ARTICLE

Offering Philosophy to Secondary School Students in Aotearoa New Zealand

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Abstract

This paper makes a case for why philosophy would be beneficial if promoted among the subjects offered to secondary students in Aotearoa New Zealand. Philosophical inquiry in the form of Philosophy for Children (P4C) has made some inroads at the primary level, but currently very few students are offered philosophy as a subject at the secondary level. Philosophy is suited to be offered as a standalone subject and incorporated into the National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA) system. Philosophy has been shown to benefit students in numerous ways, including the development of their critical thinking. Critical thinking is a focus of education around the world, including in the *New Zealand Curriculum*, and this focus on critical thinking could precipitate a focus on philosophy.

Keywords Philosophy · Secondary school · P4C · Thinking · New Zealand

Introduction

Students need to leave school knowing how to think, interpret, analyse, problem-solve, and create, and to do so with confidence, flexibility, humility, and morality. Current and future students will need certain soft skills—critical and creative thinking skills, adaptability, confidence, and so on—in order to survive and thrive (Hirsch, 2017; Ministry of Education, 2020). Ideally they will also be ethical, doing right by others and the environment. Offering philosophy to students in Aotearoa New Zealand would help to develop the soft skills and attitudes that will help them to negotiate their adolescent and adult lives.

The aim of this paper is to show why philosophy would be beneficial if promoted among the subjects offered to Aotearoa New Zealand secondary students. There is much discussion on *how* philosophy should be taught at the primary level (e.g. Lipman, 1998; Lipman et al., 2010; Hannam & Echeverria, 2009; Gregory, Haynes, and

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Morris 2016; Goering, Shudak, and Wartenberg 2013) and some at the secondary level (e.g. Hannam & Echeverria, 2009; Lewis & Chandley, 2012), but little on *why* philosophy would be beneficial if offered at the secondary level (the *Journal of Philosophy in Schools* has recently produced a special issue on why philosophy should be taught in (primary) schools). I hope to make a contribution to that debate by suggesting that philosophy would be beneficial to Aotearoa New Zealand secondary students (and by extrapolation, perhaps, secondary students in other countries too).

Some encouraging inroads have been made at primary level, where Philosophy for Children (P4C) is taught in a range of schools. And yet only a handful of Aotearoa New Zealand secondary schools offer philosophy to their students, and philosophy is not offered as a National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA) subject (the New Zealand Association of Philosophy Teachers is working to promote and develop philosophy as a NCEA subject). Offering philosophy as a subject would benefit many secondary students, for the reasons discussed below. They would also benefit if the Ministry of Education and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority made it accessible by creating a NCEA philosophy programme, encouraging teacher training and retraining, encouraging and helping schools to offer it, and so on. In what follows I first define philosophy as a subject, before making the case that it would be beneficial to offer philosophy to secondary students in Aotearoa New Zealand. I then consider several possible challenges to the inclusion of philosophy in the curriculum, with the intention of addressing them.

What is Philosophy?

The word *philosophy* derives from the Greek *philosophia* (*philo* 'loving'; *sophia* 'knowledge, wisdom'), meaning love of knowledge, pursuit of wisdom, or systematic investigation. The *Cambridge Dictionary* (2020) defines philosophy as "the use of reason in understanding such things as the nature of the real world and existence, the use and limits of knowledge, and the principles of moral judgment." This definition highlights the two important elements of philosophy: its content (a collection of problems, ideas, wisdom, and knowledge) and its essential method (the employment of reason and rationality). Regarding content, philosophy can be defined in terms of its areas of inquiry, which include: logic; ethics (including meta and applied ethics); political philosophy; the 'philosophies of' science, mind, and religion; aesthetics; epistemology; and metaphysics. These main categories can be divided into many subcategories. To engage with philosophical problems and theories within these content areas through study of the historical development of those problems and theories, thought experiments, and so on, is to engage with the subject of philosophy.

