Critical & Creative Thinking

The Australasian Journal of Philosophy in Education

Vol 14 No 1 May 2006

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ISSN 1325-7730

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Welcome to
Critical & Creative Thinking

Welcome to Volume 14, No. 1 of *Critical & Creative Thinking*: The Australasian Journal of Philosophy in Education.
Critical & Creative Thinking is published in May and November. Subscriptions are due in February. Forms are available in this edition. We hope that you will continue your subscription, and if you have any suggestions please send them to us.
The editors would like to announce that there will be a change of editorship commencing from the November issue. Our task was to fill the shoes of the founding editor Clive Lindop who retired in 2003, and to implement changes in consultation with FAPSA and feedback from the editorial board and subscribers. We have received positive feedback regarding these changes. Subscriptions have increased since the first "new look" Critical & Creative Thinking in May 2004. We hope that you will continue to support the journal and that you will renew your subscription for 2006. We would also like to thank all the contributors who sent in articles, reports, reviews and letters. Without you we would not have a journal.

The new editors are Carol Collins and Sue Knight from the School of Education at the University of South Australia. The journal is now in its fourteenth year of publication, and we are confident with Carol and Sue as editors that it will continue for many more years to come.

About the Journal

Critical & Creative Thinking is an international journal published under the auspices of The Federation of Australasian Philosophy in Schools Associations (FAPSA). The focus of the journal is philosophical inquiry with school-age students. What was once called Philosophy for Children has now grown into a sub-discipline of philosophy with its own history, traditions, and pedagogy, and incorporates what could be called philosophical inquiry in the classroom, reflective education and, generally speaking, philosophy in schools as well as related methodologies such as Socratic Dialogue. The journal performs two roles. The first is to publish scholarly research concerning the theory and practice of philosophical inquiry at school level. These articles will appear in the *Research Articles* section. The second is to publish reports of practice, comments on resources, suggestions and ideas about philosophising with school students and so forth, with a view to encouraging professional interchange among those interested in philosophical inquiry with school-age students.

Aim and Scope

To provide a vehicle for the communication of ideas and a forum for discussion and debate of issues concerning the practice of philosophical inquiry with school-age students.

To promote better teaching and curricular design for the development of critical and creative thinking amongst school-age students through increased understanding and use of philosophical inquiry in the classroom.

Notes for Contributors

All contributions will be considered for publication. Articles will be subject to the normal processes of peer-review for scholarly refereed journals, including blind reviewing by at least two referees drawn from the Editorial Committee (or from other international scholars with special expertise as necessary).

Manuscripts should be prepared with a title page. Include all relevant information about the author; institutional affiliation (if applicable), email address and contact details. The title page will be removed prior to review.

Articles should be 1.5 or double spaced in 12 point. Please keep formatting to a minimum. Use footnote citation with a list of references at the end. Tables and text in side-by-side columns should be placed in a table with 1 point border. Detailed information on manuscript preparation and referencing style will be available on the FAPSA website. An announcement will be posted on the P4C-list.

Please send articles attached as a *Word* document to:
Sue.Knight@unisa.edu.au

Letters to the Editor

It may happen that you read an article and would like to respond, but not in the form of a lengthy article. Such responses, which might simply add to a point made by the author either in agreement or disagreement, or offer an alternative view, could appear as a "Letter to the Editor." The idea is to encourage dialogue between readers and authors, in effect using the journal to create a community of inquiry.

Send all contributions to: or Sue.Knight@unisa.edu.au

Editorial – incoming editors

Critical & Creative Thinking has without question been central to the growth and integrity of Philosophy in the Classroom across Australia and beyond during the last decade and a half. We are very grateful to Clive Lindop, and in more recent times, Gilbert Burgh, Phil Cam and Stephan Millett for their dedicated efforts with the journal, delivering a robust publication and a smooth editorial transition. Our aim as editors is to build on the work done so far by maintaining the current focus on theoretical contributions to the theory and practice of philosophical inquiry in schools, as well as continuing to foster dialogue about classroom-related issues. Importantly, given the emerging work within Cognitive Psychology in the area of dialogue-based approaches to the development of thinking, we also aim to encourage contributions with an interdisciplinary focus. We look forward to a close association with the broad Philosophy in Schools community.

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Review

What is Philosophy in Schools?

Clinton Golding (University of Melbourne)

There are five characteristics that make Philosophy in Schools a distinctive educational program. These characteristics provide a useful framework for understanding what Philosophy in Schools is and how to teach it. Without an understanding of each of the five characteristics and how they relate to one another, a view of Philosophy in Schools will be flawed. I will describe and outline each characteristic in this paper and show how each depends on and supports the others.

AIM	Making sense
CONTENT	Rich concepts and philosophical questions
THINKING	Inquiry: Questioning, reasoning, evaluating, reflecting …
CULTURE	Community of Inquiry
TEACHER	Thinking coach and philosophical guide

The aim of philosophy in schools

One aim of education is epistemological. We are educated so that we gain knowledge. (Golding, 2005b, p. 143.) However, there are many different types of knowledge and so there are many possible epistemological aims: Getting the right answer, providing a useable solution, getting the authoritative answer, passing a test, and so on. The epistemological aim of Philosophy in Schools is to make sense of ourselves, the disciplines, the world, what we learn and the relationships between these things. The aim is to have our students explore content that will prove relevant to and illuminate their lives. (Lipman, Sharp & Oscanyan, 1980, p. 17)

Making sense is more than having the right answer to a question. To make sense of a topic, we go beyond a "trivial pursuit" view of education where we collect facts without a concern for a meaningful framework in which to place them. (Gardner, 1989, p. 116-117) Making sense involves appreciating how individual pieces of knowledge and experience fit together in a web of connections, inferences, relationships and principles. It is the result of a complex process of creative thinking, critical reasoning and reflection. To make sense, we pursue problems, questions and alternative views. We explore the interactions and relationships between concepts, principles, our experiences and bodies of knowledge. We make sense by creating coherent frameworks that unify our knowledge and experiences while providing insight, illumination and significance. (Golding, 2005b, p. 145)

The content of philosophy in schools

The content of Philosophy in Schools must include students' own experiences, settled and disputed facts, and accepted and debated viewpoints from different subjects and disciplines. This is what students are trying to make sense of. However, students also need to engage with content that they can use to make sense of the different experiences, facts and views. This must be content that enables students to make connections and draw inferences, and so construct meaningful frameworks. Students need to engage with content that allows them to take the knowledge, skills and insights from various contexts and disciplines and helps them to make sense of it. (Cam, 1995, p. 15)

Rich Concepts

Concepts provide the distinctive content of Philosophy in Schools. Concepts enable us to, for example, categorise (e.g., 'friend' or 'alive') and to make connections (e.g., 'love' or 'ownership'). They provide a structure within which we can place our knowledge and experiences and so make sense of them. Some examples of rich concepts include:

> Culture, violence, number, art, mind, responsibility, justice, harmony, knowledge, racism, rules, reality,

> intelligence, science, faith, evidence, proof, beauty, love . . .

Not all concepts provide suitable content for meeting the aims of Philosophy in Schools. The concepts need to be 'rich'. To be a rich concept which students can engage with to make sense of the world, the concepts must have the following features:[1]

Central

The concepts need to be those that we can use to make sense of the world. They need to be central to making sense of who we are, how we live and to our understanding of the different disciplines. They must be the building blocks of meaning. For example, we can't make sense of human beings without the concepts of 'choice' or 'emotion'. We can't make sense of any discipline without the concept of 'knowledge'.

Common & Connecting

The concepts need to link or connect our different experiences and perspectives. Because linking and connecting is one of the primary methods for making sense of something, the content of Philosophy makes it an interdisciplinary and connecting subject. For example, issues related to 'friendship' are common to all people of all ages, so 'friendship' enables us to make sense of a variety of different lives and perspectives. The concept of 'rules' is common to mathematics, English and sport. Exploring this concept helps us to make sense of each of the subjects and to make sense of the links between them.

Contestable & Challenging

The concepts are contestable and challenge our thinking. No matter how much we have explored these concepts, there is always room for further discussion and thought. There are

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[1] This analysis is based on the distinctions made by Laurance Splitter. See Splitter (2005) and Splitter & Sharp (1995), p. 130. Also see Golding (2005c), p. 24.

certainly better and worse understandings of these concepts, but there are always new questions that can be asked and we can always challenge any understanding developed.

The concepts explored in Philosophy in Schools need to be contestable and challenging because making sense of an experience or some knowledge involves resolving the tensions or incongruities in our thinking. If there were no incongruity, everything would be clear and there would be nothing to work upon. For example, it is controversial what a good friend is. Exploring this controversial concept helps our students to make sense of their relationship with others.

This sense of incoherence, "a feeling that we don't thoroughly understand what we are talking about," (Ward, 2003, p. 11) arises when we confront controversial and challenging concepts. We have to explore these concepts to find something to make sense of. Some incongruities arise because there are multiple understandings of any concept and we cannot resolve them into one clear understanding. For example, the law might provide one view of 'responsibility' and the dictionary another, while each member of a class has a further different view. Other tensions arise from a clash between our concepts and what we experience. For example, if we think that 'happiness' is doing what we want to do, and then find ourselves feeling unhappy after we do what we want for long periods of time, 'happiness' has become controversial for us.

Philosophical Questions

Philosophical questions are the other side of the coin of rich concepts. Together, they provide the distinctive content of Philosophy in Schools. The rich concepts provide the source of incongruities and tensions in our thinking. The aim of a philosophical question is to respond to this incongruity and resolve it by providing a sense of meaning. They enable students to direct their attention to the facets of the concepts that lead to incongruity and to then create a meaningful perspective or framework which will resolve the incongruity. For example, we normally think that being free is good, but we sometimes feel happier when we are just told what to do. There is a tension in our concept of 'freedom'. To resolve this tension, we could ask, 'Is it sometimes better not to be free?' Asking this question allows us to explore alternative

perspectives, to make connections and links and to make judgments that can resolve this issue for us.

More than one plausible answer can be given to a philosophical question and because they are about controversial concepts, they defy the attempt to provide a settled 'right answer'. However, this does not mean that they are questions with 'no right and wrong answer'. Philosophical questions are not matters of opinion or taste or exercises in creativity. Some answers to philosophical questions are better than others.[2] We can't tell the better answers by conducting an experiment or survey, or by reading a book, doing a calculation, or talking to an expert. We decide which are the better answers based on how well they resolve the issues they address and how well they help us make sense of our lives.

The following are examples of philosophical questions that direct us to some tension in our thinking about the different concepts:

Leadership
Do we need leaders?
What makes a good leader?
How should we choose our leaders?

Number
What is a number?
Are numbers created or discovered?
Could numbers be different from how they are now?

Freedom
Are you truly free?
What does it mean to be free?
Could you be free even if you are locked in jail?
Are you free if what you think has been influenced by your friends and family?
Are you free if the way you are is determined by your genes and/or your upbringing?

Proof
How do you know if something is true?
How much is enough evidence to prove something?

[2] See Paul & Elder, 2002, pp. 8-10 for a discussion of questions that can be given one right answer and questions that cannot.

Do we always need proof or is it OK to believe things without proof?
Does Science, Maths, History or English give better proof? Why?

The thinking in philosophy in schools

Complex thinking is required in Philosophy in Schools classes, given the distinctive content and aim of these classes. First, thinking for yourself is necessary for acquiring meaning, as it is constructed not discovered. Students, "will not acquire such meaning merely by learning the contents of adult knowledge. They must be taught to think and, in particular, to think for themselves. Thinking is the skill *par excellence* that enables us to acquire meaning." (Lipman, p. 13) Second, a philosophical question requires complex thinking in order to answer it. There is no settled method for resolving philosophical questions as there is for mathematical or scientific questions. The simple thinking involved with gathering information or settled knowledge is not enough to make sense of the problems or issues that philosophical questions address. The only way to make sense of the problems is through complex thinking: asking questions, considering alternatives, making inferences, considering reasons and drawing conclusions. In other words, students need to be good thinkers to do Philosophy in Schools.[3] See the right hand column in 'Appendix: the basic pattern of thinking for philosophical inquiry' for examples of the sorts of things good thinkers say and write when in a Philosophy in Schools class.

The thinking needed for Philosophy in Schools should be organised into a process. Haphazardly evaluating or clarifying or giving reasons will not enable students to progress towards making sense of themselves and their lives. Progress only occurs when the different types of thinking are used at the right time and in the right order. The thinking needed in Philosophy in Schools should be seen as a process of inquiry. See 'Appendix: the basic pattern of thinking for

[3] Because these questions require complex thinking to provide a meaningful answer, they require a great deal of time to do them justice. For example, questions like 'How should we live?' cannot be answered in a meaningful way after only a minute's thought. A meaningful resolution of philosophical questions may require hours, years or decades of thought. McKenzie (2000) makes a similar distinction about what he calls 'essential' questions.

philosophical inquiry' for the process students need to go through to make progress with philosophical issues.[4] First they need to examine a problematic situation to find problems and incongruities that they can investigate. Next they initiate the inquiry by suggesting questions to pursue that will help resolve these incongruities. Next they suggest possible answers or resolutions to the questions. To develop a deep understanding of the suggestions they have to reason about each of them and look at their implications and interrelations. After understanding the 'intellectual terrain' through suggesting and then reasoning about the suggestions, they can evaluate and make judgements about the suggestions. Finally, they conclude with their current understanding—they reflect on what they can now make sense of and what they need to do next in the inquiry.

