FAPSA
Federation of Australasian Philosophy in Schools Associations

Australasian Philosothon
October 2018

Rachel Buchanan

This report into the 2018 Australasian
Philosothon was commissioned by FAPSA. It
was funded as part of a grant from the
Templeton Religion Trust.

Philosothon website: www.philosothon.org

FAPSA website: http://fapsa.org.au/

Templeton Religion Trust:
https://www.templeton.org/

2018 Australasian Philosothon

Evaluative Report

Federation of Australasian Philosophy in Schools Association

Dr Rachel Buchanan
Senior Lecturer
School of Education
University of Newcastle
Rachel.Buchanan@newcastle.edu.au

Executive summary

This report examines the 2018 Australasian Philosothon.

The Philosothon is examined in terms of a research-based perspective that suggests the benefits of this format for encouraging students to undertake the study of philosophy. Although the academic literature indicates the clear benefits of the Community of Inquiry method that underpins the Philosothon, there has been no Australian research into using the Community of Inquiry competitively, to determine whether competition undercuts the benefits of this teaching method. There is also no research into the place of Philosothons in the landscape of philosophy in schools in Australia. This report recommends that such research be commissioned.

This report also examines the 2018 Australasian Philosothon from the perspective of the participants. Qualitative research was undertaken at the event. From analysis of the data collected at the event, it is recommended that:

- To ensure that the event continues to be perceived and experienced as fair, fun and worth the travel the technical and logistic details should be reviewed, evaluated and potentially updated after each annual event.
- To ensure the longevity of the Australasian Philosothon strategies for including a variety of school communities should be developed. Expansion plans should target low SES, remote, rural and systemic Catholic schools as these are the types of schools that currently do not have access to the Philosothon.
- The Australasian Philosothon has the potential to raise the profile of philosophy in schools. In order to do this media attention and publicity could be harnessed to increase awarness of the event at the national and local levels.
- Develop strategies to improve connections with the Philosophy Schools in Universities. Given the decline of Philosophy as a university subject, hosting public philosophy events such as Philosothons could potentially help universities address the decline in interest in studying philosophy.

2018 Australasian Philosothon
St Peter's College, Adelaide

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Background and context

Introduction

This report was commissioned by FAPSA to provide an evaluation of the Australasian Philosothon. This report aims to do that in two ways. Firstly, this report provides a brief overview of the research literature on Philosophy in schools and situates the Australasian Philosothon within that literature. Secondly, this report presents the findings of qualitative research that was undertaken at the 2018 Australasian Philosothon.

The literature sections of the report will show where Philosothons are situated in terms of the ways in which philosophy is taught in Australia. It provides a brief synthesis of the pertinent literature that demonstrates the benefits to students of undertaking philosophy in schools and offers suggestions for the type of future research that would provide an evidence that could be used to bolster the case that Philosothons are a worthwhile enterprise for schools and students to be involved in and why Philosothons are worth the investment of time, energy and finances that are required to ensure that they remain viable.

The research sections of this report detail the findings of the qualitative research undertaken to provide a snapshot of the students, judges and facilitators perspectives about their involvement in the 2018 Australasian Philosothon. This empirical research underpins the practical recommendations for the Australasian Philosothon going forward into the future.

The state of philosophy in schools in Australia

A decade ago, Philosophy in Australian schools was characterized as being 'in the process of coming in from the margins' (Millett, 2008). While Philosophy has now been introduced into almost all secondary curricula, with the notable exception of New South Wales (Millett & Tapper, 2014), there is little indication that it is no longer marginalized. While there is strong empirical evidence about the value of philosophy in schools (MacPherson, et al, 2018) philosophy is far from being uniformly available to all Australian school students. Philosophy in primary schools relies on the availability of philanthropic organisations and volunteers. For example, in NSW over 450 schools participate in the Primary Ethics program. Yet there are over 2000 primary schools in the state, indicating that some three-quarters of the state's primary schools do not have access to

philosophy classes. Likewise, access to philosophy classes and extra-curricular activities in secondary schools remains patchy and uneven.

The Australian Curriculum includes 'Ethical Understanding' as a general capability and stipulates what students should be able do from Foundation to Year 10; however, these skills are to be taught in a variety of KLAs (for example; HASS, History, Geography, Civics and Citizenship, etc.) and not in a dedicated philosophy subject. Additionally, of the various philosophical domains only Ethical Understanding (and not Ethics per se) is explicitly addressed by the Australian Curriculum.

Figure 1: *Organising elements for Ethical Understanding in the Australian Curriculum* (ACARA, n.d.)

