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“Negotiating the curriculum”: Realizing student voice

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Many teachers recognise the desirability of involving students in the planning of lessons and units to provide them with responsibility and autonomy. However, not many teachers give students a voice in planning lessons/future learning because it is seen as hard and the barriers can be significant. Moreover, there is a lack of clear practical strategies as to how to open up the curriculum to student input. Yet there are many benefits to being open to student input, especially in Civics and Citizenship education contexts, where student voice, the modelling of democratic processes and discourse, and notions of empowerment are so central. Although our exemplification is drawn here from a Dutch curriculum context, it also draws upon the analysis of the work of Australian scholars by Bron, Bovill and Veugelers (in press). Therefore, we are confident that the ideas that we share here are equally applicable in Australian education contexts and classrooms.

Students making decisions on their curriculum (in other words, negotiating their curriculum with their peers and teacher) is an example of student voice (Bron et al., 2016; Bron & Veugelers, 2014). It is our hypothesis that by their participation and negotiation, students practise and thus develop democratic qualities. Based on ideas from the student voice discourse, we argue that students offer unique perspectives (Cook-Sather, 2006) on the curriculum and that their involvement adds to the relevance of, and engagement in their learning (Bron & Veugelers, 2014). In this paper we present a method for negotiating the curriculum consisting of principles, aims and an instrument for use in classrooms. The instrument gives structure and direction to the negotiation process in classroom situations. We establish a theoretical basis for the broader aims of this approach and identify the skills which students employ when they negotiate their curriculum. To further highlight the value of negotiating the curriculum, we compare these skills and activities with the aims outlined in the domain of citizenship education and in the 21st century skills literature.

Theorising aims and principles

A curriculum, be it national or provincial should give direction to the work of teachers and inspire them to develop education for a specific group of students in a specific context. In this process teachers are educational connoisseurs (Eisner, 1979) who seek to find the appropriate balance between working towards ends and opportunistically seizing teaching moments in the educational process. In the curriculum as a process model (Beane, 1997; Boomer 1978; Boomer et al, 1992 Eisner, 1979; Joseph, 2011; Stenhouse, 1975), there is substantial space for students to be involved in decision making about their education. We examine this theory further using the work of Kelly (2009). Kelly distinguishes three different approaches to describing the purposes of education by way of a curriculum. The first is to see the purpose of education as the acquisition of knowledge: the curriculum is a selection of knowledge that is regarded as worthwhile, for example because of its intrinsic value, its role in the transmission of culture or because it is economically useful. The second approach is the aims and objectives model that, according to Kelly, “has no kind of view of what the aims of education are or should be but offers us a mechanism for achieving those we have decided to pursue and thus sees it [education] as essentially an instrumental process” (Kelly, 2009, p. 113). Here content is

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selected that helps achieve certain objectives. The third is the process model that sees education as the promotion of human development and the curriculum as a framework for designing developmental learning opportunities. Where in the second approach aims are translated into objectives, in the process model aims are translated into procedural principles. By reference to the principles, planning and practice can be undertaken. In the process model, content selected must promote the processes of development that are regarded as essential in education and reflect the procedural principles. Grounding this discussion in the context of the recently arrived and regularly evolving Australian Curriculum, it is important to be aware of, and create space for, the role of teacher and student mediation of what can appear to be strong content imperatives.

Kelly takes his argument to the level of the value of education itself. In its essence, the aims and objectives model (Bloom 1956; Tyler, 1949) sees education as instrumental to reaching prescribed ends. The breaking up of general aims into bite-size objectives can reduce education to a linear, fragmented, mechanical process. Because the objectives describe behavioural outcomes, students in this process are moulded homogeneously into prescribed blueprints. However, if we regard education as developmental instead of linear and uphold the view that in democratic societies the individual is to be regarded as “a free and active agent, responsible for his or her own destiny” (Kelly, 2009, p. 72), then the process curriculum, with a central role for the teacher and students instead of external experts, bureaucrats and policy makers, is preferred.

