August, 1998

Thinking, inquiry and community : teacher perspectives on philosophy for children : a report on philosophy for children in Australia.

Suzanne Mellor, *ACER*
Laurence Splitter, *Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER)*

Thinking, Inquiry and Community

Teacher Perspectives on Philosophy for Children

A Report on Philosophy for Children in Australia

Prepared by Laurance Splitter
Principal Research Fellow
Centre for Philosophy with Children
Australian Council for Educational Research

ACER
August 1998

Thinking, Inquiry and Community

Teacher Perspectives on Philosophy for Children

A Report on Philosophy for Children in Australia

Prepared by Laurance Splitter
Principal Research Fellow
Centre for Philosophy with Children
Australian Council for Educational Research

ACER
August 1998

INTRODUCTION

Background and objectives

The most systematic attempt to introduce philosophy as both a subject and a mode of presentation at all school levels – but particularly in the primary years – began with the introduction of philosophy for children in Australia, in 1983. Devised by Matthew Lipman in the late 1960s, philosophy for children is now taught in more than 50 countries worldwide, including a number from Latin America, Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa.

Over the last 15 years, Australia has developed an international reputation in the field of philosophy for children. This has come about in spite of the virtual absence of school-based philosophy in the mainstream curriculum (in contrast to curricula in non-English countries in Europe and Latin America, where philosophy at secondary school levels is often included as a standard subject in the curriculum).* Initially borrowing from the methodology and materials constructed by Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp at the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children, Montclair State University in New Jersey (abbreviated hereafter as "IAPC"), recent developments have seen the emergence of distinctively Australian curriculum materials, training programs and methodologies. At the 7th International Philosophy for Children conference, held in Melbourne in July 1995, these achievements (including the conference itself) were celebrated. Several Australian books on philosophy for children were launched during the conference, ranging from curriculum materials for children in years K-2, to a book dealing with approaches and strategies for critical and creative thinking, to the first book to deal comprehensively with the key concept *community of inquiry*.* Further Australian resource materials in philosophy have been published at subsequent conferences and meetings. Of course, only those materials in use at the time this survey was conducted have been included in the questionnaire.

While acknowledging the achievements of national and regional philosophy for children associations, including a broad range of workshops, conferences, demonstration classes, teacher networks, research activities and tertiary level courses, the absence of formal curricular recognition or legitimation has mitigated against these achievements in several respects, which may be summarised as follows:

- There is no unified curriculum framework or structure which would address such questions as "What does it mean to do philosophy in Australian schools?", "What learning outcomes can be expected?" and "What kinds of resource materials are most likely to achieve these outcomes?"

- Records of teacher/student involvement, progress and achievement of declared aims and objectives have been mainly anecdotal

- There is no agreed minimum standard for the training of teachers or teacher educators in school-based philosophy. This has led to:

- Less-than-adequate training of philosophy teachers, and inadequate support structures, particularly at the "coal-face" of individual schools and classrooms

---

* It should be noted that philosophy is a specific subject in the International Baccalaureate program offered at some Australian schools; also, a final year (HSC/VCE) philosophy subject has been proposed in some states.

* The last-mentioned book (*Teaching for Better Thinking: The Classroom Community of Inquiry*, L. J. Splitter and A. M. Sharp) was published by ACER in July 1995.

- There is no systematic framework for assessment, evaluation and reporting in school-based philosophy

At the time of writing this report, the Centre has embarked on a program of curriculum development, which is to examine the feasibility of developing philosophy as a *Key Learning Area* in the curriculum. This program will be informed by the collective experiences of those who have been most closely involved in philosophy for children – particularly those who self-identify as teachers of philosophy. In the study which informs this report, we sought to ask as many such teachers as we were able to locate a range of questions relating to their teaching. The purpose of the study was to obtain a "snapshot" of philosophy teaching in Australian schools (as perceived by teachers involved), with respect to:

- levels of commitment to philosophy by schools and teachers
- the goals of teaching philosophy, as identified by teachers and schools
- materials, methods and strategies used in teaching philosophy
- the evaluation, assessment and reporting of philosophy
- levels of professional development and support for teachers of philosophy
- the impact of philosophy on teaching and learning generally.

The results of this study should be invaluable in future work on philosophy for children, particularly relating to: providing a rationale for including philosophy in the curriculum, training and preparation of philosophy teachers, curriculum development, research and evaluation.

Data

The chief instrument used in the project was a questionnaire sent to teachers/principals in 312 schools (principals were asked to forward a copy of the questionnaire to any teachers currently teaching philosophy). The names of these teachers and schools were obtained from mailing lists provided by individuals and organisations associated with philosophy for children in Australia. The aim here was to approach every teacher who was teaching philosophy at primary or secondary level. However, it was known from the beginning that the lists provided were not complete, mainly because the Centre did not have access to all schools and teachers involved in philosophy.

The questions asked ranged from straight-forward requests for factual information, to more open-ended requests for teachers to identify specific aspects of their teaching in philosophy.

This report is based on an analysis of 181 completed questionnaires, received from 110 schools around Australia in which we previously knew, or had been advised, that philosophy was being taught. With 83 schools replying that they were not currently teaching philosophy, this implies an overall response rate, from schools, of 62%.

The questionnaires were sent out in the middle part of 1994, and returned in the latter part of 1994 and during 1995.

Structure of the Report

The following categories of responses, guided by one or more key questions, were developed. The questions, indicated in square brackets, paraphrase those questions contained in the questionnaire.

- Overview of teachers/schools involved [categorised by state, system, year level and gender of students involved]

  The data recorded in this section was taken directly from the mailing lists used in the survey.

- The philosophy program in the school [Is philosophy taught at the school?; How many teachers at the school teach philosophy and at what grade levels?]

  This category sought to determine the nature and level of school commitment to philosophy.

- The philosophy curriculum in the school [Is there a philosophy curriculum, and a process of curriculum review?]

  This category sought to determine the extent to which schools involved in teaching philosophy had developed a curriculum structure.

- Allocation of teaching time in philosophy [How frequently do teachers teach philosophy to each class? What is the duration of each lesson? How many students are in each class?]

  This category sought to determine precisely how philosophy was accommodated in the school timetable, and how philosophy classes were constituted within that timetable.

- Teaching and learning in philosophy classes:

  Goals of the philosophy curriculum [What are teachers trying to achieve, through philosophy, in terms of cognitive, conceptual, personal and interpersonal growth?]

  Teaching materials for the curriculum [What materials do teachers use in their philosophy teaching?]

  Teaching methodology and strategies in philosophy [How do teachers describe their own role and that of their students in the philosophy classroom?]

  Management of the philosophy classroom [What classroom management strategies and rules do teachers employ?]

  Student activities in the philosophy classroom [How does the philosophy class function in terms of teaching and learning activities?]

  This category sought information relating to the actual teaching and learning of philosophy in classrooms.

- Evaluation/assessment and reporting [What student learnings do teachers seek to evaluate in philosophy and how do they go about assessing and reporting them?]

  This category sought to determine the extent to which teachers of philosophy had thought about and implemented assessment and reporting strategies in philosophy.

- Professional development and support for teachers of philosophy [What prior philosophical studies have philosophy teachers undertaken and what forms of training, professional development and support have they found, or would they find, most useful?]

  This category sought to develop a profile of teachers involved in teaching philosophy, with respect to philosophical qualifications, training and needs.

- Flow-on effects from teaching/learning philosophy

  Effects on the learning strategies of students [What effects does studying philosophy have on student learning in other learning areas?]

  Effects on teaching strategies in other curriculum areas [What effects does teaching and learning philosophy have on teacher practice?]

  Other features special to philosophy [Are there any other features of philosophy which are of particular interest to teachers?]

  This category sought to determine teacher responses on the impact of philosophy on other aspects of teaching and learning.

- Conclusions and guidelines for further work

  This category sought to determine future directions of philosophy teaching and training in light of the results obtained.

OVERVIEW OF SCHOOLS INVOLVED

This section provides a broad picture of the teaching of philosophy from the school perspective. Tables 1 to 4 are based on the mailing lists that were used in the distribution of questionnaires. Only the information pertaining to those teachers and schools who returned completed questionnaires was included.

Table 1 indicates the state or territory of teachers who responded to the survey. It reveals that a clear majority of respondents came from Victoria and NSW (142/181 = 78%). The only other state with significant numbers of respondents was Tasmania (23/181 = 13%).

Table 1: Number and Percentage of Respondent Teachers, by State.

State/Territory	No. of teachers	% of teachers who responded
Australian Capital Territory	6	3
New South Wales	54	30
Victoria	88	49
Queensland	3	<2
South Australia	2	<2
Western Australia	5	<3
Tasmania	23	13
Northern Territory	–	–
TOTAL	181	100

Even allowing for the possibility of bias in the case of Victoria and NSW (where more information was readily available because of the size of the philosophy for children networks that existed there), these figures are not unexpected. At the time of the survey these two states were the only ones that contained formally constituted philosophy for children associations with resources for training and dissemination.

The Tasmanian response is particularly interesting, for it indicates that the involvement of schools and teachers is not a direct function of the size of the teacher or student population nor, indeed, of the existence of a formal association (the Tasmanian Association of Philosophy for Children was formally constituted on November 1, 1997). It is, more likely, the result of the determined efforts of a small number of individual philosophers and teachers, particularly in regard to establishing networks and programs of professional development. This achievement suggests that from a very small base, such efforts can produce significant results.

Table 2 provides a classification of respondents in terms of school sector (government, Catholic, independent). It indicates that teachers from government schools made up more than half of the number of respondent teachers. Of the remaining 45% of respondents, most came from the independent sector (including large independent Catholic schools), with teachers from Catholic schools (not including the larger independent schools) accounting for only 7% of respondents.

Table 2: Number and Percentage of Respondent Teachers, by Sector.

Sector	No. of teachers	% of teachers
Government	99	55
Catholic	13	8
Independent	66	37
TOTAL	178	100

In fact, government school teachers are slightly under-represented in relation to the population. Catholic school teachers are considerably under-represented, while independent school teachers are considerably over-represented. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that government school teachers have still been well represented in the development of philosophy for children.

