

Philosophical Dialogue Patterns: A Pattern Language for Collaborative Essence Exploration Based on Husserl's Phenomenology

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This paper presents an overview of Philosophical Dialogue Patterns and details six specific patterns. Philosophical Dialogue refers to a dialogue in which people collaboratively explore philosophical questions. Philosophical Dialogue Patterns is a set of 27 practical patterns designed for philosophical dialogues based on Husserl's phenomenological method of essence intuition. These patterns support re-examining the essence of things and values, fostering new shared understandings. The pattern language was developed from interviews with five experienced practitioners of phenomenological philosophical dialogue. As a result, three key factors for exploring essence through dialogue were identified: *ESTABLISHING A FOUNDATION FOR EQUAL TEAMWORK*, *FINDING OVERLAPS AMONG DIVERSE VALUES*, and *ARTICULATING OUR ANSWERS*. The pattern language is organized into three categories corresponding to these factors, each containing three groups and nine patterns. This paper introduces the following six patterns, two from each category: Frame “What is XX?”, Equal Explorers, Start from Experience, Trace the Stories, The Certain Core and Envision the Future. Furthermore, we present the design and outcomes of the Accompaniment-Based Support Program implemented using a pattern language approach. This program suggested three effects on the participants: acquisition of perspectives, improvement in facilitation, and self-reflection through dialogue. Additionally, an effect of being supported by the presence of others was also observed.

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1. INTRODUCTION

To foster meaningful and beneficial activities for society, it is imperative to establish a shared vision with the individuals we collaborate with. Even within the same community, individuals have different backgrounds and values. Amidst such diversity, achieving alignment requires a core set of shared values. It is crucial to engage in deep mutual understanding and reassess our fundamental priorities and the values we aim to cultivate. So, how can we create a dialogue where diverse participants can listen to each other equally, think critically, and deepen their inquiry?

Philosophical Dialogue offers a practical approach to addressing this challenge. It is a dialogue in which people come together to explore philosophical questions. For instance, topics such as “What is happiness?” or “What is justice?” as well as more specific and practical questions like “What is a good school?” are chosen to critically examine ideas that are often taken for granted.

By incorporating a *phenomenological attitude* in philosophical dialogue, we can uncover and articulate the essence that transcends apparent differences, drawing not from abstract knowledge but from lived experiences and shared insights. This type of dialogue is known as *phenomenological philosophical dialogue*. This approach does not seek to establish an objectively correct answer but rather fosters shared understanding and co-constructed insights through dialogue.

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“Phenomenological philosophical dialogue offers a methodological principle and procedure that reconciles universality with diversity. While there are many other educational techniques and methods, and it is important to develop new ones or incorporate existing practical insights accumulated in fields like pedagogy, we emphasize that the universality of the essence pursued in phenomenological philosophical dialogue underpins the diversity of differences. The source of the principle of respecting diversity lies in the universality of the 'goodness' of humanity and society.” (Iwachi and Sasaki, 2023, translated by the authors)

However, in phenomenological philosophical dialogue, articulating an essence that all participants can agree upon is a complex and challenging task. Although dialogue rules and procedures are established, there is no systematic approach for participants to engage with differing opinions and explore questions deeply. Emphasizing free inquiry can lead to conflicts and confusion, resulting in superficial dialogues. Additionally, each dialogue varies in theme, participants, and environment, requiring facilitators to adapt flexibly without clear guiding principles. Therefore, this study aims to enhance the effectiveness of dialogue practices by identifying and elucidating these patterns of practical knowledge.

This paper introduces an overview of the Philosophical Dialogue Pattern Language and details six specific patterns within it. This pattern language clarifies the practical knowledge held by experienced facilitators when conducting phenomenological philosophical dialogues. The paper is organized as follows: First, we introduce the mainstream methodologies of philosophical dialogue and explain the characteristics of the methodology for phenomenological philosophical dialogue, which is the focus of our pattern language. Subsequent sections outline the process we used to create the pattern language, explain its overall structure, and provide full descriptions of six patterns.

Furthermore, we present an overview and outcomes of the Accompaniment-Based Support Program, designed to leverage these patterns. An appendix provides a summary for all 27 patterns.

2. PHENOMENOLOGICAL PHILOSOPHICAL DIALOGUE

Currently, philosophical dialogue conducted in school education and local communities primarily adopts the methods of *Philosophy for Children* (P4C). This movement, initiated by Matthew Lipman, a philosophy professor at Columbia University in the late 1960s, spread the practice of conducting philosophical dialogue in elementary, middle, and high school classrooms (Tsuchiya, 2013).

Lipman's dialogue activities gradually gained support from philosophers like Gareth Matthews and began to spread in the American education system. In 1974, the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC) was established at Montclair State University in New Jersey, which became the base for the global expansion of Philosophy for Children.

Lipman (2003) argued that the goal of Philosophy for Children is to transform classrooms into *communities of inquiry*, proposing that philosophical dialogue serve as the foundation for all learning. Consequently, this approach has been adopted in various settings throughout Japan.

The phenomenological philosophical dialogue focused on in this study is a method that introduces *essence intuition*, based on phenomenology, into philosophical dialogue as a means of collaborative inquiry (Nishi, 2019). It was established within the Japanese education system by philosophers Seiji Takeda and Ken Nishi and has since been further developed by various practitioners. At present, this dialogue is practiced not only in educational institutions but also in diverse settings, including community organizations and businesses, serving as a platform for reevaluating the values that hold significance for us.

The aim of this form of dialogue is to explore the essence of things and values that are often overlooked, deepening mutual understanding by seeking answers that resonate with everyone. The phenomenological philosophical dialogue aims to introduce *essence intuition* based on Husserl's phenomenology as a method of collaborative inquiry into philosophical dialogue. Essence intuition is an important method in the essentialist philosophy of phenomenology founded by the philosopher Edmund Husserl. Furthermore, a pattern language for individual essence intuition, rather than one facilitated through dialogue with others, is currently being developed (Iba and Nitta, 2024).

