Philosophy for Children in Africa:
Is the Hermeneutic–Narrative Approach the Answer?

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ABSTRACT In this conceptual position paper based on literature review, the researchers reflect on the place of the Hermeneutic-narrative approach in a Philosophy for Children in Africa. Their thesis is that if any act of philosophising is said to be "African" it is an undertaking by Africans in a specific type of intellectual activity and the critical examination of fundamental problems functional to the African reality. The researchers enter the dialogue by arguing a case for a Philosophy for Children programme that can be said to be African. They present a theoretical-philosophical proposition that an African perspective of Philosophy for Children is an approach to philosophising with children that starts from an interpretation of an African culture. They submit that Philosophy for Children in Africa should involve children in a creative and accurate interpretation of phenomena in the African context in order to understand their world.

INTRODUCTION

Colonial and post-colonial education in Africa has been criticised for perpetuating cultural and intellectual servitude and devaluation of traditional African cultures (Appiah 1991; Asante 1991; Dzobo 1975; Gyekye 1997; Kebede 1999; Ngugi-Wa-Thiongo 1963; Wiredu and Kresse 2003). Such forms of conquests have led to the neglect of African ways of thinking and of connecting Africans with their world and hence the denigration of any philosophy (Biesta 2011) that is (are) said to be African. As a result, the advent of political independence has seen African states endeavour to redefine themselves through reclaiming their social, cultural and economic space including the epistemic one in order to rename their world themselves especially given what Odora-Hoppers calls "...*the arrogance of modernisation and the conspiracy of silence in academic disciplines towards what is organic and alive in Africa*"(Odora Hoppers 2001: 1).

The methodological necessity of establishing African philosophical practice on the basis of indigenous culture is being ignored by some Western-trained African scholars (Owolabi 2001). But the researchers argue that such think-

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ers consciously or unconsciously do not recognise that

Africans have their own ideas about the nature of the universe, time and space, about appearance and reality, and about freedom and necessity. The effort of the African to interpret man [and woman] in relation to the universe shows just as much intelligence [and rigor] as we find in the philosophy of the Greeks (Van Hook 1997: 29).

As a result, the call for connecting the contemporary discourse of philosophy in Africa with its traditional background has not received adequate attention (Odora-Hoppers 2001). This is despite philosophers on the African situation demanding an authentic African mode of philosophising starting from the traditional African background. Philosophy for Children as a western-initiated programme in philosophy for children from an early age has not been implemented in schools on the African soil. The above challenge poses a methodological problem. If it is to take effect in schools what model should it take? Some attempts have been made with trials in a few universities in South Africa but on the main they were challenged by their adoption of the western modes of the theory and practice of doing philosophy with children (Odora-Hoppers 2001). Hence, this paper provides a theoretical and philosophical discourse on the question of

what method is most appropriate for an African perspective of Philosophy for Children. The researchers explore the Philosophy for Children in Africa as a hermeneutics of African cultures. Their thesis is informed by two premises. Firstly, a model of intellectual discourse can be connected to a society or culture if its implementation and execution is genuinely and legitimately a product of that culture, through the manifestation of the values and ethos of that culture. Secondly, Africa can develop a uniquely African perspective of Philosophy for Children founded in interpretation the existential cultural conditions of Africa. The researchers will start by presenting the notion of hermeneutics before situating it within the framework of African philosophy. The paper will proceed to draw implications for Philosophy for Children in Africa.

THE NOTION OF HERMENEUTICS

The question of what is hermeneutics is itself as philosophical a question as it is a hermeneutic problem – a question of interpretation. In some narrow sense, hermeneutics is concerned with the foundation, principles and methods of interpretation of cultural products including texts. In effect, most of the human daily actions efforts towards or processes of interpretation and understanding the world could be termed hermeneutical. Hermeneutics is the art of interpreting and grew up as an effort to describe more subtle and comprehensive patterns of comprehension more specifically the "historical" and "humanistic" modes of understanding (Udeani 2007: 45). Taken as interpretation and understanding of texts, it "*involves two different and interacting focuses of attention: (1) the event of understanding a text, and the more encompassing question of what understanding and interpretation as such are*" (Palmer, 1969: 8). Interpretation is, then, perhaps the most basic act of human thinking; indeed existing itself may be said to be a process of interpretation (Palmer 1969) with existence in itself understood as a "*constant process of interpretation*" (Palmer 1969: 9). This brings us to the central features that characterise hermeneutics as will be discussed below.

