

The Legacy of Zosimo E. Lee and the Development of Philosophy for/with Children in the Philippines: Historical Trajectories, Pedagogical Practices, and Future Directions

Rodrigo D. Abenes

Philippine Normal University - Manila
abenes.rd@pnu.edu.ph

Freddie B. Agsaoay

Philippine Normal University - Manila
agsaoay.fb@stud.pnu.edu.ph

Analyn B. Dolueras

Philippine Normal University - Manila
dolueras.ab@stud.pnu.edu.ph

Erlene Joy D. Esperancilla

Philippine Normal University - Manila
esperancilla.ejd@pnu.edu.ph

Katherine P. Mata

Philippine Normal University - Manila
mata.kp@stud.pnu.edu.ph

Jean Nicole A. Rivera

Philippine Normal University - Manila
rivera.jna@stud.pnu.edu.ph

Abstract

The year 2026 marks the 50th anniversary of Philosophy for Children (P4C), providing an opportune moment to assess its development in the Philippines and reflect on the enduring legacy of Zosimo E. Lee (August 17, 1952 - June 2, 2026), the principal figure responsible for introducing and advancing the movement in the country. This study provides a critical review of Philippine scholarship on Philosophy for/with Children, and the Community of Inquiry from 1989 to present. Sources were drawn from international and local academic databases, institutional repositories, scholarly journals, conference proceedings, and academic publications. The paper identified four major themes: the historical development of P4C in the Philippines, the pedagogical practices associated with the Community of Inquiry, the Filipino adaptations and contextual reconstructions, and the challenges confronting the movement. Findings reveal that the Philippine P4C has evolved from the experimental educational initiative into a philosophically sophisticated and increasingly localized tradition shaped by democratic inquiry, public reason, indigenous perspectives, multilingual realities, and ecological concerns. However, persistent challenges remain, including limited institutionalization, insufficient empirical research, inadequate teacher preparation, and weak policy integration. The study concludes that while P4C has achieved significant theoretical maturity, its

future development depends on broader implementation within public education, stronger teacher education programs, and continued efforts toward indigenous, digital, and contextually grounded forms of philosophical inquiry that extend Zosimo Lee's vision of reasonableness and democratic citizenship.

Keywords: community of inquiry, filipino philosophy, philosophy for children, philosophy with children, Zosimo E. Lee

Introduction

The year 2026 represents a seminal milestone in educational philosophy, marking the semi-centennial anniversary of the Philosophy for Children (P4C) movement. Initiated by Matthew Lipman (1991; 1976) and Ann Margaret Sharp (1987; 1996) in the 1970s, this global initiative fundamentally disrupted traditional pedagogical paradigms by demonstrating that children possess an innate capacity for substantive, nuanced philosophical inquiry. Over the past five decades, P4C has transitioned from an experimental pedagogy into a globally recognized framework. Central to its methodology is the Community of Inquiry (CoI), an approach designed to systematically cultivate the "4Cs": Critical, Creative, Caring, and Collaborative thinking. Consequently, the movement has profoundly influenced international educational systems, emerging as a premier pedagogical strategy for fostering democratic dialogue, reflective judgment, and intellectual autonomy among young learners.

To appreciate its enduring relevance, the historical trajectory of P4C must be understood not as a static methodology, but as a dynamic, evolving discourse. As Vansieleghem and Kennedy (2011) argue, the movement has undergone a profound generational transformation over the last fifty years. It has transitioned from a "first-generation" model—predominantly characterized by Lipman's foundational emphasis on formal logic, critical thinking, and structured inquiry—toward a "second-generation" paradigm. This contemporary iteration embraces plurality, childhood studies, diverse philosophical traditions, and active democratic participation. This conceptual shift is increasingly mirrored in the academic preference for the term "Philosophy for/with Children" (P4wC). This linguistic evolution signifies a rejection of the child as a tabula rasa or a passive recipient of adult instruction; instead, it re-conceptualizes children as active agents, co-inquirers, and co-constructors of meaning. Accordingly, contemporary P4wC prioritizes wonder, interpretive dialogue, and the lived experiences of children, while maintaining its foundational commitment to rigorous, communal reflection.

This conceptual flexibility has facilitated the movement's extensive international expansion and cultural diversification, a phenomenon thoroughly documented by Naji and

Hashim (2017). By synthesizing perspectives from global scholars and practitioners, their work illustrates how P4C has transcended its Western origins to integrate with varied cultural, religious, and educational traditions. Crucially, this literature highlights a dual imperative: acknowledging the universality of children's capacity for philosophical thought while simultaneously embedding dialogues within local realities. The continued vitality of P4wC depends precisely on this capacity for theoretical self-critique, organic renewal, and contextual adaptation. Therefore, this international evolution provides a critical interpretive lens and a necessary macro-historical backdrop for examining the localization of P4wC within the Philippines. Understanding this global trajectory illuminates the distinctive contributions, adaptations, and insights offered by Filipino scholars, educators, and practitioners as they appropriate the movement to serve local educational needs.

In the Philippines, the historical trajectory of Philosophy for/with Children (P4wC) is inextricably linked to the intellectual legacy of Zosimo E. Lee (1952–2026). As the primary catalyst for this movement, Lee's contributions spanned rigorous scholarship, institutional advocacy, systemic teacher-training initiatives, and active engagement within both domestic and international P4wC networks. Crucially, Lee's work extended beyond a superficial transposition of Matthew Lipman's foundational educational model. Instead, he critically recontextualized the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework, reconceptualizing it as a site for public reason, communicative rationality, and democratic citizenship geared toward peace-building. The significance of Lee's contribution may be situated within the broader tradition of honoring Filipino philosophical pioneers whose works have shaped the country's intellectual landscape. During the 40th anniversary celebration of the Philosophical Association of the Philippines (PAP), held at De La Salle University-Manila under the theme *Legacy Lectures: Engaging Our Philosophical Pioneers*, distinguished Filipino philosophers such as Romualdo E. Abulad, Alfredo P. Co, Manuel B. Dy Jr., Leovino Ma. Garcia, Florentino H. Hornedo, Roque J. Ferriols, Julius D. Mendoza, Leonardo N. Mercado, Zosimo E. Lee, Emerita S. Quito, Ramon C. Reyes, Florentino T. Timbreza, and Amable G. Tuibeo were recognized for their enduring contributions to Philippine philosophy. Lee's inclusion among these intellectual luminaries reflects both the significance of his philosophical scholarship and his pioneering role in introducing and developing P4wC in the Philippines. His legacy resides not only in the institutionalization of philosophical inquiry among children but also in his vision of education as a democratic and dialogical practice capable of cultivating reasonableness, and civic participation.

Within Lee's framework, philosophical inquiry was divested of a purely cognitive or instrumental orientation. Rather, it was advanced as a transformative praxis for cultivating an informed citizenry capable of navigating pluralistic differences through reasoned deliberation, mutual respect, and dialogical engagement. Consequently, under his

stewardship, P4wC transcended its status as an imported pedagogical innovation, evolving instead into a localized educational project deeply responsive to Philippine socio-political realities and democratic aspirations.

Decades prior to the institutionalization of P4wC, Emerita S. Quito's seminal monograph, *The State of Philosophy in the Philippines* (1983), had already underscored the imperative for a philosophical paradigm that directly addresses localized anxieties rather than uncritically appropriating Western traditions. Quito sharply critiqued contemporary Filipino philosophy for its deficiencies in originality and contextual relevance, lamenting the absence of a robust philosophical culture attuned to domestic exigencies. Her critique effectively inaugurated a tradition of reflexive self-assessment within the local academy, compelling subsequent generations of thinkers to scrutinize the development, systemic limitations, and prospective trajectories of Philippine philosophical inquiry. This reflexive imperative established by Quito continues to resonate in contemporary scholarship, serving as a conceptual bridge to modern educational innovations. For instance, Abenes and Mahaguay (2017) revisited Quito's intellectual corpus, reaffirming her enduring contributions to the decolonization of Philippine thought, the reassertion of cultural identity, and the formulation of a philosophy rooted in local material conditions. Their analysis underscores that the critical interrogation of Philippine philosophical traditions remains a dynamic, ongoing intellectual project.

