

## **A handy account of Philosophy in Schools**

Clinton Golding

University of Otago

[clinton.golding@otago.ac.nz](mailto:clinton.golding@otago.ac.nz)

Philosophy in Schools is a complex educational practice, unfamiliar to most teachers and philosophers, subtly different to similar forms of education, and so easy to misunderstand and mishandle. Because of this, a common worry for practitioners is whether they are doing it properly. Given this slipperiness of Philosophy in Schools, one of my main concerns has been to give an account that would be useful; that could guide practitioners to teach well. I presented my first account in a 2006 article 'What is Philosophy in Schools?' which was based on 14 years' experience as a Philosophy in Schools teacher and teacher educator. Now, by invitation of the editors, I have the privilege to present a re-worked, improved account. This builds on and synthesises my previous publications, but it also significantly refines anything I have previously written, and is the culmination of my work in Philosophy in Schools.

I use the term Philosophy in Schools to refer to the tradition of philosophical education founded by Matthew Lipman, which involves engaging students in a community of philosophical inquiry. This tradition derives from the Philosophy for Children programme, and the novels and materials developed by Lipman and others at the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (for example, Lipman 1982, 1983; Lipman & Sharp 1995; Lipman, Sharp & Oscanyan 1984). However, Philosophy in Schools is not limited to these sources. Its theoretical roots are primarily in Dewey, Peirce and Vygotsky, and it is distinct from similar forms of philosophical education with a different heritage such as Nelson's Socratic dialogue (2004), or McCall's Popper-inspired COPI (2009).

My original 2006 article was the result of a lengthy inquiry into the problems that arise when we attempt to teach Philosophy in Schools. My goal was to describe and explain Philosophy in Schools in a way that allows readers to notice and avoid these common problems.

One problem was that I didn't know how to articulate what I did when I taught Philosophy in Schools. For example, how did I judge we were getting somewhere in our inquiry when we did not have a pre-determined conclusion to aim for or to judge progress against, and when our philosophical discussion inevitably resulted in disagreement? How did I enable my students to advance their inquiry and learn to inquire without controlling the discussion?

A second kind of problem was common misunderstandings of Philosophy in Schools that led to poor practice. For example, many taught Philosophy in Schools as merely a

thinking skills programme, and so they disregarded the equally important aim of making sense of the world.

Other common practices in Philosophy in Schools were also problematic, such as teachers stating 'there are no right and wrong answers in philosophy'. Although this might help students overcome their addiction to right answers, the side-effect was that students (and teachers) were misled into thinking that you could say anything you like without standards.

A further problem was that practitioners sometimes confused the peculiarities of the original Lipman method with required techniques of Philosophy in Schools. For example, some teachers thought that Philosophy in Schools must start with the standard Lipman method of asking questions about a shared story. But this meant they overlooked other shared experiences that could legitimately stimulate philosophical inquiry and they mistakenly thought that any philosophical questions asked about a story would be appropriate when, in fact, philosophical inquiry can only be motivated by questions that are experienced as live problems.

A related problem was identifying the central features of Philosophy in Schools that could be applied more broadly and using different methods. How could we apply the approach outside schools, in museums and galleries, with adults and very young children, and in tertiary teaching? What was the heart of the approach that could support different methods, such as purpose-written stimulus texts (Lipman 1982, 1983), pre-existing literature and picture books (Sprod 1993; De Haan, MacColl & McCutcheon 1995), and different tools such as Cam's thinking tools (2006), Ross Phillip's logic game (Golding 2009b), or what I called the concept game (Golding 2002)?

Central to all these other issues was a problem of discernment—teachers could not tell the difference between Philosophy in Schools and other educational practices, and so they sometimes strayed from Philosophy in Schools without realising.

The refined article that follows is based on my 2006 account, but also includes new insights developed from my ongoing inquiry about Philosophy in Schools. It does not capture everything about Philosophy in Schools, nor is it meant to. My aim is to enable practitioners to find their way without becoming entangled in the problems I had identified. I have included enough detail to be useful, but not so much complexity or theory that it would be unwieldy for practitioners.

### ***Acknowledgements***

This article has been influenced by many people—my students and my teachers, as well as theorists, practitioners and colleagues—so it is really the result of a long-term, world-wide Community of Inquiry. Because of the diverse influences I cannot always trace the origin of my ideas, and I cannot thank or cite everyone who has had an impact on this article. However, I would like to acknowledge some of those who have had the most impact; those who introduced me to Philosophy in Schools and who collaborated with

me as teacher-educators: Vanya Kovach, James Battye, Phil Cam, May Leckey, Sue Wilks, Laurance Splitter, Gil Burgh and Tim Sprod.

### Philosophy in Schools

Philosophy in Schools, like many educational programmes, can be analysed using five different categories:

Educational aim	Making sense
Subject matter	Philosophical problems
Thinking process	Inquiry: questioning, suggesting, elaborating, evaluating, reflecting ...
Educational culture	Community of Inquiry
Teacher's role	Guiding the inquiry as an expedition educator

I use these categories to organise this article, and to provide a handy description of Philosophy in Schools.

#### Educational aim: Making sense

The primary educational aim of Philosophy in Schools is for students to make sense of themselves and the world. Making sense involves weaving together observations and knowledge, insight and experience in a network of connections, inferences and relationships. We make sense by developing overarching perspectives, conceptions and world views, not by collecting isolated observations or bits of information. For example, a broad conception of friendship can make sense of my otherwise unrelated observations about how I have interacted with my friends. Making sense goes beyond knowing or understanding the facts and the answers, and beyond being able to explain and apply them. We make sense by creating coherent, meaningful and illuminating frameworks that unify the facts and the answers.