Advantages of philosophy in schools

Internationally, there is a strong (but incomplete) empirical research base which supports the strong claims about the value of philosophy in schools (MacPherson, et al., 2018). The Community of Inquiry based program Philosophy for Children [P4C], in particular "has relatively good quality evidence for effectiveness" (Trickey and Topping, 2004, p. 377). However, issues such as the wide-ranging goals of philosophy for children programs, the "methodological rigour" and "difficulties of instrumentation sensitivity in complex real-life social contexts" in research design, and as practical concerns such as cost-effectiveness of programs, program fidelity and

generalisability (Trickey & Topping, 2004) have been noted as concerns in the field (MacPherson, et al, 2018). The best research evidence comes from Topping and Trickey's work in Scotland, where they studied the effects of collaborative philosophical inquiry on students in 18 primary schools (Trickey & Topping, 2004, 2006, 2007; Topping & Trickey, 2007a, 2007b). Their findings suggest that P4C offers the following benefits: gains in cognitive ability after 16 months of one hour sessions per week, (an effect still evident 2 years after P4C participation had ended); gains in communication, confidence, confidence, participation and social behaviours; increase by students in their ability to support their views with reasons; and teachers increasing their use of open-ended questions in their teaching. Trickey and Topping's work is supported by a meta-analysis of 18 studies of the cognitive effectiveness of the P4C approach, carried out by Garcia-Moriyon, Colom, Lora, and Rivas (2004), who concluded that 'the implementation of P4C led to an improvement of students' reasoning skills' (p. 19).

Philosothons

Millett and Tapper (2014) report that in 2007, Matthew Wills and Leanne Rucks launched the 'Philosothon', and that now it is rapidly growing annual interschool event that, while based on the Community of Inquiry method, is simultaneously competitive and cooperative.

Philosothons are a relatively recent addition to the landscape of philosophy in schools; however, the development and presence of Philosothons is starting to be noted in the literature related to the teaching of philosophy in Australia (Burgh & Thornton, 2016, Burgh, 2017). While the first Philosothon was held in Western Australia, this competitive format has now been taken up internationally. Flood (2014) reports that as of 2014 there are more than 250 schools taking part in Philosothons worldwide.

The chief difference between Philosothons and other Community of Inquiry methods of undertaking philosophy in schools is that the Philosothon is a competitive event. While the competitive element of Philosothons was noted to be somewhat at odds with the goals of Community of Inquiry by some Philosothon participants (Wills, 2018), as yet there has been no research into whether this undercuts the efficacy of the Community of Inquiry method, or whether the introduction of inter-school and international competition increases the status of school based philosophy and Community of Inquiry methods and

is therefore a worthwhile innovation due to the incentive provided by competition to get schools and students involved.

Access

Like, access to both the subject of philosophy and Community of Inquiries, access to Philosothons remains uneven. A desk audit of the Australasian Philosothon website suggests that Philosothons are hosted in predominantly metropolitan locations, by Independent schools. The difficulties of embedding philosophy in schools serving low socioeconomic communities is well known (Thompson & Lašič, 2014). Thompson and Lašič report that in many schools that have a vocational focus or serve low SES communities there is a sense by many teachers that philosophy is not a suitable activity for their students. Perry and Southwell (2014) have shown that low socio-economic schools give students less access to the core academic curriculum subjects that are important for university entry and that the breadth and depth of courses offered by schools is related to school sector (private or public) and socio-economic context. They conclude that Australian educational policies that have encouraged choice and competition by schools has served to limit access to high-status academic curriculum (such as philosophy) in working-class communities (Perry & Southwell, 2014).

A separate issue to that of hard-to-access communities (by reason of remote/rural location and/or SES) is the difficulty of accessing systemic Catholic schools. These schools teach values and ethics via the embedding of Catholic perspectives throughout their curriculum and philosophy is viewed as less important than the teaching of Catholic perspectives (which has its own philosophic tradition) via religious studies.

Templeton funding is being used to make Philosothons accessible to a wider range of schools, especially remote, rural and low SES schools. This report iterates the appropriateness of such a strategy given the lack of schools from these backgrounds at the Australasian Philosothon. Additionally, further work could be done to embed the Philosothon within systemic Catholic schools. The Philosothon functions as an extra-curricular activity, and students are not required to have studied Philosophy at school to succeed in the Philosothon. This means that the Philosothon does not compete with the way in which systemic Catholic schools embed ethics in the Catholic perspectives and religious subjects taught at their schools.

The Australasian Philosothon

This section focuses on the Australasian Philosothon 2018 which took place at St Peter's College, Adelaide, on Oct 2nd – 4th. Students from 12 Australian schools took part (3 schools from the states of WA, SA, and NSW, 2 schools from QLD and one from Victoria).

Since 2011 national (now Australasian) Philosothons have taken place, with the venue changing each year. 2018 was the first time that the Australasian Philosothon has taken place in South Australia. To get a snapshot of how participants' experience the Philosothon, qualitative research was undertaken at the event itself.

Methodology

To garner participant's perspectives of the Australasian Philosothon the various participant groups were surveyed. Separate questionnaires were developed for: i) students; ii) facilitators and teachers; and, iii) judges. (See Appendix A - the survey instruments, p. XX).

To ensure a high response rate, judges and teachers were given the questionnaire in their Philosothon information packs. Judges were given the opportunity to fill these out at the final judges meeting. Teachers were asked to fill them out either at the same time as the students (ten responses) or electronically, via a link to a google form that was emailed to them (two responses were received this way). Students were given their questionnaires in hard copy during the presentation session on the final morning. They were given time to fill these out and responses and these were collected prior to the Philosothon winners being announced. Responses were received from ninety-one student participants, twelve facilitators and eight judges. This data was entered into google forms to allow for collation, development of descriptive statistics and analysis of qualitative responses.