Building upon the reflexive tradition inaugurated by Quito, contemporary scholarship continues to critically evaluate the contours of the local philosophical landscape. Rather than viewing Filipino philosophy as a monolithic entity, recent literature conceptualizes it as an evolving, pluralistic ecosystem. A key example of this historiographical mapping is Joaquin's (2022) examination of Analytic Philosophy in the Philippines. By tracing the trajectory of the analytic tradition from its introduction by Ricardo Pascual at the University of the Philippines through its subsequent institutionalization, Joaquin demonstrates how distinct intellectual movements coalesce to enrich the national discourse. His work offers a vital methodological insight: understanding the broader evolution of Philippine philosophy requires a granular analysis of its specific constituent movements, pedagogical projects, and scholarly networks. Simultaneously, this intellectual diversification has extended into the philosophy of education, a subfield increasingly attuned to indigenous material realities and democratic imperatives. In this context, Opiniano et al. (2022) identified the Filipino philosophy of education as an expanding domain of inquiry, emphasizing the urgent need to formulate educational theories and practices that directly address localized anxieties. In the same manner, Abenes and Daelo (2025) deepened this conversation by leveraging Gert Biesta's educational theory to analyze contemporary educational reforms. By interrogating the purposes of education

through the tripartite lens of qualification, socialization, and subjectification, their study underscores the necessity of philosophical reflection in shaping structural reforms. Confluence with these is the concept that these developments signal a concerted effort within the local academy to cultivate a Filipino philosophy of education that interrogates issues of identity, democracy, citizenship, culture, and human formation.

Crucially, this evolving philosophy of education finds a radical, democratic expression in the framework of Philosophy for/with Children. Elicor (2022b) posits that thinking philosophically with children significantly broadens the horizons of the discipline by destabilizing traditional pedagogical hierarchies. Rather than treating children as passive, uncritical recipients of state educational policies, P4wC recognizes them as legitimate epistemic agents and active participants in philosophical inquiry. Consequently, Elicor suggests that P4wC serves as a mechanism for democratizing philosophical discourse, enriching the educational landscape by integrating the unique perspectives, inquiries, and lived experiences of Filipino children. Complementing these theoretical and localized explorations, recent empirical scholarship has sought to evaluate the structural health of the discipline. Paña, Morte, and Villareal (2026) conducted a comprehensive nationwide mapping of institutions offering philosophy programs in the Philippines. Their assessment reveals that while philosophy education remains resilient and vibrant, it continues to grapple with systemic challenges regarding institutional support, public perception, and viable professional opportunities. Also, while Paña et al. emphasize that sustained philosophical engagement is vital for addressing contemporary socio-cultural crises, their macro-level institutional appraisal primarily focuses on higher education. Given these, a critical lacuna remains in the literature regarding how philosophy is introduced to younger learners, and how a culture of philosophical inquiry is cultivated within the K-12 matrix prior to tertiary education.

The convergence of these distinct intellectual trajectories renders the present study both timely and epistemologically necessary. Significantly, the global semi-centennial anniversary of Philosophy for Children coincides with the passing of Zosimo E. Lee, whose pioneering contributions fundamentally institutionalized the trajectory of P4wC in the Philippines. Such scholarly tributes have long been a tradition in Filipino philosophy, serving not merely to honor intellectual figures but also to critically evaluate their contributions, influence, and continuing relevance. For instance, Abenes and Barliso's (2024) tribute to Romualdo E. Abulad examined the enduring significance of his philosophical thought while situating his contributions within broader developments in Filipino philosophy. This historical juncture provides an ideal opportunity not merely to commemorate Lee's legacy, but to execute a rigorous, critical evaluation of the intellectual and educational project he catalyzed. While a growing body of domestic literature addresses

fragmented dimensions of P4wC—such as classroom implementation, pedagogical strategies, cognitive development, ethics, public reason, childhood studies, and localized adaptations of the Community of Inquiry (CoI)—there remains a distinct lack of a comprehensive synthesis of this scholarship. Such an assessment is vital because educational movements cannot be sustained indefinitely through unstructured advocacy, institutional memory, or individual leadership alone. Instead, they require periodic, systematic evaluation to determine whether their foundational aspirations have been realized, reconfigured, expanded, or left unfulfilled. By executing a systematic literature review, contemporary scholars can achieve several critical objectives: (1) Map dominant thematic clusters and trace shifting research trajectories over time; (2) evaluate recorded educational outcomes to measure pedagogical efficacy; (3) isolate critical lacunae within the current literature that require further empirical investigation; and (4) gauge fidelity to Lee’s original vision of cultivating communities of inquiry anchored in reasonableness, dialogical engagement, democratic participation, and peace-building.

Consequently, this study operates simultaneously as a rigorous scholarly appraisal and as an intellectual tribute to Lee’s enduring legacy. Through a critical review of Philippine literature on P4wC, this paper investigates the movement's evolution across several core domains:

1. On Historical Trajectory through charting the genealogy and institutionalization of the movement within the Philippine educational landscape;
2. On Pedagogical Practices through identifying dominant instructional methodologies and strategies deployed in local contexts;
3. On Contextual Adaptations by analyzing distinct Filipino reformulations of the traditional Community of Inquiry framework;
4. On Educational Outcomes through assessing the reported cognitive, socio-emotional, and civic impacts on learners; and
5. On Systemic Challenges by evaluating the structural, cultural, and institutional obstacles currently confronting the field.

Through this multifaceted matrix, the study seeks to address a fundamental, overarching inquiry: *What has become of the intellectual and educational project that Zosimo E. Lee initiated and nurtured within the Philippine landscape?*

This paper contributes to the broader, ongoing project of mapping the state of philosophy and philosophy education in the Philippines. By aligning itself with the reflexive traditions established by Quito's (1983) critique of Philippine philosophy, Opiniano et al.'s (2022) appraisal of the Filipino philosophy of education, and Paña et al.'s (2026) institutional mapping of nationwide philosophy programs, this study provides the first comprehensive synthesis of P4wC in the country. At this global 50-year milestone, this research not only delineates the historical contours of the movement but also charts prospective pathways for strengthening philosophical inquiry among Filipino children and educators. In doing so, Lee's legacy is honored not through passive hagiography, but through a critical, rigorous engagement with the educational vision he championed—a vision that continues to animate new generations of educators, philosophers, and learners dedicated to dialogue, critical reflection, and democratic life.

Research Method

This study adopts an exploratory critical literature review framework to evaluate the historical and conceptual development of Philosophy for/with Children (P4wC) in the Philippines, viewed through the lens of Zosimo E. Lee's intellectual and praxiological legacy. Methodologically distinct from a rigid systematic review—which prioritizes exhaustive, protocol-driven screening to aggregate data—a critical review emphasizes interpretive synthesis, conceptual evaluation, and the critical analysis of an existing body of scholarship. This design is uniquely suited for mapping shifting research trajectories, identifying dominant thematic configurations, and evaluating the overall maturity of a field.

The overarching trajectory of this review is animated by a central, bipartite research question:

How has Philosophy for Children developed within the Philippine educational landscape, and to what extent does its historical and contemporary trajectory reflect the normative educational vision advanced by Zosimo E. Lee?

To construct a robust and representative data corpus, this paper evaluated academic literature addressing Philosophy for Children (P4C), Philosophy with Children (PwC), and the Community of Inquiry (CoI) published over a 37-year band from 1989 to 2026. Data procurement involved a comprehensive search across digital databases, including Google Scholar, institutional and university repositories, specialized philosophical journals, and multidisciplinary education databases.

The search targeted peer-reviewed journal articles, edited book volumes, book chapters, conference proceedings, and institutional academic monographs. While primary

emphasis was accorded to localized literature produced by Filipino scholars or studies situated within Philippine educational contexts, foundational international texts—specifically the works of Matthew Lipman (1991; 1973), Ann Margaret Sharp (1987; 1996), David Kennedy, Walter Kohan (2017), Gareth Matthews (1994), —were purposefully integrated insofar as they provided the vital theoretical scaffolding for Philippine P4wC scholarship.

To ensure methodological rigor, clear inclusion and exclusion parameters were systematically applied during the literature selection process. Sources were included in the review if they met the following three criteria: first, they explicitly addressed P4C, PwC, or the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework; second, they contributed substantively to understanding the historical development, pedagogical execution, philosophical foundations, localization, or contemporary application of P4wC in the Philippines; and third, they were deployed within scholarly publications recognized by the fields of philosophy, education, or allied social sciences. Conversely, literature was excluded from the corpus if it fell into any of the following categories: it discussed philosophical sub-disciplines devoid of explicit relevance to childhood, pedagogy, or inquiry-based learning; it comprised publications that did not offer distinct conceptual or empirical insights into the Philippine P4wC landscape; or it consisted of non-peer-reviewed or popular media articles lacking academic or theoretical grounding.

The finalized selection of literature was subjected to a rigorous qualitative thematic analysis. Utilizing an iterative reading protocol and comparative textual examination, recurring concepts, arguments, and scholarly preoccupations were isolated, coded, and synthesized. This inductive process yielded four primary thematic axes:

- The historical evolution and institutionalization of P4wC in the Philippines.
- Pedagogical practices and instructional dynamics embedded within the localized Community of Inquiry.
- Filipino adaptations, indigenous re-readings, and contextual reconstructions of the movement.
- Systemic challenges, structural constraints, and institutional impediments confronting the discipline.

