Philosophy for Children: A Possible Starting Point for Democratic Citizenship in Africa?

A. Ndofirepi[1], N. Wadesango[2], S. Machingambi[3], C. Maphosa[4] and E. 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]Walter Sisulu University, Republic of South Africa
[4]University of Venda, South Africa
[5]University of Johannesburg. South Africa

KEYWORDS Philosophy for Children. Democracy, Citizenship. Citizen. Critical Thinking. Education. Post-Colonial

ABSTRACT In this paper, the researchers suggest that the engagement of children in philosophical enquiry from an early age can help prepare them for democratic citizenship and help to create future leaders in Africa who are tolerant, respectful of others, committed to social justice and appreciative of the 'otherness' of the 'other'. Although the desire for freedom may be innate, knowledge of how democracy functions must be taught and learnt. The researchers argue that the skills and values of democracy are socially learnt rather than innate and thus need to be modelled in formal schools. To this end, they posit that any society that wishes to remain free needs to ensure that its citizens (including children) are well educated in the theory and practice of democracy. The paper offers a critical philosophical exploration of the Matthew Lipman-initiated Philosophy for Children programme and the influence it may have on the production of democratic citizens.

INTRODUCTION

With the turbulent years of political, anti-colonial struggles in Africa now almost over, the hope once cherished by many political optimists that the oppressive governments would be replaced by free, multi-party democracies has been dashed (Sifuna 2000). The demand for democracy and good governance in Africa risks being unfulfilled if the importance of a politically-literate citizenry remains unrecognized. The discipline of philosophy is particularly important because it enables the cultivation of knowledge and skills that underlie good democratic decision-making such as deep understanding of the central concepts upon which democracy rests and the social dispositions that are needed for democratic citizenship.

In this paper, the researchers argue for the introduction of philosophy at an early age to prepare thoughtful, knowledgeable and clear-thinking citizens. Children should learn about

Address for correspondence:
Amasa P. Ndofirepi,
Wits School of Education
University of the Witwatersrand,
P.B. 3 Wits 2050.
Johannesburg ,
S.Africa
E-mail: Amasa.ndofirepi@wits.ac.za

taking responsibility for their actions. Philosophy for Children aims to promote curiosity, dialogue, critical thinking and capacity for constructive criticism. The researchers' argument is based on two premises: 1) that democratic citizenship is not innate and is therefore learnt and 2) that the Matthew Lipman-initiated Philosophy for Children project has the potential inculcating democratic values in children thereby producing a citizenry acting on internalised values such as tolerance, sympathy, respect and mutuality (Lipman 2004). In the first section, the researchers describe, in brief, the current state of democratic citizenship in Africa. They will proceed to clarify the claims made above and justify them. It is not the intention of this enquiry to detail the political underpinnings of democracy and citizenship given the limitations of space. Only working definitions shall be considered.

THE SITUATION IN AFRICA

Violations of basic individual freedoms and rights and authoritarianism have remained familiar traits of many governments in Africa. African nations have often been accused of not permitting free political choice and of having the governments that are not accountable to the people. For Harber (1997), "*citizens have little say in how the country is run and rule is by edict and*

dictat". Similarly, many regimes are being criticized for being "… *in political and economic distress and deep in bad governance, poverty, corruption, insecurity to life and property and the marginalization of those who do not belong to the ethnic affiliation of the governing regime*"(Harber 1997: 3). In most instances, of late, authoritarian rule has been outstanding in Zimbabwe, Sudan, Somalia and Rwanda to name only a few countries. Violence caused by civil unrest, violent repression and wars against neighbours is quite frequent. This is supported by dictatorship, authoritarian governance and corruption which have left African nations poor.