Opting for a process approach does not mean that teachers cannot outline, describe and share aims. On the contrary, it is essential to do so. Following Kelly, we must formulate overall aims without trying to break them into a series of short-term objectives. Furthermore, our aims and principles attempt to provide enough scope for practitioners to work with and make adjustments in accordance with their own context. Let us look at what we mean by aims and principles. Aims make explicit what is desirable and worthwhile and give direction to choices in the content and pedagogy. These aims must be adapted and developed further by professionals, teachers with their students in the first place, to fit the level, abilities, age group and backgrounds of students. Such aims can inspire teachers to develop educational activities that fit their specific context. A curriculum based on aims, serves and inspires practices without viewing education as instrumental and teachers solely as deliverers of a dictated and detailed curriculum. We feel that curriculum developers who are positioned outside the school should not become too directive, and should trust that practitioners will, in partnership with students, make the best decisions about curriculum design within their particular circumstances.

Aims are not to be confused with objectives. Put another way, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) content descriptors for Humanities and Social Sciences disciplines are not learning outcomes. We see objectives as descriptions of (usually) measurable expectations of what students learn to do. Objectives tend to have a more instrumental nature and are suitable for instructional kind of activities. But education must be more than instrumental; it must be valuable in the development of students toward the aims and in respect of principles. It might sometimes prove hard to measure the outcomes of some aims, but this does not mean we should only pursue educational outcomes that are easier to measure. As the aims and principles have an intrinsic value, this also means that they are important regardless of extrinsic ends. In other words, if the connection between educational practices and their contribution to general aims (such as tolerance, social justice, equity, inclusion, and freedom) cannot be made visible as a measurable outcome of our education, this must not stop us from our efforts.

Principles and values underpin everything that is happening in education: from content to pedagogy, to power relations and the organisation of education. They define the playing field and set the rules of the game to provide clarity for all involved. They can be formulated on a system level (supranational, national, and regional), on a school level, or at the level of a subject area or teacher. Principles should be reflected in the pedagogical choices made in teaching and learning practices. And principles, of course, are at the heart of citizenship education—including human rights, the common good, the rule of law and democracy.

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Aims and principles for curriculum negotiation

Our aims and principles are derived from theories on student voice (Cook-Sather, 2006; Rudduck & McIntyre, 2007), curriculum negotiation (Beane, 1997; Boomer, 1978, 1982, Boomer et al, 1992) and democratic citizenship education (Apple & Beane, 1995; Bron & van Vliet, 2012a; Hoskins, Janmaat & Villalba, 2012). We developed a working set of four general aims and five principles. Starting with the aims, education should contribute to students' learning by offering the opportunity to:

1. Develop abilities to participate in democratic decision making processes.
2. Make a change in one's situation by cooperating with others to establish their curriculum.
3. Develop insight into the importance of human (or children's) democratic rights.
 - a. The right to participate in matters that affect them: the school curriculum, and to have their ideas taken seriously.
 - b. The right to develop one's own personality and identity.
4. Develop a greater awareness and capability of working with a diversity of others. If all students are involved in social interaction, then students will no longer be considered a homogenous group.

Aim 1 captures the element of experiencing democracy by participating in a decision making process that calls for deliberation, dialogue, discussion and negotiation about previous learning experiences and relevant questions for learning.

Aim 2 reflects the student voice element: to have a voice, to be listened to, to be able to make a change in one's situation and to practise democratic skills in working with others while feeling responsible for the needs and learning of others.

Aim 3 both reflects student voice as a right: the right to participate (3a). This partly overlaps with the second aim but from the perspective of children's rights. However, it also promotes the principle that students have unique perspectives. In other words, they are not inert receptacles into which learning is poured but have a distinct personal identity and bring their backgrounds and previous learning experiences with them to school.

Aim 4 is a consequence of aim 3: bringing different students together and acknowledging their background and identities leads to experiencing diversity. Students must learn to function in a situation that is diverse, which is another element of practising the democratic qualities mentioned in Aim 1.

We regard five principles as crucial in curriculum negotiation.