In terms of method, philosophy is defined by *philosophising*—what one does when one does philosophy. There is no one philosophical method. Simply, philosophy poses questions which philosophers try to answer or 'make disappear'. Philosophy provides skills and frameworks to address and investigate historical and contemporary problems—this is the intersection of its content and method. The methods of philosophy, such as reason and rationalisation, are also often its content—even logic itself is a topic of inquiry. In this sense we might distinguish

philosophy from other subjects. It focuses on developing different skills via investigation into different content. It looks to establish and challenge *foundations*. As Whalley (1987) puts it, "Any other subject must take certain things for granted if it is to even get off the ground; but philosophy cannot afford to leave a stone unturned. Its very job is the turning of stones, at the constant risk of finding something unexpected lying underneath."

Philosophical inquiry is often progressed through dialogue, in which a participant forwards some position or idea, along with a defence of it, which a second participant responds to by critiquing or developing it. They may continue this discussion, and more participants may have something to say. And on it goes. This process involves challenging and defending ideas, and a focus on meaningful conclusions through analysis and reason using some form of logical argument. Academic philosophy usually takes this form, through seminars, articles, books, and so on. Another method of philosophical inquiry, such as that utilised by the P4C model, focuses on communal or shared inquiry, exploration, and understanding (Lipman, 1988; Lipman et al., 2010). Both approaches rely on the development and employment of creativity, exploration, and critical or analytic thinking. One fitting definition of philosophy at school focuses on "critical engagement with ideas and opinions from historical and contemporary sources in the context of modern society to develop thinking skills to enable sound thinking and rational judgement making" (Couch, 2004). The priorities of philosophy at the primary level focus on inquiry, learning, and skills development over content knowledge, although content is also important. At the secondary level content becomes more important, and so a good balance between content and method should be maintained (see Bowyer et al., 2020 for a discussion of the various meanings of philosophy at the school level).

The Benefits of Offering Philosophy to Secondary Students in Aotearoa New Zealand

Philosophy would be beneficial if offered to Aotearoa New Zealand secondary students for a range of reasons. In this section I explain how doing philosophy improves critical, metacognitive, and creative thinking skills, wellbeing and moral understanding, and democratic participation and citizenship. It also naturally caters for and includes a range of abilities, increases educational equality, and aligns with the front end of the *New Zealand Curriculum* (*NZC*) and *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*.

Students need the ability to interpret and react to different situations and problems if they are to live and flourish in *their* world. Soft skills may be more important than content knowledge. Educators need to "support [students'] development of the intellectual skills that will equip them to survive and even prosper in this new world, learning what they need to know as they go along" (Kuhn, Zillmer, and Khait 2013). We can help them to become adaptable, flexible, agile, confident, and resilient. They need to know how to critically and creatively analyse and problem solve. Let us consider some specific benefits of learning philosophy.

Critical Thinking

The education system should aim to liberate and empower students by helping them learn to think and act for themselves. Critical thinking helps students to plan and strategise, analyse and evaluate, identify problems and generate innovative solutions, and think broadly and adventurously. The positive flow-on effects of critical thinking for individuals and communities are numerous—critical thinkers can evaluate their own and others' actions, learn to make reasonable and defensible decisions, and challenge social, cultural, economic, and political inequalities (Smyth, 2000). The Aotearoa New Zealand education system aims to produce "critical and creative thinkers," "active seekers, users, and creators of knowledge," and "informed decision makers" (Ministry of Education, 2007).

While students regularly engage with 'philosophical' questions such as how we should live, who we are, our relationships to others, and our rights and duties, a focus on critical thinking can help them deal with these questions more effectively. Adolescents naturally ask these questions, but they may require help to approach them confidently and systematically. Philosophy excels at improving students' critical thinking skills. It can help students learn to deal with difficult questions on their own, and as such has "*distinctive* educational value: there are philosophical problems that feature prominently and pressingly in ordinary human lives and that all children should be equipped by their education to tackle" (Hand, 2018). Effective critical thinking is also creative—philosophy develops the higher order thinking that fuses the two (Lipman, 1991). One strength of philosophy is that it is "capable of fostering the normative application of [a] broad spectrum of thinking modes" (Lipman, 1995).