In the process of essence intuition, it is crucial to adopt the attitude of *phenomenological reduction*. Phenomenological reduction requires us to change from our natural attitude to a phenomenological attitude. The natural attitude refers to our habitual mode of thought. For example, we think that because an apple exists in front of us, we recognize it as an apple. This means we distinguish between our subjective recognition and the objective existence of things, presupposing the existence of an objective world.

However, the phenomenological attitude considers that the existence of objective things cannot be confirmed by anyone. It posits that only the conscious experience within our subjective awareness—such as the conviction that there is an apple in my consciousness—is certain, and it examines the content of this experience.

By suspending the assumptions of the natural attitude in this way, we do not consider a single, absolute, objective truth about an object. Instead, we confirm the core invariant structural system in which certainty within the subject is established as the essence. For example, when considering the essence of an apple, we first have the certainty within the subject that there is an apple. The essence, or the core invariant structural system, is then described by the conditions of its existence, such as red, round, and shiny. We then consider whether this can be regarded as a universal essence.

“Husserl’s solution is utterly opposite to our usual way of thinking. He believes that the validity of objective physical reality can be confirmed by the subjective meaningful world. Indeed, the validity of the objective world can be understood only through the reflective ‘insight’ of our experiences in the subjective world.” (Nishi, 2010)

“If one wants to understand the meaning and validity of some objects or the objective world itself, one must ask the subject. In order to do this, the knowledge about the objective world should not be used; only the field of consciousness (phenomena) should be considered. This process is called ‘phenomenological reduction.’” (Nishi, 2010)

By incorporating essence intuition with the attitude of phenomenological reduction into philosophical dialogue, we can explore essences intersubjectively, taking the stance that there is no objective truth. This allows participants to listen to each other’s thoughts equally, deepening mutual understanding and self-understanding even as differences in values with others become apparent. Furthermore, as participants build dialogue-based relationships and identify commonalities in their thoughts, they can reach shared conclusions.

The steps in the essence Intuition process were established by the philosopher Ken Nishi (Nishi, 2016), who is also one of the interviewees in this study and further organized by Ittoku Tomano as follows (Tomano, 2019): (1) Reflect on the experience, (2) Share awareness of issues, (3) Share examples, (4) Identify and articulate the essence common to all examples, (5) Answer the initial concerns or questions.

Our work analyzed the practices carried out through the process of phenomenological philosophical dialogue based on essence intuition and elucidates the overall system of what participants and facilitators should value and practice.

3. OUR PATTERN LANGUAGE CREATION PROCESS

The pattern language we present was created based on the creation process developed in the Iba lab (Iba and Isaku, 2016; Iba, 2022). The patterns were extracted from experienced practitioners who have implemented phenomenological philosophical dialogue in educational settings in Japan. Specifically, these include Seiji Takeda, Ken Nishi, Ittoku Tomano, Midori Inagaki, and Shotaro Iwauchi. They are all contributors who have collaborated and explored phenomenological philosophical dialogue in Japan, with their learning relationships starting with Seiji Takeda and Ken Nishi.

The Philosophical Dialogue Pattern Language was created in three phases: Pattern Mining, Pattern Writing, and Pattern Symbolizing. It took approximately four months for Pattern Mining and

about five months for Pattern Writing and Pattern Symbolizing to articulate the overall picture of practical knowledge.

3.1 Pattern Mining

In the Pattern Mining phase, a process called the Mining Interview (Iba and Yoder, 2014) was used to extract practical tips from practitioners and create Pattern Seeds, which are prototype elements of the Pattern Language. Each interview was between 120 and 180 minutes. These five mining interviews were conducted from December 2023 to February 2024, using the online conferencing tool Zoom. Verbatim transcripts were made for all interviews.

As a result, over 600 significant insights were extracted as Pattern Materials: potential practices that could become Pattern Seeds. Pattern Materials are the raw insights and observations gathered from the interviews, while Pattern Seeds are more developed and structured prototype elements of the Pattern Language, ready for further refinement and validation.

Next, clustering was performed (Figure 1). Clustering is a process of bringing together sticky notes with similar content, inspired by the KJ method developed by Jiro Kawakita (Kawakita, 1967; Iba et al., 2017). This involves reading the contents of each sticky note and grouping those with similar meanings. As a result, over 120 Pattern Ingredients for conducting practices were extracted.



Fig. 1. Scene of Clustering.

To create pattern seeds, the pattern ingredients were characterized and organized. Then they were systematized based on their characteristics (Iba, 2021; Iba and Munakata, 2021). The pattern ingredients were divided into three categories, with each category containing three groups, and each group containing three pattern elements (Figure 2). This resulted in the creation of 36 pattern seeds.

In this paper, the Philosophical Dialogue Patterns presented focus exclusively on 27 pattern seeds that are important for all participants in a dialogue. These are systematically categorized into three groups. These patterns help both participants and facilitators to 'think together' and explore collaboratively during the dialogue. This approach is based on the idea that the facilitator, while being a coordinator of the dialogue, is also one of the participants who engages in thinking together. The 9 pattern seeds that were not included here, which are essential for facilitators in designing the dialogue as a workshop, are being developed as a separate pattern language.