- I. We have a responsibility to ensure that education leads to further democratic qualities (as part of the aims for citizenship education).
- II. Democratic qualities are developed by interpersonal practices such as discussion, cooperation and decision making (educational benefit).
- III. All students are entitled to practise their democratic rights and have a voice in their education (the universal right to participate).
- IV. Students can offer unique perspectives and within a class these perspectives can be diverse (student voice).

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- V. Learning is a social process involving peers and adults (social learning).

We consider these principles of crucial importance for education, because of their fundamental, intrinsic value. This means that we must critically reflect on our teaching and learning approaches and monitor how these principles are reflected in educational practices.

A method for curriculum negotiation

At some point teaching and learning aspirations must be captured in educational activities that are, first of all, a reflection of aims and principles, but also incorporate objectives related to specific learning activities. Key to the process model is that objectives are decided upon by teachers and their colleagues, students and other professionals through negotiation and not by one of these groups alone.

For this process to be structured and comparable, we need a method based on the aims and principles, for teachers to use when negotiating curricula with the students in class. We decided to develop a student prompt sheet based on the steps developed by Cook (1992).

We developed a prompt sheet which enables students to develop learning questions that function as input into the micro-curriculum, such as a scheme of work or sequence of lessons. As the students fill out the prompt sheet individually, knowledge on a specific topic can be awakened. The next step in the process is that small groups of students develop questions they would like to explore regarding a topic. Once this stage is completed, the entire class meets and discusses the various perspectives in a conversation that can be regarded as “negotiating the curriculum” (Boomer, 1978). The teacher is leading this dialogue. It is during this phase that the teacher puts forth the curriculum requirements as formulated in the formal curriculum. This results in a set of questions that form the core of the forthcoming lessons. Table 1 outlines the different steps that are taken. The instrument itself strongly focuses on producing both content and conceptual understanding. The process the students go through incorporates numerous skills and attitudes related to citizenship education and 21st century skills. It is not dissimilar to “community of inquiry” processes promoted within “philosophy for children” approaches by Matthew Lipman (1984).

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Table 1 *The Four Steps of the Curriculum Negotiating Process*

Steps	Activity	Skills
Individual assignment	List all items related to the general topic. List the questions you have regarding the topic	Brainstorm, associate, awaken previous knowledge and prior learning.
Group assignment	Develop a word web/mindmap around the topic, using the different lists from 1. Decide on a set of questions your group finds most relevant and interesting about the topic	Share, discuss, explain, convince, negotiate, decide.
Class assignment	Groups of students share questions. The class decides on priorities and a distinction between mandatory and optional questions. The teacher makes sure that certain curriculum requirements are met.	Share, discuss, explain, convince, negotiate, decide.
Distributing questions back to groups	The selected questions are distributed amongst groups. Groups plan how best to answer them.	Discuss, explain, convince, negotiate, decide. Choose information collection method, locate sources

The negotiation process offers students an opportunity to have a voice in their education (principle III) and to participate in decision making in small and larger groups. We consider this an example of a democratic practice (principle II), not only because of the participation in decision-making, but also because of the diversity within the class that becomes apparent as each student gets the opportunity to relate learning to their own background and express their uniqueness (principle IV). The structured prompt sheet is to be used within a class setting and is not restricted to a selected group, enabling all students to participate, learn from each other and execute their right to participate and develop democratic qualities in the process (principle III and V). Therefore curriculum negotiation is, with the use of the student prompt sheet, an example of democratic education (principle I).

In Table 2 we present specific aims based on the four more general aims from the last section but developed further in order to be able to be applied to the structured student prompt sheet. This consists of steps the students take in negotiating the curriculum. These steps guide the students from awakening previously acquired insights towards building a coherent set of relevant questions for learning. We used these steps to formulate students' activities in terms of aims. In Table 2 we distinguish between aims and operationalisation. Operationalisation constitutes descriptions of possible student behaviour and activities.

