An Afrophilic P4C intervention: The case of Sebakwe primary schools in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Decades of research and practical engagement with an educational approach known as Philosophy for Children (P4C) has documented and exemplified how the approach provides an optimum environment for the advancement of children's rationality in diversity, critical reflexive thinking, and problem-solving skills. While this is certainly important, there is still a need to expand insights into how curriculum reform and transformation in Zimbabwe emerge from Afrophilic P4C learning processes. Drawing on insights from my involvement in a formative intervention study in a Sebakwe schools cluster, the paper provides descriptions and practical insights on how children's participation in a sociocultural approach to Afrophilic P4C sessions contributed to educational theory and practice The results showed that this formative intervention strengthens connections to children's lifeworlds and their engagement with the world. Moreover, in an education system with a pedagogy that is transfixed on technical disciplines of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and success in examination, the experiences and practices of children need to become alternative lenses for mediating epistemic engagement and developing a critical generative approach that considers heritage-based curriculum foundations in the Zimbabwe national schools' curriculum.

Key words

Aphrophilic learning process, children's lifeworlds, Community of Inquiry, curriculum transformation, rationality in diversity

Introduction

The purpose of this article is quite modest. I would like to provide descriptions and insights on how children's participation in a sociocultural Philosophy for Children formative intervention in Sebakwe schools cluster can strengthen and deepen the understanding of educational theory and practice in Zimbabwe and other related contexts. Philosophy for children (P4C) is an approach which hones the idea of developing philosophical inquiry with children, and the pedagogical method inherent within the P4C approach is the Community of Inquiry (Sharp 1991). Sharp links the approach to the American philosophical movement of pragmatism, and suggests that its applicability in education results in the learning experience becoming, 'a process of growth in the ability to reconstruct one's own experience, so that one can live a fuller, happier, qualitatively richer life' (Sharp 1987, p. 45). Thus, P4C, through the medium of Community of Inquiry, represents a transformation in the objectives of teaching and learning, stimulating the curiosity and enthusiasm of countless educators across the world (Weller 2016). This is mainly due to its diverse and timely benefits that include advancement of children's rationality in diversity, critical reflexive thinking and problem-solving skills, through stimulating reflection and questioning at an early age (Lipman 2003; Murris 2008; UNESCO 2009). Moreover, empirical evidence has shown that the approach has potential in enhancing higher academic attainment through development of literacy and mathematical skills, with the addition of non-cognitive benefits such as improved self-esteem and empathy for others (D'Olimpio 2014, Weller 2016). According to Lipman (2003), philosophical thinking which is rich and diverse in terms of subject matter has a generic character that makes it capable of promoting thinking in education unlike other approaches that are purely process driven. By means of this paper, I want to expand insight into how curriculum reform and transformation in the postcolonial Zimbabwean education context emerge from sociocultural Afrophilic P4C learning processes. [1]

Background of the study

The sociocultural P4C approach draws on insights from Vygotsky and Lipman and builds on work that recognises that language socialisation is an interactional two-way

[1] The term 'Afrophilic P4C' used in this paper represents a version of P4C that draws insights from Vygotsky and Lipman to emphasise language socialisation and is framed socioculturally within African (unhu/ubuntu) learning foundations.

process (Lipman 2003; Rogoff 1990; Vygotsky 1978). Vygotskian theory emphasises the role of communication, language, social interaction and instruction on child development (Vygotsky 1978). According to Sutcliffe (2003), Vygotsky's sociocultural theory has logical connections with the P4C programme promoted by Lipman as they both focus on 'internalisation of social speech' (Vygotsky 1978 p. 27). During my research, the sociocultural P4C approach has inspired schools involved in the study to adapt to local contexts and create new roles, competences and practices for teachers. This has increased the agency of the learners. Shapiro (2012) observes that what is then witnessed in education is the development of an inquisitive interactive community in which a new learning environment emerges with pedagogical implications.

