PHILOSOPHICAL INQUIRY WITH CHILDREN

The Development of an Inquiring Society in Australia

against the widespread practice in the 1980s and is rooted in the
Children curriculum and pedagogy. Seeing potential for educational
activists to develop new classroom resources and
programs that have proved influential in educational practice throughout
the continent. Behind their contributions lie key philosophical and
discussions and controversies which have shaped attempts to introduce
philosophy in schools and embed it in state and national curricula.

A wide range of eminent scholars and practitioners in the field
of philosophy, this anthology, the first of its kind, provides not only a
narrative, but an opportunity to reflect on the insights and experiences of
that have made history. The collection is divided into three parts. The
theme of Part I is the early years of Philosophy for Children in Australia and
forms the course that the 'philosophy in schools movement' would take.
bes on the events and debates surrounding the development and production
of the original curriculum. In Part III, key developments relating to teaching
in schools are analysed.

An exploration of diverse views, critical appraisals, and different perspectives of
inquiry is intended to stimulate thought-provoking questions about theory
and to increase general awareness both nationally and internationally of
philosophy in schools in Australia. It is also intended to encourage
people with ideas and develop strategies for their implementation.

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Image courtesy of the artist.
PHILOSOPHICAL INQUIRY WITH CHILDREN

The Development of an Inquiring Society in Australia

Edited by Gilbert Burgh and Simone Thornton
This volume is dedicated to Sahara Thornton and all the children who face a future shaped by decisions of the past!
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PHILOSOPHY AND THE CURRICULUM

Monica Bini, Peter Ellerton, Sue Knight, Stephan Millett and Alan Tapper

Introduction

In the 1980s, a draft document for an Australian national curriculum was put forward by the Hawke Federal Labor government, but due to a lack of agreement from state Liberal governments it was abandoned in 1991. The idea re-emerged, however, with the establishment of a National Curriculum Board in 2008 by the Rudd Federal Labor government. The National Curriculum Board was replaced by the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) which led the development of each curriculum area. The 'Australian Curriculum' was endorsed by Education Ministers the second time around, and each state has implemented it with modifications reflecting state priorities.

As it now stands, the Australian Curriculum (version 8.2, 2017) prescribes nine learning areas in Foundation to Year 10 (F–10): English, Mathematics, Science, Health and Physical Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, The Arts, Technologies, and Languages – as well as Work Studies. Disciplinary knowledge, skills and understanding are recognised in each learning area and subject description. The achievement standards describe the continuum in learning within one or two level bands. State and territory governments have been responsible for implementing the Australian curriculum and this has played out differently according to local priorities. In some cases, significant modifications were made to the Australian Curriculum.

Discussions on including Philosophy in Australian national and state curricula have been long and continue. Historical developments show that these discussions and ensuing attempts have been diverse and influenced by key players, such as those in the philosophy for children (P4C) movement, teachers, academic philosophers, teacher educators, curriculum planners, policy-makers, and proponents of 'critical thinking', as well as by the politics of the day. Different philosophical approaches have been taken, as have different ways to lobby for government approval, leading to differing levels of success in different states. However, ensuring the presence of Philosophy as a distinct learning area or subject remains a challenge. This chapter provides a survey of efforts to include Philosophy in the curriculum and the approaches taken to the content of courses.

Toward an Australian Philosophy curriculum

Perhaps the earliest substantial work on a possible Philosophy curriculum was by Laurence Splitter. In 1993 Splitter, then a research fellow and Director of the Centre of Philosophy for Children at the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), presented his ideas to the Australian Curriculum Studies Association's National Conference (Splitter 1993). In his workshop, he first identified priority areas in the Victorian Certificate of Education's curriculum framework that a Philosophy curriculum would address, then articulated a curriculum profile for Philosophy in Australian schools. This profile included P4C elements such as: connections between content and process; promoting children's sense of wonder and curiosity; demonstrating that truth and knowledge are constructed, not given; and promoting creative and critical thinking.

In 1996, supported by Myer Foundation funding, Splitter brought leading proponents of P4C from around Australia together for a weekend seminar on the topic of 'Philosophy as a Key Learning Area in the Australian Curriculum'. The seminar resulted in a profile for a curriculum framework matrix that cross-referenced philosophical strands, strand organisers and grade levels. However, there was no opportunity to apply this framework. Subsequently, in 2009 the Federation of Australasian Philosophy in Schools Associations (FAPSA) and the Australasian Association of Philosophy in Schools (AAP) submitted a proposal to ACARA to include Philosophy in the Australian Curriculum. Early in the life of ACARA a deputation from FAPSA and AAP had met with the then head, Barry McGaw. McGaw had long supported Philosophy: one example of this support being his appointment of Splitter as Principal Research Fellow at ACER. However, despite McGaw acknowledging that Philosophy could be used to address key elements of the Australian Curriculum (when finalised), he doubted that Philosophy could become an independent subject or learning area in the Curriculum as a four-year plan, part of the 2008 Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA 2008), was at the time already in place.