Writing shortly after many nations had achieved political independence, Dudley has criticized colonialism in Africa for not promoting the political values required for tolerance and participation in a democracy (Dudley 1973). The researchers find it unfair and lacking in objectivity to always attribute Africa's challenges to the colonial past. Much more recently Maathai notes that "*Africans tend to remain in a victim role, which is easier than taking responsibility for their own sins and hatred*"(Maathai 2009: 4-5). However, with reference to the colonial period, one can acknowledge that through their authoritarian school structures, schools "*… encouraged unquestioning acquiescence to authority*" thereby producing not only an 'educated native' but a 'loyal educated native'. In pursuance of that, the values that were and are still enforced in schools included(s) "*… obedience , abiding by the rules, loyalty, respect for authority, punctuality, regular attendance, quietness, orderly work in large groups, working to a strict timetable, tolerance of monotony...*"(Sifuna 2000: 219); values needed for the efficient functioning of bureaucratic organizations and social order. Consequently the emphasis in most African educational institutions on blind obedience to school authority, for example through the prefect system has created docile citizens.

The recipients of a colonial system of education that are running central government, industry and commerce and other social amenities in Africa including education. These citizens were denied the opportunity to learn democratic values such as empathy, toleration, respect for the other, and mutual co-existence from an early age, despite such values being emphasized at home in traditional African communities. It is these people who run and lead institutions of govern-

ment in Africa in the 21st century and so important questions are: For how long should Africa continue to produce citizens of this sort and how can educational practices assist in transforming the curriculum in order to produce democratic citizens? In the sections that follow the researchers address these questions and at the same time attempt to engage a working definition of democratic citizenship relevant to Africa.

QUALITIES OF A DEMOCRATIC CITIZEN

At one level citizenship simply refers to one's legal status in a country but democratic citizenship involves much more. For Portelli and Solomon (2001), citizenship requires "*… becoming informed about issues that affect you and participating with others in determining how society will resolve those issues*"(Portelli and Solomon 2001: 12). Thus the central element of citizenship is a sense of identity which, in the national space, would include people's rights, obligations, political participation, and relative adherence to societal values and expectations Rooted in the Greek words *demos* and *kratos* (rule), democracy literally means rule by the people (van der Leeuw 2006). In addition, Zech emphasises that " *…the greatest value of a democracy consists in the possibility of a free and rational discussion*"(Zech 1998: 86). Crick and Heater (1977) draw our attention to the moral, ethical and social objectives and implications of citizenship education in according citizens the possibility of understanding why "things" are as they are. This also implies that in a democracy there should be an emphasis on reason, open-mindedness and fairness and the practice of moderation and cooperation, bargaining, compromise and accommodation. The question then is where should Africa search for the origins of the virtues of democratic citizenship? The researchers propose that it is in the schools from an early age. We situate the answer in doing philosophy with children from an early age.

For Steyn and de Klerk (2005), democracy implies, among other things, freedom of thought, the right to free speech, anti-authoritarianism, self-evaluation, intellectual freedom, the right to criticize, critical thinking and the right to fend off indoctrination and domination. Such a democratic way of life would involve "*… testing arguments, in personal and group discussions and evalu-*

ating ideas in an attempt to separate true from false"(Steyn and de Klerk 2005: 155). In an open and democratic society, a citizen engages in a free critical discussion; exhibiting respect for and by other people, tolerating other viewpoints, conducting open discussions, having a sound communication style with good negotiation and skills of listening to others and in the final analysis sharing decision-making through consultation. In support, Dewey (1916) has asserted that *"...democracy is a mode of living, of conjoint, communicated experience"* (Dewey 1916: 87). In other words, a democracy entails a way of living with one another. Those who live democratically do not only live side-by-side, but rather communicate in order to connect their experiences with another's experiences. Hence, they conjoin to achieve a shared goal. The researchers therefore characterize democratic citizens as citizens who are conjointly related to one another despite having differences between themselves and are capable of breaking down the barriers of class, race, and national territory which prevent people from appreciation the full meaning of their activity. It is the display of such attributes by citizens of a society that defines democratic citizenship. From the foregoing explanation of citizenship, the researchers now turn to the concept of Philosophy for Children (P4C) after which we will proceed to show where P4C and democratic citizenship meet.