The insights of this paper are based on works located in unhu/ubuntu philosophical framework, specifically using Afrophilic lenses with indigenous languages as tools to promote cultural agency or local memory (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o 2009; Ramose 1999). The Afrophilic learning lens is a reflection of discourses that are the medium of philosophical thinking in Zimbabwe (including the Sebakwe area), and these discourses include African proverbs, poems, songs, stories and folk tales (Rettova 2004). The Afrophilic learning framework considers people as '*homo sociologicus*' (social) and identifies the extent to which cognitive development is possible through interaction and participation in social activities (Coetzee & Roux 1998). The content of the learning process embedded in an Afrophilic framework is based on physical, social, and psychological contexts (Ocitti 1973) and promotes a curriculum within context rather than an abstract generic curriculum. In doing so, the Afrophilic learning lens becomes a platform for tracking common cleavages in the sociodemographic and epistemological structures of the learners' ontological beingness (Eze 2008) in postcolonial Zimbabwe.

This paper, and the research to which it makes a contribution, is accompanied by various studies conducted in the field of P4C (see Cassidy & Christie 2013; D'Olimpio & Peterson 2018; Haynes & Murris 2009; Murris 2008). As an example, Donnelly (2005) examined children's ability to think according to set standards by integrating children's ideas with those of Western philosophers Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, and Xenophanes. While Donnelly's (2005) research showed that children can be natural philosophers or proto-philosophers, this finding is limited by narrowing children's thoughts and ideas to Western standards and values rather than creating a space for children to work with a broader conception of knowledge that exposes them to diverse systems of rationality (Eze 2008).

Ndofirepi (2011) conducted a study in which he argues that P4C in Africa should 'draw its content and methodology from African beliefs and philosophies of life' (p. 249) and goes on to demonstrate congruence between Community of Inquiry and the notion of community in African tradition. In doing so, Ndofirepi (2011) supports the hybridisation of P4C, with the goal of creating a 'third space' (Bhabha 1985) curriculum that spearheads the formation of neutral identities. Ndofirepi's (2011) proposal has merit, but I do not think it factors in how a superficial understanding of the philosophy that is to be the base of educational thinking may compromise the reconceptualisation of the curriculum.

Bhurekeni (2020) observes that a superficial interpretation of unhu/ubuntu philosophy potentially results in the masking of ethnocentric norms and values in the curriculum. This problem also entrenches the idea that the philosophy could be applied as a blanket that covers all in solving educational problems in the country, offering minimum possibilities of exploring other critical alternatives. After noting this, I suggest the need to work with a sociocultural P4C that influences the change in the roles of teachers and influences curriculum transformation (Murris 2016). Curricular changes and the shift in teachers' roles are influenced by the fact that P4C takes as its starting point the interest of young people in matters of life and the human condition (D'Olimpio 2014; Shapiro 2012).

This paper reaffirms the ongoing debate on Philosophy for Children, especially in Africa, and advocates a sociocultural approach to Afrophilic P4C that links the existential conditions of Africa to epistemic depth in pedagogy instead of doxa (Hountondji 2002). Epistemic depth in pedagogy creates a platform on which learners can assert claims of universality and diversity, based on the ability to form valid beliefs across geo-political and temporal spaces (Eze 2008). In light of this, an alternative curriculum model for mediating a critical and generative approach to the Zimbabwe national school curriculum, based on the heritage-knowledge foundations of the curriculum, has been created to be implemented in the Sebakwe schools cluster. I show how children's participation in a sociocultural Afrophilic P4C formative intervention influences theory and practice in the postcolonial Zimbabwean education system.

Ethical considerations

Careful thought was given to the multiple ethical implications of this study and for the resettlement schools in which I work.[2] An application for ethical approval was submitted to Rhodes University (ethics committee) and the ethical approval tracking number for my research is 2017.12.08.04. Two more approval letters were sent from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) head office (letter dated 9 May 2017) and from MoPSE Midlands provincial office (letter dated 22 May 2017). In addition, consent of the participants was considered and the cultural norms inherent in the study area were carefully considered. Based on my experience with the elders and children in the study area, and on the basic belief that the consent of participants was a vote of confidence and that the trust would be reciprocated, I confirmed this trust at all stages of the research. In addition, for the purposes of this research, the right of participants to remain anonymous or to reveal their identity was respected (Mack, Woodsong , MacQueen, Guest & Namey 2005). Since I worked with children, the consent of the participating child was obtained along with parental consent. Given Smith's (2012) insights of working as an insider researcher, I also prioritised identifying clear research goals and lines of communication that characterised the formative intervention research and that were distinct from the everyday networks.