Participant observation was also undertaken by Dr Rachel Buchanan in her capacity as a judge for the event. This allowed for an experiential understanding of judging and the scoring process, though the observation and judging of 5 Community Inquiry rounds (1 unscored and 4 scored).

Student perspectives

Responses indicated that participating students are from WA, SA, NSW, QLD and Victoria (Figure 2).
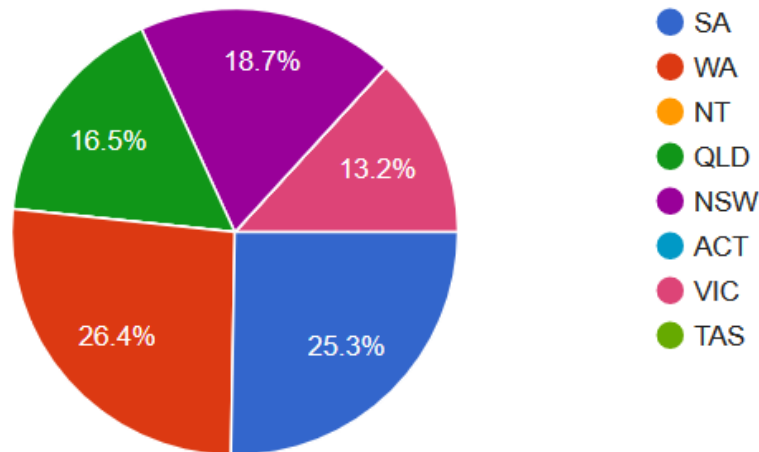
Figure 2. Where participants are from

Most while respondents were from school years 7-12 only one student from year 7 participated in the survey; 5 from year 8; 25 from year 9, 26 from year 10, 18 from year 11 and 12 from year 12 (Figure 3).
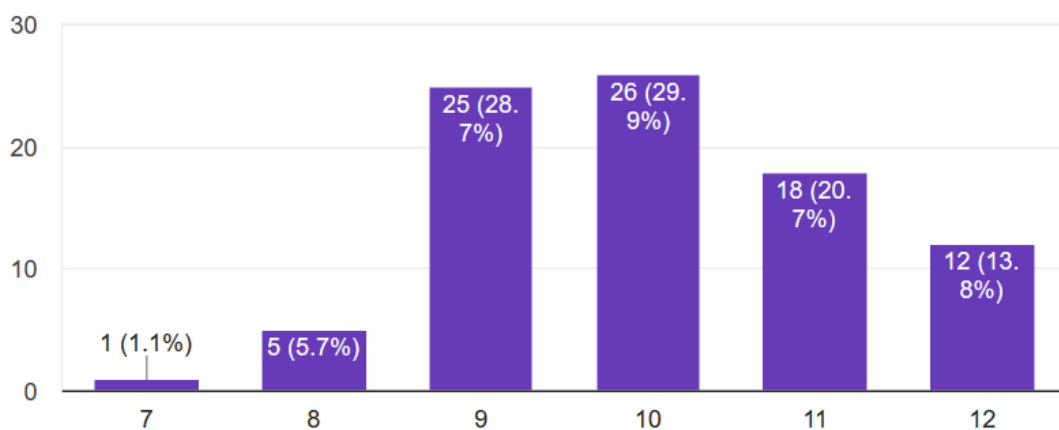
Figure 3. *Participants' school year*

Approximately four out of five respondents (78.9%) were from Independent schools and 21.1% were from Government schools. Slightly under less than half of the student respondents (45.1%) had not studied philosophy at school. For the majority of respondents (73.6%), their school experiences had increased their interest in philosophy; likewise, most (74.7%) agreed that their experience in the Philosothon increased their interest in philosophy.

The Philosothon is a worthwhile experience

> I chose to do Philosothon because I was interested in furthering my knowledge base and understanding of philosophical reasoning, while participating in a fun and diverse social environment. I wanted to further my incomplete philosophy education.

The students identified a number of benefits of, and their reasons for being involved in, the Philosothon. For many it was a chance to gain skills such as: imagination; 'greater confidence in group discussion'; argumentation and communication; listening skills; critical and lateral thinking. Other students identified the experience itself as being the positive factor: it was fun, it was a challenge; it was new; the friendships; the development of, and exposure to new perspectives; the sense of community that occurs; and access to 'amazing' discussions. The third type of response was about the increased philosophical knowledge and understanding that was gained through participation. The final theme in the response was that participation in the Philosothon offers a chance to meet 'like-minded students'.

From their exposure to and experience of philosophy most students (80.3%) stated that they felt 'confident' (44%) or 'very confident' (36.3%) to explain what philosophy is (Figure 4).