It is often incorrectly assumed that reasoning skills are naturally acquired through language acquisition, and that there is no need to identify or correct deficiencies in reasoning like there is with literacy or numeracy (Cam, 2018). Philosophy encourages thinking for the sake of thinking; it explicitly teaches reasoning or critical thinking skills such as drawing examples and counterexamples, identifying inconsistency, similarity, and distinction, and deductive and inductive reasoning. Moreover, it does so effectively: "children find the concepts it examines to be important, they are delighted to discover the power of logic as a discipline for their inquiries, and it helps them, as no other discipline can, with the intricacies of reasoning and judgment" (Lipman, 1998). Hence the aims of philosophy align with the aims of the education system: "all which the school can or need do for pupils, so far as their *minds* are concerned…is to develop their ability to think" (Cam, 2018).

So I contend that education should aim to liberate students by empowering them to think and act for themselves. By presenting a range of views on knowledge, meaning, and value, philosophy helps to liberate from ignorance and encourages thinking for oneself, one of the core abilities of the truly educated (Lipman et al., 2010). Through philosophy one learns to distinguish between beliefs and knowledge, and to think rather than repeat (Pacheco, 2013), in part because it increases one's awareness of one's own learning by naturally increasing metacognition ("the awareness and management of one's own thought" (Kuhn & Dean, 2004)). 'Thinking about thinking' describes philosophy as accurately as it does metacognition.

Increased metacognition helps students to metacognise in other subject areas, bringing "improved reading, writing, maths, science and problem-solving skills" (Millett & Tapper, 2012).

A range of quantitative studies support the cognitive benefits of philosophy (Topping & Trickey, 2007a, b, c; Trickey & Topping, 2004, 2006, 2007). One study on the effects of P4C, for example, found that "pupils [who learned one hour of P4C per week for 18 months] showed significant standardized gains in verbal and also in non-verbal and quantitative aspects of reasoning… Controls did not gain in any aspect" (Topping & Trickey, 2007a, b, c). These gains, moreover, were consistent across schools, largely unaffected by student gender or ability, and persisted two years later even when students had not experienced any further philosophical learning. Another study that followed 3000 children over 48 schools engaging in philosophical inquiry once a week for one year found that students made gains in reading and maths equivalent to two extra months instruction, compared to the control group (Education Endowment Foundation, 2015). A meta-analysis of P4C studies reported that participating students gained cognitive and high order thinking skills, and found that learning philosophy over the course of one year generally results in a benefit equivalent to over half a standard deviation (corresponding to an IQ difference of seven points, considered a great difference) (García-Moriyón et al., 2005).

Wellbeing and Ethics

A key educational development in many countries has been a shift away from curricula solely aimed at preparing students as future workers and citizens by transmitting knowledge in core subject areas such as literacy and numeracy, towards curricula focused on not only developing capacities for work, but also on developing capacities that encourage and enable students to experience flourishing lives (Soutter et al., 2012). This has placed the issue of student wellbeing at the front of those countries' curricula, Aotearoa New Zealand included, as a core aim (Ministry of Education, 2007).

Learning philosophy can engender confidence, wellbeing, and socio-emotional development. A metastudy of P4C states that "a wide range of evidence [shows] that, given certain conditions, children can gain significantly in measurable terms both academically and socially through this type of interactive process" (Trickey & Topping, 2004). Another study reports that "on a test of self-esteem as a learner, experimental pupils…gained significantly while controls…did not. There was evidence of significant reduction in dependency and anxiety and of greater self-confidence" (Trickey & Topping, 2006). Philosophy has also been shown to improve students' "confidence to speak, listening skills and self-esteem" (Gorard et al., 2015). Other disciplines can develop confidence and listening skills, but it has been argued that "the deep understanding of what underlies individual and collective human life can only be achieved by philosophising" (McCall & Weijers, 2016). This is because philosophy provides space for reflective thinking, which fits well with the adolescent mind: "Adolescents are reflective beings who possess both the intellectual ability and native interest to consider questions of fundamental import to the human

condition. A unique attribute of philosophical pedagogy is its capacity for uniting an adolescent's academic maturation with the reflective developmental stage through which she encounters her world" (Burroughs, 2013).