Problem statement

Approaches that can be used to deepen cognitive engagement and develop children's rationality in diversity and critical thinking skills have not yet been fully exploited within the Zimbabwean curriculum. There is a need to explore in depth a sociocultural couched within an Afrophilic lens, and the Community of Inquiry that influences teaching and learning and offers new perspectives on interactions between teachers and learners.Although I observed changes in teachers' roles, competences and practices in my work on Afrophilic P4C, little is known about the learning experiences of children involved in this program, and this is the focus of this paper.

[2] Zimbabwe's resettlement / satellite schools were established shortly after the country's compulsory land reform between 2000 and 2005. Most are still not officially registered as schools by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE).

Methodology: Formative intervention

The study uses the formative intervention process-oriented approach developed within Vygotsky's activist and interventionist heritage (Morselli 2019). Through formative intervention workshops, I set out to collaborate with participants in restructuring the curriculum and taking children's learning beyond the traditional norm. goal of this approach was to develop agency among participants (Morselli 2019), as will be shown below.

Through collaborative action with participants from the Sebakwe community, the aim was to develop an educational model that is consistent with Afrophilic learning processes. Additionally, drawing on the collective agency (Morselli 2019) of teachers, parents, education inspectors and children, I sought to harness African indigenous heritage knowledges for learning and curriculum innovation. Here, my role was primarily to provoke and sustain an expansive, participant-led transformation process (Engeström & Sannino 2010).

The positioning of the researcher within the human environment supports Stokols' (1992) claim that intervention research is based on a social-ecological perspective. Essentially, the Afrophilic P4C intervention provides a precedent for the use of culture-based artefacts, including African proverbs, music, picture books, images and folklore . These resources are recognised as start-up capital in promoting dialogue in a Community of Inquiry. This approach has a strong synergistic effect aimed at improving Zimbabwean heritage-based educational curriculum (Zimbabwe Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education 2014). This model is slightly different from Matthew Lipman's generalised model, which relies heavily on the use of explicitly written philosophical novels (Lipman 2003; Ndofirepi 2011).

Across a total of five months, ten Community of Inquiry sessions were conducted with 15 purposively selected children. The sessions were video recorded as agreed during the consent process. During the Community of Inquiry sessions, other participants, such as parents and teachers, were allowed to observe the class or, in some cases, participate in storytelling or singing cultural songs (see Appendix B, a story narrated by Mr Sibanda). Thus, collective agency in the study emerged from a polyphonic or multi-voiced process (Engeström & Sannino 2010, Smith 2012) which allowed the full participation of all stakeholders.

The ten Community of Inquiry sessions that provide the basis of this study were conducted in my classroom. As a teacher, and since my master's degree in 2013, I have

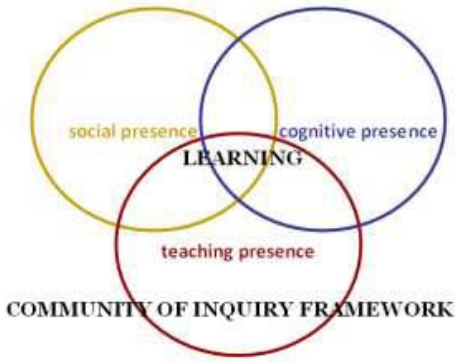
studied in depth the theoretical and practical aspects of P4C and the P4C facilitation curriculum. Consequently, participants asked that I lead the demonstration sessions. The participating children, seven girls and eight boys, were aged from 8 to 11 years and their enrolment records show that they were at the resettlement school from the time of their Early Childhood Development A (3-4 years) and B (5-6 years) until the time of the intervention when some were now in Grade 5. The participating children were locals, whose home language was either Shona or Ndebele and they could communicate in both languages. The Community of Inquiry sessions were conducted in Shona. From the assessment records, their classroom performance was below their grade levels, and none of them had a 100 per cent class attendance record by the time the Afrophilic P4C sessions began.