While not an exhaustive discussion of hermeneutic philosophy, this paper deploys four characteristics of a hermeneutic approach. Gadamer (1996) suggests that understanding is reached within a *fusion of horizons*. According to Gadamer (1996: 306),

The horizon of the present is continually in the process of being formed because we continually have to test all our prejudices. An important part of this testing occurs in encountering the past and in understanding the tradition from which we come. Hence the horizon of the present cannot be formed without the past

Gadamer further argues that "*Part of real understanding is that we regain the concepts of a historical past in such a way that they also include our own comprehension of them*" (p. 374). Gadamer (1996) underscores the value our past contributes to our understanding of our existential circumstances. In addition, hermeneutics admits and recognises that all interpretation is situated. It is "*a view from somewhere*" (Kinsella 2006: n.p). This emphasises the role of hermeneutics as a method that seeks to appreciate the cultural artifacts and gives a deeper interpretation of indigenous ideas. The knower in this case begins inquiry from a particular location in which she is located and to this Percy-Smith (Percy-Smith 1999: 4) concluded that "*...she is active; she is at work; she is connected up with particular people in various ways*". Hermeneutics as a philosophical approach is particular to context.

Hermeneutical scholars also posit that language and history are always both conditions and limitations of our understanding (Kinsella 2006). To speak of historicity and the importance of language as vehicles of the enterprise of interpretation is to stress the key dimensions of Gadamer's philosophy. Gadamer (1996: 389) proposed that "*language is the universal medium in which understanding occurs. Understanding occurs in interpreting*". This implies that for one to claim understanding some subject matter, they must first of all translate it into their own vernacular language. Language of a people and their historical circumstances are crucial for their understanding of the world through interpretation.

Another feature is the acceptance of ambiguity in a hermeneutical enterprise, that is, it embraces ambiguity by observing that there can be no single authoritative reading of a text and therefore we should appreciate that to understand something is to apply it to our context. Despite originating from the same source individuals will understand something differently. Hermeneutics admits that our understanding of reality is as plural as there are individuals. In sum, hermeneutics implies expression, explana-

tion, translation and interpretation and involves exposing an inner meaning into the open and hence it is a quest for meaning. What then is hermeneutics in the context of philosophy in Africa?

HERMENEUTICS IN AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

The researchers acknowledge Okoro's (2005: 51) claim that *"a symbiosis exists between philosophy and culture…"* with culture often considered *"…the bedrock of philosophy."* They will argue that philosophy plays a central role in reclaiming, renewing and recultivating culture by situating it outside the confinement of archaic traditions. One of the most contested challenges of establishing a philosophy based on a culture is the methodological issue that is central to the African philosophy debate. Scholars in philosophy throughout the world have battled with the meta-philosophical question: what is the most appropriate means of extracting the philosophical tradition from a people's culture? (Owolabi 2001). Equally, the African philosophical discourse has persistently struggled to justify the means of mining philosophical materials from the indigenous African culture in order to appropriate them for contemporary use. Okere (1983) has proposed four orientations or trends of defining an African philosophy, namely: (a) ethnophilosophy (descriptive); (b) philosophic sagacity (sage-ethnological); (c) nationalist-ideological philosophy; and (d) professional philosophy (linguistic-analytical). But Irele has asked: How do we *"… work out a new spiritual coherence out of the historical disconnection between the African heritage and their modern experience"* (Irele 1982: 96)? This paper will engage the fifth tradition namely the narrative-hermeneutic approach. Several African philosophers (Serequeberhan 1994; Okere 1983; Ladriere 1992; and Bell 1989) have proposed that hermeneutics could provide a vital tool for an analysis of the African experience and therefore constitute an essential element of the African philosophy debate. We are aware of the universalist school which defends the idea of philosophy as universal, but we subscribe to the contention that philosophy comes from a place (Janz 2004).

