannot yet perform mental operations. There is no stable, coherent system that supports thinking. Also, logical thinking is still underdeveloped and unsystematic. The period is characterized by concrete thinking.

   From about age four, children make many intuitive connections between things that are not really related.

3. **The concrete operational stage (7-11 year-old children)**

   In the third stage, children develop skills for correct logical thinking. However, this is purely on a concrete level; it is always related to specific objects or events. Because children in this stage master logic of classes and relations, they learn to structure their environment.

   Abstract, hypothetical thinking is not yet developed. Moreover, children in this stage have little insight into their own thinking pattern.

   In the concrete operational stage, children do not have a purely egocentric worldview anymore, and can distinguish their own thoughts from those of someone else.

4. **The formal operational stage (11-15$^+$ year-old children)**

   In this last stage, children develop abstract thoughts, and they can reason about abstract and hypothetical situations. As they have learned to understand their environment, they start to be aware of problems that they can only approach hypothetically. Also the spatial thinking and systematic problem-solving develops in this stage.

Piaget's theory states that these phases follow each other, they build upon each other. The associated ages are less important and should be seen only as an average or indication, as the pace of the development depends on the upbringing and genetic characteristics of the individual.

Piaget's theory has been criticized for various reasons (Verhofstadt-Denève et al., 1995, see 7.2). For instance, too the theory would too strongly assume a fixed sequence of age dependent phases, paying too little attention to environmental factors. This possibility is taken into account in the third hypothesis, which is described below. Also the universality of the theory has been criticized: The tasks children had to perform, after which Piaget could formulate this theory, would be deeply embedded in Western culture, making it less plausible that the developmental stages are universally the same. Another shortcoming is that Piaget does not take the development after adolescence into consideration.

Nevertheless, Piaget's theory still forms the basis of developmental psychology (Kohnstamm, 2002), and is still widely used in upbringing and educational contexts (Faber, 2009) (Delfos, 2003). Since the theory gives a detailed and comprehensive model of cognitive development, it is suitable to serve as a hypothesis for the current research question. After all, we do not take the theory as a starting point or assumption, but as a hypothesis to be tested.

According to the Piaget hypothesis there will be a large difference between philosophy classes with younger school children (age 6–8), who find themselves at the boundary of stage 2 and 3, and philosophy classes with older school children (age 9–12), who find themselves at the boundary of stage 3 and 4. The younger children will not be able yet to perform abstract think operations—abstract questions will thus be difficult for them. Furthermore, they will not be able to view things from someone else's position, and their logical-thinking skills will be underdeveloped. The older children will, according to this theory, be better at logical thinking. However, this will happen mainly at a concrete level—except for those children who are in the formal operational stage. The ages at the phases are indications, but in grade 6 (11-12 years) it is, according to Piaget's theory, likely that there will be some children who are already capable to perform abstract and hypothetical reasoning.

4.3 The nurture hypothesis

Lastly, we consider the nurture hypothesis. This does not state that the same philosophy classes can be taught to every age group, neither does it state that it depends on the cognitive development stage of the child. In contrast, the nurture hypothesis states that the upbringing of the child plays the largest role in the interests and capacities of the child, regarding philosophy. Halpern (2007) has done a meta-study to the possibility of nurturing thinking skills; this is investigated for critical thinking in particular. All described studies demonstrated that critical thinking skills, in a wide range of contexts, can be improved with exercise and instruction. Claxton et al. (2006) have shown that creative thinking can be developed at a young age, by actively using the creative thinking skills. These studies support the nurture hypothesis, which states that these thinking skills can be promoted at a young age.

Children with different upbringings regarding the stimulation of thinking skills, will perhaps have a different starting level for a philosophy class. More concrete: When a child grows up in a family in which critical or perhaps philosophical questions are asked, where curiosity about everyday situations is stimulated, and where reasonable discussions occur, he will have a head start on a child growing up in a family where this

does not happen. This then determines what kind of philosophy class (topics, types of questions, methods) is suitable.

For the current study, we have gained experiences at one primary school, and we have not taken differences in children's upbringing into account. Therefore, this hypothesis will not be able to be tested. Nevertheless, it could be an explanation for possible differences within one age group, or within different schools. I will come back to this in 9.5.

4.4 Summary

We have seen three hypotheses that could do a prediction about the research question. Only the first two hypotheses can be tested by the current study, as a comparison will be made between different age groups, and not between different upbringings of children.

The first hypothesis, the naive hypothesis, states that children from all age groups are interested in the same questions and topics for their first philosophical activities. The second hypothesis, the Piaget hypothesis, is based on the different developmental stages of children, which determine what kind of questions should be asked, and how a child would answer them. The third hypothesis, the nurture hypothesis, emphasizes upbringing factors of the child. It is important to keep this possibility in mind, but the hypothesis will not be tested by the current research, as we will not investigate differences between schools, or differences within one age group.

Chapter 5

Research plan

The hypotheses will be tested by means of a qualitative study at the Sint Antoniusschool, a primary school in the city center of Amsterdam, with around 240 children. The school has a Catholic identity, but receives children of all nationalities and religions (Sint Antoniusschool Amsterdam, 2013). The majority of the children at the school have Dutch parents.

The same series of philosophy classes will be taught to grade 2 (with children aged 7–8), with 26 children, and grade 6 (with children aged 11–12), with 28 children. In this way, we will be able to determine whether the same philosophy classes are equally suitable for both age groups. The research will be done in those specific age groups as the age difference is large; *if* there are differences between age groups, they will become clearly noticeable. And we chose for grade 2, and not for grade 1, as classroom lessons are still relatively new for grade 1, and children have just started to read and write in this grade.

All classes will be designed and implemented by myself: I have completed the bachelor studies Philosophy and Cognitive Artificial Intelligence at the University of Utrecht, and do the current research as part of the graduation of the Master of Logic at the University of Amsterdam. I have some experience teaching children of these ages: In South Africa, I taught a series of "life skills" classes to 11–13 year-old children in a primary school. These classes sometimes had a philosophical component ('why is it important to support your family and friends?', 'what would you do if you were the South African president?').

I designed nine philosophy classes, which will be conducted in both grades. Each grade will get one philosophy class each week. Classes in grade 2 will take 45 minutes, and classes in grade 6 will take an hour. All philosophy classes will be attended by the regular teacher, in order to help me maintaining order in the classroom. There will, with the consent of the parents of the children, be made video recordings of the classes, so that they can be looked back.

The series of classes for both groups is scheduled as follows:

1. Introduction in philosophy (Do all questions have an answer?)
2. Thinking (Can animals think?)
3. Happiness (What is the difference between joy and happiness?)

4. Normal (What is normal?)
5. Time (Can time sometimes go faster or slower?)
6. Voting (Do children have better ideas about the school than adults?)
7. Art (Is everything that is beautiful, automatically *art*?)
8. Fairness (When is something fair or unfair?)
9. Friendship (When are you someone's friend?)

Different areas of philosophy are covered with this set of topics (e.g., philosophy of min (2), virtue ethics (3), political philosophy (6), aesthetics (7), ethics (8)). The questions behind the topics are examples of questions that are asked in the class, and give an indication in what way a topic is *philosophical*. In the descriptions of the classes (in 7) I will explain why these topics and questions have been chosen for, and also why they stand in this order. We will also see in chapter 7 that this series of classes has been kept for the classes in grade 2, but that there are made some adjustments for the topics of the classes for grade 6. The reasons for this are described in 7.4 'grade 6: the progress of the classes'.

During the classes, a lot of opportunities will be given to children to form their own thoughts, and exchange their ideas. This means that I, as the philosophy teacher, will take no position. I will only present the philosophical questions, facilitate the class conversations, and explain the different activities. In this way, children will not feel impeded by the opinion of the teacher, which might be interpreted as 'expected' or 'correct'. For the same reason, there will not be explained a lot of background about a topic—we could think of explaining AI-developments in the class about 'thinking'. By not doing this, it will become clear for the children that the philosophy classes are *purely* about developing ideas *yourself*.[1] An additional advantage is that this approach is also accessible to primary school teachers, as little specific background knowledge is required.

After each class, there will be an evaluation session. For each class, a report will be written, based on experiences of the specific class and the video material. This report will contain a description of each activity in the class, of which particularly the classroom conversations will be written out word by word. It will also contain a 'general evaluation', in which a qualitative analysis will be given for the class. We will specifically answer the question to what extent the class is adequate for that grade. Also, we can think of how the class could be improved. For each class, we can ask whether the children were interested in the topic, whether the philosophical questions were appropriate, and whether the different activities were suitable for the age group. This can be assessed by:

- Children's first reactions, when a topic is introduced or a question is asked (how many hands are raised, and are children enthusiastic, or do they seem uninterested?);
- The answers and comments children give (abstract or concrete? Relevant or irrelevant? Based on ratio or on emotion? Do they react to one another, or do they just want to tell their own story?);
- The degree of participation (are the children actively or passively involved? Are they captivated, or easily distracted?);

[1] After a philosophy class—so, after everyone has expressed their thoughts about a certain topic, and the lesson is completed—one might reflect again on the topic, and give more background information.

- The number of children actively participating in the different class activities;
- Reflections with the teachers of the grade, who will attend the classes;
- Reflections with the children on each class, and on the series of classes in general.

In the general evaluations, we will also formulate interim findings about the philosophical capacities of the children. This could possibly be linked to a guideline or advice for teaching philosophy classes for the specific age group, which could be nuanced and supplemented later on. In this way, a comparison between the two groups will gradually and accurately be made.

At the end of the series of classes, children will fill in an evaluation form, which asks them what they thought of the classes, and what they think they might have learned in the philosophy classes. I will also conduct interviews with the teachers of the two groups, who will attend all classes. In these reflections, I will particularly ask them about what role they think philosophy could play in primary education. I will also ask, in view of the teachers' manual, whether they think they could conduct the classes *themselves*.

The findings of the research will lead to a comparison between grade 2 and grade 6, regarding their capacities and interests. In that way, we will be able to determine whether the two age groups could, and should get the same philosophy classes (in accordance with the naive hypothesis), or that we need to design two manuals, based on the interests and capacities of the respective age groups (in accordance with the Piaget hypothesis). The findings of the study will be an important source of information for the adjustment of the final teachers' manuals.

Chapter 6

Predictions

6.1 The naive hypothesis

The naive hypothesis predicts that the designed series of classes suits both age groups. When the nine classes appear to be equally successful for grade 2 and grade 6, the naive hypothesis will be supported. However, in case we notice that the two grades require *different* philosophy classes, since (a subset of) the classes, topics, or questions in the original series of classes appears to be unsuitable for either of the age groups, then the naive hypothesis will be refuted.

6.2 The Piaget hypothesis

The Piaget hypothesis predicts the opposite: Children in grade 2 are 7 or 8 years old, and find themselves, according to Piaget's theory, either in the pre-operational stage, or in the concrete operational stage. They will not possess a logical coherent system that supports thinking, and will therefore make thinking mistakes. Logical reasoning is underdeveloped, and no one will be able to reason about abstract or hypothetical situations. Hence, according to this hypothesis, children will need concrete questions in the philosophy classes. Furthermore, they will find it difficult to take other opinions into account, because they still have an egocentric world view. Questions will thus be answered from their own perspective, which might become clear during class conversations.

Children in grade 6 are 11 or 12 years old, and thus find themselves, according to Piaget's theory, either in the concrete operational stage, or in the formal operational stage. This means that they will be better at logical thinking. Everyone in grade 6 will be able to perform logical thinking at a concrete level, and children in the formal operational stage will also be able to reason about abstract and hypothetical situations. Hence, philosophical questions will require a specific context or formulation. Some children will be able to philosophize about abstract questions. Children in grade 6 will, according to this hypothesis, be able to take other people's positions into account as well, since their worldview is less egocentric. This will appear during the class conversations.

Chapter 7

Implementation

The classes were conducted during nine weeks in January–March 2013. As described in chapter 5, an evaluation report was written after each class, based on the gained experiences and the video material. These evaluation reports are appended to this thesis: Appendix 1 contains the evaluations of grade 2, and appendix 4 contains those of grade 6.[1] The evaluations with the children can be found in appendix 2 (grade 2) and 5 (grade 6), and the evaluations with the teachers can be found in appendix 3 (grade 2) and 6 (grade 6). In this chapter, I will concisely describe all these evaluations. First, the course of the classes in grade 2 will be described (7.1), followed by the evaluation with the children (7.2) and the evaluation with the teacher (7.3). Subsequently, the course of the classes in grade 6 will be described (7.4), also followed by the evaluation with the children (7.4), and the evaluation with the teachers (7.6).

I have described most classes in an informal manner on `http://kunnendierendenken.wordpress.com`.

7.1 Grade 2: course of the classes

The series of classes started in grade 2; I could only start in grade 6 three weeks later, because of the final test. The classes in grade 2 took 45 minutes each.

Class 1. Introduction to philosophy: *Do all questions have an answer?*

In the first class, I wanted to let the children in grade 2 get acquainted with philosophical questions. These are questions for which there is no fixed *correct* answer. As I presumed that children would not be familiar with such questions, this class would just be about discovering such questions, by thinking about the central question of the class: 'Do all questions have an answer?'. This question surprised children: "How are we supposed to know?". The reactions were merely negative: No, not all questions have an answer, because we

[1] It is important to notice that the evaluations were written directly after each class; when I wrote the evaluation of the first class, I did not have the knowledge and experience yet that I eventually have after I completed the series. And as the classes in grade 6 started three weeks later, the grade 6 evaluations contain more comparisons with grade 2 than vice versa.

may ask 'does god exist?', or 'how high is the sky?'—hence, they gave counterexamples. Or: No, not all questions have an answer, "because sometimes it is too difficult"—they gave arguments for their answer.

We discussed several questions, and for each we asked: Is there, or is there *no* clear answer to this question? 'What is the name of the Dutch queen?', and 'what is 3 + 2' were amongst others identified as non-philosophical questions, and 'is it fair to betray a friend?' and 'how would it be if we could travel in time?' were identified as philosophical questions.

I noticed that this was new for the children: questions that do not easily have an answer, and of which the teacher did not even know the answer. The question 'but *what* is the answer?' was asked regularly. Furthermore, they found 'philosophy' a difficult word, and they had no idea what we were going to do in philosophy classes. An introductory class, in which we simply looked at different types of questions, was therefore appropriate for these children.

During the class conversation, the children expressed their reactions mainly towards me; there did not arise a discussion between them. I also saw that the children became impatient when the class conversation took longer than ten minutes. It helped a lot when I gave the children red-green cards, which they could show during the conversation (to show that they resp. disagreed / agreed)—this added a game factor to the conversation.

At the end, I asked: "Who has already an idea of what philosophy is?". There came two answers: "to think carefully", and "thinking together and talking together".

Class 2. Thinking: *Can animals think?*

In the second class, children knew better what to expect for the philosophy class. The topic was 'thinking'. This topic appeals to the imagination, and can be accompanied by concrete questions, such as 'can your dog think?', and 'do adults think about different things than children do?'. For these reasons, I decided to have this topic early in the series.

Together, we wondered who or what can *think*, which could perhaps give us a better idea of what it actually *is*: thinking. Can animals think? Or can only *some* animals think—and which animals would that then be? Can a tree think? Does a baby already have thoughts? And does an iPhone maybe think as well? These questions were asked by means of a collage assignment, that children carried out in groups (see image below). They were asked to think carefully about *why* they put something on a certain side, and to *deliberate* this together. The assignment was very clear to the children, and it encouraged the children for discussion. Moreover, it functioned as discussion material for after the assignment.

During the subsequent class conversation, I noticed again that children mainly wanted to express their *own* thoughts, and they did not react so much to *each other*. It also stroke me that children interpret seemingly factual beliefs as being *true*. In this class, there was a boy who followed the rule 'if something has brains, then and only then, it can think'. He held onto this rule so strictly, that he did not reflect further on the issue. It did not help to ask him questions about it, because "it simply is like that". Philosophy classes may perhaps help to find some nuance in this.

After this, we concentrated on our *own* thoughts: What happens there, in your head? Do you always have a grip on your own thoughts? Do we know how thoughts look like, or what we think about? We tried to answer this last question by means of an introspection assignment: Children had to draw or write their thoughts in a thought balloon. We also reflected collectively about questions as 'do adults think about different things than children do?' ("yes, because sometimes I want to watch television, but then my mother does not allow me to"), and 'can we stop thinking?' ("yes, because I do not need to think about an easy arithmetical calculation").

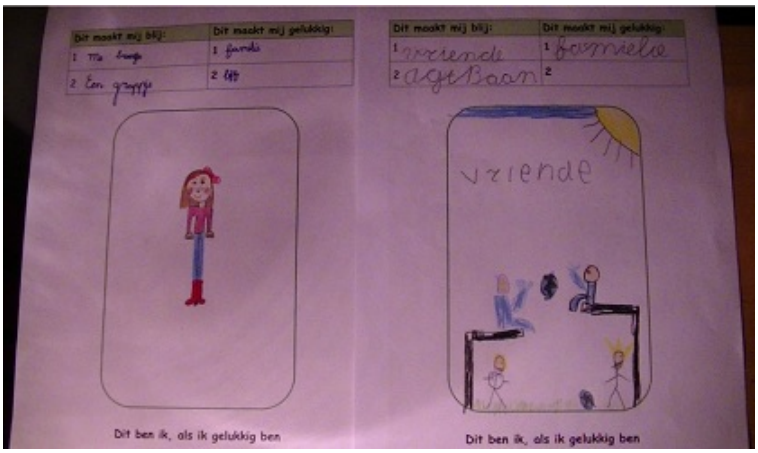
As the class contained of a variety of activities, children stayed interested, and the class kept its momentum. In addition, all children were given ample opportunity to reflect on the topic: *Everyone* had a voice in the collage assignment, and *everyone* drew, or wrote about their thoughts. As the questions were posed in a clear and concrete manner, children understood everything well, and remained interested ('can a baby already think?', 'can a calculator think?', 'do adults think about different things than children do?', as opposed to for instance 'what is thinking?'). Children said they particularly liked the collage assignment. I noticed that it was a successful class, as children kept talking about whether robots / trees / ants do or do not think, also when they walked out of the classroom for their break.