HORIZONS OF PHILOSOPHY FOR CHILDREN

Controversy surrounds the idea of teaching philosophy to children. A variety of philosophical questions have been raised in this regard. For instance: What is the relationship between philosophy and children? Is philosophical thinking desirable in children? Are children capable of philosophical thought? And does the belief that children can learn to do philosophy open up possibilities in itself? Wartenberg (2007)'s summary of such pertinent questions appears convincing. He writes,

...there is still a great deal of resistance to the idea that Philosophy is a subject that should be included in the curriculum of elementary schools....We face an uphill battle in getting teachers and administrators to acknowledge the validity of philosophy as a subject for elementary schools (Wartenberg 2007: 331).

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to address all these questions, we argue that philosophy can be introduced to children at an early age and has ethical and intellectual implications for the life of the child as s/he grows into an adult. Matthew Lipman responds to the controversy by saying,

When I advocated philosophy in schools, I was not talking about the tradition of academic philosophy taught in graduate schools of the university. What I was talking about was a philosophy redesigned and reconstructed so as to make it available and acceptable and enticing to children (Lipman 1991: 262).

Philosophy for Children, therefore , is not about teaching children philosophy but engaging them in discourses that are philosophical and suitable to their level of cognitive, social and emotional ability.

The Philosophy for Children programme is an internationally utilized project for developing reasoning skills in young people (Cannon 1996). Initiated by an American philosopher- turned-educationalist Matthew Lipman, its central aim is to help young people become more thoughtful and more reasonable. The educational method involves structuring of a community of inquiry in which the emphasis is on doing philosophy rather than learning about philosophy. For Schertz (2007) the community of inquiry is *"a dialogical, inquiry-based pedagogy utilized within the Philosophy for Children programme to enable students to engage in philosophical discourse whereby they ask questions and deliberate concepts"*(Schertz 2007: 192). Lipman provides us with a summary of what it means for children to involve themselves as members of the community of inquiry. Lipman writes,

When a class moves to become a community of inquiry, it accepts the discipline of logic and scientific methods; it practices listening to one another, learning from one another, building on one another's ideas, respecting one another's point of view and yet demanding that claims be warranted by evidence and reasons. Once the class as a whole operates upon these procedures, it becomes possible for each member to internalize the practices and procedures of others, so that one's own thought becomes self- correcting and moves in the direction of impartiality and objectivity. At the same time, each member internalizes the attitude of the group towards its project and procedures, and this trans-

lates into care or the tools and instruments of inquiry as well as respect for ideas (e.g. truth) that serve to motivate the process and regulate it (Lipman 1988: 148).

The above illustrates what is supposed to occur in a classroom community of inquiry in which children do philosophy with their peers, Ann Sharp, one of the founding members of the Philosophy for Children programme, has, in support of the above, summarized some of the behaviours that the child should display. For Sharp (1987), such a child

+ *accepts corrections from peers willingly; and is*
+ *is able to listen to others attentively*
+ *is able to revise one's views in light of reason from others*
+ *is able to take one another seriously*
+ *is able to build upon one another's ideas*
+ *is able to develop their own ideas without fear of rebuff or humiliation from peers*
+ *opens to new ideas*
+ *shows concern for the rights of others to express their views*
+ *is capable of detecting underlying assumptions (and)*
+ *shows concern for consistency when arguing a point of view*
+ *asks relevant questions*
+ *verbalises relationships between ends and means*
+ *shows respect for persons in the community*
+ *shows sensitivity to context when discussing moral conduct*
+ *asks for reason from one's peers*
+ *discusses issues with impartiality*
+ *asks for criteria.*(Sharp 1987: 38-39).[Adapted]

From the foregoing, it is evident that Philosophy for Children emphasizes four outstanding and interdependent skills, attitudes and behaviours in those who participate in it namely; critical, creative, caring and collaborative thinking. Implicit in the ideal workings of the community is thinking that is caring and collaborative (that is, each member being supported and allowed to be an integral member of the community and to take responsibility), creative (new ideas are sought out and encouraged), and critical (good reasons are expected for one's ideas and positions).