Nevertheless, after meeting McGaw, FAPSA and the AAP established a working party. Members included Monica Bini, Gilbert Burgh, Philip Cam, Eliza Goddard (AAP), Clinton Golding, Sue Knight, Stephan Millett, Graham Oppy (AAP), Janette Poulton, Tim Sprold, Alan Tapper and Adrian Walsh. The submission made the case for Philosophy as follows: (1) it would assist young people to meet key goals; (2) it would make a 'pre-eminent' contribution to meeting a number of the general capabilities mooted for the national curriculum; (3) there were sound reasons why Philosophy...
and (4) the identified challenges to its inclusion could be met. The proposal argued that philosophy's contribution to general education could be facilitated through a focus on logical thinking and ethical understanding. The general capabilities would be supported through teaching thinking skills, encouraging creativity, and promoting deep ethical reflection, while an approach to Philosophy based on the collaborative methods founded by Lipman and others, would assist the development of teamwork and social competence.

For reasons unclear, the submission was unsuccessful. Consequently, at the time of writing, Philosophy is not specifically referred to in the learning areas or included as a listed subject. However, critical and creative thinking and ethical understanding are listed as general capabilities. In the case of critical and creative thinking, the Australian Curriculum makes specific reference to foundational research on the philosophical community of inquiry by Lipman, Sharp and Oscanyan (1980), and the evidence drawn on for the inclusion and development of the ethical understanding capability also refers to the research of Australian educational philosophers Burgh, Field and Frawley (2006). The core elements of each capability reflect the input of FAPSA and AAP. However, the question remains for FAPSA whether it is timely to revisit arguments for the formal recognition of Philosophy in the Australian Curriculum.

Philosophy in some form or another has been taught in Australian schools since the first state curriculum introduced in Queensland in 1918 included Logic as an upper secondary subject. However, no philosophy was included in any other state curriculum until the early 2000s when Victoria introduced Philosophy as a secondary level, as a Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) subject – the award given to students upon successful completion of high school. Other states followed, with New South Wales being the exception. The implementation of Philosophy in the primary and middle school curriculum is a task yet to be completed. The Primary Ethics curriculum in New South Wales, while not part of the national curriculum, deserves mention here as an exemplar of philosophical engagement in schools. The diversity of approaches toward the integration of philosophy in schools represented here reflects not only the different locations, but also the diversity within philosophy itself.

### Primary and middle school curricula

Although New South Wales no longer offers Philosophy as part of the state curriculum, a change to the New South Wales Education Act in 2010, allowing secular ethics to be taught as an alternative to scripture in state public schools, created an opportunity for the development of a sequential, P4C-style ethics curriculum, now known as the Primary Ethics curriculum. The Primary Ethics curriculum was introduced into New South Wales public K–6 schools in the period 2010–2016. The curriculum's role was (and is) to serve as an alternative to Special Religious Education (SRE), that is, 'education in the beliefs and practices of an approved religious persuasion by authorized representatives of that persuasion'. The impetus for such a curriculum was the argument that it is both discriminatory and harmful to young people's mental health to deny non-SRE children the opportunity to examine what it means to lead a morally good life, an opportunity which SRE students are granted through participation in their SRE courses. This argument was pressed for seven years by the Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations, with support from the (then) St James Ethics Centre, and led the then Labor Minister for Education, Verity Firth, to approve an Ethics course trial. A 10-week curriculum, written by Philip Cam, was delivered to 10 classes of Stage 3 (Years 5–6) students. Teachers were trained volunteers from the community, in line with the processes of SRE. The trial was evaluated by a team from the University of South Australia led by Sue Knight and on the last parliamentary sitting day of 2010, with the support of the Greens, the Education Act was amended to allow classes in 'Special Ethics education' to be taught alongside SRE classes.

The change to the Act was staunchly opposed by faith groups (except the Uniting Church and the Buddhist community) and in the New South Wales Legislative Council by Reverend Fred Nile. In April 2011, Nile sought to repeal the Ethics Classes Amendment Act, arguing that 'Special Education in Ethics is a philosophical course that presents children with complex social situations, asks them what action they would take and why. There are no right and wrong answers.' The Bill was referred to the Upper House Education Committee for an inquiry, and the committee reported to the government in May 2012. The New South Wales government adopted all recommendations of this inquiry, including the recommendation that ethics classes continue. By now most of the faith groups have reversed their positions, and 'Special Education in Ethics' stands alongside 'Special Religious Education' (SRE). The government assigned the responsibility of developing and delivering ethics education classes to the St James Ethics Centre, which in turn established Primary Ethics Limited, an independent not-for-profit organisation, which it tasked with developing a curriculum, recruiting and training volunteers and delivering ethics classes in urban, regional and rural primary schools. Knight was subsequently engaged to write the curriculum.