The lower numbers of responses from the Catholic sector raises, for further investigation, the question of why this particular group of teachers/schools should be under-represented. One possible explanation is that religious instruction, which is a feature in virtually every Catholic school, is seen as a philosophical enterprise in some sense; at the very least, such activities require a time commitment that other schools might be more willing to give to subjects such as philosophy. It would be appropriate for school communities in this sector to be encouraged by philosophy for children associations to become more involved in training and related activities.

Table 3 provides a classification of teachers according to the level of the school in which they were teaching (primary, secondary, P-12 and special/other – for example, P-8 or "central" schools). It indicates that more than half of the respondents taught philosophy in primary school. Moreover, more than one quarter taught philosophy at schools which included both primary and secondary levels. Taken together, it can be inferred that a clear majority of teachers of philosophy were in primary school.

Table 3: Number and Percentage of Respondent Teachers, by Level.

School	No. of teachers	% of teachers
Primary	107	60
Secondary	18	10
P-12	45	27
Special/Other	5	3
TOTAL	175	100

The results shown in Table 3 reflect several factors, including the likely belief that a "new" subject area such as philosophy can be more easily introduced at the primary school level, and also the historical fact that most training and professional development work in philosophy has been with primary school teachers.

Neither point negates the need to promote philosophy at the secondary school level. Both in proportional and in absolute terms, the secondary sector constitutes an area for significant work in promoting and developing philosophy as an important part of the curriculum.

Table 4: Number and Percentage of Respondent Teachers, by Coeducational Status of School.

Gender	No. of teachers	% of teachers
Female	25	15
Male	20	12
Coeducational	117	73
TOTAL	162	100

Table 4 provides a classification of teachers according to the gender-type of the school in which they were teaching (female, male and co-ed). It shows that almost three quarters of respondent teachers were teaching in co-educational schools, and that fewer – but roughly equal proportions – (15% and 12%) were in single-sex schools. Assuming that classes in co-educational schools are, generally speaking, also co-educational and that where philosophy was being taught, it was included as part of the regular curriculum (see Section 2), it can reasonably be inferred from these figures that among those students who were being taught philosophy at school, both genders were well-represented.

THE PHILOSOPHY PROGRAM IN THE SCHOOL

More than 90% of respondents indicated that philosophy was **explicitly taught** at their school as part of the regular classroom curriculum. Further, more than 80% of respondents used the name "Philosophy"; and a similar proportion included philosophy in the school timetable, supporting the claim that teachers – as well as students and parents – were not deterred by the word "philosophy". These responses also suggest that teachers saw philosophy as a distinctive part of the curriculum, irrespective of whether they also saw it as being integrated with other learning areas.

Twenty five percent of respondents were the sole **teachers of philosophy in their school**. The remaining 75% had between one and 23 colleagues teaching philosophy within the same school (for the two extreme cases, 18 teachers reported that they had one colleague, and 5 indicated that they had twenty three colleagues). These responses suggest that isolation with respect to collegiate support is a factor for some teachers of philosophy. teachers of philosophy experience a sense of isolation with respect to collegiate support.

According to respondents, **levels most commonly taught** in those schools represented in the survey were grades 3/4 (70% of responses) and 5/6 (68%) (the sum of these two percentages indicates that a number of schools taught philosophy at both levels). When respondents were asked at **which level(s) they taught philosophy**, again, grades 3/4 (22%) and 5/6 (29%) were most prominent. Given the focus of training activities and curriculum materials since the inception of philosophy for children in 1983-4, the "bulge" at mid to upper primary was to be expected.

Lower primary levels (P-2) were also well represented (grades P-1: 53%, grade 2: 62% of teachers involved), also reflecting an emphasis on promoting philosophy at these levels. Secondary school participation among respondents was, relatively, much lower, beginning at 22% at grades 7/8, and decreasing to 3% at grades 11-12. It is worth noting, however, that approximately 40 respondents (20%) were teaching philosophy at secondary level.

The proportion of schools teaching philosophy at all levels (usually P-6) was high (40%), suggesting that the adoption of philosophy on a school-wide basis had become quite well-established (among those schools involved in the survey).

THE PHILOSOPHY CURRICULUM IN THE SCHOOL

Just over half the respondents (53%) reported that their school has **a sequentially-designed philosophy curriculum** (that is, a framework for teaching philosophy which incorporates structures for advancing in terms of content, within and/or between different grade levels), while just under half (49%) reported that they taught philosophy from a written curriculum. Of those teachers who gave details of the philosophy curriculum used at their school, 87% reported that they used the curriculum design which is part of specific programs such as the one designed by Matthew Lipman at the IAPC, *Philosophy for Kinder Kids Kit* (de Haan et al.) or *Thinking Stories* (Cam). The degree of curriculum structure of these programs varies from strong (Lipman) to weak (Cam). Thirteen percent of teachers who gave details of the philosophy curriculum used, reported that they taught philosophy as part of the English curriculum.

While it appears that few teachers had undertaken the task of *designing* a philosophy curriculum, either for their own class or across classes, 29% of respondents said that they *contributed* to the writing of the philosophy curriculum at their school. Of those who did not contribute, the largest proportion (46%) obtained the philosophy curriculum from ACER (ie the Lipman curriculum, with some modifications). A sizeable minority (16%) obtained their curriculum from the University of NSW (*Thinking Stories, Kinder Kit*, etc.). Other sources included workshops, Philosophy for Children manuals (without the corresponding novels), conferences, awareness sessions, and network meetings, and adaptation of a particular program by teachers (working as individuals or as part of a curriculum team). Specific examples of best practice would assist in the development of a curriculum framework for philosophy.

On the issue of **curriculum review** (that is, a systematic process of reflection on the philosophy curriculum), while just under one quarter of respondents (23%) reportedly undertook their own review process, more than one half (55%) either undertook a review at the school level, or were in the early stages of such a process. One quarter of respondents indicated that they had no process of curriculum review. The task of establishing a process of curriculum review may, perhaps, be facilitated by further work on curriculum development and implementation in philosophy.

ALLOCATION OF TEACHING TIME IN PHILOSOPHY

Frequency of philosophy classes

About 65% of respondents taught their students for one philosophy class (around fifty minutes) per week. Another 20% took students for more than one class per week, while about 15% took students for fewer than one class per week.

Class time allocated

About 65% of respondents allocated fifty minutes or more per week to philosophy (with 15% allocating one hundred minutes or more). On the other hand, 40% allocated fewer then fifty minutes. These results suggest considerable variation in the commitment provided by individual schools to the teaching of philosophy.

Numbers of students per class

Fifty percent of respondents had between 20 and 29 students in their philosophy classes. Twenty two percent had between 10 and 19 students, while 19% had between 30 and 39. Smaller percentages of respondents reported student numbers of less than 10 (2% of respondents), or student numbers of 40 or more (4% of respondents).

While 20-29 might be the normal range for class size, it is more problematic in philosophy – indeed in any subject which makes use of the methodology of the community of inquiry – because that methodology involves the class working as a single interactive group under the guidance of the teacher. Some respondents indicated that they, or their schools – particularly those which had made a school-based commitment to the teaching of philosophy – organised the time table to allow for philosophy classes to operate with half – or, at least, fewer than – the normal number of students.

TEACHING AND LEARNING IN PHILOSOPHY CLASSES

In Section 5 of the questionnaire, information relating to the actual teaching and learning of philosophy in classrooms was sought. The questions asked, and the information obtained, were categorised as follows: goals, teaching materials, teaching methods and strategies, management strategies and rules, and student activities.

Goals of the philosophy curriculum

Teachers were asked to define their **pedagogic and/or philosophical goals** and to rate the success of the philosophy curriculum in meeting (in the sense of "adequately addressing") each one. This question called for an evaluation of the pedagogic success of the philosophy program, rather than an evaluation of actual student performance. Each of the goals identified in Table 5 should be interpreted normatively, that is, as aiming for *improvement or development* of specific skills.

Table 5: Ratings of Possible Goals of the Philosophy Curriculum

Goal	Response %[a]	Success rating %[b]		
		High	Moderate	Low
Inquiry, reasoning, questioning	87	53	42	5
Speaking and listening: dialogical style	77	55	44	1
Empathy, respect for self and others	72	53	41	6
Dispositions: curiosity, tolerance, fallibility, ...	61	53	43	4
Group dynamics: working cooperatively	55	41	54	5
Exploring ideas, concept analysis	42	33	62	5
Using criteria, making judgements	36	40	56	4
Autonomy: thinking for oneself	18	54	42	4

Note: Response rate (to whole question): 91% (=163/181)

a. Response rate refers to the ratio of the number of responses to each goal as a percentage of total responses to the question (N = 163). It indicates the percentage of teachers citing that item as a goal of their philosophy program.

b. Success rating (high, moderate, low) refers to the ratio of the number of responses (specified as "high", "moderate" or "low") as a percentage of valid responses for each goal. It indicates the percentage of teachers citing that degree of success for each goal.

Table 5 identifies eight goals of the philosophy curriculum (ranging across cognitive/metacognitive, conceptual, personal and interpersonal dimensions),

together with response rates and success rates for each goal, as perceived by respondents. The classification of goals produced in the table was inferred from the responses given by teachers: the original question was open-ended.

The highest response rate (87% of all respondents to the question) was gained by "inquiry, reasoning and questioning". This means that 87% of respondents considered this to be a goal of their program. Of these responses, 95% indicated that this set of goals was met with a high or moderate degree of success. Goals related to speaking and listening also attracted a high response (77%), with 99% indicating a high or moderate degree of success. Taken together, these results suggest that teachers, generally, recognised the connection between philosophy, thinking, and oral skills and, moreover, that they judged that their students were also able to make this connection.

Generally, the success rates reported were moderate to high (with low success reported by 6% or fewer of the respondents), although it should be noted that with some goals (notably, group dynamics, exploring ideas/concept analysis and using criteria/making judgements), the response rates for "moderate success" were higher than the response rates for "high success". Further, the goals of exploring ideas/concept analysis and using criteria/making judgements, were identified less frequently than other goals (by 42% and 36% of teachers, respectively). Given the philosophical nature of these two items, it could be inferred that teachers require assistance when it comes to identifying philosophical goals and judging their success.