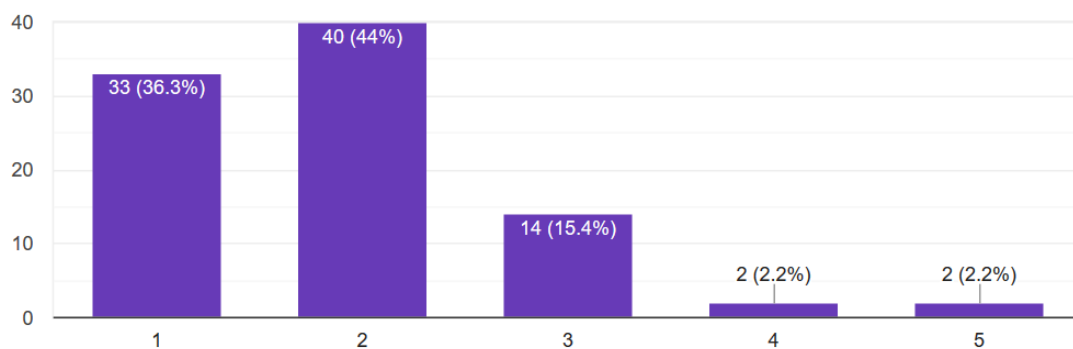*Figure 4. Students' confidence in explaining what philosophy is (1 = very confident, 5 = not at all confident).*

The majority of students (72.5%) could see themselves choosing to learn philosophy in the future, with a similar percentage (72.2%) indicating that they would be 'very likely' (48.9%) or 'likely' (23.3%) to choose to study philosophy in the future if it were offered at their school (Figure 5).
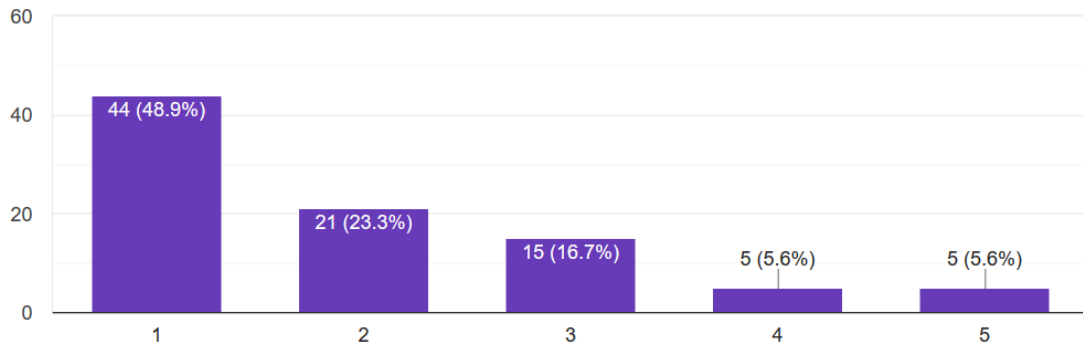
Figure 5. Likelihood that students would choose to study philosophy at school, if it was offered (1 = very confident, 5 = not at all confident).

This result did not hold for students' likelihood to choose to study philosophy at university, with under thirty percent indicating that they would be 'likely' (20.9%) or 'very likely' (8.8%) (Figure 6).
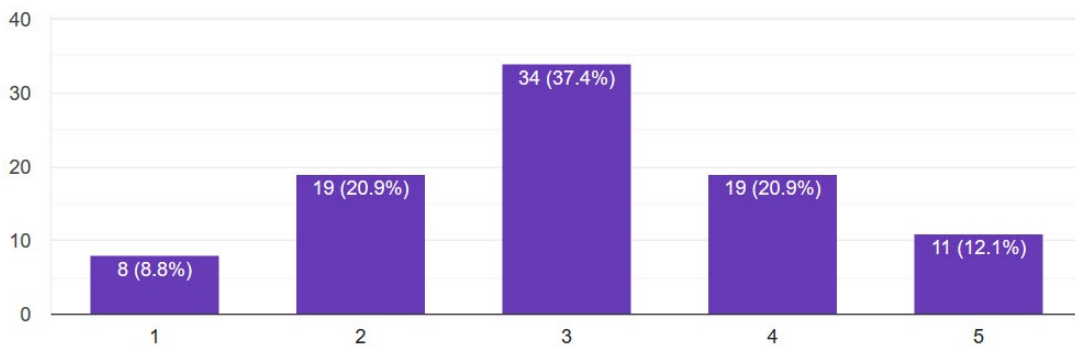
Figure 6. Likelihood that students would choose to study philosophy at university (1 = very confident, 5 = not at all confident).

Getting students to study Philosophy at school

When asked what advice they would give educators who are trying to move students to study philosophy at schools, student participants' answers were usually about advertising philosophy well or ensuring the content was relevant to, and engaging for, students. Some suggested that students should be taught philosophy from a young age. Several students suggested that philosophy is a life-skill and should be compulsory.

> Take the formality out but keep the structure. Giving opportunities to fail gracefully and learn is really good for young students. Ask them to provide a COI topic they're interested in so that everyone is personally involved.

Facilitator perspectives

As can be seen in figure 7, the Australasian Philosothon facilitators provided a predominantly positive picture of the Philosothon and the benefits that it provides for students.