The general shape of the curriculum was determined by two recommendations from the 2009 report of the New South Wales Ethics Course trial, namely (2b.) that any such ethics course 'has as its content the subject matter of Ethics as a branch of Philosophy', and (5a.) offers 'specific guidance in teaching for a process of reason-evaluation'. The remainder of this section describes the way these recommendations have been interpreted and broadened in the Primary Ethics curriculum.

The aim of the curriculum (or, more generally, of Primary Ethics classes) is to 'support children to develop a life-long capacity to make well-reasoned decisions about ethical issues'. It seems clear that the achievement of this aim requires teaching for the development of both 'reason-evaluation' skills, and the
disposition to employ those skills judiciously and widely. This holistic concept of
critical thinking informed the writing of the curriculum.

In the Primary Ethics curriculum, logical skills are introduced in the context of
real-world controversial issues, and in these skill-based topics, as in all Primary
Ethics topics, community of inquiry pedagogy is employed. This approach is in
line with a recent meta-analysis of strategies for teaching critical thinking (CT).
The authors report that:

[n]otably, the opportunity for dialogue (e.g., discussion) appears to improve
the outcomes of CT skills acquisition, especially where the teacher poses
questions, when there are both whole-class teacher-led discussions and
teacher-led group discussions. Similarly, the exposure of students to authen-
tic or situated problems and examples seems to play an important role in
promoting CT . . . In addition, it also appears as though dialogue and
authentic instruction are effective in combination . . .

(Abrami et al. 2015: 302)

The approach is appropriate (and is applied) even for Kindergarten children. One
of the big breakthroughs in understanding developments in children’s thinking
came with the recognition that children can only engage in higher-order thinking
about a topic if they have an appropriate knowledge base. Where they lack such
knowledge, children display the limited thinking that Piaget described as pre-
operational, but the moment the knowledge base has sufficient information, these
limitations vanish (e.g., Bjorklund 1997).

In every one of the Primary Ethics curriculum’s 78 three- to five-lesson topics,
students are presented with ethical questions and issues that demand the use of
critical thinking skills. Where necessary, teacher questioning provides a scaffold
for the further development of these skills. In addition, the curriculum includes
10 primarily skill-based, three-lesson topics.

As noted, the curriculum is designed to foster the skills and dispositions
required to think well, and for one’s self, about ethical issues. It has six defining
features. First, the curriculum is sequential and, following Dewey (1938) and
Bruner (1960), spiral: ideas introduced in the early years are extended and
developed in ever-greater complexity over the following years. Second, the
curriculum supports children to develop the skills of argument, initially building
on children’s implicit and partial grasp of logical rules and later encouraging
students to discover some of these logical rules or patterns of reasoning and to
make explicit use of them in thinking about ethical issues. Third, the curriculum
is grounded in moral theories of Western philosophy and employs purpose-
written stories and targeted questioning processes to encourage children to
discover, critique and apply for themselves elements of these theories. Fourth,
the curriculum is grounded in the rich and rapidly expanding knowledge of
children’s moral development. And finally, the curriculum employs a community
of inquiry pedagogy, understood here as involving Socratic questioning and peer

to peer dialogue although, to counter teachers’ lack of philosophical background,
its pedagogical approach is more directive than Lipman’s approach.

Most teachers are not trained in moral reasoning. And to implement a moral
education program based in moral philosophy they require either very substantial
training or the kind of support the Primary Ethics curriculum provides. This is a
trade-off: in being more directive, the curriculum may stifle creative thought and
miss some insights students might otherwise have reached. But, on the other
hand, teachers are more likely to succeed in developing students’ capability for
moral reasoning. Primary Ethics has taken the latter path.

As of March 2018, the Primary Ethics curriculum is accessed by more than
40,000 students in 450 New South Wales public primary schools each year. Yet
the program continues to face significant obstacles. Toward the end of 2014, then
Premier Mike Baird, following pressure from some Christian faith groups, had
the enrolment checkbox for Ethics classes removed from the New South Wales
school enrolment form. In an end-of-year memo Baird and the Minister for
Education then advised New South Wales principals not to provide parents with
any information about the existence of ethics classes unless they had already opted
their children out of SRE. Towards the end of 2017, this remained the case.

