

**Philosophy in Schools:
*Developing a Community of Inquiry***

**Report on the Proceedings
of the Conference**

(Mon 17 – Tues 18 April 2006)

**Introduced and Edited by
Dr Ho Wah Kam
(Academic Consultant, STU)**

**with the assistance of Mr Henry Widjaja
(Chairman, Secretariat)**

PROF. DR. ROSNANI HASHIM
Professor
Centre for Education and Human Development
International Islamic University Malaysia

© 2006, Singapore Teachers' Union

CONTENTS

		Page	
Introduction to the Conference		8	
Welcome and Opening Addresses	1	Welcome Address by Mr Mike Thiruman, President of the Singapore Teachers' Union 12	
	2	Opening Address given by Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam, Minister for Education, Singapore 15	
Keynote Addresses	THE FOUR KEYNOTE ADDRESSES		21
	1	Philosophy and the School Curriculum by Associate Professor Philip Cam 23	
	2	Teaching Philosophy in Australian Schools by Dr Stephan Millett 39	
	3	Philosophy in a Crowded Curriculum by Professor Laurance Splitter 56	
	4	The "Philosophy" in Philosophy in Schools by Mr Clinton Golding 66	
Seminars	THE NINE SEMINARS		85
	A	Philosophy in Upper Secondary School by Dr Stephan Millett 87	
	B	What are Philosophical Questions? by Mr Clinton Golding 100	

C	Training Teachers to Teach <i>Philosophy for Children</i> in the US and Australia by Professor Laurance Splitter	115
D	How Shall I Live?: Disparate Reflections on Education, Meaning-Making and the Postmodern Existential Condition by Professor David Hogan	130
E	Philosophical Thinking and Attitude by Dr Tan Tai Wei	173
F	Introduction to Classical Chinese Thought by Dr Benjamin Wong	180
G	Critical Perspectives on Contemporary Islamic Thought by Mr Azhar Ibrahim	191
H	Teaching Indian Philosophy in Schools by Professor Saranindranath Tagore	217
J	Teaching Critical Reasoning Through Films and Songs by Dr Charlene Tan	223
Presentations at Symposia	THE THREE SYMPOSIA	235
K	Fostering Primary School's Critical Thinking in the Learning of Chinese Language Through the Use of <i>Philosophy for Children</i> by Mr Seet Jun Feng	237
	Fostering Critical Thinking in the Primary School Classroom Through the <i>Philosophy for Children</i> Approach and Its Implication for National Education by Mr Jeremy Ang Wei Teck	249
	The Creative Classroom: A Paradigm Shift from Teacher to Pupil Ownership and Leadership by Ms Stella Fernandez	260
	<i>Comments of Respondent, Mr Clinton Golding</i>	285
L	Embracing P4C by Ms Gan Lay Tsin, Ms Ng Kuan Hwa, Mr Lee Chiew Lim and Mr V Ruminathan	288

M	Building a Socratic Community: Pedagogy, Skills, and Assessment Strategies by Mr Kenneth Low, Mr Mohamed Azlan and Mr Dennis Au	306
	The Place of Philosophy in Affective Education by Mrs Shirley Tan and Mr Teoh Chin Leong	317
	<i>Comments of Respondent, Associate Professor Philip Cam</i>	340
	An Exploratory Study of My Students' Face-to-Face Philosophy Classroom Discussions by Mr Yip Meng Fai	343
	Philosophy in Schools in the Malaysian Context by Professor (Dr) Rosnani Hashim	358
Philosophy-Enriched English Programme by Ms Ellene Tan	368	
<i>Comments of Respondent, Ms Janette Poulton</i>	373	
Closing Plenary Session	Closing Remarks given by Mr Kishore Mahbubani	382

PHILOSOPHY IN SCHOOLS IN THE MALAYSIAN CONTEXT

Rosnani Hashim

*International Islamic University Malaysia
Malaysia*

Introduction

Philosophy as has been understood for so long is the inquiry into Truth and ultimately, to attain wisdom. Although it began with the Greeks who loved to speculate, analyze and prescribe on the nature of human being, God, the universe and existence itself, the purpose of man's living, the good life, and on happiness, it could also be found in all great Traditions. The subjects of philosophy, namely metaphysics, epistemology, values and logic, are all important in drawing the parameter of any tradition's worldview. In this sense, philosophy seems like the umbrella that holds the worldview together and attempts to give it meanings. Philosophy is also known as the theory of education (Dewey, 1929) because its subject matter is very much linked to education. Education deals with man as the learner, with epistemology because it deals with knowledge as the content to be understood, passed on and further expanded through the various methods – empirical or sense experience, rational thinking, or from the Words of God revealed by the messengers. It also deals with values because the goal of education is not just to transmit existing knowledge and generate new knowledge but more importantly to also cultivate good moral values for the good of man and society. Finally, it deals with logic because the teacher will not be able to make sense to the students unless he or she instructs them in a clear and logical manner.

The inability of students to think well, critically and be wise, is today a matter of concern and it was due to this that the notion of philosophy in schools becomes relevant since every tradition has its share of philosophers who brought forth great ideas leading to societal change. Its importance is more felt as man began to neglect it on the pretext of its obsolescence in the era where man is more concerned with his material well being which is catered for by other more relevant disciplines and subjects. People have come up with many new approaches such as de Bono's Lateral Thinking, to improve thinking skills but our encounter and experience with philosophy informs us that here is an