Figure 7: Word cloud made from facilitators responses

The twelve facilitators who provided responses came from SA (25%), WA (25%), NSW (25%), QLD (16.7%) and Vic (8.3%), (see figure 8). All facilitators were at the Philosothon in their capacity of teacher/coach for a participating school team. Seventy five percent of facilitators were from Independent schools and twenty five percent were from Government schools.

Figure 8: Where facilitators are from

Just under half the schools represented by the facilitators (41.7%) do not teach philosophy subjects. Philosophy is taught at just over half (58.3 %) of the representative schools; either a compulsory course, or an elective, or via a philosophy club/cafe or through a gifted and talented education program.
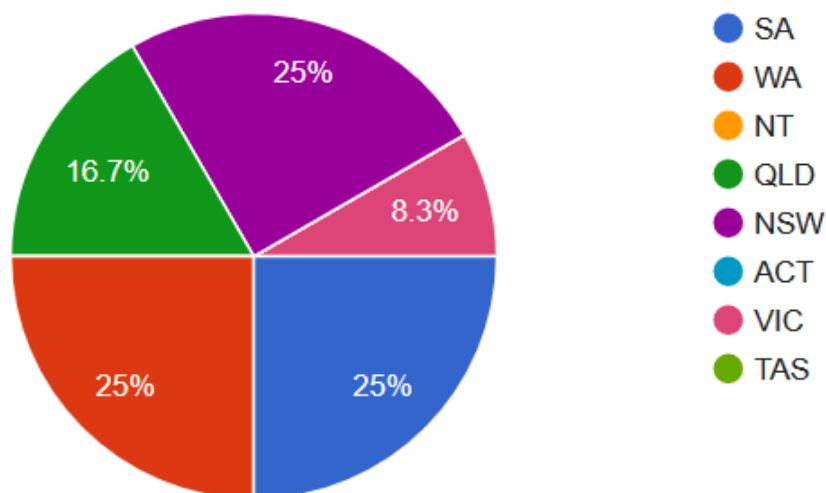
Philosophy is also taught in non-philosophy subjects at several participating schools (63.6 %). These subjects include Religious Studies, English, Global Politics, and Theory of Knowledge. This suggests while students do not have equal access to philosophy across Australia, a lack of explicit philosophy subjects in schools is not a barrier to participation in the Philosothon.

Facilitator perspectives on the value of the Philosothon

The majority (83.3 %) of respondents saw participation in the Australasian Philosothon as a worthwhile experience for their students. Benefits of the experience included: critical thinking, problem solving, collaborative conversation; cross peer-group interaction, development of cultural capital and verbal skills, the opportunity to meet students from across the country and to have meaningful discussions.

> Students benefited from discussing philosophical issues with a wide range of students from different backgrounds to their own.

> The students have been exposed to COI that have allowed a deeper level of thinking and philosophical exploration. It has developed confidence and given the girls a sense of success

> Great opportunity to network with students across the country.

Facilitators also saw the experience as being valuable for them. They enjoyed watching students participate, citing: "Collegiality, support, enjoyment and academic stimulation for all" and the chance to meet other educators who value philosophy, the opportunity to see how the COI can work as a pedagogical tool, a sense of pride in their students and being part of a national movement.

Facilitators' suggestions for improvement

Some facilitators suggested that the Philosothon would be improved if schools were given feedback on how students performed. There was a sense that they had traveled a long way to attend the Australasian Philosothon and it seemed a little wrong to receive no feedback (the judging was perceived as being opaque). Other suggestions for improvement related to organization of the event. Facilitators didn't like that some topics had changed after they had received the information kits. The days of the Philosothon were experienced as being very long. Suggestions for addressing this included: only having one practice (non-scored) COI; shortening COIs to 45 minutes and not having night time activities for the students; moving the start to lunch time on the first day. For the event facilitators suggested that: guest speakers need to be appropriate for the students with topics that lead clearly to a question; judges and facilitators need to be properly trained; and that the age groups could be changed as students under 13 years were too young to travel with.

Judge perspectives

Eight judges provided feedback. All were from South Australia, except for one judge from NSW. Three of the judges noted that they were first time judges with no previous Philosothon experience.

The Philosothon is a worthwhile experience

There was consensus amongst the judges with all agreeing that the Australasian Philosothon is a worthwhile experience for students:

> Students learn critical and collaborative skills and address important questions. They see that clear thinking and communication are valued. Their creativity is recognised and encouraged.

Judges saw the experience as valuable because of the skills that were developed and demonstrated by students, through the CoI process. The skills identified by judges include critical and collaborative skills, support of, and cooperation with their peers, their ability to identify philosophical problems, their ability to articulate complex thoughts and advance discussion through clarifying questions.

The judges' feedback also made it clear that the Philosothon encourages participation in and the study of Philosophy in, and beyond, school.

All judges stated that they were likely (75%) or very likely (25%) to recommend participation in a Philosothon. All judges also agreed that they would recommend involvement as a judge to an interested person (62.5% very likely, 37.5% likely).