It is very rare for an inquiry to follow these steps in the simple, linear way described. Inquiry in the Philosophy for Schools classroom can be very messy. Students need to constantly reflect on the process and ask themselves what they have done and what should be done next so the inquiry continues to 'move forward'. For example, new suggestions may occur to students as they are making their conclusions so they need to go back and reason about this new alternative. Students might discover they had gone down a false trail and so they start again. Students often have a sub-inquiry when a question arises which needs to be dealt with before they can resolve the question they are currently investigating.

The Culture of philosophy in schools

Students can only engage in the thinking process necessary for Philosophy in Schools when they are in a certain learning culture or environment. The traditional learning culture involving transmission of knowledge from expert to student is inadequate. The culture of Philosophy in Schools must allow students to think and inquire for themselves, as this is how they make sense of themselves and the world. However, students are not naturally able to do this, so the culture must also support the students in learning *how* to think and inquire for themselves. The culture of a Philosophy in Schools classroom is the Community of Inquiry. Students

[4] This analysis is based on the inquiry process described by Cam (2006).

inquire and think together with others. Disciplined thinking together with others—often in discussion—is both the primary culture that supports inquiry and the primary culture for learning how to inquire.

The Community of Inquiry provides a safe and supportive space for inquiry to occur. It provides an environment where it is safe to share ideas and where thoughtfulness is encouraged. In most environments it is not safe to think for yourself or share ideas. In some educational environments we are expected to follow the lesson plans of the teacher and are discouraged from pursuing our own trains of thought. In a Community of Inquiry, however, participation through active thinking is encouraged and required. In some environments we have to be careful what idea or view we suggest as if someone disagrees, they will think badly of us. What is worse, someone might make fun of us and our ideas or put us down. When a class is a Community of Inquiry, however, the culture is based on thoughtfulness and respect for others and their ideas. Students evaluate and judge ideas rather than evaluating and judging people. All ideas are given respectful consideration and will not be automatically accepted or rejected. The Community of Inquiry is a place where it is safe to agree and disagree with ideas, where students are encouraged to do so and where disagreeing and agreeing are not taken personally.

The Community of Inquiry is also a supportive culture for inquiry as it provides discipline and rigour for the inquiry. The Community of Inquiry provides the rigour of a public testing of ideas. It is essential that students move outside their own limited points of view and consider alternative perspectives. However, if students only think about an idea on their own, it is very easy to retain their biases, mistakes, errors and prejudices. When they think with others, the limits to their ideas will quickly be noticed and they can get help to construct a better framework for making sense of life and the world. The Community of Inquiry also provides discipline to the process of inquiry. Students are unable to wander off on unproductive lines of thought. Students have to work together to create a productive inquiry and each student contributes by helping to keep the inquiry on track and moving forward.

The Community of Inquiry also provides the environment whereby students learn how to think and

inquire. Following Vygotsky (1986), all cognitive functions appear first on a social and inter-psychological level before they become internalised as individual cognitive process. This applies to the inquiry process needed for Philosophy in Schools. First the inquiry has to occur on a social level. For example, students need to see other students and the teacher asking questions and giving examples and reasons. Then students start to ask these questions of others and challenge them to give examples and reasons. They learn to say the things that good thinkers say and follow the processes good thinkers follow. These become routines for students, so they finally learn to ask themselves the same questions and challenge themselves to give reasons and examples. (Ritchhart, 2002) In other words, thinking is the internalisation of dialogue and thinking is learned by first engaging in thoughtful dialogue. (Lipman, Sharp and Oscanyan, p. 23)[5] Students have to engage in open-minded inquiry with other before being able to think open-mindedly on their own. By engaging in disciplined dialogue, students learn to be disciplined thinkers.

Three types of classroom discussion

Discussion is the primary means of supporting and developing the thinking needed for Philosophy in Schools. However, not all discussions are useful for philosophy. Some discussions enable students to learn how to think and inquire for themselves, while others are used for different purposes. I describe three types of discussion and then give an example of each.

Student-centred discussion

This is the sort of discussion you might have when students talk directly with each other, but when they have no training or support to make this talking productive. In this discussion, the students are engaging with each other but are not engaging with ideas or with the process of inquiry.[6] Often the aim of a student-centred discussion is to have all students contribute. Without training or facilitation from the teacher, this often leads to each student saying whatever

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[5] Lipman *et al* refer to the work of Vygotsky, George Herbert Mead and John Dewey.

[6] Freakley & Burgh, p. 47 introduce the idea of categorising different types of discussions in terms of that with which the participants are engaged.

idea they think of with no deep connection to what others have said. In this case there is no inquiry and the discussion doesn't go anywhere. Alternatively, a student-centred discussion can lead to some students dominating or debating and trying to make everyone agree that their views are the best views. Again, the discussion doesn't go anywhere and no progress is made.

A student-centred discussion may be useful for helping students to learn social skills such as turn-taking or talking in public. However, it does not support the disciplined thinking and inquiry needed for Philosophy in Schools.

Teacher-centred discussion

The aim of a teacher-centred discussion is to have the students talk in a disciplined way, but the teacher is providing the discipline and setting the content that students must progress to. The teacher does this by having a predefined idea of what students need to know, and then leading them to knowledge. This means that students engage with the teacher and the teacher's questions and ideas. For example, the teacher might ask questions that will direct students to the 'right' answer, or they might simply point out whether students' suggestions are correct or incorrect.

A teacher-centred discussion is very useful to 'cover' material and make sure students have the right information. However, it is very poor for developing the independent thinking needed for Philosophy in Schools. In this sort of discussion students learn how to play the game 'guess what the teacher wants me to think'. They rely on the teacher to do the thinking for them and to lead them to the right answers. They don't need to do the thinking themselves and so they don't learn how to inquire and make sense for themselves.

Idea-centred discussion

The final type of discussion is the one used in Philosophy in Schools—an idea-centred discussion. In an idea-centred discussion, students are critically and creatively engaged with ideas suggested. It is not a 'mere conversation', as the student-centred discussion can be. (Gardner 1995) It is a disciplined inquiry process. Nor does it involve the teacher

intervening to 'cover' the content, as a teacher-centred discussion would be. An idea-centred discussion involves the teacher intervening only to help students employ rigorous thinking and to model the process of inquiry. Unlike the student-centred discussion where any idea is acceptable or the teacher-centred discussion where only the teacher-endorsed ideas are acceptable, in a Community of Inquiry students learn to distinguish better ideas from worse ideas.

Idea-centred discussions can be different depending on the extent to which students have internalized the process of inquiry and can operate independently, and therefore how much modeling and scaffolding the teacher needs to supply. A fully developed idea-centred discussion would be when the students run the inquiry without prompting or guidance from the teacher. They know different thinking moves, they notice opportunities when a thinking move would help the inquiry and they use these moves to make their inquiry fruitful. An early idea-centred discussion would involve the teacher doing much of the thinking and inquiry themselves. They would model the thinking and questioning necessary for philosophical inquiry. They would make interventions in the students' discussions designed to slowly coach and train students to be able to apply quality thinking and inquire for themselves.

An idea-centred discussion is essential for building a Community of Inquiry. These discussions provide a supportive culture in which to inquire and train the students to be able to inquire for themselves. No other classroom environment allows for this. However, a Community of Inquiry is different from an idea-centred discussion. The Community of Inquiry should be understood as a class culture rather than as something you do. Once students have participated in idea-centred discussions for long enough to have internalized the thinking and inquiry process, they can operate as a Community of Inquiry at any time. They can have a disciplined internal dialogue about the ideas presented in any form, for example from a teacher-centred discussion, from reading a text-book or from listening to others.

Example of Discussions about Proof

Student-centred discussion

Student A: Proving something means that you're certain it is true.
Student B: Yea, but you can't prove anything for certain.
Student C: I'm certain that the movie on TV last night was rubbish.
Student D: It was the worst!
Student E: Who's going to see the new horror movie that came out yesterday?
Student B: Anyway, forget that. Like I said before, nothing can be proved for certain. There's no point in trying to figure out what proving something means because there is no such thing as proof.
Student F: You really think so?
Student B: Sure. There's no point in talking about proof any more. Lets talk about something else…

Teacher-centred discussion

Student A: Proving something means that you're certain it is true.
Student B: Yea, but you can't prove anything for certain.
Teacher: That's not quite right. What has been proved for certain?
Student B: I'm not sure.
Teacher: What subjects prove things for certain?
Student C: Science?
Teacher: Sometimes, but this wasn't what I was thinking of. Try again.
Student B: Maths.
Teacher: Now you've got it. In maths we prove things for certain. We can prove that two plus two does equal four. We are right that proving something means that you are certain it is true. OK, next question …

Idea-centred discussion

Student A: Proving something means that you're certain it is true.
Student B: Yea, but you can't prove anything for certain.
Teacher: I think we need to figure out what we mean by 'being certain' before we judge whether we can be certain about anything. Once we have decided that, then we can figure out if proving something is related to being certain about it. So, what does it mean to be certain about something or certain that it is true?
Student C: I guess it means that you know you've made no mistakes.
Student D: That sounds okay—if you haven't made a mistake you must be right. You're certain.
Student D: Maybe we could build on this—maybe being certain is when we know we *couldn't* have made a mistake?
Teacher: Why might it be important that we cannot have made a mistake?
Student D: Well, if you couldn't have made a mistake you are really certain. If you just *think* you didn't make a mistake, you could be wrong. But if it is impossible to have made a mistake then you couldn't be wrong.
Student E: But if that's true, that would mean we can't be certain about anything. It's always possible to have made a mistake….

The teacher of philosophy in schools

Philosophy in Schools involves a distinctive content, classroom culture and process of thinking. To teach using this process, in this culture and to deal with this content, teachers need to see themselves occupying a distinctive role.

To engage in Philosophy in Schools, students need to learn how to think and inquire for themselves. The teacher's job is to help them learn how to do this. The teacher is a thinking coach rather than the source and evaluator of knowledge. Their job is to decide what thinking needs to be done and help the students do this thinking. At first the teacher will act as a philosophical guide. They will guide the

students with the aim that students will learn how to guide themselves. They are not deciding the answers students should have, and then leading them to these answers. Instead, the teacher listens carefully to the students and asks questions to help students find the incongruities in their thinking that they want to resolve. Then the teacher asks questions and makes suggestions to model the inquiry process to resolve this incongruity. After the teacher has helped the students to internalise the inquiry process, they have the students do the thinking and guiding work rather than doing it themselves. Rather than, for example, showing students the right questions to ask to have a good inquiry, the teacher now allows the students to ask the questions themselves. They will only intervene to help students to decide for themselves what step to take next in the inquiry.[7]

Closed and Open Attitude

We cannot account for what is distinctive about the teachers' role in a Philosophy in Schools classroom just by looking at what the teacher says or does. What is distinctive is the attitude the teacher takes. To explain this attitude, I will distinguish between two different attitudes a teacher might hold—one supports Philosophy in Schools and one prevents students from doing Philosophy.

I call it a closed attitude when a teacher decides what answer is best and then sees their sole goal to be that students get this answer. The teacher keeps the class 'on-track' so they get to this goal. When the students get to where the teacher wants, they move on to a different topic without any further discussion. What is distinctive about this attitude is what the teacher is paying attention to: whether the answers suggested are correct or not. After a response by a student, the teacher thinks 'Is that correct?' If it is correct, they tell the students they have it right and then move on to a different topic. If it is not correct, the teacher leads students to the correct answer by, for example,

[7] The issue of being a guide is a complex one and beyond the scope of this introductory account of Philosophy in Schools. More can be said about how a teacher can use their expert knowledge of a subject area or discipline to model good thinking, to guide students without leading them and to allow students independence for their inquiry while still helping them progress.

asking a new question or just telling them the correct answer.

This attitude is incompatible with the aims and methods of Philosophy in Schools. It is this attitude that makes a teacher-centred discussion harmful for students' thinking. If teachers consistently take this attitude, students will not learn to think independently and instead will rely on their teacher for answers and evaluations. Holding this attitude prevents students from making sense of philosophical issues for themselves. Holding this attitude makes it impossible to have an idea-centred discussion. Even if students have learned how to think and inquire for themselves, if the teacher takes a closed attitude, they will leave no room for the students to do this. The students may engage in independent thinking to come up with their answers, but the teacher's attitude is discouraging them from doing this. The teacher is not interested in the students' thinking. They just want the 'right' answer.

I call it an open attitude when a teacher aims to have students pursue an inquiry to their own conclusions and aims to open up, deepen and develop students' thinking. The teacher may know many possible answers to the question raised, and may also know the reasons for and against accepting these answers. The teacher may even have an answer which they think is correct. Yet by taking an open attitude, the teacher's goal is not to transmit their knowledge to the students or to push the view that they think is best. The main goal of a teacher taking an open attitude is to help the students to generate and make sense of answers and to learn how to think and inquire for themselves.