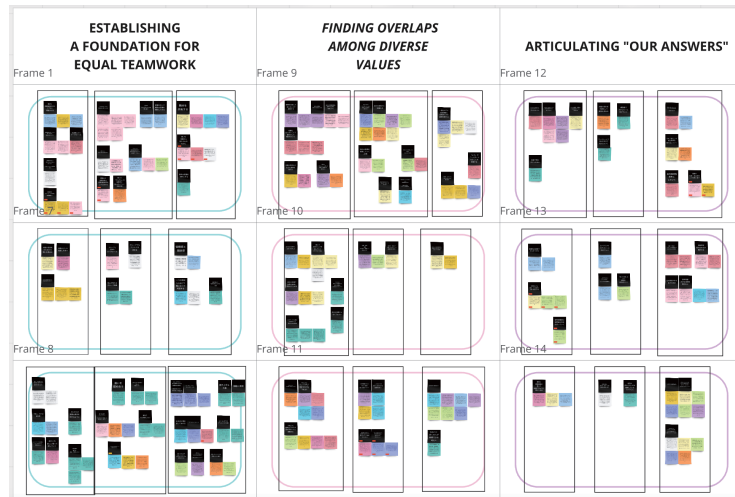


Fig. 2. Scene of Differentiating the whole of the practice in Systematization.

3.2 Pattern Writing

After Pattern Mining was completed, we moved on to the Pattern Writing phase. First, the Pattern Seeds were described in the CPS (Context, Problem, Solution) format, outlining the context, the problem that arises, and how it can be resolved.

Once the CPS was drafted, we moved on to the Full Description phase. In addition to the CPS format, we described the force explaining why the problem occurs, the action showing concrete examples, and the consequence detailing the expected outcomes. We adjusted the expression of both CPS and the complete descriptions.

3.3 Pattern Symbolizing

Concurrently with Pattern Writing, we also undertook Pattern Symbolizing. During this phase, each pattern was assigned a Pattern Name. The pattern names were created succinctly with the aim of accurately representing the content of the pattern and ensuring ease of reference and appeal.

4. PATTERNS

Philosophical Dialogue Patterns consists of 27 patterns of practice that are important for people exploring essence through mutual understanding (Figure 3). These patterns are grouped into three categories, each containing nine patterns: *ESTABLISHING A FOUNDATION FOR EQUAL TEAMWORK*, *FINDING OVERLAPS AMONG DIVERSE VALUES*, *ARTICULATING OUR ANSWERS*.

The first category, *ESTABLISHING A FOUNDATION FOR EQUAL TEAMWORK* includes important practices that prepare the setting for exploring the essence and enable participants to engage in dialogue as team members. This category consists of three groups: *SIMMERING THE QUESTION*, *MAKING IT A PLACE EVERYONE CAN ENJOY* and *CREATING A SPACE FOR INQUIRY*.

The second category, *FINDING OVERLAPS AMONG DIVERSE VALUES* includes important practices for deeply listening to diverse perspectives based on individual experiences and building good relationships to achieve deeper mutual understanding. This category consists of three groups: *ASKING ONESELF QUESTIONS*, *OPENING UP ONE'S HEART* and *ENGAGING IN MINDFUL LISTENING TO EACH OTHER*.

The third category, *ARTICULATING OUR ANSWERS* includes important practices for deriving answers to questions based on what was discussed in the dialogue and making the exploration more meaningful. This category consists of three groups: *IDENTIFYING THE COMMON ESSENCE*, *CREATING BETTER EXPRESSIONS* and *CONNECTING TO THE NEXT INQUIRY*.

In this following, we present two patterns we selected from each category:

ESTABLISHING A FOUNDATION FOR EQUAL TEAMWORK

- Frame “What is XX?”
- Equal Explorers

FINDING OVERLAPS AMONG DIVERSE VALUES

- Start from Experience
- Trace the Stories

ARTICULATING OUR ANSWERS

- The Certain Core
- Envision the Future

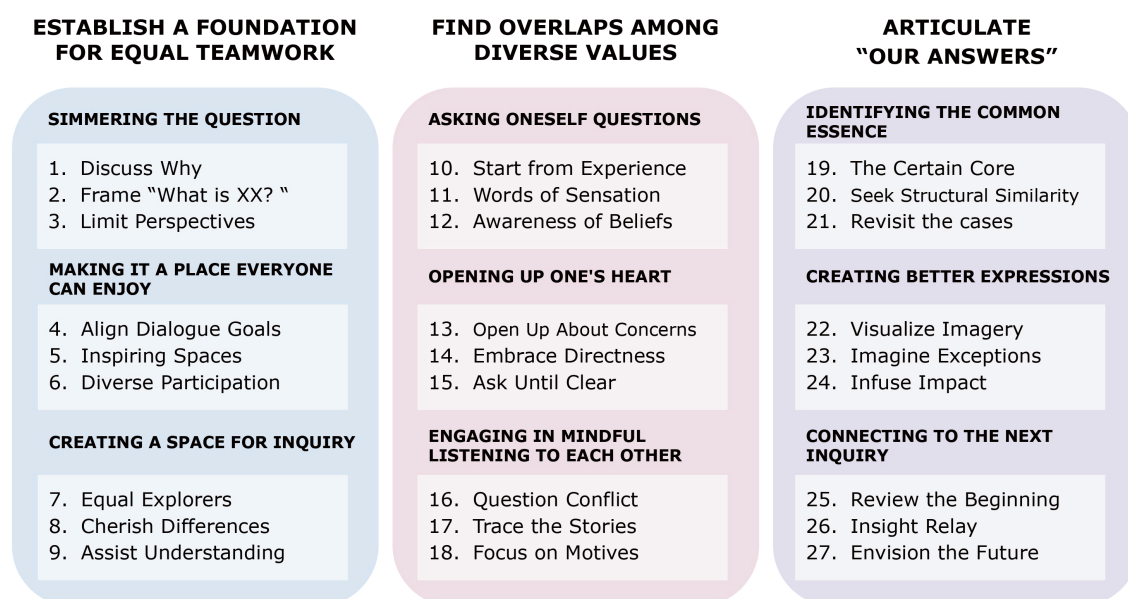


Fig. 3. Overview of Philosophical Dialogue Patterns.