On the other hand, it is likely that the goals of developing group dynamics and autonomy, identified by 55% and 18% respectively, were perceived by teachers as general goals across the curriculum and so, not worthy of specific mention (particularly in the case of "autonomy"). On the basis of the evidence presented here, the latter goal, given that it concerns the crucial attribute of thinking for oneself, is one which should be more explicitly identified and discussed by teachers.

Goals relating to dispositions – notably, curiosity, tolerance, fallibility, – attracted an overall response rate of 61%, while the more specific dispositions of empathy and respect were identified by nearly three quarters of teachers surveyed (72%). Moreover, more than 80% of those who identified these aspects reported high or moderate success in each case. While these results are significant, they suggest that more work can be done to assist teachers in identifying those dispositional aspects which are central to philosophy for children.

Teachers were then asked to identify **specific goals that they had for individual philosophy lessons**. The point of this question was to determine the extent to which teachers of philosophy modified their goals in relation to specific lessons, when compared with the goals they had for the philosophy curriculum as a whole.

Eighty percent of teachers responded to this question – 11% fewer than for the more general goals-related question (suggesting that some teachers were either unwilling or unable to make the transition from general goals to specific goals). Responses were categorised as follows:

- *learning-related* goals (72%)
- *philosophical* goals (specifically, goals relating to concept development or, in other words, the exploration and investigation of *philosophical content*) (62%)
- *management-related* goals (particularly in relation to student involvement and interaction) (41%).

Seventy two percent of respondents identified learning-related goals, 62% identified philosophical goals and 41% identified management-related goals. Juxtaposing the responses in Table 5 for identifying philosophical goals at the whole curriculum level (42% and 36%), with the response rate of 62% for such goals in the context of specific lessons, it can be inferred that those teachers who did identify philosophical goals were more comfortable with identifying such goals for specific lessons than for philosophy as a whole.

The (relatively) low response (41%) for management-related goals suggests that such goals were likely to be perceived by teachers as general across the curriculum, rather than as specific to philosophy or any other subject area.

In the final question relating to goals, teachers were asked to comment on **the role played by students in identifying goals** in philosophy. The rationale for this question was that student involvement in setting goals has, traditionally, been a significant factor in philosophy for children.

Again, 80% of teachers responded. Only 6% of respondents stated that students were involved in setting curriculum goals in philosophy, while a higher proportion (22%) indicated that students were involved in setting goals for the class as a whole.

Forty one percent of respondents stated that students played a role in relation to goal-setting, through the asking of focus questions for subsequent dialogue. While the response, throughout the questionnaire, to the role of students as questioners was encouraging (see, for example, Table 8), the responses relating to student goal-setting suggest that more work on this particular aspect of student involvement needs to be undertaken. In this context, it is striking that more than one third (35%) of respondents indicated that they did not involve students in the process of identifying goals.

Teaching materials for the curriculum

Curriculum development for philosophy for children in Australia has been multifaceted since the incorporation of Matthew Lipman's IAPC program in 1983. This program, consisting of philosophical novels and teacher manuals, is still being used in Australia. However, judging from trends in marketing and sales at ACER over the last few years, other materials are also being used, and with increasing frequency. There is much debate in the philosophy for children community, both nationally and internationally, about the most appropriate curriculum materials for stimulating philosophical thinking and dialogue in children. The purpose of this question was to obtain a clearer sense of **what materials were being used** in Australian schools by teachers of philosophy.

Table 6 lists those teaching materials that (at the time of the survey) had been designed for specific use in philosophy classrooms in Australia, together with response rates and rankings according to frequency of use. The first two items listed refer to the materials published by the IAPC (full-length philosophy narratives and accompanying teacher manuals). The remaining three items refer to materials published in Australia since 1993.

Table 6: Use of Specified Stimulus/Resource Materials

Teaching materials	Response %[a]	Ranking by use %[b]		
		Ranked first	Ranked second or third	Box ticked only (no ranking)
Philosophy for children stories with manuals	84	34	15	51
Philosophy for children stories without manuals	24	15	42	42
Philosophy for Kinder Kids	30	26	22	51
Books into Ideas	18	17	27	43
Thinking Stories	25	19	24	48

Note: Response rate (to whole question): 93% (=169/181)

a. Response rate refers to the ratio of the number of responses to each set of materials as a percentage of total responses to the question (N = 169). It indicates the percentage of teachers citing that item as a resource used in their philosophy classrooms.

b. Ranking by use (first, second/third, no ranking given) refers to the ratio of the number of responses (specified as "first", "second/third" or "no ranking") as a percentage of valid responses for each set of materials. It indicates the percentage of teachers citing that degree of frequency of use for each set.

Consistently with results relating to the type of philosophy curriculum being used by teachers (as discussed in an earlier section), the IAPC materials (full-length structured narratives with teacher manuals) attracted the highest response (84%). These materials also gained the highest "first" ranking (34%), but the lowest "second/third" ranking (15%). Taken together, these results indicate both that most

philosophy teachers made some use of the IAPC materials, and that more of these teachers used these materials in preference to other materials. A smaller, but still significant, proportion (24%) used the IAPC materials (specifically, the full-length narratives) *without* the corresponding manuals. Of the latter group, a smaller proportion (15%) ranked this use first (that is, 15% of those teachers who used the IAPC materials without manuals reported that they used these materials most frequently), while a considerably higher proportion (42%) ranked this use second or third. This result is consistent with the notion that the narratives are more popular when used in conjunction with the manuals as support materials.

The Philosophy for Kinder Kids Kit (subsequently published as Book 1 of *Philosophy with Kids*) was used by almost a third of respondents (30%), while the collection of short philosophical stories *Thinking Stories* (recently published at the time of this study) was used by one quarter of respondents, and the resource book *Books into Ideas* was used by 18% of respondents.

It is noteworthy that while fewer respondents indicated that they used Australian curriculum resource materials (*Philosophy with Kids*, *Thinking Stories*, and *Books into Ideas*[+]), as compared with the IAPC materials, between one third and one half of those who did, ranked them first, second or third according to frequency of use. This suggests a considerable degree of variability among teachers when it comes to preferred materials. For example, while the framework of *Thinking Stories* is similar to that of the IAPC resources – albeit presented as short stories rather than full-length narratives – the framework of *Philosophy for Kinder Kids* and *Books into Ideas* uses, as a starting point for philosophical dialogue, standard children's literature (picture books) rather than specially prepared texts. While it can be argued that teachers should have access to the full range of materials available, there is also the question – as yet unresolved – of the appropriateness of different kinds of materials when it comes to stimulating structured philosophical inquiry.

Other materials

Just over one half (51%) of teachers surveyed indicated that they made some use of curriculum materials other than those listed in Table 5.2. Fifty nine percent of these (that is, 54 responses) referred to the use of children's literature and other resources as a creative stimulus to philosophical inquiry (with or without such books as *Kinder Kit* and *Books into Ideas*, which are designed to support these resources). Further, almost one quarter of all respondents (24%) stated that they used the IAPC manuals as teacher resources to support the use of literature and other (non philosophical) materials as a stimulus for philosophy. Given the structure and content of these manuals, it can be assumed that this support took the form of helping teachers to identify key philosophical ideas and explore them through dialogue, although the question of how teachers correlated the children's literature with the activities in the manuals was not resolved here.

Finally, more than one quarter of respondents (26%) claimed to have used other, purpose-written materials such as exercises and activities written by themselves or colleagues.

[+] *Philosophy with Kids*, de Haan, MacColl and McCutcheon (Longman 1995). *Thinking Stories*. Cam (Hale and Iremonger 1993). *Books into Ideas*. Sprod (Hawker Brownlow 1993)

Teaching methodology and strategies in philosophy

Philosophy for children is often characterised in terms of specific modes of teaching and learning, most notably those associated with the concept of the classroom *community of inquiry*[+]. Since the methodology of philosophy for children is, to a large extent, encapsulated by this concept, it was appropriate to ask teachers to offer **their own interpretation of the key phrase "community of inquiry"**.

More than 85% of those surveyed responded to this question, of whom only 11% identified the physical arrangement of the classroom as the defining characteristic of a community of inquiry. Factors most commonly identified were:

- a focus on *conceptual questioning and discussion* (59% of respondents)
- *open-ended questioning and inquiry-based learning* (58%)
- *the valuing of opinions* (55%)
- a focus on *the whole class* as a community rather than on relationships between the teacher and individual students (45%).

Assuming that these factors play a central role in developing thinking, inquiry and dialogical skills, the responses here suggest that, generally speaking, teachers had an understanding of the connection between establishing a classroom community of inquiry and strengthening these skills.

The next question asked teachers to identify the **strategies and procedures they most commonly used** in philosophy. A key assumption behind this question is that these strategies are designed to facilitate the building of communities of inquiry which, in turn, constitute appropriate environments for doing philosophy in the classroom. Accordingly, the information obtained in response to this question will contribute to an understanding of how teachers actually teach philosophy.

More than half the respondents (55%) identified strategies that, taken, together, constitute what has come to be called the "plain vanilla" approach to teaching in philosophy for children (so-called because it constitutes a basic or core model of philosophy teaching which can, subsequently, be modified as and when appropriate). The key ingredients of this approach may be summarised as follows:

- shared reading of text or other stimulus material
- generation of (philosophical) questions/issues from students, based on the stimulus material
- ordering and categorisation of questions/issues by the classroom community of inquiry
- dialogue/discussion generated from questions/issues identified (including use of exercises and other activities from the teacher manuals in philosophy for children)
- reflections, conclusions, evaluation of session (as understood by the members of the community).

Other significant responses to this question included:

- facilitating class discussion (30%)
- questioning (by teachers and/or students) (16%).

Since these strategies are aspects of the plain vanilla approach, and since other procedures – notably, brainstorming (14%), community-building games (14%) and hands-on activities (11%) – were not reported as frequently, it can be concluded that plain vanilla, in one form or another, was by far the most commonly reported strategy.

[+] See *Teaching for Better Thinking: The Classroom Community of Inquiry*, L. J. Splitter and A. M. Sharp (ACER, 1995).

Teachers were then asked to rank the **level of importance they placed on aspects of their role** (as specified in the questionnaire) in the philosophy classroom, followed by a similar ranking of **roles for students**. The point of these questions was to determine how teachers viewed the connection between the roles that they and their students played, on the one hand, and the building of the classroom as a community of philosophical inquiry, on the other.