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Table 2 *Aims Related to Steps in Prompt Sheet*

<i>Aims related to prompt sheet Steps 1 - 4 (Cook, 1992)</i>	<i>Aims</i>	<i>Examples of operationalisation</i>
Step 1: <i>What I know and want to find out?</i>	<p>Reflect on prior knowledge;</p> <p>Draw conclusions about one's own prior knowledge to formulate questions for learning</p>	<p>Reflect on prior (learning) experiences, use introspection, retrospection, and brainstorm</p> <p>Take one's own identity (background, interests, and values) as a point of departure.</p> <p>Try to be original and think creatively.</p>
Step 2: <i>Exchange of prior knowledge in groups</i>	<p>Communicate one's findings with others (voice).</p> <p>Relate knowledge put forward by others to one's own (experience diversity).</p> <p>Be responsible for the cooperative development of a group outcome (democracy).</p>	<p>Express and clarify ones prior knowledge</p> <p>Interpret, stimulate and take seriously others' perspectives</p> <p>Make sure everyone's contribution is taken into account.</p>
Step 3: <i>Negotiation and formulation of group questions</i>	<p>Actively participate in negotiations and decision making in small groups</p> <p>Monitor and influence the group dynamics</p>	<p>Explain, convince, give arguments</p> <p>Listen, ask for clarifications or arguments</p> <p>Weigh arguments and interests, discuss differences of opinion</p> <p>Decide together and accept group decisions</p> <p>Reflect on one's own questions for learning and reformulate if necessary</p> <p>Be sensitive to the wellbeing of group members during the process.</p> <p>Express discomfort or feelings of unfairness</p>
Step 4: <i>Negotiation of a common set of agreed questions with peers and teacher</i>	<p>Actively participate in negotiations and decision making in larger groups.</p> <p>Negotiate what the teacher considers non-negotiable (Who says this? Why should we believe this? Who benefits if we act upon it?) And accept the outcome.</p> <p>Prioritise and determine class questions for learning.</p>	<p>Weigh teacher's arguments</p> <p>Express group positions and one's own.</p> <p>Apply insight in roles and responsibilities of students, teachers, school leaders and government.</p> <p>Accept decisions and temporarily regard these as final.</p>

Justifying the relevance of curriculum negotiation for democratic citizenship education and 21st century skills

Student voice is a way of putting the development of democratic qualities into practice. Because of the current interest in democratic citizenship education internationally, International Civics and Citizenship Study (Schulz, Ainley, Fraillon, Kerr, & Losito, 2010), in Europe (Eurydice, 2012) and in the Netherlands (Bron & van Vliet, 2012a), we have looked more specifically at the aims for this domain. We found that the aims presented in Table 2 can to a large part be related to the domain of citizenship but not completely. Some elements are better addressed in existing frameworks for higher order skills that we have come to know as 21st century skills, advanced skills or general capabilities (Voogd & Pareja Roblin, 2012).

We have used the citizenship curriculum framework that was developed for Dutch general education (Bron & van Vliet, 2012a) by the Dutch curriculum institute, SLO. SLO developed this framework in response to the request of the Dutch Government to inspire schools when making their own decisions about their school based curriculum for citizenship education.

Citizenship education in the Netherlands

Citizenship education is on the educational agenda of many countries worldwide and the Netherlands is no exception: from 2006, education for active citizenship and social integration became a formal requirement for primary and secondary schools. The reasons for introducing citizenship education in the Netherlands are congruent with international trends such as increasing individualisation in society, growing multicultural diversity, fear of radicalisation and concerns about the downturn in participation in civic society, particularly among younger generations (Nelson & Kerr, 2006). These concerns are mirrored in Australia.

In 2005 the Dutch Ministry of Education commissioned SLO to develop a curriculum proposal for citizenship education. SLO chose also to integrate human rights education (HRE) into the citizenship curriculum. Since these two domains partly overlap (Bron & van Vliet, 2012a) SLO's curriculum proposal is not prescriptive. It contains recommendations that allow for interpretation and control by schools. The proposal is mainly written for primary education and the first phase of secondary education: learners from 4–16 years of age.

Curriculum content

In its curriculum proposal, SLO has developed three domains: Democracy, Participation and Identity. Each domain is divided into attitudes, skills and knowledge. By combining the domains with attitudes, skills and knowledge, a grid with nine aspects of democratic citizenship is created. In Table 3 the main goals for the first phase of secondary education are summarised. The different domains are thoroughly described by SLO and are available in English (Bron & van Vliet, 2012b).

