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# How do children form philosophical questions and how do such questions evolve when learners reason collectively ?

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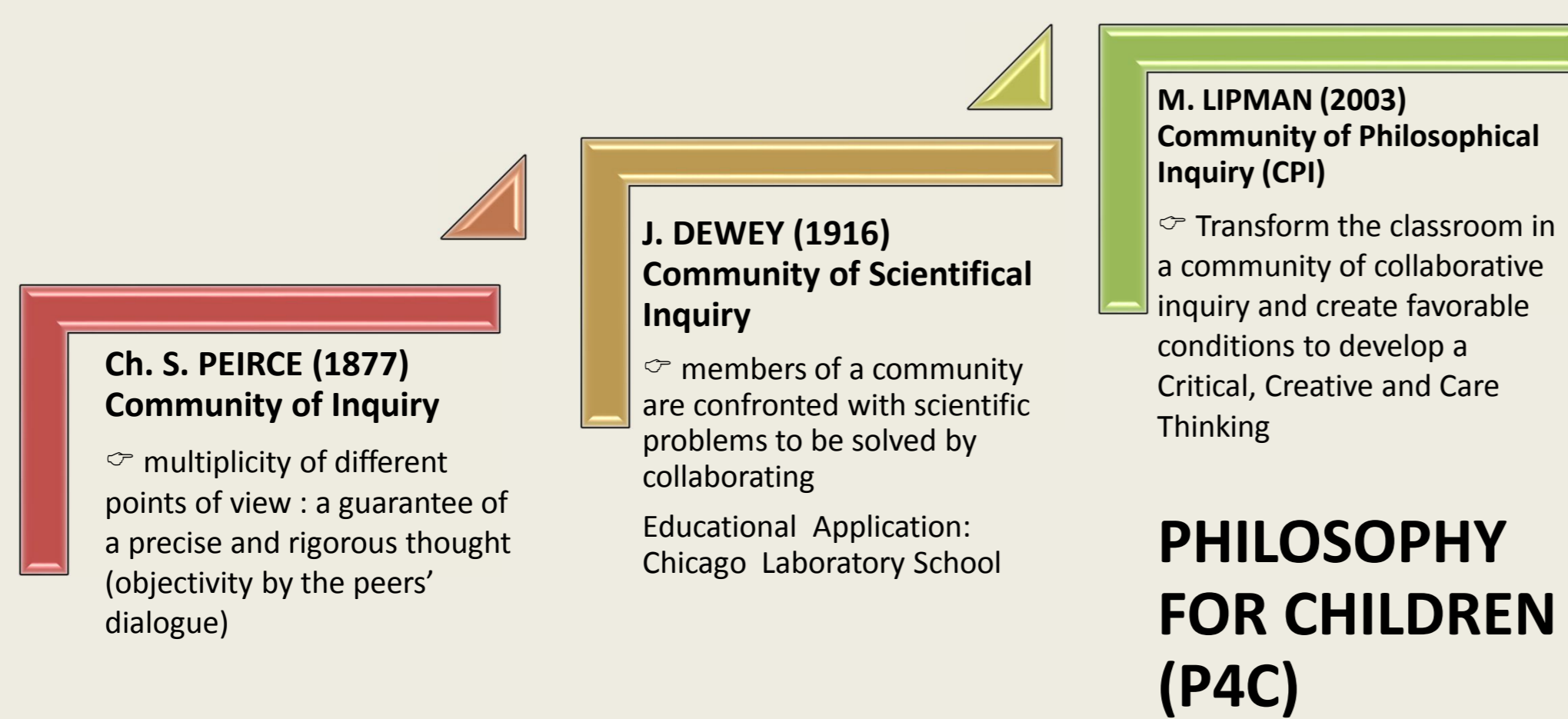
LIDILEM