In Queensland, the ‘Framework Project’ provided a potential opportunity
to include philosophy in the state curriculum. The initiative, led by then University
of Queensland (UQ) academic Allan Luke, and the Queensland School Reform
Longitudinal Study (QSRLS) undertaken by the University of Queensland for
Education Queensland (see Lingard et al. 2001), led to the New Basics Project
and trial between 2000 and 2004 (and post-trial in 2005) involving state govern-
ment primary and secondary schools. The New Basics approach to curriculum,
teaching, assessment, reporting, and school organisation was an educational
reform program that ‘was developed and trialled because of a widespread
recognition and acceptance in 1999–2000 that major changes in education were
absolutely essential, particularly in the compulsory years of schooling’ (Matters
2005: 25). It focused on improving educational outcomes, and at its core was the
idea that, in practice, there must be an alignment of curriculum, teaching and
assessment, conceptualised as triad of the New Basics (curriculum organisers),
the Rich Tasks (assessing performance on transdisciplinary activities) and Produc-
tive Pedagogies (employed for meaningful student outcomes). Moreover, the
emphasis would be on practices, not merely statements of intention or expecta-
tion to develop students’ ‘skills and knowledges to survive and flourish in
changing economic, social and technological conditions’ (Grunt n.d.: 1).

At the same time the New Basics Project was being developed and imple-
mented in Queensland, a parallel national curriculum reform that organised the
school curriculum into eight Key Learning Areas (KLAs) ‘had also been in
progress across Australian States and Territories during the 1990s . . .’ (Lingard
& McGregor 2013: 215). The two are different. KLA, which organised the
Australian Curriculum, is organised into discrete areas informed by related
disciplinary knowledge, whereas the New Basics Project emphasises a curriculum
‘oriented towards researching, understanding, and coming to grips with newly emerging economic, social and cultural conditions’ (Matters 2005: 25). Unlike within the KLA curriculum, productive pedagogies are mandatory within the New Basics framework. Outcomes are not expressed in terms of expected progressive knowledge within learning areas, but as Rich Tasks, i.e., ‘the specific activities with real-world value and use, through which students are able to display their grasp of important ideas and skills’ (Matters 2005: 26). The KLA curriculum stagnates implementation of syllabuses over a span of years, whereas all Rich Tasks are available at once. Moreover, KLA syllabuses do not contain assessment criteria, but New Basics documents are prescriptive, with ‘Core Learning Outcomes’ as indicators of standards. Broadly speaking, “[t]he KLA syllabuses follow a constructivist approach to learning. The New Basics Rich Tasks realise the reconceptualist paradigm’ (Matters 2005: 26); its rationale was ‘based in neither behavioural objectives nor disciplines, but rather framed through a visioning of workers, citizens and a desired future world’ (Lingard & McGregor 2013: 215).

A government primary school located in the inner-city of Brisbane capitalised on the New Basics reforms through its Philosophy program, and in doing so drew international attention. In 1996, Lynne Hinton was appointed principal at Buranda State School, which was federally funded under the ‘Disadvantaged Schools Scheme’, with a diverse student population that included children ‘with serious learning needs’ (Hinton & Davey Chesters 2013: 268). However, the ‘biggest problem’ that concerned Hinton ‘was that the children didn’t really like being at school’ (Hinton & Davey Chesters 2013: 269). Under these circumstances, she initiated a whole-school approach to P4C, in which Philosophy became a core subject alongside Mathematics, English and Science. From the start, Hinton sought the commitment of all teachers at the school and the expertise of philosophy academics to facilitate understanding of P4C and the processes that would allow its intended outcomes to create systemic change in the school, focusing on collaborative philosophical inquiry (Hinton 2003b). Hinton’s strategy proved to be effective. Student performance in both state and national standardised tests, including the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), was above the state and national means (Hinton 2003b). In 2001, the Assessment and New Basics Branch of Education Queensland approached the school and Philip Cam ‘to investigate the links between the philosophical community of inquiry as practised at the school and “Productive Pedagogies” as identified by the QSRLS’ (Burgh, Field & Freakley 2006: 201).

The school was also ‘one of two case study schools chosen from twenty-four case study schools as the focus of a comparative study on professional learning communities’ (Burgh, Field & Freakley 2006: 200; see Allwood & Capeness 2001: 8–9), but the only one to include a Philosophy program. The success of the P4C initiative at Buranda State School cannot be overstated. Hinton considers ‘[t]here are two easily identifiable factors’ (Hinton 2003a: 28), which contributed to its success. The first is that all concepts related to the New Basics curriculum are examined and developed by students through philosophical communities of inquiry. The second relates to the Productive Pedagogies which are fundamental to the practice of P4C.