If the above is what the practice of Philosophy for Children entails and what has been out-lined in the earlier sections of the paper represents the broad dimensions of democratic citizenship, then what remains is the question of the meeting point of the two notions. The question the researchers now to turn to is: Can Philosophy for Children help children develop into more democratic citizens and if so, to what extent?

COMMUNITY OF INQUIRY

In this section, the researchers wish to situate the community of inquiry in the context of doing philosophy with children. They will argue that Philosophy for Children as a programme is best explained through the community of inquiry as pedagogy. Lipman summarises the essence of the *community of* inquiry by commenting that:

When we underscore the word "inquiry" in "community of inquiry" we emphasise the investigative role of such communities. This is the role that leads them to deliberate with regard to concepts, evidence, jurisdictions, reasons, definitions etc...When we underscore "community" in "community of inquiry" we stress the social and creative aspects of the process... (Lipman 2003:111).

At this juncture the researchers observe that *community* denotes togetherness. A community that works together has mutual respect and concern and a recognisable and agreed upon presuppositions and procedures. However , it takes a long process to form and develop although togetherness *"...may not be essential at the outset of a process of inquiry"* (Pardales and Girod 2006: 308).The ideal community of inquiry in Philosophy for Children is characterised by the acceptance that members can make errors and lack knowledge; and there exits incorrect or inconclusive answers not as ends in themselves but as instruments of coming to a wider understanding of not only ourselves but also of the world we live in. By discovering that they are fallible, persons change and develop basing on the idea of *"I may be wrong and you may be right..."* (Popper 1966: 240).

It is by accepting fallibility and admitting that all human beings run the possibility of error and have the capacity to be wrong as well as acknowledging and recognising error that we gain and create a new space for new knowledge through actively reframing our old understanding. Fallibility is assumed and self –correction becomes a way of life. The researchers find it

sufficient, therefore, for the community of philosophical inquiry to set a favourable environment in which children are prepared to tolerate, support and encourage difference and are therefore willing "*...to engage others in a communicative interchange that makes the meaningful juxtaposition of different views possible*" (Burbules 1995: 94). The assertion "I don't know" can be the starting point of the process of discovering that can reveal not only knowledge, but meaning –the meaning of our quest to understand and our need to transform ourselves into the more wondering, curious, intelligent and caring human beings. Emanating from these features, we argue that doing philosophy becomes a possible starting point for being democratic.

The community of philosophical inquiry is also directed by democratic principles in which each person's views and insights are to be heard, respected and valued as a latent source of important insights. The community comes to generate alternative meanings, distinct perspectives and communal assistance to its members. Not only are each participant's rights respected through expressing differences, but such expression is a means of supplementing the developing self. The engagement of children in a dialogical encounter enables children *"to hear the differences offered by others because they are not personally affronted"* and through the play of differences , they are "*...making something that they share with others but that is no one's personal property"* (Shorter 1996: 345). Children in a community of philosophical inquiry are involved in the process of trying to understand one another and to do this they must learn to talk coherently, and expressively and at the same time listen to each other. Furthermore, they must develop the capacity to enter into each other's world and by so doing they adopt a compassionate open mind. These dialogical dispositions call for intellectual humility and an authentic willingness to self- correct. Dialogue, in this sense, implies any encounter that takes cognisance of the world's difference. 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 since , " *...knowledge about reality is partial and also fallible and revisable"* (Planas 2004: 87) . This goes to stress the indispensible role of the community in knowledge construction. It is considerably more than a merely polite and superficial willingness to tolerate an opposing or novel point of view- behaviour which may very well lack what Russell calls *"any inward readiness to give weight to the other side"* (Russell 1971: 106). In effect, the community of inquiry should remove intellectual fears and in the process prevail over blind confidence in archaic ideas stored in the facts. Thus the community of inquiry provides a setting in which reasonable persons are nurtured. To this end, Splitter and Sharp (1995:6) concluded 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) use the notion of respect in the sense of listening to others' views. The researchers would accept their definition of the reasonable person as long as the persons involved agree to tolerate other people's points of view in order to challenge or disagree with them. To completely demean another person's proposition before listening to the gist of it is tantamount to disrespect and therefore is unreasonable.