In Okere's (1983) *African Philosophy: A Historical – Hermeneutical Investigation of the Conditions of its Possibility*, hermeneutic philosophy is both the interpretive tool and the result of intervening and interpreting lived experience. For Okere, the role of philosophy is to deal with the non-philosophical features of lived experience. For him, the non-philosophical implies *" …the non-reflected, that unreflected baggage of cultural background "* (Okere 1983: 88). Reading between the lines, the researchers find Okere's proposition for any philosophy to start from a people's culture revealing some elements of nostalgia. But one could explain his thoughts by arguing that he wants a unique philosophy for Africa rooted in a particular tradition of non-philosophy. This position sounds plausible from a critical position especially given that any people's philosophy cannot be reduced to other philosophical systems. Consequently, it can be deduced from Okere's thesis that African Philosophy, an African philosophy of education and hence an African perspective of Philosophy for Children can be unique and makes use of all the rational tools employed and essentialised by other philosophical traditions. But Okere's argument is only vital as far as it goes to present hermeneutics as the link between a people's culture (their non-philosophy) and philosophy. The biggest challenge to Okere's submission is the implied pure African culture. It is not possible, to talk of a pure and originary African culture on which to base a unique African Philosophy. Can we justifiably talk of an African culture in the 21st century Africa on which to base an African perspective of Philosophy for Children? Critics may question Okere's hermeneutics of African culture as philosophy as nothing other than a silent articulation of (neo) colonialism if not a perpetuation of the status quo. However, we appreciate his transcendence of Hountondji's (1996) critique of ethnophilosophy by proposing that African Philosophy should be constructed from African culture of which the latter is the stimulus for reflection. Of note is Okere's recognition that universalism is as challenged a starting point as particular experience. How do we honour the traditional African techniques of philosophising and at the same time measuring up to the conventional methodological demands of the western tradition of philosophising? But is it a question of sameness with western ways of the philosophic enterprise? In the context of Philosophy for Children, does Africa need the western criteria for doing philosophy to authenticate an African perspective of the same? Serequeberhan pro-

poses that an African philosophy should be a synthesis of the western and traditional African ways of philosophising.

In Serequeberhan's seminal work, *Our Heritage: The Past in the Present of African-American and African Experience (2002),* we find the element of hybridity in hermeneutics. He argues that:

This (non)identity, this in-between, is the ambiguity of our heritage. For we are the ones – in one way or another – who live and have experienced this "ambiguous adventure" and feel, in the very depth of our being, the unnerving experience of being two in one, Europe and non-Europe (Serequeberhan 2000: 2)

The 21st century African culture and therefore philosophy is an "in-between", the western perspective and the African one and thus is not an alienated space but rather a place in its own right with existence occurring there. The space and honour for such philosophy cannot be indebted to the forces that fashioned the hybrid in the first place. Hence, Serequeberhan suggests that:

The heritage of the struggle beyond the defeat of colonialism, this "new humanity ... this is what Fanon calls us to. It is an Other-directed openness, not "an already established interpretation of nature, history, world, and the ground of the world." it is an open-ended project of humanity, in process, that finds itself in joint struggles (Serequeberhan 2000: 12).

Serequeberhan (2000) recognises that "in-betweeness" of the African heritage and places the African in that context. The African culture and in turn their philosophy can best be interpreted in this space though stressing that the African heritage should take due care of the re-invasion of cultural imperialism and neo-colonialism. Thus the hermeneutic method is standing in-between the particularism of the traditional school and the universalism of the modernists. Consequently, Owolabi (2001), in defending the hermeneutical-narrative approach has come to the conclusion that it is:

the most credible of all the available methods is because this method by its very nature possesses the appropriate means of retrieving the authentic philosophical heritage of Africa (Owolabi 2001: 152).

The researchers agree with the above position if it is based on the understanding that "...*philosophy is essentially a cultural phenomenon...*"

(Gyekye 1987: 43). African philosophy can only bear its true name and authenticity when it continues to be linked to its cultural roots. The hermeneutic tradition of philosophy that we propose stresses a paradigm shift from the first generation of African philosophers (Appiah 1991; Asante 1991; Dzobo 1975; Gyekye 1997; Kebede 1999; Ngugi-Wa-Thiongo 1963) by searching for the possibilities of engaging the storehouse of ideas in the oral tradition of Africa. This position challenges the protagonists of the universalist school by proposing that African oral heritage equally matches other philosophical traditions and thus it cannot be dismissed just because other foreign minds have not succeeded in interpreting it. Given this understanding of the hermeneutic approach, what implications can we draw for an African perspective of Philosophy for Children?