In other schools, the evaluation of the New Basics trials delivered mixed results; the positives related to improvement in some schools, mostly to the quality of student work and teachers’ pedagogy and assessment cultures, and the negatives related to staffing and resourcing issues, teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge and willingness to change. The trials indicated that the New Basics had the potential to deliver the educational reform anticipated by Luke and the QSRLS team. However, it also ‘struggled to surmount the systemic obstacles that inhibited widespread changes within state education beyond the parameters of the trial years’ (Lingard & McGregor 2013: 218); obstacles that would also inhibit opportunities to provide Philosophy with a fundamental role in what the New Basics idea intended, namely, the alignment of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment.

During the time of implementation, the increasing influence from intergovernmental organisations, such as Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), ‘has had considerable influence on national governments, encouraging the development of national curricula and national testing regimes’ (Lingard & McGregor 2013: 220). Changing political regimes demanded ‘hard “data” on student achievement, particularly in respect to literacy and numeracy, as part of the rise of “policy as numbers”’ (Lingard & McGregor 2013: 219–220), and, as a result, created competing tension between state and national curriculum development and implementation. The Labor Party’s federal election win in 2007 allowed Kevin Rudd as Prime Minister to fulfill his promise to establish ACARA, and subsequently develop a KLA-based Australian Curriculum and external assessment regime, which, as mentioned, all Australian states and territories have incorporated into their curricula. The external assessment regime, particularly, did not sit comfortably in tandem with ‘the legacy of New Basics and subsequent QCAR attempts to unclutter the curriculum’ (Lingard & McGregor 2013: 220), and the KLA curriculum was also somewhat at odds with the New Basics idea of aligning curriculum, pedagogy and assessment.

As a result, despite the positives that emerged from the evaluation of the New Basics trials, the demonstrated, and hugely beneficial impact of philosophy on the education of primary students has not been taken up at a state-wide, systems level. According to Lingard and McGregor (2013) ‘instead of extending the New Basics Framework to the rest of Queensland, its “core values” were claimed as informing subsequent educational policies’, i.e., the Queensland Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting (QCAR) Framework, which ‘reverted to the KLAs as its fundamental curriculum organizers’ despite its conceptual framework being influenced by the more ambitious ideas of the New Basics (Lingard & McGregor 2013: 218). It appears to be a lost golden opportunity to include Philosophy in the curriculum for primary schools in Queensland. Ironically, as mentioned earlier, it opened
an opportunity for philosophy to inform the critical and creative thinking and ethical understanding capabilities embedded in the Australian Curriculum.

An important step forward for Philosophy in the Victorian curriculum was the introduction of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) in 2006, the then curriculum framework for F–10, which included standards on Thinking Processes. Thinking Processes was categorised as part of the Interdisciplinary Learning strand. Standards for this were organised under three dimensions: reasoning, processing and inquiry; creativity; and reflection, evaluation and metacognition. Victorian Government and Catholic schools were required to design school programs that enabled students to meet the prescribed learning standards, for example 'at Level 6, students ... generate questions that explore perspectives'. Achievement in Thinking Processes was reported on in two year bands from Years 3–10. Prior to VELS teachers had to demonstrate at the individual school level how explicit attention to critical thinking skills might improve student achievement across learning areas. Individual teachers often cast philosophy as a vehicle for developing critical thinking skills. The value of philosophical ideas from areas such as ethics, metaphysics or epistemology was not recognised in the VELS but these ideas did get some purchase with the introduction of ethical capability and to a lesser extent critical and creative thinking in the Victorian Curriculum: F–10. Although there was short transitionary curriculum between VELS and the Australian Curriculum called AusVELS, the next major revision after VELS, the Victorian Curriculum, was released in 2015 for planning and development and came into effect for government and Catholic schools from 2017. It followed the release of the Australian Curriculum, with significant differences reflecting Victorian priorities. In relation to philosophy education, the most relevant difference is the inclusion of discrete curricula for critical and creative thinking and ethical capability. These are mandated and must be explicitly taught, assessed and reported against at least once every two years from Year 3 and 4.

One of the influences on the development of the Victorian Curriculum was Professor Michael Young's work on powerful knowledge. As such, one of the three assumptions underlying ethical capability is that student learning is 'enhanced by engaging with philosophical ideas, the premises of different religions, secular world views and cultural norms'. The other assumptions concern the intrinsic contestability of many aspects of ethics and the central place of reasoning. The critical and creative thinking curriculum includes some ideas from epistemology and metaphysics, for example in exploring scepticism on cause and effect, and certainty. The curriculum articulates a progression in knowledge and skills required to develop critical and creative thinking. It is complementary to the disciplinary critical and creative thinking developed in other learning areas.

In Western Australia there has been no systematic inclusion of Philosophy in the primary curriculum despite the efforts of members of the Western Australian Association for Philosophy in Schools (APIS) over nearly two decades to lobby for this and train teachers in collaborative philosophical inquiry. Led by Stephan

Millett, Felicity Haynes and Alison Freeman, APIS has run workshops for primary teachers and collaborated with a range of schools to introduce whole-the extent to which philosophy is being taught in Western Australia primary schools as a result of this work.

