

## Reasonable Children, Reasonable Citizens: The Contributions of Philosophy for Children to Post-apartheid South Africa

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**KEYWORDS** Philosophy for Children. Reasonableness. Citizenship. South Africa

**ABSTRACT** The following questions are addressed in this concept paper: (a) What kind of citizenship education, if any, should schools in liberal societies promote? and (b) What ends is such education supposed to serve? A transformation agenda of an emerging democratic society such as South Africa should be informed by an education system that fosters democratic ideals. Schools are primarily instituted with the central goal of producing educated persons in general and persons who are as knowledgeable as they are reasonable in particular. But can we educate for reasonableness without educating for thinking? We present in this paper a theoretical-philosophical exposé of Philosophy for Children by attempting to advance a convincing interpretation of reasonableness in the context of South Africa. We argue a case for doing philosophy with children as this promotes the virtues of striving for objectivity, accepting fallibility, judiciousness and maintaining a pragmatic attitude which are critical for a reasonable person.

### INTRODUCTION

*“Human beings became civilised as they became reasonable, and for an animal to improve its reasoning is a long, slow process” (Lipman et al 1980: xi).*

*“Education in the critical faculty is the only education of which it can be truly said that it makes good citizens” (Swarts 1992: 5)*

Having been introduced to a course in Philosophy for Children almost 12 years back, we have often been perplexed by a single question: What is the value of Philosophy for Children? Searching for an answer to this question, we turned to existing literature where we discovered a multifarious range of reasons from social, psychological to political domains which in an educational context are attached to many educational aims. There are a profusion of arguments, which purport to answer the above question, and can be classified into two broad questions: normative and pedagogical respectively: (1) what are the primary aims of education? (2) How can these aims be realised? It is against this background that we have tasked ourselves

with the duty of discussing firstly what the proper business of education should be, and secondly, linking Philosophy for Children with identified aims of education. Consequently, we make two claims namely that: (1) Education is for making children reasonable citizens who will gradually grow into reasonable adult citizens and (2) Doing philosophy with children using the pedagogy of community of inquiry is the most suited way of achieving the goal. While these tenets are intertwined and complementary in the formation of a good citizen, the focus of this paper is on the underlying notion of a reasonable citizen.

Since the dawn of the democratic elections of 1994, South Africa has been subject to an enduring socio-political change. Societal changes have been accompanied with some strides towards developing and providing an appropriate democratic education to its citizens. Yet for a political structure to stand the best chance of legitimacy and sustainability, it should concern itself with motivating its citizens (Nussbaum 2001). Furthermore, Jewel (2005: 494) asserts that “...children should be educated to be ideal citizens, capable of making rational and informed decisions... (and)... societies that favour liberalism preach the primacy of the individual autonomous citizen and a concomitant tolerance

for others” (Jewel 2005: 494). It is known that citizens in democratic societies spend their youthful, formative years at school, and to that end every democratic society faces the challenge of educating succeeding generations of young people to become reasonable and responsible citizens. Consequently, we argue that these dispositions have to be fostered and nurtured by the power of practice. It is the case that we cannot conceive of reasonable critical citizens without education, and we posit that human beings are not born with characteristics necessary for reasonable citizenship. In this paper, we explore the notion of a reasonable being by examining Burbules’ (1995) four virtues of reasonableness, which we link to the formation of citizens. But first, we will briefly discuss the notion ‘child’ in the African context before considering the concept of Philosophy for Children.

### **Child in the Context of Africa**

Children in Africa, in general, tend to be lacking in power or authority with their lives determined and/or constricted by adults in the political, educational, legal and administrative sense (James and Prout 1997). What this means is that there is a permanent undercurrent of inferiority among children. In addition, adults construct and repeatedly enforce this notion of inferiority of children, which is evidently discriminatory against children. ‘Child’ and ‘adult’ are considered to be static, ahistorical and radically polarized opposites, and “...child is the subordinate category in [this] partnership and it is defined as not adulthood, which means not autonomy and not citizenship...” (Wyn 1995: 52). In addition, Jenks (1996) posits that children are seen and treated as subordinates until they pass a period of socialisation and graduate into competent adult beings. This futurist notion of becoming a competent adult denies children certain rights including that of being citizens until some predetermined age and or after fulfilling certain ritualised processes. This reinforces the Lockean idea of child as a citizen-in-the-making, fledgling, an imperfect reasoned and a blank slate to be filled with experience. Locke posited that the child is incomplete and immature and needs the help of adult experience to imprint knowledge of the world onto his or her. The insight underlined here is that a child gains knowledge from experience. In other words, knowledge is