Most judges stated that they had gotten something from their involvement as a judge in the Philosothon. For many, this was the opportunity to get a sense of how students are thinking and how good they are at doing philosophy. For another judge from the Academy, they appreciated that their involvement deepened their connection with school philosophy. One judge, who was also a speaker, found watching students discuss their talk gave them ideas about how to better direct their talk to solicit a more focused discussion. Judges' feedback also showed that they liked learning about the Philosothon and the use of CoI, and the experience of assessing a discussion. All judges valued the opportunity to be involved in the Philosothon, with one describing that judging brought:

> An inspiring sense of what young people are capable of when they're given a conducive environment for thinking and discussion.

Judges' perspectives on potential ways to improve the Philosothon.
Most judges offered suggestions for improving the Philosothon. Several judges noted that they had seen inconsistency in the facilitation of the rounds and suggested that the facilitators be provided with more guidance to ensure consistency in the way that the rounds are run.

Previous research (Wills, 2018) based on Philosothon participant feedback suggested that there was some contention about Philosothon winners being

determined based on raw scores, rather than z scores. At the Australasian Philosothon judges were privy to the process of the tallying of results, and z scores were used to provide a double check against the results produced by the raw scores[1]. No judges criticised this use of raw scores, however, some judges thought the scoring criteria could be changed – noting that the scoring could be recalibrated to reward collaborative rather than individualistic behaviour. At present judges award each student in the CoI a mark out of ten for each of three criteria: Critical thinking, Creative thinking and Collaboration. One judge suggested giving each CoI a score for overall group performance which would contribute to each student's score and would encourage collaborative behaviours.

Half the feedback from the judges also stated that the judges should score more groups. (In this iteration of the Philosothon, judges scored the same group twice; meaning that if a judge scored two rounds they observed the same group for both rounds, if they scored four rounds then they scored two different groups twice each). The feedback noted that the advantages of judges scoring more groups would include:

> More [judges'] voices to speak about the students who are the winners (in the case of ties) and to speak what they saw in relation to those nominated as most promising philosophers.

> [Also] high scores are more impressive when corroborated by a larger number of different judges.

One judge requested more clarity around the marking criteria, suggesting that a rubric be developed for clarity.

Getting students to study Philosophy at school

The judges had suggestions for teachers wanting to encourage students to do philosophy. These were pragmatic suggestions, such as: making philosophy relevant to today's world; presenting interesting philosophical problems by using engaging questions or getting students to generate their own questions.

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[1] Monty Campbell from Hale School WA (Hale were not participating in the 2018 Australasian Philosothon) developed a computer program for tallying judges scores that allowed for instant comparison of raw scores and z scores. This program was successfully used at the 2018 Australasian Philosothon and significantly cut down on the time required to tally the results. Judges scores were entered anonymously, and feedback could be easily obtained about individual and school performances across the categories of Critical, Creative and Collaborative thinking.

The judges also suggested that interested teachers attend a Philosothon and join their philosophy in school association. They also noted the benefits for students of doing philosophy, as the skills and knowledge involved are "future-proof".

> The Philosothon is great but seems to be limited to private/selective schools. It would be great to see something similar, even if administrated locally, done in public schools. Also, ask the universities for help. More enrolments for you means more for us.

The quote above is an anomaly as it takes a big picture perspective on the issue of giving more students access to philosophy. This comment relates to the wider issue of access and proffers the suggestion that Philosothons could benefit from the involvement of and resources offered by universities. It is the case that the University of Queensland organises the Philosothon for that region. This model could be expanded if there was interest from other universities. Running a Philosothon would be a low-cost outreach activity in the context of widening participation, especially if used to target schools which wouldn't have access to activities of this sort.

This latter suggestion and others are canvassed in the following section of the report.

Recommendations

What is working?
The research here shows clear enthusiasm from all participants: students, teachers/facilitators and judges. That participants believed that participation in the Philosothon offers a range of benefits; intellectual, social, experiential and life-long was clear from analysis of the responses. The event itself was very positively perceived (minor organizational suggestions for improvement aside). Students enjoyed meeting fellow students from around the country and participating in high-level philosophical discussions. Facilitators and Judges saw students performing well and were impressed by the level of collaboration, creative thinking and communication skills that students were able to demonstrate via the Community of Inquiry process. There is little doubt that Philosothons in general, and the Australasian Philosothon are seen as worthwhile enterprises. The Australasian Philosothon raises the profile of both Philosothons and philosophy. Participants; students, facilitators and judges alike; all enjoyed and felt that they benefitted from their involvement.

Suggestions for improvement
While enthusiasm for the Australasian Philosothon is the most evident theme across all participants, there were some suggestions for improvement in the way that the Australasian Philosothon is run. For future events it is suggested that:

- The timetable for the event take into account the travel time of participants by, for example: starting earlier on the first day; only having one practice (unscored) CoI; reconsidering the Bull hunt activity; choosing a different movie (or doing away with the movie session altogether).
- Giving schools (anonymised) feedback on their overall and individual student performance. Given that most schools invest a lot of time and funds to travel to the event, many teachers were interested in receiving performance feedback so that they knew what aspects of the format their students were doing well, and which aspects needed further development.
- Ensuring consistency in how the sessions were facilitated.
- Evaluating and potentially changing the way the CoIs were scored to reward collaborative behaviours.