When taking an open attitude, the attention of the teacher is not on whether students have the right answer. Instead, they are paying attention to what thinking is needed and what issues and questions need to be considered to make progress. After a response by a student, the teacher thinks: 'Now what thinking do we need to use?' 'What questions will help us move forward in our inquiry?'

In Philosophy in Schools classes, teachers take an open attitude. It is this attitude that allows the Community of Inquiry to develop and allows for idea-centred discussions to occur. In the early stages of a Community of Inquiry, before students have internalized the thinking process, the

teacher will be responsible for the disciplined inquiry. The teacher will ask many of the questions so they can model good philosophical inquiry and help students to make sense of the issue for themselves. See the left-hand column in 'Appendix: the basic pattern of thinking for philosophical inquiry' for examples of the sorts of questions the teacher can ask to model the inquiry process. For example, when the teacher sees that we need to evaluate suggestions so we can move forward in the inquiry, they might ask, 'What are the reasons for and the reasons against that suggestion?' If the teacher saw that considering a few more alternative viewpoints would help keep the inquiry disciplined, then they might ask, 'What are some other alternatives?' As the Community of Inquiry develops, students internalize the process of inquiry, take responsibility for the process and ask most of the questions. By taking an open-attitude, the teacher leads the students to do most of the disciplined thinking.[8]

Below is an example of a closed and an open attitude being adopted. In these examples, it is the teacher's attitude that closes or opens up the thinking.[9]

Example of a closed attitude

Teacher:	Is racism ever acceptable?
Student:	Maybe racism could be good when it gives a minority a bit more opportunity?
Teacher:	Why do you think that?
Student:	Well, it's good if people who have had a hard time, like Aboriginal students, get extra opportunities.
Teacher:	Maybe. But it's unfair on than other races isn't it? Who has another idea?

[8] At this point, it may be possible to have a teacher-centred discussion where the teacher has an open attitude. The students know how to inquire and think for themselves and will not just passively absorb what the teacher says. The teacher is sharing a great deal of knowledge with students, but not with the aim of 'covering' the content. Instead they share the information that they think will help the students to think and inquire about the subject for themselves. More needs to be said to fully explore this possibility.

[9] See examples from Wilks (1995), pp. 40-41 and 43-44, for other examples. Although Wilks does not describe them in this way, they are good examples of what I am calling the 'closed attitude'.

Student: Maybe racism is okay when it's the minority against the majority?

Teacher: Hmmm. Do you think the majority would feel unfairly treated?

Student: I guess that the majority would still feel bad if the minority were insulting them or telling them they couldn't do certain things because of their race.

Teacher: Good point. Can anyone build on that idea?

Student: I think racism is always bad because it is always unequal and unfair treatment.

Teacher: That's right. You can't have good racism because that would mean treating people unequally and treating people unequally is always unfair. Okay, next question …

Example of an open attitude

Teacher: Is racism ever acceptable?

Student: Maybe racism could be good when it gives a minority a bit more opportunity?

Teacher: Can someone give me an example of what this might be like?

Student: What about when aboriginal students are given special scholarships to go to University?

Teacher: Okay, so that's an example of giving a minority more opportunity. Why might someone think that this would be good or acceptable racism?

Student: Aboriginal students have had a hard time because people have been racist towards them and towards their ancestors. It's good to give them some extra help to make up for this.

Student: But that can't be good. It's unfair to all the others who have had a hard time but can't get a scholarship.

Teacher: So how will we decide if it really is good racism or not?

Student: It is unfair racism whenever one race gets an unfair advantage over another

Conclusion

This paper has outlined the distinctive features of Philosophy in Schools. Each of the features described supports and depends on each of the other features. There can be no Philosophy in Schools where any one of the features is missing. These five characteristics provide a framework that teachers and schools can use for implementing and improving Philosophy for Schools classes. I also hope this framework will be productive for suggesting further theoretical, pedagogical and empirical research and discussion about the nature of Philosophy in Schools.

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APPENDIX: basic pattern of thinking for Philosophical inquiry

Based on: Cam (2006) & Golding (2005 & 2005c)

INITIAL PROBLEMATIC SITUATION: 'LOOKING CLOSELY'

What is your favourite aspect? I see …
What is the most interesting aspect? I think …
What do you like? What do you dislike? I feel …
What is challenging? I believe …
What do you see?
What do you feel?
What do you think?

INITIATING

What questions or issues does this raise? One question is …
What does this make you think about? This makes me think about…
What does this make you wonder about? I wonder …

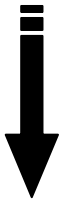
SUGGESTING

What is a different idea about …?Maybe …
How else could we think about …? A different idea is …
How can we explain… in a different way? How about …?
What are some other alternatives? What if …?

REASONING & EXPLORING WIDELY

What is … connected to? To explain that further …
What is … distinct from? That would mean …
If … is true, what would this mean? If … is true, then that tells us …
What does … mean? … means …
How can we explain some more about …? We also need to consider …What is the best way to understand …? What else could we consider?

EVALUATING



How can we check if … is true? … because …
Why do you think …? We can test this by …
What are the reasons for …? A reason for that is …
What are the reasons against …? A reason against that is …
What might someone say who disagreed with …?The evidence against is…
What might someone say who agreed with …? The evidence for is …
What criteria or tests can we use to evaluate? The criteria we should use to evaluate is …
What view has the most support? The strongest evidence is for …

CONCLUSION & RESOLUTION

What conclusions could we draw?
A conclusion we can draw is …
Where have we moved forward?
… now makes sense because …
What have we decided?
I have figured out … because …
What have we learned? I now understand … because …
What do we need to work on next? We now need to work on …

REFLECTION ON PROCESS OF THE INQUIRY
(happens at any time)

What are we trying to do? We were trying to …
What is going well? … was going well because …
What is not going well? was not going well because …
What can we improve on? We could improve on … because
What should we do next? Next, we should …
What will help us get there? … will help us here, because …

REFLECTION ON CONTENT OF THE INQUIRY
(happens at any time)

What is the main idea? The main idea is …
What point is being made now? … is relevant because …
Are we addressing the main point? That is missing the point because …
How does that suggestion help us? … helps us because …
What do we need to consider now? We now need to consider …

Philosophy in upper secondary school: an example from Western Australia

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Introduction

Western Australia has embarked on an ambitious, and sometimes controversial, program to implement an outcomes-based education system. Within that program is a new course of study called Philosophy and Ethics that will be available to students in their final two years of schooling. This course of study had to be accessible to all students, not just those heading toward university. This directive, and the outcomes-based system within which the course sits, proved a challenge to the developers. The result is a course, currently being tested, that will help students *do* Philosophy and which, if successful, will help them develop skills applicable across all disciplines and help them become better citizens.

The developers of the course believe they have created an approach to Philosophy in upper secondary classes that honours the long traditions of philosophical inquiry while providing essential thinking skills for life in the 21st Century. This paper explains the structure of the new course—its content, contexts, outcomes and assessment strategies—while interrogating some of the presumptions on which it is based.

Background

In the past decade in Western Australia there has been a shift to an educational system where the emphasis is on outcomes. This has been accompanied by an increasing emphasis on student-centred learning. It has also necessitated increased scrutiny on the set of skills and knowledge that will equip students for life in a fast-changing society and caused a re-evaluation of the assumptions underpinning state-sanctioned education.

The transition has not been unproblematic. Although there has been trenchant criticism of outcomes based

education (OBE) itself from some sectors, led by a sensationalist local press, much of the criticism has centred on the speed of its implementation and the lack of resources allocated to the transition. For some critics the new system lacks the rigour and content base of more traditional approaches. Despite the criticisms, the system is being introduced and teachers must live with a new education environment. It is into that environment that the new course of study in Philosophy and Ethics has emerged. And it has to be said that the course would not be what it is, and may not have been introduced in any form, if it were not for the system-wide change to outcomes.

The change began in 1995 with the Review of School Curriculum Development Procedures and Processes in Western Australia, which identified a number of priorities in curriculum, including the need for a common curriculum direction and a coherent learning philosophy between the different levels of schooling coupled with a more even spread of curriculum support materials and assistance to enable schools to tailor curricula to meet their students' particular needs. The review recommended that all schools in the state, government and non-government follow a State-wide curriculum. From the review came the establishment of the Curriculum Council of Western Australia that was charged with developing a curriculum framework. This framework would have a consistent structure, but would give schools and teachers some flexibility to write programs. A key principle of the Framework now in place is inclusivity, which means that all courses should be open to all students.

After some years of outcomes-based curriculum and reporting in the primary and middle school years, the Curriculum Council of Western Australia, which mandates what is taught in all Western Australian schools whether state or private, has introduced a new upper school curriculum. This new curriculum replaces the current curriculum with 50 new subjects each of which is open to all students at their own level of achievement. Students may use these courses as a university entry requirement, entry to technical and other further education or toward direct participation in the workforce either through vocational training or linked apprenticeships. Each new course has a syllabus comprising outcomes, essential content and standards.

The Philosophy and Ethics Course of Study is a completely new area. There was no pre-existing course on which to base the new course, thus presenting the developers with a problem and an advantage. With no prior course, resource materials would be difficult and there would be few teachers trained to teach it. But, with no prior course the developers were in relatively uncharted waters and they could create something fresh and innovative. In establishing the course, the writers were required to base their work on the outcomes already prescribed for the key learning areas. They chose to synthesise outcomes from the learning areas of *English, Arts, Science, Society and Environment, Media* and *Technology and Enterprise.*

Once enrolled in the course, students are required to demonstrate levels of achievement in four outcomes: philosophical inquiry; philosophical approaches to making meaning; philosophy and ethics in human affairs; and the application of philosophical and ethical understanding. The new course is undergoing action research trials in five schools with a view to introducing it into schools in 2008. What is described in the following is a snapshot of a process that is not yet completed. However, the key principles are unlikely to change even though some of the finer-grained descriptions of outcomes and levels of achievement are in the process of being changed at the time of writing.

Constraints

One of the difficulties encountered in writing the new course was to make the course fit the model mandated: the writers had to accept idiosyncratic definitions for key terms such as outcomes, contexts and content. This necessitated a 'Procrustean' approach in that the "Philosophy"—as understood by the group—had to be either stretched or truncated to fit the pre-existing model. While this could have been an impediment to constructing a workable course, the fact that there was no pre-existing syllabus and little history of teaching philosophy in upper secondary classes meant that the writers could craft something original that had philosophical rigour, would be interesting to learn and to teach and which fitted the construction matrix provided by the Curriculum Council. A significant constraint was overcome early in the process when it was successfully argued that Philosophy and Ethics should be separate from

any course in Religion, it having been suggested by a religious lobby that a course in religion could achieve the same outcomes as one in philosophy. The counter argument recognised that Religion was an important course but Philosophy could not and should not be subsumed under it. A future constraint to the implementation of the new curriculum will almost certainly come from a shortage of suitably qualified teachers as there has been in many places a declining enrolment in university philosophy courses as students paying fees opt for courses that they believe (rightly or wrongly) are likely to offer them greater employment opportunities in the short term.

Structure

The course of study has three core components: Outcomes, Content and Contexts. The outcomes must be demonstrated by all students at their own level of competence, from Level 1 which is usually demonstrated in the first years of primary school through to Level 8 at which students are functioning at a level usually achieved in the second and third years of tertiary study. The content is divided into three areas: 'How we know', 'What is real?', and 'How should we live?' These are lay terms for the philosophical sub-disciplines of epistemology, metaphysics and ethics, but allow also for the inclusion of such areas as aesthetics, political philosophy and governance. Contexts are themes used for teaching. For example it is possible to teach metaphysics, epistemology and ethics using texts from science fiction. Think how *The Matrix* could be used in discussing perception, *The Island of Dr Moreau* in discussing xenotransplantation, *Blade Runner* in questioning identity and persons. In such a context Mark Rowlands (2004) suggests, tongue in cheek, that Arnold Schwarzenegger might well be one of the great philosophers of the past thirty years. Think, for example, of the mind-body problem and the complexities of time travel in *The Terminator* series and questions of personality and personhood in *Total Recall*.

Contexts suggested for other units of work are: the individual in the world of work; shopping, fashion, celebrity and material possessions; sports, games and leisure; self-interest, identity and society ('Who am I?' and 'Where do I belong?'); political philosophy and the uses and abuses of power; utopia and dystopia; religion and science; and

bioethics—questions of life and death. Each of these contexts allows teachers and students to negotiate a curriculum. In early units the contexts are designed to focus on areas already of interest to students. The outcomes, required content and standards of achievement assure academic rigour.

Rationale

In mounting an argument as to why philosophy and ethics should be included in a new school curriculum, the group writing the course had to consider what philosophy was, why it might be useful to those who did not intend to take it up at University level and in doing so to explain how it might be useful outside academia. The group argued that philosophical thinking, as a carefully-structured approach to analysing and evaluating problems, statements and, particularly, concepts could help shape what people thought, encourage them to assess critically what they value, what they consider to be true and how to engage productively with those around them. They argued that philosophical thinking gives a framework for considered judgment and encourages people to listen carefully so as to understand what people mean, not just what they are saying. A strong part of the rationale was that philosophy should be taught as a practical activity that enables us to understand, evaluate and engage with our world.