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Table 3 Summary of the main goals of citizenship and human rights education in the Netherlands for the first phase of secondary education grid (Bron & van Vliet, 2012b)

	Democracy	Participation	Identity
Attitudes	<p>A1 Problem-solving people <i>are prepared to:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. solve conflicts satisfactorily without using violence 2. stand up for a social climate in which everybody feels free and safe to express themselves 3. cope with conflicting interests 4. manage possible tensions when reaching and carrying out majority decisions 	<p>B1 Active people <i>are prepared to:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. be involved in and feel responsible for the social and physical quality of their daily environment 2. stand up for an atmosphere of non-discrimination in social relations 3. dedicate themselves to services useful for society and people in need 	<p>C1 Responsible people <i>are prepared to:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. have two-way conversations with others 2. feel and show respect for their own development as well as the development of others 3. reflect on their own views in relation to commonly accepted values and norms 4. cooperate with others irrespective of their group identity
Skills	<p>A2 Informed people <i>are able to:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. express, explain and communicate their views, opinions and ideas 2. actively inform themselves by consulting and weighing a range of sources 3. accept and deal with the possibility that their views will not be shared by others 4. explain the importance of Democracy, Rule of Law and Human Rights to their own lives 5. form an idea of life in countries where human rights are not or just partially observed 	<p>B2 Social-communicative people <i>are able to:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. apply basic social-communicative skills 2. reflect on their ways of communicating 3. apply their rights to freedom of association and peaceful assembly to initiate and organise activities to improve the livability in class, school and other parts of their everyday environment 4. discuss the importance of socio-economic rights to participate in society 	<p>C2 Empathic people <i>are able to:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reflect on their own identity and experiences 2. develop basic empathic skills, especially to open up to and put themselves into the position of others 3. cooperate with other people regardless of their social, ethnic and/or cultural backgrounds 4. imagine themselves in situations where people are denied the right to (the development of) their own (cultural) identity

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Knowledge	A3 Democratic-literate people	B3 Social-literate people	C3 Cultural-literate people
	<p><i>have insight into:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. key features and characteristics of Democracy and the Rule of Law in the Netherlands and the European Union. 2. the relation between state and citizens/people concerning rights, duties and responsibilities 3. the importance of the Dutch Constitution, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child 	<p><i>have insight into:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. forms of communication 2. different and shared roles, tasks, positions and responsibilities of people in schools 3. activities of organisations that are aimed at human solidarity 4. from a global perspective: several examples of what a lack of human rights means in people's lives 	<p><i>have insight into:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. a few basic characteristics of the Netherlands as a multicultural and pluralistic society, including the right to identity 2. the importance of socialisation to identity development 3. from a global perspective: a few examples of the consequences of non-observance of cultural rights for people's daily lives

The contribution of curriculum negotiation to the aims of citizenship education

Not all of the curriculum statements from Table 3 are relevant for the aims and principles we developed for our curriculum negotiation method. The question was how to select those curricular statements which reflected the essence of curriculum negotiation and the aims and principles we described at the beginning of this paper. To do so two researchers and specialists in curriculum development both individually considered the statements and made a selection. These were then compared in order to establish a selection of 12 relevant curriculum statements from Table 3. The relevance of each selected statement from the perspective of the curriculum negotiation method and the student prompt sheet is described below. The aims are coded in accordance with the overview in Table 3 and follow its sequence horizontally.

1. Stand up for a social climate in which everybody feels free and safe to express themselves (A1-2).

The prompt sheet (steps 2, 3, 4) requires students to cooperate with peers in groups, make decisions in a democratic way, listen to each other's input, and communicate. Each of these processes depends upon a learning climate that is safe, open and inviting. This aim is related to principle III: students are entitled to have a voice.

2. Cope with conflicting interests (A1-3).

Making decisions, negotiating, comparing arguments; all reflect conflicting ideas, points of view and interests (prompt sheet steps 3 and 4). Students might be surprised to be confronted with differences and must learn to cope with situations of disagreement. This aim is related to principle II: Practising democratic qualities and general aim 4: experiencing diversity.