4.1 Frame “What is XX?”

No.2

Frame “What is XX?”

You are trying to create inquiry questions for a *philosophical dialogue*.

▼ In this context

If you turn what you want to consider into a binary question—like A or B, true or false, good or bad—or frame it as a question about how to do something, the answers will vary based on differing values, making it impossible to explore a common answer for everyone. Of course, if the purpose is

to discuss differences, such questions can lead to interesting dialogues. However, if you want to build consensus, you must frame the questions in a way that can yield definitive answers.

▼Therefore

Transform the foundational concept into a question like “What is XX in the first place?” to enable exploration based on each person's subjective experiences and perceptions. Consider what concept lies at the root of your thoughts or concerns. Then, form questions targeting that concept directly, such as “What is XX?” For example, when you want to consider the issue of “Should the use of mobile phones be banned in schools?”, you could start with the question, “What is a good school in the first place?” In this way, you frame the question to explore the essence of a good school. Ensure that these questions allow for shared exploration based on individual experiences, so everyone can say, “Yes, that makes sense.”

▼Consequently

By forming questions that can be subsequently validated through experiences and feelings, you create a starting point for dialogue that delves into the essence that is common to each subjective view. This way, you can explore commonly agreed-upon answers.

4.2 Equal Explorers

No.7

Equal Explorers

You are trying to explore the essence of a philosophical question.

▼In this context

If you think someone has the correct answer, it leads to a competition of hypotheses, preventing the emergence of new common understandings. For you, your own thoughts feel convincingly correct. However, the same applies to others, leading to arguments like “That's just your opinion” or “Can you say that is absolutely true?” This results in relativizing the other person's stance and pointing out contradictions or exceptions, turning the conversation into a game of who can out-argue whom.

▼Therefore

Embrace that nobody knows the correct answer and proceed with the dialogue as equal explorers, valuing each other's feelings. Everyone lives within their own subjectivity, so you can only think within your own perceptions. Your thoughts, no matter how deep, are merely “This is what I believe,” making the notion of an absolutely true objective truth unknowable to anyone. Hence, everyone can value their feelings and explore the common essence that is being felt at the moment.

▼Consequently

By progressing the inquiry equally, you can seek answers within the intersubjectivity that arises from overlapping subjectivities of those present. This approach avoids falling into dogmatic fundamental

hypotheses and prevents the discounting and blaming of others' opinions. Instead, it fosters respectful listening and dialogue. As a result, you can collaboratively think about the essence that everyone can agree on.

4.3 Start from Experience

No.10

Start from Experience

You have started a philosophical dialogue.

▼In this context

If you aim to provide a more definite answer, you might try to rely on existing knowledge or authoritative statements. However, this approach prevents capturing the essence felt among us here. You might present the knowledge you believe is correct as the answer in the discussion. This only leads to textbook-like conversations, not genuine inquiry. Simply exchanging opinions makes it difficult to reach the deeper essence.

▼Therefore

Ground your starting point in specific experiences to engage in dialogue with a living reality and shared understanding. First, recall specific experiences related to the concept being questioned. It's acceptable to share others' experiences or examples if they are real. Present these in the dialogue, appreciating their diversity. When sharing your opinion, always include the underlying experience that led to your perspective by saying, "I had this experience, so I think this way."

▼Consequently

By grounding the dialogue in experiences and their associated feelings, you can explore from within your lived reality rather than relying on knowledge. This approach prompts you to question your unarticulated feelings, leading to deeper self-understanding. Additionally, discussing at the level of concrete experiences allows you to empathize with others' backgrounds, fostering discoveries that enhance understanding of others.

4.4 Trace the Stories

No.17

Trace the Stories

You have someone who speaks with belief.

▼In this context

Each belief often carries strong, unwavering emotions and motivations, making it difficult to deny and causing group inquiry to stagnate. It is natural for everyone to have beliefs they feel are the truth, given the weight of their diverse life experiences. However, if one opinion is asserted too strongly, others may refrain from speaking up, even if they feel uncomfortable, simply to avoid conflict. This leads to conformity driven by a desire for a harmonious dialogue, making it challenging to explore the essence important to everyone.

▼Therefore

Ask about the experiences that gave rise to these beliefs and feelings to allow everyone present to vicariously experience that person's story. Begin by asking, “What led you to hold this belief?” Listen to the experiences shared and ask follow-up questions like, “How did you feel at that time?” and “Why did you think that?” This helps everyone support the individual's self-understanding. By doing so, you foster empathy and understanding rather than denying the belief.

▼Consequently

By listening to and reliving their experiences, you may realize that under the same conditions, you might have developed similar beliefs. This approach allows you to understand others from their perspective. As a result, you begin to see both yourself and others as living humans, finding overlapping areas of empathy and understanding based on their backgrounds.

4.5 The Certain Core

No.19

The Certain Core

You have entered the stage in the dialogue where you are trying to reach an answer together.

▼In this context

When you try to select and narrow down which opinions are essential from the various ones presented, conflicts might arise. Even though you have shared diverse thoughts and listened to differences carefully, narrowing them down to a common answer might feel impossible if values are significantly different. Trying to come up with an answer to a question inherently involves chaos and difficulty. So, how should you explore the essence from each person's experiences and feelings?

▼Therefore

As a new phase, reflect on what everyone feels and articulate the characteristics you are convinced are indispensable to identify the core essence. First, capture the sense of this might be the essence and succinctly express the core characteristics. Then, as you articulate your convictions, find expressions that resonate more with everyone. Additionally, considering the differences from similar or opposite concepts may help you get closer to the core.