The *NZC* includes wellbeing because wellbeing is necessary for students to flourish. We also want our students to be ethical, for this allows and helps others to flourish. By learning and discussing moral philosophy, students learn how to make moral calculations in preparation for decisions they will face throughout their lives. Furthermore, by practicing communal philosophical inquiry, students can develop virtuous habits that lead to virtue itself, that which Aristotle called *phronesis* (practical wisdom). Moral philosophy is well placed to develop virtue because it encourages students to look inwards and decide what sort of life one wants to live, causing one to move towards a life of *eudaimonia* (flourishing; supreme happiness) (Crisp, 2014). According to this Aristotelian view, a goal of secondary school should be to help students flourish; to live healthy, happy, and meaningful adolescent and adult lives. Students can learn to confront the moral problems in their lives by acting virtuously and developing a virtuous character. As Teschers (2017) argues, if we accept that people generally desire *eudaimonia*, then the education system ought to "develop an education system and curriculum that supports this strive and allows for the diversity of the direction people might take." Virtuous action and character does not necessarily come naturally; for many it must be learned and practiced. Philosophy—argument and analysis in particular—can help students to deal with these often urgent and inescapable problems (Hand, 2018), and thus fulfil the education system's obligation to contribute to "the pedagogic requirements of individual and communal flourishing, …the understanding of what a well-lived life might be, and to the actual living of it" (Hobbs, 2018).

Democratic Participation and Citizenship

Democracy only functions well when a citizenry is informed and empowered. The relationship between education and democracy is important, since freedom should be a major goal of the former (Echeverria & Hannam, 2016). In addition to moral development, learning philosophy develops the social and intellectual skills required for democratic participation and citizenship. Philosophy can function as democratic education, in which students "have an integral role to play in shaping democracy through engaging in philosophy as collaborative inquiry," because "philosophical inquiry is an exemplar of the kind of deliberative inquiry required for informed and active democratic citizenship" (Burgh, 2018). The future focus principle of the *NZC* emphasises "sustainability, citizenship, enterprise and globalisation" and "being actively involved in communities" (Ministry of Education, 2007). Philosophy can help develop communities who are empowered to participate in politics as and when necessary (Burgh, 2014; Burroughs, 2013). It does this through its content (ethics, political philosophy), and its method (communal inquiry).

As Hobbs (2018) puts it, "Philosophy…is one of the best ways of helping children resist attempts to indoctrinate them." Democratic skills and knowledge help protect against political alienation, deception, and tyranny. The thinking skills provided by

philosophy have been called a 'room-for-doubt detector', meaning that students can consider when to accept arguments and facts and when to find out for themselves (Worley, 2018). In these ways learning philosophy aligns with the United Nations' education goals. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has argued (2009) that "philosophy teaches and encourages open-mindedness, civic responsibility, understanding and tolerance among individuals and groups," and should be thus accorded "a full, complete and autonomous place… in curricula at secondary and higher education" (2011). Philosophy's "cognitive and cultural strength," UNESCO says, "lies in the critical deconstruction that it teaches us to carry out on our belief and value systems—and thereby in the way it teaches us to continually question the structure and ethics of our world view" (Goucha, 2007). Adding philosophy to the *NZC* and creating a NCEA philosophy subject area would further align Aotearoa New Zealand with current international trends and expectations, including these UNESCO declarations.

Inclusion and Equality

Unless all students are learning, we do not have educational equality. We must, therefore, include different abilities, learning styles, cultures, and so on. Philosophy is naturally inclusive, especially when involving inquiry learning, thus providing natural interest and extension for a wide range of students. Able students are easily extended by philosophy, since it provides ample opportunity to develop transferable intellectual habits and deep and flexible analysis skills. It involves higher level thinking, challenging abstract systems, combinations of history, language, art, and logic, positive intellectual habits, and methodical analysis (Winstanley, 2018). Philosophy creates spaces "wherein gifted—but other students as well—can develop and go on as far as they can cope with" (De Corte, 2013).