One of the key practical strengths of philosophical inquiry is that it helps all of us deal more effectively with disagreement, recognising fallacious arguments, questioning assumptions, discerning the meaning of statements and engaging in a dialogue aimed at mutual understanding. This dialogue allows all students to deal with issues and problems that cannot be addressed adequately merely by appeal to information from our senses, by experimentation or by appeal to an authority. In doing Philosophy students learn to assess problems and find ways to untangle complex issues. These are clearly transferable skills applicable across a wide range of disciplines and real-life situations. The Western Australian course has made engaging in philosophical inquiry a required outcome that students need to demonstrate. One aspect of this outcome requires students to participate in a philosophical Community of Inquiry. This

places an onus on teachers to build philosophical communities of inquiry into their routine classroom practice.

Included in the rationale for establishing a new course of study was the belief backed by research findings (e.g. Millett and Kay, 2001) that learning philosophy and ethics contributes to a clearer understanding of self and thus helps to promote a healthy and dynamic connection between a person as an individual and a person as a citizen. Understanding of self is one of the core outcomes in the Curriculum Framework for Western Australian schools (Curriculum Council, 1998). The improved understanding of self and one's place in society accompanied by improved thinking and analytical skills and improved moral discernment "empowers students to flourish in a world of increasing complexity of not just new problems, but new categories of problems" (Curriculum Council, 2004)

Outcomes

Outcomes in the framework established for Western Australian schools are statements of what students should know, understand, value and be able to do as a result of their studies in a particular course. The key questions that had to be addressed were "what does it look like when a student is achieving the outcome?" and "how can we differentiate achievement of these outcomes at different levels". The developers of the Philosophy and Ethics course of study were constrained by both the definition of outcomes and the number allowed. They were instructed to limit, if possible, the outcomes to only three or four, with each outcome to have 3 or four "aspects". These outcomes were to be derived from the 13 core outcomes prescribed in the Western Australian Curriculum Framework.

The four outcomes that were finally settled upon were: **Philosophical inquiry** (in which students investigate philosophical methods and strategies); **Philosophical and ethical perspectives** (within which students demonstrate an understanding that there are philosophical approaches to making meaning); **Philosophy and ethics in human affairs** (where students understand that philosophical and ethical thinking has a role in human affairs) and; **Applying and relating philosophical and ethical understandings** (where students use philosophical and ethical strategies to reflect on, evaluate and respond to social and scientific issues).

To assist teachers to develop suitable content and methodology for the course and to evaluate achievement of these outcomes, each outcome has a number of aspects that students should be able to demonstrate at one of eight levels of achievement. Achievement of Level 4 (see below) is assumed as a starting point for upper secondary students.

Outcome 1: Philosophical Inquiry: Students use investigative methods. In achieving this outcome, students: • investigate philosophical and ethical concepts, ideas and ideals • develop reasoning and other thinking skills; and • participate in open philosophical communities of inquiry
Outcome 2: Philosophical and ethical perspectives: Students understand that there are philosophical approaches to making meaning. In achieving this outcome, students • understand that there are different ways of knowing; • understand that there are different viewpoints on the nature of existence; and • understand that people need to give good reasons for how they live.
Outcome 3: Philosophy and ethics in human affairs: Students understand that philosophical and ethical thinking has a role in human affairs. In achieving this outcome, students: • understand that there are philosophical traditions; • understand that there are different worldviews; and • appreciate the references in contemporary culture to philosophical ideas
Outcome 4: Applying and relating philosophical and ethical understandings: Students use philosophical and ethical strategies to reflect on, evaluate and respond to social and scientific issues. In achieving this outcome, students: • apply different ways of knowing to practical, social and scientific issues; • reflect on who they are and the nature of things; and • apply ethical reasoning to social and political practices

Table 1: Summary of draft outcomes and aspects for the Philosophy and Ethics Course of Study. These outcomes and aspects are yet to be finalised.

Measuring Outcomes

The course of study writers developed matrices across five levels of achievement which form a continuum from Level 4 through to Level 8. Level 6 would be considered the minimum entry level to university. However, all the upper

secondary courses are now required to also stipulate what achievement at Level 3 looks like and this work is underway.

For example, in the draft scale of achievement for Outcome 4, *Applying and relating philosophical and ethical understandings*, a student would be at Level 4 when she demonstrates that she can "Recognise more than one philosophical and ethical approach to an issue and gives reasons for value choices that might be made" and would demonstrate achievement of the outcome at Level 6 (the minimum university entry level) when she clearly identifies different perspectives on philosophical and ethical issues and from an articulated philosophical perspective prepares a well-developed argument for a position one might take in relation to issues" (Curriculum Council, 2005).

Philosophy and Ethics offers three pairs of semester-long units and it is possible that a single class might contain students working on one of the units while, simultaneously, there are students working on another. Six units have been developed, and it is envisaged that most students would study four units over a

two- year course. It is possible for students to take only one or two units. Schools are encouraged to be flexible in planning and timetabling and to allow for students to achieve outcomes through work experience and out of classroom activities in addition to classroom work.

Essential Content

The description of "Content" in all the new courses of study in Western Australia, including the Philosophy and Ethics course of study, is distinctively different from what teachers might commonly have understood in the past. Content is a description of essential areas that must form the basis of teaching and learning programs in each of the units offered in the course of study.

Content in the Philosophy and Ethics course of study comprises three essential areas: 'How we know', 'What is real?' and 'How should we live?' Each of these is elaborated into sub-areas, all of which are included in every unit taught. There is little prescription as to which authors are to be read or which books are to be used; it is up to teachers to devise programs that allow students to achieve all of the outcomes while covering all areas of essential content. This, of course, is proving to be a contentious requirement among teachers

who might in the past have been accustomed to working from a set text which they supplemented with their own material. The former approach is seldom possible in the outcomes-based curricula mandated for all schools and has led to significant criticism, including from the Federal Minister (Ferrari, 2006), that the transition to outcomes-based education has been under-resourced and would lead to a decline in standards.

The essential content areas prescribed by the Curriculum Council for the course are summarised in Table 2.

How we know	What is real?	How should we live?
Philosophical methods can be used to help us understand how we know and explain things. In learning these methods, students develop understanding in • Critical reasoning • Methods of inquiry • Imagination and interpretation • Analysing, clarifying and evaluating concepts	Philosophy helps us to understand the nature of reality and existence. The scope of this part of the curriculum includes • Scientific worldview • Conceptions of ultimate reality • Persons	The question of how humans should live is the core question of Ethics. Essential content will be addressed under these headings: • Self and others • Communities and cultures • Governance

Table 2: Draft essential content areas and their elaborations for the Philosophy and Ethics course of study.

The course developers recommended that the units be delivered within focus areas, with an increasing degree of difficulty as students move between them. From easiest to

hardest, the focus areas suggested were: 'Why Should I?' (first unit); 'Play, Pleasure and Leisure' (second unit); 'Reasons and persons (third unit)'; 'Culture and aesthetics' (fourth unit); 'Society' (fifth unit) and 'Meaning' (sixth unit). Following action research testing in classrooms, the focus areas for the units were refined to: reason and actions; reason and happiness; reason and persons; reason and culture; reason and society; reason and meaning. Within these focus areas the recommended content is further refined and detailed, although there was considerable discussion and disagreement as to how the content could be scoped for difficulty while simultaneously ensuring students could achieve all the outcomes. Work on this continues.

Table 3 below shows an early suggested detailed content for Unit 3a, which would normally be the first of the final two units undertaken by students heading for university entry. Teachers are free to choose a context within which to frame the unit of work. The writers suggested that for Unit 3a, which has the working title of "Reason and Society", teachers and students could choose from contexts including: political philosophy and the uses and abuses of power; current political events, arguments and policy issues; utopia and dystopia; and environmental ethics.

For the students taking Unit 3a this would normally be the first of four semester units. University entry would be contingent on the students demonstrating all outcomes at Level 6, and on passing an externally-set examination. Without a set curriculum to be followed in any of the courses of study, there is an extra difficulty in framing an examination. The questions must be more general in nature and such as to allow students to demonstrate understanding at up to Level 8 standard.

Assessment

Each outcome in the course must be assessed in a variety of ways. The Curriculum Council requires assessment in the following categories: Performance, Investigation, and Response or Production. To demonstrate the outcomes students might construct and perform a dialogue, investigate and report on a significant concept or create a documentary. The intention is to recognise that students have a variety of learning preferences and should have an opportunity to display what they know and understand in a variety of

forms. This approach is consistent with learning theory increasingly being adopted in the earlier school years, but there is resistance from some of those teaching the senior years.

Conclusion

The course designers have developed a course which is flexible and which should cater for the achievement levels, learning styles, needs and interests and post-school destinations of students with a wide range of interests and abilities. However, the nature of the changes to the West Australian education system in the past ten years has been, and continues to be, contentious. Within the parameters of the Curriculum Council directives, the designers feel they have designed a Course of Study to meet the needs of most students; one that offers in a flexible way an approach to Philosophy in upper secondary classes that honours the long traditions of philosophical inquiry while providing essential thinking skills for life in the 21st Century.

Unit 3a: Society	
The recommended focus for this unit is **Society.** Content related to inference and argument structure, on doubt as a key element of scientific method and on both the ideals of a smooth-running society and ideal models of societies and their correlates will be dealt with. Students will examine the concept of property and social structure and forces predicated on the concept. They will examine religion and secularity in the context of persons – singly and in groups – exercising free will, intentionality and power.	
How we know:	
Critical reasoning	Inference; Mapping arguments; fallacies (2) [e.g. adverse consequences, selective use of favourable instances; false dichotomy; straw man; weasel words] .
Methods of inquiry	The scientific method induction; Sceptical doubt; Socratic inquiry; Dialectic;
Imagination & interpretation	Utopias, dystopias; idealism (political vs. metaphysical);
Analysing, clarifying and evaluating concepts	Justice; liberty; democracy; social contract; citizenship; power ;common good, Judgment

What is real?	
Scientific worldview	Monitoring and surveillance; property; place; space; technology; empiricism
Conceptions of ultimate reality	Nihilism, religion; fundamentalism; secular humanism.
Persons	Personhood; intention; identity; free will; social beings
How should we live?	
Governance	Democracy; punishment:; ideology; republic; jural relations (e.g. right, obligation, privilege, inability, duty); justice: social contract; is-ought relations; codes of conduct; codes of ethics;
Communities and cultures	Church and state; the public sphere; saving face; shame; utilitarianism; care; duty; rule of violence
Self and others	responsibility; moral considerability;beneficence; non-malificence; Care; Consequences; Consistency of principle;

Table 3: Unit 3a. Elaboration of content. An early draft of the suggested content for a unit intended to be taken by students in their 11th year of a 12-year school system.

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Philosophy and the School Curriculum: Some General Remarks

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The very idea of philosophy in schools

Philosophy is often seen as the most remote of disciplines, suitable only for tertiary study or for academically inclined students in the senior secondary school. This is not because philosophy is inevitably at a greater remove from the needs and concerns of ordinary life than other areas of inquiry. On the contrary, philosophy takes a particular interest in problems and issues that are the common lot. It is not due to the fact that the work of professional philosophers tends to be abstract, technical and difficult. Academic philosophy does display those tendencies, but the same is true of research in many disciplines that are represented in the school curriculum. Philosophy's remoteness has more to do with the fact that its role in school education has traditionally been so limited. This has resulted in a double-bind. Unlike many other academic disciplines, philosophers have never thought about how they might reconstruct their discipline for general educational purposes until quite recently; and being effectively cut off from any concern with school education or education beyond the university, philosophical practice has tended to be narrowly academic and insular. The pity is that this state of affairs, this alienation of philosophy from the broader society, seems so natural to many philosophers that they believe their discipline has little to offer to most people's education or to their lives.[1]

Philosophy is taught in the upper secondary school in many parts of the world, of course, and the connection

[1]For example, see the comments by both Michael Dummett and Richard Schusterman in Roger-Pol Droit, *Philosophy and Democracy in the World* (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1995), pp. 104-105.

between philosophy and school education where it is taught no doubt helps to maintain closer ties between philosophy and society than in the English-speaking world, where philosophy tends not to be taught. While this has been changing in recent years—with philosophy making its way into the senior secondary curriculum in Australia, for example—it is nevertheless arguable that interventions in the final years of school are unlikely to make a really deep impact upon the ways of thinking of the society or upon the character of its concerns.

Comparisons between the restricted role of philosophy and the almost universal practice of teaching literature and mathematics within the school curriculum help to make the point. No one would expect a final year survey course in literature to provide the kind of influence that growing up with literature imparts. We insist upon the study of literature—that is, of reading, thinking and writing about literature—from the early years of school education; and we engage students in creative literary practice as well. We make such a thoroughgoing effort because we believe that it can have a formative influence. We believe that by growing up with literature, and learning to express themselves in speech and writing under its sway, students can refine their sensibilities and develop a more humane cast of mind. We don't think that the study of literature could have this influence if it were laid on top of the rest of their education in the final years of school.