## OBJECTIVE

At school, children are traditionally encouraged to give answers rather than ask questions. Thus they may be interested in knowledge but not in knowing. But questioning, as well as curiosity and astonishment, are important skills in learning. Questions lead us to experience our own thought : reflect, doubt, inquiry, arguing about opinions and challenging ideas, and confronting them with peers' thoughts. Helping children to learn how to think by themselves, through philosophical dialogue, is one of the main aims of an innovative teaching practice called "Philosophy for Children". Questioning, as a philosophical reflection, includes both an emotional dimension and an intellectual one. We know that questioning is no longer a spontaneous mental act for learners from the third year of primary school (Dewey, 1916, Lipman & al., 1980, Daniel, 2008). But what about astonishment? Is there still present? We would like to understand how learners form and develop their questioning, when thinking together during philosophical discussions.

## Collective Reasoning and Philosophical Inquiry in PHILOSOPHY FOR CHILDREN

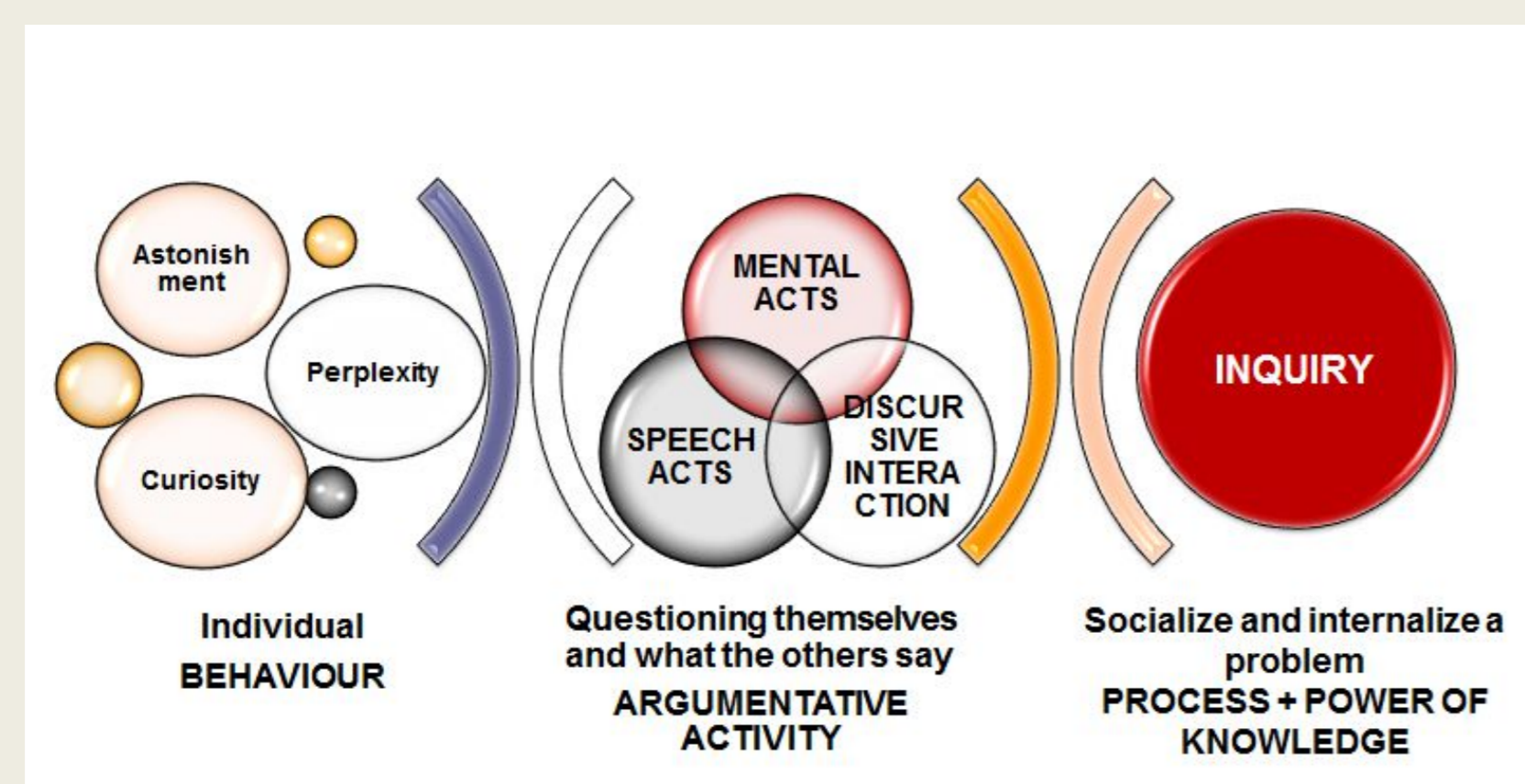


## INTRODUCTION

- *What are learners supposed to do in a CPI ?*
  - think about concepts and discuss the criteria /standards which surround these concepts, in order to distinguish the correct processes of thought from the incorrect one
- *How is this done ?*