These emergent themes were subjected to a deductive critical analysis using Zosimo E. Lee's educational philosophy as the primary interpretive lens. Specifically, the literature was evaluated against Lee's emphasis on public reason, communicative rationality, democratic inquiry, and citizenship formation. More so, this methodology transcends a

merely descriptive survey of existing literature; it functions as an evaluative critique, measuring the degree to which contemporary Philippine P4wC has actualized, modified, or fallen short of Lee's core philosophical and educational aspirations.

Results and Discussion

The reviewed literature reveals that Philosophy for/with Children (P4wC) in the Philippines has matured into a nuanced, evolving field of scholarship characterized by rich theoretical orientations, pedagogical innovations, and sophisticated contextual adaptations. While the movement originated through the mechanical transposition of Matthew Lipman's standard Philosophy for Children curriculum, Philippine scholars have progressively transformed it into a distinctive intellectual and educational tradition calibrated to local cultural, social, political, and educational realities. The academic discourse demonstrates that the discipline has progressed beyond elementary questions of operational feasibility and classroom implementation. Instead, contemporary research engages with expansive socio-political concerns, including democratic citizenship, public reason, critical childhood studies, indigenous knowledge systems, ecological responsibility, and structural educational transformation.

A thematic analysis of the selected studies reveals that the development of Philippine P4wC may be understood through four interconnected dimensions. First, the literature documents the historical development of the movement, tracing its evolution from early experimental implementations to contemporary efforts at localization and public engagement. Second, it highlights the pedagogical practices associated with the Community of Inquiry, particularly the ways philosophical dialogue, questioning, facilitation, and collaborative meaning-making are enacted in educational settings. Third, the literature demonstrates the emergence of Filipino adaptations and contextual reconstructions that seek to indigenize and reimagine philosophical inquiry through local concepts, multilingual realities, and culturally grounded educational practices. Finally, the reviewed studies identify persistent challenges and constraints that continue to shape the movement's development, including issues of institutionalization, teacher preparation, curriculum integration, policy support, and empirical validation.

These thematic axes signify more than the technical expansion of a pedagogical tool; they mark the crystallization of an indigenous intellectual tradition that seeks to cultivate cognitive reasonableness, democratic participation, ethical responsibility, and reflexive citizenship among Filipino learners. To provide an analytical evaluation of this trajectory, these themes are critically interpreted through the foundational educational philosophy of

Zosimo E. Lee. By utilizing Lee's framework as a conceptual lens, this review evaluates the extent to which contemporary Philippine scholarship has sustained, expanded, or radically transformed his original aspiration of nurturing communities of inquiry dedicated to the service of public reason, democratic deliberation, and civic life.

Historical development of philosophy for/with children in the Philippines

The historical trajectory of Philosophy for/with Children (P4wC) in the Philippines cannot be understood as a mere mechanical transplantation of Matthew Lipman's foundational Western educational model. Instead, its evolution occurred through a series of non-linear, interconnected phases characterized by pedagogical adaptation, structural philosophical reconstruction, cultural contextualization, and broadening institutional applications.

Across the corpus of localized literature, a definitive narrative arc emerges: the institutional biography of Philippine P4wC is indissolubly linked to the intellectual contributions and labor of Zosimo E. Lee. It was through Lee's systematic intervention that an imported, Anglo-American pedagogical innovation was re-theorized into a distinctly Filipino discourse—one that repositioned inquiry, communal dialogue, and democratic formation within the specific material realities of the global South.

The beginning of this movement in the country is marked by an initial Introduction and Experimental Phase, spanning the late 1980s and early 1990s. The foundational baseline for this period is established by the seminal study of Holder (1988), which offers the earliest documented account of P4C implementation within the domestic education system. Conducted as a controlled pilot project at the Philippine Normal College Laboratory School, this initial foray introduced Lipman's core target curriculum—specifically the translated and localized iterations of Pixie and Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery—to young Filipino learners. The overriding research objective during this exploratory period was primarily epistemological and programmatic, which investigators sought to verify whether children situated within a developing, post-colonial educational context could successfully master the mechanics of formal philosophical inquiry. While the empirical findings from these early implementations were encouraging—demonstrating not only that Filipino children could actively inhabit a Community of Inquiry (CoI) but also that they exhibited quantifiable gains in cognitive reasoning skills—the phase illuminated profound structural frictions. Chief among these were the limits of linguistic translation, the nuances of cultural adaptation, and the problematic transferability of pedagogical models produced within Western socio-cultural context. These nascent anxieties regarding linguistic dissonance and localized relevance would transition from immediate logistical hurdles into the enduring, generative themes that define contemporary Philippine P4wC scholarship.

A decisive paradigm shift occurred during the Foundation and Democratization Phase, an era largely defined by the extensive theoretical and praxiological interventions of Zosimo E. Lee (2009; 2014; 2017) throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. Moving decisively away from the preceding experimental efforts—which were predominantly technical and preoccupied with basic operational feasibility—Lee introduced an expansive, macro-philosophical interpretation of P4wC. His deep engagement with the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC), alongside formative, collaborative dialogues with Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp, catalyzed a conceptual evolution. Lee recognized that the Community of Inquiry (CoI) model possessed a latent transformative potential that transcended its standard application as a tool for cognitive enhancement or instructional strategy for critical thinking. To ground this insight, Lee critically scaffolded the CoI framework using the political philosophies of John Rawls (1999; 2001) and Jürgen Habermas (1995; 1996). He, then, re-theorized philosophical inquiry with children as a foundational form of democratic practice. Under this framework, the classroom dialogue became a micro-public sphere—a site for cultivating the exact civic virtues, mutual respect, and non-coercive deliberation necessary for a vibrant democratic society. Teacher-training workshops, public-school initiatives, and university-based programs organized through the University of the Philippines expanded awareness of P4C and established its intellectual foundations in the Philippine context.

The literature consistently highlights Lee's conceptual innovations as foundational to the structural transformation of the discipline. While international P4C discourse frequently prioritized cognitive development and critical thinking metrics as primary outcomes, Lee advanced a more expansive "pedagogy of reasonableness." Within his paradigm, the Community of Inquiry (CoI) was re-theorized as a structural microcosm of a democratic polity. By participating in the CoI, young learners did not merely sharpen their logical faculties; they acquired the civic dispositions and communicative capacities indispensable for public deliberation. The epistemological significance of this shift is profound: P4C in the Philippines emerged not as an isolated cognitive program, but as a deliberate educational response to post-colonial pluralism, systemic social conflict, and the imperatives of democratic participation. This normative framework permanently altered the trajectory of the movement, serving as the dominant philosophical orientation for subsequent generations of local scholar-practitioners.

Following the securement of these theoretical foundations, the movement transitioned into the Pedagogical Consolidation Phase, spanning the early 2000s through the early 2020s. This era was characterized by an intellectual shift away from macro-level philosophical justification toward micro-level classroom mechanics, facilitation dynamics, and empirical validation. An early catalyst in this transition was the work of Payongayong

(2007), who positioned the CoI as a radical alternative to the banking model of traditional, teacher-centered education in the Philippines. Aligning her analysis with Lipman's core tenets, Payongayong argued that national pedagogical structures must actively cultivate autonomous, reflexive, and critical thinkers rather than passive consumers of state-mandated information. By framing collaborative reflection and dialogical inquiry as the primary mechanisms for knowledge construction, her conceptual interventions effectively legitimized inquiry-based learning within the broader local academy. Her scholarship served as an essential intellectual bridge, translating Lee's institutional advocacy into concrete frameworks for classroom application. Subsequently, the scholarship of Abigail Canuto (2015; 2018) marked a crucial empirical turn in the literature, representing the earliest systematic, classroom-based investigations of CoI practices within the Philippine matrix. Canuto's qualitative and descriptive studies mapped the specific modalities through which Filipino learners engage in concept formation, collaborative reasoning, peer-to-peer questioning, and intersubjective meaning-making. These studies shifted the discourse from advocacy toward evidence-based examination of classroom processes. Rather than asking whether children could philosophize, researchers began examining how philosophical inquiry unfolds in educational settings and what pedagogical conditions support its success. This phase played a crucial role in legitimizing P4C as an educational practice. Community of Inquiry was no longer merely a theoretical ideal but an observable pedagogical reality. At the same time, studies during this period highlighted the importance of teacher facilitation, indicating that successful implementation depended heavily upon educators capable of sustaining dialogue and inquiry.