Class 3. Happiness: *What is the difference between joy and happiness?*

During the third class, we thought about *happiness*: an accessible topic, as everyone would have their own thoughts and associations related to it. It would therefore be an appropriate topic for the third class. In order to be able to explain what happiness is, as precisely as possible, we compared it with *joy*. Is it the

same, or is there a difference—and what would that difference then be?[2]

I started with the simple question 'what makes you happy?'. Although this is not a very philosophical question, all children would immediately be motivated to think about the topic. I noticed that this question got everyones attention, which would be beneficial for the following questions.



So what is then the difference between joy and happiness? At the beginning, children found it hard to formulate an answer: "If you are joyous (blij), then you smile or laugh more, and if you are happy (gelukkig), then you could also be angry, as some people have a very rich life, while they are unhappy (ongelukkig)", and "if you are happy (gelukkig), then your pleased (blij) with your life, but if you are joyous (blij), then you are eehmmm. . . I don't know".

The class conversations was held by means of a game. Children could express their opinion with their bodies: If they agreed with a certain statement, they had to make themselves really tall (arms up), and if they did not agree, they had to make themselves really small—this was a continuous scale. This was a successful way of having a class conversation, as children could move, and they could all express their opinion without the conversation resulting in a lot of noise. Additionally, their physical expressions could function as starting points of the class conversation. Amongst others, we discussed the following statements:

- If you have a lot of toys, then you must be happy (gelukkig).
- Everyone is unhappy (ongelukkig) from time to time.
- One can be sad (verdrietig) and happy (gelukkig) at the same time.
- One cannot be happy (gelukkig) when being poor.

I saw that children thought very carefully about their opinion, but again, not much interaction between them took place; children did not / hardly react to each other, but rather expressed their own thoughts to me. I noticed that children sometimes tend to tell about personal anecdotes, which are irrelevant for the philosophical conversation ("my wrist was once put in a plaster, because I fell from the climbing frame, and then. . . "). This can take quite long, and is distracting from the conversation. To avoid this, it is important to keep the focus on the topic; the topic or question at issue could be written on the board, and it could help to explain explicitly that all comments should be about the question.

[2]It is important to note that the Dutch words were "gelukkig" (fortunate, happy, well-off) and "blij" (happy, joyful, pleased), which differ slightly from "happiness" and "joy".

Again, the variety of activities made it possible to move on with the class, which is important for the children, so that they do not get distracted easily. The form of the class conversation, in which children could express their opinion with their bodies, appeared to be worth repeating.

At the end, I asked again: So what is the difference between joy (blijdschap) and happiness (geluk)? This question still appeared to be a difficult one, but the children understood it better than at the beginning of the class. The final comment was: "I think there is a difference. When happy (gelukkig), then you feel *very* ehm, happy (blij), good (fijn) *on the inside*, and if you are joyous (blij), then you are fully happy (blij) *on the outside*" ("Ik denk er een verschil is. Bij gelukkig, dan voel je je *van binnen* héél erg, ehm, blij, fijn, en als je blij bent, dan ben je *van buiten* helemaal blij").

Class 4. Normal: *What is normal?*

In the fourth class, we reflected on the question when something is *normal*, and when we call something *not normal*. This topic might be more difficult, since 'normal' is a more abstract concept than 'happiness' and 'thinking'; we use it often, but the criteria for using it are difficult to express, and it can be applied in numerous situations (to what someone *says*, to the way something is *done*, to how something or someone *looks*, et cetera). For this reason, this topic is presented somewhat later in the series.

So, what is normal? And is it bad when something is *not* normal, or do we accept that? We discussed these questions looking at some examples. I presented an image on the digital blackboard, of which the children could decide whether they thought it was *normal*, or *not normal*: a girl who eats rice for breakfast, a boy who prefers to wear dresses, someone in flower-power clothing, a boy with two mothers, et cetera.

Children were surprisingly open: Most of them easily considered things to be normal. This might have to do with the fact that this is a school in the center of Amsterdam, where children might have more open upbringing than usual. The fact that it often happened that *all* children found something normal, made it more difficult to have philosophical conversations: It made it less easy to put opposing views next to each other, except by asking 'what would you do if someone else would tease this person (for example, the boy with the dress)?'. This often resulted in politically correct replies: "If other children say you are weird, then you should not be offended, since it is most important that you like it yourself".

Despite the lower philosophical content of the class, the teacher said that she found the class very valuable. Although the children knew that it is 'ok' to be different, they might have become more aware of it, now they have carefully thought about it, and collectively talked about it.

Class 5. Time: *Can time sometimes go faster or slower?*

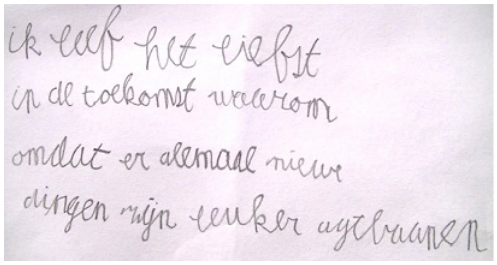
Children in grade 2 learn to tell the time. Hence, they will associate *time* with the clock. But the time keeps on going, when all clocks have stopped. It is not easy to get a grip on time, even though it is such a common concept. It could be difficult to reflect on this topic, which is the reason for the fact that it is found a bit later in the series.

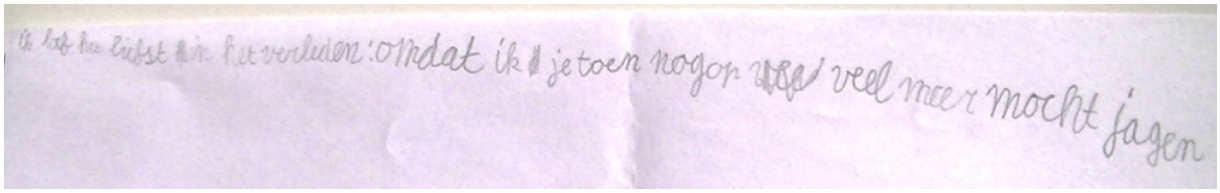
The class started by looking at a 2-minutes timer, in silence. That took long! Children started to wobble when we were half way, and they were glad when it was over. This was a good start for the question 'does

time always have the same speed?' ('gaat tijd altijd even snel?'). This resulted in an interesting conversation: There existed different opinions, and children gave several reasons: "Yes! Because we don't have a machine which can transport us to the future? So the time *cannot* go faster", and "no, if you have to sit still, time goes really slow, but if you are playing, then it goes faster".

After this, little groups performed short plays, in which every time something strange was going on with time, such as 'you are at a children's party, and time goes really fast! Within two minutes, you unwrap the presents, you eat the cake, and you go for a swim', and 'you live 1000 years in the future. Play how you go to school, and how you get a class'. The children were enthusiastic about the acting part, but as these descriptions were too difficult—I made an estimation error—they were a bit confused. I noticed that they found it particularly difficult to understand unreal or impossible situations, such as time going faster or slower.

At the end, children were instructed to write about whether they preferred to live either in the past, in 2013, or in the future. They understood this better, and it was nice that they could use their imagination.



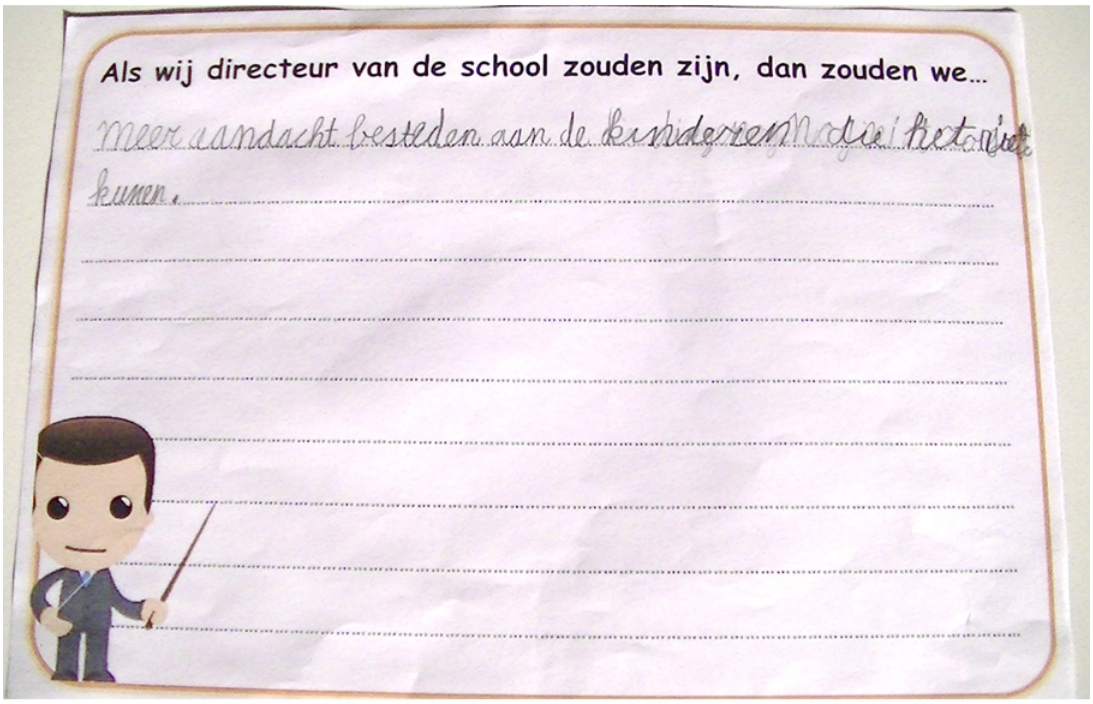


Class 6. Voting: *Do children have better ideas about the school than adults?*

In the sixth class, we simulated a democracy. We pretended that a new managing board for the school had to be chosen, and there had been decided that this would be a small group from grade 2. Hence, in groups of three, children wrote down their ideas for the school. They found it extremely exciting, and they took their responsibility quite seriously. After each group presented their plans, children could all vote for the new management. The party line of the winning group would be given to the school principal.

At first sight, this might not seem to be the most philosophical class ever, since the voting activity took quite some time. Nevertheless, there was a good introductory class conversation, and the activity was about creating own ideas. Children were stimulated to come up with creative ideas, that promote the general interests at a school. This implicitly entails questions such as 'what do I find important at school?', 'why does one need to learn things at school, and could we not just play?', and 'why do we actually go to school?'. For this reason, this class is found somewhat later in the series. Since children were already used to the fact that *their* ideas are important in the philosophy class, it would be more likely that they would participate more actively in this class, than when the class would have been at the beginning of the series.

The strength of this class was the *experience* of the topic at issue: Children have not only learned about the workings of a democracy, they have also experienced it. They took the activity very seriously, especially when they could bring out their vote anonymously. Although most parties had three or four party items along the lines of 'longer breaks!', 'more school trips!', and 'no language classes anymore', the winning party had only one item: '*more attention for those children who are behind*'.



The most important lesson I took from this, is that a comprehensive philosophical class conversation is not per se the highest goal in a philosophy class for this age group. A group assignment or a game can also be philosophical, and results in everyone's participation. In this way, children will start to think automatically about the related philosophical questions, and they will probably remember this better. The latter is shown in the final evaluation, where most children said this class to be their favorite. Also the teacher and I found this class to be the most successful one in the series.

Class 7. Art: *Is everything that is beautiful, automatically art?*

If we *all* say that a fast race car is beautiful, why isn't it art? And if do not think the Mona Lisa is super pretty, why *is* that art? The topic of this class was 'art', and we mainly considered the question of *what* it is that makes something art. This topic finds itself later in the course, as it is less related to children's daily life. In this way, children would better understand how the topic would be philosophical, of which they would at this point have a clear idea ("thinking together and talking together", as explained by a child in the first class). The goal of the class about art was to make children aware of the fact that everyone has their own taste and their own opinion—a conclusion which was drawn by a child at the end of the class.

We looked at several images (of a natural waterfall, of the Mona Lisa, of a 'beautiful' soccer goal, et cetera), and for each of them we asked ourselves whether it we thought it was beautiful, and discussed whether it

was art. How is it possible that this does not always correspond? "There are many race cars. But you cannot simply make a copy of a painting". During this class, the children were less likely to provide their answers from explanations. They determined fairly quickly if they found something beautiful, and whether something is art, and that was that. The reason for this is probably that the class was not so exciting. Children in this grade get carried away in a story or game, which this class did not have.

For the last activity, children got half a painting of Picasso, or half a 17th century painting, which they had to finish, by drawing the other half. This was not so much a philosophical activity, but functioned as a pause in the class. Moreover, it could function as discussion material afterwards: Do you think that this painting can go in a museum now? When is something suitable for a museum?

Class 8. Fairness: *When is something fair or unfair?*

The terms'ethics', or 'moral dilemma' are too difficult for children in grade 2. Nevertheless, the topics that are involved in ethics are rather intuitive, and we could think of plenty moral dilemmas which children could reflect on. These dilemmas invite children to reflect on them *together*, and to construct arguments for an opinion. This class finds itself later in the course, as children could have learned this during the earlier classes.

I started the class with the bare question: What is fair, and what is unfair?, just to see whether they had any ideas about this abstract concept. And they had: They directly came up with some examples of unfairness: "What is unfair, is that some people are very rich, and some are very broke. That is unfair, since everyone needs food". And "it is unfair when someone has three cupcakes, and gives one to someone, then another person asks 'can I also have a cupcake?', and he says 'no, I keep the other two for myself"'.

With help of the cut-and-paste-collage (see picture), we talked about several ethical questions, presented in a simple style, such as 'is a poor man allowed to steal a bread to feed his children?', 'are you allowed to bully back a bullier?', and 'if we can eat cows, are we then also allowed to eat dogs?'.

The assignment was appropriate for the age group, but no group conversation arose. Sometimes children had different opinions, but this was simply accepted. Children of this age apparently do not feel the need

to convince each other. In comparison: The corresponding class in grade 6 caused a lot of interactive class discussion.

Class 9. Friendship: *When are you someone's friend?*

The topic of the last class was suggested by the teacher. She explained that this is a topic children often think about. I think that it is important for the philosophy classes to pick themes children can relate with, or topics that they think about outside the philosophy class as well. This might encourage creative thinking outside of the philosophy classes, and it may be seen as a signal that the children are taken seriously. After all, it shows that their own thoughts are as valuable as those of the teacher, or those of the writer of a school book.

In this class, we asked ourselves when you know that you are someone's friend ("if you help each other", "if you have sleepovers with each other"), and what is important in friendship ("being nice to each other", "when you solve a fight immediately"). After this, children could draw themselves with a good friend, and write down *why* this is a valuable friendship.

This class suited the interests of the children very well. Everyone had an opinion about it, and they enjoyed talking about it. However, sometimes the children were less involved. The reason of this might be that I occasionally asked abstract questions that were not situated in a context. I think their interests would have remained better if the questions would have been more catchy, and accompanied by a story.

7.2 Reflection on the course with the children of grade 2

At the end of the last class I took fifteen minutes to reflect on the complete series of philosophy classes. This reflection happened partly in class conversation, and partly on a form with some questions. What did they think of philosophy, which questions did they enjoy, and what do they now think philosophy is? The evaluation can be found in appendix 2, and here I shortly discuss their answers to the questions. Children in grade 2 are not very strong at verbalizing their thoughts, or writing them down, which is why I limited the evaluation to just a few questions.

To the question 'what did you think of philosophy?', that children had to answer on the form, 20 out of the 23 children answered "nice", or "very nice". 'Nice' on itself is not very meaningful; it is more interesting to look at the reasons they gave for it:

- Because it makes you think carefully.
- Because I thought it was interesting, and I learned a lot from it.
- Because it was different every time.

Two out of the 23 children said they found it "boring", unfortunately without reason, three said "interesting", and one child said "educational".

I also asked which class they liked most, after we had collaboratively figured out the complete range of topics—these where written on the blackboard. The clear winner was class 6: Voting (in which we simulated

a democracy), won. Twelve out of 23 children had voted for this class. Number two went to the last class, Friendship, with six votes. The fact that this class had just been finished could play a part in this. Class 5, Time, had three votes, class 7, Art, had two, and class 1, Introduction, and 3, Happiness, both had one vote.

The last question I asked was: 'What is philosophy?':

- That you think a little bit about everything. *About what kind of things do we then think?* Ehm, food, friendship, the world, actually, we think about everything.
- That you make up things. *What kind of things do we then make up?* Things that professors have invented.
- That you think very carefully, about what something exactly is.

7.3 Reflection on the course with the teacher of grade 2

The teacher of grade two attended each class. She had always been interested in doing philosophy with the children, but did not know where to start, by a lack of background knowledge and a good manual. She said she would need a manual which is appropriate for the age group, and which contains clearly described classes, which could also be used by primary school teachers who do not have so much knowledge of philosophy. For this reason, she was very enthusiastic about this project, as she wanted to learn of it herself as well. She regularly motivated me to send the written out classes to a publisher. At the end of the series, I talked to her about the classes. The exact questions and answers can be found in appendix 3, and here, I describe the main issues.

