Can a Philosophy for Children Programme Empower the 21st Century Child in Africa?

**Amasa P. Ndofirepi[1], Newman Wadesango[2], Severino Machingambi[3], Cosmas Maphosa[4]
and Edmore Mutekwe[5]**

*[1]Wits School of Education University of the Witwatersrand. Johannesburg, South Africa
[2]Walter Sisulu University, East London, Republic of South Africa
[3]Mangosuthu University of Technology, Republic of South Africa
[4]University of Venda, South Africa
[5]University of Johannesburg, South Africa*

ABSTRACT In this paper the researchers present a theoretical debate in which they advance the case of doing philosophy with children. It is their case that children in Africa will take their rightful, empowered positions and play meaningful roles in adult life if they are exposed to philosophy in schools from an early age. Throughout the history of ideas, philosophy has been interpreted as providing enlightenment and attending to the questions and issues that seek to improve human life. Critics have, however, denigrated the role of philosophy in contemporary life and hence relegated it to mere verbiage that serves no purpose for practical life. They have accused it of being a distraction which contributes nothing to society; one that is dangerous. On the contrary, in this paper we attempt to justify doing philosophy with children as a pragmatic and realistic way of empowering children as citizens-in-waiting. The Philosophy for Children approach aims at the development of critical thinking in young learners through philosophical dialogue. Starting with children, the researchers contend that philosophy is needed now in Africa more than ever to address issues of ethnic diversity, oppression, and the creation of more tolerant and inclusive societies.