This insight would later influence discussions regarding teacher preparation and professional development. By the mid-2010s, Philippine P4wC entered a period of **Philosophical Expansion and Theoretical Diversification**. During this phase, scholars extended the discourse beyond critical thinking and democratic education into broader philosophical domains. A central figure driving this theoretical evolution is Peter Paul Elicor (2016; 2018; 2020; 2022a; 2023; 2024). Elicor's early work (2016) intentionally re-theorized P4wC as a form of emancipatory pedagogy. Drawing on Lipman's foundational models, he reconceptualized the Community of Inquiry (CoI) as a democratic clearing where children could actively exercise autonomy, intellectual agency, and existential freedom. This initial intervention successfully shifted the national discourse away from functional skills development, re-centering it on the recognition of children as legitimate epistemic agents. Subsequent to this initial re-framing, Elicor introduced a series of critical post-structuralist and post-colonial interventions into the literature.

Firstly, by placing the CoI in conversation with the political and ethical philosophies of Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Rancière—alongside insights from feminist epistemology

and indigenous systems of thought—Elicor challenged traditional configurations of pedagogical authority. Within this expanded framework, the CoI is no longer viewed merely as a site for collaborative problem-solving; it is analyzed as an ethical and political encounter characterized by radical alterity (the recognition of the absolute other) and reflexivity regarding the facilitator's structural positionality. Another is that a watershed contribution of this era was the systemic introduction of critical epistemology into the P4wC matrix. In a key study on mapping identity-based prejudice, Elicor (2020) deployed Miranda Fricker's framework of epistemic injustice to demonstrate that classroom inquiry communities are not inherently insulated from broader societal inequalities. He illuminated the precise mechanisms through which young learners experience testimonial and hermeneutic injustices—often caused by identity-based credibility deficits, adultcentric social stereotypes, and institutionalized biases. By exposing these power dynamics, this line of research disrupted the romanticized assumption that the CoI is automatically democratic, forcing contemporary scholars to critically monitor the subtle asymmetries operating within dialogical spaces. More so, Elicor (2022b) further extended this critique to the broader discipline of the Filipino philosophy of education. He argues that children must be recognized not merely as the subjects of pedagogical design, but as active co-constructors of educational philosophy itself. This stance explicitly destabilizes the deep-seated assumption that theorizing about education is an exclusively adult prerogative. By asserting that children possess unique registers of wonder, existential curiosity, and radical openness, Elicor contends that a genuine Filipino philosophy of education must treat the child as an essential dialogue partner. Under this paradigm, P4wC evolves from an instructional technology designed to teach children how to think into a collaborative project that actively thinks with them, permanently broadening the democratic horizons of the field.

Simultaneously, other prominent scholars contributed vital conceptual frameworks that solidified P4wC's position as a robust domain within the philosophy of education rather than a mere pedagogical methodology. Mancenido-Bolaños (2016; 2018; 2025) shifted the analytical lens toward the Philosophy of Childhood itself, executing rigorous interrogations of children's structural agency, distinct temporalities, and phenomenological lived experiences within post-colonial spaces. In the same manner, Capili (2021) directly confronted the linguistic frictions of the domestic school system by exploring the unique dynamics of multilingual and second-language philosophical inquiry, mapping how children negotiate complex abstract concepts across vernacular and official instructional languages. Also, Marquez (2017a; 2017b) contextualized these dialogical practices within macro-level debates on institutional educational reform and state-mandated critical thinking metrics. The empirical viability of these multi-layered theoretical models was further validated by Basa, Mancenido-Bolaños, Gapo, and Miranda (2023). Through systematic, online Communities of Inquiry involving children aged five to ten, their research

demonstrated that early learners could seamlessly formulate philosophical queries, scrutinize underlying assumptions, proffer logical justifications, and sustain collaborative reflection. This empirical evidence directly sustained the core epistemic assertion of the contemporary movement: children are inherently active, reflexive thinkers capable of rigorous philosophical labor.

By the 2020s, a distinct fifth phase materialized, marked by Localization, Indigenization, and Filipino Reconstruction. This era represents a significant departure from earlier scholar-practitioners who were primarily preoccupied with the superficial localization of Lipman's Eurocentric curriculum materials. In contrast, contemporary Philippine scholarship seeks a radical, decolonial reconstruction of the epistemological and ontological foundations of inquiry itself. A prime example of this epistemic shift is Elicor's critique of Western P4C models. He argues that traditional Anglo-American frameworks overemphasize hyper-individualistic, atomistic logical analysis. In response, he proposes alternative models that are explicitly relational, highly situated, and communally oriented. This relational imperative is deeply materialized in the work of Hernandez (2023), who formulated an "eco-rational" Philosophy for Children explicitly grounded in the core Filipino indigenous value of *kapwa* (shared identity/interconnectedness). By weaving *kapwa* into the CoI architecture, Hernandez seamlessly synthesizes ecological responsibility with communal philosophical dialogue. Augmented by the culturally grounded insights of Mancenido-Bolaños and Capili, this phase marks a definitive transition from passive contextual adaptation to genuine philosophical reconstruction—one that draws its vitality directly from indigenous knowledge systems, vernacular lifeworlds, and multilingual realities.

The most recent evolutionary trajectory has culminated in the Public Engagement and Contemporary Applications Phase. Here, the scholarship systematically deploys P4wC as an active socio-political intervention against contemporary crises. A stark illustration of this public turn is found in Jasareno's (2023) critical analysis of the 2022 Philippine general elections. Jasareno demonstrates that the Community of Inquiry can serve as a vital institutional defense against the proliferation of digital misinformation, political polarization, and acute democratic fragility. By applying the CoI to highly contested civic domains, current scholarship explicitly positions philosophical dialogue with children as a site for defending democratic citizenship, fostering cultural identity, and executing social justice. Through these contemporary vectors, the discipline effectively actualizes Lee's foundational dream: transforming philosophy from an elite academic luxury into an essential, democratized tool for public reason and collective survival. A notable development in this period was the adaptation of the Community of Inquiry to online and distance learning environments. Responding to the educational disruptions brought about

by the COVID-19 pandemic, Mendoza et al. (2020) critically examined the applicability of Zosimo Lee's Community of Inquiry framework to distance education by comparing it with Garrison's well-established Community of Inquiry model. Their analysis revealed substantial similarities in the emphasis on collaborative inquiry, reflective dialogue, and community-building, while also identifying limitations related to asynchronous interaction and teaching presence. The authors argued that Lee's framework could be strengthened through insights from online learning research, thereby extending the relevance of Philippine P4wC beyond traditional face-to-face settings. This study represents one of the earliest attempts to bridge Lee's philosophical vision with contemporary distance education theory and laid the groundwork for digital and technology-mediated Communities of Inquiry in the Philippines (Mendoza et al., 2020). In her recent Alvarez-Abarejo (2024) further expanded Philippine P4wC scholarship by revisiting Plato's *Allegory of the Cave* as a philosophical foundation for the Community of Inquiry. Challenging the common view that Plato opposed philosophical education for children, she argued that both Plato and P4wC share a common educational goal: the cultivation of wisdom. Through a comparative analysis of Platonic education and the Community of Inquiry, Alvarez-Abarejo showed that education is not merely the transmission of knowledge but a transformative process that guides learners toward truth, understanding, and reflective judgment. She emphasized that teachers function as facilitators of inquiry rather than transmitters of information and that wisdom, rather than critical thinking alone, should be regarded as the ultimate aim of education. By reconnecting P4wC with classical philosophical traditions, her work broadened the theoretical foundations of Philippine P4wC and reoriented discussions toward virtue formation, intellectual humility, and human flourishing. While many scholars in the Philosophy for/with Children (P4wC) movement have focused on its theoretical foundations and pedagogical applications for children, Gapo (2023) extends the discussion by proposing a rethinking of teacher education itself. Drawing from the works of Matthew Lipman, John Dewey, David Kennedy, and other P4wC scholars, he contends that teachers should move beyond being transmitters of knowledge and become facilitators of a Community of Inquiry where learners actively construct meaning. Integrating P4wC into teacher education can cultivate reflective, self-corrective, and democratic educators capable of fostering reasonableness in future generations.

This contemporary phase decisively mirrors the enduring, generative influence of Lee's original vision. The Community of Inquiry has broken free from its traditional confinement within the school classroom; it is now systematically theorized as a vital macroscopic framework for navigating systemic societal crises. Within this public turn, philosophical inquiry is elevated into a mechanism for cultivating an active citizenry—individuals equipped to confront highly polarized public issues through rigorous, non-coercive dialogue, structured reason-giving, and collective reflexivity. The

aggregated literature outlines a clear developmental arc, charting a trajectory that began with experimental transplantation and has culminated in philosophical maturity, decolonial critique, and contextual reconstruction. Viewed historically, the biography of P4wC in the Philippines cannot be reduced to the institutionalization of an imported Anglo-American educational program. Instead, it represents an indigenous intellectual movement characterized by a relentless effort to nurture communities of inquiry dedicated to democratic life, ethical responsibility, and uniquely Filipino registers of philosophical engagement. While profound structural barriers persist regarding macro-level policy support and large-scale systemic institutionalization, the academic consensus is clear: Philippine P4wC has successfully evolved into a distinct, self-reflexive intellectual tradition whose continuous development remains fundamentally animated by the pioneering vision of Zosimo E. Lee.