Philosophy also benefits students at the other end of the spectrum, and perhaps to a greater extent. It has been shown to especially benefit lower-achieving students, ("because it does not directly target academic performance"), non-native English speakers ("through listening to others and participating in the discussion"), and students with behavioural issues (who "learned ways to control their behaviour and reason their way through problems") (Education Endowment Foundation, 2015). Philosophy aids students with gaps between their thinking and oral skills and their writing skills: "cognitively challenging discussion allows them to participate fully, helping to combat underachievement" (Montgomery, 2009). Philosophy has been found to draw out "thoughts, ideas, interpersonal interactions and self-exploration" in an adolescent psychiatric unit (Swota & De La Hunt, 2020).

Philosophy has been proven to benefit disadvantaged students. In one study, philosophy produced the greatest gains in verbal and non-verbal reasoning in students in the middle and lower quartiles, in areas of "severe deprivation" (Topping & Trickey, 2007c). Another study found that "P4C had the biggest positive impact on…disadvantaged pupils (those eligible for free school meals)" (Education Endowment Foundation, 2015). Disadvantaged students require strong critical thinking and communication skills that can be used to face the many obstacles that they will face

throughout their lives (Pacheco, 2013). Philosophy is excellent at developing such skills. Unfortunately, many schools with disadvantaged students prioritise vocational training and rote learning over the acquisition of critical and creative soft skills (Thompson & Tomaž, 2014). These schools reproduce disadvantage instead of decreasing it (Symes & Preston, 1997). Disadvantaged communities suffer from 'patterns of exclusion' from wider society, including the job market, and the schools that serve those communities often react by adopting curricula that prepare students for work. This further exacerbates the problems of exclusion and social immobility that these communities suffer from. Philosophy "disrupts the reproduction of disadvantage because it challenges the vocational determinism so often found in schools in lower socioeconomic areas," thereby alleviating the "alienation and irrelevance that many students experience in schools" (Thompson & Tomaž, 2014). Through philosophy, students can learn the requisite communication (vocabulary and discourse) and thinking skills needed to escape patterns of exclusion and make change in their communities and their own lives.

The *New Zealand Curriculum*

The *NZC's* 'key competencies', or 'capabilities for living and lifelong learning', are: thinking; relating to others; using language, symbols, and texts; managing self; and participating and contributing. Philosophy's methodology and content relate to the key competencies in the following ways, as outlined (in part) by the Ministry of Education (2011). 'Thinking' *is* philosophy—it effectively encourages and develops creative and critical thinking, as discussed above. In terms of content, learning logic, including deductive and inductive reasoning, specifically develops critical and creative thinking. 'Relating to others' is developed by inquiry and discussion-based learning. Students doing philosophy learn to respectfully and openly listen and interpret others' ideas, and to clearly formulate and articulate their own (and have them critiqued in turn). Elements of ethics, political philosophy, aesthetics, and metaphysics directly relate to the understanding of people and relationships. 'Using language, symbols, and texts' is developed by interpreting and critiquing written, oral, and visual ideas, and creating one's own ideas. Logic and aesthetics are particularly focused on symbols and texts. 'Managing self' is developed by engaging in student-led discussions; by learning how to positively contribute to a group. Developing cognitive and metacognitive thinking encourages the exploration of knowing and understanding ourselves, which in turn helps us manage our thoughts and feelings. Ethics, epistemology, and moral psychology focus on managing our thoughts and actions. 'Participating and contributing' is again developed by participating in discourse and student-led discussion. A 'low floor' and 'high ceiling' means that everyone can contribute to and feel valued in the philosophical community. Political philosophy and ethics help students to understand their places and roles in their communities, and how they can contribute to them (Millett & Tapper, 2012). Thus philosophy fits well with all of the *NZC* key competencies.

Also found at the front end of the *NZC* are its 'values': excellence; innovation, inquiry, and curiosity; diversity; equity; community and participation; ecological

sustainability; integrity; and respect. Philosophy is well placed to encourage and engender these values, for reasons outlined above. Its process and content leads towards these values. Evidence shows that collaborative philosophical inquiry also "brings improved reading, writing, maths, science and problem-solving skills [and] important social benefits" (Millett & Tapper, 2012).