Making sense is the *epistemic* aim of Philosophy in Schools—the type of knowledge or understanding that is sought. Philosophy in Schools also has other educational aims, such as developing independent thinkers, but these are of secondary importance, the means to the end of making sense.

The epistemic aim of making sense should be distinguished from seeking right answers, but it is also misleading to think that there are no right and wrong answers in Philosophy, or that it is all a matter of opinion (see Figure 1). Philosophy in Schools is concerned with better and worse answers—the aim is to develop better conceptions and perspectives based on reasoned, reflective judgements. For example, we seek clearer,



animals which are typically livestock and OK to eat (chickens), and animals that are typically pets which are not OK to eat (cats). We have not added anything we did not already know, but the incongruence disappears when we see things in this new way.

Although we achieve something when we resolve a philosophical problem, there is never one final right resolution to a philosophical problem. Each resolution leads to more sophisticated problems and we develop better resolutions to resolve these. For example, although we resolved the initial incongruence between eating cats and chickens, we now have to resolve the inadequacy in our conception about *why* it might be justified to eat livestock but not pets. A better resolution would also resolve this problem.

In summary, the subject matter of Philosophy in Schools is the philosophical problems that students experience when their conceptions do not make sense. The epistemic aim of Philosophy in Schools is for students to uncover what is philosophically incongruous and inadequate about their conceptions, to experience the force of these philosophical problems, and then to develop more sophisticated, meaningful conceptions. The aim is to make sense by resolving more and more sophisticated philosophical problems, and by developing better and better resolutions.

### ***Philosophical questions about rich concepts***

Philosophical problems can be difficult to formulate, but philosophical questions about rich concepts provide useful tools for identifying and articulating these problems.<sup>2</sup>

Rich concepts, such as health, evidence, honesty, or intelligence, are the building blocks of meaning. These concepts provide a structure or framework for making sense of, organising and connecting our knowledge and experiences. For example, we need the concepts of 'choice' and 'emotion' to make sense of human behaviour, and we can only make sense of biology, history and the other disciplines by employing the concept of 'knowledge'. However, the concepts we employ are often philosophically problematic. For example, we normally think that being free is good, but we sometimes feel happier when we are just told what to do. Our concept of 'freedom' is incongruous.

Philosophical questions enable students to articulate and address the philosophical problems that arise in our rich concepts. For example, to resolve the philosophical problems about freedom, we might ask, 'Should freedom always be the most important value?' or 'Is happiness more important than freedom?' Alternatively we could ask other philosophical questions to pick out different facets of the philosophical problem we are trying to resolve:

---

<sup>2</sup> For an elaboration of philosophical concepts see Golding (2002, 2005b). Splitter calls them common, central and contestable concepts (Splitter & Sharp 1995). For more on different types of philosophical questions see Golding (2007, 2008). Cam (2006) provides an alternative, useful account of philosophical questions.

What is freedom?

What is the significance of freedom in our lives?

How do we know when we are free?

Are we ever truly free?

Because philosophical questions are used to articulate philosophical problems, they cannot be answered by gathering more information. No matter how much information is gathered about how people use the word freedom, or which countries are considered free, or whether people like or dislike being free, this will not be enough to answer our question, 'Should freedom always be the most important value?'

More than one plausible answer can be given to a philosophical question, and they defy all attempts to provide one 'right answer'. However, they are not matters of opinion or taste, because some answers to philosophical questions are better than others. We cannot tell the better answers by conducting a survey, reading a book, doing a calculation, or consulting an expert. We judge which answers are better based on how well they resolve the problems they address and how well they empower us to make sense of our lives.

### **Thinking process: Inquiry**

In order to resolve their philosophical problems and make new meaning, Philosophy in Schools students must employ complex thinking. We resolve a philosophical problem by creating a new way to look at the problematic issue, and this requires reasoning, inquiry and judgement.

Yet haphazardly asking questions, inventing alternatives, making inferences, evaluating reasons and drawing conclusions will not enable students to resolve their philosophical problems. Their complex thinking should be organised as a process of inquiry with a direction away from the problem that has stimulated the inquiry, and towards a resolution of this problem. According to the logic of inquiry, one thinking move leads to the next. The problem impels us to ask questions, and so we suggest possible answers and resolutions, which leads us to elaborate and then to evaluate these suggestions, which finally leads us to resolve the problem (see Figure 2).

Stage of inquiry	Prompt question	Philosophical thinking move
1. Experience stimulus	What is interesting?	... is interesting because ...
	What do you see? Feel? Think?	I see ... I feel ... I think ...
2. Articulate a problem	What does this make you wonder?	I wonder ...
	What puzzles you?	One puzzle is ...
	What is the problem?	The problem is ...
	What questions does this raise?	One question is ...
3. Suggest	How might we resolve the problem?	One resolution might be ...
	What are some other alternatives?	Maybe ... How about ... What if ...
4. Elaborate, explore and analyse	How could we build on that suggestion?	Building on that you could say ...
	What is an example of that?	An example is ...
	What do you mean by ...?	... means ...
	What is ... related to?	... is related to ...
	What is ... different from?	... is different from ...
	If ... is true, what would this mean?	That would mean ...
5. Test and evaluate	What are possible reasons for ...?	A reason for ... is ...
	What are possible reasons against ...?	A reason against ... is...
	Does our suggestion resolve the problem?	... resolves the problem because ...
	Is this suggested resolution defensible?	... is defensible because ...
	How can we judge the better resolution?	We can judge the better resolution by...
6. Resolve	What have we resolved?	We have resolved ... because ...
	What is not yet resolved?	We have not resolved ...
	Which is the better resolution?	... is better than ... because ...
	Which conclusion should we draw?	A conclusion we can draw is ...
7. New problem	What new problems arise?	New problems to consider are ...
	Are we making progress?	We are/aren't progressing because ...
	What are we doing now?	Now we are ...
	How does this help us?	... helps us because ...
	What should we do next?	Next we should ...
	Reflect (at any time)	What are we trying to do?
Are we making progress?		We are/aren't progressing because...
What are we doing now?		Now we are...
How does this help us?		... helps us because...
What should we do next?		Next we should ...