The community of inquiry as a pedagogical framework and method puts into operation Dewey's notion of education as reconstruction of experience through the creation of a collaborative structure of choice and initiative in the classroom with teachers and learners sharing in the selection and problematisation of themes and issues. The community of inquiry as expressed in Philosophy for Children is both a structure and a process. It is a structure in that it is a participatory community of discourse with a purpose to engage in a deliberate inquiry, guided by reason into questions chosen by the community itself. In effect, all community members democratically choose and arrive at the central question to be focused on in each particular philosophy session. The physical configuration of the classroom community of inquiry *"...maximises the opportunities for participants to communicate with, and behave democratically toward one another ; a roundtable format or perhaps a collection of smaller groups"* (Splitter and Sharp 1995: 18). Lipman (1991:241-243) summarises five steps that characterise the community of inquiry namely,

1)   the communal reading of a text, 2) the construction of an agenda, that is, the identification of questions which the reading of the text has raised and the cooperative decision about where to begin the discussion; 3) solidification, which includes the articulation of positions and counter-positions , the definition of terms under discussion , and the search for criteria by which to make sound judgments about the subject; 4) exercises and discussion plans, based on the ideas in the text; 5) further responses , which may be in form of creative writing, dramatisation, art, or some other modality.

Such a set-up in a classroom presupposes that children are exposed to a democratic way of living. Education, in this sense, teaches people to live democratically from an early age. By participating in a community of others requires that children communicate their experiences and goals to one another and in the process the share the goals and communicating with one another about them.

THE POINT OF CONTACT

Several scholars have attempted to link democratic reform and education by advocating different Socratic methods of teaching and learning which seek to promote the exploratory spirit, dialogical engagement and inter-subjective reflection through the strengthening of a participatory culture in children (Englund 2006; Lipman 2003; Murris 2000; Vansieleghem 2005). It is unfortunate that schools in Africa have traditionally tended to promote authoritarian values and perpetuate them through educational practice. They have not encouraged participation, debate, responsibility and critical enquiry and have preferred instead to use chalk-talk and rote memorization (Harber 1997).However, the mere existence of democratic institutions is not enough in itself to ensure that people automatically become democrats and appreciate the values of democracy (Camps 1997). Even the acclaimed democratic institutions such as schools are not democratic at all. If democratic behaviour means the acquisition of certain habits, certain civic virtues, these can be inculcated through education. The home as a social institution can play this crucial role as well. Moore states more succinctly that, *"democratic society depends on democratic man"* (Moore 1982: 130) since "there can be no democracy without democrats" (Park-

er 2003). Dewey adds, and is was convinced, that the school must serve society with regard to citizenship in a democratic society by emphasizing, "…*the importance of education in creating the habits and outlook that are able to secure the ends of peace, democracy and economic stability" (Dewey 1915: 3-4)* and of *"…education as a necessary condition for the creation of the kind of citizenship indispensable to the success of society" (Dewey 1956: 90).*Thus it has been argued that it is in the public interest for a democracy to provide an education in democracy for its citizens so that they can take their place as fully productive citizens in a democratic society. There may be several pedagogical tools through which values of democratic citizenship can be initiated in children. One of them is Philosophy for Children as will be justified below.

As Philosophy for Children accepts that children both possess a degree of autonomy and that their autonomy is developing, then the Philosophy for Children classroom provides students with the opportunity to think for themselves as well as an environment that scaffolds the development of an autonomy based on the premise that human beings are *"... essentially choosing creatures, constantly taking decisions about how they want to act"* (Elliott 1990: 27). When children explore moral and ethical questions, and look at different values in the philosophical community of inquiry they begin to explore their own ideas, thoughts and behaviours and there opens up the possibility of even seeing the causes for these. Once they are able to think for themselves, children *"...are able to determine, through their own responsible deliberation, the desirable avenues for their own culture to traverse" (Vansieleghem 2005: 23).* For Cleghorn (2002), allowing children to think for themselves is a very empowering process because it brings the young to a point where choice is possible instead of habitual behaviour, He further argues that *"It is better when regulation comes from the inside , with each citizen being self-regulated through having the self-knowledge to make informed choices"* (Cleghorn 2002: 50). Sharp (1997) writes the following in support of a community of inquiry:

The community of inquiry reflects democracy and initiates the children into the principles and values of this paradigm; it engages young generations in a process of individual and political growth. By exercising in school freedom

of thought and action, democracy will become a way of living and being when they become adults within their society (Sharp 1997: 12).