The teacher said that she thought that class 6, Voting, was the most successful—this was also the children's favorite. Her reason for this was that this was an active class. Because of the fact that we really *simulated* a democracy, children could become aware of how that works, she explained. She was also very enthusiastic about class 4, Normal. This is remarkable, since none of the children mentioned this class as their favorite. The teacher explained that even though most children assessed most of the presented situations normal (different cultural habits, homosexuality, et cetera), it is important to bring up these issues and talk about them.

Next to the topics, we also talked about the different teaching methods. As I experiences myself, the teacher also thought that a variety of teaching methods worked best. At first, talking for 5 or 10 minutes, than do an assignment or group work, and then reflecting back. In this way, everyone keeps their attention on the topic. Furthermore, it is always good to do an active activity with the children, she said. Expressing an opinion by making yourself small or large, but also showing the green-red cards, she found a good idea: In this way, children have something to *do*, instead of that they merely talk and listen, and this makes the activity more clear. She also emphasized that it is important to make the class exciting for the children. It is therefore important to ask a question which comes forward from a story you have told, instead of asking bare questions which children do not know where they come from.

What can grade 2 children learn from philosophy classes?—this was a question I asked because the teacher was not familiar with the literature about philosophy for children, and she had attended all classes. She will

thus answer this question purely on the basis of her experiences in class, without presuppositions about the possible reasons for or effects of philosophy in the classroom. Without any doubt, she replied: "They learn to think carefully, they learn to listen to each other, they learn to express their opinions, and they learn to empathize with others."

As my aim was to make a teachers' manual which would also be accessible to primary school teachers, I asked whether she had the idea that she could give these classes herself. About this she was very sure: Yes, it is a very clear approach, and the short, practical descriptions of the classes enable teachers to give these classes themselves. It is a nice activity to do once in a while. She would not let the classes take longer than 20 minutes.

7.4 Grade 6: course of the classes

With grade 6, I started three weeks later than with grade 2, because they had to make their final test first. For this reason, the classes did not advance simultaneously. Just before the start of the classes with grade 6, I spoke about the project with one of the class teachers. She told me that the class had already had one philosophy class, and that the children did not like this at all. This class was taught by a student, who discussed the difference between *nature* and *culture* in a dull way. Children would thus probably have a negative association with philosophy. Hence it was important to enthuse the children from the first moment, so that this association would disappear. For this reason, I decided to skip the first class ('Introduction to Philosophy'), and to start with the class about 'Thinking'. I did this, as 'Introduction to Philosophy' is more theoretical and abstract—it is about the nature of certain questions—than 'Thinking'. With this, I would take the risk that children would not immediately understand what we were doing, would be confused. However, the class about 'Thinking' could lead to exciting discussions about thinking ants, chess robots, and iPhones. In this situation, it was very important that children would be immediately captivated by the topic. Besides that, an introduction would probably have been less important for a group of children who had already been introduced to philosophy earlier. And I could ask the question 'what is philosophy' also in the introduction of the first class.

Class 1. Thinking: *Can animals think?*

I had prepared myself to a group of children who had the expectation that it would be a boring class, and who would have an uninterested attitude from the beginning. However, it appeared to be the opposite: Children participated actively, and were enthusiastic. They knew very well what philosophy is: "thinking about a question of which actually you cannot know the answer", "thinking about things which are one step beyond everything we see around us".

From several thought out ideas, it seemed that some children sometimes practice philosophy for themselves ("Sometimes I suddenly realize, when I am in a car, that *everyone* has their own life, with own friends, and own memories", and "I often think about what is behind the universe"). The universe, and especially its size, was a recurring theme: Children apparently associate this with philosophy.

The first class in grade 6 mainly corresponded with the second class in grade 2. By making a collage, children discussed what *can* and what *cannot* think (see picture below). This activity also suited this age group. The

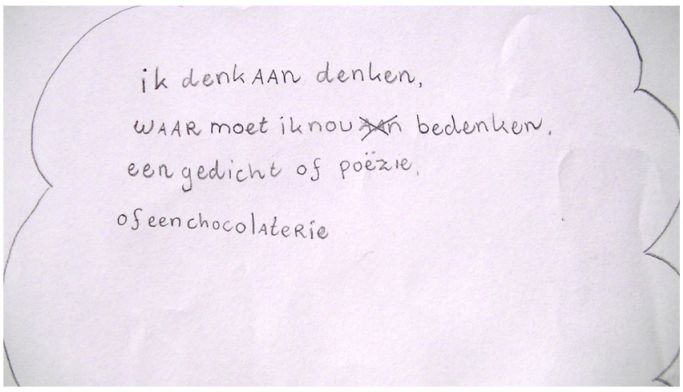
difference was that children in grade 2 saw the collage as a goal, whereas children from grade 6 realized that the collage served as material for further discussion.

The level of the discussion was a lot higher than what I was used to in grade 2. Children were more able to substantiate their opinions, and also responded *to each other*. This allowed the conversation to develop. An example is written out below; children talked about the question: Can a tree think?

- Yes, because he always knows which season it is. And he knows when the leaves need to fall off. And when he should grow.
- But we also do not know when to grow, right? (In other words: A tree probably does not know either, so this is no argument for the statement that trees can think).
- I see, but I mean that trees decide themselves when they grow: We haven't decided that for them. The tree takes up all kinds of things from the earth, via leaves and so on. And if the tree really would not do anything, then nothing would happen. So he *does* think.
- Yes, but then you could also say that all plants think. And that is really nonsense.
- Perhaps, trees do think, but their thinking might be completely different, and then it also looks differently.
- How would we ever find out?
- It is impossible to find out.

This is a big difference with the class conversations in grade 2, where children mainly gave individual responses to the question, which they merely wanted to explain to me.

We also did the same introspection activity as I did with grade 2, where everyone could draw or write down their own thoughts.



A pitfall for the children in grade 6 is that children sometimes quickly appeal to their emotions, and give sudden, inconsiderate comments ("I really think that's nonsense. How could you say that?", "really, a robot cannot think, it is really stupid if you think that!"). As I was not prepared fir this, I thought: 'That standpoint is probably not well reasoned, so let's just move on'. But looking back, I thought it was better to pay attention to such comments, and say: "OK, so you are convinced that robots cannot think. But other people are not sure. You don't convince others if you just say that it's nonsense that robots can think, because that is no argument. In a minute, I'll come back to you, and then I expect a good argument for your opinion that robots cannot think".

Furthermore, I notices that children appreciated it when I took them seriously: I let their comments determine the further conversation. Next to that, I asked their opinion about the class, so that I could use their feedback for the following classes. They took this question seriously and gave me useful advices and feedback. They told me that they really enjoyed the class conversations, where everyone could react to one another. Someone else said that he preferred the collage activity, as that allowed him to actually *do* something. Another child said that such activities were a good starting point for the discussion that followed. All reactions were positive, and the girl who had participated the most, said she enjoyed it a lot, because "most of the time, you don't think about all those things, but if you practice philosophy, then you think more about the universe, about death, about what you want to become, and so on. And most of the times you only think about little things, such as 'am I gonna pass this test', or 'what am I gonna eat?"'.

Class 2. Happiness: *Are we in control of our own happiness?*

This class was mainly the same as the third class for grade 2. To get a better understanding of *happiness*, we compared it to *joy*.[3] What is the difference between those two? Children thought about this question by reflecting on their own experiences: Is joy always accompanied by happiness, and vice versa? Children quickly came up with counterexamples: "When your grandmother tells you something funny, while she is almost gonna die. Then you could be joyous (blij) for a minute, but you're not happy (gelukkig)", or, "if you are really unhappy (ongelukkig), and Ajax wins a match, then you could be joyous (blij) for a short period". One boy explained the difference as follows: "Being happy (gelukkig) goes further than being joyous (blij). If you are happy (gelukkig), then a lot of things go really well, whereas for being joyous (blij) simply happens when one thing goes well".

[3]Again, it is important to note that the Dutch words were "gelukkig" (fortunate, happy, well-off) and "blij" (happy, joyful, pleased), which differ slightly from "happiness" and "joy".

We also played a game, in which I read out loud a certain statement, and the children literally had to take on a position, by walking to one of the sides of the classroom: agree / disagree / I-don't-know. Amongst others, we discussed the statements: 'If you have a lot of friends, then you must be happy (gelukkig)', 'if you are very pretty, than you must be happy', 'if nothing works against you, then you must be happy', and 'you should try you best, in order to become happy'. The children held discussions with each other, using good arguments, but it was difficult to keep the discussion centered. Since the children had to walk to different places each time, the activity became a bit disorganized.

From this class, I learned that the two age groups need a different type of introduction for a class. From grade 2, I was used to start each class by asking a question to which everyone would have something to say, so that everyone would get the confidence to participate in the rest of the class. I also did this in grade 6, by asking "what makes you joyous (blij)", and "what makes you happy (gelukkig)", and let several children tell their experiences. However, this resulted in a superficial conversation: I asked a question, and one by one, children gave an answer. Children in grade 6 are able to have a deep conversation, by considering, and focusing on a question or comment for a longer time. But as I used the grade 2-strategy (*what makes you happy?* Learner 1: "chocolate", learner 2: "a good CITO-grade", learner 3: "summer", et cetera), I did not use the opportunities to have a deeper conversation, by standing still at one remark for a longer time ("would you be less happy if chocolate would not exist?", "is it the CITO-grade *itself* that makes you happy, or the consequences that are associated with it?", "so, do you think that happiness is dependent on the weather?", et cetera). Children in grade 2 need such questions to have a good start, giving everyone confidence and getting the attention for the rest of the class. On the contrary, children in grade 6 know what to expect: They are aware of the fact that they are going to practice philosophy together. When I looked back at the video material of this class, I noticed that children often wanted to respond to each other, but that I did not give them so much opportunities, from the beginning. More opportunities for interactive discussions became available in the activity in which everyone could literally take a position for each statement.

After those two first lessons, I noticed that certain questions were asked regularly, without there being a direct reason. These question kept on recurring, probably because they associated them strongly with philosophy, and because they where fascinated by them:

- What happens after death?
- What is behind the universe, or how big is the universe?

I was faced with a dilemma: Do I change the course plan, as to satisfy the wishes of this group, or do I keep the original course plan, as to stick to the research plan? The advantages of the latter option are self-evident, yet, I decided on doing the former option: I decided to design a new class about *infinity*, where the second question could be discussed. I made this decision because I found it important that the eventual series of classes would suit the age group as well as possible. If children show a clear interest in the universe, then we should investigate how a class would turn out that has been designed specifically to meet this interest. Apparently, children in grade 6 sometimes practice philosophy for themselves. It is important that the questions they come up with themselves get a place in the philosophy classes, so that this natural tendency to practice philosophy gets stimulated, rather than ignored. In conclusion: The next class would be about infinity. I decided to then remove the class about art, as this class did not give much opportunities to have deep philosophical discussions, and because I expected this topic to be less suitable to the interests with the children.

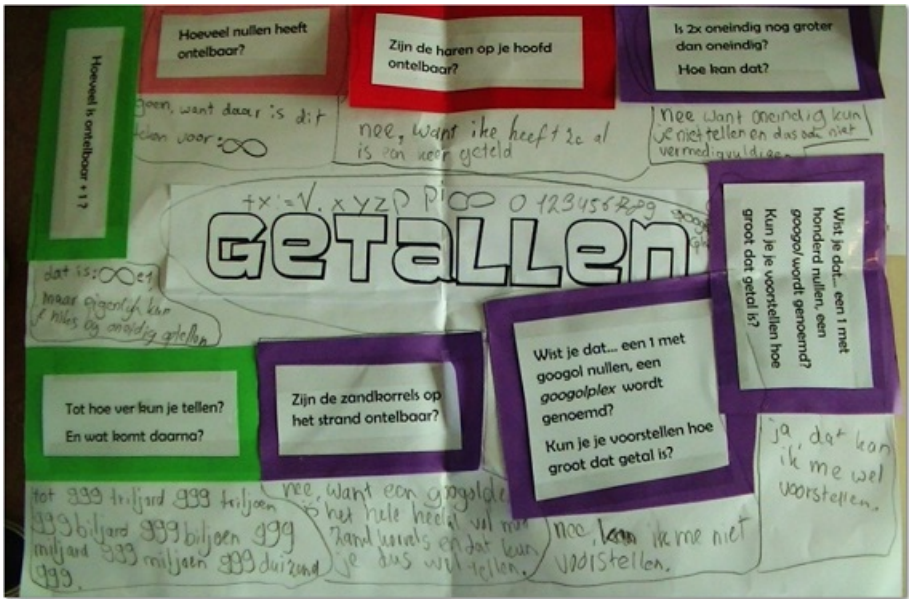
Class 3. Infinity: *How much is infinity + 1?*

As children in grade 6 had shown a great interest in the possible infinity of the universe, a specific class was designed to meet this interest. Children were, not surprisingly, enthusiastic about the topic. The fact that there were constantly many children who wanted to say something in the class discussion showed that children had indeed thought a lot about this topic before. To find out their initial associations with infinity, I simply started off with the question "what do you think about, when I say we will talk about infinity?". This resulted in various answers: the universe, numbers ("there is no biggest number, as it can always be bigger"), pi, one third of 100, humanity, time, and maybe a googolplex?

After this, children started to make mindmaps about the universe or about numbers, in groups of three. I had designed some material for this, including question cards, so that they would always have enough material to talk about. These questions included:

- Are the grains of sand on the beach uncountable?
- How far can you count? And what comes next?
- How much is infinity +1?
- Is 2× infinity larger than infinity? How is that possible?
- Did you know that the universe is more or less 13,7 billion years old? So what was there 14 billion years ago?
- Do you think the universe is infinite?
- If the universe is infinite, does that mean that there is also an infinite number of stars and planets?
- Did you know that scientists do not know whether the universe is infinite? How would they be able to find out?

Children enjoyed working with question cards: This supported the group discussions. Everyone was actively involved both in the discussions in the little groups, and in the class conversation that followed.



At the end, I told the story about Achilles and the tortoise running a race[4]. The children listened carefully, and understood the problematic aspect of the story very well. They explained afterwards why the reasoning of the tortoise was invalid: "Look, if Achilles can run 10 meters in the same time that the tortoise can walk 1 meter, then Achilles would be at 20 meters after step 2, and the tortoise would be at 12". This child noticed that one should look at the respective *speed* of Achilles and the tortoise, in order to calculate who wins after a while, whereas the reasoning of the tortoise looked at the distance that the tortoise could walk in the time that Achilles reached his former position. OK, so who would eventually win? "It depends on how far the race is. Because Achilles is really fast. So the tortoise gets less and less time to traverse a new distance. So eventually, he will only be 2 cm ahead, and then Achilles passes him easily." Someone added to this that Achilles would win the race, "except when the finish is at 12 or something". The number 12 has been chosen just incorrectly, as the limit lies at 11.111..., but the idea is good: The reasoning of the tortoise goes on (forever) until this limit, but when the finish lies behind this limit, it will simply be passed at a certain time.

In this class, a lot of background information could have been taught to the children. I have described in chapter 5 why I have not done this: The philosophy classes should give children the opportunity to independently create their own ideas. It is important to acquire insights into a question or a problem, to examine concepts, and to discover that if you carefully think about something, then you can come up with an answer *yourself*. When the teacher would discuss existing theories during the philosophy classes, this space to think freely would be impeded, and the emphasis would somewhat move from *independently developing ideas* to scientific knowledge. When I asked for the children's opinions about the class, at the end, someone said she found it "very interesting, because you have to think very carefully and precisely to find out an answer". And this is exactly why I merely asked the questions: Philosophy classes are there to let children

[4]This story is known as a paradox of Zeno. See the teachers' manual for grade 6 (appendix 8) for the story. Achilles and the tortoise were going to do a running race. The tortoise started with an advantage of 10 meters. Achilles would pass these 10 meters very quickly, but in that time, the tortoise would have shambled another meter. In a fraction of a second, Achilles would have passed that meter, but that would have given time to the tortoise to get a little bit further again—et cetera. Achilles would thus never be able to win, according to the tortoise's reasoning. Or would he?

think about questions and possible answers *themselves*.

This does not mean that children should be deprived of the approaches of scientists. These can be given attention outside of the philosophy classes. There could be a class on cosmology, for example with the book *De geheime sleutel naar het heelal* (English title: George's secret key to the universe) from Hawking and Hawking (2008) (which also has two sequels), or the book *Het universum uitgelegd aan mijn kinderen* (the universe explained to my children), from Reeves (2011). In mathematics, there could be a class about arithmetics with infinity, where there could be referred again to the thoughts and conversations from the philosophy class. There could also be referred back to Zeno's paradox, and be explained that an infinite sum can have a finite solution. The approach of Reichenbach (1958) to the paradox could also be given: He says that the paradox arises since time and space (in this case: distance) are being considered as two separate entities, while they might actually exist in a single continuum.

At the end of the series of classes, I assessed this class being the most successful. Reasons for this are:

- The fact that the children had brought up the topic themselves; hence, the motivation to practice philosophy about this topic came from the children themselves.

- The group work with the cards was very successful, for reasons described above.

- It is a topic that can be found in various other subjects (mathematics, language, world orientation), but does not receive much (if any) attention in primary or secondary school. Despite this, it fascinates children, because it is difficult to grasp: How can something *possibly* be infinite? It is thus a topic that does not receive attention in school, while children do think about it.

Class 4. Voting: *Do children have better ideas about the school than adults?*

This class was analogous to the class 'Voting' in grade 2. There had been three theoretical classes, so I thought it would be a good time to do the democracy activity. We started talking about who decides certain things for you: which book you read, at what time you go to school, who your friends are, and which shoes you will buy. I noticed that the children did not need so many different questions. It worked well for grade 2, as those children needed to get used to the class conversation again, but in grade 6, children were used to this already, and they really wanted to have a philosophical conversation with each other. Hence, it would have been better to take one of these questions ('who decides that all children have to go to school?'), and have a deeper conversation about it.