IMPLICATIONS FOR PHILOSOPHY FOR CHILDREN IN AFRICA

From the case made above, the researchers argue that using the hermeneutic approach, a Philosophy for Children in Africa programme should start from a recovery and reclamation of the cultural assets of traditional Africa which then become the objects of its interpretation. As Wiredu and Kresse (2003) reiterate, "...*just narrating is not good enough, we have to interpret. Trying to interpret is actually getting conceptual*" (Wiredu and Kresse 2003: n.p.) and if we agree that philosophy is conceptual then an African perspective of Philosophy for Children is not a repetitive narration of the African tradition but rather a critical interpretation of it. They find a strong element of hybridity in hermeneutics in that it is a synergy of the critical-analytical approach and sage philosophy as the sages are the guardians of the comprehensive traditional narratives. The rigour, coherence, systemacity and rationality embedded in professional philosophy as linguistic analysis, are employed to interpret the hidden meanings of the traditional materials. The goal of such an approach is to retrieve the African philosophical heritage for use in contemporary times. We support Ladriere's conclusion that "*a hermeneutic procedure is the appropriate way to ensure an authentic encounter between the product of a cultural tradition and the demands of a rational understanding*" (Ladriere 1992: xxi).

Equally, by engaging the hermeneutical-narrative perspective in doing philosophy with children, it is one way of rejecting the hegemonic tendencies left behind by colonialism in Africa. The West's domination of the intellectual discourse should be repudiated and we find the hermeneutic approach as one handy method and a vital tool for Africans to liberate philosophy from the absolutist shackles associated with western discourse. The researchers argue against an externally imposed emphasis on pure analysis and strict rationalism as the only appropriate method of doing philosophy in Africa. But the question is: How and why should the hermeneutic method surpass what earlier methods have failed to achieve? They submit that the hermeneutic method is unique in that it answers the questions the preceding methods have failed to address especially the use of traditional ways of thinking in contemporary times. In the context of Philosophy for Children, the researchers argue that the hermeneutic-narrative approach reacts to the criticisms that have been leveled against any forms of doing philosophy in general in Africa and Philosophy for Children in particular. The approach enters to debunk earlier philosophers' dismissal of the African perspective of doing philosophy as uncritical, unsystematic and romantic gaze at Africa's past. While an argument against the traditional African ways of doing philosophy may be that it lacks the critical component, a rebuttal to that is that hermeneutics settles in with the critical aspect of the cultural heritage.

If we can agree that African Philosophy is a response to the cultural identity crisis and that its discourse is to reconnect philosophy with indigenous intellectual practices located in a place and its culture, then an African perspective of Philosophy for Children should do the same. The researchers argue that given the comprehensive mythological narratives through tales, proverbs, pithy sayings and songs as the archives of the African philosophical heritage, then an African perspective of Philosophy for Children should adopt a hybridised hermeneutic narrative approach to critically, systematically and rigorously interpret these intellectual practices situated in Africa. After all these cultural products are themselves products of deep reflection and vigorous critical debate. If used in the classroom community of inquiry in doing philosophy with children they force children to

dialogue giving rise to critical reflection. To this end, Bell concluded that

These narrative situations force dialogue and give rise to human reflection, and they are far from uncritical. Each dialogical situation has earmarks of the Socratic enterprise; each is formative of the values characteristic of that community; each reflects the existential texture of human life; each dialectically serves to move a community from injustice to justice, from wrong to right. . . . As each community "re-evaluates" its life in terms of new external factors, it can critically evolve its tradition to meet modernity (Bell 1989: 373).

The African perspective of Philosophy for Children cannot however ignore Lipman's (1988; 1998) contribution (Wiredu and Kresse 2003). It constitutes, for those of us interested in educational matters, a remarkable point of reference especially given that it is one of the most systematic and most likely proposals that put together children and philosophy. The Lipmanian method has developed a number of practical experiences. While together the novels and the instructional manuals for teachers have formed the wellspring of undeniable value for everyone interested in initiating Philosophy for Children in their own countries, we have case against those who are fond of aping, in total, this philosophical method in both theory and practice for children in Africa. It is a truism that we are now living in a global world in which Africans are part, and there is no way they can avoid the philosophical works of their particular colonisers. The researchers see no wrong in accommodating ways of doing philosophy from other cultures especially if contemporary academic philosophy in Africa has a certain richness that derives from the comparative character of the discipline. Working with more than one tradition can broaden your mind by providing you with alternative conceptual options (Wiredu and Kresse 2003).