  - learners are given a particular topic or story and then they are encouraged to think about it for themselves, sharing opinions and creating a rich dialogue based on reasoning
  - Where? In the classroom but outside of a formal curriculum
- *Why questioning in a philosophical dialogue?*
  - Recent research (Sapere, 2014) showed positive effects of using philosophy at school :
    - significant progress in mathematical and reading (primary school) and positive effects in speaking out, self-confidence, capacity of listening and self-respect.
  - Studies about the potential of learners' questions for initiating collaborative argumentation in science (Chin & Osborne, 2010)

Research about learners' questioning for initiating conceptual and problematical reflection, have not yet been studied.

## Questioning : from Astonishment to Inquiry



## METHOD

Conceptual and linguistic analyses of philosophical dialogues between learners, guided by teachers.

Two devices : • class ; • club

### Population

- 1 class (size = 24) in primary school (PS), 8/10 years old, in a well-to-do rural zone;
- 2 classes (size = 20 and 22) in middle school (MS), 11/13 years old, in a socio-economic and cultural mix, combined with a weak academic level
- 1 « philo club », between 6 and 11 voluntary participants (MS), 12/14 years old

### Material

12 videos recorded, transcribed and annotated with ELAN <https://tla.mpi.nl/tools/tla-tools/elan/>

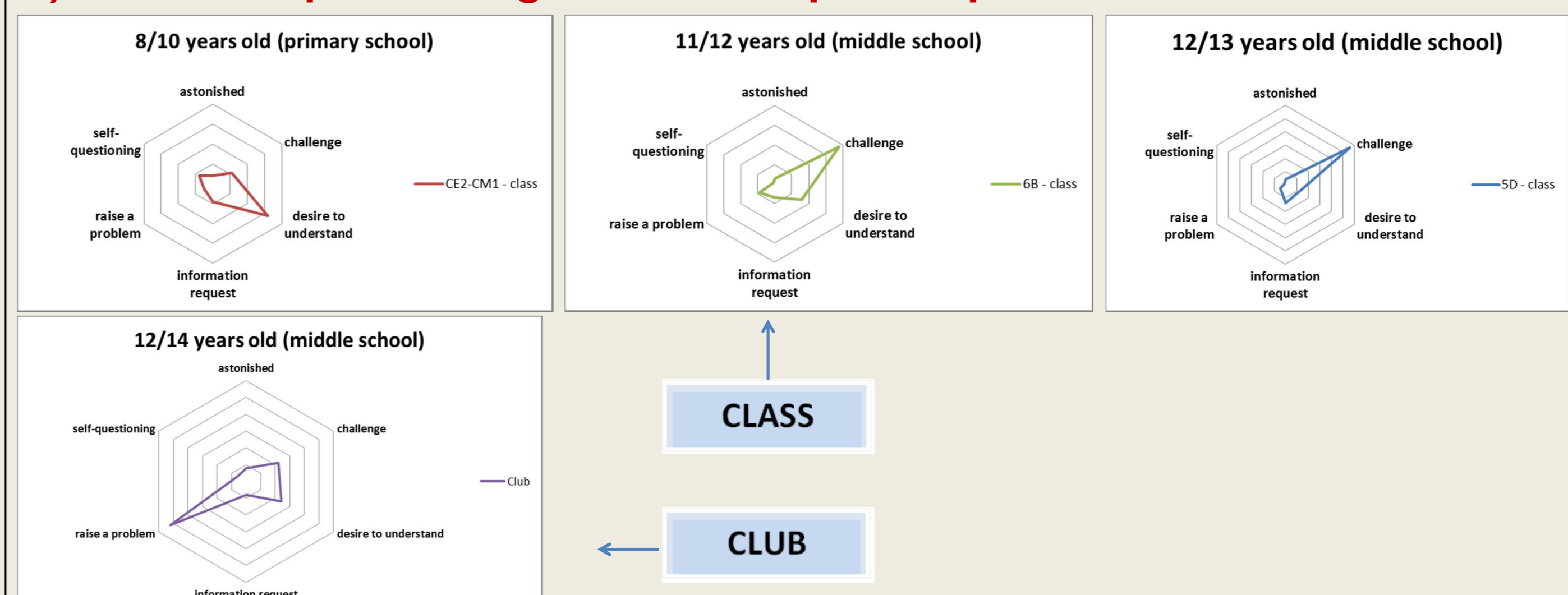
Learners' questionnaire (N = 56)