Children in grade 6 took the democracy simulation less seriously than children in grade 2 did. Afterwards, the teacher told me that exactly this game had been played a few weeks earlier; then it was a success. The fact that is was a repetition of a previous activity was, according to her, the reason that the children participated less seriously today.

Another possible contributing factor was that this activity did not offer much opportunity for group discussions: making party programs, presenting them, and voting took a lot of time. Also, afterwards, children gave feedback, saying that they would have preferred to have more class conversations. They had so many things to say about the topic, but the class was finished already! This made me realize that they *were* interested in the topic, but that the class should have a different set up.

Class 5. Moral dilemmas: *Is a poor man allowed to steal a bread for his children?*

The fifth class for grade 6 is the equivalent to the eighth class for grade 2 about fairness. The names for the equivalent classes are different though, as there would have been a chance that the term 'moral dilemma' would sound too difficult, and scare children in grade 2. I decided to conduct this class after the democracy class, since children mentioned there that they wanted to discuss more. I designed the current class such that there would be ample of opportunity to share thoughts and discuss questions. In fact, the whole class was centered on the discussion, starting by a class discussion, followed by discussions in groups of three, concluded by a class discussion. The children appreciated this.

I had composed several moral dilemmas, including some classics. We talked, amongst others, about the following:

- Your brother is seriously ill, and your neighbor is the only person in the world who has a life-saving medicine. However, he asks 10,000 euros for it, even though he had made it just for 1000 euros. You have tried everything to collect the money, but you only succeeded to get 5000 euros. The neighbor does not want to negotiate. *Are you now allowed to steal the medicine?*

- A truck drives on a narrow road. The driver suddenly sees two hikers in front of him, on his side of the road, and one cyclist on the other side of the road. And he notices that his brakes fail to work; he can only steer. If he steers to the left, the one cyclist will die. If he stays, or steers to the right, the two hikers will die. *What should he do?*
- You are standing on a bridge over a motorway. A fat man is standing next to you. A truck drives on that motorway below you, and you see that its brakes do not work. The truck moves towards three people. It is inevitable that these three people will die, *except* when you push the fat man standing next to you on the bridge: He would block the truck, and only the fat man would die. *Do you push him?*
- A poor man steals a loaf of bread, because he has to feed his children. As every shoplifter, he gets a fine of 150 euros. *Do you agree with that*?
- Fatma is muslim, and therefore wears a burka. She works in a shop, and her boss wants her to work without burka, and otherwise he will fire her. *Do you think the boss may demand that?*

Children were captivated by these scenarios, and they all participated actively. Discussing the dilemmas in little groups was a good way to give everyone the opportunity to express and explain their opinions. The fact that they had to write down a conclusion was useful, as this gave the idea that the children really worked towards a goal.

Afterwards, there was also an interactive class discussion, in which children listened carefully to each other. They philosophized about *guilt*, when we talked about the first truck driver dilemma:

- He should not steer, because steering would be *your* decision, so then it would also be *your fault* that the cyclist is dead, so you are guilty of someone else's death. And if you do not do anything, then it would be the fault of the failing brakes, so then the brakes would be guilty.
- I only agree with half of that. On the one hand, you would really *murder* someone if you do steer. On the other hand, it would be really cowardly if you don't because then you would have murdered two people instead of one, and then you wouldn't blame yourself, but the brakes. So you think: *Either* I make sure that two people die, and I blame something else—the brakes, *or* I make sure that one person dies, and I blame myself, and two people would survive.

At the end, a girl explained that she really enjoyed this class, because "one comment could change everyone

else's opinion".

Class 6. Identity: *Are the clothes you wear important for* who you are?

During the first five classes, I noticed that one hour was just too long for grade 6; during the last 15 minutes, their attention dropped down, and a topic could also perfectly be rounded off in 45 minutes. For this reason, the last three classes would take 45 minutes.

The topic of the sixth class was 'identity', which was not discussed in grade 2. I did this class in grade 6, as I expected this topic to suit the personal philosophical experiences of children. After all, children regularly mentioned differences between each other: "I like to see that everyone thinks differently" (class 1), and "I think there has been a Big Bang, but she thinks it was Adam and Eve, and then we reflect on that" (class 3). Also in the comment that was made in the first class ("Sometimes I suddenly realize, when I am in a car, that *everyone* has their own life, with own friends, and own memories"), which was recognized by many other children, shows the insight and the wonder of the fact that everyone has their own *identity*.

We reflected on what things are important for who you are. The following questions were discussed:

- What do you think about if you ask the question 'who am I?'
- If someone says 'be yourself', what is meant by that?
- Do you decide yourself who you are, or has that been determined at birth?

There arose some good discussions about the *I*, but some children found it to be somewhat vague; they did not understand what was meant by the questions. Hence, these questions could better be asked from a story, so that the context would have made clear what was meant.

The individual activity of making a 'personal passport' was meant to let them think further about the question. Nevertheless, this was not a very successful activity, as probably the goal of it was not very clear to the children.

I noticed that children wanted to express a lot of ideas during this class, but they found it hard to verbalize those, and to construct a good argument. An example: As a reaction to the question 'what does someone mean by 'be yourself?", a girls wanted to explain that you are not yourself if you react in a different way than you would actually want to react, or than you would normally react: "Look, most of the times, you are not yourself, if say something else. For instance, Rosa is in a churting mood, and I feel I have to laugh about it, but if suddenly I wouldn't laugh, then I wouldn't be myself. It is also how you react to something. If you think something is a bit weird or so, then you don't do it. So if you really want to react to something, because you think it's really funny, but you think that other people would say it's stupid, or so". Hence, the children sometimes need the help of the teacher to find structure in their thoughts, and to formulate their opinions clearly.

In conclusion, the topic of the class was fine, but the class would be better when adjusted a bit. The questions should be formulated in such a way so that it becomes clear what is meant, and so that it suits the age group. Questions coming from a story would be a good idea. Next to that, the activity should be designed in such a way that it is more interesting for the children. The feedback of the children was mostly positive.

However, one boy said he found the other classes "more exciting", as they had contained more variety; "this class was only about the question 'who am I?"'.

Class 7. Humans vs. robots: *Can a robot* really *be afraid?*

Since the class about infinity was so successful, I had asked the children from grade 6 for input for the last few classes. "Death", was of course the answer, but also "things that happen in your mind and so on. How is it possible that we can do mathematics, that we have feelings, and all those things?". A class about the difference between humans and (human-like) robots would enable us to talk about her question in an interesting way. After all, we have an idea of how a robot works, making it less special than a human being seems to be. Or is a human being also a kind of robot, when we realize that our brains have also been programmed, in a certain sense?

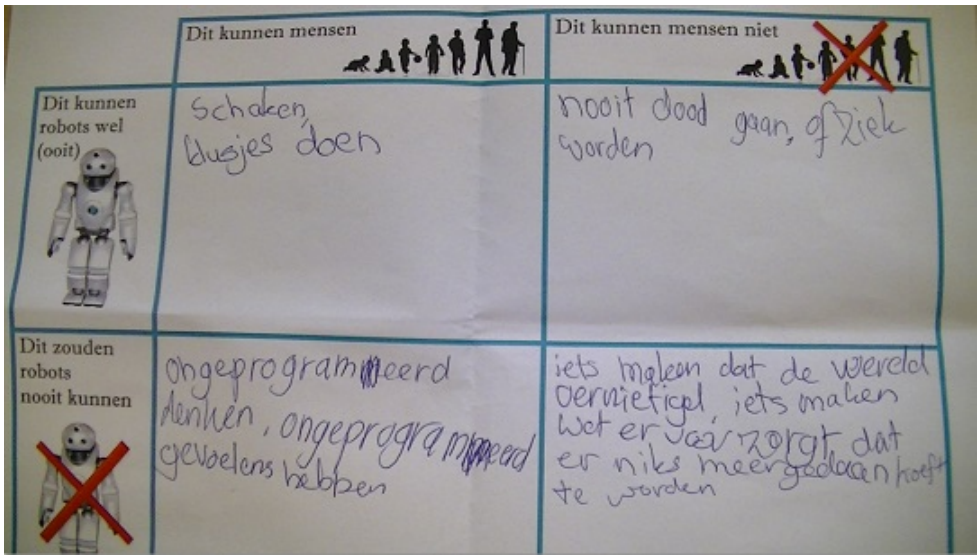
In this class, philosophical questions could be accompanied by nice examples, such as a chatbot, and an android robot which seemed to have feelings (see below). This resulted in the fact that the children were captivated, and that they participated enthusiastically to the discussion. When talking about the chatbot, we thought of, and tried, questions which could unmask the bot as a robot: Are you real?, do you have feelings?, do you often eat bread?, do you know you are a robot?, when should you write a *d* or a *t* in the Dutch past participles?, who programmed you?. This chatbot clearly turned out to be a robot indeed: It gave ungrammatical, and sometimes unintelligible answers. We wondered whether it would be possible that maybe in 100 years, when we would be much better at programming, that it really seems that there is a human being on the other side. The answer was unanimously: yes! In 1950, Alan Turing (1950) had predicted that 2000 would be the year in which correct identification of humans and robots in such situations would not be more than 70 %. Children in grade 6 seemed to be even more optimistic than Turing: "We see more and more, on television for example, that there are robots who can take care of people. While in the past there weren't even computers or televisions. So I think it will go really quick."

But if we would think that this could be a human being, then what would still be the difference between humans and robots? An interesting discussion arose about feelings, free will, and being programmed. We also looked at a movie of an android robot, of which we discussed whether it could be *really* afraid.

The questions were clear to children, as they were connected to a concrete example (first, the chatbot, later,

the android robot). This kept the attention of the children, who participated actively. Furthermore, it made sure that it was clear what we were talking about, and that the discussion stayed focused. The movie functioned both as a pause and as a starting point of the new conversation.

In between, children worked in pairs to filled in a table: "a robot could do this / a robot could never do this × a human could do this / a human could never do this". Since this was an enumeration assignment, it did not stimulate children much to think further about the topic. A better idea could for example be to work with propositions ("humans are also a sort of robots"), about which they can debate in pairs. In that case, the emphasis would be on arguments, instead of simply making up things.



Again, a class specifically designed after children showed interest in the topic, was very successful. The children were very enthusiastic about the class, and the teachers told me that they kept talking about it for days. *De ijzeren wil* from Haring (2003) could be a good source for more (philosophy) classes on this topic.

Class 8. Death: *Could we ever know what happens after death?*

The question that kept on recurring in each previous class was 'what happens after death?'. Children also asked regularly: "When are we finally going to philosophize about death?", after which the rest would support: "Yeeees!". For aforementioned reasons, I responded to the natural interests of the group—and thus, the last class would be about death.

As this was the last class, and since the topic came from the group, I decided to not start off with a question from my side, but to let the children make up their own philosophical questions. They could do this in pairs, after which we had talked about what a *philosophical question* is:

- "A question to which everyone has their own answer, and of which everyone thinks something else".
- "You can never find out what you really should do, or what is really true".
- "A question which you don't really think about in daily life".

Among others, children came up with the following questions:

- Do you experience death differently when you commit suicide than when you die from a disease?
- How do you feel after death?
- Who are you after death?
- What is death?
- Will you become someone else after death?
- Is there life after death?
- Will you be reborn immediately after death?
- Could we ever know what happens after death?
- Why do we die, why does our heart suddenly stop beating?
- Everyone thinks something else of what happens after death. Some people think: I will go to heaven. Others think you will be reborn. This has to do with culture and religion. *What is true?*
- What happens to your mind / spirit (geest) if you die?

It was a good exercise for the children to think of philosophical questions themselves, and also, it were the *children* who had provided the discussion material of the class. Then, it is a challenge to control the class conversation: One of the questions should be picked, and as the teacher, it is difficult to be well prepared for possible lines of conversation. Since children had made up the questions themselves, they wanted to discuss *their* questions. Besides that, all questions were still written on the blackboard. This resulted in a discussion that quickly switched topic. It would have been better to close the board, and to be clear about the fact that we would focus on one question per time—there might be place later for comments about other questions.

Children really appreciated it that their topics were turned into philosophy classes. Yet, for this reason, I could not do the classes 'time', 'normal', 'art', and 'friendship' in grade 6. The teacher of grade 6 said that 'friendship' is a sensitive subject for this age group; children would feel inhibited to speak openly about it, as they could be afraid to risk friendships. The other three classes ('time', 'normal', and 'art') were exchanged by the classes on topics suggested by children, because these were the classes of which I thought they contained the least opportunities for discussion. It is of course unfortunate that not all grade 2 classes have been conducted in grade 6 as well, but this disadvantage is outweighed by the advantage of the grade 6 series of classes suiting the natural interests of children.

7.5 Reflection on the course with the children of grade 6

Also in grade 6, I took time to reflect back on the course. The children knew that the project was part of a research, and that their feedback was important. They filled in a form, on which the following questions were asked:

- Which class did you enjoy the most? (*Just before, we had collaboratively figured out the complete range of classes, which was written down on the board.*)
- Because...

- What did you think of philosophy?
- Because...
- What did you learn in the philosophy classes?

The answers that were given by the children can be found in appendix 5.

The responses to the first question were very diverse. The most votes were for the class about death—but these were only 8 votes out of 27, and the fact that the class had just ended can be a partial explanation. Other classes with relatively many votes were the second, about happiness (6 votes), and the seventh: 'humans vs. robots' (5 votes). The only class which did not get any vote was the class about identity. Reasons children gave for this were often related to the fact that it led to an interesting discussion, or to the fact that it was nice to talk and think about the topic with others:

- (Happiness), because it was nice to hear other people's opinions, and we could move a bit.
- (Death), because I sometimes reflect on that, and now we could do that together.
- (Moral dilemmas), because we had to think carefully about it.
- (Happiness), because it gave us the opportunity to convince others.
- (Moral dilemmas), because we always had to make a decision, and I enjoyed discussing about it.
- (Voting), because I got the feeling a little bit as if it was real.
- (Geluk), because we reflected on what really makes you happy.

For the question 'what did you think of philosophy', most children answered 'nice', or 'very nice'. Some said 'great', 'sometimes a bit boring', 'interesting', or 'educational'. Again, the discussion was often considered to be positive, as well as the opportunities of expressing thoughts and ideas. Some children said they enjoyed to think deeply about things they usually don't think about. And someone said she valued the fact that serious issues were discussed as well. And: "Philosophy has to do with everything".

What have you learned in the philosophy classes?, was the last question. Some of the answers were:

- That you can say everything, because nothing is wrong.
- Learn how to collectively reflect on things one usually does not think about.
- That you almost never know an answer to a question fur sure.
- Nothing, because philosophy is thinking about something, but I could do this already, so: nothing.
- A lot, but very difficult to explain!!!
- That you can always think one step further.
- That not everyone thinks what you think.
- To think about things a person never thinks about in his life.

7.6 Reflection on the course with the teacher of grade 6

There were two teachers of grade six, of which at least one attended each philosophy class. When the children talked too much, or when they were too boisterous, they could intervene—this happened every now and then, as philosophy usually brings about many reactions, and because of the fact that I was a new teacher. For this reason, it was good that the school teacher could sometimes maintain order, so that I could concentrate on the content of the classes. After the project, I had an evaluation session with the two teachers. The questions and answers are written our in appendix 6, and I will explain the main issues below.

Both of the teachers were pleasantly surprised by the philosophy classes; the experience they had with a previous philosophy teacher, was that the teacher talked a lot, and that it was boring and "stuffy" for the children, since they could not *do* so much during those classes. They were positive about the facts that children got ample opportunity to express their thoughts, and that the class consisted of more than just a classroom conversation.

Their favorite class was the one about infinity; children kept talking about it for days. The group was fascinated by questions such as "how much is infinity + 1?'. The teachers also found the classes 'thinking' and 'humans vs. robots' very successful, as these brought about interesting class discussions.

They assessed all classes to be appropriate for the age group. The class about identity should however be adjusted, since the questions were too abstract, and the assignment (making a 'personal passport') did not appeal to the children's interests.

The teachers were enthusiastic about the variety of activities in the philosophy classes; this resulted in the fact that the children kept their attention to the topic, even though the classes were relatively long—in grade 6, classes usually do not take longer than 30-40 minutes.

I also asked the key question: What did the children learn from the philosophy classes? The teachers agreed on their idea that children learned to think further after one answer, that they learned to think consciously about their opinions, and to be open for other people's opinions. They explained that teachers can learn from such philosophy classes as well: You can get to know the children better, and you can gain insight in children's reasoning.

The teachers explained that they saw a connection with some other subjects in the curriculum, such as language, since in philosophy classes, they practice to translate their thoughts into words. Additionally, it also suits citizenship education, as children learn to form their own opinions. At the Sint Antoniusschool they currently use the method 'Leefstijl' (Leefstijl, 2010a) for citizenship education. However, the philosophy classes are more complete than this method, one of the teachers explained: "The good thing about philosophy is that there are no ready-made answers. The children are expected to look at a topic from different angles, and are stimulated to stay sharp and critical. The method Leefstijl expects too many socially desirable answers of the children. In philosophy, children learn to listen to each other, and to think carefully about the topics."

Of course I was curious to whether they had the idea that they could give these philosophy classes *themselves*, when they were given a clear teachers' manual. One of the teachers immediately confirmed this, and the other one added that the manual should contain a section 'how to teach a philosophy class'. This should explain that the teacher should have an open attitude, and that he / she should not give his / her own

opinion, in order to give children the full opportunity to give their "pure, original opinions". She explained that this was a strength of my classes, whereas this would not be so obvious for teachers; it should therefore be explained in the manual.