Despite the above merits of doing philosophy by borrowing from other cultures, and the process of philosophising having a critical character, the critical activity is sensitive to context. It does not provide room for receipts in form of ready-made texts, concepts, methods or values. If the researchers are to develop a Philosophy for Children perspective that may be referred to as 'African' the reality of each school and the children who attend it should be our prime point of reference. The themes and concepts that in-

form the content of the Philosophy for Children classes are inclined to start from the life and experience of the children and the life of the school. In this regard, the researchers would challenge introducing Lipman's texts and materials that do not concern the life and existential circumstances of the learners, teachers and the school itself. Introducing Philosophy for Children in Ovamboland in Namibia or deep parts of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa, for example, through Lipman's storybook *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery* or other storybooks as well as picture books, videos and films about foreign materials and using such as stimuli for philosophical engagement with children in those contexts would be tantamount to an epistemological assault on the minds of the innocent learners. Lived experiences are the compass of uncertainty in which children search to explore why we live the life we live and what other lives we could construct. Hence, this search should start from the context of the children themselves.

Children in schools face insurmountable challenges and social pressures and are confronted with a series of challenges; competition, success, oppression, punishment, illness, hunger, disease etc. Other concepts that constitute their daily lives include love, truth, faith, crime and on instances these pass with no coherence and no reflection. Instead of imposing concepts from the literature originating outside their African context, Philosophy for Children should be initiated from the African context and done in the language best used daily by the participants. But the researchers would argue for a Philosophy for Children project in Africa that is *"...not expelling Europeans and their cultures..."* (Makgoba 1997: 199) but rather one that acknowledges the African tradition and its place in the global sphere by *"...incorporating, adapting and integrating other cultures into and through African visions..."* (Makgoba 1997:199). The researchers posit that an African perspective of Philosophy for Children should start from the African experience as the source of the aims, content and pedagogy of doing philosophy. In other words, it is a matter of African priorities before those that originate from the world external to Africa.

In situating a Philosophy for Children in Africa in the existential locus of the Africans as well as their cultural milieu, the researchers add language as an aspect that improves philosoph-

ical competiveness especially if *"it is within language that we dream, desire, have a consciousness and where images are located"* (Nakusera 2004: 131). As Obotetukudo puts it *"Language affords a window into the views and beliefs of a people, and hence their philosophies"* (Obotetukudo 2001: 42). Language is both part of the culture and the medium through which culture is transmitted. As intimated earlier, language is the medium every people use to interpret their world. It is true that without language we cannot acquire knowledge and therefore express it. Using the language the child is most familiar with, the researchers argue that doing philosophy with children in Africa will go beyond retaining the old traditional values and the classroom community of inquiry has a role of unmasking myths and exorcising illusions and attempting to evaluate and reinterpret them in the light of the real and relevant 21st century African problems. The use of the child's home language was endorsed by the Council of the International African Institute (1930) which states that "It is a universally acknowledged principle in modern education that a child should receive instruction in and through his mother tongue, and this privilege should not be withheld from the African child"(cited in Spencer 1985: 168). Franz Fanon adds: *"To speak [a language]... means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization... A man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language"* (Fanon 1967: 18)

The traditional African background is rich with ritual celebrations of community with the attendant stress on individual dedication to the welfare of the collective and empathic relations with others. The transformation of everyone's well-being is promoted through community dedication by each individual. Given that the traditional African world-view cherishes community ethos, the researchers find traditional Africa paradigm contributing the essential role of *community* to complement the Lipmanian notion of critical rational *inquiry* for the construction a new paradigm of Philosophy for Children in Africa. In the new scheme which they propose a new complementary weaving of both the critical/analytical component and the particularist/ culturalist element as equally valuable constituents of a hybridised African perspective of Philosophy for Children is suggested. Notwithstanding the

possibilities of contradictions and conflicts, this proposal appears justifiable if doing philosophy with children in Africa is to be freed of the negative effects of cultural imperialism on the one hand and ethnocentricism on the other. Hence, the researchers find the hermeneutic-narrative approach ideal for doing philosophy with children in that it incorporates the virtues of African tradition into the modern ways of philosophising. To this end they concur with Ndofirepi (2011) who has suggested the need to hybridize traditional African ways of doing philosophy with children with the Lipmanian model to suit the 21st century African milieu (Ndofirepi 2011).