3. Manage possible tensions when reaching and carrying out majority decisions (A1-4).

In step 4 of the prompt sheet, the number of questions from sub-groups is decreased. Not all input from different students can be incorporated in the final selection of questions for learning. Students have to cope either by accepting that not all their input can be used or that

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others might be disappointed if their input is not used. This tension can be stressful and emotional. This aim is related to principle II: Practising democratic qualities and general aim 1: democratic decision making. In a democracy not everyone gets what they want!

4. Express, explain and communicate their views, opinions and ideas (A2-1).

In the process of sharing prior knowledge and questions for learning (prompt sheet step 2) as well as in negotiating relevant questions (prompt sheet step 3), students express, explain and communicate their view, opinions and ideas. This aim is related to principle II: practising voice; principle V: learning as a social activity, and general aim 3: to have ones ideas taken seriously.

5. Accept and deal with the possibility that their views will not be shared by others (A2-3).

In most situations where ideas are shared and negotiation takes place, conflicting ideas and opinions appear. Agreement and disagreement are the result. Especially in steps 3 and 4 of the prompt sheet, students must accept and deal with situations where their views are not shared. This aim is related to principle II: developing democratic practices through experience, and general aim 4: experiencing diversity.

6. Explain the importance of democracy, rule of law and human rights to their own lives (A2-4).

This is a rather abstract statement. If teacher and students reflect on the process of curriculum negotiation, they can reach an understanding of the relationship between the processes they participate in such as: having a voice, participating in decision making, applying rules; and the concept of democracy, rule of law and rights. This aim is related to principle V: student voice is a practice for the development of democratic qualities based on rights and general aim 3: to experience democratic rights.

7. Apply basic social-communicative skills (B2-1).

Communication has a central place in curriculum negotiation and in steps 2, 3 and 4 of the prompt sheet. Except for one, all steps within the prompt sheet involve communication within small groups or the whole class. This aim is related to principle II: developing democratic qualities such as voice and social interaction.

8. Have insight into different and shared roles, tasks, positions and responsibilities of people in schools (B3-2).

As students influence their curriculum by participating in curriculum negotiation, they become aware of the responsibility this entails. In the class discussion (prompt sheet step 4) the teacher will explain non-negotiable external requirements and will also share his/her own preferences. Students must accept that the teacher will have to approve the final selection based on their responsibility related to their position. This aim is related to principle V: develop democratic qualities based on rights.

9. Have a two way conversation with others (C1-1).

Negotiation and decision making means exchanging points of view, listening to others, finding common ground or reaching solutions. Communication is key in the prompt sheets steps 2 to 4 where input goes back and forth amongst participants in a group. This aim is related to principle II: developing democratic qualities such as social interaction; principle V: learning is a social activity and general aim 4: experience diversity through social interaction.

10. Feel and show respect for one's own development as well as the development of others (C1-2).

Curriculum negotiation revolves around questions to be addressed in the forthcoming lessons. These questions are based on interests and ideas about one's own intellectual and

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social development. As participants within a group have different backgrounds and interests the learning and development can go in different directions. This requires a balance of interests when carrying out decisions, especially in step 4 of the prompt sheet. This aim is related to principle IV: students have different perspectives and a class is diverse and V: learning is a social activity. Also relevant is general aim 3: the right to have their ideas taken seriously (reciprocity).

11. Reflect on own identity and experiences (C2-1).

The curriculum negotiation process and the prompt sheet (step 1) starts with a reflection on prior learning experiences and existing knowledge. Students reflect on their own identity related situation and experiences. This aim is related to principle IV: students have unique perspectives, and general aim 3: develop one's personality and identity.

12. Cooperate with other people regardless of their social, ethnic and/or cultural backgrounds (C2-3).

Classes often have mixed populations: students have different social, cultural or ethnic backgrounds. In group work students are more or less required to cooperate with each other; this is especially so in step 3 of the prompt sheet. Teachers can stimulate this by steering the group formation. The aim is related to principles II: democratic qualities; V: learning is a social activity, and IV: the class as example of diversity, and to general aim 4: experience diversity.