## RESULTS

### A) What do the children think about asking questions and giving answers at school?



### B) Learners' questioning attitudes in philosophical discussion



### C) Observing the acts of asking questions

	Acts of asking questions	Examples	Attitudes	Learners' age	
Verbal Markers	Interjections surprise	Hey	Peter: hey	Astonished	8/10 PS (class)
	Morphosyntactic markers (morpheme)	Est-ce que (fr)	Edwin: is our imagination more perfect than reality	Desire to understand	11/12 MS (class)
	Interrogative structure	"Wh-questions" + How Alternative questions: Yes/no	Lea : why did I ask a question before Mark : the person I was / it's still me	Self-questioning Raise a problem	8/10 PS (class) 12/14 MS (club)
	Declarative structure	Statement	Alex : uh maybe we are in a thought Max : I contradict what Ulric said uh he said that uh that we can speak only of a person in this sentence// we can say I hate another person and this other may be a group of people	Astonished Challenge	12/14 MS (club) 12/13 MS (class)

Prosodic markers and Contextual indications : not analyzed

### D) Learners' questioning evolves in interaction with teacher and peers

Alex : uh // it is possible that we are in a thought  
 Teacher 1: this is not a question  
 Nina : it could be a question // is it that the life is a thought  
 Alex : maybe are we thought by someone (xx) (laughs)  
 Nina : well yes  
 Teacher 1: so can you reformulate this question // is it that the life  
 Nina : is it that the life is a thought // is a dream  
 Teacher 2 : Alex you added something // you said something else  
 Alex : well in fact now we are in a thought // somebody thought //and we don't know that  
 Teacher 1 : thus it is something like are we // are we in the thought of somebody else  
 Alex : I say maybe that we are not in a real life but in a thought  
 Teacher 1 : so that is are we // in a thought of someone else  
 Alex : no that is maybe that we do not exist  
 Teacher 1: do we exist only in the thoughts  
 Alex : no no no (xx)  
 Teacher 1 : do we exist in the others' thoughts  
 Alex : yes yes  
 Teacher 1 : all right

(CLUB) QUESTIONING SESSION

AN INITIAL ASTONISHMENT EVOLVES INTO A PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTION, IN AND BY THE INTERACTION

## CONCLUSION

Children think that school expects them to give answers rather than ask questions and they consider themselves to be more at ease with the first. But when teachers invite them to a philosophical discussion, they are able to ask questions about what they desire to understand. They are also able to question others' opinions. But in order to raise philosophical questions and problems, a collective reflection built with peers and teacher's interventions seems necessary.

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