not in-born (Ndofirepi 2010). This position further asserts that children, if left alone, are bound to make mistakes that will not be in their best interests and those of their families and the community at large. The older members of society see themselves as the custodians of knowledge leading to what Kaphagawani refers to as epistemological authoritarianism (Kaphagawani 1988).

We observe the weak position that children are accorded in questioning and challenging decisions that affect their lives. It also points to the amount of autonomy young members of society are accorded to be independent and critical thinkers. Yet we subscribe to the school of thought that maintains that knowledge has some kind of independent existence and has awesome power. Furthermore, we agree with Erny (1973: 1) that a person who possesses knowledge “inspires awe, whatever the domain he exercises his knowledge”. We insist, therefore, that children rightly deserve autonomy to create and possess knowledge suitable for their own age range. Children create this knowledge by possessing the right to articulate informed decisions by engaging in dialogue with their own world in order to make meaning out of it since “curiosity in children is an appetite after knowledge... the great instrument nature has provided ... (*in order*) to remove that ignorance that they were born with..(without which) they will become dull useless creatures” (Locke in Ulrich 1957: 372). From the above view, we posit that the child makes inquiries, has all his or her questions answered and has matters he or she desires to know.

Elsewhere, we have argued that traditionally, Africans consider such an allowance and disposition to be inquisitive of adult knowledge as a sign of disrespect shown by children to their adult members (Ndofirepi 2010). The question remains: Does a South Africa of the 21<sup>st</sup> century define a child in this sense? How can education be instrumental in making children live reasonable lives and share equally through deliberative engagement in a democratic South Africa? We argue that the centuries of unreasonableness and the accompanying costs fostered by traditional education is a luxury South Africa cannot afford in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. By proposing reasonableness as the critical value of education we assume that reasoning is most effectively cultivated in the context of philosophy. This means that doing philosophy with

children will help young people to think better for themselves and to think in responsible ways.

### Are Children Citizens?

Crompton makes an attempt to define citizenship as “full and participating membership of a nation state...” (Crompton 1993: 139). Complex as the definition of citizenship may be, we acknowledge that citizenship has to do with the relationship between a state and those who live within its boundaries an idea referred to as belonging to a state. We argue that citizenship is a status bestowed on all those who are ‘full members’ of a community, who are furnished with individual and collective rights, protection, other benefits as well as stipulating the obligations the citizen must fulfil and the manner by which they conduct themselves in order to adhere to the basic principles of the state. In this sense, citizens become equal members of a community with respect to rights and duties with which the status bestows upon them. However, with reference to children, the question we pose for interrogation is: Is citizenship age-specific? In other words, are children as citizens as adults? Does our postmodern society recognise children as much of citizens as their parents?

While we agree that children depend to a large extent on the adult members of society in terms of socio-economic needs, we argue that they hold citizenship in the communities in which they are members and therefore are worthy of respect in that regard. While we acknowledge that they often act and think irrationally and irresponsibly, we maintain that children, by virtue of their humanity, rightly deserve to occupy their space in society and are worthy of being recognised as citizens, and should enjoy and grow up with their citizenship till they reach adult maturity. We appreciate, to an extent, the deficit model of Aristotle and Locke that assumes that children are lacking the experience that adults have and therefore have to look up to adults to assist them become full human beings. Although to some extent citizens are made, there is no reason to postpone providing for children to develop dispositions that make them child citizens. Developing their awareness of their citizenship by allowing them this space at an early age so as to exercise their rights to citizenship is a basic human right. Against this background, we wish to propose that one avenue through which citi-

zenship can be fostered is schooling by introducing them to philosophy that allows them the opportunity to philosophise.