Relevance of curriculum negotiation for 21st century skills

The focus of citizenship education is on the participation of students in society now and in their later lives, with an emphasis on democratic attitudes, social cohesion and coping with diversity. The 21st century skills share the same focus on participating in society now, but also look forward to participation in the job markets of the future society. The emphasis is on creative thinking, problem-solving, working together, communication, ICT and world citizenship (Voogd & Pareja Roblin, 2012).

In the Australian Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes, Values and Ethics (KSAVE) model (Binkley et al., 2012) 10 skills are grouped into four categories. The categories are: ways of thinking; ways of working; tools for working; and living in the world. In the next paragraphs we present the skills that we consider most relevant to the curriculum negotiation process. In a similar manner to the process of selecting aims from the citizenship framework, two experts individually made their selection and then compared their selections to locate the overlapping statements. It turned out that not all categories were useful: tools for working (including information and communications technology (ICT) literacy) are not used. For each skill we explain the relationship to our general aims and principles in the context of the student prompt sheet for curriculum negotiation.

Ways of thinking, 1. Creativity and innovation:

Be open and responsive to new and diverse perspectives

Working in groups (prompt sheet steps 2, 3 and 4) and using input from group members to reach solutions can only function if group members are open and responsive to new and diverse perspectives. This is especially the case when groups are more heterogeneous. This aim is related to principle III and general aim 4 on experiencing diversity and on principle V: learning as a social activity.

Ways of thinking, 2. Critical thinking, problem solving, decision making

Identify gaps in knowledge

Inviting students to participate in discussions about the curriculum requires that students develop ideas about what there is to learn and what they consider relevant to learn. Students

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are asked to reflect on previous learning experiences (steps 1 and 2) in their lives to identify gaps in knowledge, insights and skills. This aim is related to general aim 3: develop one's personality and identity.

Ask meaningful questions

Besides identifying gaps in knowledge, students are asked to formulate questions for further learning they consider meaningful (all steps in the prompt sheet). Discussing proposed questions with peers helps to improve formulations and to select questions that are meaningful to students. This aim is related to principle IV: students offer unique perspectives and to general aim 2: having an active role in establishing their curriculum.

Ways of thinking, 3. Learning to learn, metacognition

Ability to reflect critically on the object and purpose of learning

Being involved in curriculum development eventually leads to questions on the object and purpose of learning within a school context. Teachers can raise the awareness of students about sharing power over the curriculum by curriculum negotiation (introduction to prompt sheet and step 4). This aim is related to general aim 3: the right to participate in matters that affect the student.

Ability to communicate as part of the learning process (...)

Curriculum negotiation strongly depends on communication in small groups and in class to exchange knowledge and questions for learning. Students can learn from articulating their prior learning experiences and knowledge and the questions they consider relevant. And they learn from other students' input and the discussion that can follow (prompt sheet steps 2, 3 and 4). This aim is related to principle II: participate in discussion and social interaction; principle V: learning as a social activity, and general aim 2: having an active role in establishing their curriculum.

Positive appreciation of learning as a life-enriching activity and a sense of initiative to learn

Being involved in a discussion about one's curriculum is based on appreciation of learning and on the initiative to learn. Practically experiencing having a voice and having an influence is important here. The prompt sheet itself is too concrete for these reflections, but the teacher can awaken this aspect in the introduction or when reflecting on the process. This aim is related to principle III: students are entitled to have a voice in their education as well as IV: students can offer unique perspectives. Furthermore the aim is related to general aim 2: make a change in one's situation (curriculum).

Adaptability and flexibility

Working in groups and negotiating the opinions and perspectives from different people requires adaptability and flexibility, for example when faced with others' views and opinions or when one's own ideas are not shared with others (prompt sheet step 2, 3 and 4). This aim is related to principle IV: students offer unique perspectives and a class is an example of social diversity. The aim is also related to general aim 4: experience diversity in social interaction.