**Figure 2:** The stages of thinking for philosophical inquiry

Figure 2 outlines a handy plan for philosophical inquiry, organised into stages from problem to resolution. First, students need to experience a stimulus that raises philosophical problems, such as a story in which a character keeps something they find. Then students articulate the problems they identify, perhaps as a philosophical question ('Does keeping something you find count as stealing?'). Resolving this problem and answering this question is the agenda for their inquiry. Next they suggest possible resolutions and answers ('It's only stealing if you take something from someone. If you find it, you haven't taken it from anyone.'). To develop a deeper understanding of the suggestions they have to elaborate and clarify them, interpret and analyse ('But if it were true that stealing is only when you take something directly from someone, then you couldn't put anything down or someone would be allowed to take it.'). After elaborating the suggestions, students are ready to test and evaluate them, perhaps by noting the pros and cons ('The suggestion gives a definition of stealing that's too broad. It implies that it's OK to take things that someone has put down, but this should be classified as stealing.'). Finally, the students conclude with what they judge to be the better resolution ('Maybe stealing has more to do with whether someone owns something, regardless of whether they have it in their possession. This means keeping something you find counts as stealing if someone owns it.'). They finish by reflecting on what they should do next in their inquiry ('Now we need to figure out whether it counts as stealing when you keep something you find if you cannot discover who owns it.').<sup>3</sup>

Based on this understanding of the inquiry process in Philosophy in Schools, we can now revisit the epistemic aim: to make progress in the inquiry away from problematic conceptions and towards ones that make sense again. This epistemic progress should not be confused with students making progress by becoming more skilful thinkers, or more able to inquire together.

Figure 2 lists some of the characteristic thinking *moves* that students can make at the different stages of philosophical inquiry in order to make progress. For example, if students suggest that 'Stealing is when you take something that is owned by someone else', then the next stage is elaboration and their next move might be to say 'An example of this kind of stealing is ...'. Figure 2 also includes *questions* that can be asked to prompt the moves to be made. Lastly, Figure 2 implies inquiry *milestones*, the results of the moves at each stage of the inquiry, which indicate that progress has been made. Examples of milestones include making a plausible suggestion, giving an example to elaborate the suggestion, and agreeing on the live options for resolving a problem or on the strongest reason for or against a suggestion.

It is very rare for an inquiry to follow the stages outlined in Figure 2 in a simple linear way. Instead, Figure 2 should be seen as a useful heuristic that Philosophy in Schools

---

<sup>3</sup> This description of the stages of philosophical inquiry is based on Dewey's account of inquiry (1933/1998), and is influenced by adaptations from Lipman (2003, pp. 101-103), Burgh, Field and Freakley (2006, pp. 117-119), Cam (2006, pp. 12-28), and Gregory (2007, 2008). I document several iterations of my description of philosophical inquiry through Golding (2002, 2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2006 & 2009a), and I elaborate the account in Golding (2012, 2013b).



teachers and students can use to plan their inquiry, break it into manageable stages and give it a promising structure and direction. They can use the inquiry pattern to reflect on whether they are making progress, and what they might do to make further progress. They can judge how far they have come ('We agreed on a rough definition of stealing as taking something owned by someone else, but we are now uncertain what it means to own something. '), what to do next to advance the inquiry ('Now we need to explain what it means to own something. '), and what moves would likely help them make further progress ('What do we mean when we say someone owns something?').

### **Educational Culture: The Community of Inquiry**

The main educational culture of Philosophy in Schools is the Community of Inquiry. Students inquire together about community-chosen problems and questions, in order to make sense of the issues and resolve the problems. This involves thinking together or collaborative inquiry.

In a Community of Inquiry students are encouraged to become a single community pursuing a common line of inquiry (Lipman 2008, p. 109) rather than going in multiple directions pursuing their individual trains of thought. Each student contributes by listening to what others say and making suggestions to keep the inquiry on track and moving forward. This involves distributed thinking where different participants—teacher or students—make different philosophical moves (Lipman 2003, p. 95). One student asks a question and another suggests an answer; the teacher then suggests the answer should be elaborated, which a further student does; then others explore the reasons for and against, before someone else draws a conclusion.

The Community of Inquiry encourages collaborative inquiry rather than intellectual sparring or merely sharing opinions. Students respond to what others say, but judge the ideas rather than the people. They are encouraged to agree and disagree in order to advance their joint inquiry, but not to take this personally. They care for their inquiry but also for each other, so they keep the inquiry rigorous but also safe and respectful.