### Challenges of Contemporary Education

The educational system today in South Africa and elsewhere has often been challenged for being “monolithic, inflexible, and impenetrable” (Lipman 1988: 15). Although, the major goal of education is thought to be learning, the recall model is dominated by assessment: teachers teach for tests. Equally, the information-acquisition model overshadows the educational activities and in the process discourages children from thinking for themselves. This stifles rather than initiates thinking in learners. We contest the tendency of contemporary education to instruct the child into a culture through the assimilation of the child by the culture. On the contrary, we posit that education should provide for the appropriation of the culture by the child. We agree with the assertion that:

*In high school there is a common system of “learning” that goes something like this: listen, take notes, memorise, and regurgitate facts. Each high school subject seems to show the world a distinct window unconnected to the window presented by other classes (Benjamin and Scott 1989: 29).*

In many classrooms learners are often punished for talking. In fact talking has a bad name and students who engage in it are covertly treated as evidence of disobedience. Children sit at their desks and are overwhelmed by factual information that seems mixed-up, pointless, irrelevant and meaningless to their daily experiences (Lipman et al. 1980). Developmental psychologists such as Jean Piaget hold that children are not capable of logical reasoning before they reach some age have to a large extent informed current educational practices (Piaget 1967). But we concur with Groethuysen (1978), who claims that it is a serious error to divide human life into stages, and then to consider the mature stage as somehow “normal” so that childhood is merely leading up to the norm. In this sense, traditional education is the home of meaninglessness and as result so many children find schooling boring and are apathetic. In effect, the text books prepared and written by adults and used in schools are didactic devices that “...stand over against the child as an alien and

rigid other” (Groethuysen 1978: 20). On entry into preschool, children are eager, fresh and enthusiastic to learn. More often than not, it is our observation as high school teachers that by the time they start formal schooling they lose the natural inquisitiveness and with progress into middle years of schooling they hold the suspicion that they are being compelled to remain in school; some even contemplate quitting. The common thread that we observe in these challenges is the lack of opportunities that our schools offer for reasonable behaviour. As Wyn explains:

*Conceptually, the positioning of youth in this way obscures the experiences of young people by relegating them to a less significant realm than those who have reached ‘adult’ life. Young people are seen as ‘non-adults’, a group who are deficit. They are citizens of the future rather than citizens in the present... the present is seen as preparation for the future, thereby devaluing the experiences young people have* (Wyn 1995: 52)

This dominant ideal of schooling actually seems to assume that it’s only when students finish school and become fully autonomous adults that they will find the knowledge acquired at school relevant, useful and meaningful. If we accept this conception of education we should simply expect, as many adults do, that students will find schooling meaningless, boring and onerous.

In this connection, Lipman (1988: 18) rightly puts that the current challenge is that traditional education has offered “...the greatest disappointment... (by) its failure to produce people approximating the idea of reasonableness”. Referring to the South African case specifically in the social and economic sphere, there are “regular occurrences of racism, intolerance and stereotyping...” (Delport 2009: 105) and an alarming evidence of moral decadence evidenced by, ... “daily incidents of corruption, armed robbery, rape, murder, xenophobic attacks and hijackings” (Delport 2009). The question then is what is the possible solution to these challenges? We propose introducing philosophy to children. But what can philosophy and children offer each other?

### **Philosophy for Children**

Education systems are facing challenges to reshape the cognitive skills, interpersonal aware-

ness and cultural sensibilities of children as learners to suit the changing times. How can educational aims be adjusted to suit the child and what basic skills and competencies and attitudes does the child need to survive and contribute to a new 21<sup>st</sup> century South Africa? While it might be acknowledged that there are a diverse range of such competencies, we single out reasonableness as the most outstanding virtue that the redesign of education must primarily concern itself with. We argue that reasonable children dispose what Barber (1992: 37) calls, “...the competence to participate in democratic communities, the ability to think critically and act deliberately in a pluralistic world, the empathy that permit us to hear and thus accommodate others, all involve skills that must be acquired”.