To turn to my second comparison, the heavy emphasis almost universally given to mathematics throughout school education could hardly be justified in terms of its direct application. Some amount of mathematics must be taught for the sake of practical numeracy, and considerably more for the few whose careers will depend upon it. But it would be extremely wasteful, and an unwarranted imposition, if the widespread emphasis upon mathematics throughout school education were basically a weeding exercise by which the few were selected. So it is no surprise that the central argument for an extensive commitment to mathematics within the core of a school education is that it helps to develop and strengthen the capacity for logical thought. Given this, the case for mathematics may well be oversold, because other studies, and particularly philosophy, could do a better job of satisfying that aim. The point is, however, that whatever

means we use to instil a capacity for logical thought—whether mathematics, philosophy, or anything else—there is no question that it needs to be incorporated throughout the whole fabric of school education.

The moral of these comparisons is that for philosophy to have a formative influence, and thereby to significantly affect both the way people think and the character of their concerns, we need to move beyond the short course and the fringes of the curriculum. In some form or other, we would need to make philosophy a part of the regular fare throughout the school years. Only by this means can philosophy effectively supply its nutrients to the developing roots of thought and action. And only when people grow up with philosophy can there be a genuine *rapprochement* between philosophy and ordinary life.

In order to reconstruct philosophy for these purposes, we need to adapt it to the interests and experience of students of various ages and to adjust its tools and the procedures it employs to their stage of development, arranging these things in appropriate pedagogical sequences. It is quite an undertaking to develop an extended school curriculum, and some philosophers find the task both foreign and difficult to envisage. However, part of their difficulty lies in the fact that it presents philosophy from an unfamiliar perspective. Yet there are models to work from,[2] and in recent years philosophers have begun to find their way forward. If part of the difficulty is also that some philosophers think of philosophy as being above all that, it is salutary to remember that other disciplines have long since discovered how to recast themselves in educational form. Philosophy is not above all that. Educationally speaking, it is a late developer.

The spiral curriculum revisited

[2] The most widespread model of philosophy for schools comes from the programs and pedagogy associated with Matthew Lipman and his colleagues from the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children at Montclair State University, New Jersey. Lipman developed materials for kindergarten right through to the end of secondary school, in the form of philosophical novels and teachers' manuals that were designed to promote philosophical inquiry through class discussion. Since the early 1990s Lipman's followers have extended his work and this general approach is now represented in schools in many countries around the world.

By way of a backdrop to the discussion, I wish to resurrect an old idea of Jerome Bruner's that should help us with the general conception of the philosophy curriculum. Over forty years ago, Bruner made the startling claim that "the foundations of any subject may be taught to anybody at any age in some form,"[3] and he suggested that the prevailing view of certain disciplines as too difficult for younger students results in us missing important educational opportunities. Bruner's claim about the foundations of the disciplines points to the possibility of introducing philosophy to students in primary school, and in light of this fact we might include an early introduction to philosophy as amongst the missed opportunities in education.

Bruner elaborates upon his claim by suggesting that children can intuitively grasp the basic notions of a discipline long before they can give them adequate formal expression. In the early years, therefore, education should aim at developing an intuitive understanding of the key ideas and basic themes of the areas of study, and then, as things progress, it should deepen and enrich the child's understanding of them in successively more sophisticated and complex ways:

> Though the proposition [that the foundations of any subject may be taught to anybody at any age] may seem startling at first, its intent is to underscore an essential point often overlooked in the planning of curricula. It is that the basic ideas that lie at the heart of all science and mathematics and the basic themes that give form to life and literature are as simple as they are powerful. To be in command of these basic ideas, to use them effectively, requires a continual deepening of one's understanding of them that comes from learning to use them in increasingly complex forms. It is only when such ideas are put in formalized terms as equations or elaborated verbal concepts that they are out of reach of the young child, if he has not first understood them intuitively and had a chance to try them out on his own. The early teaching of science, mathematics, social studies, and literature should be designed to teach these subjects

[3]Jerome Bruner, *The Process of Education* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1960), p.12.

> with scrupulous intellectual honesty, but with an emphasis upon the intuitive grasp of ideas and upon the use of these basic ideas. A curriculum as it develops should revisit these basic ideas repeatedly, building upon them until the student has grasped the full formal apparatus that goes with them.[4]

The conception here is of what Bruner calls a *spiral curriculum*: one that begins with the child's intuitive understanding of the fundamentals, and then returns to the same basic concepts, themes, issues and problems at increasingly elaborate and more abstract or formal levels over the years.

Whatever one may think of this conception in other areas of education, it is undoubtedly vital for developing the kind of understanding that belongs to the humanities. Whether we are studying literature, human history or art, we return again and again to the same themes, the same basic concepts and issues. The theme of one's identity that is implicit in a picture book in kindergarten, say, may surface again in a story book for the young reader, only to be taken up again in the adolescent novel, and finally elaborated in much more complex and subtle ways in the major works of fiction that are on the syllabus in the senior secondary school. At each return, the student comes to the theme with both more experience and more powerful ways of articulating that experience. And each return is an occasion for yet further development.

When we turn our minds to programs in philosophy for schools, the educational significance of this spiral pattern has direct implications for curriculum design. For it is clear that philosophical understanding develops through the spiral return. We have only to think of the standard advance from the undergraduate level to postgraduate study and then to professional work, as well as the professional philosopher's tendency to return again and again to the same terrain. So Bruner's claim that any discipline can be taught to students at any age, points to the possibility of reconstructing philosophy so that it spirals right down through the secondary and into the primary school. It challenges us to conceive of the foundations of philosophy being recast in a form that can lead students to intuitively grasp its main

[4]Ibid., pp.12-13.

ideas and intellectual tools in ways that progressively deepen their understanding and develop their skills. It invites us to make the effort to construct such a curriculum rather than see our children forgo such an important educational opportunity.

Aims and objectives

Just as in science education we bend scientific method to the classroom in order that children may come to think scientifically, so in philosophy education we must adapt philosophical practice to the classroom in ways that encourage children to learn to think philosophically. The appeal to method is not incidental. When we engage children in science in order to teach it, we are doing what is necessary given that science is a practice, or family of practices, and not just a body of theories or established results. Philosophy too involves a family of practices, and not just an array of philosophical theories and doctrines that one can learn to repeat without really engaging in philosophy at all. So we cannot but appeal to these practices, and get children *doing* philosophy, if we wish to teach it.

While this takes us well beyond what I suspect all too often passes for philosophy education, it does not take us very far. In thinking about the task of adapting philosophical practices to the classroom, we need to be clear about our educational aims, and about how to fit those practices within a teaching and learning environment in such a way as to help fulfil those aims. Only then will we have a clearheaded understanding of the discipline of philosophy from an educational point of view.

To begin with aims, for the purposes of this discussion I am going to assume that the overarching aim of philosophy education is the development of philosophical understandings, intellectual skills and abilities, and social and intellectual dispositions that will assist students to become active participants in the social, cultural and economic life of a vibrant democratic society. Philosophy education may have other aims, of course, but it seems to me this general aim is of such central importance that it will be sufficient to focus upon it.[5]

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[5] The case for making this aim central to philosophy education has been argued in many places. For example, see Matthew Lipman, *Thinking in Education*, Chapter 15, 'The political significance of the

In order to translate aims into practices, we need objectives. In other words, given this broad aim, we need to elaborate the most important objectives that fall under it. Again, since my purpose is to explore the consequences of aims for curriculum construction and pedagogy, I will state these objectives without argument. It seems to me that they are: (1) to develop the student's knowledge and understanding of a wide array of philosophically significant issues and ideas that inform life and society through an increasingly deep inquiry into them; (2) to develop students' capacities to think critically and creatively, so that they will be better prepared to face the problems thrown up by social and economic change; and (3) to develop the ability of students to tackle intellectual and social problems and issues collaboratively in such a way that they can help to sustain an inclusive, thoughtful and caring community. Allow me to elaborate these objectives a little, taking them in turn.

(1) *Knowledge and understanding*

Philosophy deals with questions and concepts that underlie many of our concerns and understandings. Whether it is ethical questions about how we should behave, social questions about the good society, epistemological questions about the justification of people's opinions, metaphysical questions about our spiritual lives, or logical questions about what we may reasonably infer, philosophy is a rich source of our cultural heritage and of contemporary thought and debate. Both in terms of its history and ways of thinking, philosophy also helps to deepen our understanding of the big ideas and key concepts that have helped to shape civilization and continue to inform the way we live. Our conceptions of what makes something right or wrong, of justice, freedom and responsibility, of our personal, cultural and national identity, of sources of knowledge, of the nature of truth, beauty and goodness, are all central to what we value and how we conduct our affairs. Since such concepts so deeply inform life and society, it is important for students' to develop their knowledge and understanding of them. And

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inquiring community' (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 244-259. Also see Philip Cam, 'Philosophy, democracy and education: Reconstructing Dewey,' in In-Suk Cha (ed.), *Teaching Philosophy for Democracy* (Seoul: Seoul National University Press, 2000), pp. 158-181.

while such knowledge and understanding may be imparted elsewhere in the curriculum, it is in philosophy more than any other discipline that students are able to explore such ideas and extend themselves conceptually.

(2) Thinking

Philosophy is a discipline with a particular focus on thinking. It involves thinkers in the cognitive surveillance of their own thought. It is a reflective practice, in the sense that it involves not only careful thinking about some subject matter, but thinking about that thinking, in an effort to guide and improve it. Since philosophical thinking tends to keep one eye on the thinking process, philosophy has developed many tools and procedures that assist the thinker in such tasks as questioning, clarifying issues, reasoning about complex problems, analysing suppositions and articulating and exploring a range of possibilities. By adapting these tools and procedures to the classroom and teaching students how to use them, we can help them to acquire the kinds of skills and mental habits that promote good general problem solving and better reasoning. This makes students not only more effective participants in their own intellectual development, but it helps to give them both the means and the mental outlook through which they can learn to think effectively in all kinds of contexts. Under this objective I would include such things as: acquiring the habit of reflecting carefully upon your own thoughts, as well as what others think; developing the ability to imagine and evaluate new possibilities; developing the habit of changing one's mind on the basis of good reasons; and acquiring skill in the establishment and use of appropriate criteria to form sound judgments.

(3) Community

With regard to cooperative thinking and the importance of community, I would stress the virtues of dialogue. On the Socratic view, at least, philosophy involves us together in a discourse aimed at intellectual inquiry which stands the test of reason. So as we work to resolve differences in our understandings, or to subject our reasons to each other's judgment, or try to follow an argument where it leads, we are like detectives whose clues are the experience,

inferences, judgments and other intellectual considerations that each thinker brings into the dialogue with others. On this view, philosophical inquiry provides a model of the inquiring community: one that is engaged in thoughtful deliberation and decision-making, is driven by a desire to make advance through cooperation and dialogue, and values the kinds of regard and reciprocity that grow under its influence. Just because it has these characteristics, philosophical inquiry can provide a training-ground for people who are being brought up to live together in such a community. And so, if philosophy education took the form of a collaborative inquiry, it would provide the means by which we can satisfy the third objective of philosophy education. Under this objective I would include such things as: developing the habit of listening to other people and trying to see their point of view; becoming used to considering a range of opinions; being prepared to open your views to thoughtful criticism; becoming disposed to give reasons for what you think when that is appropriate; and generally, learning to cooperate intellectually and socially with others.

Some developmental and pedagogical considerations

As these remarks already indicate, there need not be a tension between independence of thought and thinking cooperatively in a community. On the contrary, there is reason to think that the most effective way of encouraging independent thought in students is to engage them in the practice of thinking together. Reflection upon the Socratic invitation to philosophical inquiry itself confirms such a view, but it is also bolstered by developmental theory. I will therefore make a brief excursus into that area in order to reinforce the idea that collaborative inquiry is an effective means of structuring the teaching and learning environment so that it supports the aims and objectives of philosophy education.

According to the developmental psychologist Lev Vygotsky, although thought and talk begin from different roots, they converge in early childhood.[6] Well before children are of school age, they have begun to use speech not only for social purposes, but also to communicate with themselves.

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[6] See L.S. Vygotsky, *Thought and Language* (Boston: MIT Press, 1962), especially Chapter 4, 'The genetic roots of thought and speech'.

They come to address themselves in the ways that they have previously been addressed or have learned to address others—praising themselves, admonishing themselves, offering themselves advice and instruction. It appears that, through this process, children begin to gain a greater control over their own thinking and become more self-directed in their behaviour. They become less impulsive and more able to overcome problems by planning.[7] While this self-directed, self-organizing speech—egocentric speech, as it's called—is in decline by the time that children reach school age, it is not a genuine extinction, according to Vygotsky. The decline that we observe merely marks a change in the child's psychological orientation, as egocentric speech makes its way "inward", becomes inner speech, and transforms the child's thought by language. Ironically, rather than being merely an expression of the egocentric nature of the young child's psychology, egocentric speech is the means by which thought becomes socialized. Through its inward passage, the child's thought begins to be structured by those inter-personal acts that we perform with language—such as questioning, admonishing, correcting, and explaining—which now take on intra-personal functions, as through the fertilization of thought by language, the child's socialized intellect begins to grow:

> The greatest change in children's capacity to use language as a problem-solving tool takes place . . . when socialized speech (which has previously been used to address an adult) *is turned inward*. Instead of appealing to the adult, children appeal to themselves; language thus takes on an *intrapersonal function* in addition to its *interpersonal use*. When children develop a method of behaviour for guiding themselves that had previously been used in relation to another person, when they organize their own activities according to a social form of behaviour, they succeed in applying the social attitude to themselves. The history of the internalization of

[7] On this point, see also A.R. Luria and F. la. Yudovich, *Speech and the Development of Mental Processes in the Child* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971).