The epistemic aim of a Community of Inquiry is for students to make collective progress in their collective inquiry—*we* move from our shared problem, through a process of shared inquiry, and towards a resolution of the problem. In particular, students make collective progress by reaching mutual understanding despite differences, by advancing their distributed inquiry through each stage of the inquiry process, by reaching milestones in the inquiry, by agreeing about what has been achieved and what to do next to make further progress.<sup>4</sup>

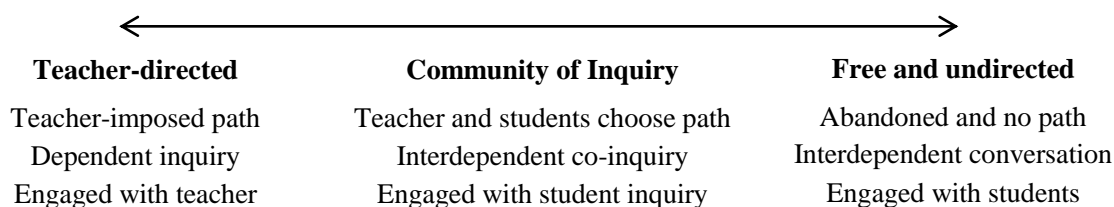
The educational culture of the Community of Inquiry combines inquiry learning and collaborative learning. First, students learn the subject matter of Philosophy in Schools by engaging in collaborative inquiry about their own philosophical problems, rather

---

<sup>4</sup> For more on collective progress, see Golding (2013b).

than by learning the results of professional philosophical inquiry. Making the journey from problem to resolution is essential to their learning, unlike transmission teaching where the aim is to take students to a pre-decided destination without inquiry. Second, by participating in an inquiring community, students learn to inquire. Because thinking is the internalisation of dialogue (Lipman, Sharp & Oscanyan 1980, p. 23), students have to inquire with others before being able to inquire on their own. They learn by internalising the practices, values and discourses of the inquiring community.

Discussion is central to a Community of Inquiry. However, not all discussion involves the necessary collaborative inquiry, and it is easy to slip into an inappropriate kind. To make it easier to identify a Community of Inquiry, I describe and illustrate three types of discussion, with the Community of Inquiry balancing between the extremes of teacher-directed and free discussion (see Figure 3).<sup>5</sup>



**Figure 3:** Continuum of kinds of discussion, with Philosophy in Schools in the middle

### ***Teacher-directed discussion***

The aim of a teacher-directed discussion is for students to cover the content, ideas and conclusions that the teacher judges are important. The teacher does all the inquiry work, directing and controlling the inquiry to ensure progress is made. The teacher decides the paths students should take, the inquiry moves that should be made, and the milestones and outcomes that should be reached. The students then engage primarily with the teacher.<sup>6</sup> They try to do and say what the teacher wants, rather than responding to what other students say.

A teacher-directed discussion involves a kind of student inquiry, but students are being led through the inquiry, rather than inquiring for themselves. This can be very useful to 'cover' teacher-decided material, but it is very poor for developing the independent inquiry needed for Philosophy in Schools. In a teacher-directed discussion students learn to play the game 'guess what the teacher wants me to think'. They rely on the teacher to do the thinking for them and to direct them down the correct path and to the right places, and so they do not learn to inquire and make sense for themselves.

<sup>5</sup> This section draws heavily from Golding (2011a).

<sup>6</sup> The idea of categorising different types of discussions in terms of participant engagement comes from Freakley and Burgh (2002, p. 47).

**Example 1: Teacher-directed discussion**

Alex: Proving something means that you're certain it's true.

Helen: Yeah, but you can't prove anything for certain.

Teacher: That's not quite right. What has been proved for certain?

Helen: I'm not sure.

Teacher: What subjects prove things for certain?

Chen: Science?

Teacher: Sometimes, but this wasn't what I was thinking of. Try again.

David: Maths.

Teacher: Now you've got it. In maths we prove things for certain, like 'two plus two equals four'. Alex is right that proving something means that you are certain it is true. OK, next question ...

In the discussion from Example 1, the teacher directs the students to follow a teacher-imposed path. As a result the students have little independence and they do not inquire for themselves.

***Free and undirected discussion***

The typical aim of a free discussion is for everyone to take part. Teachers might encourage students to participate, to take turns, and to talk directly to each other, but they offer no training or support to enable students to make progress in their inquiry. The teacher does not provide a direction, and students do not know how to find their own, so the students engage with each other but not with the process of inquiry. The result might be a discussion where all students talk, but without critical engagement; they just speak their piece without considering what others have suggested. Alternatively, a free discussion might result in some students dogmatically asserting their views without trying to inquire into a better answer.

A free discussion is so unstructured that it no longer counts as inquiry, but is merely a chat (Gardner 1995). Because the main aim of a free discussion is participation and sharing ideas, there are no constraints on what counts as a productive suggestion. Every suggestion is as good as any other, and students say what they like rather than deliberately advancing a co-inquiry. In a free discussion, students might get to know each other and learn social skills such as turn-taking and talking in public. However, it does not support the disciplined thinking and productive inquiry needed for Philosophy in Schools.

**Example 2:** Free and undirected discussion

- Alex: Proving something means that you're certain it's true.
- Helen: Yeah, but you can't prove anything for certain.
- Chen: I'm certain that the movie on TV last night was rubbish.
- David: It was the worst!
- Elaine: Who's going to see the new movie that came out yesterday?
- Helen: Anyway, forget that. Like I said before, nothing can be proved for certain!
- Tony: You really think so?
- Helen: Sure. There's no point in talking about proof any more. Let's talk about something else ...

The students in the discussion from Example 2 have been given freedom but no assistance to discipline their inquiry. They are essentially abandoned (Roberts 1996) and end up making irrelevant suggestions or dominating the group without productive inquiry.

***Community of Inquiry***

The Community of Inquiry balances teacher-direction and free discussion. The aim is for students to resolve community-chosen problems by co-inquiring with their teacher. The students and teacher jointly direct the inquiry (unlike a teacher-directed discussion) and the teacher guides students to engage in productive collaborative inquiry (unlike a free discussion). The students have some freedom to self-direct their own inquiry, but they also have teacher guidance to enable them to make progress and to learn to go on alone.