- Ensuring that judges judged different groups, rather than judging the same group twice, in order to minimize the potential for bias to even out rather than amplify the effects of judges' different styles of judging.

Overall recommendations

Recommendation 1

To ensure that the event continues to be perceived and experienced as fair, fun and worth the travel effort the technical and logistic details should be reviewed, evaluated and potentially updated after each annual event. For example, the judging and facilitation guidelines should be reviewed in order to ensure clarity and consistency and the event timetabled in a way that takes into account the travel time of facilitators and participants. Teachers have asked for feedback on their school performance, and in line with this recommendation, the ban on such feedback being given should be reconsidered.

Recommendation 2

To ensure the longevity of the Australasian Philosothon event strategies for including a variety of school communities should be developed. Expansion plans should target low SES, remote, rural and systemic Catholic schools as these are the types of schools that currently do not have access to the Philosothon. Access to the Philosothon is the most pressing barrier to the continued success and status of the Australasian Philosothon. At present the Australasian Philosothon represents a limited number of Australian schools - selective government schools and Independent schools.

Recommendation 3

Philosophy in Australia is not uniformly available to students, with not all states including philosophy in their curricula. The Australasian Philosothon has the potential to raise the profile of philosophy in schools. In order to do this media attention and publicity could be harnessed to increase aware of the event at the national and local levels.

Recommendation 4

Develop strategies to improve connections with Philosophy Schools in Universities. As one of the judges suggested, Philosothons could be further expanded to the university sector with more universities encouraged to host Philosothons. These events could easily form a part of university's widening participation and outreach activities. Given the decline of Philosophy as a university subject, hosting public philosophy events such as Philosothons could potentially help universities address the decline in interest in studying philosophy.

Future research trajectories

Academic literature suggests that philosophical inquiry has multiple benefits (including cognitive skills, ethical dispositions or pro-social behaviour) for students, teachers and communities (McPherson, et al. 2018). Although the academic literature indicates the clear benefits of the Community of Inquiry method that underpins the Philosothon, there has been no Australian research into using the Community of Inquiry competitively, to determine whether competition undercuts the benefits of this teaching method. There is also no research into the place of Philosothons in the landscape of philosophy in schools in Australia. This report recommends that such both types of research be commissioned.

Such research could be undertaken to determine the efficacy of the Philosothon - does it have same benefits as traditional CoI approaches? Does the competitive aspect diminish the benefits that are usually associated with COI pedagogies? Given the growing political importance of measuring "non-academic outcomes" (Ladwig, 2010) in schooling, P4C and COI approaches remain an important educational tool. Further research should be undertaken to determine whether Philosothons offer the same benefits to non-academic outcomes (collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking, for example). While the qualitative data proffered here suggests that students and teachers feel that participation benefits students in this way, further empirical research would have to be undertaken to confirm this.

"Despite its effectiveness, philosophy in schools has suffered in part because it has not been adequately scoped and sequenced so that students are able to build their philosophical capacity in ways analogous to the ways their capacities in numeracy, literacy and scientific understanding are built across the whole of their schooling. With the weight of evidence showing significant and measurable improvements in cognitive and social elements for students who learn philosophical methods through collaborative classroom inquiry, it is time that philosophy became more fully enmeshed in school life and time that pre-service training for teachers included philosophical methods and appropriate pedagogy." (Millett & Tapper, 2014, p.1222)

Beyond, researching the benefits of participation in Philosothons, to support the ongoing political project of ensuring that all students in Australia have access to philosophy in schools it is recommended that FAPSA support high quality research that fills in the gaps identified in the literature that demonstrates the benefits to Australian children of studying philosophy.

Also, that FAPSA support work that furthers the push for the inclusion of philosophy in the National Curriculum; and FAPSA sponsors projects that seek to provide a sequence of the skills developed by philosophy akin to the way that numeracy and literacy skills have been sequenced.

Conclusion

There are a large number of positives associated with the Australasian Philosothon. Some have to so with the event itself, others with participation in the 'doing' of philosophy. If the Philosothon encourages more students to do philosophy and be exposed to the benefits of COI pedagogies then that is a good thing. However, in order to ensure that the benefits of the Philosothon do not remain the province of those already privileged (i.e. students in selective and Independent schools) more work needs to be done to get rural, remote, low SES and systemic Catholic schools involved in the Philosothon. This speaks to the larger political project of democratising philosophy in education. That is, working to ensure that students' background and location does not determine whether they have access to philosophy at school. There are a number of organisations working to ensure that this is not the case. Some are lobbying for curriculum change, others are using empirical research to build an evidence base regarding the academic and non-academic benefits to students of doing philosophy. Still others are working in voluntary organisations such a Primary Ethics to ensure that students have the opportunity to do philosophy. To ensure the longevity of the Australasian Philosothon not only must effort be made to ensure that the event is well run and well publicised, but efforts should also be expended in the larger project of building a case for the teaching of philosophy to all students in Australia.