▼Consequently

By reflecting on the dialogue and exploring the core essence based on feelings, you can distill the essence into simple words. By valuing the process of expressing these, everyone can reach an answer with a sense of agreement. Even if different words are used, the core feeling is the same, and aiming for better expression together can make the dialogue about exploring the essence more enjoyable.

4.6 Envision the Future

No.27

Envision the Future

You feel that you have found an answer to the question that everyone can agree on.

▼In this context

The answer you reached with the members during the dialogue is precious and irreplaceable, but amidst busy daily lives, it may fade over time. The time spent deeply considering questions that are usually hard to ponder, and articulating thoughts together, is indeed luxurious. The relationships formed among the participants and the joy of having had the conversation itself are also valuable, providing a sense of satisfaction. However, to use this as a stepping stone for further exploration, it's important not only to enjoy the experience of the dialogue but also to apply the thoughts and answers generated in the dialogue.

▼Therefore

Set aside time to discuss and envision how you can build a better community based on the answers found in the dialogue, focusing on the future. During the dialogue session or at another time, align your perspectives and talk about how to utilize the 'answers' you have come up with by listening to each other's opinions. For example, consider using the insights as hints or principles for your life, thinking about the nature of the community and society, or deciding on policies, thereby contemplating ways to apply them for a better future. Based on the essence you have grasped, envision the future you want to aim for, question whether reality aligns with that vision, identify obstacles, and think about how to achieve it. This approach will help you capture the core of issues and make decisions.

▼Consequently

By positively discussing your future with a shared understanding, you can create a sense of unity and excitement, fostering community activities. You will be able to make the community and individual ways of life better based on what you value. Sharing the goals you aim for and building consensus that everyone can agree on will bring hope to individuals and contribute to making society better through the community.

5. SUPPORT PROGRAM WITH THE PATTERN LANGUAGE AND ITS RESULTS

Following the completion of the pattern language development, we implemented the Accompaniment-Based Support Program utilizing the patterns. This initiative aimed to support two teachers in practicing phenomenological philosophical dialogue, a method introduced into moral education textbooks in Japan. Over the course of approximately one month in 2024, we conducted individual

meetings to provide continuous support for the acquisition of practical knowledge through pattern language.

This section describes the design of the program using pattern language and the results obtained. Although the findings remain suggestive, we present the positive effects observed in practitioners through this program.

5.1 Design of the Support Program

This section outlines the design and overview of the program. The participants were two public elementary school teachers in Japan who practiced phenomenological philosophical dialogue in moral education classes. They faced challenges in facilitating discussions to derive shared understandings from students' dialogue processes. To address this, they utilized pattern language.

The accompaniment-based support program was structured around four key steps: *Goal Setting*, *Practice Check*, *Practice Plan*, and *Reflection*. Each step guided participants through a structured cycle, reinforcing their engagement with the pattern language.

To support this process, an Excel-based worksheet was used, and all sessions were recorded with participants' consent for analysis. Participants documented their insights and reflections in alignment with the structured steps. This cycle was repeated throughout the program, enabling participants to refine their practices using pattern language.

The first step, *Goal Setting*, took place during the initial session, where participants engaged in a hearing to establish their objectives. They were asked four key questions: their perspectives on phenomenological philosophical dialogue, including past experiences, challenges, uncertainties, and strengths and weaknesses; the type of dialogue they aimed to facilitate; the current difficulties they faced in their practice; and their expectations for the program, including their ideal state and objectives.

Building on this foundation, the second step, *Practice Check*, was implemented throughout the program, from the first session to the final session. During these sessions, participants reflected on their own dialogue practices by documenting their observations in a worksheet that included 27 pattern items with brief summaries. More detailed descriptions of each pattern were provided separately for reference. To evaluate their implementation progress, participants used a five-point scale ranging from "Not aware, not implemented" to "Well implemented." Additionally, they indicated their interest in adopting certain practices using a Yes/No marking. Rather than striving for a perfect score across all items, the primary purpose of this step was to align their reflections with the goals and challenges they had identified in the first step.

The third step, *Practice Plan*, enabled participants to develop actionable strategies for their upcoming lessons. Based on their assessment, they selected three to five patterns to implement, guided by both their own interests and recommendations from the pattern language developers. The Practice Plan included specific elements such as the selected patterns, the reasoning behind their choice—including the challenges they sought to address and the ideal state they aimed to achieve—the individuals responsible for implementation, the contexts in which the plan would be applied, and the methods for execution, including specific prompts to be used in class.

The final step, *Reflection*, required participants to review and evaluate their implementation before the subsequent session. They recorded their self-assessments using a five-point scale, ranging from not at all implemented to fully implemented, and provided detailed reflections on their experiences. This included analyzing the effectiveness of their strategies, insights gained, and the reasons behind their successes or challenges. Through this iterative process, participants continuously refined their dialogue facilitation skills while engaging with the pattern language as a reflective tool.

In the final session, a *Post-Implementation Reflection* was also conducted. Participants were interviewed to assess the changes in their practices and the effectiveness of pattern language. Additionally, based on the Goal Setting established in the first session, participants self-evaluated their goal achievement using a five-point scale to measure their progress.

This structured reflection process provided a comprehensive evaluation of the program's impact, enabling participants to critically assess their progress and identify areas for continued development.

5.2 Results

This section presents the results of the Accompaniment-Based Support Program. The observed effects on participants can be categorized into two key areas: (1) learning and changes in phenomenological philosophical dialogue practices and (2) the supportive effects of the program's accompaniment structure. The following sections will describe the specific effects observed in each category.

5.2.1 Learning and Changes in Phenomenological Philosophical Dialogue Practice

The results of the program suggest that participants experienced three main types of learning and transformation in their practice of phenomenological philosophical dialogue. The first is acquisition of perspectives, the second is improvement in facilitation skills, and the third is self-reflection through dialogue. In the following sections, we will examine these effects in detail, referring to the experiences of participants, Mr. M and Ms. F.