While the researchers agree with Green (1997) who has ascribed to Philosophy for Children a liberatory potential with specific reference to South Africa, they challenge her assertion that it would be difficult if not implausible to implement uniquely African perspective of Philosophy for Children in South Africa. This suggests a proposal to introduce the Lipmanian model in Africa, and by implication South Africa. On the contrary, the researchers contend that the importation of Lipman's model speaks to a Eurocentric world-view. The importation of philosophical materials from outside the context of Africa ignores the possibility that African philosophies and epistemologies have conceptual sophistication as a par with those of western thought. What alternatives are left for an African Philosophy for Children materials? The researchers see four choices. The first is to translate Lipman's novels in the main language of the specific country, including the manuals as well as the accompanying supplementary proposals, for discussion by teachers and children. The second is to adapt the content of Lipman's novels to the local culture through the transformation of certain incidents in ways that make them relevant to the culture, traditions and context of the country concerned. The third is writing the new-look Lipman style novels envisaged in terms of the same objectives for engaging in the same activity, though founded in the specific culture of the country involved. The fourth is to produce new supporting material on the basis of Lipman's material including picture books, comic books or other audio-visual materials. The common thread across the alternatives above except the fourth is that Philosophy for Children should be particular to a cultural context hence my case for mate-

rials that meet the existential conditions of Africa.

Elsewhere, Kennedy and Kohan's (2000:41) assessment of the implementation of Philosophy for Children in China concluded that the Chinese *"...were very emphatic in pointing out that they wished to introduce and practice Philosophy for Children in a manner which is coherent with their own tradition"*. Philosophising in a foreign language especially with the language as a medium of expression, one engages that language as a medium of thought. This presents challenges in that the categories of thought so embedded in the language become natural and unavoidable. Hence, Wiredu and Kresse (2003) make a clarion call for conceptual self-exorcism which he refers to as conceptual decolonisation. It follows that there is a need to examine more tightly and critically whether the languages in which material written is relevant to African thinking. A conceptually decolonized Philosophy for Children project is anti-apism of the Lipman's material. The proposed programme for children in Africa should be built on material based on the thoughts and language and rooted in the African existential situation in order to be authentic. The materials will include proverbs, maxims, popular doctrines and various narratives with African roots. The researchers, however, submit to Giddy's proposition that *"...a critical touchstone is needed if the traditional wisdom is to be sifted"*(Giddy 2012: 15).

Stories and proverbs are primary ways through which a great deal of African philosophical thought, knowledge and wisdom has been taught. Scholars on African tradition (Appiah 1991; Asante 1991; Dzobo 1975; Gyekye 1997; Kebede 1999; Ngugi-Wa-Thiongo 1963; Wiredu and Kresse 2003) have compared the wisdom paradigms of Western cultures against African cultures and concluded that proverbs, as a form of ancient wisdom, are highly regarded in African cultures. However, this is often overlooked by Western cultures who favour a wisdom paradigm of propositional knowledge. Pre-colonial African culture was characterized by an oral tradition that found expression in stories, folktales, anecdotes, proverbs, and parables that provoked a great deal of reflection as will be demonstrated in the later sections. Bodunrin supports the contention that proverbs could serve a philosophical function for the African philosopher. Bodunrin (1991) writes:

"There is no a priori reason why proverbs, myths of gods and angels, social practices... could not be proper subjects for philosophical enquiry.... The African philosopher cannot deliberately ignore the study of the traditional belief system of his people. Philosophical problems arise out of real life situations" (Bodunrin 1991: 76-77).

Traditional Africans had no written records and therefore all that has been preserved of their knowledge, myths, philosophies, liturgies, songs, and sayings has been handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation (Fajana 1986). Proverbs are open-ended and straightforwardly vague and as Fajana (1986) rightly suggests *"... proverbs constitute an important intellectual mode of communication...to develop the child's reasoning power and skill in expressing the deeper thoughts most essential in settling disputes and in decision making processes"*(Fajana 1986). When used with children, just as with adults, they allow the participants in the deliberative encounter to call to mind their reflectivity while making sense of the hidden meanings embedded within. The embedded meanings invite contests of ideas, and in the process knowledge as shared understanding results and both the self and the group are developed. These proverbs are appropriate to specific topics and themes that the community members intuitively understand. In Reagan's (2005) categorisation of the Zulu proverbs in South Africa, one singles out proverbial sayings whose central concepts revolve around treatment of people (*ubuntu* meaning humanness), faithfulness, deception, cunning behaviour, friendship and enmity (*ubuhlobo nobutha*), good fortune, misfortune, uncertainty, failure and encouragement (*Impumelelo, inhlanhla, namashwa),* to mention but a few. Given the width and depth of the African proverb, we see no justification for not engaging these concepts as stimulus for philosophic inquiry by children in a classroom community of inquiry.