These aspects, together with the corresponding rankings, are summarised in Tables 7 and 8. An interpretation of the data, incorporating a comparative analysis of the two data sets, is provided.

Table 7: Characterisation of the Role of the Philosophy Teacher

Teacher role	Response %[a]	Importance rating %[b]		
		Great importance	Some importance	Minimal importance
Classroom manager	98	44	44	13
Discussion facilitator/Guide	73	77	22	2
Questioner	98	42	45	13
Resource	98	9	48	43
Summariser	98	29	58	13
Evaluator	97	17	47	37
Provoker/ motivator	98	59	36	5
Model	99	61	30	10

Note: Response rate (to whole question): 98% (=178/181)

a. Response rate refers to the ratio of the number of responses to each teacher role as a percentage of total responses to the question (N = 178). It indicates the percentage of teachers citing that item as a role of the philosophy teacher.

b. Importance rating (great, some, minimal) refers to the ratio of the number of responses (specified as "great importance", "some importance" or "minimal importance") as a percentage of valid responses for each role. It indicates the percentage of teachers citing that degree of importance for each role.

Table 7 specifies eight roles of the philosophy teacher (ranging from more subject-centred roles such as "Resource", to more student-centred roles such as "Guide"), together with response rates and rankings of levels of importance for each role, as perceived by respondents. The classification of roles was specified in the questionnaire.

All roles specified had an exceptionally high response rate (≥97%), with the exception of the teacher as *discussion facilitator/guide* which, at 73%, was significantly lower. A plausible explanation for this exceptional case is that this role, for many teachers, was taken as too obvious to be worthy of specific mention. It is noteworthy that of those who did respond to this category, 77% rated this role as being of great importance – by far the largest percentage for any of the responses relating to importance. Conversely, the responses from those for whom this role was only of

some or minimal importance, were proportionately fewer (the respective response rates were 22% and 2%). In short, the role of discussion facilitator/guide seems to have been acknowledged, either implicitly (because of the lower response rate) or explicitly (because of the higher proportion of those who rated this role as being of great importance), by most teachers.

The great importance of the teacher as *model*, and as *provoker/motivator*, was reported by more than half the respondents (61% and 59% respectively), where no other role (except for discussion facilitator/guide) rated more than 45%. A plausible interpretation is that teachers were less inclined to rate as important those roles (for example: *summariser*, *evaluator* and *resource*) which (appeared to) reinforce the image of the teacher as expert. The teacher as *classroom manager* and *questioner* were identified as being of great importance by 44% and 42% of respondents respectively. This is consistent with the hypothesis that these roles, while not as significant as that of facilitator/guide, were more appropriate than the "teacher as expert" roles.

As a cautionary remark, it should be noted that several of these roles, when specified by a single heading, are ambiguous or vague, and require further investigation before any more detailed analysis of teacher practice can be offered. For example, it is notoriously the case that *how* teachers question and *what* they ask for in response are major factors in determining the extent to which they are encouraging open inquiry. The same point can be made with respect to how and what teachers model (curiosity, puzzlement, wonder, on the one hand, or control, power, expertise, on the other).

Table 8 specifies six roles of philosophy students (similar to the previous listing of teacher roles, but without reference to the roles of "Classroom Manager" and "Model"), together with response rates and rankings according to frequency for each role, as perceived by respondents. The classification of roles was, again, specified in the questionnaire.

Table 8: Characterisation of the Role of Philosophy Students

Student role	Response %[a]	Frequency rating %[b]		
		Often	Sometimes	Not at all /Hardly ever
Discussion facilitator	97	34	59	7
Questioner	100	63	37	1
Resource	97	55	43	2
Summariser	98	21	60	19
Evaluator	96	28	53	19
Provoker/raiser of issues	99	64	34	2

Note: Response rate (to whole question): 100% (=181/181)

a. Response rate refers to the ratio of the number of responses to each student role as a percentage of total responses to the question (N = 181). It indicates the percentage of teachers citing that item as a role of students in philosophy.

b. Frequency rating (often, sometimes, not at all/hardly ever) refers to the ratio of the number of responses (specified as "often", "sometimes" or "not at all/hardly ever") as a percentage of valid responses for each role. It indicates the percentage of teachers citing that degree of frequency for each role.

Even more strikingly than in the previous Table, all student roles specified had an extremely high response rate (≥96%), with every teacher surveyed responding to the role of the student as *questioner* – although fewer than two thirds (63%) declared that students took this particular role frequently. Still, this frequency, like that for *provoker/raiser of issues*, was greater than the frequencies reported for the other roles specified, suggesting that teachers (1) understood the importance of these student-focused activities in the community of inquiry, and (2) perceived that their students were well on the way toward putting these roles into practice.

The role of *discussion facilitator* (and, to a lesser extent, that of *summariser*) was generally seen as more likely to be taken by the teacher than by students, although with respect to other roles (most notably that of resource, but also that of questioner, provoker and evaluator), this was not the case. This result may reflect teacher perceptions that in so far as facilitation and summarising are, or involve, more complex pedagogic tasks than questioning, provoking, etc., they are still, largely, under the teacher's control. It is interesting to note that whereas only 73% of teachers recorded any response to the role of the teacher as facilitator/guide (see Table 7), 97% responded to this role as a student-led activity (Table 8), (although fewer respondents indicated that students took this role often). This suggests that teachers understood the particular importance, in the classroom community of inquiry, of encouraging student facilitation, notwithstanding their perception that students did not (as yet) perform this task often or well (when compared, for instance, to the tasks of questioning and provoking/raising issues).

Conversely, *evaluation* – another complex task – was perceived as a role that students took more often than teachers, albeit with relatively less frequency than (some) other roles. So, for example, where 28% of respondents reported that students frequently took the role of evaluator, only 17% reported that the teacher frequently took this role. This result suggests that although a sizeable proportion of teachers understood the importance, in the philosophy classroom, of evaluation by students, the actual practice of this form of evaluation was still in its early stages. On the other hand, it is encouraging to note that more than half the number of respondents (53%) reported that students *sometimes* played an evaluative role. The complex issue of evaluation/assessment in philosophy is discussed further in a later section.

With respect to the role of *resource* (ie source of information and opinion), it is significant that whereas only 9% of respondents saw this role as being of great importance when carried out by the teacher (the lowest response for any role), 55% reported that students frequently functioned in this role. Further, 43% saw this role as minimally important when carried out by the teacher, but only 2% reported that students never (or rarely) functioned in this role. Forty eight percent of respondents reported that the role of teacher as resource was of some importance (Table 7), while 43% reported that students sometimes functioned in this role (Table 8). Hence, it could be inferred that teachers (1) understood the need for students, in the community of inquiry, to function as sources of information and opinion (and to see themselves – rather than the teacher – as playing this role), but (2) perceived that students needed assistance (ie from them) in order to take this role.

With a view to interpreting these results, the following prescriptive claims concerning philosophy for children can be advanced:

- *all* of the student roles listed in Table 8 are desirable, in the sense that the more frequently students take these roles the more they can be judged to be working as a genuine community of inquiry, but

- among the teacher roles listed in Table 7, those roles which appear to reinforce the image of the teacher as expert – specifically, summariser, evaluator and resource – are less desirable than those roles which enhance forms of active student participation – specifically, discussion facilitator/guide, model, provoker/motivator, classroom manager and questioner.

Given these suppositions, it can be inferred that:

1. further work (in professional development and classroom practice) needs to be carried out with respect to all student roles listed, but specifically those of discussion facilitation, summarising and evaluation

2. further work needs to be carried out with respect to all teacher roles listed, with a view to encouraging teachers to promote the roles of classroom manager, questioning, provoking/motivating and modelling in preference to the roles of resource, summariser and evaluator.

Management of the philosophy classroom

While classroom management is always important, it is quite crucial in philosophy for children because the dynamics of the community of inquiry, combined with the open texture of philosophical thinking and dialogue, give students a sense of freedom which they may not experience in other subjects and classes. Teachers of philosophy are called upon to respect this openness, while conveying a clear sense of what is, and is not, expected of students with respect to their participation and behaviour (Splitter and Sharp 1995). The following questions sought to determine exactly how teachers of philosophy manage their classes.

Teachers were asked to give details of how they preferred to arrange **the physical environment** in their philosophy classrooms. Ninety four percent of respondents stated that they organised students into a circle or similar arrangement, sometimes in a specific part of the room (for example, "our discussion corner"). This arrangement, by contrast with others (notably, the traditional rows of desks and groupings of students at tables) allows all students to see one another as well as the teacher, thereby make it easier for them to engage in dialogue.

While more than half (53%) referred to this factor alone, other factors were also mentioned fairly frequently, specifically:
- the teacher being at the same (height) level as students (22% of respondents)
- small group arrangements (17%)
- using tables for writing (12%).

Each of these factors, but particularly "teacher level" and use of tables for writing, is quite consistent with, and can be used to complement, the circle arrangement. It is worth noting that only a very small minority of respondents (fewer than 3%) stated that they preferred a conventional classroom environment, with the teacher directing from the front and students seated in rows of desks.

This result, in conjunction with that in the preceding section (regarding the interpretation of the phrase "community of inquiry"), indicates that while teachers judged that a circle-like arrangement was an important ingredient in forming a community of inquiry, they did not regard it as a *defining* feature. As was noted earlier, defining features identified included: conceptual and open-ended questioning and discussion, the valuing of opinions and a focus on the "whole class". The significance of this for future teacher training aimed at fostering the growth of communities of inquiry is that while the circle-arrangement (as an aspect of the overall physical environment) is a desirable and helpful one, it is not strictly necessary – because other, more central features could, in principle, be put in place without it (if, for example, it was not practicable to rearrange the classroom furniture) – and it is certainly *not* sufficient for such growth to occur.

Teachers were next asked to describe **the advantages of using a specific physical arrangement**. For the majority of respondents, this meant the circle environment. Seventy eight percent of respondents referred, as a benefit of such an arrangement, to the fact that students (and the teacher) were able to see each another. This can be particularly important for fostering the dynamics of inquiry (especially dialogue). Additionally, 36% of respondents referred to the greater sense of equality (both among students and between students and the teacher) which such an arrangement reflects or promotes. A smaller proportion (20%) noted that the physical arrangements reduced distractions and helped students to focus, but only 9% referred to what might be called the "symbolism" associated with such an arrangement (that is, the idea that doing philosophy in this way represented or symbolised something important). These results suggest that while most teachers interpreted the question in practical or utilitarian terms, a significant proportion was also concerned with more theoretical aspects (such as equality).