Students in a Community of Inquiry are encouraged to critically and creatively engage with the ideas suggested by other students—they build on and evaluate what others say in order to further their joint inquiry. This means a Community of Inquiry involves a disciplined inquiry process (unlike the mere conversation of a free discussion) where the students do some of the inquiry work (unlike the teacher-directed discussion).

In a Community of Inquiry students are encouraged to judge the better paths to take, moves to make, and milestones to reach. Their judgements are subject to the logic of inquiry ("To what extent will the suggestion advance the inquiry towards a resolution of the problem?"), unlike teacher-directed discussions where suggestions are subject to the authority of the teacher, or free discussions where suggestions are subject to no authority. This means the Community of Inquiry tends towards the middle of the continuum of epistemic aims in Figure 1, while the teacher-directed discussion tends towards the left extreme of seeking correct answers (the ones the teacher thinks are best), and the free discussion tends towards the right extreme of the continuum where all suggestions are equally good.

**Example 3: Community of Inquiry**

Alex: Proving something means that you're certain it's true.

Helen: Yeah, but you can't prove anything for certain.

Teacher: We should evaluate Helen's suggestion before we move on. But in order to do that, I think we need to figure out what we mean by 'being certain'. So, what does it mean to be certain that something is true?

Chen: I guess it means that you know you haven't made any mistakes.

David: That sounds okay—if you haven't made a mistake you must be right. You're certain.

Erin: Maybe we could build on this—maybe being certain is when we know we *couldn't* have made a mistake?

Teacher: Why is it important that we couldn't have made a mistake?

David: Well, if you couldn't have made a mistake you are really certain. If you just *think* you didn't make a mistake, you could be wrong. But if it is impossible to make a mistake then you couldn't be wrong.

Elaine: But if that's true, that would mean we can't be certain about anything. It's always possible we made a mistake ...

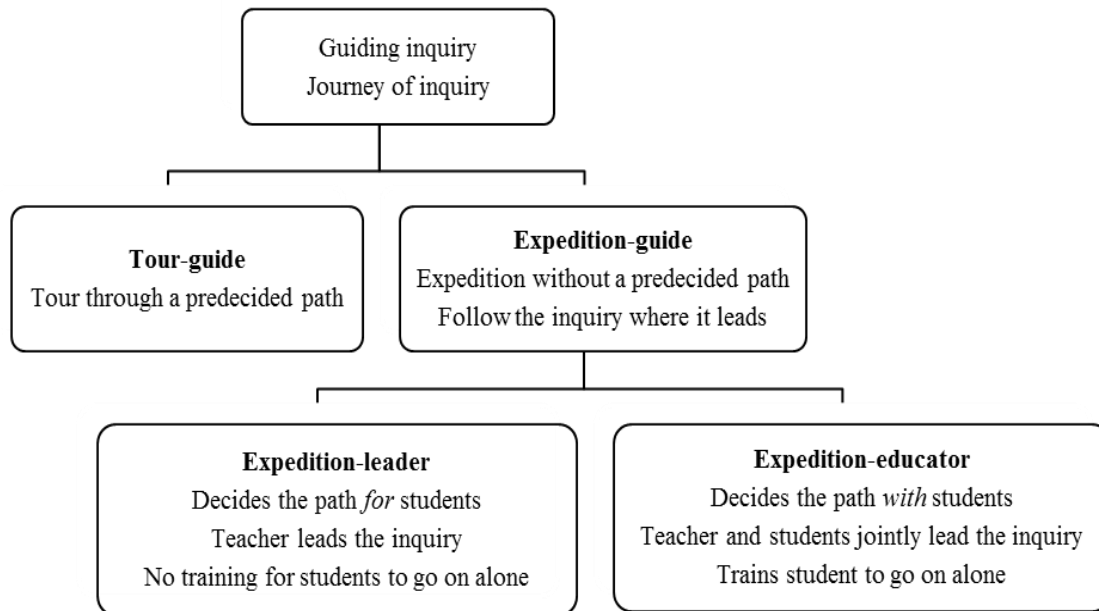
In the discussion from Example 3 the teacher and students inquire together, distributing the inquiry work and jointly ensuring the inquiry is rigorous and makes progress. Each time the teacher speaks the students are prompted to move to the next stage of the inquiry, but they are not directed by the teacher to particular milestones or outcomes. The students also make some of the inquiry moves, suggesting what to do next, as well as judging whether they have developed reasonable milestones.

It is important to note that, in a Community of Inquiry, how much of the inquiry work will be done by the teacher and how much will be done by students will depend on the experience of the students. When they are experienced in collaborative inquiry, the students can lead the inquiry without prompting or guidance from the teacher. They know the different philosophical thinking moves, and use these to make progress. When students are novices, and not yet independent inquirers, the teacher in a Community of Inquiry would need to do much of the inquiry work, intervening frequently to guide the inquiry and to empower students to guide themselves. Yet even with novices the teacher would leave some of the inquiry work for students, such as suggesting answers to the prompt questions in Figure 2.