Riddles, among others, form part of plethora ways through which the traditional Africans not only sharpened the reasoning skills of the young but also provided entertainment to participants. Through the search for solutions to riddles, children are challenged to think more theoretically with depth and breadth while their figurative language gives the child the chance to uncover their meaning through a reasoning process. The an-swer to a given riddle acts as a conclusion of the logical process and it is often a one word answer which is both precise and clear to the participants. Among the Shona, for Gwaravanda and Masaka (2008), *"...riddles promote logical skills and the one who is capable of solving many riddles is arguably more mentally sophisticated than the one who is less capable"* (Gwaravanda and Masaka 2008: 194).

Philosophy as a practice is characterised by the following: (a) The questioning of assumptions, through problematising the natural, ordinary and obvious in our experience; (b) the emergence of difference through dialogue; (c) the examination of implications and consequences of those positions; (d) the clarification of meaning; and (e) transformation (Kennedy and Kohan 2000). As philosophers, we need to consider the above practices in our teaching in schools. For example, one of the challenges that the traditional African child brings to school is the lack of space to enter easily into problematisation given the authoritarian family background with parents and the elders in the neighbourhood not accommodating the inquisitive child coupled with the basic values that pay respect to unanimity and consensus. Ironically this might work in the positive when the oppressive lid is removed in a Philosophy for Children classroom at school where such children can be viewed differently. It is this complementary role that is needed from the western (Lipmanian) perspective that injects in the African perspective the aspect of inquiry thereby allowing the child to open flawlessly along the fault lines. As discussed earlier, while African tradition is suffused with the community-orientation and dialogue, the background of it has limitations of the lack of permissiveness to inquiry especially in younger members of society. This does not dismiss the proposition that traditional Africans expose their young to experiences that demand tests for wit. From the characterisation of philosophy given by Kennedy and Kohan (2001) above we find that if there is a need for a hybrised Philosophy for Children, it is in Africa that is demanded most. On the one hand the community consciousness and the dialogical components are what the African background can contribute with the contemporary experience as the content and context. The stimulus of philosophical discussions, should originate primarily from African priorities. Thus the narratives and the central philosophical questions could be

drawn from issues that attend to the concerns of poverty, famine, HIV/AIDS, social-economic crises of underdevelopment, corruption as well as political crises of dictatorships and violence and the general experiences of the learners themselves. The hermeneutical –narrative approach to Philosophy for children proposed in this paper is consonant with Higgs's (2002) assertion that such a deconstructive and critical programme

"...seeks to restore a sense of agency in empowering persons to think and act independently, while at the same time focusing on a concern for the other as other, might well be suited to those educational endeavours which are directed at the establishment of an open critical civil society in a democratic South Africa (Higgs 2002: 75).

On the other, hand the Lipmanian model would contribute the demands of inquiry coupled with the critical, rigorous dimension that is transformative for individuals and the community to constitute a hybridised African perspective of Philosophy for Children. It is the researchers' case that in the field of Philosophy for Children in Africa, it is the African background and the Lipmanian perspective should complement each other.

CONCLUSION

The researchers have acknowledged that philosophy is essentially a cultural phenomenon and hence an African perspective of Philosophy for Children can only realise its real meaning and potential when it is connected to its cultural roots. And it is only through the adoption of the hermeneutic-narrative approach that this cultural continuity can be sustained. The western, (Lipmanian) model offers a compelling contribution especially as it is founded on the understanding of the child as a rational being capable of offering critical, reasoned thinking provided it is situated in a conducive environment; the classroom as a community of inquiry. African communalism subscribes the notion of community while western rationality contributes critical inquiry thereby proffering the inquiry component. What we find convincing is an African perspective of Philosophy for Children project situated in the context of Africa, *for* children located in Africa and not *about* them; one that engages the traditional African background as well as the contempo-

rary experiences of the African peoples. What is critical is that an African perspective of doing philosophy with children should be a hermeneutics; an interpretation in order to understand, traditional and contemporary cultures in the African milieu.

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