This historical development of Philippine P4C may be more clearly understood through the periodization presented in the table below, which summarizes the major phases, leading scholars, and dominant intellectual contributions that shaped the movement over time.

Table 1
Phases in the Development of Philosophy for/with Children in the Philippines

Historical Phase	Period	Key Scholars	Major Contributions and Characteristics
<i>Introduction and Experimental Phase</i>	1980s–1990s	<i>John J. Holder Jr., early collaborators from Philippine Normal College</i>	<i>First documented implementation of P4C in the Philippines through the Pixie and Harry Stottlemeier’s Discovery programs. Focused on testing the feasibility of philosophical inquiry among Filipino children, adapting Lipman’s materials, and addressing concerns regarding language, culture, and educational transfer.</i>
<i>Foundation and Democratization Phase (The Lee Era)</i>	1990s–2000s	<i>Zosimo E. Lee, University of the Philippines Department of Philosophy</i>	<i>Institutional introduction of P4C through teacher trainings and public-school</i>

			<p><i>implementations. Reframed the Community of Inquiry as a pedagogy of public reason, democratic citizenship, communicative rationality, and peace-building. Established the philosophical identity of Philippine P4wC and positioned philosophical inquiry as a practice of democratic life.</i></p>
<p><i>Pedagogical Consolidation Phase</i></p>	<p>2000s–2020s</p>	<p><i>Ma. Theresa T. Payongayong, Abigail G. Canuto,</i></p>	<p><i>Consolidated the pedagogical foundations of P4wC in Philippine education. Payongayong advocated the Community of Inquiry as an alternative to teacher-centered instruction and emphasized the cultivation of critical, reflective, and independent thinking. Canuto provided classroom-based investigations into facilitation, concept formation, and inquiry processes, while Marquez connected P4wC to critical thinking, educational reform, and the strengthening of Philippine basic education. These scholars demonstrated the educational value and practical viability of philosophical inquiry in schools.</i></p>

<i>Philosophical Expansion and Theoretical Diversification Phase</i>	2010s–2020s	<i>Peter Paul E. Elicor, Zosimo E. Lee, Marella A. V. Mancenido-Bolaños, April Capili, Leander P. Marquez</i>	<i>Expanded P4wC beyond critical thinking into ethics, alterity, public reason, pedagogical authority, intellectual emancipation, multilingual inquiry, values education, and Philosophy of Childhood. This period produced the richest theoretical contributions in Philippine P4wC scholarship and situated the field within broader debates in philosophy of education and democratic theory.</i>
<i>Localization, Indigenization, and Filipino Reconstruction Phase</i>	2020s–Present	<i>Peter Paul E. Elicor, Carl Jayson D. Hernandez, Marella A. V. Mancenido-Bolaños, April Capili</i>	<i>Marked a shift from adaptation to reconstruction. Scholars increasingly incorporated indigenous epistemologies, Filipino concepts such as kapwa, ecological consciousness, multilingual realities, children’s lived experiences, and decolonial perspectives into the Community of Inquiry tradition, contributing to the emergence of a distinctly Filipino P4wC.</i>
<i>Public Engagement, Reasonableness, and Contemporary Applications Phase</i>	2020s–Present	<i>Emmanuelle O. Jasareno, Cathlyne Joy Alvarez-Abarejo, Leander P. Marquez, Carl Jayson D. Hernandez, Basa, Mancenido-Bolaños, Gapo, & Miranda, Lumberto G.</i>	<i>Extended P4wC beyond classroom inquiry to address contemporary social and educational concerns. Research explored democratic citizenship, misinformation, ecological crises, educational</i>

Mendoza Marielle *reform, and wisdom*
Antoinette H. Zosa Jairus *education. Basa et al.*
Diesta Espiritu Alexander *demonstrated the cultivation*
Atrio L. Lopez *of reasonableness through*
 online Communities of
 Inquiry, while
 Alvarez-Abarejo reconnected
 P4wC to the classical
 philosophical pursuit of
 wisdom. Together, these
 scholars extended Lee's
 vision of public reason and
 dialogical inquiry into
 contemporary Philippine
 social life and educational
 practice.

Pedagogical practices associated with the Community of Inquiry (CoI)

The second major theme emerging from the literature centers on the precise pedagogical practices through which Philosophy for/with Children (P4wC) is operationalized within the Philippine educational landscape. While the historical evolution of the movement traces its institutional biography, the pedagogical literature isolates the micro-dynamics of how philosophical inquiry functions in real-world educational settings. Across the reviewed studies, a clear consensus emerges: the Community of Inquiry (CoI) serves as the definitive pedagogical framework through which collaborative dialogue, critical reflection, democratic participation, and intersubjective meaning-making are cultivated. Crucially, contemporary scholarship indicates that Philippine P4wC pedagogy has broken free from its early, narrow alignment with cognitive psychology. Rather than focusing exclusively on the development of discrete, insular thinking skills, the localized execution of the CoI has expanded to encompass ethical formation, democratic citizenship, multilingual navigation, ecological consciousness, and the structural recognition of children's epistemic agency.

A recurring baseline finding across the literature is the absolute centrality of the CoI as the primary instructional model. Derived from the pioneering works of Matthew Lipman 35 and structurally adapted to the local socio-political landscape by Zosimo E. Lee, the CoI is consistently defined as a non-hierarchical, collaborative learning environment where participants share ownership of a philosophical investigation. This structural orientation

introduces a profound departure from the authoritarian, teacher-centered paradigms that historically dominate many Philippine classrooms. Instead of positioning students as passive repositories for state-mandated information—akin to Paulo Freire’s critique of the banking concept of education—the CoI repositions them as active co-constructors of knowledge. Under this framework, the trajectory of inquiry is fundamentally bottom-up: investigations are triggered by raw questions generated by the learners themselves, and conceptual clarity is achieved through open-ended dialogue, peer-to-peer reflection, and collective, self-correcting reasoning.

Several studies underscore that the primary pedagogical efficacy of the Community of Inquiry (CoI) resides within its inherently dialogical architecture. Canuto’s empirical, classroom-based investigations demonstrate that structured philosophical inquiry enables learners to seamlessly formulate questions, clarify ambiguous concepts, expose unexamined assumptions, and construct meanings intersubjectively. Through sustained, non-coercive dialogue, students learn to articulate independent ideas, provide logical justifications for their claims, evaluate alternative viewpoints, and refine their own thinking in response to peer critiques. These linguistic and cognitive processes do not merely accelerate cognitive development; they actively cultivate the deeply rooted socio-emotional dispositions necessary for democratic participation. The literature consistently portrays dialogue as simultaneously the method and the telos (ultimate goal) of inquiry. This dual orientation directly mirrors Lee’s expansive normative vision, which positions education not as technical training, but as a deliberate preparation for public reason, civic deliberation, and pluralistic coexistence.

Closely aligned with the dialogical matrix is the strategic pedagogical deployment of questioning, which the reviewed scholarship identifies as the primary engine of philosophical inquiry. In the CoI framework, questioning undergoes a radical functional transformation. Unlike conventional classroom recitation—where the teacher utilizes closed interrogatives to measure rote content mastery—P4wC privileges open-ended, conceptually dense, and philosophically significant queries. Learners are explicitly invited to interrogate foundational human abstractions, including truth, justice, identity, freedom, responsibility, and the ethical contours of human relationships. In terms of pedagogical shift, by prioritizing learner-generated questions over instructor-mandated prompts, the CoI structurally shifts epistemic authority away from predetermined, state-sanctioned answers and redirects it toward collaborative, open-ended exploration. Canuto’s empirical findings suggest that this shift enables students to move past factual recall, migrating into the domains of deep conceptual understanding and reflective judgment. Consequently, the literature positions questioning not merely as an instructional tactic, but as a foundational

pedagogical practice that stimulates intellectual curiosity, triggers self-correcting inquiry, and nurtures autonomous thinking within the learner.

Another critical pedagogical theme in the literature concerns the radical reconfiguration of the instructor's role within the dialogical space. Moving away from traditional instructional models where the teacher serves as the primary repository and transmitter of knowledge, the localized P4wC scholarship consistently redefines the educator as a facilitator of inquiry. Under this framework, the facilitator's primary responsibility is explicitly divested of the duty to provide definitive, closed answers. Instead, their professional focus is redirected toward sustaining the momentum of the inquiry process, scaffolding marginal participation, clarifying emergent concepts, and maintaining the rigor of reflective dialogue.