Challenges

If the claim that it would be beneficial to offer philosophy to Aotearoa New Zealand secondary students is persuasive, as supported by the preceding arguments, then perhaps philosophy ought to be introduced into the curriculum as a proper subject, with teacher training, assessment pathways, and so on. If the claim is *very* persuasive, then perhaps philosophy—with particular emphasis on critical and creative thinking—ought to be considered an important subject like English (due to the importance of literacy) or maths (numeracy). Since philosophy is neither a NCEA subject nor offered to many students, however, it may be that educators and policy makers are unconvinced of its value. This section considers some of the challenges to including philosophy in the Aotearoa New Zealand secondary curriculum.

The first and most obvious challenge to the addition of any new subject, philosophy included, is that the curriculum is already too crowded. The Ministry of Education has already proposed cutting subjects (such as Latin and classical studies) from NCEA. Schools also suffer from the crowded curriculum issue. But students must learn to think, and while subjects such as maths, the sciences, and social studies do develop creative and critical thinking, they do not and cannot focus on it like philosophy does. Philosophy does not develop literacy like languages, nor numeracy like maths (although it does improve both of these things (The Education Endowment Foundation, 2015)), but it develops thinking like no other subject. Hence if we want our students to learn how to think, we could offer them philosophy.

All subjects require some level of critical thinking, but reasoning *in* a subject is not equivalent to reasoning *about* a subject, nor are students given many opportunities to think about reasoning itself (in terms of its effects on society, learning, and decision making) in other subjects (Lipman, 1985). Moreover, the exploration of philosophical ideas, which cover the entirety of human thought and history, is of great worth. And if thinking skills are already taught in schools, then why do we not see better thinking skills in students? University lecturers often report limited critical thinking skills in some students (it was for this reason that Lipman founded P4C (1982)). Some might argue that thinking is context- or discipline-specific, meaning that it can only be learnt in context and not learnt per se, but to do so its to misunderstand the nature of critical thought and how it is developed. The best thinking is flexible and multifaceted.

One option is to simply incorporate philosophy into other areas of the curriculum. It has been argued that P4C inquiry learning can be successfully incorporated into a range of appropriate subjects across the secondary curriculum (Lewis & Chandley, 2012). An example of philosophy being 'woven' into the curriculum in Aotearoa New Zealand is found in Māori studies and in Kaupapa Māori

curricula, where philosophy is naturally integrated into other elements of Māori knowledge and process (Stewart, 2020). *Te Kete Ipurangi*, Aotearoa New Zealand's main education portal, suggests that schools can introduce philosophical discourse into current classes (Ministry of Education, 2011). Schools are encouraged to incorporate philosophy into a range of curriculum areas: English and other languages ("clarity and precision in communication"); the arts ("underlying concepts across different types of expression"); health and physical education ("personal identity, empathy, and…self-worth"); mathematics and statistics ("creating and constructing logical systems, and expressing and explaining relationships"); science ("generating hypotheses and testing them against experience"); social sciences ("exploration of values, concepts, and perspectives"); and technology ("solving human problems") (Ministry of Education, 2011).

But since philosophy presents a range of views on knowledge, meaning, and value, it also holds value as its own part of the curriculum. Incorporating philosophy into other subjects would undervalue philosophy and put further strain on teachers, who might be ill-equipped to facilitate philosophical learning. As Cam (2018) rightly points out, developing high-level critical thinking "requires long-term and systematic acquisition of the tools of inquiry, exposure to the principles and practice of reasoning, and training in conceptual analysis," which is unlikely if they "are added to the demands placed on teachers in other areas of the curriculum without the support of philosophy." Take English, a subject into which philosophy might be incorporated. English is excellent at developing literacy (and other things), like philosophy is at developing thinking (and other things) (Lipman, 1991). Assuming that thinking and literacy are similarly important, philosophy could be viewed as essential to the curriculum like English is. Similar things can be said for the incorporation of philosophy into history, social studies, science, and so on. The experience of those who have successfully incorporated P4C into other subjects, however, could be used as a guide to see what a secondary philosophy programme might look like (Lewis & Chandley, 2012). It could still utilise the community of inquiry model (focusing on collaborative exploration and creativity), while adding in the more dialogic and formal elements found in tertiary and academic philosophy (focusing on content, understanding, and analysis). This would allow for more traditional assessment if required, which would be difficult under a purely P4C approach, and could achieve a better balance between content and method.