Teachers were then asked **if they used these physical arrangements in any of their other teaching**, and if so, with what results. Eighty six percent responded positively, although only 58% chose to provide details, suggesting either a degree of uncertainty as to the intent of the question or the reluctance/inability of teachers to specify in what form transfer to other classes occurred. Of those who did provide details, 81% stated that using the same physical arrangements in other classes promoted discussion and interaction. This result strongly suggests that the physical environment of the community of inquiry has the potential to promote greater interaction in learning areas other than philosophy.

The next question sought to determine what kinds of **management rules** teachers applied in order to achieve the effective operation of their philosophy classroom, and what **degree of success** they found in implementing these rules. The responses to these questions are summarised in Table 9.

Table 9 identifies eight management rules applied in philosophy (ranging from rules concerning student interaction to rules about thinking), together with response rates and success rates for each rule, as perceived by respondents. The classification of rules produced in the table was inferred from the responses given by teachers: the original question was open-ended.

The highest response rate was for "speaking rules" (74%), which may be taken to include such specific items as speaking in turn and raising hands in order to speak. This result is consistent with the general understanding displayed by teachers that a community of philosophical inquiry has dialogue, questioning and other language-based activities at its heart. It is true that (careful and active) listening is an important, and complementary, ingredient in a community of inquiry (Splitter and Sharp 1995) but two factors might explain the lower response rate (41%) for this item:

the likelihood that teachers would include listening as part of their understanding of speaking rules but not necessarily *vice versa* and, more significantly, the difficulty in establishing and maintaining clear rules for listening, as compared with speaking.

The second highest response rate referred to rules concerned with encouraging each other and not engaging in "put-down" behaviour (46%). That fewer than one half of teachers surveyed identified dispositional rules relating to philosophy for children, reinforces an earlier point that more work needs to be done to assist teachers in identifying these crucial dispositional aspects.

The next most common response rate referred to the rule that students should actively share their ideas (23%).

The response rate was significantly lower with respect to rules related to giving reasons/evidence and readiness to be involved (each 14%), asking questions (8%), and reflection (6%). However, it seems plausible that teachers would not readily associate these strategies with management rules, because the latter would more commonly be associated with such overt behaviour as talking.

With respect to **success of implementation**, the response rates for "high success" were, generally, stronger than those for moderate and low success (the responses for low success were, by and large, not significant). The responses for high success with rules relating to questioning (85%) and encouraging others (79%) were striking (even though teachers tended not to see questioning as a classroom management rule). The former is consistent with the high level of appreciation of the importance of questioning, shown by respondents at different points in the survey.

Noticeably lower in terms of degree of success in implementation were the response rates concerning rules associated with reflection (high success: 44%, moderate success: 56%), and giving reasons/evidence (high success: 44%, moderate success: 52%). Attention needs to be given (in teacher education, as well as the classroom) to the nature and role of reflection and the giving of reasons, because of their importance as philosophical strategies (Splitter and Sharp 1995).

Table 9: Management Rules Applied in Philosophy

Management rule	Response %[a]	Success rating %[b]		
		High	Moderate	Low
Encourage each other; no put-downs	46	79	20	1
Listen carefully	41	66	31	3
Speaking rules	74	63	34	3
Reflect (think harder)	6	44	56	0
Ask questions	8	85	15	0
Give reasons/evidence	14	44	52	4
Ready to be involved	14	65	30	4
Actively share ideas	23	58	37	5

Note: Response rate (to whole question): 91% (=164/181)

a. Response rate refers to the ratio of the number of responses to each rule as a percentage of total responses to the question (N = 164). It indicates the percentage of teachers citing that item as a rule they applied in their philosophy classrooms.

b. Success rating (high, moderate, low) refers to the ratio of the number of responses (specified as "high", "moderate" or "low") as a percentage of valid responses for each rule. It indicates the percentage of teachers citing that degree of success for each rule.

Student activities in the philosophy classroom

The following questions sought to complement those which dealt primarily with the teaching and learning methodology of philosophy from the perspective of the teacher. Here, the focus (albeit still based on teacher input) is on the dynamics of the philosophy classroom **with respect to student-related activities.**

Teachers were asked, first, if their classes **usually worked as a single group** when doing philosophy. 166 teachers (that is, 92%) responded to this question. Eighty three percent of respondents indicated that their classes usually worked in this way. This result reinforces those reported earlier (in relation to the physical environment of the philosophy classroom), namely, that students usually operate as a single community when doing philosophy. It should be noted that while the idea of the classroom as a single community of inquiry is, indeed, at the heart of philosophy for children (Splitter and Sharp 1995), alternative configurations (working in smaller groups for certain kinds of activities, and being instructed as a whole group, for example) are not necessarily ruled out. This point may warrant greater attention in teacher training.

The next question asked those teachers whose students did **work in small groups to describe some of the activities they undertook.** "Small groups" was taken to mean groups of 3-6 students. (It did not refer to the practice of dividing the whole class into a smaller – but still single – group).

Given the conditional nature of the question (and the fact that more than three quarters of all teachers surveyed stated that their classes usually worked as single groups), the low response rate (when compared with the response rates for most of the other questions) of 67% (that is, 122 teachers) was not surprising. Of these 122 teachers, nearly three quarters (72%) indicated that students engaged in discussion in small groups, while 57% referred to hands-on activities and 44% to the activities of summarising/clarifying/categorising. These results may suggest that teachers who did use small groups were aware of their potential to facilitate dialogue and other activities involving students who might otherwise not participate in whole-class discussion. On the other hand, only 16% of respondents indicated that their students worked in small groups in order to formulate questions for discussion. This, together with the apparent failure to see the merits of working in small groups as enhancing the objectives of the classroom community of inquiry, probably needs to be emphasised in future training.

As a counter-point to the questions on group work, teachers were asked **in what ways their students worked independently** in philosophy. Given the large number of teachers (138) who indicated that their classes usually worked as a single group (as indicated above), the relatively low response to this question (69%, that is, 124

teachers) was, again, not surprising. Although there is no inconsistency, in principle, in the idea that students who work as part of a single group also work independently, it is possible that some teachers took the idea of working independently to exclude group work and hence judged that this question did not apply to them.

The highest response rates were in the areas of writing (38%) and reflecting (32%). Writing is one activity which can be (and perhaps usually is) undertaken independently, ie as a solo activity (unlike speaking, for example). The response rate of 32% for "reflection" as an independent activity was reasonably encouraging, given the pivotal role of this activity in philosophising.

The final question in this section asked teachers to name **the three teaching/learning activities they used most in their classes** (activities which, on the basis of earlier results, were likely to be whole-class activities). Sixty four percent of those who responded to this question (that is, 64% of 141 teachers) indicated that they used activities which involved some form of listening and talking. Forty two percent of those who responded indicated that they used physical activities such as writing and "making things" . Other activities referred to included:

- problem solving: 26% of those who responded to the question
- "plain vanilla" (of which listening and talking are aspects): 25%
- philosophical thinking: 15% (also part of the plain vanilla approach)
- reading: 11% (also part of the plain vanilla approach).

These results suggest that a good mix of activities occurs in many philosophy classrooms, with a focus on those based around discussion. It is worth noting that the response rate for "plain vanilla" in this question was considerably lower than the response rate for "plain vanilla" in the earlier question (Section 5.3) which asked teachers to identify the strategies they most commonly used (25% as compared with 55%). Given that this question focused on activities engaged in, rather than strategies employed, a plausible explanation for this lower response rate is that the plain vanilla strategy (either as a whole or in terms of its various components), even when understood and identified by teachers, was less easily translated by them into classroom practice. To what extent it is desirable for teachers of philosophy to have, *and to apply*, an understanding of this strategy, is a question that needs to be considered as part of future planning in philosophy for children. This question is particularly pertinent in Australia, where there appear to be many more approaches – in terms of stimulus materials and teaching methods – to teaching philosophy in schools, than in other countries where the practice of philosophy for children has evolved along more traditional, and predictable, lines (that is, in line with the original curriculum developed by the IAPC).

EVALUATION/ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING

The credibility of philosophy as a legitimate and identifiable component of the school curriculum depends, in part, on a viable, efficient means of assessment (whether of individual students or, alternatively, of the class/group as a whole). This section of the questionnaire sought information on how teachers of philosophy approached the issues of evaluation, assessment and reporting. These issues raise particular challenges in philosophy because of the open-ended nature of philosophical inquiry, and the correspondingly limited role of content-based (in the sense of "factual") knowledge and information.

The first question asked teachers to name the **student learnings which they sought to evaluate when assessing their students' work in philosophy.** The responses to this question are summarised in Table 10.

Table 10 identifies eight kinds of student learnings which teachers of philosophy sought to assess (ranging across cognitive/metacognitive, conceptual, personal and interpersonal dimensions), together with response rates for each student learning. The classification of student learnings produced in the table was inferred from the responses given by teachers: the original question was open-ended.

Table 10: Student Learnings Sought Through Assessment of Students' Work in Philosophy

Student learning sought through assessment	Response %[a]
Inquiry and reasoning skills	66
Questioning skills	40
Listening/speaking skills	59
Empathy, respect, tolerance, acceptance	47
Working cooperatively; openness	39
Level of participation/involvement	49
Conceptual depth, judgement, relationships	44
Reflectiveness/evaluating own involvement	9

Note: Response rate (to whole question): 80% (=144/181)

a. Response rate refers to the ratio of the number of responses to each student learning as a percentage of total responses to the question (N = 144). It indicates the percentage of teachers citing that item as a student learning in philosophy.