Canuto identifies this capacity for sophisticated facilitation as one of the most critical structural variables influencing the success of a Community of Inquiry session. Her empirical work emphasizes that effective facilitators must deliberately cultivate an atmosphere of epistemic and intellectual safety—a specialized classroom ecology where young learners feel structurally respected and psychologically encouraged to articulate non-conformist or diverse perspectives. This structural shift in classroom dynamics is further theorized in Elicor's critical investigations into the metaphysics of pedagogical authority. Putting the CoI framework into conversation with Jacques Rancière's philosophy of intellectual emancipation, Elicor contends that authority within a philosophical inquiry community must break sharply from classical, hierarchical models of classroom governance. Within an emancipatory paradigm, the facilitator's legitimacy does not derive from an assumed monopoly over superior information or academic credentials. Rather, it is anchored entirely in their capacity to liberate independent thought and safeguard collaborative, peer-to-peer inquiry. By restructuring the classroom into a context where teachers and students operate symmetrically as co-inquirers engaged in a shared, open-ended search for meaning, this approach directly destabilizes paternalistic assumptions about learning. In doing so, it reinforces the deeply egalitarian and democratic ethos that animates the contemporary Philippine P4wC movement.

The literature also highlights the multidimensional nature of thinking cultivated through philosophical inquiry. Following Lipman's framework, several studies emphasize the development of critical, creative, and caring thinking. Critical thinking involves examining assumptions, evaluating arguments, and applying criteria to judgment. Creative thinking encourages imagination, innovation, and the generation of alternative possibilities. Caring thinking introduces an ethical dimension by fostering empathy, appreciation, and concern for others. Philippine scholars consistently argue that these dimensions are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Elicor's Levinasian interpretation of P4C further

deepens the role of caring thinking by emphasizing responsibility toward the Other and ethical responsiveness within dialogue. Democratic participation emerges as another defining pedagogical characteristic. Through Lee's conception of a pedagogy of reasonableness, it significantly shaped subsequent discussions of educational practice. In the same manner, within the Community of Inquiry, students learn to listen to others, provide reasons for their views, consider alternative perspectives, and revise their positions when warranted by evidence or argument. These practices mirror the norms of democratic deliberation and public reasoning. The literature suggests that philosophical inquiry functions as a form of democratic apprenticeship, allowing learners to experience the processes of collective decision-making and rational discourse. Rather than merely learning about democracy, students practice democratic engagement through participation in inquiry itself. The reviewed studies further demonstrate that Philippine P4C pedagogy increasingly responds to issues of diversity, inclusion, and contextual relevance. Capili's work on philosophizing in second-language contexts illustrates how philosophical inquiry can be adapted to multilingual educational settings. Contrary to assumptions that philosophical dialogue requires advanced language proficiency, Capili argues that inquiry can facilitate language development by providing meaningful opportunities for communication and reflection. The Community of Inquiry becomes a space where learners use language authentically while simultaneously engaging philosophical questions. This contribution is particularly significant in the Philippine context, where multilingualism remains a defining educational reality. Similarly, Elicor emphasizes culturally responsive and indigenous approaches to inquiry. Elicor's work with indigenous communities challenges the universal applicability of Western models of philosophical dialogue and advocates for inquiry practices grounded in local knowledge systems and communal traditions. These studies suggest that effective philosophical pedagogy requires sensitivity to cultural contexts, epistemological diversity, and local ways of knowing. This shift toward culturally responsive, indigenous, and ecological frameworks represents a sophisticated maturation of the philosophical foundations established by Zosimo E. Lee. While Lee initially conceptualized the Community of Inquiry (CoI) as a site for public reason and democratic citizenship, he always maintained that P4wC must not remain a mere imported commodity. For Lee, the ultimate goal of the movement was to cultivate a "pedagogy of reasonableness" that was profoundly responsive to the specific material realities, socio-political anxieties, and democratic aspirations of the Philippines. Such developments reflect a broader movement toward the indigenization and reconstruction of P4C within Philippine educational settings. By pushing the boundaries of the CoI into indigenous epistemologies and ecological relationality, contemporary scholars are directly actualizing Lee's vision of an indigenized, locally meaningful educational project.

Another emerging pedagogical direction concerns ecological and relational inquiry. Hernandez's eco-rational Philosophy for Children extends traditional Community of Inquiry practices by incorporating ecological consciousness and the Filipino concept of *kapwa*. Philosophical dialogue becomes a means of exploring relationships among self, others, community, and the natural environment. This approach broadens the scope of inquiry beyond human-centered concerns and demonstrates the capacity of P4C pedagogy to address contemporary environmental challenges. This ecological reconstruction directly serves Lee's vision of utilizing philosophy as a response to real-world social and structural conflict. By infusing the CoI with *kapwa*, contemporary pedagogy transforms Lipman's traditional inquiry model into a distinctly Filipino ethical encounter—one that equips young learners to address contemporary environmental crises and democratic vulnerabilities through an indigenous lens of shared humanity.

Despite these strengths, the literature identifies three pedagogical challenges. First, successful implementation remains highly dependent on teacher competence and facilitation skills. Many teachers have limited exposure to philosophical inquiry and may struggle to transition from content-centered instruction to inquiry-based pedagogy. Second, classroom time constraints and curriculum demands often limit opportunities for sustained philosophical dialogue. Third, the absence of systematic training programs and institutional support creates difficulties in maintaining consistent implementation across educational settings. These challenges suggest that pedagogical innovation alone is insufficient without corresponding investments in teacher development and educational policy.

All of these demonstrate that pedagogical practice within Philippine P4C is characterized by dialogue, questioning, facilitation, collaborative inquiry, democratic participation, and multidimensional thinking. While the Community of Inquiry remains the dominant pedagogical framework, contemporary scholars have expanded its application to address issues of language, culture, ethics, ecology, and social inclusion. These developments reveal a pedagogical tradition that is both philosophically grounded and increasingly responsive to the diverse realities of Philippine education. Most importantly, they illustrate how educational practice continues to embody and extend Zosimo E. Lee's vision of inquiry as a means of cultivating reasonableness, democratic citizenship, and reflective participation in public life.

Filipino adaptations and contextual reconstructions

A paramount theme emerging from the corpus of reviewed literature is the systematic evolution of Philosophy for/with Children (P4wC) from a process of passive educational transfer into a distinctive, self-reflexive indigenous intellectual tradition. While the initial introduction of P4wC within the archipelago relied almost exclusively on the

orthodox Western frameworks established by Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp, contemporary Philippine scholarship exhibits a pronounced trajectory toward localization and decolonial reconstruction. Rather than uncritically adopting imported models of philosophical inquiry, contemporary Filipino scholars increasingly seek to dismantle and re-engineer the Community of Inquiry (CoI). This structural reimagining is achieved by anchoring the CoI within indigenous conceptual frameworks, local educational materialities, multilingual lifeworlds, acute ecological anxieties, and culturally grounded definitions of childhood.

The issue of contextualization has been present since the earliest stages of Philippine P4C. Holder's account of the initial implementation of Lipman's curriculum already identified concerns regarding cultural transfer, linguistic adaptation, and educational relevance. Although the pilot projects demonstrated that Filipino children could engage in philosophical inquiry, they also revealed the challenges of implementing educational materials originally designed for Western contexts. The question was not merely whether children could philosophize, but whether the philosophical content, examples, narratives, and assumptions embedded within imported materials adequately reflected Filipino experiences. This concern would later become a central theme in the development of Philippine P4C. The work of Zosimo E. Lee marked an important turning point in this process. Rather than focusing solely on the adaptation of instructional materials, Lee reconstructed the philosophical meaning of the Community of Inquiry itself. The work of Zosimo E. Lee marked a watershed turning point in this historic effort toward contextual relevance. Lee recognized that superficial textual adaptation—such as merely altering names, settings, or idioms in Western stories—was an insufficient response to post-colonial educational realities. Instead, he executed a radical reconstruction of the metaphysical and political meaning of the Community of Inquiry itself. By synthesizing Matthew Lipman's pedagogical scaffolding with the political philosophies of John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas, Lee successfully transplanted the CoI out of the domain of elementary cognitive psychology and placed it squarely into the arena of macro-political theory. Rather than treating P4wC as an instructional technology designed to sharpen isolated critical thinking skills, Lee re-theorized it as a structural response to Philippine social realities characterized by acute political polarization, systemic socio-economic conflicts, and democratic vulnerabilities.