Chapter 8

Findings

The implementation of the course has led to many insights into how to teach philosophy classes, and in the interests and abilities of the two age groups. When the implemented classes of the two grades are placed next to each other, we can clearly identify some differences. Additionally, we now have a clear idea of how philosophy classes for the two age groups should differ from each other.

In this chapter, the two age groups will be compared in several respects, and the most striking differences will be discussed. We will discuss in this order: the class conversation; reflecting on the activity; thinking skills; character of the classes; the role of the teacher; what did children learn; and the structure of a class. These finding will lead to the conclusions in the following chapter.

8.1 The class conversation

In both grades, each class contained around three class conversations[1]: one at the beginning, as introduction and startup, one halfway, often as a reflection on an activity, and one at the end, as a conclusion of the class. In these class conversations, I always started with a question, sometimes arising from an introduction or a story, to which the children could respond. Standard rules applied, such as 'raise your hand' and 'you can only talk if it is your turn'. As explained in chapter 5, I, as the teacher, never took a position myself; I gave the complete space to children to give any possible opinion. The only things I did were asking questions, giving turns to children, and sometimes asking for clarifications. In this way, children got the full opportunity to develop their own ideas, and they would not get the feeling that they would have to conform to an expected answer, or to factual knowledge.

The two age groups were similar with respect to the acceptance of differences in opinion: Children in neither of the two age groups made a problem when someone else had another opinion. In grade 2, children did not pay much attention to someone else's opinion—whether this was different or not. In contrast, children in grade 6 were openly enthusiastic about the variety of opinions, since this caused discussion: "In philosophy, you can't actually be wrong. Because you are never certain. Because look, I think there has been a Big Bang, but she thinks it was Adam and Eve, and then we reflect on that" (class 3, grade 6).

[1] I use 'class conversation' and 'class discussion' interchangeably; they mean the same.

Another similarity between the two grades is that the line of the class conversation was often unpredictable. Both in grade 2 and in grade 6, children could suddenly have a surprising opinion. In grade 2 this was the case in class 4, on normal, and in grade 6, this was the case in the first discussion of the class on moral dilemmas. It is thus important for the teacher to not only be prepared on one line of conversation (if I ask X, they will say Y, on which I can react with Z), but on as many as possible different turns of the class conversation. With both grades, I noticed that a class conversation ran better when I had considered this possible variation in advance, since that enabled me to respond easier and quicker with a question that stimulated children to further reflect on the topic.

Besides this, the class conversations of the two groups were strongly different. Most children in grade 6 looked forward to this part of the class, whereas children in grade 2 looked forward to the *other* activities.

8.1.1 Grade 6: looking forward to the discussion

The class discussions were the most important parts of the philosophy classes in grade 6. These conversations were alternated with assignments or group work, but this was also by the children considered as a vehicle for further discussion.

In the class discussions, children in grade 6 carefully reflected on the question for themselves, gave thoughtful answers, and they listened to one another. They tried to convince each other, made each other doubt, and could follow up on other children's lines of argument. They regularly said that they enjoyed the class discussion the most, in the philosophy class. They were enthusiastic about forming their own opinions, and listening to other children's thoughts: "I really enjoyed it that children reacted to each other", and "I really liked it that we talked about things usually don't think about. And the discussion, I liked to see that everyone thought something else" (class 1). In the evaluation with the children of grade 6 (appendix 5), we also see that children appreciated the discussion: "It is nice to hear someone else's opinion", and "I enjoy reflecting on questions together, because usually, you only think about it yourself".

Since I noticed that the philosophical class conversations in grade 6 were both very fruitful and popular, I sometimes took more time for them then planned. When I moved on the next activity too quickly, the children made clear that they would have wanted to discuss more. They often wanted to fully examine a question. For instance, they wanted to understand the different words in a question: A girl asked, in response to the question whether a robot can *really* be afraid: "What do you mean by 'real'?" (class 7). And also, children came up with new questions, to get a better understanding of the original question: When we reflected on the question 'does a baby have thoughts?', a girl said: "First, I have another question. If I know the answer to that question, then I will be able to give an answer: Can animals think?" (class 1).

However, a pitfall in the class discussion in grade 6, is that children can have emotional, unreasoned reactions ("that's just nonsense"). The teacher could pay attention to this, and ask for a good reason for this opinion, "since this does not convince others".

8.1.2 Grade 2: discussion is less popular

In grade 2, class discussions were less popular than in grade 6; most children preferred the other activities in the philosophy class. Sometimes they were even rocking their chairs back and forth, explicitly waiting

for the next part ("so when is this class gonna start?" (class 8)). I noticed that the classes should not take longer than 7 minutes. Nevertheless, they were not tedious or useless; the conversation at the beginning served as an introduction of the topic, and gave children the opportunity to reflect on it for themselves. However, sometimes they could hardly be called a 'discussion'. Children often raised their hands, but this was mainly just to tell their own story. They did not try to convince others. Only sometimes, someone reacted to someone else's comment, but in a class conversation, children mainly expressed their opinions and thoughts *towards the teacher*.

8.1.3 Difference: reacting *to each other* vs. answering *towards the teacher*

For the reasons mentioned above, in grade 2, the conversation focus usually stayed close to the question—everyone simply answered the question from his/her own perspective—while a conversation in grade 6 could develop in many directions, as children mostly responded to each other. We can clearly see this difference in the following examples:

Grade 6 about the dilemma whether you may or may not steal, if the only medicine for your brother's disease is in your neighbor's house, and you are not able to pay for it:

- Look, there is a difference between *that what is allowed* and *that what you would do*. Of course, you love your brother, so I would do it, but still, it is not allowed.
- No, it is. An ambulance *is allowed* to drive a red light, if there is an emergency. And this is also an emergency. I don't want to die because someone else really wants to stick to a rule.
- OK, but this is no emergency. Because there are millions of other people who are critically ill. You don't want them to break into neighbor's or doctor's houses. Those doctors won't earn money anymore, and then even more people will die.

Grade 2 about the proposition "if you can watch tv all day long, then you must be happy":

- Yes, because it's fun to watch tv.
- No, because it's not very good for you.
- No, because it is bad for your eyes.
- No, because why would it be nice to look to a screen all day long?
- ...

In short, in class conversations, children in grade 2 tell their thoughts *to the teacher*, and they did not try to convince others. A class conversation in grade 2 thus aims to introduce children to reflecting on certain topics. To stimulate conversation skills, the teacher could explain that children shouls listen carefully to others, and react to other children's comments. In grade 6, children did react to others, resulting in conversations that developed easily. Here, the class conversations were seen as the most important parts of the class. Of course, these rules have their own exceptions: Sometimes, children in grade 2 reflected to each other, or children in grade 6 wanted to tell their individual story. But we can generally characterize the class discussions in the two grades as described above.

Hence, in grade 6, class conversations were consistent with the descriptions in the literature about philosophy with children, see for example Anthone and Mortier (1997) and Bartels and van Rossum (2009). The class conversations in grade 2 were however of a different nature than described there: exploratory, and stimulating children to reflect further on the topic.

8.2 Reflecting on the activity

A second major difference between the two age groups was the understanding of the purpose of the philosophical activities. Children in grade 6 were aware of what we were doing in philosophy classes, and about the role they had in those classes. For grade 2 however, philosophy was something completely new; the children had to get used to the kind of questions, and had to discover what philosophy is. This difference became clear in the first classes of the two age groups: Children in grade 6 could give clear answers to the question 'what is philosophy?' ("thinking about things which are one step beyond everything we see around us" and "thinking about a question of which actually you cannot know the answer"). Yet, in grade 2, it was good to have an introductory class, as nobody had ever heard of philosophy.

This difference became clear in the class conversations as well. In grade 6, children were aware of the fact that there is always more than one possible answer, than one can criticize an opinion, and that one can question statements. For this reason, children listened carefully to others, and tried to convince each other. In a discussion, children took several different opinions into consideration, they have arguments for their ideas, and they reacted to each other. Although they sometimes had difficulties formulating their thoughts, constructive philosophical conversations often arose.

In grade 2, we noticed that children had to get used to the fact that there is not one *correct* answer to a philosophical question. We can conclude that they learned this, during the course, since at the beginning, children regularly asked "but *what* is then the *correct* answer?", which they did not ask anymore later on. Additionally, as we have seen, children in grade 2 were less likely to have a discussion with each other. They reflected on a question themselves, and directed their answer to the teacher. They simply took note of other children's opinion; they had little need to convince others, and there was hardly any discussion between children with different opinions. The different views were simply accepted. We have also seen that children in grade 2 sometimes tend to tell irrelevant anecdotes ("I was in Euro Disney three weeks ago, and…")—this might be because they are simply not aware of the fact that this does not belong in a philosophical conversation.

The fact that children in grade 6 had a better idea of what philosophy was, and were able to recognize their philosophical thoughts as such, probably also played a role in the difference in influence children had on the classes and conversations. I noticed that the philosophy teacher plays the largest role in determining what happens during class (the questions that are discussed, when the next activity will be started, et cetera). However, in grade 6, the children played a large role in the layout of the classes. Children in grade 6 could clearly indicate which question they wanted to reflect on, gave new twists to discussions, and also brought in new themes and questions they wanted to discuss. This did not happen in grade 2.

8.2.1 Deviation of the course plan in grade 6

A remarkable development in grade 6 was the deviation of the original course plan. In grade 2, the planned course was implemented without any hesitation, but in grade 6, I noticed that children came up with topics and questions themselves, which I had not originally included in the course plan. Since I thought it would be good to encourage their natural interests and philosophical thinking, and to explore what would happen if I responded to their interests, I decided to design a class on their suggested topic—with the result that an originally planned class had to be deleted. Likewise, three more classes were substituted, and the eventual course plan ended up to be only for 50% in correspondence with the original plan. Hence, children in grade 6 had a large influence on the themes of the classes.

The topics suggested by children in grade 6 were the (possibly) infinite universe (resulting in class 3), the "special thing" about human beings (resulting in class 8), and death (resulting in class 9). It seems that children in grade 6 are fascinated by the everyday elusive: The universe is simply the space in which people and planets find themselves—but infinitely large? Everyone will die—but nobody knows what happens? We are all human beings—but how is it possible that we do not know what distinguishes us from animals and computers? Children's favorite class was the one on death (see appendix 5). The teachers found the class on infinity the best one (see appendix 6), which was also my favorite, as interesting discussions arose, and all children participated actively. The class 'humans vs. robots' was also one of the most successful classes, about which children kept on talking for days, according to the teacher (see appendix 6). In short, adapting the course plan led to the most successful classes, probably because they corresponded directly to the interests of the children. Besides that, the children appreciated the fact that the classes were adjusted with respect to *their own ideas*. They felt being taken seriously, which contributed positively to the relation between me and the group—the teachers of grade 6 confirmed this (see appendix 6).

The suggestions from grade 6 came up spontaneously, but also in response to my question to their own interests. I regularly asked them about this, because it was clear that some children also practiced philosophy for themselves, apart from the school hours. During the first class already, children asked several times to the infinity of the universe, and shared their personal philosophical experiences. This happened regularly, even though their thoughts did not correspond to the theme of the relevant class; apparently, there was a strong need to share their philosophical experiences. An example (during the first class): "Sometimes I suddenly realize, when I am in a car, that *everyone* has their own life, with own friends, and own memories. What would they think about?!" Many children recognized this: They also had these thoughts, and they were enthusiastic about this recognition. Another spontaneous remark: "I used to think that there were little figures in my head, that controlled me. But don't worry, now I know that is not the case."

That this did not happen in grade 2 does not mean that these children do not practice philosophy for themselves—we do not know. After all, it could be that these children do not recognize their philosophical thoughts as such. In that case, the deviation of the classes is not so much due to different interests of the two age groups, but rather to the fact that children in grade 6 are more aware of what philosophy is, and can recognize their philosophical thoughts as such, whereas children in grade 2 cannot make this connection between their thoughts and the philosophy classes.

Although this appeared to be a clear difference between the two age groups, I have not encountered it in the literature. Nevertheless, it is important to know this for designing and implemented the classes: Children in grade 6 know what philosophy is, whereas children in grade 2 need to get familiar with philosophical questions

first. After all, this difference did not only influence the themes of the classes, but also the character of each class, and the role of the teacher, which I will both discuss further on in this chapter.

8.3 Thinking skills

Based on the class conversations, I could infer how the abstract thinking skills and logical reasoning skills of children in the two grades were. For designing and implementing philosophy classes, it is important to be aware of their level in these skills; it determines how a question can best be asked (in an abstract or a concrete fashion), or in which way the teacher should provide help with logical reasoning.

8.3.1 Abstract thinking

Abstract thinking involves translating concrete situations to general theories. Contrary to 'concrete thinking', in which merely the present situation is considered, abstract thinking concerns observing connections between different situations, and generalizing from several situations to a general idea or theory.

Abstract thinking is an important skills for doing philosophy. After all, philosophy involves constructing general theories that could be an answer to the big philosophical questions. These questions are often abstract themselves: 'What is happiness?' requires an answer which is abstracted from situations in which a person is happy. The answer "when I went to Paris with 4 friends, when I was 16" does not suffice. The element 'happiness' should be isolated from such situations, and should be described in isolation of the contexts. This involves: abstracting information from concrete situations.

Now the question is to what extent children of the two age groups are able to do this. This is particularly interesting in light of the Piaget hypothesis, stating that only children in the formal operational stage—children of age 11-15^{+}—can perform abstract thinking. Before this, children would be in the concrete operational stage, in which they can do logical thinking, but merely about concrete situations.

The findings related to abstract thinking are based on the types of questions children preferred, and on their comments in the class conversations.

During the classes, I noticed that the best was to ask a question was different for the two age groups. Children in grade 2 clearly preferred to get concrete questions from a story, and found abstract questions too difficult. Concrete questions, or abstract questions from a concrete context resulted in active participation and interesting discussions. I will give two possible introductions for a class about happiness to illustrate this:

1. Today we will talk about happiness. What is happiness?
2. Today we will talk about happiness, and I will start by telling a story about a princess. Her name is Princess Petronella (named after the character role in *het Klokhuis*). Princess Petronella was easily bored, and enjoyed thinking about gifts she wished to receive. She said: If I get a dog, *then* I will be happy! Her dad raced to the animal shelter, and bought a puppy for his daughter. When he came home, with the puppy, Petronella took the dog in her arms for a while. But soon, she had enough of it. She placed the dog outside, and plumped down on the couch again, bored. She said: If I have an

iPad, *then* I will be happy! Her father immediately ordered an iPad for her, which was delivered by the lackey two hours later. But before she had even turned the thing on, Petronella didn't have attention for the iPad anymore. She felt jaded, and she thought of a new wish: a horse! Yes, if she would get a horse, *then* she would be *really* happy. And it went on and on like this. What do you think happens, when Petronella gets a horse? [space for children's responses]. Princess Petronella talks about *being happy* all the time. But what is that, *happiness*?

Option (1) would cause confused faces in grade 2. The question comes out of the blue, and it is unclear what it is about. Some children would perhaps have an answer, but many of them would think: 'OK bye, this is too vague for me'—and the attention is gone.

Option (2) may have the risk that the moral of the story will be seen as true or correct (in this case: One does not achieve happiness by direct fulfillment of all wishes, or by goods). Furthermore, the first question might fit better in the context of a reading comprehension class, than in a philosophy class. However, this concrete approach has several advantages. First, with such a story, you will get the attention of all children. When the bare question 'what is happiness?' is asked, children's thoughts will wander off already, as they do not have enough leads. Furthermore, children understand much better what the question means in option 2. Abstract questions without context would often lead to questioning faces. Children got confused and would say things such as "I don't understand *anything*". The question resulting from the story would lead to enthusiastic children who understood what it was about—although the same question was asked: 'What is happiness?'. Despite the fact that this question is being asked with a little detour, children will be more captivated, and will participate more active in the conversation that follows. They will have a better idea of how to answer the question, and the conversation has a better chance to develop.

In short, children in grade 2 preferred to approach questions from a concrete context. Also, they enjoyed telling their own stories, and they often answered the question from their own perspective and situation. The situations that are described in the class about time, such as "you are at a children's party, and the time goes really fast!" were unreal or impossible. Children did not understand this, and did not know what to do with it. Concrete situations, or situations they could connect to their own lives, would probably have been more appropriate.

However, this does not mean that children in grade 2 never new what to do with abstract questions; they could reflect on them, provided that they were accompanied with a good introduction. The answer would then often concern concrete examples, or specific anecdotes from their own life. But there were exceptions: Based on the abstract question, asked without context, "what is the difference between joy and happiness?", a 7 year-old boy answered "I think there is a difference. When happy (gelukkig), then you feel *very* ehm, happy (blij), good (fijn) *on the inside*, and if you are joyous (blij), then you are fully happy (blij) *on the outside*" ("Ik denk er een verschil is. Bij gelukkig, dan voel je je *van binnen* héél erg, ehm, blij, fijn, en als je blij bent, dan ben je *van buiten* helemaal blij"). Hence, children in grade 2 preferred the concrete, easily applied a philosophical issue to their own situation, but we do know that some children can deal with abstract questions, and sometimes have abstract theories—despite their vocabulary sometimes being too small to accurately formulate their thoughts.

We have seen that children in grade 6 were aware that philosophy centers on class discussions about philosophical questions. Children were prepared for philosophical questions, and they knew these could be abstractly formulated. Despite that, an introductory story was also helpful for grade 6: This could make sure that

children were captivated by the topic, and a context could make a question clearer. We could clearly see this in the discussion about Achilles and the tortoise, and also in the class about humans vs. robots, in which the discussion was introduced by a video, and by talking to a chatbot. After this, a philosophical discussion would start immediately, while children in grade 2 needed an easier question at the beginning (such as "what makes you happy?").