> social speech is also the history of the socialization of children's practical intellect.[8]

According to Vygotsky, this incorporation and transformation of the social is a universal feature in the development of all of the so-called higher cognitive functions:

> Every feature in the child's cultural development appears twice: first on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first *between* people (*interpsychological*), and then *inside* the child (*intrapsychological*). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher psychological functions originate as actual relations between human individuals.[9]

Returning to the topic of developing our students' capacities for independent thought in the classroom, it would be a natural extension of Vygotskian psychology to suggest that children come to think for themselves through the internalization of social practices. For example, that learning to ask questions of others is a prelude to coming to ask yourself questions and that learning to consider others' views makes you more ready to consider alternatives to your own first thoughts. Given that this extension is essentially correct, we can see how our two objectives come together—how children can learn to think for themselves while also learning to think together as members of a community. *Learning to think for oneself is simply applying the practices of collaborative inquiry to one's own thought through the process of internalization.*

Let us suppose that we engage our students in collaborative inquiry in the classroom, employing structured class discussion and small group work through which, among

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[8] L.S. Vygotsky, *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*, edited by Michael Cole, Vera John-Steiner, Sylvia Scribner and Ellen Souberman (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 27.

[9] Ibid., p. 57. For further exploration of the idea that all of the higher mental processes develop out of and reflect cultural practices and arrangements social, see A.R. Luria, *Cognitive Development: Its Cultural and Social Foundations* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1976).

other things, students learn to listen to one another, try to understand each other's points of view, to explore their disagreements, request and give reasons, and build upon one another's ideas. Let us suppose that we assisted them to internalize the cognitive-cum-social forms of practice of such a community by encouraging them to reflect upon their own views, generate alternative ideas, evaluate their own reasons, and so on. Then we would be using the practices of collaborative inquiry in order to teach our students not only to think cooperatively together but also to think for themselves. And thinking for oneself and thinking with others would assume the same open-minded form and sustain each other.

We therefore have returned to the point from which we began this brief excursion into classroom practice and developmental theory. We are back with the objectives of philosophy education. We have discovered the means by which we can develop a capacity for independent thought while fostering those forms of regard and practices of intellectual exchange that enable the members of a community to be reasonable with one another in dealing with problems and issues.

Critical, creative and caring thinking

It may be useful to relate the kind of thinking that collaborative inquiry-based learning in philosophy promotes to more familiar ways of talking about thinking in education. At the risk of repeating myself, therefore, allow me to redouble my efforts.

We live in a region that is undergoing considerable transformation and in an economic environment that has become extremely competitive and more and more global. It is a world in which change is rapid and often unpredictable, and there is a constant need to adapt. It is a world flooded with information, bringing with it diverse opinions and uncertain claims, where increasingly young people will need to be able to sort out for themselves what is reliable and of value and what is not. In such conditions, the need for our students to develop into resourceful and adaptive individuals can hardly be ignored, and the development of critical and creative thinking is needed as never before.

Fortunately, many schools already have programs in critical and creative thinking in the curriculum, which is

certainly to be applauded. Yet many teachers do not know that philosophy is the natural home for such endeavours, from which most of these programs ultimately derive. Not only that, when philosophy is taught in the way being envisaged here, it combines attention to the practices of good thinking with significant social learning, which encourages students to give due consideration to the feelings and viewpoints of others. This is no small matter. History affords us countless examples of superb critical and creative thinkers whose behaviour was politically and socially devastating. None of us would wish to contribute to the development of a culture that is ruthless and uncaring in the use of its intelligence. In encouraging critical, creative and *caring* thinking, we are doing what is needful if the citizens of tomorrow are truly to work for the betterment of society.

Within the context of an inquiring classroom community, philosophy can provide a basis of developing thinking that is critical, creative and caring. It combines attention to critical thinking skills, the creative development and exploration of ideas, and social abilities and dispositions. This is just the combination of skills, abilities and dispositions that those growing up today will need if they are to be educated to work productively together and to deal successfully with a wide range of issues and problems that they will face in their lives. These include such things as:

- being able and ready to ask appropriate questions
- being inclined to offer thoughtful suggestions
- being willing to work with others to seek better alternatives
- being disposed to consider things from other people's points of view
- being good at making needful distinctions
- being active in searching for useful connections
- being inclined to draw relevant inferences
- being in the habit of looking for good reasons
- being good at handling disagreement
- being attentive to the need for reliable criteria
- being able to make careful reasoned judgments
- being generally intellectually and socially cooperative

Obviously such outcomes are beneficial in the context of schooling across the curriculum; but as I am stressing, they

will also prove useful in all kinds of life circumstances and bring genuine benefits to society.

Integrating the curriculum

In the context of the standard school curriculum, philosophy's dual focus on general thinking skills and broad conceptual understandings can help students to make connections between different areas of study, and to seek a broader and more integrated understanding of things.

Philosophy is the one form of inquiry that makes contact with every learning area. We can see this immediately from the various areas of study that make up academic philosophy, such as philosophy of science, social and political philosophy, philosophy and literature, ethics, aesthetics, philosophy of mathematics, of biology, of history, and so on. Philosophy is a Central Station through which one can travel backwards and forwards to other areas of study in all directions. To vary the metaphor, it can provide the connective tissue that enables the different parts of the curriculum to form a more effective whole.

While the connections between philosophy and the school curriculum can hardly be conveyed in a few words, the following sample of typical philosophical questions may help to show how it brings together issues from various learning areas:

PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTION	LEARNING AREAS
What is it to be a person?	Human Society and Its Environment Personal Development English
What is a rule?	Mathematics English Human Society and Its Environment Personal Development
Where do rights come from?	Human Society and Its Environment Personal Development
Does everything have a cause?	Science Education Human Society and Its Environment
What is knowledge and how can we come by it?	All curriculum areas

To take just one of these questions at random, students will be familiar with the importance of rules in different areas of their studies as well as in many contexts of life both inside and out of school. There are rules of grammar, arithmetical rules, social rules and laws, and rules and guidelines for maintaining good health, as well as rules in sport and rules of conduct in the classroom. To think about the significance of rules for the conduct of life, or about how a spelling rule in English (such as 'i' before 'e', except after 'c') may be similar to but different from a moral rule (such as 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you'), enables students to bring together their understanding and experience of various domains. It enables them to develop a deeper, more coherent and integrated understanding of a significant aspect of their lives.

In an appropriate classroom setting, broad questions such as these can be a vehicle for inquiry-based learning. Another example may help to give the general idea. Let us begin with an upper primary school reading program in English, and suppose that the class has read a story about a ten-year-old boy named Ahmed whose community is in conflict over what seem to be people's rights. Let us also suppose that the students have been encouraged to raise questions in response to the story, and the teacher has written their questions on the board. Now the class is ready to conduct a discussion. In order to pay attention to the issue of rights, the teacher looks over the student's questions and notes those that seem particularly relevant, such as the following:

> Is it fair that Ahmed had to leave school when he was only ten? (Robert)
> Shouldn't Ahmed's mum be allowed to have another baby if she wants one? (Lucy)
> Why do the people at the factory think that they can pollute the river? (Hee-Min)

A discussion about rights might begin with any of these questions, and once it is underway the teacher who is alert to the issue might then work some of the questions from the following plan into the discussion in order to give it structure and focus:

DISCUSSION PLAN: Rights

1. Ahmed has been at school for only five years. Should he have a right to more education?
2. Where Ahmed lives, there is not enough money to provide teachers and schools for everyone to become educated. Do all of the children still have a right to be educated?
3. Ahmed has to sleep in the same room as his sisters. Should he have a right to a room of his own?
4. Ahmed's mum and dad love each other. Should they be able to have as many children as they want?
5. Some days Ahmed has to go hungry because his parents do not have enough money to provide food. Does Ahmed have a right to be fed?
6. Ahmed lives by a polluted river. Shouldn't Ahmed have a right to clean water?
7. If Ahmed's river is to be made safe, the factory where his dad works will have to close. Does Ahmed's dad have a right to a job?
8. Can you think of any cases outside of the story where some rights might conflict with other rights?
9. What should we do when rights conflict?
10. Do people just naturally have rights?
11. Where do rights come from?

Questions about human rights are directly relevant to Human Society and Its Environment and Personal Development. Yet just as we can use the philosophical content of these learning areas to set students thinking, so philosophical inquiry can be used to explore concepts and engage them in reasoning in other curriculum areas. Addressing significant concepts and issues across the learning areas in this way does more than provide superficial thematic connections. It helps to supply the connective tissue that makes sense of the curriculum as a whole. So Philosophy not only helps students to develop habits of good thinking, it also provides them with a means of making those broader connections out of which richer and deeper understandings can grow.

Summary

I have argued that the addition of philosophy to the school curriculum could have considerable academic, personal and social benefits. In order to reap these benefits, however, we need to reconstruct philosophy as a systematically

implemented program based on collaborative inquiry-based learning. Such an approach fits naturally within the framework of a spiral curriculum where students come to learn the tools and procedures of a discipline and to understand its basic ideas in increasingly sophisticated ways as they progress through their school years. The pedagogical approach being recommended here is reinforced by developmental considerations. It supports important educational aims and objectives, including developing students' knowledge and understanding of important issues and ideas, while extending their capacities for critical, creative and caring thinking in ways that can have significant academic and social outcomes. And it can help us to provide the connective tissue that encourages students to think across the curriculum. When thus conceived, philosophy makes a rich and rewarding addition to the curriculum, and the fact that it has been so long in coming should only strengthen our efforts to make it a living reality.

Exploring the benefits of an inquiry-based intervention approach for children with learning difficulties

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Introduction

The purpose of this article is to examine the Community of Inquiry program as a strategy that could influence the cognitive and social-emotional factors that contribute to learning difficulties in the classroom. The psychological hurdles encountered by students with learning difficulties can result in a lack of confidence, low self-esteem and an external locus of control. Consequently their levels of academic attainment tend to be low. One key issue is investigating ways of supporting students with learning difficulties in becoming more motivated learners with enhanced skills of learning how to learn, that is to become self-regulated learners. This paper looks at the benefits of the Community of Inquiry, a strategy that seems to have the capacity to nurture in children a more internal locus of control, enabling improved reasoning, judgement and motivation to persist in the process of interpreting and understanding their world. If this program is successful in improving students' abilities to think independently, demonstrate greater motivation and to conceptualise their understandings, then students with learning difficulties should show improved performance in self-regulated thinking, self-efficacy-beliefs and a consequent improvement in academic attainment.

Learning difficulties

Children with learning difficulties generally have inadequate cognitive strategies and are often unable to take responsibility for their own learning. Does Philosophy for Children and the Community of Inquiry method of teaching have something to offer children in need of learning support?

The central issue in this article is an exploration of the Community of Inquiry, as a strategy to assist these students by enhancing metacognition, self-regulation skills and self-efficacy beliefs and ultimately improve academic outcomes, particularly in literacy. The rationale here is based on improving cognitive strategies in LD students. As Westwood (2004) points out, thinking processes involving metacognition are what most children with learning difficulties lack.

Learning Difficulties is a contentious field of study with many unresolved arguments centred on issues of definition and causality (Hammond, 1996). In this paper, the term 'learning difficulties' refers to those children experiencing mild learning constraints and who are not making adequate progress within the curriculum. These students are described as having short-term barriers to learning, while students with longer-term barriers, often arising from neurological conditions, are categorised as learning disability (Education Queensland (1995)).

The issue of how to support students with learning difficulties has been a problem for decades. But how closer are we to definitive answers to this complex issue? Hammond (1996) argues that: "After over 100 years of research from the fields of medicine, education and psychology we are no closer to agreement on what causes ordinarily intelligent children and adults to have problems with the basics of learning" (p. 4). The causes are complex but are usually reflected in one or more of the three broad areas, which include the physical learning environment, psychological (social/emotional) problems or neurological factors. Many of these students lack confidence and have diminished self-regulation skills and negative beliefs regarding their own ability to achieve. Although limited experience of failure is not necessarily a bad thing, the consequence of failing consistently creates a danger of sliding into a failure mentality and students then attributing their problems to external factors beyond their control (Westwood, 2004). The development of an external locus of control can lead to learned helplessness and a failure cycle (Knight, Paterson, & Mulcahy, 1998): "When students do not perceive events as contingent upon their own behaviour (external LOC) a psychological handicap is generated that thwarts actions from the students themselves and others such as parents and teachers" (p. 7).

The above issues raise the question of whether the negative self-belief factors that nurture notions of failure in the early years can be circumvented by modifying the learning environment and adopting strategies that give students a sense of control in their thinking and more positive self-belief. Extensive research reveals that what fundamentally determines how children achieve and adjust is the 'mindset' that they bring with them to life's experiences (Bernard, 2002). Hence, curriculum initiatives that elevate cognition in LD children and their ability to control and regulate their thinking, could well promote a more appropriate level of academic achievement. Carpenter and Ashdown (1996) argue that these learning difficulty students "Are pupils for whom imaginative and creative programs of study are necessary to enable them to receive their curriculum entitlement" (p. 2). The classroom Community of Inquiry may well be one of those creative programs; however its consideration, in this context, is seen as being complementary to existing classroom learning support practices and other fundamentally important basic skills teaching.