In South Australia, efforts to secure a place for Philosophy in school curricula date from the early years of P4C in Australia. In the 1980s Bill Ekins, then a Superintendent of South Australian schools, and Knight (then at the University of South Australia), advocated (with some success) for the IAPC materials and pedagogy to be incorporated into the traditional primary-level learning areas. As in Western Australia, the uptake was patchy, and, despite the founding of the South Australian Association for Philosophy for Children (SAAPIC) and support from teachers and academics, resources for teacher professional development were inadequate. Knight, together with Carol Collins, and later, Tania Meyer and Tace Vigilante, then focused on working with pre-service teachers. Their work included writing (mostly unpublished) units of work for incorporation into curriculum areas (including History and Environment and English). However, with some opposition and almost no support from colleagues (who, on the whole, considered P4C pedagogy and content as of far less value to trainee teachers than the more practical skills of report-writing, poster-making, etc.) the task was difficult, and its effectiveness has been hard to judge.

In the next section, we look to the various ways in which philosophical thinking has been embedded in the senior secondary curriculum throughout Australia. Once again, the approach taken varies by place. It should be noted that across Australia little work has been done in introducing Philosophy into lower secondary schooling.

Senior secondary curriculum

In five of the six Australian states, Philosophy is today part of the senior secondary curriculum. The process by which Philosophy achieved this status is outlined chronologically below. The exception is New South Wales; its story is described briefly at the end of the section.

The story begins in Queensland, where a formal subject in syllogistic reasoning existed and survived in secondary schools remarkably unchanged from 1918 (the year of the first senior external exam in the subject) until 1961 when the Queensland reasoning syllabus changed to modern symbolic logic and philosophical logic based on Stephen Barker’s Elements of Logic (Barker 1985). When the state Education Act was amended in 1970, in part to remove the requirement of public examinations, a requirement was introduced to keep syllabuses under constant review. This provided a background for syllabus change. In 1973 the Logic syllabus changed again when a team led by then University of Queensland philosopher Rod Girle split the course into three streams: deductive logic, critical thinking, and philosophy. Girle influenced curriculum design and
generations of young teachers who as university students took his course on critical reasoning. In addition, he was the chief examiner of the subject Senior Logic in secondary schools and ran teachers’ weekend workshops to support the teaching of Senior Logic. After Gilre’s departure from UQ in 1991, Dominic Hyde taught Critical Reasoning as an undergraduate course until his retirement in 2016; his course was taken by many teachers of the Queensland syllabus over the years. The course influenced the school syllabus redesign in 2004 (when it changed from ‘Logic’ to ‘Philosophy and Reason’) as did Hyde as a member of the syllabus design team.

In 2017, the syllabus was redesigned again along with all Queensland syllabuses, as part of a systemic overhaul of the Queensland education system. The lead writer of that team was Peter Ellerton, who taught Science, and Philosophy and Reason in high schools for many years. Ellerton moved to UQ in 2011 as a PhD student under Burgh’s supervision, with Hyde as associate supervisor and is now Curriculum Director of UQ’s Critical Thinking Project (UQCTP), which works in partnership with communities, schools and the Department of Education and Training (DET). One of Ellerton’s tasks as Curriculum Director was to develop a post-graduate course called Critical Reasoning, which extended Hyde’s undergraduate course and was informed by the focus of the high school Philosophy and Reason syllabus. Deborah Brown, Director of UQCTP, worked alongside Burgh and Hyde to open discussion with the School of Education at UQ to include Philosophy and Reason as an elective course in teacher preparation programs. In 2011, ‘EDUC6853: Philosophy and Reason: Specialist Teaching Area’, a two-semester course, was taught for the first time, with Ellerton as course coordinator. These initiatives provided institutional support for preservice teacher education, as well as professional development and networks, for teachers of the Philosophy and Reason syllabus.

In Victoria, both state support and an advisory panel with expertise in P4C were crucial to the implementation of Philosophy in the secondary curriculum. In 1997, following the report Enhancing their futures, senior secondary Philosophy became part of the two-year VCE. The report had recommended that ‘the Board of Studies investigate the feasibility of developing a further study in the humanities, based around theories of knowledge and approaches to philosophy’ (Department of Education and Training 1997: 29). In 1998 an expert panel was appointed to advise the Board on the introduction of VCE Philosophy. The panel considered national and international senior secondary curricula, any overlap or duplication of existing studies and the distinctive contribution that a study of philosophy might make to preparing students for further learning and active and full participation in a democratic society. A review panel provided advice on drafts of the Philosophy study design throughout 1999, a small trial was held in government and independent schools in 2000, and in 2001 VCE Philosophy began. Since then it has introduced students to ideas in ethics, metaphysics and epistemology.