Lipman makes the strong claim that : *"...an education which promotes philosophical research among children is a guarantee of an adult society which is genuinely democratic"*(Daniel et al. 1992: 5). Doing philosophy with children consists in exploring alternative possibilities and different points of view through dialogue and discussion; it has the promise of engaging learners in the kinds of discursive encounters with one another that will help promote a more tolerant and reasonable citizenry. It contributes to open-mindedness, to building critical reflection and independent thinking, which constitute argument against all forms of manipulation, obscurantism and exclusion.

One of the general aims of Philosophy for Children is to include the voices of every member of the community on the grounds that *"the more voices are heard, the greater will be the possibilities of reaching a general and appropriately representative consensus"* (Vansieleghem 2005: 21). However, some authorities on Philosophy for Children have argued that the goal of the community of philosophical inquiry is dissensus especially that the more the voices the more the chances of testing the validity of members' own beliefs. From this perspective, the input of children is of particular concern as it is children who keep questioning when adults have lost the inclination to do so. Moreover, it is the capacity to use tools and skills, to adopt strategies and to participate and inquire that have become basic presuppositions of a democratic society. Similarly, Philosophy for Children is based on the proposition that critical thinking and dialogue are the necessary conditions for emancipating children from determination and for transforming them into free, democratic citizens. From the above, the similarities are clear between the principles of Philosophy for Children and those of democratic citizenship. It may further be deduced that by practising philosophy at an early age children can display habits of democratic citizenship as they grow into adults.

A democracy promotes fundamental values of justice, fairness and equity (Carr and Kemmis 1986). This may also point to the effect that every human being should be treated by another as a source of value. Also implicated in this assertion is that each person regardless of ability, disability, wealth, race or religion has the right to fair and just treatment. According to Carr and Hartnett (1996), with reference to Dewey, schools themselves should become educational sites of democratic living—that is, democratic learning communities. They write:

For Dewey, individuals can only learn to understand themselves as democratic individuals by becoming members of a community in which the problems of communal life are resolved through collective deliberation and a shared concern for the common good. For this reason, a democratic school is a common school providing a broad social community to which children of different race, class, gender and religion can belong (Carr and Hartnett 1996: 63).

If Dewey was right then schools in Africa should offer philosophy to children thereby becoming embryonic societies providing all pupils with opportunities to develop the social attitudes, skills and dispositions that allow then to formulate and achieve their collective ends by confronting shared problems and common concerns (Carr and Hartnett 1996). Likewise, in a community of inquiry all members are considered capable of reflecting their desires, setting their own ends and rationally pursuing some means to an end. Children who have the ability to develop a societal perspective, exhibit empathy and acquire a capacity to evaluate alternative perspectives on the complex social problems are better prepared to take on social roles as decision- makers and negotiators of different perspectives. Lipman proposes schooling that will ensure that children will be 'good people' and is for this reason that he introduces philosophy into their education as a tool that is used to promote the formation of more critical , reasonable , tolerant, democratic ,judicious people. Doing philosophy with children from an early age is empowering children to explore issues, to discuss, to expressing opinion, to deliberate and to suggest strategies to deal with conflict and achieve reasonable goals. Such experiences of participation are especially empowering for children, helping them to understand that participation is a worthwhile effort. Hence philosophy becomes a starting point of democratic citizenship. Newborns cannot grasp difficult principles of democracy such as toleration and impartial justice. They are not born already inclined toward or capable of deliberating public policy issues with other citizens whose beliefs and cultures may be sharply different. Such things are

not innate. Children need to be given real experience of democracy and human rights situations so as to create a personal appreciation of their significance. The expansion and advancement of critical thinking should be part and parcel of each school subject or learning area. Hence, Steyn and de Klerk (2005) have concluded that

Criticism, including self-criticism, is essential for the development of each student/learner. Critical thinking plays an important role in open communication and it is promoted through the teacher's modelling of intellectual honesty and respect for the views of others. In this process of open communication, teachers should demonstrate a high degree of openness and flexibility, and not feel threatened when students start asking critical questions (Steyn and de Klerk 2005: 156).