**The teacher's role: Guiding the inquiry as an expedition-educator**

Teachers of Philosophy in Schools guide their students to make progress in their collaborative inquiry. However, there are different ways to guide an inquiry, and not all ways are helpful for a Community of Inquiry. To make it easier to discriminate the role

of the teacher in Philosophy in Schools, I describe three different ways of guiding an inquiry. The Philosophy in Schools teacher guides as an expedition-educator, rather than as a tour-leader or expedition-leader (see Figure 4).<sup>7</sup>



**Figure 4:** The various kinds of teacher-guides for an inquiry

### ***Tour-leader***

Tour-leaders take students through a pre-planned journey of inquiry. They lead students along paths that have already been blazed, showing them a tour from problem to resolution with pre-decided milestones along the way. An example of this would be the teacher-directed discussion from Example 1—the teacher had already planned for the students to understand that mathematics gives certainty, and then led students to this point.

### ***Expedition-Guide***

Instead of a pre-planned tour, students in a Community of Inquiry go on a genuine journey of inquiry, an expedition where no one knows where they will end up. In a genuine inquiry, unlike a tour, neither teacher nor students know the paths they will take, the milestones they will reach or the answers they will arrive at, and thus they have to follow the inquiry where it leads (Burgh, Field & Freakley 2006, p. 152). The teacher acts as an expedition-guide, guiding the students to follow the inquiry where it leads, blazing new trails as they go.

<sup>7</sup> This section draws heavily from Golding (2013a).

In an expedition, the path of inquiry emerges rather than being pre-decided. This means participants have to consider the path they have already travelled in order to decide how to move forward. Some suggestions will take them off-track from the emerging path, while others will advance them to the next stage of the inquiry.

Even if the teacher-as-expedition-guide knows the area well—including the best paths to take, milestones to reach, and pitfalls to avoid—he or she can treat the inquiry as a genuine inquiry, allowing themselves to be lost with their students, blazing new trails rather than following a path mapped out in advance. Such teachers treat the inquiry questions as live questions and inquire anew.

There are two ways to guide an expedition—an expedition-leader directs students to follow the teacher-decided path, while an expedition-educator co-decides the path with the students (see Figure 5). An expedition-educator is needed for Philosophy in Schools. We can best distinguish these two kinds of guide by considering the approach or attitude taken. Both are on a journey of inquiry with their students, but the expedition-guide takes an inquiry-encouraging approach, whereas the expedition-leader takes an outcome-leading approach (as does the tour-leader).

<b>Expedition-leader</b>	<b>Expedition-educator</b>
Outcome-leading	Inquiry-educating
Decide path for students	Co-decide a path with students
Telling students what to do	Enabling students to judge what to do
Directing students	Offering students a choice about the path
Advancing the teacher's agenda	Advancing the co-created agenda
'How can I lead students to the correct judgements, the judgements I think they should make?'	'How can I help my students to make progress in their inquiry, and hence learn to guide themselves?'

**Figure 5:** The two kinds of expedition-guide

### ***Expedition-leader***

Expedition-leaders blaze a trail for their students. They pick out a path to follow and herd students along this path. Even though they do not have a path mapped out in advance, they decide what line of inquiry is emerging and they decide the path to take to make further progress. They are in control of the inquiry, have no intention of allowing students to take the lead, and do not train them to go on alone.

Expedition-leaders take an *outcome-leading approach*. They decide the outcomes students must reach during the inquiry, and then direct students to these outcomes. The 'outcomes' are substantive points that the teacher decides must be addressed in the inquiry—this could be a final conclusion, but more likely it is a path to take, or a milestone to reach. For example, outcome-leading teachers might lead their students to make particular suggestions or distinctions, to give particular example or reasons, or to consider particular interpretations. They also direct students away from outcomes they think should not be addressed, the pitfalls that must be avoided, such as an illegitimate suggestion, or unacceptable examples or reasons.<sup>8</sup>

An outcome-leading teacher focuses on whether student suggestions are correct or not. After a response by a student, such teachers consider 'Is that correct?' (meaning: 'Is that the response I think they should have made in order to progress the inquiry?'). For example, is that the correct question, the correct suggestion, the correct elaboration, or the correct reason to consider? If it is correct, the teacher indicates that the students have it right and then moves on to a different topic. If it is not correct, the teacher leads the students to the correct outcome by, for example, asking a leading question.

An outcome-leading approach is incompatible with Philosophy in Schools and the Community of Inquiry. If teachers consistently take this approach, students will not learn to think independently and instead become dependent on their teacher to do the inquiry work for them. Teachers who take an outcome-leading approach discourage student thinking and leave no room for student inquiry, even if students already know how to inquire for themselves. Outcome-leading teachers are not really interested in student thinking, they just want the 'right' outcomes and milestones. For example, outcome-leading teachers ask prompt questions such as 'What are the reasons for and against?' or 'What is an example of that?' not to invite the students to inquire, but to lead them to their own preferred answers.

A teacher-directed discussion, like that from Example 1, is the result of an outcome-leading approach. The teacher in the example asked him or herself the following questions in order to decide what to say and ask: 'What is the next important outcome to be reached in the inquiry? How do I ensure that my students reach this outcome?' The teacher keeps the class 'on-track' in order to get to the teacher-decided outcomes. When the students get to where the teacher wants, the teacher moves on to a different topic without further discussion.

If the teacher in Example 1 had decided the outcomes and milestones to cover during the inquiry, then it would be an example of expedition-leading. If the teacher had instead pre-decided the outcomes and milestones, then this would be tour-guiding. Both are examples of leading the students to teacher-decided milestones and outcomes. Seen in this light, the real difference between the tour-leader and the expedition-leader is *when* the teacher makes the decisions about where the inquiry will go. The tour-leader decides *before* the inquiry, while the expedition-leader decides *during* the inquiry, but

---

<sup>8</sup> See Splitter and Sharp (1995, pp. 137-139) for more on what they call 'pre-empted conclusions.'



both make the decision for their students. The expedition-leader improvises more, but is just as controlling.