Four out of every five teachers surveyed responded to this question and, overall, identified eight broadly defined variables relating to assessment (as indicated in Table 10). Teachers tended to identify a relatively large number of combinations of variables, with just over 50% of respondents nominating four or more variables relating to assessment. With the exception of reflectiveness (which, arguably, can be subsumed under several other headings, for example: inquiry skills, questioning skills, and conceptual depth), response rates were in the range 39%-66%. The highest response rates referred to the skill-related categories of inquiry and reasoning (66%), and listening/speaking (59%). The response relating to affective dimensions (empathy, respect, tolerance, and acceptance: 47%) was also frequently reported, as were the responses relating to social dimensions (working cooperatively: 39%; participation/involvement: 49%) and conceptually deep thinking (44%).

These results suggest that while the assessment of skills came most readily to mind for teachers of philosophy, the assessment of affective and social aspects associated with philosophy (and the classroom community of inquiry) was also regarded as important. Moreover, the content-rich dimensions of conceptual thinking (which incorporates the formation of judgements based on criteria, and the construction of relationships) and philosophical questioning received significant acknowledgment by teachers (albeit still by fewer than 50% of respondents) as areas worthy of assessment. These dimensions can be taken as marking off philosophy from other approaches to the teaching of thinking.

The crucial role of questioning in the philosophy classroom has been remarked upon earlier in this report, and is reflected in a number of responses from teachers. It is important to note that good questioning has both procedural and content-rich dimensions, and should be characterised *both* in terms of skills and dispositions, *and* as a marker of content-based knowledge and understanding (Splitter and Sharp 1995). Future work on assessment in philosophy will need to acknowledge and record both dimensions.

It should also be noted that the overall response rate to this question (80%) was lower in comparison with response rates for (most) other questions discussed in this report. One possible explanation for this is that the issue of assessment in and of philosophy, is one about which a number of teachers who are actively engaged in teaching philosophy feel some level of discomfort. It will be important for future work that this contentious but important topic is developed in ways which both preserve the integrity of the discipline of philosophy (as practised with children) and are responsive to contemporary social and political expectations regarding the place and nature of assessment in the curriculum.

The second question asked teachers to identify and describe those **forms of evaluation actually used in assessing their students' work in philosophy.**

Table 11 identifies seven forms of evaluation (plus one item for "no evaluation") which teachers of philosophy actually used (ranging from prepared checklists and analysis of students' discussions and written work, to personal observation), together with response rates for each form of evaluation. The classification of forms of evaluation produced in the table was inferred from the responses given by teachers: the original question was open-ended.

Table 11: Forms of Evaluation Used in Assessing Students' Work in Philosophy

Form of evaluation used	Response %[a]
IAPC manual activities and tasks[+]	9
Cognitive checklist[++] /Teacher report	6
Analysis of discussions	22
Students' journals; written work	33
Student hands-on activities	13
Persistence (as measured, typically, by length of discussion)	37
Anecdotal/observation	56
No evaluation/assessment carried out	8

[+] This item refers to questions on evaluation following (some of) the chapters in the IAPC teacher manuals.

[++] This item refers to the *Cognitive Behavior Checklist* of 17 items (IAPC, 1990).

Note: Response rate (to whole question): 77% (=139/181)

a. Response rate refers to the ratio of the number of responses to each form of evaluation as a percentage of total responses to the question (N = 139). It indicates the percentage of teachers citing that item as a form of evaluation used in philosophy.

The response rates presented in Table 11 are, by and large, lower than those presented in Table 10, perhaps reflecting the point that *seeking to assess* a range of cognitive, personal and interpersonal dimensions is one thing; *actually assessing* them is quite another. Consider, for example, the form of evaluation which attracted the highest response rate: anecdotal/observation (56%). This gives rise to the question of how the range of factors identified in Table 10 – the identification of which presupposes some understanding of a taxonomy of categories for assessment – could realistically have been evaluated (particularly when considered in conjunction with the lower overall response rate of 77% in Table 11, the 8% of respondents who reported that they did no evaluation of student performance, and the fact that three quarters of the student learnings listed in Table 10 received response rates of 40% or more). The nature of anecdotal/observational assessment is that teachers assess on the basis of their professional judgement, without the use of formal categories or methods.

More than one third of respondents (37%) reported that they used "persistence in discussion (as measured by length of the discussion)" as a variable in assessment, but this result needs to be interpreted cautiously given that judgements about the length of a discussion – particularly when it comes to examining the involvement of individual participants in the discussion – are likely to be somewhat subjective and, hence, difficult to verify. It is noteworthy that 22% of respondents reported that they used "analysis of discussions" in assessing philosophy. It would be important to try and determine what criteria were used by these teachers when undertaking such an analysis.

Other more structured modes of assessment (eg assessing students' written work: 33%; IAPC-style assessment: 9%; (structured) reporting format: 6%) were also referred to – albeit less frequently – suggesting that some teachers, at least, were attempting to use more formal criteria in assessment. There seems little doubt that one important task for future work in research and training will be to investigate assessment methods which more closely reflect those areas identified by teachers as worthy of assessment and evaluation (as summarised in Table 10).

Teachers were asked next if they sought to **assess the functioning of the class as a group**. This aspect of assessment marks a distinct departure from traditional forms of classroom assessment which are usually focused on individual students. It highlights an important aspect of the community of inquiry: namely that it, too, is worthy of assessment in terms of its function and progress *as* a developing entity. The response rate for this question was 93%. Eighty two percent of respondents indicated that they did seek some form of whole-group assessment (although it should be noted that teachers were not asked to give any details of how this was done). This result reinforces earlier findings that teachers, by and large, had an understanding that the idea of the classroom functioning as a community of inquiry involves, among other things, working together to produce an outcome that is worthy of assessment in its own right.

The next question derived from a concern to explore the democratic and autonomous nature of the community of inquiry. Teachers were asked if they encouraged students to **evaluate their own progress in philosophy**. It should be noted that "own" in this case can refer both to each individual student and the class as a whole. The response rate for this question was 90%. Almost one half of the respondents

(48%) indicated that their students did evaluate their own, or the group's progress in philosophy. When asked for details, a smaller group (44%) responded, of whom 40% indicated that self-assessment consisted mainly in inviting students as a group to comment, at the end of the lesson, on various aspects of the activity (usually discussion) that had taken place. For example, students would use appropriate signals ("thumbs up", "thumbs down") to indicate if they thought that they had been listening to one another, giving reasons for their views, self-correcting, offering examples or counter-examples, "going in deeply" (as opposed to treating an issue superficially), exercising tolerance and open-mindedness, and so on.

Thirty three percent of respondents reported that students made evaluative comments incidentally during the course of a philosophy lesson. A still smaller group (19%) stated that students engaged in some kind of formal process of course assessment. It can be inferred from this that few teachers tackled the issue of self-assessment in any formal way (although a larger number involved students in self-assessment on an incidental basis), and that this issue is one to be explored in the future.

The final question dealing with evaluation and assessment asked teachers to specify **the forms of reporting** they engaged in for philosophy. The response rate for this question was 71%. Forty six percent of respondents stated that they included philosophy in school reports. Smaller proportions stated that they used parent-teacher interviews (18%) or some form of teacher checklist (16%) for reporting purposes. One quarter of respondents stated that they did not engage in reporting in philosophy.

The fact that a sizeable number of teachers included philosophy in school reports is noteworthy, but so is the fact that a significant proportion of philosophy teachers had not engaged in any reporting in philosophy. The latter finding is consistent with earlier results which showed that assessment was, largely, anecdotal (see discussion of Table 11). Greater attention to the reporting of progress and achievement in philosophy is needed as part of a more coherent approach to assessment in general. In this regard, it should be noted that some practitioners of philosophy have developed reporting formats that could serve as models for further work.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS OF PHILOSOPHY

There are good grounds for speculating that the majority of teachers at both secondary and (particularly) primary school levels, have had little or no formal background in philosophy, except perhaps for a course in the philosophy of education. Aside from anecdotal evidence, the primary such ground is that, in general, philosophy had not been identified or taught as a school-level subject in Australia. This general claim stands despite such notable exceptions as the International Baccalaureate program offered by some schools, philosophy as a "distinction" subject in the NSW Higher School Certificate and, until quite recently, the school-level logic course offered in Queensland.

The questions in this section sought to identify what philosophical studies had been undertaken by those teachers who were engaged in teaching philosophy, and also to identify those forms of training and professional development that this group of teachers have found, or thought that they would find, most useful. The responses given to these questions will assist in the planning and structure of future training activities, in both preservice and inservice programs.

Teachers were asked, first of all, **how long they had been teaching philosophy.** While the majority of respondents (65%) indicated that they had been teaching philosophy only one or two years, a substantial minority (35%) indicated that they had three years, or more, experience in teaching philosophy. These results are encouraging in so far as they suggest that a number of teachers (60 out of 173 respondents) had a long-term commitment to philosophy in the classroom.

When asked if they had **undertaken any philosophy studies at a tertiary level,** slightly more than one third of respondents (40%) stated that they had. However, only a minority of these (28%) reported that they had studied philosophy to any significant extent (ie a sub-major at undergraduate level or greater), with a majority indicating studies in the form of "some undergraduate sessions" (71% of respondents). It is difficult to offer a clear interpretation of this result, given that much of the inservice and support work carried out in philosophy for children has taken place within a tertiary/university framework, and therefore could be described by teachers as "undergraduate" or even "graduate" level work (see next paragraph). However, it does suggest that future training in philosophy for children, at least in Australia, should probably not assume any substantive philosophical knowledge on the part of teachers. This is especially so since very few teachers would have experienced philosophy as part of their own pretertiary schooling.

Teachers were then asked to specify those **forms of training and professional development in philosophy which they had found most useful** (by their own definition of what constituted training and professional development). Ninety one percent of teachers surveyed responded to this question, of whom 70% cited short training courses or workshops (usually held over a period of several days or, alternatively, on an after-school basis for several weeks). In addition, 31% cited the kinds of training offered by the Centre for Philosophy with Children at ACER. Given that the ACER training sessions were, in general, short courses or workshops, it can be inferred that a clear majority of respondents regarded the workshop format as the most useful that they had received in philosophy.

Other forms of training were identified by teachers, albeit much less frequently. These included:

- observing other philosophy classes: 10%
- networking among groups of teachers: 9%
- conferences relating to philosophy for children: 7%

- specific tertiary programs (such as the Graduate Certificate offered at the University of NSW): 6%
- Occasional "philosophy days" organised by or within a university philosophy department: 4%.