5.2.1.1 Acquisition of Perspectives

The Practice Check and Practice Plan stages contributed to gaining new perspectives. The pattern language provided a framework to recognize effective practices, making implementation easier. Participants reported that learning from experienced practitioners' patterns enabled them to consciously consider previously unconscious practices. Below are selected excerpts from the worksheet responses of the participant (Mr.M):

- Having the key points presented as the pattern language made it easier to implement in practice.
- Reading the patterns made me realize, That's what I should have done!, which led to a more conscious approach to implementation.

This shift in awareness highlights how the structured nature of pattern language not only facilitated implementation but also encouraged a more reflective and intentional approach to teaching practices. Similarly, the following responses were also obtained from the participant (Mr. F):

- The patterns provided clear perspectives and viewpoints for reviewing my lessons. Although I have always wanted to improve my classes, I often struggled due to a lack of time or uncertainty about how to proceed. However, with the Pattern Language, I was able to identify what aspects I should focus on and which areas needed improvement, helping me overcome these challenges.
- Gaining these perspectives enabled me to make significant updates to my lessons.
- Moving forward, I feel that I will continue to rely on pattern language as a foundational tool for designing my classes.

His reflections underscore the role of pattern language as an effective support system for lesson planning and continuous improvement. By providing clarity and structure, it empowered participants to approach teaching with greater confidence and a well-defined sense of direction.

5.2.1.2 Improvement in Facilitation

The Reflection step showed an improvement in facilitation skills. The participants rated their progress on a five-point scale, and all responses were 4 (improved) or 5 (satisfied). Below are selected excerpts from the worksheet responses (Mr.M):

Problem: Definition and Description of the Essence

It was difficult to create a definition that everyone could agree on.

Evaluation: Overall satisfaction (5)

This time, the children were able to define it themselves. Perhaps this was possible because I implemented the patterns Words of Experience and Commonalities in Structure.

By asking, Are we all convinced up to this point? and using Imagining Exceptions to explore cases that did not fit, I was able to ensure that the children truly understood and agreed.

This shift in approach demonstrates how applying specific patterns can facilitate deeper engagement in defining concepts. By encouraging students to articulate their own understanding and critically examine variations, the process became more interactive and collaborative, ultimately leading to a shared agreement. Likewise, the following responses were also obtained from the participant (Mr. F):

Problem: Lack of Depth in Dialogue

When asked, What do you think?, children responded, but they struggled to reconstruct their own ideas based on others' thoughts. Even when they said I see, they did not take the next step of questioning their own thinking.

Evaluation: Improvement observed (4)

- I feel that the dialogue is becoming more effective. In particular, the prompt Does this include all the key concepts? (Revisiting the Cases) worked well.
- Although the level of abstraction is high, students are now making an effort to find commonalities through discussion. When I asked, Could this be the key concept?, they started providing counterexamples.
- As a result, they have begun to naturally verify overarching concepts, ensuring that they include as many shared elements as possible.

These reflections indicate a shift in the students' engagement with dialogue. Initially, they struggled with articulating and refining their thoughts, but as they practiced questioning and identifying key concepts, they began to develop a deeper understanding. This progression suggests that the structured use of patterns facilitated a more thoughtful and analytical approach to dialogue, ultimately enhancing their ability to engage in meaningful discussions.

5.2.1.3 Self-Reflection through Dialogue

The following charts illustrate the progression of participants' self-evaluations regarding their implementation of patterns during the Practice Check sessions (Figure 4). In these radar charts, sessions are labeled as #1 through #4, with each line color representing the self-evaluation for a specific session. For each of the 27 patterns, participants rated their implementation using a five-point scale ranging from "Not aware, not implemented" to "Well implemented." These self-evaluation scores fluctuated over the course of all four sessions for both participants.

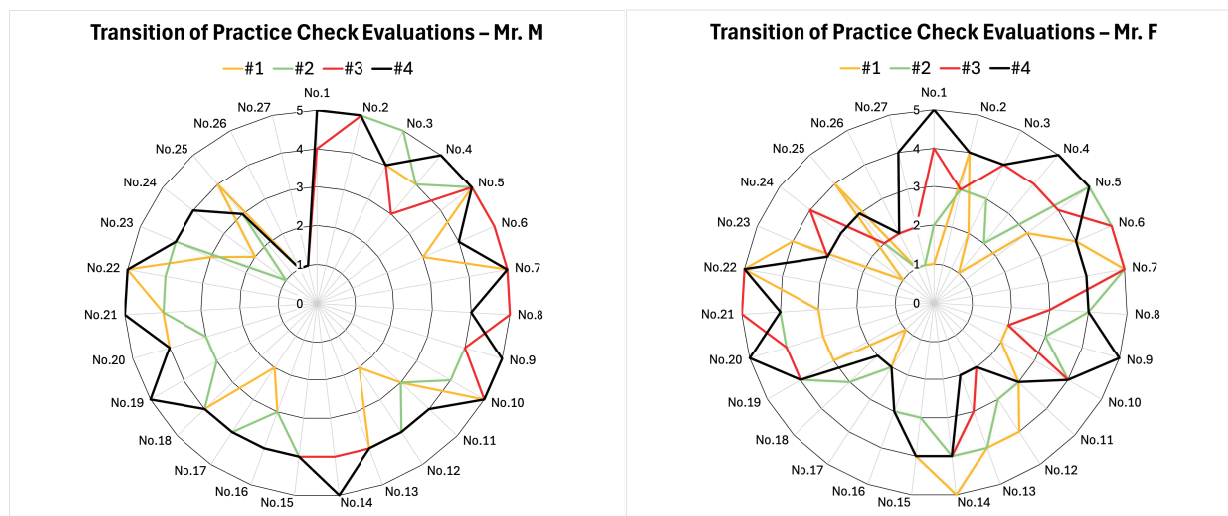


Fig. 4. Transition of Practice Check Evaluations.