Despite a recommendation from within the Victorian Ministry of Education that thinking skills should be taught and that P4C be given careful consideration in curriculum planning (Baunmart 1999) it took time to start moving on a thinking curriculum: the inclusion of critical thinking in the Victorian curriculum occurred through several changes during the past 20 years.

Curriculum design for VCE Philosophy over the course of 1999–2017 could have taken many directions in terms of selected knowledge and skill development and overall purpose and direction. However, a direction that has endured is to focus on the four aims in the first study design, two of which were to enable students to know the history and development of philosophical ideas, and to aim at ‘do’ philosophy, which entails engaging with philosophical argument covering central questions. It was this second aim that laid the ground for including critical thinking.

Unlike Queensland, the VCE Philosophy study designs are not syllabi, but are guiding documents that comprise four units: two usually taken in Year 11 and two in Year 12. Year 11 units are not prerequisites for Year 12 units. The first VCE Philosophy study design (2001–2004 extended until 2007) set some directions that have endured: an expectation that students ‘do’ philosophy; a thematic approach with a choice of topics to guide Units 1 and 2; and that Units 3 and 4 involve studying a prescribed list of philosophical texts. In ‘doing’ philosophy students engage with contemporary debates, apply philosophical ideas from sources, and develop key skills (VCE Philosophy 2008–2013). Teachers also develop their own internal assessments, however, a written external examination focusing on analysis, evaluation and application of the prescribed texts has strongly influenced the way the study is taught. P4C is often selected by teachers to teach for example the key skills requiring students to be able to defend and refine their responses in philosophical exchanges with others. The review of VCE Philosophy in 2017 strengthened conceptual thinking to foster the ‘doing’ of philosophy in critical engagement with ideas in the prescribed texts and contemporary debates. As noted above, the direction of the Victorian Philosophy curriculum can be seen in the aims in the first study design which have endured over subsequent iterations of curricula. Principal among these was a focus on studying philosophical texts and on making it to introduce students to an important aspect of their cultural heritage and promote the idea that philosophical thinking is more than merely critical and caring thinking, requiring some knowledge and application of disciplinary ideas rather than simply reflection on lived experience.

In the late 1990s in South Australia, Dr Lynda Burns, of the Philosophy Department at Flinders University, sought the support of SAAPIC and other educational bodies to lobby for the introduction of Philosophy as a Matriculation subject. With support from within the Rann Labor government, the Independent Schools Board of South Australia, Catholic Education and SAAPIC, this goal was achieved in 2003. Knight and Head of Curriculum at St Johns College, David Rawnsley (also a SAAPIC committee member), joined Burns in writing a Philosophy syllabus based on the sub-branches of the western tradition and a community of inquiry pedagogy. The syllabus has subsequently
final course outline. Philosophy enrolments gained pace quickly, with some 700
courses gaining a score in 2006. However, in 2011, following a Ministrer's
Review of the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE), designed to
address 'prevailing low patterns of retention, participation and completion in the
senior secondary years of schooling' (Crafter, Crook & Reid 2006: 9), the
requirements for successful completion of the SACE changed dramatically.
Fewer subjects were required for success and additional compulsory units were
added. Subsequently, Philosophy enrolments fell to approximately 70 in 2017.

Tasmania, from the early 1990s to early 2000s, followed a nationwide trend
toward outcomes-based education, in the form of the Essential Learnings (EL)
curriculum, two areas of which, 'thinking' and 'being ethical', provided space for
P4C. Unfortunately, as in the case of New Basics, EL was abandoned due to the
changing political landscape of the time. It was not until 2006 that Philosophy
was introduced as a subject in the final years of schooling, with the curriculum
being revised in 2015 following the creation of the Office of Tasmanian Assess-
ment, Standards and Certification. The original curriculum was introduced as
Religion and Philosophy, but with students required to choose four topics from
two of three sections it was possible to complete the course by undertaking only
Religion units. This is not the case with the revised curriculum, Philosophy,
which has the following learning outcomes: understanding philosophical ideas,
issues and positions; reading and primary texts; identifying strengths and weak-
nesses of philosophical arguments; formulating philosophical questions; develop-
ing informed opinions on philosophical issues; appreciating the value of
philosophy as a link to the world today; and appreciating and explaining the
significance of philosophical positions to contemporary issues (TASC 2013).