Data collection was conducted through observation. Participation in the ten P4C sessions allowed me to reflexively observe the unfolding of the sessions, and also created space for me to capture detailed notations of behavior and events, and the contexts surrounding the events and behavior (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2011). The observation guide for the sessions was guided by the Community of Inquiry analytic tool (WRAITEC) explained in the next section, and this made it easier to record the findings of the study. Session observations helped to move beyond perception-based data to empirical data inquiry Schulze (1999) and to discover things that participants may not freely talk about in interview situations. Thus, observing the sessions allowed me to gain a finer understanding of the complexities of the formative intervention plan. The session observations were video-recorded (with the consent of participants and their parents) for data analysis purposes. Video-recorded sessions also allowed me to reflexively observe myself in action, and to capture the dialogical interactions and processes of the ten lessons as they unfolded.

The last phase of data collection for this study involved reflective interviews with children as well as other participants involved in session observation to elicit information on their experiences and views of the intervention (Schulze 1999). The interviews were conducted in either Shona or Ndebele, depending on the interviewee's mother tongue. Reflective interviews made it possible for me to develop a deeper level of reflexivity in relation to the intervention approach. To ensure trustworthiness with the use of interviews, I made sure that the techniques used aimed to be reproducible, systematic, credible and transparent (Schulze 1999). An agenda for the interview was sent to the interviewees at least a week before the actual interview date.

Data analysis

The first step for data analysis was to develop tools that allowed for rigour and 'distanciation' from the data and process. This was essential to ensure that, as a researcher, I become reflexive of the process and also that I manage my own subjectivity. My first analytical tool was the Community of Inquiry framework (Swan, Garrison & Richardson 2009). In practice, the Community of Inquiry is anchored on the assumption that learning experiences arise from the intercommunication of the social presence, the cognitive presence, and the teaching presence (Swan et al. 2009). The three presences potentially help the learners to be involved, informed and empowered. These three presences also encourage teachers/educators to shift from the role transmitters of information to the role of co-enquirers and resources for deliberation (Lipman 2003). Figure 1 offers an illustration of the Community of Inquiry framework which I used as my analytical tool in the study.



Social presence: classroom mediated interactions where learners and the teacher as co-learner feel connected to one to another socially and emotionally.

Cognitive presence: transition within learners' zone of proximal development (ZPD) to the next higher level of thinking.

Teaching presence: the intertwining of the social and cognitive processes to facilitate transformative learning.

Figure 1: Community of Inquiry framework (Swan & Ice 2010).

Transcription of activities

Data collected from the ten Afrophilic P4C sessions and reflective interviews was transcribed by the researcher. Personal transcription of generated data allowed for further engagement with the data and the process as a whole; it also ensured participant confidentiality as it minimised multiple interactions with the data by different individuals. Furthermore, the transcription of activities created space for me to identify all the issues that recur in coding of the data, and group them according to

themes and categories that summarise the collected data. However, one of the notable limitations that I encountered is that the original discussions from data sources were in either Shona or Ndebele. Hence, upon transcription and translation into English, some words were bound to lose their original meaning, although the researcher tried to retain the original context of the discussions.

WRAITEC analytical tool applied to each lesson

The second analytical tool that I applied for classroom lesson observations and reflections is a tool provided by Creighton University for teachers using P4C (see Appendix A). This tool, which is largely informed by Jackson's (2001) 'Good Thinker's Tool Kit', gives great traction for developing analytical descriptions of the P4C lessons and their subsequent contribution to the development of critical reflexive thinking. Jackson's Good Thinker's Tool Kit is a lesson observation guidance framework for P4C lessons which could also be used actively within inquiry (Jackson 2013). Jackson's Good Thinker's Tool Kit obliges P4C teachers to consider the following dimensions of the P4C lesson process which assist in generating and supporting the development of critical reflexive thinking skills: (1) Meaning(s), (2) Reasons, (3) Assumptions, (4) Inferences, (5) Truth, (6) Evidence/examples, and (7) Counter-evidence/counter-examples (see Appendix A).