### ***Expedition-educator***

In the second kind of expedition, the one needed for Philosophy in Schools, teachers act as expedition-educators. They understand themselves as travelling with their students to an undecided destination, and they enable their students to make progress in their inquiry *and* to learn to inquire for themselves. Expedition-educators give up the leader-follower relationship and replace it with co-inquiry. They co-blaze a trail *with* their students (rather than *for* them as the expedition-leader does).

Expedition-educators take an *inquiry-educating* or *inquiry-encouraging approach*; they judge which thinking moves will help to move the inquiry forward and then enable their students to make these moves. They use their greater skill and experience to provide educative guidance—anything they do to keep the inquiry on track is also intended to train students to guide themselves.

When taking an inquiry-educating approach, the teacher's attention is on the moves needed in order to make progress in the inquiry, and how to enable students to make these moves. The teacher does not pay attention to whether the students have got the 'right' milestones or outcomes, but only to what the students need to do next in order to make progress. For example, an inquiry-educating teacher asks prompt questions such as 'What are the reasons for and against?' or 'What is an example of that?' in order to assist students to make progress to the next step in their inquiry, and to model the process of inquiry for students to emulate. After a response by a student, the teacher thinks: 'Now what inquiry moves do we need to use to move forward in our inquiry?' and 'What questions can I ask to prompt these moves?' The students are then prompted to make these moves.

Teachers can take an inquiry-educating approach even if they have views on the inquiry topic and answers to the questions being addressed. When they take an inquiry-educating approach teachers put aside their own views and answers so they can concentrate on encouraging student inquiry and educating students to learn to inquire for themselves.

The inquiry-educating approach of an expedition-educator can seem like the outcome-leading approach of an expedition-leader because expedition-educators sometimes tell their students what to do to progress the inquiry. Yet the resemblance is deceptive. An expedition-educator only takes the lead for educative reasons, when this is necessary to help students make progress and learn to lead themselves (unlike an expedition-leader who always takes the lead). Expedition-educators invite their students to do as much inquiry work as they can handle (unlike an expedition-leader who gives no real opportunity for student input). They typically only tell their students the inquiry process to follow (unlike the expedition-leader who tells students the particular outcomes and

milestones they should reach). Even if an expedition-educator suggests milestones and outcomes to their students, this is different from an expedition-leader because of their educational aims. The expedition-educator only leads when this will enable students to learn to inquire for themselves (unlike the expedition-leader who leads students to what they think are the 'right' milestones and outcomes).

An inquiry-educating approach creates a Community of Inquiry discussion like that in Example 3. Students make some of the inquiry moves, and when the teacher judges they are getting lost, he or she prompts them to take the next step forward. An inquiry-educating teacher asks him or herself the following questions in order to decide what to say and ask: 'What needs to be done to make progress? How much inquiry work can my students handle? How can I enable my students to do some of the inquiry work so they make progress and learn to inquire for themselves?' In Example 3 the teacher's questions were intended to both prompt students to move forward in their inquiry and to provide a model of inquiry for students to emulate.

Philosophy in Schools teachers sometimes think that they should begin with a teacher-directed discussion and operate as a tour-guide or expedition-leader. But this is a mistake. A Philosophy for Children class should always be a Community of Inquiry with the teacher acting as expedition-educator. A teacher-directed discussion with an expedition-leader is always incompatible with Philosophy in Schools. Even though expedition-educators in a Community of Inquiry can sometimes lead and direct their students, they are different from expedition-leaders because of their educational aims. Expedition-educators always do what will enable their students to learn to make progress for themselves; expedition-leaders always do what will ensure their students reach the right outcomes and milestones.

Expedition-educators taking an inquiry-educating approach will vary what they do, say and ask depending on how effectively their students can guide themselves. They may model the inquiry process, coach or train students, or offer advice depending on what the students need so they learn to inquire. They judge how to intervene on a case-by-case basis by asking: 'What will help my particular students to make progress in this particular inquiry and hence learn to guide themselves?' Regardless of what they do, they always do it for educative reasons, they always allow students some input or choice in the inquiry process, and they always have students do some of the inquiry work.

If students were novices or very young, expedition-educators might judge that the best way to help their students inquire would be to direct them to pursue the line of inquiry the students would have chosen if they were more experienced. For example, the students may be confused about what to do next and cannot come up with a clear suggestion. So the teacher considers what inquiry move the students would have suggested if they were more experienced, and then asks the students to make this move, using a prompt question from Figure 2. Perhaps the teacher judges that the students would have considered the pros and cons next if they were more experienced, and so

says 'I think we need to evaluate the pros and cons here. What are the reasons for and the reasons against this suggestion?'

If students were so young that even this level of inquiry work is beyond them, expedition-educator teachers might judge that they need to do most of the inquiry work and be more directive in order to empower their students to learn to inquire for themselves. For example, if the next step in the inquiry is to make suggestions about what counts as a friend, and students were unable to make this move, the teacher might say: 'Some people think a stone cannot be a friend, what do you think?'

When students are experienced, expedition-educators might judge that they now need practice at leading their own inquiry. The expedition-educator might suggest the next stage in the inquiry and ask students to choose what move to make from that stage ('Next we need to test our suggestions. What should we do to test our ideas so far?'). Or, to give more independence to their students, the expedition-educator might ask the students to choose what stage to go to next, and what move to make ('What do we need to do next to make progress?').