In our view philosophy is one force that may be used in training the faculty of judgment, of criticising, of questioning as well as sensitivity. Historically, Philosophy for Children has served to foster a progressive educational agenda and thinkers in support of it have often argued that it seeks to the prepare children for citizenship within a democratic society (Fisher 2007; Vansieleghem 2005). Lipman (1991) has posited that as a programme Philosophy for Children aims at improving the conditions of teaching thinking in educational systems. He has suggested that the goal of the programme is to help children to learn how to think. In effect, the central focus of doing philosophy with children is improving reasoning ability, developing creativity, stimulating ethical values, improving self-awareness and augmenting critical thinking.

Doing philosophy with children is a holistic dynamic approach that promotes personal integration of human existence through cognitive, emotional and social communication. To that end, in order to achieve these goals, schools should involve building what Charles S. Peirce has coined as “*community of inquiry*”. By community, Dewey (1966) refers to a group of like-minded but diverse individuals who come together around a common concern over time (Dewey 1966). Such a community is a democratic society of members who, together figure challenges out, plan and solve problems that arise from their world. Schools form one of those communities wherein children can be encouraged to think for themselves. On this view, Lipman (1980) and his co- Philosophy for Children thinkers have recommended that for children to do phi-

losophy they should be a community of inquirers in which individuals develop caring, reasonable, and autonomous interconnectedness with others; a small community characterised by a dynamic peer cooperation (Daniel 2001; Schleifer et al. 1999) in which autonomy leads up to interdependence. Referring to community, Lipman explains that 'community' in a community of inquiry stresses,

*...the social, affective, and social aspects of the process. Social because the community's members recognise their interdependence, and at the same time acknowledge each other's distinctive points of view and perspectives. Affective, because participants in such communities care for each other and for the procedures of inquiry and creative because such communities encourage participants to think for themselves-independently, imaginatively, and with originality (Lipman 1991: 18).*

The attitudes of tolerance and solidarity are basic to a flourishing community of inquiry. Tolerance implies that members learn to take care of each other's views, respect different points of view and listen to others' point of view each time divergent points of view surface. In the process, children as members of an inquiring community develop a critical sense by challenging one another constructively, they self-correct thereby developing the person. The spirit of solidarity is also enhanced through communities of inquiry when members participate with a common objective in view. As a result, self-confidence, respect, open-mindedness, self-effacement and intrinsic curiosity are fostered (Daniel 2001).

From the foregoing, we notice how doing philosophy with children involves both the dialogical and the philosophical aspects of community. Dialogical in that reciprocity and cooperation and interpersonal communication with the goal to solving a common problem or to attain a common objective is the central pedagogy. It is philosophical because there is a personal and social renewal, (and not a transmission), a search for meaning rooted in personal and social experience; a process that takes place within the framework of a common search with the aim to advancing the quality of experience.

### **Virtues of Reasonableness**

Reasoning and rationality have been two concepts that philosophers and psychologist

have not found easy to define. For instance, John Rawls's essays in the 1980s are replete with references to reasonableness but "...the idea of the reasonable is so frustratingly difficult to define" (Boettcher 2004: 597). However, he holds that "persons are reasonable in one basic aspect when, among equals say, they are ready to propose principles and standards as fair terms of co-operation and to abide by them willingly, given the assurance that others will likewise do so" (Rawls 1993: 49). Rawls refers repeatedly to the terms 'reasonable' and 'unreasonable' when applied to persons, judgments; philosophical views and social conditions such as pluralism. But we find interest in Sibley's essay "*The Rational versus the Reasonable*" (1953). For Sibley, the rational agent is characterised by (1) ability to make informed choices about ends in light of an understanding of the relation between various ends and preferences; (2) selects the most effective means to those ends; and (3) tends to act in accordance with knowledge about the best means to preferred ends (Sibley 1953). However, reasonableness goes beyond rationality and intelligent judgement and according to Sibley, reasonableness implies a willingness to consider our actions from a common standpoint and in light of the interests of others. From the above it is pertinent to note that, in different and broader terms, reasoning transcends rationality although philosophers of education (Ennis 1987; McPeck 1981; Paul 1990; Siegel 1988) concur that rationality and reasonableness are equal. While Habermas views reasonableness as "...a predicate that is extended from the attitudes to the beliefs of reasonable persons" (Habermas 1998: 88), reasonableness according to Burbules (1995) is "the dispositions and capacities of a certain kind of person ...in specific contexts to other persons" (Burbules 1995: 85-86). Given that reasonableness is a human characteristic, it would be pertinent to explore Burbules's notion of the virtues of reasonableness in the context of human conduct.