I regularly noticed that children in grade 6 had an idea of a general theory as an answer to a question, but that they had difficulties articulating this theory. What they then usually did, was taking a particular instance of the theory, to explain the general theory. We see this back in the class on identity, when we discussed the question "are the clothes you wear important for *who you are*?". One girl wanted to explain that this is not the case, as it often happens that your clothes do not correspond with your personality: "My brother sometimes goes to the Albert Heijn across the street on his slippers and in his pajamas. And that really doesn't mean that he is sloppy, no really. If he goes to his work, he goes with his Louis Vuitton bag. And then, would he be someone else? So I don't think that if you run on the street in your underwear, that you would immediately be a whore". It often happened that general ideas were explained this way: It is suggested that there is a general theory, by mentioning a few instances which fit into the theory. This indicates that they indeed do have abstract thoughts, but that they have difficulties with formulating them. The teacher can encourage children to carefully articulate their idea or theory, by asking guiding questions such as: "OK, looking at these examples, in what way would your clothes then determine your personality?" An important aspect of the philosophy class is to carefully formulate ideas, but it is not easy for a teacher to assist children in this. It requires insight in someone else's reasoning, and it also helps if the teacher knows the children; after a few classes I knew what to expect, and therefore I could respond better to reactions of the children. Accordingly, I could help children better with finding structure in their thoughts.

In short, both grade 2 and grade 6 benefited from philosophical questions from a context. Grade 6 could, and wanted to, immediately start with a philosophical question, whereas grade 2 needed a not too difficult question first—this could be a less philosophical question—so that all children were encouraged to participate actively in the rest of the class. Next to that, children in grade 2 often answered philosophical questions just from their own perspective; the comments they gave were mostly related to personal and concrete situations. Children in grade 6 could have more general theories about the topics, although they could have difficulties formulating them.

8.3.2 Logical reasoning

How were the reasoning skills of the children in the different age groups? This is difficult to figure out, because children in both groups did not often use different reasoning steps to motivate their answer. For children in both age groups, I will nevertheless briefly reflect on their logical reasoning skills, based on a few examples.

For children in grade 2, forming an opinion and collaboratively reflecting philosophical issues was entirely new. They understood that they had to explain the *reasons* for their opinions, as I often emphasized this. However, the motivation behind an opinion was often limited to naming one reason, such as:

- "It is unfair that some people are very rich, and some are very broke. That is unfair, since everyone needs food". (Class 8: fairness).

- "A computer can think, because if you google something, it always takes a little while, because the computer needs to think first". (Class 2: thinking).

When I asked for more explanations in such cases (in the second example, this could be: How do you know that your computer does indeed *think* at that moment?), children often did not know what to say. Moreover, asking for more explanation delayed the conversation, resulting in a moment in which children got distracted easily. And as we have seen in 8.1.2, the class conversation in grade 2 was an introduction in the topic, where children were stimulated to reflect on the issue, instead of a discussion platform where children collaboratively constructed arguments.

I could sometimes infer from conversations that some children in grade 2 sometimes make mistakes in reasoning, whereas others noticed these. In the conversation written out below, A makes a mistake, while B points this out, trying to correct it, but does this with incorrect reasoning. Then, A reacts with a single counterexample to refute an existential statement ('not all'). The fallacy of this reasoning is then restored by B.

Who would have better ideas for the school: children or adults? (in Class 6: Voting).

- A: Adults, since teachers can also be fathers and mothers, and they will then know even more about the school of their children. (A assumes here that 'adults' are equivalent to 'fathers and mothers', and intends to say that *because* there are teachers with children—who know the most about the school—adults (people with children) have better ideas for the school).
- B: But not every teacher has a child here at school. (Hence, she goes along with the equivalence of 'adults' and 'mothers and fathers', but notices that A based a universal statement on particular instances. However, she exchanged the terms. The right correction would have been: 'Not every adult is also a teacher on this school, so not all adults have better ideas for the school').
- A: But Mirjam does! (A wants to refute B's existential claim ($\neg\forall x(Teacher(x) \rightarrow HasChildAtSchool(x))$) by saying $Teacher(mirjam) \wedge HasChildAtSchool(mirjam)$; this is no valid counterexample.)
- B: But I said 'not all'. (The invalidity has been correctly noted by B).

Such logical reasoning mistakes happened regularly in grade 2. But there were also occurences of sound reasonings, such as "If a robot could not think, then it would not be able to talk. Robots can talk. Hence, they can also think" (this is a modus tollens reasoning).

Although the class conversations were more interactive in grade 6, children in this grade also did not often use step-by-step reasonings. Also in this grade, we can see examples of children who make reasoning mistakes, but also of children who notice these.

In the third class, on happiness, we first talked about possible *differences* between happiness and joy. Subsequently I asked whether children thought it was *the same*:

- A: Yes, because if you are joyous (blij), then you are not unhappy (ongelukkig).
- B: And if you are happy (gelukkig), then you are joyous (blij) most of the time.
- C: But if you are really unhappy, and Ajax wins, then you can be joyous for a moment.

First of all, A assumes that 'being happy' is a binary predicate: not unhappy is equal to being happy. B correctly notices that A's argument was incomplete: For equivalence (of joy and happiness), two implications are required: If you are joyous, then you are happy, and vice versa. (Yet, the "most of the time" weakens the argument for the equivalence). C reacts to A with a counterexample: You *can* be unhappy and joyous at the same time, namely in this situation, *therefore*, happiness and joy is *not* the same.

In the same class, we discussed the proposition *if you are very pretty, then you must be happy*:

- A: I disagree. Take for instance Marylin Monroe: People said she was really pretty. But nobody took her seriously anymore; it was only about her looks. She committed suicide for that reason, just because she was so unhappy. (Counterexample)

- B: But Doutzen Kroes has a lot of friends, right?

A provides a counterexample to the universal statement, but B gives an example of someone who is both pretty and happy, which however is not an argument for the universal statement, neither is it a counter-argument to A's counterargument. However, we cannot simply conclude that B's reasoning capacities are not well developed yet; perhaps he / she had not listened carefully at that moment. This could better be examined by means of a study that focuses purely on reasoning skills, see for example Talentenkracht (`www.talentenkracht.nl`), of which one of the research project concerns the development of logical reasoning skills (Gierasimczuk et al., 2013, and further work).

8.4 Character of the classes

Thus far, we have seen that philosophy classes in the two grades differed at three important aspects. First, the class discussions were exploratory and introductory for grade 2, while in grade 6, they served as a discussion platform, where children shared their philosophical thoughts. Secondly, we have seen that group eight already knew what philosophy was, and gave a lot of input for the classes themselves. However, for children in grade 2, philosophy was a completely new subject, and they had to get used to the activities and the types of questions. Thirdly, we have seen that children in grade 6 could deal slightly better with abstract questions than children in grade 2 (although they both preferred a question to be accompanied with a concrete context), and that children in grade 2 approached philosophical issues mostly from their own perspective.

We can categorize these observations in an overall difference: The philosophy classes in the two grades had a different *character*.

Philosophy classes in grade 2 were mainly had an *exploratory* character: In retrospect, I can say that the purpose of the classes was to make children familiar with philosophical thinking. In grade 6, the philosophy classes had a more *in-depth* character; the classes encouraged children to reflect further on philosophical issues, and the philosophical conversation took an important place in the classes.

8.4.1 Grade 2

At the beginning of a class, grade 2 always needed a question as a startup. It did not matter so much that the question was perhaps less philosophical ("what makes you happy", could be such question), because the goal was to give all children confidence to participate in the class. We have also seen that children often just wanted to tell their thoughts to the teacher; they did not have much interaction with others—different opinions were simply accepted. This is in line with the character of a philosophy class in this grade: Children become acquainted with philosophical questions, and it might be the first time they think about the topics. Teachers therefore should not have high expectations of these children: It is a new way of thinking, and children need to get used to questions that do not have one correct answer. This all needs to be discovered. An in-depth philosophical discussion should therefore not be the goal in grade 2. An introduction to philosophical questions, and providing space for children to form their opinions is a more realistic goal. This can be illustrated with the success of the class on voting. Although this class offered less opportunity for class discussion, it let the children *experience* how a democracy works, and at the same time, it provided a platform for children to collaboratively reflect on school matters, and to actively participate in the game. Moreover, this class nicely showed that the philosophy class can be a place where children can reflect on serious issues, and where they can learn to take other people's perspective into account as well: Whereas most groups of three had written down party items in the trend of "longer breaks", and "no language classes anymore!", the winning group had only one party item: *more attention for those children who are behind.*

8.4.2 Grade 6

We have seen that the children in grade 6 had a clear idea of what philosophy is. They were also aware of the possibilities in a philosophical discussion: Different opinions can exist, and one can try to convince other with arguments. In the discussion, the children wanted to stay at one question for a longer while, in order to develop a good discussion. Also, they could indicate which questions they wanted to discuss, and gave suggestions themselves as well. Too many questions led to too many incentives to start a *new* discussion, let to chaos—because everyone had too many things they wanted to say. The class on voting was exactly for this reason less popular in grade 6, which was also noticed by a girl: "Sometimes I raise my hand because you ask a really good question, but then after a while you want to move on, while I still want to say something about it. So then I understand that children say: I still want to share this, and that is why they just shout it". This is a typical example, since this class was very *successful* in grade 2, just because of the fact that we moved on to a new activities each time relatively quickly.

In short, whereas the tempo of the class and in a conversation is important for grade 2, it is important for grade 6 to *not* go too fast. This also indicates that a philosophy class in grade 2 serves to introduce children to philosophy, while a class in grade 6 builds on the philosophical thoughts children might have already; the classes encourages further discussion.

8.5 Role of the teacher

Following from the mentioned differences, there is also a difference in the role of the teacher, between the two grades.

8.5.1 Grade 2

Grade two followed obediently the original class program: We simply did what I had prepared. Children saw me as *the* philosophy teacher, who knew everything already, and particularly in the beginning, they asked "can you finally tell us the answers?". Sometimes, they were also inclined to give the political correct answer without firstly thinking about a question: For instance, when I asked "is it fair to betray on your best friend?", the angel choir sounded "noooooo". Hence, in grade 2, the teacher should actively stimulate the children to think independently about the question at issue, to substantiate their opinions, and to listen to each others. This can be done by explaining the philosophy "rules" occasionally:

- Different opinions are possible; there is not one correct answer to the question. Think about the question for yourself, and try to come up with your own answer. (When children follow a certain opinion, because they think that is the correct answer, the teacher could say: "I see that many children agree with John, but is there someone who has *another* answer?")

- It is important to listen to others, because we can learn from each other. (The teacher can even say "from now on, we will *only* react to that what is said by the one before you".)

- We respect every opinion, also if you do not agree with it.

- The conversation is about the question; make sure everything you say relates to that question. (The question could also be written down on the board, so it stays visible.) This may prevent children telling stories about their sick cat, or that they will go to the Efteling tomorrow; this is a pitfall for philosophizing with grade 2.

Explicitly explaining what we do in the philosophy classes could result in children participating more consciously. Moreover, when these rules are regularly reflected on, class conversations could improve and develop, and children could learn more from it. However, as this can be difficult, it could sometimes work better to integrate these rules in a game or assignment. I did this for instance in the game in class 3 and 4 in grade 2, where children had to stretch out completely when they agreed with a proposition, and they had to make themselves very small when they disagreed. I explained that they could change their opinion (make themselves longer or smaller) when they heard a good argument of someone else. This game made this aspect of philosophy tangible, which worked very well.

In grade 2, it is thus important that the teacher encourages the children to think independently, and to have a conversation with each other. This can be don by recalling the "rules" that apply in the philosophy classes, and to integrate them in the activities.

8.5.2 Grade 6

We have seen that philosophical conversations in grade 6 often arose automatically after introducing the question. It was less necessary to actively highlight the philosophy rules, as the children were aware of these already; they even regularly mentioned them themselves, when we reflected on a class ("one argument can change everyone else's opinion", in class 5). Hence, my role was more that of the facilitator of the philosophy class, who introduced questions and assignments. During conversations, I sometimes asked questions, I gave turns to children, and I occasionally picked out someone's comment, to continue the conversation from a new starting point. Discussions usually proceeded easily, as the children had a lot of thoughts for each philosophical question, and they were keen to share those with the rest of the class, and to interact with each other. Hence, *they* had the conversation together, I just came up with the questions.

Children from grade 6 were very enthusiastic about the fact that they got so much space to share their thoughts; I noticed that they appreciated the fact that I took them seriously. They also liked it that I followed their interests: When they told me they wanted to reflect on a certain question for a longer time, I usually gave time to that, and when they came up with topics for a class, I designed a class around this topic. This was a clear sign to them that indeed I took their input seriously, and that indeed it is important to think independently about topics, and share ideas with others. Moreover, it could stengthen their confidence in their own thinking skills.

In short, for the philosophy teacher in grade 6, it is important to adopt the role of the conversation facilitator, and to follow the interests of the children. This means that the teacher is to a lesser extent an authority, but rather someone who asks questions, and who keeps structure in the class by for instance introducing an assignment. The regular grade 6 teachers considered this as an important attitude of the philosophy teacher: to give children the full opportunity to form their opinion, without taking in a standpoint yourself (see appendix 6).

During the philosophical activities, the teacher can also help the children of grade 6 with articulating their thoughts, and with finding structure in their arguments. After all, we have seen that children in this grade experience difficulties with this. Sometimes, the teacher needs to ask a child to formulate more carefully, because otherwise they can become sloppy ("it is like, a kind of eeeehm..."). Additionally, children in grade 6 can sometimes utter unreasoned thoughts ("that's just nonsense"). The teacher could pay attention to that, and explain that he/she will not convince others with this—"could you give us an argument for why you think that is nonsense?". It could also be explained explicitly that children should not say something unthinkingly, and that they should give arguments for their opinions. Although children in grade 6 could have a discussion almost without any help, the teacher can play an important role in challenging the children to substantiate their opinions and to formulate carefully.

In short, a philosophy teacher in grade 2 stimulates children to think independently, and to have a conversation *together*. In grade 6, the teacher merely facilitates the philosophical activities, since philosophical conversation often arise naturally. Hence, in grade 6, the role of the teacher corresponds to the explanation in 1.1.1, and in Lipman et al. (1980) and Anthone and Mortier (1997).

8.5.3 Open attitude

For both grades I think that the teacher should only introduce questions, and leave out his or her own opinion or thoughts. In this way, it is clear that the children have all the space to express their thoughts, and it will be more likely that they feel free to do this; the do not need to feel inhibited by a possible opinion of the teacher. For grade 2, this is important, as children will then learn that philosophy is really about thinking independently; *their* thoughts are important, and for that, we do not need to know the answer of the teacher. For grade 6, this is important that the teacher does not give his or her opinion, so that children have the freedom to develop their own ideas. The teachers of grade 6 confirmed that an open attitude is indeed important for the philosophy classes, as the teacher's opinion could "deprive the freedom for the children to have a pure, original opinion" (see appendix 6). I experienced the development of philosophical conversations between the children, in which I had merely asked the questions, as one of the most valuable aspects of the philosophy class. Also the children were enthusiastic about these class conversations. When I would have given my opinion in the conversations, I think children would have felt being taken less seriously, which would have had a negative influence on the philosophy classes.

Considering the different characters of philosophy class—exploring philosophical topics (grade 2) and stimulating independent and collaboratively philosophizing (grade 6)—we can conclude that the teacher should not give background information in the philosophy class. I could have done this in several classes, such as those on infinity, democracy, and humans vs. robots. However, I did not do it, because the classes were not about scientific developments, but about independently creating and developing theories, about reflecting on theories together, and about examining concepts. Of course, it is not forbidden to give children some extra information about scientific approaches to the philosophical issues afterwards, but this should not be a part of the philosophy class.

8.6 What did children learn?

It is difficult to determine what children have learned after nine or eight classes. I do not pretend that children have made enormous progresses in the skills I described in 2.2. However, I am convinced that they have been challenged to think independently, to ask critical questions, and to approach an issue from different perspectives. When evaluating the classes, I asked the teachers what they thought children had learned in the course. I asked the same question to children in grade 6—in grade 2, children found it difficult to answer such reflective questions, so their I just asked what they thought about the philosophy classes.

The teacher of grade 2 was very certain about what children could learn from such philosophy classes: "They learn to think carefully, they learn to listen to each other, to formulate their opinion, and to empathize with each other". She summarized the various aspects involved in philosophy: She noticed both the independent thinking aspect as the stimulation of conversation skills. In addition, the teacher saw a role for the philosophy classes for discussing serious issues: She said that the class *normal* was a good class, as certain things were discussed which do not often get attention. The children of grade 2 said that they had to think deeply in the philosophy classes. When I asked at the end of the course "what is philosophy?", someone responded "that you have to think very carefully about things, about what something exactly is".

The teachers of grade 6 said that the children had learned that there is not always just one answer, and

that they should sometimes think further after one answer. Additionally, the children learned to listen to one another, and to take other people's positions into consideration too. Hence, they also mentioned both thinking skills and communication skills.

Children in grade 6 could accurately indicate what they thought they learned in the philosophy course. They did not only do this in the final evaluation, but also at the end of each class, when I asked for feedback on the activities in the class. In one class, someone said: "Most of the time, you don't think about all those things, but if you do philosophy, then you think more about the universe, about death, about what you want to become, and so on. And most of the times you only think about little things, such as 'am I gonna pass this test', or 'what am I gonna eat?"'. So she indicated that philosophy stimulated her to think about big, important issues. In the third class, someone said: "Now you finally become aware of your own opinion. For example, the Olympics, for how long do they exist now? Someone could say scientifically 'it has been so and so many years', but actually that person cannot know this for sure, because he doesn't know whether the resources are correct. You never know something for sure". (The Olympics had not been discussed that class). This boy thus pointed to the fact that you should not considerer something to be *true* too easily, and that he has become more aware of his own opinion.