## **Conclusion**

This article has described the aims, subject matter, thinking process, educational culture and teacher's role in Philosophy in Schools. The aim of Philosophy in Schools is that students make sense of themselves and their lives. More specifically, the aim is for students to resolve the philosophical problems they experience; the problems where things do not make sense no matter how much information or knowledge is gathered. Students use a process of philosophical inquiry to address their philosophical problems within the educational structure of a Community of Inquiry. Teacher and students engage in collaborative inquiry where they start with a philosophical problem and attempt to make progress away from that problem and towards a resolution. This is different from a free discussion which does not involve disciplined inquiry, and different from a teacher-led discussion where students are herded along, following the teacher's agenda, rather than participating as inquirers. Teachers have a distinctive role within the Community of Inquiry—they guide students to make progress and to learn to make progress (rather than leading students to teacher-decided outcomes). This description provides a field guide for identifying Philosophy in Schools, and a handy account for practitioners. I also hope this account will stimulate further theoretical, pedagogical and empirical work about the nature of Philosophy in Schools.

## **References**

Burgh, G, Field, T & Freakly, M (2006) *Ethics and the community of inquiry*. Melbourne, Thomson Social Science Press.

- Cam, P (2006) *Twenty thinking tools*. Melbourne, Australian Council for Educational Research Press.
- De Haan, C, MacColl, S & McCutcheon, L (1995) *Philosophy with kids: Books 1, 2 and 3*. Melbourne, Longman.
- Dewey, J (1933/1998) *How we think*. New York, DC Heath.
- Freakley, M & Burgh, G (2002) *Engaging with ethics: Ethical inquiry for teachers*. Katoomba, New South Wales, Social Science Press.
- Gardner, S (1995) Inquiry is no mere conversation (or discussion or dialogue): Facilitation of inquiry is hard work! *Critical and Creative Thinking: The Australasian Journal of Philosophy in Education*, 2(2), pp. 38-49.
- Golding, C (2002) *Connecting concepts: Thinking activities for students*. Melbourne, Australian Council for Educational Research Press.
- Golding, C (2004) Philosophy in schools and multiple intelligences. *Critical and Creative Thinking: The Australasian Journal of Philosophy in Education*, 12(1), pp. 16-31.
- Golding, C (2005a) *Developing a thinking classroom: A workbook for professional learning teams*. Melbourne, Hawker Brownlow Education.
- Golding, C (2005b) *Thinking with rich concepts: Rich concepts for philosophical questioning in the classroom*. Nelson, New Zealand, ThinkShop.
- Golding, C (2006) What is philosophy in schools? *Critical and Creative Thinking: The Australasian Journal of Philosophy in Education*, 14(1), pp. 1-21.
- Golding, C (2007) Types of philosophical questions, *Critical and Creative Thinking: The Australasian Journal of Philosophy in Education*, 15(1), pp. 36-48.
- Golding, C (2008) Philosophical questions: Their nature and function. In C Tan (ed) *Philosophical reflections for educators*. Singapore, Cengage Learning, pp. 193-204.
- Golding, C (2009a) 'That's a better idea!' Philosophical progress and philosophy in schools. *Childhood and Philosophy*, 5(10), pp. 223-269.
- Golding, C (2009b) Ross Phillips' logic game. *Critical and Creative Thinking: The Australasian Journal of Philosophy in Education*, 17(1), pp. 15-24.
- Golding, C (2011a) The many faces of constructivist discussion. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 43(5), pp. 467-483.
- Golding, C (2011b) A conception of philosophical progress. *Essays in Philosophy*, 12(2), pp. 200-223.
- Golding, C (2012) Epistemic progress: A construct for understanding and evaluating inquiry. *Educational Theory*, 62(6), pp. 677-693.
- Golding, C (2013a) The teacher as guide: A conception of the inquiry teacher. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 45(1), pp. 91-110.

- Golding, C (2013b) We made progress: Collective epistemic progress in dialogue without consensus. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 47(3), pp. 423–440.
- Gregory, M (2007) A framework for facilitating classroom dialogue. *Teaching Philosophy*, 30(1), pp. 59-84.
- Gregory, M (2008) *Philosophy in schools: Practitioner handbook*. New Jersey, Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children.
- Lipman, M (1982) *Harry Stottlemeier's discovery*. 2nd edn. New Jersey, Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children.
- Lipman, M (1983) *Lisa*. 2nd edn. New Jersey, Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children.
- Lipman, M (2003) *Thinking in education*. 2nd edn. New York, Cambridge University Press.
- Lipman, M (2008) *A life teaching thinking*. New Jersey, Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children.
- Lipman, M & Sharp, AM (1995) *Ethical inquiry: Instructional manual to accompany Lisa*. 2nd edn. New Jersey, Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children.
- Lipman, M, Sharp, AM & Oscanyan, F (1980) *Philosophy in the classroom*. 2nd edn. Philadelphia, Temple University Press.
- Lipman, M, Sharp, AM & Oscanyan, F (1984) *Philosophical inquiry: An instructional manual to accompany Harry Stottlemeier's discovery*. New Jersey, Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children.
- McCall, C (2009) *Transforming thinking: Philosophical inquiry in the primary and secondary classroom*. London, Routledge.
- Nelson, L (2004) (originally c.1922) The Socratic method. In R Saran & B Neisser (eds) *Enquiring minds: Socratic dialogue in education*. Sterling, Trentham Books, pp. 121-165.
- Roberts, D (1996) Epistemic authority for teacher knowledge. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 26(4), pp. 417–431.
- Splitter, L & Sharp, AM (1995) *Teaching for better thinking: The classroom community of inquiry*. Melbourne, Australian Council for Educational Research Press.
- Sprod, T (1993) *Books into ideas: A community of inquiry*. Melbourne, Hawker Brownlow Education.