First reasonable persons *strive for objectivity*. Such persons develop the attitude of tolerance by accepting alternative viewpoints without a "rush judgment" (Burbules 1995) and this capacity is advanced by the exercise of a character and space for self-control. In this sense, the reasonable is supported by a thoughtful and sympathetic consideration of the 'other'. It is significant that the objectivity as a virtue of be-

ing reasonable fosters pluralism by accepting a sufficient range of differences while at the same time engaging in the give and take process through serious cognisance of the merits therein. It is on this view that Burbules (1995) regards reasonableness to be a virtue that "... must acknowledge the fact of difference... perhaps irreconcilable differences as a condition of the social world". Such a view considers the human world as constituted of inter-subjective beings that may agree or disagree to disagree. It is out of the pursuit for objectivity that a reasonable person's thinking is enriched and becomes more impartial and fairer when it accommodates a wider range of alternatives. Objectivity entails openness to ideas especially when those ideas potentially challenge beliefs a person already holds and therefore, involves "a readiness to connect the new with the old and to restructure, if necessary, the whole web of our belief" (Cooper 1994: 464). However, for Burbules, persons who can listen to anything without reacting critically fail to meet the objectivity criteria of a reasonable person. Instead it must be accompanied by a critical assessment of those ideas if a person is to avoid becoming, in Freire's words, "an 'empty' mind passively open to the reception of deposits of reality from the world outside" (Freire 1993: 56).

*Accepting fallibility* is the second criterion for reasonableness according to Burbules (1995). He borrows from Popper's (1966) assertion that we should not be afraid of making mistakes. A reasonable person fulfils the virtue of accepting fallibility by admitting that all human beings have the potential to err. Acknowledging and recognising error thus implies gaining and creating a new space for new knowledge by actively reframing our old understanding. It therefore implies that a reasonable person is one who is prepared to exist in a context in which one can tolerate, support and encourage difference and is therefore willing "...to engage others in a communicative interchange that makes the meaningful juxtaposition of different views possible" (Burbules 1994: 94). However, accommodating the views of others does not mean simply giving in to their ideas, but it does mean that one is ready to accept a court of reasons that can be subjected to public scrutiny not simply private confirmation. It is considerably more than a merely polite and superficial willingness to tolerate an opposing or novel point of view, beha-

viour which may very well lack what Russell calls "any inward readiness to give weight to the other side" (Russell 1971: 106).

Burbules's (1995) third virtue of a reasonable person is the ability to *maintain a pragmatic attitude*. Pragmatism in this context involves a tolerance for uncertainty, imperfection, and incompleteness as the existential conditions of human thought and action. The idea is that human beings find it lighter to acknowledge their wrongfulness than realising their rightness. Life situations dictate that we are frequently confronted with situations that present challenges to us with inadequate alternatives in front of us and in such situations our reasonableness is put to test. In such situations a reasonable person reacts by approaching the problems before him or her with an open-mind, willingly adapting and confronting the situation with persistence. The reasonable person thus accepts failure and frustration as an inexorable condition of growth in which cooperative assistance and positive propositions can make adequate alternatives. Thus reasonable persons in this case confront situations practically and with an open-minded attitude despite the challenges that they meet in the process.

*Judiciousness* is Burbules last but not least virtue. Reasonable persons must be able to judge and make distinctions between different situations. Such persons dispose the ability to hold contrasting situations in balance and through rigorous reflection they are able to accept the differences by respecting what is relevant and denouncing openly those that do not carry weight to the situation at hand. Once again, keeping an open mind to alternative viewpoints and accepting the fallibility of one's beliefs come into play. Burbules (1995) holds that "...reasonableness is a matter of degree" (Burbules 1995: 96) and all of us would like to be labelled "reasonable" yet there are times when we are less reasonable. It is on this view that all of us seek to work on our reasonableness in order to compete favourably in our social world. It is through this awareness that humanity will always strive for interdependence and interaction with others to maintain their levels of judiciousness at a balance with others in their social world.