The Western Australian story begins in 1995, when a Review of School
Curriculum Development Procedures and Processes identified the need for a
common curriculum direction and greater involvement by non-government
schools and the community in developing a state-wide curriculum. In 1997 the
Curriculum Council of Western Australia was established, the first major work of
which was the introduction in 1998 of the Curriculum Framework. This
mandatory framework was first applied to Kindergarten–Year 10 (K–10), and then
er later to upper secondary (Years 11–12). The Council spent considerable
time and effort getting agreement on core values and it became accepted in the
education community that values, ethics and philosophical positions underpinned
curriculum choices and pedagogies. These core shared values underpinned an
'ethics framework' for schooling (Millett & Tapper 2013: 1214) under four
headings: (1) a pursuit of knowledge and a commitment to achievement of
potential; (2) self-acceptance and respect of self; (3) respect and concern for
others and their rights; and (4) social and civic responsibility.

When the Curriculum Council began work on changes to the final years
of schooling, in addition to the inclusion of the shared values, four principal changes
were implemented: (1) subject offerings for the upper secondary curriculum were
reduced from 150 to 52 subjects; (2) new subjects not previously considered
suitable for students in the 16–18 age range were introduced, including Philoso-
phy and Ethics (P&E); (3) compulsory education was extended to age 17 for the
first time, and the newly designed subjects had to be accessible to all students, not
just those seeking university entrance; and (4) an outcomes approach that had
been accepted from pre-primary to lower secondary school was mandated for
each of the 52 subjects for the two final years of schooling (Curriculum Council
2002).

The Curriculum Council established a Reference Group to write a Philosophy
curriculum, with members from universities and all sectors of secondary educa-
tion. To ensure consistency with the mandated Curriculum Framework the
Reference Group was required to describe learning outcomes for students and
settled on four: philosophical and ethical inquiry; philosophical and ethical
perspectives; philosophy and ethics in human affairs; and applying and relating
subject content areas and for Philosophy these were encapsulated in three
questions:

- How do we know?
- What is real?
- How should we live?

The study of critical reasoning took up about three-tenths of the subject. Its
content followed established precepts for teaching critical thinking at university
level.

Implementation of the curriculum was smooth for the Curriculum Council
and the Reference Group, but it was far from smooth in other ways. A public
furore broke out, fuelled by a group of teachers, hostile to outcomes-based
education, who feared that the new curricula would undermine the teaching of
traditional disciplinary knowledge (Millett & Tapper 2013). In that controversy,
P&E for some time flew under the radar. When its presence was finally noted, a
few of the critics took the view that philosophy could not be taught to teenagers,
perhaps through misunderstanding of what was being proposed. Opposition to
outcomes-based education per se persisted from 2004 to 2009 during which time
the draft Philosophy curriculum was approved. P&E was trialled in 2006, with
action research, and in 2008 it became a fully fledged Western Australian
Certificate of Education course.

New South Wales no longer offers Philosophy as a subject in the last two years
of senior school; the elite Distinction Course that began in 1994 is no longer
available, having ceased in 2010 along with all other Distinction Courses, and no
replacement has been introduced. The Distinction Courses were advanced place-
ment programs in which upper secondary students could engage with a subject at
university level. As a result, Philosophy has a formal place in the secondary
curricula of all states except New South Wales. It continues to prosper in
Western Australia and Victoria and has had recent curriculum updates in Tasma-
nia and Queensland.
Conclusion
Philosophy curricula in Australia vary between states in part because Australia is a Federation and in the Australian Constitution responsibility for education has not been transferred from the states to the federal government. The variations also reflect the influence of key players on the inclusion (or not) of Philosophy and the development of curricula. Academic philosophers saw the importance of critical thinking to educating students and saw that the pedagogies underpinning P4C were a powerful and effective way to engage students and ensure important learning outcomes were met.

Recent international studies show conclusively that teaching Philosophy through a philosophical community of inquiry brings lasting cognitive and social benefits to students (Millett & Tapper 2012). However, successive governments in some states have chosen not to promote Philosophy within the curriculum, partly due to a misunderstanding of both its nature and its benefits. Valuing the thinking developed through Philosophy that goes beyond that typically required in subject specific competencies, a shift made to some degree in various states, will be necessary if young Australians are to take up Philosophy and through it learn better how to adapt to a fast-changing social, economic, environmental and cognitive landscape.

Notes
1 See Hand (2018). Australian contributors are Gilbert Burgh, Philip Cam and Laura D’Olimpio.
3 For a summary of the evidence base from which the Ethical understanding capability’s introduction, organising elements and learning continuum have been developed, see http://v75.australiancurriculum.edu.au/generalcapabilities/ethical-understanding.
4 For example, a semester-long Research Project. See www.sace.sa.edu.au/students/sace-overview/getting-your-sace.
5 See https://www.sace.sa.edu.au/documents/838603/976530d6-cd3d-3953-0c03-e58a9526e71

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