Children gave diverse answers to the question what they thought they had learned in the philosophy course (on the reflection form), but their answers can be categorized mainly under the thinking-skills aspect. They said they had learned to think about issues one usually does not think about, that you can always think a step further, and that they had learned to think "differently". "That you never know an answer to a question for sure", and "that you will never know everything", and that "not everyone thinks like you", was also mentioned. In the answers to this question, none of the children mentioned discussion skills—although they were mostly enthusiastic about the discussion when they explained what they thought of the classes (I enjoy having a discussion with others / talking with others about topics you usually just reflect on yourself).

8.7 Structure of a class

8.7.1 Teaching methods

For the teaching manual, it is also important to reflect on the teaching methods: Which were appropriate for the respective age groups? We have clearly seen that *variation* was the key word in both grades. Not only did this ensure that children kept their attention, but it also enabled all children to participate to the class. Children who are verbally less strong would be disadvantaged if the class consisted only of a discussion. Additionally, there can always be only one child talking in a class conversation. When conversations are alternated with group work and assignments, children have more opportunities to share their ideas with each other.

Grade 2: tempo

For grade 2, it was important that a class had a certain tempo, to keep the attention of the children. An ideal structure would be: 7 minutes of class conversation, followed by an assignment or group work of 8 minutes, and then 5 minutes reflection. This may be followed by another little activity and a conclusion.

Seven minutes for the conversation is the maximum, as children would otherwise get distracted or start to day-dream. A class conversation could also have a game element: Both having to show a card to express an opinion (done in class 1 and 7) and expressing an opinion with the body (done in class 3 and 4) worked very well in grade 2; this gave children an active role, and they kept their attention to the conversation. I noticed that as soon as an activity contained such a game element, the children immediately got enthusiastic. But also with this, 7 minutes, exceptionally 10 minutes, was the maximum for a class discussion. After that, children needed to do something more active: group work or an assignment.

An assignment could be a creative or a group assignment, in which the theme of the class could become more tangible; their work could then support their thoughts, which could be helpful for some children. Additionally, the subsequent conversation could have a new starting point, as the children got time to think about the issue without guidance of the teacher. A final argument for alternating the class discussion with assignments is that in that way, the class is not continuously relying on verbal skills. When children are verbally less strong, this does not need to hinder participating in the philosophy class.

So what would be a good philosophy assignment for grade 2? We have seen that it is important for children to be stimulated to reflect further on the philosophical issues, but also that the assignment has a nice result. The latter is important, as children were less aware of the first goal—encouraging further reflection. And when the result would not be nice, children could get the idea that the assignment was useless, and they could get less interested. An example of a successful assignment was the collage assignment in the class on thinking. This had a philosophical component: Children had to decide in their groups whether something *could* or could *not* think, and they had to put it on the right side. Hence, children had to discuss with each other, and they had to try to convince others, if they did not agree—something they do not automatically do. If they did not agree, they had to solve this by explaining their views, and giving arguments. And if they still could not find a consensus, they had to put the card on the question mark. Whereas there is no real need for an interactive discussion in the class conversation, such assignments "force" the children to have interactive discussions, as they had to come with a decision. Hence, they were stimulated to discuss with each other, and to give arguments when they did not agree. Furthermore, the assignment resulted in a nice collage (see picture), making it more enjoyable for the children.

Writing assignments were less suitable for grade 2; children of this age find it still difficult to translate their thoughts into words on paper. Clear, visual assignments with a philosophical component were most suitable.

Grade 6: focus on the discussion

In grade 6, I noticed that more time could be given to each class activity. It was even important for this grade to not go too quickly; time was needed to thoroughly reflect on a question, and to consider different points of view. Children were very enthusiastic about the class conversation, and there were often many reactions to one question. When different questions succeeded each other too quickly, or when there were too many incentives for a new discussion, there were too many things to say, resulting in the class losing its focus. This happened for example in the class on democracy, in which almost every party item could lead to a discussion—but we had to move on in order to finish the activity.

Hence, children in grade 6 could, and wanted to have longer class conversations; as we have seen, interesting discussion could arise, and the children enjoyed this part of the class the most. Despite this, there is still a maximum for a class conversation: After 15 to 20 minutes, we moved on to the next activity, since otherwise children were getting too distracted. Besides that, not all children participated actively during a class conversation: There were always around five children who *always* had something to say, and twelve children who wanted to say something occasionally. The rest sat back; either listening or day-dreaming. Another downside of the class discussion is that there can always be just one person talking; it is thus impossible to let everyone express their opinion *and* to let everyone react to everyone. Hence, there are several reasons for why it is important to alternate the class conversation with group assignments, in which all children can play an active role.

For the assignment, I noticed that it was important that it provided space for further discussion in groups. During the class conversations, there were always many children who raised their hands, who could not all get a turn—although they really wanted to express their ideas. This need could be fulfilled in the assignment afterwards. Children in grade 6 knew that the assignments were a *means* for further philosophical discussion, and they were less interested in the end result. A suitable assignment for grade 6 is one in which children could have a discussion in groups of two, three, or four. For these group discussions, it was helpful to have little question cards which could support the discussion. The assignments in class 2 (thinking), class 3 (infinity), and class 5 (moral dilemma's) were for these reasons very successful: They resulted in discussions in which all children participated actively. The use of cards made the assignment more clear and tangible. A less suitable assignment was the one in class 6, where children had to make a personal passport. The assignment was not formulated clearly, and children could not further discuss the philosophical issues with each other, because of the fact that it was an individual assignment.

In short, for both groups it was important that class conversations were being alternated with assignments. This was also confirmed by teachers of both grades (see appendix 3 and 6).

This finding deviates from the standard form of philosophy in the classroom (which is for example used by WonderWhy): According to that, a philosophy class simply contains one long socratic conversation of 20 minutes, 45 minutes, or even longer. However, I have noticed that children in grade 2 could find a long conversation boring, and also children in grade 6 started to get distracted when a class conversation took too long. Moreover, the class discussion was not the ideal type of activity; some children could express their thoughts better in a group assignment, or in a creative assignment. Besides that, in a class conversation, it is always just one person talking; therefore, relatively, children cannot get much opportunities to say something. In conclusion, an assignment for grade 2 provides a pause in the class, in which children are stimulated to reflect further on the topic, together or alone. In grade 6, an assignment gives children more

space to express their opinions, in which children can react to each other more directly. These findings will be taken into account for the design of the final teachers' manuals for the two grades.

8.7.2 Length of the classes

In grade 2, a philosophy class of about 20 minutes, 30 minutes maximum, long enough. This gives time for an introduction to the topic (7 minutes class conversation), an assignment (8 minutes), and a reflection on the assignment and concluding conversation (5 minutes).

The classes I taught to grade 2 took 45 minutes, which appeared to be just too long. In the last 15 minutes, we usually did another assignment or game, while the class could have been finished at that point as well. During the last 10 minutes, attention dropped, and at the end of the class, the deep thinking had been more than enough for the children, and they just wanted to run around outside.

In grade 6, a class of 35 to 40 minutes is optimal. The structure would be the same as in grade 2, taking more time for each activity: class conversation of 15 minutes, followed by a 10 minutes assignment, concluding with a class conversation of 10 minutes. In this group, the first classes took an hour, which appeared to be too long: At the end, it was hard to keep the attention when a new question or activity was introduced. In 35 to 40 minutes, a topic can also be discussed extensively.

This is consistent with the other subjects: Grade 2 never has classes which take more than 30 minutes, and classes in grade 6 never take longer than 45 minutes.

8.8 Summary

The differences that have been discussed in this chapter diverge from the course of a class conversation, to thinking skills, to having insight in the philosophical activities, to the character of the classes. I will summarize all aspects in this section:

- **Class conversations** for grade 2 are introductory and exploratory; children tell their thoughts *to the teacher*, which are mostly related to their own life. Children in grade 6 could however have interactive discussions, in which they give arguments for their opinions, and in which they react *to each other*. (8.1)
- **Reflecting on the activity**: children in grade 6 had a good understanding of the philosophical activities, and the role they played in the classes themselves. They knew that different opinions were possible, and that it was important to use arguments. They also came with philosophical topics and questions themselves: Their own input left its marks on the classes, and on the course plan. Children in grade 2 did not yet know what philosophy was, and had to get used to discussing questions that do not have one clear answer. With grade 2, we simply followed the course plan as initially designed. (8.2)
- **Abstract thinking**: children in grade 2 had difficulties understanding abstract questions, and related philosophical questions often to their personal environment, or to a concrete story. Children in grade

6 had less difficulties with abstract questions, and could make generalizations themselves as well. However, they often preferred to have a question introduced by a concrete story or example. (8.3.1)

- **Logical reasoning**: since children in both groups did not often construct step-by-step argumentations, it was difficult to determine their level of logical reasoning skills. In grade 2, children often mentioned one reason for their opinion. We have seen instances of reasoning mistakes, as well as instances of valid reasonings. In grade 6, we have observed the same: both reasoning mistakes and valid reasoning steps. This could be accurately investigated in a more controlled study, that focuses merely on reasoning skills. (8.3.2)
- **Character of the classes**: Philosophy classes in grade 2 stimulated philosophical thinking. Children were motivated to ask questions, to form an opinion, and to talk with each other about serious topics. In grade 6, classes had an in-depth character: The children knew better what philosophy was, and had discussions with each other. Topics could be explored thoroughly, and children wanted to discuss each question extensively. (8.4)
- **The role of the teacher** is different in both groups: In grade 2, the teacher stimulates the children to think independently, and to have a conversation with each other. In grade 6, the teacher facilitates the philosophical activities, as philosophical conversations often arise naturally. (8.5)
- **What did children learn?**: The teachers of both groups indicated that the children acquired both thinking skills and conversation skills. Children in grade 2 emphasized *thinking carefully*. In grade 6, children mainly mentioned that they learned to reflect on big questions, and that they became aware of the different opinions of others. (8.6)
- **Structure of the class**: In grade 2, 20-30 minutes is enough for one class; this is 35-40 minutes for grade 6. For both groups, a variety of activities is very important. In grade 2, the activities should not go too slow, as children otherwise get distracted, whereas children in grade 6 want to take time for each question; they want to express their opinions, and react to other people's views. (8.7)

Chapter 9

Conclusions and future research

9.1 Recapitulation

We have seen in chapter 1 and 2 that philosophy could have a valuable place in the primary school curriculum. As it provides the opportunity for children to think independently and as it stimulates children to ask critical questions and develop substantiated ideas, it could contribute to develop several skills. Philosophy in the classroom could foster children's critical and creative thinking skills. In the current traditional Dutch primary education the emphasis lies on questions which have one clear, correct, answer, which results in the fact that these skills remain insufficiently highlighted.

The introduction of philosophy in the primary school curriculum could be a solution for this lack of attention to critical and creative thinking, as this subject pre-eminently invites children to formulate answers to questions *themselves* and to critically reflect on different views. Several studies have shown that this can have far-reaching effects: Other subjects in the curriculum can also benefit from the thinking skills that could be developed with philosophy, and in addition, doing philosophy in the classroom could positively contribute to the class atmosphere. After all, since some important values are emphasized in the philosophy classes—such as respecting everyone's opinion and responding to each other reasonably—children can become more tolerant towards each other. Finally, philosophy could fulfill the place of citizenship education, one of the core aims of primary education.[1]

For these reasons, philosophy has gained popularity in primary schools in recent decades. Despite this fact, we have seen that the possibilities to realize this on a larger scale are limited. As the subject differs both in content and form from other primary school subjects, it is not easy to implement for primary school teachers. Hence, and intervention should take place which provides a stepping stone for the primary school teacher to make a start with philosophy classes. This would have a much bigger impact than an intervention for which external philosophers would visit schools. The broader intervention could be realized at the level of teacher education programs (Pabo)[2], or by providing school teachers with an *introductory* teachers' manual, which

[1] This paragraph is a summary of chapter 2, in which all relevant references can be found.

[2] Currently, there are only a few teacher education institutes in the Netherlands, such as the Pabo in Alkmaar, which have philosophy for children in their standard curriculum.

could enable them to use the existing comprehensive teachers' manuals (such as *Filosoferen doe je zo* by Bartels and van Rossum (2009)).

The current study has made a start with the latter intervention. The aim of this study was to firstly determine how adequate philosophy classes for different age groups would look like. Based on these results, we could develop an introductory manual for primary school teachers.

For the first aim, to find out what an adequate philosophy class for particular age groups would look like, I conducted a qualitative research in two grades (2 and 6) on a primary school in Amsterdam. The research plan has been explained in chapter 5. The original idea was to give the same nine philosophy classes in both grades in order to find out whether the same topics, questions, and teaching methods would be suitable for both groups. In that way, two hypotheses could be tested: The naive hypothesis, predicting that the same philosophy classes could be taught to different age groups, and the Piaget hypothesis, based on Jean Piaget's cognitive developmental stages, predicting that philosophy classes should be tailored to the developmental stage of the child. According to that hypothesis, the different age groups would need *different* philosophy classes. (The hypotheses and the predictions are described resp. in chapter 4 and 6.)

The progress of the classes is described in chapter 7; 'Implementation', in which we have read that the planned set of classes had been somewhat adjusted during the implementation stage of the research. This development already showed that the naive hypothesis might have been *too* naive. More extensive evaluations can be found in appendix 1 (describing the classes in grade 2) and appendix 4 (describing the classes in grade 6). I also evaluated the classes with the children (appendix 2 and 5) and with the teachers (appendix 3 and 6).

The acquired experiences and the evaluations of the classes showed that the philosophy classes in grade 6 differed in several aspects from those in grade 2. These differences are described in chapter 8. In *grade 2*, the philosophy classes served as an introduction to independently reflect on philosophical topics and questions. In the class conversations, children wanted to tell their own ideas and thoughts to the teacher and they hardly reacted to each other's comments. From experiences with grade 2, I concluded that the role of the teacher in the philosophy class was to stimulate children to think critically and creatively about a topic and to listen to one another. In *grade 6*, most children were more familiar with philosophizing. In discussions, they reflected on different possibilities, and they reacted to other children's comments. They also brought up topics and questions for the philosophy classes themselves. The main tasks of the teacher, I noticed, was to facilitate class conversations, to follow the interests of the children, and to help them find structure in their thoughts and arguments.

We can now compare these results with the predictions of the two hypotheses.

9.2 The naive hypothesis

The naive hypothesis predicted that the same philosophy classes would be suitable for both age groups, due to the fact that philosophical topics are interesting for everyone and the fact that philosophical topics and questions could always be explained clearly and illustrated easily. However, this hypothesis made the implicit (naive) assumption that the implementation of a class merely depends on which topics and questions are covered. The form of the class, i.e. , the way of asking a question and the kind of activities in class, is

ignored.

We have seen that many philosophical topics indeed interested both grade 2 and 6: The classes about thinking, happiness, fairness (moral dilemmas), and voting were suitable for both age groups. But as children in grade 6 came up with topics themselves, the program of classes was adjusted. These topics (infinity and death) could probably be discussed in grade 2 as well. Conversely, most classes that were only taught to grade 2 (time, normal, art) could probably be taught to grade 6 as well. Only 'friendship' would perhaps have been a too sensitive topic, according to the grade 6 teachers, but that does not imply that they could not philosophize about it.

In other words, the naive hypothesis is right in the fact that the same topics could be discussed in the philosophy classes for different age groups. But this does not automatically imply that the classes should be implemented in the same way. We have seen that an adequate philosophy class in grade 2 differs strongly from an adequate philosophy class for grade 6. After all, a philosophy class in grade 2 is an exploration in thinking, whereas for grade 6 it is a platform for exchanging possible opinions and reflecting on them. Classes should be designed based on these characteristics. For example, we have seen that for children in grade 2, it helped a lot to give concrete illustrations when presenting a philosophical issue. And we have seen that children in grade 6 could, and wanted to, start discussing a philosophical question. We also saw that the class conversations served a different function in the two grades: exploratory in grade 2, and more profound in grade 6. For children in grade 6, it was therefore important to reflect on one question for a longer time, so there would be enough space for elaboratively reflecting on different perspectives. By contrast, in grade 2 it was important to *not* stay for too long at the same question. Also the kind of activities should be adjusted to the age group: For both grades, it was important to have a variety of activities, but the classes for grade 2 should be exploratory, where the classes for grade 6 should stimulate further discussion.

In short, philosophy classes in the two age groups have a different character, to which the implementation of the classes should be adjusted. Giving identical classes to both age groups was not realistic, which refutes the naive hypothesis.

9.3 The Piaget hypothesis

The Piaget hypothesis stated that philosophy classes should be in correspondence with the cognitive developmental stage of the age group. This hypothesis predicted that the two age groups would require *different* philosophy classes.

Indeed, it is found that adequate philosophy classes for both grades differ from each other. However, it is not easy to determine whether this can be (perhaps partially) explained by the different cognitive developmental stages corresponding to the relevant age groups.

9.3.1 Grade 2

According to this hypothesis, children in grade 2 find themselves either in the pre-operational stage, or in the concrete operational stage. This means that either their logical thinking is still underdeveloped and unsystematic (for children in the pre-operational stage), or that their logical thinking has been developed

but can only be applied to concrete situations (for children in the concrete operational stage). As we have seen, it was difficult to assess children's reasoning skills, as they did not make many reasoning steps often. We have seen both cases with mistakes in reasoning and cases with valid reasonings in concrete situations. This former could possibly be explained by the characteristics of the pre-operational stage, whereas the latter could be explained by the characteristics of the concrete operational stage.