Taken together, these options cover the range of training and professional development activities offered in Australia to date. Accordingly, the lower response rates for alternative forms of training (as indicated above) underscore the importance of the workshop format for the purpose of (initial) training in philosophy.

As a corollary to the issue of training and professional development, teachers were asked to identify those **forms of support, other than professional development, which they considered to be most valuable** to them as teachers of philosophy. The response rate for this question was 79% – somewhat lower than the response rate of 91% for the previous question which related specifically to professional development. One possible explanation for this difference is that that fewer teachers surveyed had given thought to the issue of non-professional development support. More than half the respondents (51%) stated that networking (after-school sessions with fellow teachers, circulated newsletters, etc.) was the most valuable form of support. A smaller but significant proportion (36%) referred to support from other (individual) teachers involved in teaching philosophy (this could be considered as a form of mentoring), while 24% cited the value of having access to good (stimulus and resource) materials.

Other forms of support mentioned included:
- access to demonstration classes: 8%
- priority given to the teaching of philosophy within the school: 7%
- doing more philosophy: 5%.
- smaller classes for philosophy: 2%

The last of these results suggests that class size is not necessarily a major factor when it comes to support for teachers of philosophy. An alternative interpretation is that teachers did not opt for forms of support which they regarded as unrealistic. It should be noted, however, that in some schools where philosophy is taught, classes are divided in half to facilitate greater participation among students.

The issue of optimum size for a classroom community of inquiry is one that could be addressed in future work. It is clear, for example, that the larger the class, the fewer opportunities for intervention on the part of individual students. On the other hand, it can be argued that the nature and quality of the classroom environment are more important factors (when it comes to effective teaching and learning) than the overall size of the class.

Of particular interest is the low response rate with regard to the value of doing more philosophy as a means of supporting professional development programs (5%). It seems clear from these results that teachers regarded the provision of peer support and access to good materials (in that order) as more important supplements to training and professional development than further study in philosophy itself.

The final question in this section asked teachers to specify those **forms of professional development which they would find most useful in the future.** Eighty percent of teachers responded to this question, of whom 38% stated that networking on specific teaching strategies would be the most useful form of professional development. Thirty four percent of respondents stated that some form of observation of or by experts (experienced philosophy teachers or professional philosophers, for example) would be the most useful form of professional development, and 32% indicated that (advanced) training workshops and seminars would be most useful.

A smaller proportion of respondents (14%) stated that further seminars and/or courses in philosophy would be the most useful form of professional development for them in the future.

It is worth comparing these results with those given above, in connection with previous professional development experience, and support over and above professional development. It seems clear, for example, that peer networking and observation were regarded by a large proportion of respondents as a useful *supplement* to initial training (notwithstanding the point that networking was, apparently, regarded as a form of professional development by some teachers but not by others). However, these activities were not rated as particularly significant factors in the initial or basic training that teachers received. Of this training, the short training course or workshop remained the most important and useful activity. Furthermore, teachers rated this kind of activity as more or less equal in value to networking and observation in the context of follow-up training. The overall model of training which emerges here is one which begins with workshops and branches out into a broader range of activities (including follow-up workshops).

The response rate for further study in philosophy was higher in the context of further professional development than in the context of support activities other than professional development (14% as compared to 5%). This difference may not be important, other than suggesting, perhaps, that teachers were more inclined to classify the study of philosophy as a form of professional development rather than as an additional support activity. However, it is worth noting that the responses given to the whole idea of studying philosophy as a way of preparing for, or supporting, the teaching of philosophy in the classroom were, in general, low. Bearing in mind the earlier finding that few teachers of philosophy had a significant background in philosophy, and assuming that some kind of understanding of philosophy as an intellectual discipline is desirable (if not essential) for teachers of philosophy, it is reasonable to suggest that professional development in philosophy for children, both in its initial and more advanced forms, *should incorporate the study of philosophy as part of the overall training regime* (rather than as a separate course of study). This point, if true, has implications for teacher preparation in philosophy, particularly in regard to the mix of "pedagogic" and "philosophic" activities which helps shape training and workshop programs.

This, in turn, suggests that more attention needs to be given to the question of how to incorporate the study of philosophy in training activities, by those involved in training in philosophy for children. At the very least, these activities should help teachers understand the *connections* between philosophy for children and its parent discipline. Such an understanding is required by teachers if they are to develop an "ear" for identifying philosophical problems and guiding philosophical dialogue. This understanding calls for training formats which embrace, but extend beyond, cognitive, metacognitive (or reflective thinking) and classroom management skills and strategies. Exposing teachers to a "philosophical environment", in which the doing of philosophy becomes as natural as reading, writing and other "basic" activities, will continue to be an important dimension of good training in this area.

FLOW-ON EFFECTS FROM TEACHING/LEARNING PHILOSOPHY

One of the strongest claims in support of including philosophy in the school curriculum is that it impacts positively on student learnings and behaviour (cognitive, affective, social, ethical) in other areas of the curriculum (and, indeed, beyond the classroom – in all situations that call for good judgement). The final section of the questionnaire sought to determine teacher responses to the subject of flow-on or transfer. In an increasingly crowded and pressured curriculum, into which philosophy is seeking to gain admission, this issue becomes all the more significant.

Effects on the learning strategies of students

Teachers were asked to describe **changes in learning which they observed in students, subsequent to their studying philosophy.**

Table 12 identifies eight kinds of changes in student learnings subsequent to studying philosophy (ranging across cognitive, conceptual, personal and interpersonal dimensions), together with response rates for each learning change. The classification of changes in student learnings produced in the table was inferred from the responses given by teachers: the original question was open-ended.

Table 12: Changes in Student Learning Subsequent to Studying Philosophy, as Described by Teachers

Learning change described in students	Response %[a]
Listen/hear/talk better	40
Think more reflectively/independently	53
Improved reasoning skills/ability	39
Engage in more questioning	30
Greater and more effective levels of participation	22
Work more cooperatively and tolerantly	57
Display more independence and confidence (self-possession)	32
Show greater interest in philosophy/discussion of ideas	15

Note: Response rate (to whole question): 82% (=148/181)

a. Response rate refers to the ratio of the number of responses to each learning change as a percentage of total responses to the question (N = 148). It indicates the percentage of teachers citing that item as a learning change in students of philosophy.

The response rate of 82% is relatively low, but this could be partly explained by the fact that some teachers would not have felt competent to make judgements about changes in student learning subsequent to philosophy, just because they did not teach them subsequently (ie in other classes). This is more likely to be the case in post primary schools where teachers are assigned to many different classes.

On the other hand, the distribution of responses received was relatively broad across a large number of categories, suggesting that those teachers who did respond saw a considerable number of flow-on effects in their students. It is noteworthy that the two largest responses were in complementary dimensions of learning (namely, cognitive and affective): reflective/independent thinking (53%), and cooperation/

tolerance (57%). The importance of these learning characteristics is one of the assumptions behind philosophy for children (Splitter and Sharp 1995), but such assumptions do not automatically translate into practice. So it is noteworthy that more than half the respondents to this question reported positive changes in their students for these central characteristics. Notwithstanding the cautious wording of the question (referring to "changes subsequent to studying philosophy", rather than "changes as a result of studying philosophy"), it could be inferred that respondents had in mind a causal connection, on the grounds that the terminology used in many of the responses to this question echoed or paraphrased the terminology used to express the goals and methodology of philosophy for children. Examples of this terminology include "a readiness to inquire", "being more prepared to listen to other points of view", "being confident to speak up about a topic", "questioning 'why' to everyday things", "more interaction between students", "an increased verbalisation of 'wonderings'", and "staff and librarian have made very definite comments about the girls' tangible improvement in critical analysis skills".

In some responses, teachers made the causal connection explicit; for example "I think philosophy has helped my students mature as cooperative community members...", and "The students respond well to philosophy; it improves their reasoning skills in all subjects...".[+]

The remaining six learning changes listed in Table 12 occurred less frequently, although in all cases but two, the response rate was at least 30%. In other words, in addition to the flow-on effects noted above, a significant proportion of teachers reported that subsequent to studying philosophy, their students improved in a range of skills and attributes, including listening and talking (40%), reasoning (39%), displaying more independence and confidence (32%) and questioning (30%).

It could be said that the 30% response rate for the learning change described as "engage in more questioning" is modest in light of the prominence given to questioning in earlier responses (see, for example Tables 5, 7 and 8). One suggestion here is that while teachers appeared to be aware of the role played by philosophy in enhancing this important teaching and learning tool, they were not as prepared to state that philosophy resulted in their students actually asking more questions in general.

The two categories which elicited relatively lower responses were: greater and more effective levels of participation (22%), and showing greater interest in philosophy and the discussion of ideas (15%). It is, perhaps, surprising that fewer than one quarter of respondents reported increased participation, given that such an increase is precisely what ought to happen in a community of inquiry (Splitter and Sharp 1995). One plausible explanation for this result is that a number of teachers referred to changes in listening and speaking skills which may be taken as specific markers of increased participation.

A similar point might be made about students showing greater interest in philosophy and the discussion of ideas, in so far as such an interest can be inferred from the more positive responses concerning reflective thinking, reasoning and questioning. If, however, this inference is rejected, then the question arises as to what might be required if students are to show a greater interest in the philosophical and conceptual dimensions of their studies.

[+] Interpreting these results causally rather than merely temporally provides a response to the claim that changes in learning are due to maturation.

Effects on teaching strategies in other curriculum areas

The next question asked teachers to describe **changes in their own teaching style or methodology as a result of teaching philosophy**. Such changes are a further indicator of the flow-on effects that might be attributed to philosophy. (It should be noted that this question explicitly invited teachers to reflect on the issue of causality since it referred to changes in *their own* behaviour.)

Table 13 identifies eight changes in teaching style or methodology as a result of teaching philosophy, together with response rates for each change. The classification of changes in teaching style produced in the table was inferred from the responses given by teachers: the original question was open-ended.

Table 13: Changes in Teaching Style or Methodology as a Result of Teaching Philosophy

Change described in teachers – teachers more attentive to:	Response %[a]
Bringing out the philosophical dimensions	13
The classroom as a community of inquiry	12
Inquiry-based learning	25
Greater emphasis on questioning	30
Conducting more precise discussion	18
Group work/pupil-centred teaching	60
Listening/hearing more effectively	21
Quiet and patient control	10

Note: Response rate (to whole question): 78% (=141/181)

a. Response rate refers to the ratio of the number of responses to each change in teaching style as a percentage of total responses to the question (N = 141). It indicates the percentage of teachers citing that item as a change in teaching style.