Hence, Philosophy for Children is a response to Goodman's observation that *"the key to transforming society lies in transforming the consciousness of its citizens, especially children"* (Goodman 1989: 107). Schools become locations where children in Africa learn to negotiate the conflict between the desire to pursue one's own interests and the fear that others doing likewise will limit one's success. Ideally, education in schools will involve clearing individual interests while together the members of the community pursue common goals. Such a pursuance and sharing requires tolerance by resting aside our feelings long enough to get the truth straight and engage the "other" in serious moral dialogue as well as he may mean that learning about the practices of those from another group — those who are different from us in some ways — so as to understand their perspectives on their actions. We have made a case in this section that positions classroom communities of inquiry as microcosms of democracy. Hence Hamilton states, *"...as they develop in schools they spread out into society. As a result, society develops higher-order thinking and democracy is thus served"* (Hamilton 2010).We therefore find Philosophy for Children's capacity to permit the youth to engage in the practice of democratic ideals in a school environment defensible. To this end, the researchers argue a case for Philosophy for Children in schools as the starting point of democratic citizenship in Africa.

CONCLUSION

In the above discussion, the question: What ought to be done in order that the once respect-

ed ideal of democracy in traditional African societies is never violated in Africa in the 21st Century found an illuminating answer in Philosophy for Children. The critical claims that we have made in this article reveal two fundamental ideas, namely, 1) that Philosophy for children must be a guiding light of a democratic culture and hence 2) that education in general is not possible unless moral values are conveyed and one way of doing this is through the introduction of Philosophy for Children. The researchers have characterised the Philosophy for Children pedagogy as an instrumental pedagogy with a focus on engaging philosophy to produce individuals with certain qualities and competencies. It has been argued that the practical dimension of opening up philosophical dialogue to children at an early age on diverse subjects helps to create an atmosphere of tolerance and mutual respect and provides appropriate tools for rigorous argumentation and analysis, paving a powerful way towards democratic citizenry. The virtues of democracy can best be learnt in schools and schools should therefore take up this challenge and be an integral part of the democratic transformation of Africa. A democratic community-centred attitude such as the one recommended above can assist in generating and promoting a democratic culture and open society in Africa. If such citizenship is practiced starting with the youth, we foresee this as a way Africa can overturn the limitations of the lack of respect for public property, the lure of fraud, the toleration of those engaged in corruption and the indifference to the problems of those who exist outside the social mainstream. While key concepts of democracy should be understood by children, living and acting in a democratic environment is a necessary condition for the production of democratic citizens. This is made possible through the involvement of children in doing philosophy through the classroom community of inquiry.

REFERENCES

Burbules NC 1995. Reasonable doubt: Toward a postmodern defence of reason as an educational aim. In: W Kohli (Ed.): *Critical Conversations in Philosophy of Education*. London: Routledge, pp. 82-102

Camps V 1997. Education for democracy. *Prospects,* xxvii: 493-499.

Cannon D 1996. Philosophy for Children. From <www.wou.edu/las/humanities/cannon/children.htm> (Retrieved on 14 December 2010).

Carr W, Hartnett A 1996. *Education and the Struggle for Democracy: The Politics of Educational Ideas*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Carr W, Kemmis S 1986. *Becoming Critical*. London: Falmer.

Cleghorn P 2002. Why philosophy with children? *Education Review,* 15: 47-51.

Crick B, Heater D 1977. *Essays on Political Education*. Ringmer: The Falmer Press.

Daniel MA, Schleifer M, Lebouis P 1992. Philosophy for children: The continuation of Dewey's democratic project. *Analytic Teaching,* 13: 3-12.