In a relevant manner, he situated philosophical inquiry within the context of democratic citizenship, public reason, and communicative dialogue. In doing so, Lee transformed P4C from a program primarily concerned with thinking skills into a broader educational project aimed at cultivating reasonableness and democratic participation. This reinterpretation represented one of the earliest forms of localization within Philippine P4C because it responded directly to social realities characterized by political pluralism, cultural

diversity, and democratic challenges. The Community of Inquiry became not merely a classroom methodology but a model for civic engagement and peaceful dialogue. Through this theoretical re-engineering, Lee enacted the earliest and most profound form of localization within the domestic tradition by aligning the CoI with the defense of democratic institutions. To reiterate, Lee transformed the classroom from a site of rote instructional delivery into a democratic clearing. Here, the Rawlsian concept of public reason and the Habermasian framework of communicative action were translated into lived, accessible child-centered practices. Another is that Lee championed "reasonableness" over mere logical consistency. This conceptualization repositioned philosophical inquiry as an ethical imperative, training future citizens to engage across deep-seated cultural, linguistic, and socio-political divides without resorting to coercion or polarization. More so, through this, the CoI ceased to be an exotic classroom methodology. It was elevated into an indispensable socio-pedagogical tool for peace-building, democratic participation, and public deliberation tailored to the democratic aspirations of the post-dictatorship Philippine republic.

Subsequent scholars expanded these efforts by exploring dimensions of Filipino educational experience that had received limited attention within traditional P4C literature. One significant area of adaptation concerns multilingualism and language diversity. In many Western P4C contexts, philosophical inquiry is conducted within relatively stable linguistic environments. The Philippine educational landscape, however, is characterized by multilingual classrooms, code-switching practices, and second-language instruction. Capili's work directly addresses this reality by examining whether philosophical inquiry can be effectively conducted in a language that is not the learner's mother tongue. Her findings challenge assumptions that philosophical thinking requires advanced linguistic mastery. Instead, philosophical dialogue is presented as a means of supporting language acquisition through meaningful communication, conceptual clarification, and collaborative reflection. This contribution represents a significant contextual adaptation because it responds directly to one of the most distinctive features of Philippine education. Another important dimension of Filipino adaptation is the increasing engagement with indigenous knowledge systems and decolonial perspectives. Traditional P4C literature has largely been grounded in Western philosophical assumptions regarding rationality, inquiry, and dialogue. Elicor's scholarship challenges the universality of these assumptions by exploring how indigenous communities engage in meaning-making, knowledge formation, and communal reflection. His work suggests that indigenous epistemologies often emphasize relationality, community, spirituality, and lived experience in ways that differ from dominant Western models of philosophical inquiry. Consequently, the Community of Inquiry must be reconceptualized not as a fixed pedagogical structure but as a flexible framework capable of accommodating diverse cultural traditions. Through this perspective, philosophical inquiry becomes a site for epistemic inclusion rather than epistemological assimilation. Building upon Zosimo Lee's

original assertion that inquiry must serve localized human liberation, Elicor argues that the CoI must be re-engineered into a highly plastic, flexible framework capable of honoring diverse cultural traditions. Through this decolonial transition, philosophical inquiry with children is successfully transfigured from an imported instructional technology into an active site for epistemic justice, ensuring that marginalized ways of knowing are validated as legitimate contributions to the global philosophical discourse.

Closely related to these decolonial efforts is the growing incorporation of Filipino philosophical concepts into P4C discourse. Among the most notable examples is Hernandez's development of an eco-rational Philosophy for Children grounded in the concept of *kapwa*. Widely regarded as one of the central concepts in Filipino philosophy and psychology, *kapwa* emphasizes shared identity, relationality, and interconnectedness. Hernandez extends this concept beyond interpersonal relationships to include human relationships with the natural environment. Through an eco-rational Community of Inquiry, learners are encouraged to examine ecological issues not merely as scientific or technical problems but as ethical and relational concerns. This reconstruction demonstrates how indigenous and Filipino concepts can serve not simply as supplementary content but as foundational principles for philosophical inquiry itself.

The literature also reveals significant adaptations in the understanding of childhood. Traditional educational frameworks often conceptualize children primarily as future adults whose value lies in what they will eventually become. In contrast, the work of Mancenido-Bolaños contributes to a growing Philosophy of Childhood discourse that recognizes children as persons with their own experiences, perspectives, and temporal realities. Drawing from thinkers such as David Kennedy and Walter Kohan, she argues that educational systems frequently impose adult-centered notions of time, productivity, and development upon children. Her scholarship encourages educators to recognize children's agency and lived experiences as legitimate sources of philosophical reflection. This perspective aligns closely with broader efforts within Philippine P4C to move beyond developmental deficit models and toward more child-centered approaches to inquiry. Another emerging characteristic of Filipino adaptation is the integration of values, ethics, and social responsibility into philosophical dialogue. While international P4C literature often emphasizes critical thinking, several Philippine scholars have highlighted the importance of caring, ethical responsiveness, and communal responsibility. Elicor's engagement with Emmanuel Levinas, for example, introduces the concept of alterity into the Community of Inquiry. Dialogue becomes not merely a cognitive exercise but an ethical encounter with the Other. Similarly, Hernandez's eco-rational framework and Lee's pedagogy of reasonableness emphasize relational responsibility rather than individual

achievement. These developments resonate strongly with Filipino cultural traditions that value interpersonal relationships, community solidarity, and mutual care.

The reviewed studies also suggest that Philippine P4C increasingly addresses contemporary social realities. Jasareno's application of Community of Inquiry to issues of misinformation and democratic polarization demonstrates how philosophical inquiry can respond to contemporary civic challenges. Rather than treating philosophical dialogue as an isolated classroom activity, these studies position inquiry as a means of preparing learners to navigate complex public issues. This orientation reflects Lee's original vision of public reason while simultaneously responding to contemporary Philippine concerns regarding democracy, media literacy, and civic participation. These developments indicate that Philippine P4C has moved beyond simple adaptation toward what may be described as philosophical reconstruction. Early efforts focused primarily on introducing Lipman's methodology into local schools. Contemporary scholarship, however, increasingly seeks to transform the philosophical foundations of inquiry through engagement with Filipino concepts, indigenous epistemologies, multilingual realities, ecological concerns, and local educational challenges. The Community of Inquiry remains the dominant pedagogical framework, but its meaning and application have been significantly enriched through contextual reinterpretation.

All of these reveal a clear trajectory from educational importation to intellectual ownership. Philippine scholars are no longer merely consumers of international P4C discourse; they have become active contributors to its development. Through concepts such as *kapwa*, indigenous relationality, eco-rationality, multilingual inquiry, and children's temporality, Filipino scholars have expanded the possibilities of philosophical inquiry and demonstrated the capacity of P4C to respond to diverse cultural and educational contexts. In this sense, Filipino adaptations represent not a departure from the original vision of Philosophy for Children but its creative continuation within the realities of Philippine life and thought.

Challenges and constraints

Despite the significant contributions of Philosophy for Children (P4C) to educational discourse in the Philippines, the reviewed literature consistently reveals a range of challenges and constraints that have limited its broader development and institutionalization. While Philippine scholars have successfully established a rich philosophical tradition around the Community of Inquiry (CoI), the movement continues to face difficulties related to implementation, teacher preparation, empirical validation, curriculum integration, policy support, and sustainability. These challenges help explain

why P4C, despite more than three decades of scholarly development since its introduction by Dr. Zosimo E. Lee, remains largely peripheral within mainstream Philippine education.

One of the most frequently identified challenges concerns the limited institutionalization of P4C within the formal educational system. Unlike countries where philosophical inquiry has been integrated into national curricula or supported through dedicated educational policies, P4C in the Philippines remains largely dependent on individual advocates, university initiatives, and isolated classroom projects. The literature reveals that most documented implementations have occurred within specific schools, teacher-training programs, or research settings rather than through system-wide educational reforms. As a result, philosophical inquiry has not become a stable component of basic education. This institutional fragility creates a situation in which the continuity of P4C initiatives often depends on the commitment of particular educators rather than on established structures within the educational system. Closely related to this issue is the absence of explicit policy support. The reviewed studies suggest that although concepts associated with P4C—such as critical thinking, learner-centered education, values formation, and democratic participation—appear within national educational frameworks, Philosophy for Children itself has not received formal recognition as a distinct pedagogical approach. Consequently, schools and teachers have limited incentives to adopt Community of Inquiry practices, especially when confronted with curriculum requirements emphasizing content coverage, standardized testing, and measurable competencies. The lack of policy integration means that P4C remains vulnerable to changing institutional priorities and educational trends. Another significant challenge concerns teacher preparation and facilitation. Across the literature, effective facilitation emerges as one of the most important conditions for successful philosophical inquiry. Canuto's classroom studies demonstrate that the quality of dialogue, questioning, and collaborative reasoning depends heavily on the facilitator's ability to guide inquiry without dominating discussion. Similarly, Elicor's analysis of pedagogical authority highlights the complexity of the teacher's role within a Community of Inquiry. Facilitators must balance openness with structure, encourage participation while maintaining rigor, and support inquiry without imposing predetermined conclusions.