What were the reasons behind these variations in self-evaluation? A common theme emerged for both participants: they realized that practices they had initially assumed to be well-executed were, in fact, either not fully implemented or had room for further improvement. This led to a shift in perception, characterized by a growing sense of I can do more or I want to explore this further.

In Mr. M's interview, he reflected on his realization regarding the pattern The Certain Core:

“When I revisited the content of this pattern, I realized that I had been consistently approaching it only through the exploration of 'What is gratitude?' and had not reflected on it as much as I thought. (...) I had assumed that I had already mastered it.”

This realization prompted a reassessment of his approach, leading him to recognize the necessity of deeper reflection beyond his initial understanding. Likewise, Mr. F stated the following in the interview:

“Regarding Pattern No. 25, I started to perceive it with greater clarity and realized that I had not been implementing it as effectively as I thought.”

“After discussing it within the program and actually applying it in practice, I felt that some patterns, which I initially rated as a 5, could still be refined further. As a result, their scores slightly decreased, from 5 to 4.”

“Patterns such as The Certain Core, which I initially selected for my Practice Plan, might have shifted from a 5 to a 4. In some cases, even if I had rated something as a 4 before, I felt that I could push it further. This led to a conscious decision not to rate it as a 5 just yet.”

These reflections highlight the participants' evolving awareness and a growing commitment to deepening their practice through iterative self-assessment.

5.2.2 Supportive Effects of the Program's Accompaniment Structure

The presence of a facilitator provided external encouragement that functioned as a constraint, pushing participants to engage in new practices.

Participants noted that the facilitator's presence prevented procrastination, encouraged structured thinking, and provided tailored recommendations. They acknowledged that working alone often led to stagnation, whereas the external accompaniment created an obligation to persist, leading to successful acquisition of practical knowledge.

5.3 Discussion

Iba (2013) identifies three fundamental functions of pattern language: Cognitive Lens, Building Blocks of Thought, and Vocabulary for Communication. These functions highlight the crucial roles that patterns play in helping practitioners recognize challenges and acquire practical knowledge through structured learning and engagement.

The results of this study suggest that the pattern language for Phenomenological Philosophical Dialogue effectively fulfills these three functions. Moreover, a clear correspondence was observed between these functions and the learning outcomes demonstrated in the program.

First, the acquisition of perspectives corresponds to the function of Cognitive Lens. The patterns provided a structured framework that enabled practitioners to analyze and reconsider their teaching practices. By utilizing this framework, they were able to gain new perspectives and deepen their insights into how to create and facilitate dialogue spaces effectively.

Second, the improvement in facilitation corresponds to the function of Building Blocks of Thought. The patterns supported practitioners in breaking down and reconstructing their facilitation strategies, helping them refine their practical facilitation skills. Through this process, practitioners acquired a more structured approach to guiding dialogue effectively and fostering shared understanding among participants.

Third, self-reflection through dialogue corresponds to the function of Vocabulary for Communication. The shared language established through the patterns enabled deeper discussions between program facilitators and practitioners. Engaging in these dialogues allowed practitioners to engage in iterative self-reflection, which contributed to the continuous refinement and improvement of their educational methods.

This correspondence underscores that pattern language not only facilitates structured learning but also supports reflective and dialogical approaches in educational practice. The findings of this study suggest that pattern language played a significant role in structuring, guiding, and enabling reflection on educational practices. Through the structured cycle of goal setting, practice, and reflection, the program effectively enabled teachers to engage in practical facilitation of dialogue and address challenges in their practice.

6. CONCLUSION

This paper presented an overview of the Philosophical Dialogue Patterns, a pattern language for people exploring essence through mutual understanding, along with the full descriptions of six of the patterns. We created this pattern language to share the practical knowledge of people who want to create new shared understanding among diverse people. Introduced the overview of the Companion Support Program utilizing pattern language, along with the observed effects. And We presented an overview of the Accompaniment-Based Support Program that utilizes a pattern language, along with the effects observed in this instance.

Additionally, the Philosophical Dialogue Patterns presented here are intended for participants of philosophical dialogues to learn and practice independently. The practices for facilitators to design dialogues as workshops are being developed as a separate optional pattern language, which will be published in the future. We would be delighted if these could be used together. We plan to further refine this pattern language and make it available online next year. We intend to continue our research to expand the application of these patterns across various contexts.

We anticipate that this pattern language will be utilized by individuals who wish to embed important values and principles more deeply into the culture of their community, as well as by those who aim to create organizations capable of making decisions with aligned perspectives. We sincerely hope that this pattern language will support the better activities within the community.

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APPENDIX

The following is a table with summaries for each of the patterns in the Philosophical Dialogue Patterns.

A.1 ESTABLISHING A FOUNDATION FOR EQUAL TEAMWORK

A.1.1 SIMMERING THE QUESTION

Patterns in the group From SIMMERING THE QUESTION are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 The summaries of the patterns in from SIMMERING THE QUESTION

Pattern Name	Summary
Discuss Why	Start by discussing why you want to have this dialogue and what you want to clarify about the theme, linking it to how it will benefit each person's life, and sharing the motivation for the inquiry.
Frame "What is XX?"	Transform the foundational concept into a question like What is XX in the first place? to enable exploration based on each person's subjective experiences and perceptions.
Limit Perspectives	Base your questions on your awareness of the issues, limiting the perspective from which you consider the questions, to ensure that the content discussed in the dialogue remains focused.