Findings

The intent of the study was to engage learners in philosophical discussion as an approach that empowers them to become better thinkers (Shapiro 2012). My data analysis shows that this indicator was attained. From the ten sessions based on heritage knowledges drawn from the learners' life-world, participant learners proved that they are capable of, and are interested in, epistemic depth inquiry. The time allocation for the sessions was between 15 to 20 minutes. This allowed for easier recording and to ensure that learners wouldn't get bored from longer sessions. However, as the learners got used to philosophical engagement and their enthusiasm increased, it become practical for some sessions to exceeded the scheduled time by at least five minutes. Here, emphasis was on prioritising energy and engagement as part of process building toward educational empowerment and deeper inquiry.

During the Community of Inquiry engagement learners discussed issues framing their arguments from both broader contexts and local contexts as shown, for example, in a written narrative titled: World environment day (see Appendix C). The short essay, written on 4 June 2018, draws its arguments from a global context and applies them to the local context. The implications of plastic pollution to the environment as written by the learner reveal how connected the writer is to the environment. Evidently, the learner balances his perceptions with insights from other subject area content such as agriculture, science and heritage and social studies. Another noticeable finding from the study is that learners who were involved could frame their own philosophical questions after a stimulus had been presented to them or during deliberations in the Community of Inquiry sessions. In the next section of the paper, I examine three findings.

Children can follow the logic of an argument

During the sessions, learners and the teacher played different games to encourage learner engagement and to develop the habit of listening to each other (Shapiro 2012). One of the games which—as I reflected on the lessons—seemed to have helped learners develop the ability to follow the logic of an argument is the 'Keep the Question Going' energiser. Here, learners collaborate in formulating a question (one word after another) and indicate that they have come to the end of the question by clapping. For example, in one of the lessons the following question unfolded:

> **Tarisai:** *Are*
>
> **Abel:** *your*
>
> **Farai:** *friends*
>
> **Mirriam:** *the*
>
> **Tinevimbo:** *only*
>
> **Abgirl:** *people*
>
> **Arnold:** *you*
>
> **Tadiwanashe:** *should*
>
> **Susan:** *care*
>
> **Fungisai** *for?* (claps to signal the end of the question)

The following excerpt is based on a lesson on 'Rules and Laws' exploring the topic/questions: 'The law making process (justice and the law) / Whose responsibility is it to

make laws and pass judgement?' The participant learners were able to give examples and counter-arguments, proving that they had capability to follow the logic of an argument during discussion. In this case, learners demonstrated the ability to offer examples not simply as illustrations but as speculation or a general hypothesis of what might be the case. In the next examples, I illustrate learners dialogue and give brief insights on how to apply the analytic tool that was utilised:

> **Abel:** *When someone commits a crime [murder], death should not be their punishment they should just be imprisoned for life.*
>
> **Tadiwanashe:** *I think that person should also be killed because if you forgive such a person there is possibility that s/he will repeat the crime.*
>
> **Tinevimbo:** *I agree with Tadiwanashe, someone who commits such a crime must face the same punishment.*

When using the analytical tool kit (see Appendix A), teachers or P4C lesson observers are obliged to see whether the lesson process involves justification of claims made by participants. In the dialogue above0, we see Tadiwanashe trying to give reasons to justify his claim and this also influences other children to reinforce their suppositions and consider whether to agree or disagree. This is common as the main activity in P4C is to help children thinking about their thinking (Lipman 2003). In the following dialogue, we see that Tadiwanashe is engaged in thinking about his earlier claim.