Again, the response rate of 78% is relatively low. Moreover, in contrast with the previous question, the majority of responses were more narrowly focused on a smaller number of categories. Taken together, these factors suggest that teachers were more willing and/or more able to identify changes in student behaviour than in their own.

The only change in teaching style which received a response rate greater than 30% was that of becoming more attentive to group work and pupil-centred teaching (60%). Thirty percent of respondents stated that they attended more, and gave greater emphasis, to questioning, while 25% referred to inquiry-based learning and 21% to more effective listening. The remaining responses ranged from 18% down to 12% which, given the overall response rate, could be described as modest.

It is not clear how these results should be interpreted. While the response rate regarding group work and pupil-centred teaching is encouraging, it is interesting that this category deals with strategies with which many teachers would already be familiar, independently of their work as philosophy teachers. On the other hand, the fact that no more than one quarter of respondents (in each case) made reference to philosophical dimensions, inquiry-based learning, conducting more precise discussions, and more effective listening, in the context of thinking about how philosophy has impacted on their teaching, suggests either that teachers had

difficulty identifying these philosophical attributes in their teaching, or else that they were not prepared to report much change in these dimensions of their teaching (either because there was not much change or for some other reason).

The modest response rate for teachers reporting that they had become more attentive to questioning in their teaching (30%) is, in fact, the same as that given to the corresponding item in Table 12 which related to changes in learning. In view of the earlier responses relating to questioning (see, for example, Tables 5, 7 and 8), it may be suggested that the actual impact of questioning on teacher practice did not match teachers' apparent understanding of the key role played by questioning. It is tempting to conclude that training and professional development programs should place greater emphasis on the practice of good questioning, both in philosophy and across the curriculum.

Other features special to philosophy

The final question asked teachers to note **any features or characteristics which they regarded as being special to philosophy and of particular interest to them as teachers.** This was an open-ended invitation to report on anything of concern not covered in the questionnaire.

Table 14: Special Features of Philosophy, as Noted by Teachers

Special feature of philosophy	Response %[a]
Philosophical ways of questioning and exploring	37
Conceptual nature of philosophical analysis/critical inquiry	26
Quest for understanding and sense of interconnectedness	18
Love of discussion/ ideas for ideas' sake	12
Makes us more thoughtful/reflective/flexible/ independent/innovative	44
Support offered to individual (often quiet) learners	26
Ownership offered by the community of inquiry	18
Emerging empathy and respect for others	11

Note: Response rate (to whole question): 65% (=117/181)

a. Response rate refers to the ratio of the number of responses to each special feature of philosophy as a percentage of total responses to the question (N = 117). It indicates the percentage of teachers citing that item as a special feature of philosophy.

Table 14 identifies eight special features of philosophy, as identified by teachers, together with response rates for each feature. The classification of features produced in the table was inferred from the responses given by teachers: the original question was open-ended.

This question attracted a considerably lower response (65%) than other questions, possibly because of its more open form, and/or because teachers felt that they had already identified most, if not all, relevant characteristics in response to earlier questions (for example, in relation to the concept of community of inquiry).

As in the previous question, there were just two response rates of 30% or greater: (developing/implementing) philosophical ways of questioning and exploring (37%), and (teachers) becoming more thoughtful/reflective/flexible/independent/innovative (44%). These responses can be interpreted as reinforcing earlier results concerning the perceived importance of philosophically-structured questioning on the one hand, and diverse thinking styles (including metacognition) on the other.

These two responses can be taken as representative of two broad categories: responses focusing on philosophical attributes, and other responses (specifically, those focusing on cognitive, affective and social aspects). In the above table, the first four responses belong to the former category, while the remaining responses fit the latter. Viewed in this way, the table indicates that teachers regarded both philosophical and other kinds of attributes as more or less equally worthy of note. This conclusion might be taken to reflect and reinforce a key duality in relation to philosophy and the curriculum: the value of including philosophy as an area of concern in its own right, on the one hand, and the value of including philosophy as a framework for developing key cognitive, affective and social attributes, on the other.

CONCLUSIONS AND GUIDELINES FOR FURTHER WORK

The picture which emerges from this study is multifaceted. Philosophy for children in Australia has developed in ways which are both significant and – in the context of such development in other parts of the world – unique. There appears to be a healthy and dynamic tension between a high degree of diversity in classroom practice, and a set of common understandings of major goals and strategies. While it is fair to say that the idea of philosophy in schools (complemented by the community of inquiry environment for teaching and learning) has taken root in many classrooms around Australia, it is also important to consider the challenges and demands that lie ahead.

The following points and recommendations are based on the findings presented above, in the broader context of more recent trends and developments in education generally, and in school-based philosophy in particular. The recommendations require action from the various bodies and associations within the Federation of Australasian Philosophy for Children Associations (FAPCA), as well as the Centre for Philosophy with Children within ACER.

There appears to be a need to:

1. Focus greater attention on questions relating to the development of a curriculum framework for philosophy at pre-tertiary levels. These questions include the following:

    - Should such development proceed, and if so, in what way and according to what time schedule?
    - How does such development bear on the present (national and state) curriculum structures with their focus on outcomes?
    - How is such development related to understanding the school curriculum as inquiry-focused, contestable and problem-based?
    - Is such development consistent with the perceived need to identify and develop so-called philosophical (specifically: ethical, logical, epistemological, aesthetic, ...) dimensions of existing subjects and learning areas?
    - What is the precise connection between these philosophical dimensions and aspects of student learning which may need particular attention (for example, values education, reasoning and judgement formation, dialogical and linguistic competence, student motivation and attitudes to learning)?
    - What kind(s) of timetable structures are most appropriate for teaching philosophy, and how can these be promoted and encouraged (specifically, given that most students receive one philosophy class per week, how can this level be increased in line with other subject areas)?

2. Acknowledge and support the use of diverse resources in, and teaching approaches to, philosophy in Australian classrooms, while, at the same time, developing a clearer framework of goals, methods and (as appropriate) outcomes in line with 1. above. Assist teachers in understanding the differences among available resources with respect to:

    - ease of access for students (including connectedness/resonance with their own experiences, "Australian" content/style)

- philosophical breadth and depth (ie degree of structure, in conceptual and curricular terms)
- degree of connectedness to previous and ongoing philosophical traditions
- the extent to which resource materials model and facilitate processes of inquiry and dialogue/discussion in the classroom (and in students' thinking).

3. Encourage the use of the name "philosophy" in order to:

   - provide a more transparent sense of connection with the discipline of philosophy as it has developed and evolved
   - articulate, for teachers and students, both the substantive and the procedural aspects of the discipline, as well as the links between these aspects (for example, using reflective thinking to transform processes of reasoning into objects of discourse).

4. Encourage greater involvement from the Catholic school sector.

5. Urge greater involvement from secondary schools, without losing the focus on primary (and early childhood) levels. This strategy will involve linking into existing programs and priorities, such as drug education, citizenship education, peace education, gender issues, etc. It will also involve the issue of transfer (see 10.).

6. Assist schools and school communities (including parents) to develop, over time, a whole-school approach to philosophy, by:

   - supporting the development of networks, mentoring and other self-help structures
   - working toward a school-based structure for philosophy (including statements of aims and objectives, and a framework for evaluation and reporting), even if not all teachers at a particular school are involved in teaching philosophy
   - providing support for those teachers who may feel a sense of isolation within their school (or school community) just because they teach philosophy
   - incorporating, as part of the development of a curriculum framework for philosophy, a "vertical structure" which facilitates movement from one grade/year level to the next.

7. Explore gender issues: including the positive impact of the community of inquiry environment on assertiveness, self-confidence, peer relations, and integration of cognitive with affective/social dimensions of learning.

8. Review teacher training and professional development in philosophy, with reference to:

   - the integration of the discipline of philosophy and appropriate pedagogic strategies (for example, reflective modelling of dialogical inquiry) into professional development

- the development of structures which give adequate weighting to "initial" training (for example, one or more intensive workshops in which procedural and substantive connections with the discipline of philosophy are examined in a "philosophical environment", supplemented by a range of follow-up activities which focus on peer support, classroom work, and specific teaching and learning strategies)

- reflecting on aspects of the teacher's role in the (philosophy) classroom (for example, as manager, model and provoker/motivator, rather than primary resource and evaluator)

- "best practice" management and pedagogic strategies (for example, motivating and encouraging "difficult" students, and incorporating small group work/cooperative learning strategies into the community of inquiry framework)

- "best practice" assessment, evaluation and reporting models which faithfully reflect the cognitive (both procedural and substantive), affective and social dimensions involved, including the focus on the class or community as a unit of assessment

- the democratic aspects of the community of inquiry (for example, the involvement of students in goal-setting, providing input/resources, summarising and assessment tasks, and skills/dispositions relating to questioning, challenging authority, discussion facilitation, self-correcting thinking, fostering mutual respect and trust)

- the roles of teachers and students in philosophy, compared to these roles in other classes and subject areas

- the role of support activities over and above professional development, including peer-driven teacher networks, seminars conducted by university departments of philosophy and conferences.

9. Undertake further analysis and study of the concept of the community of inquiry, as an alternative classroom environment and a paradigm of "whole class interaction".

10. Develop a better understanding of issues concerning transfer with respect to philosophy and the community of inquiry on the one hand, and the broader curriculum, and life in and beyond school, on the other. These issues will need to reflect cognitive, affective and other dimensions of teaching and learning. It will also be important to find effective ways of presenting these ideas to teachers, principals, parents and other members of the community.[+]

For information about this Report or about Philosophy for Children, contact:

Dr Laurance Splitter
Australian Council for Educational Research
Private Bag 55
Camberwell Vic 3124 Australia
Tel. +61 3 9277 5594 Fax. +61 3 9277 5500
Email: splitter@acer.edu.au

[+] I am grateful to my colleagues Adrian Harvey-Beavis and Suzanne Mellor for their support and assistance in the preparation of this Report.