Embedding career education in the Victorian Curriculum F–10

Ethical Capability, Levels 9 and 10

An existing learning activity linked to a particular learning area or capability in the Victorian Curriculum F–10 can be easily adapted to incorporate career education, enriching students’ career-related learning and skill development.

1. Identify an existing learning activity

**Curriculum area and levels:** Ethical Capability, Levels 9 and 10

**Relevant content description:** Distinguish between the ethical and non-ethical dimensions of complex issues, including the distinction between ethical and legal issues ([VCECU021](https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/VCECU021))

**Existing activity:** Analysing the ethical and non-ethical obligations in a hypothetical scenario in a school setting, such as the use of quotas.

**Summary of adaptation, change, addition:** Identifying tensions between ethical and non-ethical considerations (such as practical or legal requirements) in a contemporary workplace context, such as the use of quotas.

2. Adapt the learning activity to include a career education focus

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| Existing learning activity | Adaptations, changes or extensions that can be made |
| Teacher facilitates a class discussion regarding the distinction between ethical and legal obligations, noting in particular:   * instances where past laws have been arguably unethical (such as laws that restrict the rights of certain groups) * instances where it is not practical to make ethical choices binding (e.g. enforcing promise-keeping) * instances where ethical obligations become legal obligations, but the change is met with resistance * instances where ethical obligations contradict or challenge existing rules/laws. | Teacher leads brainstorm to generate examples for each category from the existing activity, drawing on students’ experience of or assumptions about the workplace.  For example, previously, the obligation to have good hygiene in a workplace was primarily an ethical one, whereas post-COVID-19, it seen as a legal Occupational Health and Safety issue, which some members of the community protest. |
| Teacher introduces a hypothetical scenario for students to apply their understanding of the distinction between ethical and legal obligations, and the tensions that may arise as a result.  For example:  *Teachers introduce an informal policy that there needs to be equal gender representation in the school’s mixed table tennis team, regardless of the merit of the players. This policy has come about because female players have been underrepresented in the team in the past. Without being on the team, female players have less access to resources to practise. Female students have expressed interest in joining the team, but are discouraged by the current gender balance and perceived skill disparity.*  *If the school were to adopt this policy, they would be the only team in the local competition to do so. There is no rule preventing the use of quotas.*  Students should discuss how they feel about the introduction of quotas in this situation. What are the ‘legal’ and ethical obligations? Do they think the new policy is fair? What benefits/challenges can they identify? | As an extension of the existing activity, teacher identifies a contemporary workplace issue where ethical and legal obligations are at odds, or where legal requirements fall short of ethical obligations.  For example, teacher directs students to consider the issue of improving leadership opportunities for women and minority groups using quotas. To what extent can laws improve equality? What are the limitations of the law on this issue? (i.e. there are laws that prohibit discrimination against women for having children, yet discrimination persists in many forms.) |
| Students then consider a situation where the mixed table tennis competition organisers introduced a rule mandating equal representation of genders. Students reflect on whether their position changes based on quotas being a result of a rule, rather than being an informal school policy. | Students consider a workplace scenario where there are very entrenched views that would be challenged by a change in legal obligations. For example, they imagine a workplace where the board of directors is opposed to gender quotas but has to meet them legally. Would the legal quotas change the views of the members of the board? Why/why not? |
| With reference to previous activities, students write a short answer response to the following questions:   * In what ways can laws/rules support ethical decision-making? * In what ways might laws/rules be at tension with ethical decision-making? | Students reflect on and articulate what the issues raised in the activity means to them personally. Has it given them insight into future career planning? Students think about how they would respond in the scenario explored, or how they would feel if they couldn’t respond in the way they’d like to. |

Considerations when adapting the learning activity

* In some examples, students should be provided with supporting statistics so as not to rely entirely on ethical intuitions. For example, students could consider statistics from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency in relation to gender quotas for [women in leadership positions](https://www.wgea.gov.au/topics/women-in-leadership).
* While debates about gender quotas are sometimes framed as a debate between merit and equality in popular culture, more nuanced approaches can be found in research. For example, see relevant articles in [The Conversation](https://theconversation.com/au/topics/gender-quotas-24934).

Benefits for students

Know yourself – self-development:

* Students develop their ethical reasoning and identify ways in which the changing world of work may challenge values and beliefs.

Know your world – career exploration:

* By considering contemporary workplace issues, students understand the influence that ethical concepts and societal values have on workplaces, as well as how work allows people to participate in society.

Manage your future – be proactive:

* Focussing on a contemporary issue allows students to understand trends in how workplaces are changing. This assists them to make informed choices when planning their careers.