Significance of philosophical inquiry for LD students

Efforts to promote self-directed learning in LD children should focus on self-referential processes and the need to monitor their own responses and self-correct. Learning an intellectual skill means learning how to perform the cognitive processes involved in thinking, reasoning and problem solving, that is the higher-order skills of inquiry (Westwood, 2004). The classroom Community of Inquiry should provide an opportunity for LD students to develop conceptual understandings, reasoning and problem-solving abilities. Hinton (2003) substantiates this in confirming that Philosophy for Children undoubtedly provides young minds with greater capacity to engage in metacognitive processes thus becoming reflective, self-directed learners. Recent research on the Community of Inquiry program has explored many of the academic and social-cognitive components of student performance (Gardner, 1998; Imbrosciano, 1997; Moorehouse, 1995). However, there appears to be few studies exploring the impact of this strategy on children who exhibit failure tendencies. Such research is significant for three reasons. Firstly, the psychological hurdles experienced by

many children with learning problems appear to be having an increasing impact within the changing social, technological and commercial environments in which children are challenged on a daily basis. Our children are growing up in a world increasingly flooded with information in which they will have to deal with diverse opinions and uncertain claims (Cam, 1995). They need to be enabled to develop strategies for questioning, reasoning and making good judgements. Secondly, although many students with learning difficulties cannot cope adequately with text, they often have good verbal skills. Teaching strategies that capitalise on their social-interaction abilities, as in the classroom Community of Inquiry program, may nurture literacy development in these children. Thirdly COMMUNITY OF INQUIRY could also positively influence self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1977), that being the way individuals think about themselves in social contexts and the belief in their capabilities to organise and execute courses of action.

Metacognition, self-regulation and self-efficacy

There are two metacognitive factors that are claimed to have a considerable impact on achievement and failure in children, namely, self-regulation and self-efficacy (Westwood, 2004). What is the relationship between the two? Gilmore and Cuskelly (2005) state that much research has focused on academic self-regulation but less attention has been given to cognitive and emotional self-regulation in younger children.

Self-regulation involves the development of cognitive strategies for planning, or action plans for problem-solving and completing tasks. These skills are vitally important for self-directed learning, especially in those students with learning difficulties. Kroll (1999) contends that this is the case for all students, but in particular for students with learning difficulties who may not have the strategies or the understanding of procedures for learning how to learn. A student's learning potential can be put at risk when they are not given opportunities to develop reflective, self-monitoring procedures. Knight and Scott (2004) confirm that LD students are characterised as non-strategic learners who may have few or poor self-monitoring behaviours. This perspective is also endorsed by Westwood, (2004): "One of the common observations concerning students with learning problems is

that they have little confidence in their own ability to control learning" (p. 30). Hence, teaching students how to regulate and monitor their performance in the classroom should be a focus in any intervention program for supporting this particular group.

Self-efficacy and self-regulation appear to have a somewhat symbiotic relationship. Self-efficacy beliefs affect motivation, effort and persistence determining a student's belief that a goal can be achieved. Additionally, self-efficacy may itself contribute to self-regulation. Wang, Haertal, and Walberg (1993) argue that effort and perseverance are now regarded as key attributes necessary for developing self-regulated learners. While self-regulation comprises the skills of personal control over one's own learning, self-efficacy involves the belief factors in an LD child's perceptions of his or her personal capabilities to achieve goals. Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory states that psychological influences, whatever their form, alter the level and strength of self-efficacy and are derived from four principal sources: Firstly, accomplishments and success build a strong belief in one's ability to achieve while failures undermine it. Secondly, vicarious experience allows self-appraisal of personal performance in relation to the attainments of others. Thirdly, feedback from peers and adults is important because it is easier for a student to sustain efficacy if others express faith in his abilities rather than doubt. Finally, self-efficacy is influenced by one's physiological state of confidence, comfort and fulfilment within the learning environment. Students with learning difficulties can be at risk in any of these areas because their successes are often infrequent; their comparisons with others can be negative; they often receive less positive feedback; and their emotional stability and confidence may also be at risk. Westwood (2004) claims that lowered self-efficacy is likely to have a detrimental effect on motivation and on willingness to persist with challenging tasks in LD children. These beliefs appear to underpin the skills of self-regulation and academic competence. Zimmerman (1995) stresses the relationship between self-efficacy and academic achievement: "Within the educational crucible, children acquire their self-conceptions of academic agency. It is their growing sense of self-efficacy and purpose that serve as major personal influences in their ultimate level of accomplishment" (p. 202). This is confirmed by

Bandura (1995) who argues that self efficacy has a powerful impact on an individual's learning orientations, and that among the mechanisms of personal agency none is more central or pervasive than beliefs of personal efficacy.

Becoming a self-directed learner should be a key goal in any intervention process for LD children. Developing the tools of self-regulation is a critical phase in developing the skills of learning how to learn, skills that are a fundamental part of how students can become independent managers of their own learning. Zimmerman (1995) confirms that children's efficacy beliefs play a prominent role in regulating cognitive, effective and motivational factors that operate in concert in the development of children's capabilities to manage their own learning. This raises questions regarding the role that inquiry-based learning can play as an intervention process for LD students. What impact does the Community of Inquiry teaching strategy have on students with learning difficulties? To what extent does it influence metacognition, self-regulation and self-efficacy beliefs? Following is a brief appraisal of each one of these factors in the Community of Inquiry context.

Enhancing metacognition in LD students

Students with learning difficulties have a special need of assistance in constructing their own cognitive strategies to give them a sense of being in charge of their own learning. The Community of Inquiry approach appears to have the propensity for enhancing metacognition and extending independent thinking and understanding in a social context.

Children, as do adults, place great importance on being with and observing others, as well as being appreciated, listened to and accepted by their peers (Knight, Graham, & Hughes, 2004): "Not only do children need to be taught about social competence but they also need opportunities for working with others to foster acceptance" (p. 181). Most children in school classrooms rely on their peers for emotional and moral support and this need and enjoyment of group interaction appears to be capitalised upon in the Community of Inquiry learning environment, with resulting positive effects on confidence and strengthened thinking skills which are internalised through its social practices of intellectual exchange (Cam, 1995). Peers have a crucial role to play in

developing sound thinking strategies and enhanced metacognition.

If the peer group plays a major role in self-monitoring and building thinking strategies, then it would seem that this path toward reflective thinking could and should be utilised for the benefit of children with short-term barriers to learning. Based on social-constructivist principles that encourage the participants to observe, listen, converse and interact together, students with learning difficulties should be enabled to build their metacognitive processes. The best way of fostering good thinking is through the social and intellectual practice of thinking together. (Cam, 1995) It is also relevant for LD children that the learning setting provided by the COMMUNITY OF INQUIRY seems to enhance thinking while supporting a student's existing knowledge and skill level. Therefore, through its social-cognitive processes, it should clearly have a positive impact on metacognition for these students, paving the way toward a higher level of self-directed thinking and cultivating the skills of self-regulation.

Promoting the skills of self-regulation

LD students usually exhibit deficits in the skills of independent learning but could well benefit from teaching methods that develop the habits of self-regulated thinking through social-cognitive practices. These practices encourage verbal confidence and the ability to articulate, reason and understand, thus enhancing procedural competence and 'self-correcting' thinking, which Splitter and Sharp (1995) claim is an outcome from participation in classroom inquiry. In a classroom Community of Inquiry children address questions, provide reasoned argument, make judgements and think together (Cam, 1995): "They develop a method of behaviour for guiding themselves" (p. 9). It is largely through the internalisation of these social practices that the individual's habits of thinking are formed. The Community of Inquiry has a particular focus on thinking and conceptual exploration—it is highly metacognitive. Students with well-developed metacognitive skills tend to be more effective, self-directed learners (Knight, Paterson, & Mulcahy, 1998). This should similarly apply to children with low levels of academic attainment because, as Splitter (1993) argues, "Philosophy in

education nurtures thinking skills in school age children and is relevant to *all* children not just the so-called academic or gifted minority" (p. 385).

Through engagement in a Community of Inquiry, children who have learning difficulties should be enabled to perceive themselves as being capable within their peer group, empowered to take charge of their own learning and thus move forward with greater cognitive independence. Brooks (1993) supports this argument. "Students who frame questions and issues and then go about answering and analysing them take responsibility for their own learning and become problem solvers and perhaps more importantly problem finders" (p. 103).

De Bono's (1976-2000) lateral thinking strategies, Bloom's (1956) taxonomy of educational objectives, and Gardner's (1983) multiple intelligences all give testimony to the view that interventions to enhance independent, self-regulatory thinking are effective for all students including those with learning difficulties and a fundamental premise in this argument is early intervention. The Community of Inquiry strategy would seem to have the potential to improve independent, self-regulated thinking in LD children, even in the early years of schooling. Kennedy (1996) identified 'dynamic patterns of argument' in Community of Inquiry groups of 5- to 7-year-old children. Claxton (2002) supports this viewpoint:

> Given the chance and the right kind of encouragement, even children as young as five or six can be reflective about their own thinking, Good learners have the self-awareness to monitor their learning and change course when circumstances change. They can reflect on what they have produced in a realistic and sometimes critical way. (p.32)

This self-awareness and self-referential processing can, in turn, build on a child's self-efficacy beliefs.

Nurturing self-efficacy beliefs

Unlike self-esteem or self-concept, self-efficacy is more context-specific. It is a self-assessment of one's competence to perform a task in a given discipline. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how children feel, think and act through four major processes. They are cognitive, motivational, affective

and selection processes (Bandura, 1995). Social-cognitive strategies tend to support these features within the social or classroom context. Similarly, the Community of Inquiry promotes the cognitive aspects of performance by building intellectual confidence. It also encourages positive behaviours and motivation (Hinton, 2003) and because the Community of Inquiry constitutes an appropriate framework for teaching and learning across all subject areas and disciplines (Splitter & Sharp, 1995) and develops the quality of good judgement as well, it aligns well with the efficacy 'selection processes'. This supports the role that efficacy and beliefs play in both self-directed learning and academic achievement (Zimmerman, 1995): "Perceived efficacy for self-regulated learning enhances perceived efficacy for academic attainment and perceived academic self-efficacy in turn raises the academic goals students set for themselves" (p. 221). It would seem that the Community of Inquiry has the potential ingredients for cultivating and nurturing self-efficacy.

Psychological implications

The influence of the Community of Inquiry method on the cognitive development of students with learning difficulties, their self-regulation processes and self-efficacy, appears to be significant. Confidence and self-esteem are also positively affected (Gardner, 1998) through the process of communicating in a supportive environment where their views are accepted and respected and not least being listened to. Both listening reflectively and being listened to respectfully are an essential part of the COMMUNITY OF INQUIRY process and contribute to both skills and beliefs. Lewis (1996) states that the experience of not being listened to can have potentially devastating effects on a child's ability to learn, on their self-concept as well as their view of themselves as people who have a say in their life. The classroom inquiry strategy seems to have the capacity to improve self-perceptions and produce psychological benefits that impact positively on learning. Early research projects on the performance of children in a Community of Inquiry program demonstrated that children in the program learned better, were more engaged and were learning important thinking skills (Moorehouse, 1995).

Recent research on Community of Inquiry has reported benefits for self-esteem, motivation and academic

achievement when students feel socially accepted by their peers (Knight, Graham, & Hughes, 2004). These affective benefits are confirmed by Gardner (1997) whose 2-year empirical research study on philosophical inquiry in Canadian classrooms found that there was a significant increase in the students' self-esteem.

Implications for literacy competence

A critical academic goal for LD children is to become literate. Support processes that target literacy while developing greater proficiency in self-regulated learning are vitally important. The Community of Inquiry appears to have this capacity as it supports the wider curriculum including the language goals of written expression, reading and verbal confidence and fluency (Hinton, 2003). Inquiry based approaches offer a potential intervention because they provide opportunities for students to be active constructors of knowledge. Clay (1991) argues that active construction of knowledge is fundamental in developing language competencies:

> Because of what we now know about oral language acquisition we have to accept that children can be active constructers of their own language competencies. Too often we adopt teaching strategies which proceed as if this was not true. These active constructive learners are not accounted for by the empty vessel metaphor in education which suggest that the role of teachers is to pour learning into children. (p. 61)

Evidence from a recent quantitative project on the Community of Inquiry in a preschool (Seon-hee & Park, 2001) provided clear evidence of accelerated language development. From Lipman's (1980) research in the early seventies showing impressive gains in reading to Hinton's (2003) school-based studies showing evidence of increased levels of academic attainment in all areas of literacy, one would assume that the Community of Inquiry should help LD children in literacy competence and produce a reduction in their academic attainment deficits.

Some conclusions

The causes of learning difficulties are complex and often comprise a varying number of environmental and/or psychological causal factors. The greatest concern for LD children is the resulting constraints on curriculum access and appropriate participation in the classroom learning environment, resulting in low levels of academic attainment. LD children tend to exhibit fewer cognitive strategies for regulating their learning procedures and as a consequence their belief in their own ability to achieve, is eroded with repeated failure. The lack of independent thinking and learning skills has been examined in the light of one teaching approach, the Community of Inquiry, which may promote self-directed learning. The Community of Inquiry cultivates metacognition which in turn encourages self-regulation and self-efficacy. The Community of Inquiry is a social-cognitive strategy that appears to have the potential for supporting the social-emotional and academic achievement problems that LD children face. The literature indicates that the skills that are nurtured within this program may provide the skills that are lacking in LD students.