From the above observations, Burbules has stressed that interdependence of personalities is an essential human condition for reasonableness. Without others in our community and by

interacting with them in some deliberative engagement, there can be no reasoning to talk about. In each of the virtues the common strand that transcends all is communicative interactions with others. The virtues discussed, besides reflecting the individual character of the reasonable person also emphasise the social side. Thus, reasonableness is both a social and individual attainment. It is by striving to be objective and accepting that we are all fallible and making judicious efforts to confront our situations practically can we, according to Burbules be deemed reasonable beings. In support, Splitter and Sharp have observed that

*[T]he reasonable person respects others and is prepared to take into account their views and their feelings, to the extent of changing their own mind about issues of significance, and consciously allowing her own perspective to be changed by others. She is, in other words willing to be reasoned with* (Splitter and Sharp 1995: 6).

Therefore, the common denominator is that a reasonable person is one who wants to make sense, wants to be fair to alternative viewpoints, and is careful and cautious in arriving at important life positions coupled with his or her willingness to admit to making mistakes. Its opposite is unreasonableness, a vice characterised by prejudice and insistent stubborn attachment to the initial idea encountered on a particular subject and rejecting subsequent possible corrections. Pride makes the unreasonable refuse an idea or theory that runs counter to the cherished preconception. Through selfishness an unreasonable person is only willing to accept or consider those ideas that are to one's personal advantage and to reject anything that goes on the contrary. In a nutshell, we consider reasonableness as a virtue of critical, creative, caring and collaborative thinking.

### **Philosophy for Children and Reasonable Citizens – The Meeting Point**

From the pre-Socratic era to contemporary times, philosophers have looked upon to philosophy as an intellectual activity that requires systematic and continuous learning oriented towards the development of complex skills. Philosophy as a discipline keeps, as Bernstein (1991) puts it, "...alive the spirit of restless questioning..." (Bernstein 1991: 4). As observed above,

philosophy as an activity is dialogical. Dialogue as offered in Philosophy for Children is seen as a form of thinking out loud that is problem-focused, self-correcting, and egalitarian and constructively based on mutual interests; in other words, it is inquiry-based thinking (Splitter and Sharp 1995). It involves communicative action and so one cannot engage in a philosophical activity without questioning with the aim of finding out one's correctness or wrongness. When people are engaged in dialogue with one another they are compelled to reflect, to concentrate, to consider alternatives, to listen closely, to give careful attention to definitions and meanings and to recognize previously unthought-of opinions. Doing philosophy with children facilitates the development of autonomous, independent students who recognise their interdependence and interconnectedness (Sharp 1991).

Participants in a community of inquiry appreciate that they are dependent on their peers for their capacity to think for themselves as well as for their ability to build warranted, common meanings both of which are necessary for autonomy. The community of inquiry procedures and practices in a Philosophy for Children classroom are not absolute and a priori but are socially constructed and fallible. This implies that the procedure in the classroom reflect diverse perspectives of the members thereby allowing the equal opportunities to always critically reflect on, and reconstruct both the means and the ends the dialogical process. It is in this respect that by allowing children space to participate in a community of philosophical inquiry they are able to have their diverse ideas interact and be turned into new, more common inter-subjective ideas. Involving children in doing philosophy through collective inquiry will assist them to self-correct and think better.