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Appendix A

Survey Instruments

Questionnaire for Students

Questionnaire for Teachers/Facilitators

Questionnaire for Judges

[Please note some change in formatting has occurred in the conversion between Google forms, Word and Adobe PDF. The questions have not changed]

Participant Questionnaire

Questionnaire for Australasian Philosothon participants

1. **What state are you from?**
   Mark only one.

   ( ) SA

   ( ) WA

   ( ) NT

   ( ) QLD

   ( ) NSW

   ( ) ACT

   ( ) VIC

   ( ) TAS

2. **What school year are you in?**

   _____

3. **What type of school do you attend?**
   Mark only one.

   ( ) Government

   ( ) Systemic Catholic School

   ( ) Independent School

4. **Do you, or have you ever, studied a philosophy subject at school?**
   Mark only one.

   ( ) Yes

   ( ) No

5. **Has philosophy been explicitly taught to you in any non-philosophy subject at school?**
   Mark only one.

   ( ) No

   ( ) Yes

   ( ) I'm not sure

6. **Have your experiences at school increased your interest in philosophy?**
   Mark only one.

   ( ) Yes

   ( ) No

   ( ) Maybe

7. **Why did you choose to participate in the Philosothon?**

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

8. **Has your experience in the Philosothon increased your interest in philosophy?**
   Mark only one.

   ( ) Yes

   ( ) No

   ( ) Maybe

9. **How likely are you to recommend participation in a Philosothon to a fellow interested student?**
   Mark only one.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very likely	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	Not at all likely

10. **What have you gotten out of your involvement in the Australasian Philosothon?**

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

11. **A fellow student asks you to explain what philosophy is. How confident are you that you could explain?**

Mark only one.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very confident	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Not at all confident

12. **Do you see yourself choosing to learn more philosophy in the future?**

Mark only one.

◯ Yes

◯ No

◯ Maybe

13. **If philosophy is offered at your school in the future how likely are you to choose to study philosophy?**

Mark only one.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very likely	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Not at all likely

14. **What is the likelihood that you will choose to study philosophy at university?**

Mark only one.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very likely	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Not at all likely

15. **What advice would you give to educators who are trying to get more students to study philosophy at school?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Teacher/Facilitators Feedback form

2018 Australasian Philosothon

1. What state are you from?

Mark only onel.

- ( ) SA
- ( ) WA
- ( ) NT
- ( ) QLD
- ( ) NSW
- ( ) ACT
- ( ) VIC
- ( ) TAS

2. Please describe your involvement in the Australasian Philosothon

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. What type of school do you work at?

Mark only one.

- ( ) Government
- ( ) Systemic Catholic
- ( ) Independent School
- ( ) I'm not a teacher (please go to question 8)

4. Does your school teach philosophy subjects?

Mark only one.

- ( ) Yes (Please go to question 5)
- ( ) No (Please go the question 6)
- ( ) I'm not sure (Please go to question 6)

5. Please describe how many students choose to study philosophy at your school

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

6. Is philosophy explicitly taught at your school in any non-philosophy subject at your school?
Mark only one.

( ) Yes (please go to question 7)

( ) No (please go to question 8)

( ) I'm not sure (please go to question 8)

7. If you answered 'Yes' to Q.6 please provide an example

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

8. Do you see participation in the Australasian Philosothon as a worthwhile experience for students?
Mark only one.

( ) Yes

( ) No

( ) Maybe

9. Please explain your answer to Q.8

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

10. On a scale of 1-5, how likely are you to recommend participation in a Philosothon to an interested student?

Mark only one.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very likely	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	Not at all likely

11. What have you gotten out of your involvement in the Australasian Philosothon?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

12. Can you think of any practical/logistical ways in which the Australasian Philosothon could be improved?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

13. What advice would you give to educators who are trying to get more students to study philosophy at school?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Judges Feedback

2018 Australasian Philosothon

1. What state are you from?

Mark only one.

- ◯ SA
- ◯ WA
- ◯ NT
- ◯ QLD
- ◯ NSW
- ◯ ACT
- ◯ VIC
- ◯ TAS

2. Please describe your involvement in the Australasian Philosothon?

_____

3. Do you see participation in the Australasian Philosothon as a worthwhile experience for students?

Mark only one.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Maybe

4. Please explain your answer to Q.3

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

. 5. On a scale of 1-5, how likely are you to recommend participation in a Philosothon?
Mark only one.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very likely	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Not at all likely

6. On a scale of 1-5, how likely are you to recommend involvement as a judge to an interested person?
Mark only onel.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very likely	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Not at all likely

7. What have you gotten out of your involvement as a judge in the Australasian Philosothon?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

8. Can you think of any practical/logistical ways in which the Australasian Philosothon could be improved?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. What advice would you give to educators who are trying to get more students to study philosophy at school?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

FAPSA

Federation of Australasian Philosophy in Schools Associations