It has also been argued that a dearth of teaching expertise means that philosophy cannot be properly included in the curriculum. But this argument has it backwards—there are few philosophy secondary school teachers because philosophy has not been properly included in the curriculum. Philosophy is a popular university subject, and graduates might relish the opportunity to teach it. Until they can, however, they will not consider it a career option. The real problem would be how to attract those who will make good philosophy teachers, but all subjects face this. Many current teachers would also like to teach philosophy—many of us know at least one philosophy graduate (happily or otherwise) teaching some other subject. The education world is used to updating skills and knowledge as necessary parts of teacher development (Turgeon, 2013).

Lipman ([1988]) argues that while philosophy teachers need competence in guiding philosophical discussions, they do not need to be or become philosophers (but also that 'teacher trainers' must have strong philosophical backgrounds). Although arguably true at the primary level (mostly due to practical limitations), this approach would be risky at the secondary level. Philosophy teachers, like teachers of any subject, should be trained in philosophy, in part because untrained teachers tend to fall into textbook-directed teaching and learning. Aside from general pedagogical and philosophical experience and training, there are good resources to help teachers to develop philosophical inquiries (Hannam & Echeverria, [2009]; Lewis & Sutcliffe, [2016]; Burroughs, [2013]). An effective training course for good teachers of other subjects might suffice to equip them with sufficient pedagogical and content knowledge. Aside from tertiary-level training, a good philosophy teacher needs the very skills endowed by philosophy, such as critical and creative thinking.

Schools are reluctant to offer non-NCEA subjects like philosophy. The clearest solution to this problem is to make philosophy a NCEA subject. It is odd that it is not included in the extensive range of subjects offered at NCEA level, given its primacy as a subject and its focus on skills that are desperately needed. Another solution is to offer philosophy by creating a course using NCEA assessments from other subjects or a course that does not offer NCEA credits. Nevertheless, several schools currently run philosophy programmes, including: a compulsory programme for senior students; an optional half-year course for junior and senior students; a range of optional courses for senior and adult students; a full secondary school programme; and personalised programmes (Ministry of Education, [2011]). These schools can provide ideas on how to expand the number of students exposed to philosophy and philosophical thinking. Philosophical thinking is sometimes explicitly developed in other subjects, including religious studies, social studies, and global citizenship.

There are schools in Auckland and Christchurch who deliver philosophy courses using NCEA standards from history, English, social studies, and religious studies, and others who deliver philosophy courses without NCEA assessment. Teachers have expressed frustration at having to move from one NCEA assessment subject to another and support for standalone NCEA philosophy standards (personal communication 2019). My enquiries to the leadership of one Auckland state school about introducing philosophy were met with concern over NCEA pathways and endorsements, owing to the lack of standalone NCEA philosophy standards (personal communication 2019). The view of junior philosophy was similarly affected by concern over pathways to senior level, as well as a lack of teaching expertise. A non-NCEA philosophy course might be preferable, therefore, but may suffer from the dominance of the NCEA system over the senior secondary landscape (in that students may choose subjects that include NCEA assessments, even if NCEA is a means to an end, not an end in itself). National assessment in critical thinking has been available in the United Kingdom since 2001, but has suffered from various issues including lack of teaching expertise, perceived difficulty amongst students, lack of support from school leadership, lack of assessment system endorsement, and student motivation (Black, [2009]). Despite these difficulties, however, its popularity and success has grown significantly. Philosophy is likely to run into similar issues in Aotearoa New Zealand, but they are not insurmountable.