A.1.2 MAKING IT A PLACE EVERYONE CAN ENJOY

Patterns in the group From MAKING IT A PLACE EVERYONE CAN ENJOY are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 The summaries of the patterns in from MAKING IT A PLACE EVERYONE CAN ENJOY

Pattern Name	Summary
Align Dialogue Goals	Have a clear vision in advance of what kind of time you want this dialogue to be, and share it as a goal so that everyone can pursue the inquiry with the same purpose.
Inspiring Spaces	Create time for discussion in small groups and as a whole to stimulate each other with different perspectives and inspire each other's thoughts.
Diverse Participation	To have a good dialogue, recognize that having diverse people is important, and by acknowledging what each person values, including how they participate in the dialogue, foster a sense of safety and trust where everyone can fully accept each other's presence.

A.1.3 CREATING A SPACE FOR INQUIRY

Patterns in the group From CREATING A SPACE FOR INQUIRY are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 The summaries of the patterns in from CREATING A SPACE FOR INQUIRY

Pattern Name	Summary
Equal Explorers	Share the understanding that nobody knows the answer and proceed with the dialogue as fellow seekers, valuing each other's feelings.

Cherish Differences	Embrace differences actively, believing that within the clash of differences lies the chance for new understanding, and strengthen your thoughts through twists and turns by responding to and accepting these differences.
Assist Understanding	Constantly check within yourself for any discomfort or if you genuinely understand with a I see, and communicate this to approach a universal understanding that everyone present can agree on.

A.2 FINDING OVERLAPS AMONG DIVERSE VALUES

A.2.1 ASKING ONESELF QUESTIONS

Patterns in the group From ASKING ONESELF QUESTIONS are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 The summaries of the patterns in from ASKING ONESELF QUESTIONS

Pattern Name	Summary
Start from Experience	Ground your starting point in specific experiences to engage in dialogue with a living reality and shared understanding.
Words of Sensation	Face your feelings that are moving your heart carefully, and try to find the perfect words to capture them, attempting to express those feelings accurately.
Awareness of Beliefs	When you become aware of your beliefs, consider where they originate from to gradually become aware of the values and assumptions that have been formed within you over time.

A.2.2 OPENING UP ONE'S HEART

Patterns in the group From OPENING UP ONE'S HEART are shown in Table 5.

Table 5 The summaries of the patterns in from OPENING UP ONE'S HEART

Pattern Name	Summary
Open Up About Concerns	Express exactly what you are thinking, including any feelings of anxiety, as they are, to take a step toward opening yourself up in the present moment and place.
Embrace Directness	When you feel that the other person's thoughts have come across clearly, communicate this positively to foster a sense of reassurance that you are understanding and accepting each other's feelings.
Ask Until Clear	Consider that you are asking questions not to deny but to understand, and by courageously expressing your discomfort, create a space where you can ask each other directly and honestly until you understand.

A.2.3 ENGAGING IN MINDFUL LISTENING TO EACH OTHER

Patterns in the group From ENGAGING IN MINDFUL LISTENING TO EACH OTHER are shown in Table 6.

Table 6 The summaries of the patterns in from ENGAGING IN MINDFUL LISTENING TO EACH OTHER

Pattern Name	Summary
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Question Conflict	Set aside which of the conflicting opinions is better, and instead, delve into the question of why these differences arise.
Trace the Stories	Ask about the experiences that gave rise to their beliefs and feelings to allow everyone present to vicariously experience that person's life.
Focus on Motives	Instead of superficially understanding the words alone, separate the intention from the underlying motivation to focus on what the person truly wants to convey.

A.3 ARTICULATING OUR ANSWERS

A.3.1 IDENTIFYING THE COMMON ESSENCE

Patterns in the group From IDENTIFYING THE COMMON ESSENCE are shown in Table 7.

Table 7 The summaries of the patterns in from IDENTIFYING THE COMMON ESSENCE

Pattern Name	Summary
The Certain Core	As a new phase, reflect on what everyone feels and articulate the characteristics you are convinced are indispensable to identify the core essence.
Seek Structural Similarity	Analyze the emerging examples by identifying their characteristics and conditions using keywords, and explore commonalities in their structure, categorizing the diverse examples accordingly.
Revisit the cases	Reflect and verify that all previously mentioned examples are included, ensuring that your explanations fully encompass the entirety.

A.3.2 CREATING BETTER EXPRESSIONS CREATING BETTER EXPRESSIONS

Patterns in the group From CREATING BETTER EXPRESSIONS are shown in Table 8.

Table 8 The summaries of the patterns in from CREATING BETTER EXPRESSIONS

Pattern Name	Summary
Visualize Imagery	Visualize the flow of dialogue by writing down the emerging viewpoints and words in a visible place, making it easier to understand the overall picture.
Imagine Exceptions	Imagine are there any exceptions? by considering examples from as many different perspectives as possible, not just the experiences shared by participants, to approach the essence from multiple angles.
Infuse Impact	Step away from the expressions used so far and, based on the most memorable examples, search for a single phrase that encapsulates what is this impact? to create words imbued with vivid texture.

A.3.3 CONNECTING TO THE NEXT INQUIRY

Patterns in the group From CONNECTING TO THE NEXT INQUIRY are shown in Table 9.

Table 9 The summaries of the patterns in from CONNECTING TO THE NEXT INQUIRY

Pattern Name	Summary
Review the Beginning	Reflect on the insights gained and your personal changes by answering the initial problem awareness shared at the beginning, based on the grasped essence.
Insight Relay	Continue your exploration by not leaving any lingering doubts unresolved, but instead repeatedly write, read, and discuss with those close to you, moving towards more satisfying expressions.
Envision the Future	Set aside time to discuss and envision how you can build a better community based on the answers found in the dialogue, focusing on the future.