The classroom community of inquiry environment permits children to develop trust, confidence and courage in themselves and their peers. This is necessary condition for children to feel that their ideas are considered seriously and given the due respect and care. Such a permissive setting conduces to attentive listening to and empathising with each other as well as building on each other's ideas. All these features point to a condition where children are exposed to situations they are allowed to have their reasons heard as well listening to others' reasons thereby helping all to self-correct when

the reasons are compelling them to. It is in the process of interrogating the problematic in a philosophical community of inquiry that children learn the importance of being caring and considerate when offering counter examples, criticising and changing each other's ideas. The rules that prevail in the community of inquiry classroom are fallible as it is the children participants who structure the procedures that govern their own leaning experience. In fact, the rules and procedures are "outgrowths and formalisations of the social, interdependent and caring nature of individuals engaged in a communal inquiry" (Bleazby 2006: 47). The question then is to what extent can doing philosophy with children through the procedures of the community of inquiry pedagogy lead to the formation of reasonable children and subsequently reasonable adult citizens?

We have observed that reasonable persons strive for objectivity by seeking to make sense and to be fair to other points of view and developing the capacity to enter into communicative relations in which persons "... together inquire, disagree, adjudicate, explain and argue their views in pursuit of a reasonable outcome" (Burbules 1995: 88). We also noted that one of the central features of doing philosophy with children is to allow them space for inquiry through interdependent thinking in a community of peers in attempt to think better and self-correct. I see the causal effect of Philosophy for Children in transforming children into more objective members of society. McCall (1991) holds that,

*Creating conditions which allow for the emergence of both the disposition to inquire and the skills to reason empowers people in a way that simple enfranchisement does not... the possession of inquiry and reasoning skills empowers by enabling people – adults and children – to seek for and deal with the truth – what is there* (McCall 1991: 38)

McCall raises a crucial issue of the empowerment of children. Children are lacking in power or authority within our society. If a society seeks to have reasonable citizens it is our contention that it must start with children understanding and practising the principles of reasonableness. We propose that exposing them to an atmosphere where reasonableness is encouraged such as the community of inquiry, we are promoting their

'voices' or giving them some kind of participatory role. In the words of Lipman (1998)

*Reasoning and judgement are ideally what the educational institutions of our ideal democracy should cultivate, for reasoning and judgment together add up to reasonableness: to be able to reason and to open to reason ; to be able to make sound judgments and to be respectful of the judgments others have made* (Lipman 1998: 280).

Consequently, children develop what Barber (1992) calls, "...the competence to participate in democratic communities, the ability to think critically and act deliberately in a pluralistic world, the empathy that permits us to hear and thus accommodate others..." (Barber 1992: 37). We therefore argue that the previous centuries of unreasonableness is a luxury that South Africans cannot afford in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Hence, the socio-economic challenges of hunger, diseases especially HIV/AIDS, crime and violence, corruption and maladministration in public offices, to mention but a few, are evidence that the costs of our relaxed attitudes towards unreasonableness are now far beyond our reach. We, therefore, propose that the antidote to such a state of affairs is to introduce philosophy to children in order to cultivate the attitude of reasonableness in the South African citizen from an early age.

Research by Colville and Clarken (1992) points to the effectiveness of involving children in activities that foster a democratic culture since they develop socially responsible citizens by improving their knowledge and abilities such as clear reasoning, critical thinking, empathy, reflection, and decision-making (Colville and Clarken 1992). For Aristotle, Kant, Mill, and Rawls, the ideal person is one who is reasonable, rational, well-informed, self-determining, autonomous, and tolerant of others. Philosophers on childhood and philosophy have proposed an educational programme that flows from the deliberations of reasonable, rational, autonomous people find these in the nature of Philosophy for Children. It is against this backdrop that we suggest that Philosophy for Children can be an avenue teaches children to develop children into reasonable citizens by providing a setting that conduces to critical, creative, and caring thinking.

Given the central tenets of a community of inquiry in a Philosophy for Children classroom



and those of a reasonable character or disposition as posited by Burbules (1995), we observe that the former and the later converge on dialogical reflective action. It is by engaging in a persevered self-corrective exploitation of issues that learners in community think in the disciplines about the world and if these communities of can be nested within larger communities and these within larger communities, the ripple effect outwards leads to a society consisting of individuals committed to self-corrective exploration and creativity. We suggest that children should be allowed to participate in situations that allow them to be reasonable in the here and now, rather than focus on the development of virtues of reasonableness in children in order to participate as future citizens. However, this does not imply that the dispositions so acquired will remain in the classroom domain but children will grow up as reasonable citizens and will in turn form a reasonable citizenry in South Africa. We are not arguing for a reasonable child for a reasonable adult but rather a reasonable childhood as an end, not as a means to an end.