According to this hypothesis, children were expected not to do much abstract and hypothetical thinking. Hence, it was predicted that children needed to be presented with concrete questions and problems in the philosophy classes. This corresponds with the results: Children had difficulties with abstract questions, posed without an introductory story. They participated more actively in a conversation when a question was formulated more concretely, and when it was situated in a context. Also their comments were often concrete, and often related to their own life.

The latter could again be explained by the Piaget hypotheses, which stated that children in the pre-operational stage have an egocentric worldview. The hypothesis predicted that questions would be approached from their own perspective, as they would have difficulties with moving in someone else's perspective. This appeared to be the case in the classes indeed: Children reasoned mostly from their own perspective, and they did not show much interest in the opinion of others.

Most children *did* realize, however, that someone else could have another opinion. This is consistent with a feature of the concrete-operational phase: Children can distinguish their own thoughts from other people's thoughts. Yet, they did not take this opinion into consideration themselves; the difference in opinion was simply accepted.

9.3.2 Grade 6

According to the Piaget hypothesis, children in grade 6 are either in the concrete-operational stage, or in the formal-operational stage. The hypothesis predicted that all children were able to perform logical reasoning at a concrete level—a feature of the concrete operational stage. However, we have seen that it was difficult to determine children's logical reasoning skills. We have seen both valid and invalid reasonings. A study that focuses more specifically on just logical reasoning could determine this more precisely.

Children who have reached the formal operational stage, would also be able to perform abstract reasoning, and to consider hypothetical situations. We have seen that children in grade 6 could have a general theory about something, but they often have difficulties expressing this in general terms. The explanation of a theory is often solely based on particular instances. Sometimes, children came up with hypothetical situations, for instance in the eighth class: "I sometimes think I live two lives. I live now, and later on, I live a different life, not necessarily as a human, but then I won't be aware of the fact that I have been someone else previously. So, if I live in a different world later on, then I think that would be the only life. In both lives I think I just live one life, but in fact, there are two". However, most comments were concrete, or illustrated with concrete examples. The children who reasoned merely about concrete cases could be in Piaget's concrete operational stage, and children who could perform abstract and hypothetical reasoning could be in the formal operational stage.

The Piaget hypothesis also predicted that children in grade 6 would have a less egocentric worldview than children in grade 2. Hence, they would be better able to consider situations from someone else's perspective.

Indeed, this became clear during the classes. Children usually listened carefully to each other, and they also took other people's views into consideration. They saw it as a challenge to adjust their opinion in light of the comments of others and indicated that they had learned a lot from this aspect of the philosophy class.

In short, the observed differences between the two age groups are compatible with the Piaget hypothesis. There is a clear difference between a philosophy class in grade 2 and a philosophy class in grade 6, possibly explicable by the Piaget's developmental stages which correspond to the age groups. The differences between the two groups that could be explained by the Piaget hypothesis are however restricted to the *cognitive* differences. We have seen more differences that should be taken into account when giving a philosophy class. For example, we saw that the classes in the two groups have different character (exploratory vs. in-depth), and we observed a difference in children's own input to the classes and topics (grade 6 came up with topics and questions themselves, resulting in some adjustments of classes, whereas grade 2 simply followed the plan of the teacher). The Piaget hypothesis correctly predicted that philosophy classes for different age groups differ from each other, but it cannot account for all the differences between the two groups.

9.4 Answer to the research question

The research question was: *Should philosophy classes differ for different age groups, and if so, how?*. It has become clear that different age groups require different philosophy classes, mainly for the reason that philosophical activities in the two classes differ in character. For grade 2, philosophy is an introduction to thinking about questions that do not have a clear answer; it is a first stimulation in collaboratively reflecting on philosophical issues. The focus is therefore not so much on the discussion, in which children react to each other, but more on reflecting on new questions. A philosophy class in grade 6 goes one step further: The children are familiar with philosophical questions, and with having a discussion. An introduction is therefore unnecessary; children in grade 6 are able to, and want to *practice philosophy* and have discussions.

This difference is reflected in the class conversation. In grade 2, all children think for themselves—they tell their ideas to the teacher and hardly respond to each other's ideas. In grade 6, children often enjoy the class conversation the most, since there they can listen to other people's opinions, convince others, and get convinced by others.

This difference is also reflected in the role of the teacher: We have seen that in grade 2, the teacher should mainly stimulate children to think independently and to have conversations *with each other*. To achieve this, it is sometimes good to explain explicitly that different opinions are possible, that we should listen to each other, and that it is important to give *reasons* for your opinions. In grade 6, we saw that the teacher is more like a conversation facilitator, as described in Anthone and Mortier (1997) and Lipman et al. (1980). Besides that, the teacher helps the children with finding structure in their arguments. Furthermore, the teacher follows the interests of the children—as they could also suggest their own philosophical questions and topics.

How should these differences be translated to the teachers' manuals? In the following chapter, I will formulate the answer to this question in terms of two sets of rules of thumb: one for philosophy classes in grade 2, and one for philosophy classes in grade 6. These two sets of rules of thumb form the bridge to the two teachers' manuals that are designed in line with this study.

9.5 Future research

There are several possible continuations of the conducted research.

In future studies, this research could be extended to other age groups: Specifications could be made to grade 1, 3, 4, and 5—but also to Kindergarten and the first years of secondary school. Teachers' manuals could be developed parallel to the research, as done here. This might result in a continuous method that corresponds to the average development of children.

However, such a method would implicitly make the assumption that all children develop in the same way and at the same rate. Jean Piaget already mentioned that the ages linked to the developmental stages were mere indications. Besides that, the nurture hypothesis has not been tested yet. This hypothesis states that children's upbringing would play the largest role in the interests and capacities in the field of philosophy. Children who grow up in an environment where wonder, a critical perspective, and independent thinking is stimulated, would have a head start on children who grow up in an environment where this is not the case. In order to test this hypothesis, individual differences should be studied. This could be done within the scope of one school, but it could also be examined how philosophy classes at different schools differ from each other. The present study was carried out at a school in the center of Amsterdam, mainly attended by children with Dutch parents. We did not investigate the possible influences of the environment of the school (e.g., rural or urban) on the philosophy classes.

To supplement the current research, it could also be examined how teacher education institutions could provide future school teachers with a solid preparation for philosophy classes. For this, the manuals designed in line with the current research, with possible extensions for the other age groups, could be of assistance.

Something else that could be studied is the connection between philosophy and other subjects in the primary school curriculum. As described in chapter 2, i.a. Heesen (1990) and Trickey and Topping (2004) have shown that philosophy classes may lead to better insight in other subjects in the curriculum. It would thus be interesting to design classes with a philosophical character for specific subjects, and to investigate to what extent such classes could improve the insight in these subjects. For instance, classes could be designed and implemented for mathematics (arithmetics with infinity), language (about *meaning*, or the relation between thoughts and language), and citizenship education (about the desirability of different forms of government).

We have reflected on several possible continuations of this research, concerning differences between philosophy classes for different age groups. In the following chapter, I will shortly describe possible further steps as a continuation of the teachers' manual.

Chapter 10

Towards new teachers' manuals

The research has been conducted, the hypotheses have been tested, and the differences between the two age groups have been described accurately. The second aim of this research was to design a teachers' manual, taking these findings into account. Firstly, I will formulate two sets of rules of thumb, which have been derived from the results. Then, I will introduce the teachers' manuals, which can be found in appendix 7 and 8. Lastly, I will describe possible future steps for this intervention.

10.1 Philosophy with grade 2: rules of thumb

1. A philosophy class takes 20 to 30 minutes. This gives enough time to have an introductory class conversation of 7 minutes, a group or individual assignment of 8 minutes, and a joint reflection afterwards, of 5 minutes. This might seem short, but in grade 2 it is important to **maintain tempo**, so that children do not get bored or distracted.

2. Philosophy is **completely new** for this age group; hence, one should not have the expectation that there will be profound conversations about philosophical questions. A philosophy class for these children is to introduce them to reflecting on the issues, and to encourage them to talk with each other and to form an opinion.

3. Give the **word to the children**; as a teacher, you ask the questions, and you give turns to the children. Hence, leave out your own opinion. This will give the children the entire space to form their own opinion, and they will not be influenced by expectations or a seemingly desirable answer. This also means that you equally judge children's opinions.

4. Explicitly ask children to listen carefully to each other, and to react to what others say. Children in this age group tend to just tell their own story to the teacher, while the conversation may develop when they have a **conversation *with each other***.

5. Let the first question of a class be one to which every child will have an answer, although this question might be less philosophical. In this way, you **get all the attention** of the children, on which you can

build on further. All children can practice philosophy, as long as they have the confidence that they can do it. Starting with an accessible question may contribute to this.

6. Keep a **class conversation short**: ten minutes maximum. Class conversations are tempting, as it may lead to beautiful philosophical gems, but after 10 minutes, most children get distracted, and they want to move on with something else.

7. Adding a **game element** to the class conversation (such as holding up cards to express an opinion) increases the attention and the participation.

8. A **good preparation** to as many as possible different turns of the class conversation ensures that you can control the discussion better, which may lead to a more focused, and well developed discussion.

9. Make sure that all questions in the philosophy class are stated **clearly and briefly**. Hence, suppress the tendency to specify a question after posing it; it needs to be clear on itself. For this reason, having written down the questions beforehand would help.

10. Introduce each philosophical question by telling a **captivating story**, so that children get captivated by the topic. Children of this age group get excited by stories and games. When a bare philosophical question is asked ("what is happiness?"), they will get distracted.

11. Make sure that you **vary** class conversations with active, practical activities or assignments, that encourage philosophical thinking. In this way, things that have been discussed get the chance to be further reflected on, and they can digest the philosophical questions. A good activity or assignment for grade 2 motivates the children to further reflect on the subject and to discuss it with each other. Furthermore, it should lead to a nice result—this is important, as it stimulates children of this age to carefully carry out the activity. A result of the assignment could function as discussion material afterwards. In this way, the philosophy class gets more tangible, which is necessary for children of this age: An assignment could support their thoughts. Moreover, a conversation could get a different emphasis, as children will have had the time to further reflect on the topic, without any guidance of the teacher.

12. Children can learn from explicit **reflections on the philosophy classes**. You could ask what they think what philosophy is, what they think they learn in the classes, and why it is important to share thoughts during the philosophy class. This will give insight in how children experience the classes, and children could become aware of the goals and ideas behind philosophy in the classroom.

10.2 Philosophy with grade 6: rules of thumb

1. A philosophy class takes **30 to 40 minutes**. This will give enough time for an introductory class conversation of 15 minutes, a group assignment of 15 minutes, and a reflection of 10 minutes.

2. **Follow the interests of the children**. Some children in grade 6 have been practicing philosophy for themselves. Their philosophical thoughts will not always correspond to the topics you have in mind for a philosophy course. As a teacher, you can adjust the topics and classes to the questions the children bring in, so that these thoughts get a place in the philosophy classes. In this way, their personal thinking activities get stimulated, and children will become aware of the fact that thinking

outside the school context is also valuable. In addition, children will feel being taken seriously, when their comment or question gets singled out for a conversation or for a class. This could give them confidence, and stimulates their philosophical thinking.

3. Give the **word to the children**; as a teacher, you ask the questions, and you give turns to the children. Hence, leave out your own opinion. This will give the children the entire space to form their own opinion, and they will not be influenced by expectations or a seemingly desirable answer. This also means that you equally judge children's opinions.

4. Keep a **class conversation short**: 15 minutes maximum. Class conversations are tempting, as it may lead to beautiful philosophical gems. However, as many children get distracted after 15 minutes, and as some children flourish with practical or creative activities, one should move on to another activity after a while.

5. A philosophical discussion may arise easier when a question is asked from a **concrete context**, than when a bare philosophical question is asked. It is good to have written down clearly formulated questions beforehand.

6. Do not switch too quickly from one question to the next: Children in grade 6 appreciate the opportunity to express their opinion and to listen to others' comments. Only if the teacher **takes time for a question**, a conversation gets the chance to develop.

7. Children in grade 6 sometimes need help with **structuring their thoughts**. They often have difficulties formulating abstract ideas, and are tempted to explain these by concrete instances. A teacher can help the children to accurately formulate their ideas, by asking questions that guide them in this process.

8. Similar to grade 2: **Variety** is very important. Hence, make sure that you alternate class conversations with practical activities that stimulate children to reflect further on the philosophical issues. Group work, in which children can discuss questions with each other, suits this grade well—since children of this age group simply enjoy discussing philosophical issues with each other, and since it gives everyone plenty of opportunity to express their thoughts. Group work can be supported by cards, describing questions or situations, so that the assignment becomes tangible, and so that they will stick to the current topic. The assignment can function as discussion material for the subsequent class conversation. In this way, the discussion could get a new emphasis, as children will have had the time to further reflect on the topic, without any guidance of the teacher.

9. Related to (2): **explicitly give the children a role** in the classes, and in the course of the classes. At the end of each class, you can take some time to ask whether the children have some questions or topics they want to discuss in the philosophy classes.

10. Also, take time to **reflect on philosophy**, and ask what they think philosophy is, what they think they learn in the classes, and why it is important to substantiate your opinions. In this way, you can gain insight in the experience of the children, and the children could become aware of the goals and ideas behind philosophy in the classroom.

10.3 The teachers' manuals

The teachers' manuals designed parallel to this study are in line with the research findings, and thus also with the aforementioned rules of thumb. Thus, they are consistent with the two age groups. Furthermore, I wrote out the classes in such a way that they will specifically be accessible to teachers without philosophical background.

As explained in the introduction, philosophy is a subject that is mainly taught by external philosophers; primary school teachers to not easily give the subject themselves. Hardly any tools exist for them to make the first steps with doing philosophy with their class. I kept this in mind, while designing the teachers' manuals parallel to this study. They contain *short* introductions, in which the hows and the whys of philosophy in the classroom are explained, the classes are described in a clear and introductory manner, and follow-up questions for class conversations have been formulated. The teacher of grade 2 has looked at the written program, and was very positive about it: She confirmed that the descriptions are clear and tangible, and was convinced of the fact that primary school teachers will be able to teach these classes themselves (see appendix 3). The teachers of grade 6 have not seen the written classes yet. Nevertheless, they also confirmed that they could teach the classes themselves (see appendix 6), provided that the manual contains a clear introduction, describing *how* one should teach a philosophy class.

When a primary school teacher has gained experiences with help of these introductory manuals, it will be easier to use existing methods, such as *Filosoferen doe je zo* by Bartels and van Rossum (2009), which are less accessible to a beginner in philosophizing with children.

For the manual of grade 2, the themes of the classes are as follows:

1. Introduction to philosophy: *Do all questions have an answer?*
2. Thinking: *Can animals think?*
3. Happiness: *What is the difference between joy and happiness?*
4. Normal: *What is normal?*
5. Time: *Can time sometimes go faster or slower?*
6. Voting: *Do children have better ideas about the school than adults?*
7. Thoughts: *Can we stop thinking?*
8. Art: *Is everything that is beautiful, automatically* art*?*
9. Fairness: *When is something fair or unfair?*
10. Friendship: *Can you be friends with your mother?*
11. Happiness: *Does having a lot of toys makes you happy?*

Since the classes on thinking and happiness are split into two parts, the manual contains two more classes than conducted in the study.

The classes in grade 2 take 20 minutes each, and are usually composed of 7 minutes introductory class conversation, an activity of 8 minutes, and a reflecting class conversation of 5 minutes. All classes have been

tested, and adjusted based on experiences. The rules of thumb are carefully taken into account.

For the manual of grade 6, the themes of the classes are as follows:

1. Thinking: *Can animals think?*
2. Happiness: *What is the difference between joy and happiness?*
3. Infinity: *How much is infinity +1?*
4. Voting: *Do children have better ideas about the school than adults?*
5. Moral dilemmas: *Is a poor man allowed to steal a bread for his children?*
6. Thoughts: *Can we stop thinking?*
7. Humans vs. robots: *Can a robot* really *be afraid*?
8. Death: *Could we ever know what happens after death?*

Also in this course, the class on happiness has been split up. The class on identity has not been included yet, as a good activity still needs to be designed.

The classes in grade 6 take 45 minutes each, and are usually composed of 15 minutes philosophical class conversation, followed by 15 minutes of group activity, and ended by 15 minutes philosophical class conversation. All classes have been tested and adjusted based on experiences as well. The rules of thumb are again carefully taken into account.

The designed teachers' manuals can be found in appendix 7 and 8. They are a direct implementation of the conducted research.

10.4 What is next?

Now that the first introductory teachers' manuals have been established, several further steps can, and will be made.

At first, currently we merely have introductory manuals for teachers of grade 2 and grade 6. It would be good to have such introductory manuals for each grade, so that each primary school teacher has the tools to do their first philosophical activities with their class. I have the plan to realize this in the near future.

Secondly, we could design philosophical classes with a more direct connection to other subjects. In 9.5, I mentioned that we could investigate how such classes could contribute to understanding the matter, and gaining insight in the subject. Examples of such classes are: math class(es) for grade 6, where children do arithmetics with infinity, language class(es) in which children examine the link between our thoughts and language, or citizenship class(es) in which children philosophize about the rights and duties of citizens. We could design introductory manuals for such classes, so that primary school teachers are enabled to make this connection to other subjects clear.

Thirdly, a teachers' manual could be developed which puts more emphasis on logical reasoning. In the current teachers' manuals, the emphasis lies on independently forming ideas, and reflecting on different perspectives.

Classes specifically designed to promote logical reasoning could highlight these analytical reasoning skills. I also have the plan to realize this next step in the future.

Lastly, we could adjust the designed manuals, and the proposed future material, in such a way that it could be used by teacher educational institutions, for preparing future teachers to carry out philosophy classes.

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