However, the literature suggests that many teachers have limited preparation for such responsibilities. Traditional teacher education programs in the Philippines generally emphasize content delivery, classroom management, and assessment practices rather than philosophical facilitation. As a result, educators may find it difficult to transition from teacher-centered instruction to inquiry-based pedagogy. Facilitating philosophical dialogue requires specialized skills, including conceptual clarification, question generation, active listening, and the ability to sustain reflective discussion. Without systematic training programs, many teachers may feel unprepared to implement P4C effectively. This challenge

is particularly significant because poor facilitation can reduce philosophical inquiry to superficial conversation rather than meaningful dialogue.

A third challenge concerns the predominance of theoretical scholarship and the relative scarcity of empirical research. One of the strengths of Philippine P4C is its rich philosophical literature. Scholars have contributed sophisticated analyses of democracy, public reason, ethics, childhood, ecological responsibility, multilingual inquiry, and indigenous epistemologies. Yet the review reveals a significant imbalance between conceptual development and empirical investigation. Most studies employ philosophical analysis, critical reflection, or theoretical reconstruction rather than classroom-based research.

This imbalance creates several difficulties. First, it limits the ability of scholars to demonstrate the practical impact of P4C on learners. While the literature frequently argues that philosophical inquiry promotes critical thinking, reasonableness, democratic participation, and ethical reflection, there remains limited empirical evidence documenting these outcomes across diverse educational settings. Second, the lack of large-scale studies makes it difficult to advocate for policy adoption. Educational policymakers often require measurable evidence regarding effectiveness, scalability, and impact. Without such evidence, P4C may struggle to compete with other educational innovations that possess stronger empirical support.

The challenge of assessment further complicates this issue. Many of the outcomes associated with P4C—such as reasonableness, caring thinking, intellectual humility, perspective-taking, and democratic participation—are inherently difficult to measure. Traditional assessment systems emphasize quantifiable outcomes such as examination scores, academic performance, and competency acquisition. By contrast, philosophical inquiry seeks to cultivate dispositions, habits of mind, and forms of participation that resist straightforward quantification. The literature suggests that Philippine P4C scholars have yet to develop comprehensive assessment frameworks capable of capturing these complex educational outcomes. Consequently, the value of philosophical inquiry often remains difficult to communicate within educational environments dominated by measurable performance indicators. Curricular constraints also represent a significant obstacle to implementation. Philippine schools operate within densely packed curricula characterized by extensive content requirements and time limitations. Teachers frequently face pressure to complete prescribed learning competencies and prepare students for examinations. Within such environments, sustained philosophical dialogue may be perceived as a luxury rather than a necessity. Community of Inquiry sessions require time for questioning, reflection, discussion, and collaborative meaning-making. These processes often unfold slowly and cannot easily be compressed into highly structured lesson formats. As a result, philosophical

inquiry may be marginalized in favor of more efficient forms of instruction focused on content delivery and assessment preparation.

The reviewed literature additionally identifies cultural and educational barriers that may hinder philosophical inquiry. Philippine education has historically been influenced by hierarchical classroom structures in which teachers are regarded as authoritative sources of knowledge. Students are often socialized to respect authority, avoid confrontation, and prioritize correct answers. While these cultural tendencies are not inherently problematic, they may create challenges for pedagogical approaches that encourage questioning, disagreement, and open-ended inquiry. Community of Inquiry requires learners to challenge assumptions, evaluate arguments, and engage critically with ideas. Such practices may initially conflict with educational traditions emphasizing compliance and deference to authority. Consequently, both teachers and students may require significant adjustment before becoming comfortable with philosophical dialogue.

Another challenge concerns linguistic diversity and educational inequality. Capili's work highlights the opportunities and difficulties associated with conducting philosophical inquiry in multilingual classrooms. While philosophical dialogue can support language development, linguistic barriers may also limit participation among learners with varying levels of language proficiency. Moreover, disparities in educational resources across schools can affect the quality of implementation. Schools with limited instructional materials, overcrowded classrooms, or insufficient teacher support may struggle to sustain inquiry-based pedagogies. These structural inequalities raise important questions regarding access and equity within P4C implementation. The literature also points to the challenge of sustaining localized and indigenous approaches to philosophical inquiry. Recent scholarship has made significant progress in incorporating concepts such as *kapwa*, indigenous epistemologies, and local cultural practices into the Community of Inquiry framework. However, these innovations remain relatively isolated and often depend on individual scholars. There remains a need for systematic efforts to develop culturally grounded curricular materials, facilitator guides, and instructional resources that can support broader implementation. Without such resources, localized approaches may remain largely theoretical rather than becoming established educational practices.

All of these reveal a broader challenge related to public visibility and societal impact. Zosimo Lee envisioned philosophical inquiry as a means of cultivating public reason and democratic citizenship. Yet most documented applications of P4C remain confined to educational settings. Although recent studies have begun addressing issues such as misinformation, democratic polarization, and ecological responsibility, evidence of broader societal influence remains limited. The challenge moving forward is to demonstrate how communities of inquiry can contribute not only to educational outcomes but also to civic life,

democratic engagement, and public discourse. These challenges suggest that the future development of Philippine P4C depends upon addressing both structural and intellectual constraints. The literature reveals a movement that has achieved considerable philosophical sophistication but continues to struggle with institutionalization, empirical validation, and educational scalability. Nevertheless, these challenges should not be interpreted as signs of failure. Rather, they reflect the growing pains of a field that remains in the process of defining its place within Philippine education. The reviewed studies indicate that significant foundations have already been established. What remains is the task of translating philosophical promise into sustained educational practice, policy recognition, and broader social impact. In this regard, the challenges identified by the literature also point toward the future directions necessary for realizing the transformative vision that has guided Philippine Philosophy for Children since its introduction by Zosimo E. Lee.

Conclusion

This paper examined how Philosophy for Children (P4wC) started, grew, and adapted in the Philippines, as well as the problems it faces today. The findings show that Philippine P4C has grown from a small educational experiment into a deep, meaningful field of study that fits local culture. Over thirty years of research show that scholars have remained deeply committed to dialogue, open inquiry, critical thinking, democracy, and moral growth. At the same time, this review highlights ongoing problems. Issues with teacher training, a lack of official government policies, and a need for more school-based research have kept the movement from making a larger impact nationwide.

A major finding of this study is that the history of Philippine P4C cannot be separated from the life and work of Zosimo E. Lee. While early projects simply tried to bring Matthew Lipman's ideas into local classrooms, Lee completely changed what philosophical inquiry meant for the country. Instead of treating P4C as just a tool for teaching thinking skills, Lee connected it to deeper ideas of public reason, peaceful discussion, and democratic life. He turned philosophical inquiry into a pedagogy of reasonableness. Through his workshops for teachers, academic writing, and deep reflections, Lee built the foundation that younger Filipino scholars use today. Because of this, the story of P4C in the Philippines is truly the story of Lee's vision coming to life.

The review further demonstrates that Philippine P4C has progressed through several stages of development. From its early introduction and experimentation, the movement advanced toward pedagogical consolidation through classroom-based studies, followed by theoretical diversification through engagements with ethics, childhood studies, multilingual education, and democratic theory. More recently, Philippine scholars have begun reconstructing P4C through indigenous epistemologies, Filipino philosophical concepts such

as *kapwa*, ecological inquiry, and culturally responsive pedagogies. These developments suggest that Philippine P4C has moved beyond adaptation toward the emergence of a distinct intellectual tradition capable of contributing to international scholarship.

Despite these rich ideas, there is still a large gap between academic theory and actual practice in schools. Most local writing on P4wC remains conceptual. There are very few large-scale studies that track how dialogue helps students over many years or how it changes teacher development. Furthermore, P4wC does not have a permanent home in the national school curriculum or in college programs for future teachers. Without these structural roots, the movement remains vulnerable to disappearing from schools when individual leaders leave.

Looking ahead, several bright paths are opening up for the movement. The push for a uniquely Filipino approach to philosophy creates opportunities to write new stories and guides rooted in local wisdom. At the same time, the Department of Education's ongoing rollout of the MATATAG Curriculum—which focuses on peace education, values, and critical thinking—offers a perfect opportunity to bring the Community of Inquiry into public school classrooms. Future work must focus on expanding research in public schools, building official certification programs for teachers, and testing how digital tools and AI can help children hold philosophical discussions outside traditional classrooms.

P4wC in the Philippines is still a work in progress. Its greatest success has been building a rich scholarly community based on reason, dialogue, and democratic values. Its greatest task now is turning those beautiful ideals into lasting daily classroom habits. As the movement enters its next chapter, the vision of Zosimo E. Lee is more important than ever. His deep belief that education should create communities where people can reason together across their differences is not just a goal for schools—it is a necessity for democracy. The future of Philippine P4C lies in continuing his vital work: building spaces that teach young citizens how to listen, how to deliberate publicly, and how to seek wisdom together in a complex world.

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