A fully participative citizen requires the intellectual skills of thinking, judging and acting for themselves and on behalf of others when necessary. Such skills cannot be handed out to students; they need to be practised in democratic settings across the curriculum. Along with fostering 'reasoning' in people, is the attribute of 'reasonableness' referred to by Splitter and Sharp (1995) as the characteristic that embodies and demonstrates care, respect and the valuing of ideals that work for the good of others. We agree with Csikszentmihalyi (1993) that just like all citizens around the globe, South Africa needs citizens who dispose the

*... intuition to anticipate changes before they occur, empathy to understand that which cannot be clearly expressed, wisdom to see the connection between apparently unrelated events and creativity to discover new ways of defining problems, new rules that will make it possible to adapt to the unexpected* (Csikszentmihalyi 1993: 109).

This goes to further elaborate that reasonableness, characterised by judiciousness, objectivity, pragmatism and acceptance of human fallibility, is a categorical imperative for the citizens if the rainbow nation is to realise its democratic goals in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. South Africa, being a multi-cultural society with different ethnic,

religious, racial and sexual groups, reasonable citizens should demonstrate that they are aware of cultural and ethnic differences and through such a consciousness respect for one another, and mutual trust are engendered. By bolstering thinking abilities through a permissive democratic environment that South Africa hopes to be, children will be able to deal with problem-solving, making decisions and acting reasonably and intelligently. If this awareness is to be nurtured, we propose that doing philosophy with children is the starting point. Doing philosophy with children becomes a social good for survival (Lipman 1988). The "we" that characterises the community of inquiry in doing philosophy with children implies that children become a new kind of person, a vision of the good life (Noddings 2005: 252). In effect, individuals should be committed to serve the greater human and think beyond the self. Lipman (2003) has affirmed that "If schools could do more than to teach children to exercise better judgment, it would protect them against those who inflame them with prejudice and manipulate them through indoctrination. It would make them better producers, better citizens and better future citizens (Lipman 2003: 273).

Through doing philosophy with children they grow up reasonable and will form reasonable citizens capable of taking responsibility by:

- ♦ ensuring the right to freedom of religion, belief and opinion, of a democratic South Africa;
- ♦ ensuring the right to life;
- ♦ ensuring the right to freedom and security of the person;
- ♦ ensuring the right to equality;
- ♦ ensuring the right to human dignity;
- ♦ ensuring the right to a safe environment;
- ♦ ensuring the right to citizenship;
- ♦ ensuring the right to freedom of expression; and
- ♦ ensuring the right to citizenship as enshrined in the Bill of Responsibilities for the Youth of South Africa (Government of South Africa 2010: n.p.)

We therefore project that the reasonable citizen that Philosophy for Children will promote, given the multicultural nature of South African society, should dispose the attitudes of recognition of difference, tolerance of the *other and* respect and acceptance of all persons and their cultures.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper we have argued that reasonableness is a disposition that can be learnt and it can be developed by setting a learning environment that permits for its cultivation. Education can be used as transformative instrument for a democratic society and transformation can be fulfilled by paying attention to the inner personal level. We forwarded a case for doing philosophy with children as one avenue that leads to reasonable citizens starting from an early age. While Philosophy for Children as programme in schools has a multifarious range of virtues, we have submitted that reasonableness and its accompanying attitudes of respect for others' views and toleration of difference that we value highest. Despite the challenges that confront the Philosophy for Children paradigm, the above is a philosophical exposé of the role philosophy for children in making children reasonable. Our hopist position has attempted to argue that children can be reasonable by showing what can be done to help bring this possibility to fruition. We have argued that unless citizens (starting with children) are educated to be reasonable, they lack the prerequisites for taking part in critical discussion and therefore in the rational guidance of society. As reasonable and responsible citizens, it is hoped that they will dispose the virtues of accepting fallibility, striving for objectivity, judiciousness and maintaining a pragmatic attitude in the post-apartheid South Africa.

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