Dewey J 1915. *The School and Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Dewey J 1916. *Democracy and Education*. New York: Free Press.

Dewey J 1956. *Philosophy of Education: Problems of Man*. Ames, Iowa: Littlefield, Adams and Co.

Dudley BJ 1973. *Instability and Political Order: Politics and Crisis in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press.

Elliott J 1990. Educational research in crisis: Performance indicators and the decline in excellence. *British Educational Research Journal,* 16: 3-18.

Englund T 2006. Deliberative communication: A pragmatist proposal. *Journal of Curriculum Studies,* 38: 503-520.

Goodman J 1989. Education for critical democracy. *Journal of Education,* 171: 88-116.

Hamilton RP 2010. The Contribution of Philosophy To Deliberative Democracy. The Higher Education Academy.From <http://prs.heacademy.ac.uk/pdf.html/prsdocuments/263> (Retrieved on 22 December 2011).

Harber C 1997. *Education, Democracy and Political Development in Africa*. Brighton: Sussex Academic Press.

Lipman M 1988. *Philosophy Goes to School*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Lipman M 1991. *Thinking in Education*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Lipman M 2003. *Thinking in Education.* 2nd Edition. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Lipman M 2004. Philosophy for Children's debt to Dewey. *Critical and Creative Thinking,* 12: 1-8.

Maathai W 2009. *The Challenge for Africa: A New Vision*. London: William Heinemann.

Moore TW 1982. *Philosophy of Education – An Introduction*. London: Kegan Paul.

Murris K 2000. The role of the facilitator in philosophical inquiry. *Thinking: The Journal of Philosophy for Children,* 15: 40-46.

Pardales MJ, Girod M 2006. Community of inquiry : Its past and present future. *Educational Philosophy and Theory,* 38: 299-309.

Parker WC 2003. Schools is Not Private Places Like Homes: Diversity, Democracy and Education. From <http//www.newhorizons.org/strategies/parker.htm> (Retrieved on 14 January 2008).

Planas CC 2004. The role of the community of inquiry in the process of knowing. *Analytic Teaching,* 23: 84-96.

Popper KR 1966. *The Open Society and Its Enemies.* Volumes 1 and 2. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Portelli JP, Solomon RP 2001. *The Erosion of Democracy in Education*. Calgary, AB: Detselig Enterprises Ltd.

Russell B 1971. *Principles of Social Reconstruction*. London: Unwin.

Schertz M 2007. Avoiding 'passive empathy' with Philosophy for Children. *Journal of Moral Education,* 36: 185-189.

Sharp AM 1987. What is a community of inquiry? *Journal of Moral Education,* 16: 37-45.

Sharp M 1997. The sacred-as-relationship in the community of inquiry. In: H Palsson, B Siguroardottir, B Nelson (Eds.): *Philosophy for Children on Top of the World*. Akureyri: University of Akureyri Research Fund, pp. 142-156

Shorter A 1996. Concepts of social justice in traditional Africa. *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute,* XXXIX: 58-84.

Sifuna DN 2000. Education for democracy and human rights in African Schools: The Kenyan experience. *Africa Development,* xxv: 213-239.

Splitter LJ, Sharp AM 1995. *Teaching Better Thinking: The Classroom Community of Inquiry*. Melbourne: Australian Centre for Educational Research.

Steyn J, de Klerk J 2005. Karl Popper's views on an open society and their implications for the democratic transformation of South African education. *Education as Change,* 9: 151-167.

van der Leeuw KL 2006. Aspects of philosophical dialogue with children. *Bulletin of the Graduate School of Education,* 1: 25-34.

Vansieleghem N 2005. Philosophy for children as the wind of thinking. *Journal of Philosophy of Education,* 39: 19-35.

Wartenberg TE 2007. Philosophy for children goes to college. *Theory and Research in Education,* 5: 329-334.

Zech G 1998. Education and problem solving: Critical rationalism put into practice. In: P Higgs (Ed.): *Metatheories in Educational Theory and Practice.* Johannesburg: Heinmann, pp. 61-81.