Ways of working, 5. Collaboration

Show respect for cultural differences and be prepared to work effectively with people from a range of social and cultural backgrounds

Students work together with peers in small groups and in class (prompt sheet steps 2, 3 and 4). Depending on the diversity of a class, students will be faced with differences in background and personality that will affect the group work. This aim is related to principle IV: the class as an example of diversity, in combination with 1: furthering democratic qualities and 5: learning as a social activity. It is also related to general aim 4: experiencing diversity.

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Living in the world, 8. Citizenship – local and global

Willingness to participate in democratic decision-making at all levels

Students negotiating their curriculum are making decisions in a democratic way at the level of small groups (prompt sheet steps 2 and 3) and at the class level (prompt sheet step 4) as they negotiate with other groups and the teacher. This aim is related to principle I: furthering democratic qualities, II, practicing democracy and general aim 1: to participate in democratic decision making processes.

Negotiate and balance diverse views and beliefs to reach workable solutions (Citizenship).

When students negotiate their questions in small groups (prompt sheet steps 2, 3) and the class (prompt sheet step 4), they will have to balance the contributions of the group members and try to reach solutions that will not ultimately lead to conflicts. This aim is related to principle II: develop practices such as discussion, social interaction and negotiation. The aim is also related to diversity and therefore to general aim 4: experiencing diversity.

Living in the world, 9. Life and career

Go beyond basic mastery to expand one's own learning

When students exchange prior knowledge and their questions for learning (prompt sheet step 2), they are confronted with the other students' ideas and opinions. This will challenge them to go beyond their own input for the curriculum and thereby expand their own learning. This aim is related to principle III: have a voice in their education; principle V: learning as a social activity and general aim 2: make a change in one's situation by having an active role in establishing their curriculum.

Living in the world, 10. Personal & social responsibility – including cultural awareness and competence

Ability to negotiate

Curriculum negotiation is an example of developing the ability to negotiate (prompt sheet step 3 and 4). This aim is related to principle II: developing democratic qualities by practising negotiation, and general aim 1: to participate in democratic decision making.

Disposition to compromise

Negotiating means giving and taking which is based upon a capacity and disposition to compromise. This aim is related to principle III: student voice is a practice for the development of democratic qualities based on rights. And general aim 3 the right to have their ideas taken seriously.

Conclusion

Viewing a curriculum as a process means leaving ample opportunities for practitioners to co-construct and negotiate the curriculum with colleagues and students. Aims and principles give direction and inspiration to that process. We have sought to transform the broad intention articulated in the student voice and democratic citizenship discourses to a selection of such aims and principles and relate these to the steps students take when using an instrument for curriculum negotiation in class settings. We have gone on to highlight links to the aims of education for democratic citizenship and 21st century learning skills and dispositions. We have conducted a series of five case studies with 12–13 year old classes in schools of both low and high achieving students. The first results from these cases are positive: students had no problems using the method and teachers noticed an increase in engagement amongst students and observed an increase in the use of skills such as cooperation, exchanging opinions, negotiation and decision-making. The results of these case studies will become available in the near future.

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The most recent Australian overview of contemporary curriculum theory and practice (Webster & Ryan, 2014) encourages teachers to take the time to reflect upon how they relate to multiple perspectives on the curriculum and “to take a committed stance” (p. 1) around the sort of curriculum work that they might want to enact. They rightly reject the notion that teachers should “passively accept from central authorities packaged materials and preferred methods of delivery as though curriculum work and teaching were only technical affairs” (p. 4). They assert the centrality of teacher agency—“If you want to educate the students you teach, then you will need also to be a participant with the Australian Curriculum, rather than its recipient” (p. 209). The processes and principles outlined in this paper offer a way for students and teachers to negotiate curricula in ways that enable significant learning through enacting democratic education in classrooms.

We have argued here for student agency as well as teacher agency when it comes to negotiating the curriculum. The students can be partners in the citizenship education learning journey. We hope that our suggestions here provide signposts to modeling processes which place education for democratic citizenship practices at the heart of a whole school culture which respects students’ desires, interests and opinions.

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