The conservative forces in education, which include policy makers, schools, parents, students, and (most importantly) the system itself, obstruct changes to curricula and schools' academic programmes, including the introduction of new subjects. This conservatism, combined with the effects of colonialism, class dynamics, and so on mean that Pierre Bourdieu's 1966 analysis rings true even today:

> It is probably cultural inertia which still makes us see education in terms of the ideology of the school as a liberating force…and as a means of increasing social mobility, even when the indications tend to be that it is in fact one of the most effective means of perpetuating the existing social pattern, as it both provides an apparent justification for social inequalities and gives recognition to the cultural heritage, that is, to a *social* gift treated as a *natural* one (2012).

This works against that which philosophical thinking aims to promote, namely the critical and creative thinking that can be used to liberate ourselves and others from educational and societal inequalities—we might therefore view philosophy and educational conservatism as directly oppositional. These forces may make it difficult to introduce new subjects, but subjects like philosophy can help with the push to make education the liberating force that it should aspire to be.

Conclusion

This paper has focused on *why* philosophy would be beneficial if offered to Aotearoa New Zealand secondary students. *How* it might be offered mostly falls outside the scope of this paper, but I would like to briefly consider a couple of important points. The benefits of philosophy raised here would be swiftly negated if philosophy were introduced and delivered in the wrong way. P4C provides an good model for delivering philosophy to students—while developed for the primary level, it could be adapted for secondary by adding the academic elements mentioned above. The effectiveness of P4C's democratic, teacher-facilitated community of inquiry has been clearly demonstrated (Trickey & Topping, 2004). NCEA standards could be developed around this approach, with assessments produced via observations of group discussions, oral and written submissions, and so on, during or following particular inquiries or topics. Assessment and delivery are therefore not impediments to the introduction of philosophy to NCEA. In terms of inquiry styles, Socratic circles or seminars have been shown to facilitate and incentivise the learning and doing of philosophy. Philosophical *talanoa* or *hui* might work well in the Aotearoa New Zealand context (Robinson & Robinson, 2005). Any philosophy course should incorporate Māori philosophy and an exploration of Te Ao Māori (Stewart, 2014, 2020), as well as Pasifika philosophies. With consultation and training, interesting comparisons could be explored in areas such as moral philosophy (see Perrett & Patterson, 1991), metaphysics, and so on.

Students typically make meaningful development through culture, family, and friends. Offered in the right way, philosophy can lead students to see school as a place *where meaning is made*, where the mind and spirit may flourish (Shudak, 2013). Like all creative tasks, one learns philosophy by doing philosophy:

"philosophy cannot be expected to promote higher-order thinking unless students actually engage in philosophical thinking" (Cam, 2018). A closed curriculum will not encourage students to develop and articulate their own ideas—they must not be viewed as content receptacles. We must follow the student, let them find their interests. Encouraging students to think shows respect to them as persons by helping them to think for themselves, prepares them for adulthood by developing self-sufficiency and self-direction, helps them excel in other subjects, and allows them to participate in democratic life by developing analytic abilities (Siegel, 1988).

In this paper I have put forward a number of reasons in favour of offering philosophy to Aotearoa New Zealand secondary students, and have covered some objections. Are we doing all we can to encourage and develop clear, critical, creative, flexible, informed, moral, and courageous thinking? Philosophy focuses on the critical and creative thinking required for the current and future worlds that our students will inhabit. Even if one disagrees that philosophy should be a core subject, I hope that the above arguments show that philosophy would be beneficial if offered to Aotearoa New Zealand secondary students.

We must help students to learn to deal with the problems that they will face in their lives. Some of those problems are predictable, and some are not. Philosophy can help to provide them with the means of finding the solutions, and this may be grounds for its inclusion into the curriculum. If we want our students to learn critical and creative thinking, and to find their education meaningful, then we ought to include a relevant philosophical component in their education. If we do not, then it is because we do not sufficiently want them to think about, question, and marvel at the point of life (Lipman, 1982). That is the sort of reasoning that a student can easily learn on their first day of philosophy. We should no longer deny our students the opportunity to discover this wonderful subject, for the unexamined life is indeed not worth living.

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