

Abstract

Philosophical dialogues in education for persons with acquired brain injuries

Persons with acquired brain injuries (“ABI”) often have difficulties taking standpoints and giving arguments for their positions. For them it is necessary to relearn and develop new thinking and communication skills for participating actively in society. The aim of this paper is to examine whether philosophical dialogues inspired by Philosophy for Children (“P4C”) can be an effective tool for persons with ABI to regain lost abilities and develop new capabilities. An important focus of P4C is the development of critical, creative, collaborative and caring thinking through a community of inquiry. The empirical data of the study consist of questionnaires answered by students and staff at a specialized education program for persons with ABI at a folk high school in northern Sweden, that had 34 philosophical dialogues in different groups during nearly three years. Results suggest that philosophical dialogues are effective for persons with ABI for gaining skills that are essential to participating as citizens in a democratic society. Both students and their staff considered the dialogues to have had positive impact on the students regarding certain thinking and communication skills. A possible explanation of the results is that the form and content of P4C correspond to important needs of persons with ABI. To our knowledge, there have been no studies on the effects of philosophical dialogues with persons with ABI prior to this study. The results are promising, but further research is needed.

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