This paper has provided a rationale for examining some of the ways the Community of Inquiry program may support students with learning difficulties by:

- Activating metacognition
- Enhancing cognitive strategies to promote self-regulated learning
- Restoring self-efficacy beliefs
- Improving academic outcomes

These attributes comprise their major areas of need. They are the cognitive attributes that are fundamentally important for learning, language and literacy growth. The outcomes for students with learning difficulties from the Community of Inquiry learning environment should manifest in improved attainment levels and a reduction in their academic deficits as a result of acquiring thinking strategies. Lipman, Sharp, and Oscanyan, (1980) concur: "The child who has gained proficiency in thinking skills is not merely a child who has grown, but a child whose capacity for growth has increased." (p. 16)

Summary

Children with learning difficulties need support and appropriate interventions that address basic academic skills as well as helping them to become more effective learners. Students with diminished metacognitive skills tend to be less effective learners and therefore require support in developing a more internal locus of control, self-regulation competence and self-efficacy. The classroom Community of Inquiry approach should enhance metacognition in LD students through its practices of intellectual exchange, which promote reasoning, reflection and independent thinking, thus allowing them to apply knowledge more effectively. These attributes should then translate into self-regulation skills and elevated self-efficacy, which many LD children lack. This paper argues the case for an examination of the Community of Inquiry as a strategy for providing children who have learning difficulties with the tools for learning how to learn.

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Report

Seventy minutes on fairness: an account of a recent Year 9 Community of Inquiry

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I do find that reflection upon practice is a very useful tool for the professional facilitator in the Community of Inquiry. Plotting developments in a discussion, tracking the stages of insight, and finally appraising one's own management of the inquiry against the students' perceived gains is a very useful, even necessary responsibility when undertaking facilitation in Community of Inquiry.

This report from the staffroom reviews one Community of Inquiry developed among seventeen Year 9 girls and boys from several independent schools in Brisbane in May 2006. I had the privilege of facilitating this same group for the whole school day from nine o'clock to three o'clock within the well-established AISQ Day of Excellence program. My focus is one seventy-minute discussion on fairness, just one of the four sessions held that day, addressing the general topic of Rights and Responsibilities.

It ought to be noted at the outset that none in this group had "done" Community of Inquiry before. In opening the day, I noted how this pedagogy differed from debating, for here we valued honesty more than cleverness with argument. Here we pursued an inquiry together not to argue a position against all odds despite what one may really think, but to work together pushing ahead in an inquiry to explore concepts and seek solutions. If we reached unanimity, it was all well and good but that was not the aim of the exercise—it was honesty in analysis, seeking reasonableness in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

For Community of Inquiry stresses respect and reasonableness as its two distinctive features. Respect implies separating the person from his or her views, with openness to listen and a general commitment to share an inquiry wherever it goes. Reasonableness requires that participants go beyond mere claims to sift for clear evidence

to support reasonable positions on issues. Community of Inquiry is an excellent way to deal with abstract and conceptual issues.

One topic I chose for discussion that day was 'Fairness' previously referred to in my article, 'Practical Thinking on Bigger Ideas' (*Critical & Creative Thinking*, August 2005). It is a story from Lipman and Sharp's *Ethical Inquiry: Manual to accompany Lisa* (p. 197) used to evoke different views on achieving fairness. This discussion will report on a much longer discussion on the same text with significantly different outcomes.

After reading the text account of the teacher withdrawing the same amount of candy from each student after they had fought for it, in her attempt to honour their own definition to "treat each student equally," my group embarked on a search for some suitable understandings of fairness. It proved to be more complex and productive than anticipated. The discussion went on for over 70 uninterrupted minutes.

On the whiteboard, I recorded definitions the students gave to fix attention on the need for precise wording. One student later reported how amazed she was that the choice of one word could alter the flavour of a discussion—for instance, changing "should" to "must." Over the course of the discussion, we generated many different aspects and definitions. The whiteboard was covered with them:

Fairness is not equitable treatment.
Fairness is equality for everyone; no bias.
Fairness is equal treatment.
Fairness is distributing advantage to those who deserve it.
Fairness is when everyone has the same.
Fairness is due reward for effort.
Fairness is not attainable but is a long term goal.
Fairness is what you deserve.
Fairness is a level playing field; everyone starts from the same base line.
Fairness is when we end up with similar or same outcomes.
Fairness is serving the greater good.
Fairness is fighting unfairness.
Fairness is never achieved
Fairness changes with changing circumstances.

Discussion progressed inferentially as students considered first one then another statement as adequate or inadequate definition. We explored consequences and implications of statements in an attempt to grapple with this seemingly ordinary concept. What was a norm and reference point in many everyday discussions was apparently not so easy to pin down. This very elusiveness of the concept of fairness makes it such a suitable topic in moral philosophy. I find it is a consistently tantalising topic in Year 9 philosophy.

After many positive approaches to find out what fairness is, I initiated one thinking tool to discover what it is not. This tool suggests that fairness is better served by fighting unfairness wherever it occurs. In this model, fairness measures a contest between competing interests, like greed and ambition, and is quite uneven most of the time. It was noted in reply that fairness is never static, that it is an amorphous estimation by changing agents upon many variables. This line of inquiry led to a brief appraisal of an example in capitalism as opposed to "communism." One student suggested that some stimulus was always needed to generate an economy, and that the failed Eastern European models caved in without these necessary impulses. To balance this simplistic analysis, I pointed out that there were many mechanisms in our society like religion, social festivals and caring attitudes that moderated the extreme effects of ambition and greed to ensure that social harmony, if not immediate fairness, was felt.

At this point, the discussion needed a framework. What was the temper of our inquiry? Were we being optimistic or pessimistic about the chances of fairness being achieved? Would being positive about our chances of achieving fairness in fact improve them? The students felt that every day people were striving for fairness and had a duty to do so. One offered an analogy from biology, that the world and society were actually persistently unstable and so there was always a real need to restore some equilibrium. Humans had to be active about finding acceptable levels of fairness. One (male) student provided another model from theology, that all such change and movement was necessary to achieve the perfection of fairness. If all was perfect now, we would need to change nothing. That very instability and changeability is built-in so that the world can move forward

towards its destined perfection. There was some silence following this profundity.

Another productive line of inquiry was to consider "right" (not rights) and "fairness." We found that fairness may be achieved by seeking the right by following rules, so that fairness is best achieved when a referee ensures the rules are adhered to in a game. To give free kicks arbitrarily in an effort to recover some semblance of fairness can in fact be dangerously unfair. Fairness is achieved in human actions not just by hopes or chance.

Another contention addressed was: Would fairness result if all interests were served, all stakeholders informed and reconciled? Even if they were all identified (a side issue in itself), how could we be sure we had adequately reconciled their competing interests? Was fairness just a temporary compromise for a particular time and place? If there were so many different perspectives, by what mechanism could we transcend our own limited lens upon an issue to achieve even an acceptable level of fairness? This issue of different perspectives rapidly led to the perennial topic of relativity, or more precisely, the variety in values found in society. Again we found that the elusive quality of fairness might not be readily grasped from within different values systems.

Eventually, one student offered the valuable observation that fairness is not equality. The two terms were not interchangeable and were in fact distinctive and different. It is a mistake to say fairness is achieved when everyone is equal (whatever that means at the time). The group was learning the value of distinctions and precise language.

One key turn in the discussion (offered by a male) had it that fairness was not what you have but it is an ideal, a goal in the distance to be constantly aimed for. This shift from the reallocation of material resources, advantages or opportunities marked a new phase in the discussion. Now we were dealing with a concept, not with some computational game or managerial model. This was indeed philosophy—to deal with an intangible, an idea, and possibly an ideal.

To review, in the course of the day the students got to know one anther very well indeed, and in their structured discussions built up a working Community of Inquiry. They practised the virtues of listening intently, framing precise questions, pushing for depth in discussion, sifting the

evidence for claims, and at times changing their minds in the face of the evidence presented. As I noted earlier, one student reported how amazed she was that the choice of one word (from 'should' to 'must') could change the complexion of a discussion, and another said that she would never read news items superficially in future. She had learnt many analytical skills on the day. Others reported the benefits of the co-educational experience by encountering quite different perspectives from the other gender. Most reported the great benefit of hearing different views and angles on issues of rights that they would not have generated in thinking alone.

To close, I note again the benefits of reviewing the discussion. It is amazing how writing can discipline the memory, and how lapsheet points lead to recollections of some of the intensities in the inquiry. Indeed, enquiries had led to an inquiry. In an attempt to plot this discussion, I may have made it seem a little too glib, but the process has been very useful for me the facilitator in terms of assessing my degree of intervention to move the inquiry forward, and for you the reader to understand the quality and maturity of these Year 9 students' responses. The range and quality of this seventy-minute discussion was achieved by having a strong commitment to the task and a shared desire to explore its depths. As already selected and nominated students, this was not a normal classroom scene. However I hope this account encourages others to use this story from *Ethical Inquiry,* and to be brave enough to trust our students to broach the more conceptual areas of philosophy. In my experience, they can do philosophy very well if given the right stimuli.

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Review of James Surowiecki *The Wisdom of Crowds*

(Abacus, UK 2005 ISBN: 0349116059 rrp: $24.95)

Greg Smith (St. Joseph's College, Brisbane)

In this age of increasing executive control on so many levels of life, many of us teachers in communities of inquiry may be tempted to lose our nerve about our ideological bases. We work to empower students to think and speak as responsible citizens in society yet we know and feel the tug of elites and experts in almost all areas of life. I have found James Surowiecki's timely book *The Wisdom of Crowds* is a highly insightful book to repair any loss of confidence about finding wisdom in community.

The Wisdom of Crowds: Why the many are smarter than the few argues very compellingly argues that "groups do not need to be dominated by exceptionally intelligent people in order to be smart. A group can still reach a collectively wise decision" (xiii). It is true: very commonly individuals lack enough foresight, sufficient data, and enough collective wisdom to make good cost-benefit decisions. Individuals often act on appearances or best hunches. Surowiecki calls that intelligence "the wisdom of crowds." He cites the success of the stock market as one example of the wisdom of crowds. (He might have looked at the relative success of favourites in horse racing for a counter example!) Too often, he points out, we assume that the best knowledge resides in the right person who will have the desired answer. This impression is reinforced daily as many seek radio talk-back experts and Gallop polls to help and inform them.

There is a history of suspicion of crowds: Charles Mackay's 1841 *Extraordinary Popular Delusions* and *The Madness of Crowds*, Gustav la Bon's 1895 *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* and Elias Canetti's Nobel Prize winning *Crowds and Power* (1962) may readily come to mind. There has been wide suspicion of crowds since the advent of democracy that does not do our cause much help in our age of experts. However, what I found most reassuring in Surowiecki is that the posing of many different questions to deal with a problem situation is the best way to solve it.

What better pedagogical practice meets this criterion than Community of Inquiry to do that!

Surowiecki might have gained better kudos to consider other terms that "crowds" perhaps, such as 'people' or 'nation' or 'community'. To my mind, "the wisdom of communities" as a more appealing ring to it. "Community" meets his three problems for crowds in attaining wisdom: cognition, cooperation and coordination; and mutual respect in community supplies dynamic criteria and methods to attain wisdom through diversity, independence and decentralization. Attaining these qualities, a crowd's decision is better for avoiding hysteria, irrationality and information overload. One conclusion I found to be very true for us practitioners is: "Paradoxically the best way for a group to be smart is for each person in it to think and act as independently as possible" (xx). This has enormous pedagogical implications for our facilitations in Community of Inquiry.

Surowiecki makes much of a group's best collective guess on matters of data—a fact found in many experiments on group dynamics of the sixties. Reasonable estimation is another area for "proving" the worth of group wisdom. Perhaps this book is an argument for statistics or the success of Google searches after all. Perhaps highways will be safer when all drivers are synchronized to computers without the need for steering wheels. But our collective wisdom will be richer and more compelling when it is derived from the children's sheer diversity of viewpoints. Inquiries can produce his "coherent flow."

I have spent my professional career in the education of gifted students while at the same time advocating the excellence of Community of Inquiry approaches. I was at times bridging the two with an uncertain surety. While this book does not target educationalists (it has a topical appeal and racy read quality that sells at airports), it has given me more respect for the wisdom of crowds, of groups, and of communities. We may be amazed at individuals' grasps of insight at the end of long conversations in Community of Inquiry.

There is wisdom to be found over and above maximized group self interest. It may be time for me now to respect the capacities of the group to reach satisfactory and indeed excellent decisions that reject lowest common

denominator mediocrity, to make good sense and be excellent at finding solutions, enough to earn the name of wisdom. The getting of wisdom has come to mean a whole new experience: a crowd's "aggregation" or the capacity to turn private judgments into collection decisions.

The Wisdom of Crowds
By James Surowiecki
Abacus, UK 2005
rrp: $24.95

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