> **Tadiwanashe:** [reconsiders his previous statement and now asks] *But why should death be the final punishment for someone who has committed such a crime* …{interjection}
>
> **Tinenyasha:** *Because the person deserves to be treated the same.*
>
> **Teacher:** *Who should be responsible for making such laws and, when making such judgements, is that person(s) not committing the same crime [murder]?*
>
> **Tadiwanashe:** *If the person who passes the judgement is the Chief [Mambo] of the area then he won't be committing a crime because, as the leader, he has the final say in passing such a judgement.*
>
> **Abel:** *So, are you claiming that the Chief [Mambo] is the one who is allowed to commit murder?"*
>
> **Tadiwanashe:** *Yes, since he is the leader of that community …* [interjection]
>
> **Arnold:** *But murder is murder, the crime is in killing someone.*
>
> **Farai:** *So, this law needs to be looked into because what we are against is the act not one who does/performs the act.*
>
> **Tadiwanashe:** *But the Chief [Mambo] will just instruct his army to do it for him.*

> **Farai:** *That makes no difference because the outcome is the same whether one is doing it intentionally or under command.*

In the second example we see the teacher trying to get the discussion more focused especially by considering the law-making process and the passing of judgement. In P4C sessions it is important that the teacher/ facilitator tries to get the discussion focused without imposing their own thoughts. By asking questions as the learners discuss, the teacher is also showing that they are part of the discussion and also that what the learners are saying makes him think.

Children can use questions and inquiry to drive their own learning

Engagement in Community of Inquiry created space for learners' 'collaborative participation' (Rogoff 2014). In doing so, learners activated in themselves aspects of critical reflexive thinking and also demonstrated an ability for philosophical thinking. Being critical of one's own thinking involves many facets of the analytic tool (Appendix A) that I utilised as learners give reasons, search for the truth, and give counter-examples and evidence during the sessions. An extract from an interview with Mirriam, a nine-year-old girl who has participated in all of the P4C sessions, illustrates how learners become critical of their thinking:

> **Merriam:** *At first, I feel we would just talk because we were so enthusiastic about being recorded and because we wanted to crash each other's point, but as we got used to the sessions, we learnt that one should think first before jumping to make a comment or contribution.*
>
> **Interviewer:** *Have the sessions changed your perception on how you think about different subject matter?*
>
> **Merriam:** *Yes. Now I feel comfortable asking questions during lessons and even when I am alone sometimes, I wonder about the things I think about and then I ask my friends and we discuss on it.*

This shows that Community of Inquiry approach to learning has capacity to openly facilitate critical interactions among participants and, more importantly, the approach can even necessitate such interactions among learners as young as 8 to 11 years old (Cassidy & Christie 2013). Here, educators and more knowledgeable others—who could also be other children—play the role of scaffolding and transforming learning in response to the child's prior understanding. In this way, it is possible that

development and learning will occur in the context of the child's communities (Rogoff 2014).

Children's use of questions and inquiry help them to develop interest in exploring the world

As Goering, Shudak and Wartenburg (2013) explain, '[a]nyone who has spent time with young children knows that they are constantly asking "why?" and trying to figure out the world. Like philosophers, they are puzzled by why things are the way they are' (p. 3). In the study, learners demonstrated that their thinking evolves as they deepen their understanding of the human environment and the reflective artefacts from their life-worlds through active participation. Here, children mediate culturally-oriented tools—asking questions, proffering reasons and counter-examples to clarify their points during dialogue, experimenting and discovering on their own Lipman, (2003), thus developing in themselves life-long learning skills. All that the teacher needs to do is to build on the learners' curiosity by allowing them to enquire, explore, and discover more about the world around them. The following dialogue shows how learners engage in deep enquiry about issues that concern them in their daily lives:

> **Abel:** *Say I find a strong fence and trap those elephants that are destroying people's fields, what will happen?*
>
> **Tadiwanashe:** *After a while the elephants will die because they will eat everything within the fence.*
>
> **Abel:** *What if we let them destroy all our crops [maize], where will we get food?*
>
> **Farai:** *Abel, remember we are the ones who came to live in the animals' territory, we should grow plants they don't eat, then we sell and buy our food from other people who are in areas where there are no elephants that destroy crops.*
>
> **Tadiwanashe:** *I think Farai is right, Abel. Imagine if those animals can find a way of putting us in a cage, will you be happy?*
>
> **Teacher:** *So how can we live together with the non-human animals?*
>
> **Tinevimbo**: *I think we must leave enough space for the animals to graze and live in. If we occupy all the space, where will the animals live; in the past how were people living because all these animals were there?*

Discussion

From the findings, it is noted that the participants were successful in working with Afrophilic content. The content was aimed at fostering the chidren's critical reflexive thinking skills (*kurodza njere/pfungwa* – Shona; *ukulola ingqondo* – Ndebele: 'to sharpen the mind'). By way of example, participants chose the teaching of 'folklore' (*Ngano* - Shona; *Inganekwane* - Ndebele) (Appedix B) among other Afrophilic concepts. During the first Community of Inquiry sessions, when learners were still gaining familiarity with the dialogical approach, my main role as the facilitator was to find ways of constantly prompting them to share their ideas and ask questions. Typically, I would ask follow-up questions or would just ask 'what else?' However, as the learners got used to the sessions and became more engaged, at times the discussions became more prolonged.

> **Teacher:** *Why do we need friends?*
>
> **Arnold:** *God wants us to have friends.*
>
> **Tadiwanashe:** *They share with us their food.*
>
> **Teacher:** *Can a friend only be someone who gives you food?*
>
> **Tadiwanashe:** *Sometimes we play after lessons or during lunch-hour.*
>
> **Teacher:** *What else?*

By this time, my role had shifted from prompting learners to speak to simply sustaining the discussion by encouraging participants to give reflective responses. The most interesting lesson for me during the sessions was that the teacher has to stay true to the process of inquiry itself (Haynes & Murris 2009) and create space for communicative diversity and clarity so as to let learners gain new meanings and enhance their participative agency. One of the limitations encountered is that the original discussions from data sources were in either Shona or Ndebele (see Appedix B for the translation of a story from Shona folklore). Hence, upon transcription and translation into English, some words were bound to lose their original meaning although the researcher tried to retain the original context of the discussions.

Implications for theory

Culturally-apropriate philosophical learning can strengthen connections to chidren's life-worlds their engagement in the world. Moreover, this approach to education can

strengthen and contribute to the decolonial intention of the Zimbabwean curriculum framework with necessary depth that avoids paradox and doxa (Bhurekeni 2020). The approach also helps to side-step the reproduction of coloniality (Mgqwashu 2016). Decoloniality is possible given that Afrophilic P4C through the Community of Inquiry methodology fosters an inquiry-based teaching and learning process in schools which is contrary to learning by rote or what Rogoff (2003) has referred to as assembly-line teaching. According to Murris (2008) and the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC) (2006, cited in UNESCO 2007), learner participation in Community of Inquiry has the capacity to foster improvements in the characteristics of critical reflexive thinking, such as reminiscing, cataloguing, reflecting, deliberating, hypothesising and responsive listening. This co-participative process that involves children as active contributors to knowledge production and meaning making acts as a de-linking process from what Lyle (2018) refers to as a linear and hierarchical understanding of learning. Under the linear and hierarchical understanding of learning, motivation for teaching is derived from teacher's capability to respond to government-determined curricula by transmitting knowledge to learners who are expected to regurgitate such knowledge and succeed in tests and examinations (Lyle 2018; Murris 2016). In contrast, P4C views the child as a complex and socially-constructed being and foregrounds the idea of the child as learner of agency and an active participant in co-constructing knowledge and reorienting culture (Haynes & Murris 2009). Thus, through engaging with this kind of learning, teachers develop lenses for developing conceptual frameworks that will help learners to become critical reflexive thinkers.

Implications for P4C

Reflections on the reflective artefacts that were selected reveal that Afrophilic learning lenses resonate well with the life experiences of the learners and the quality of their being-ness. Thus, an Afrophilic P4C has potent implications for how the school curriculum is to be organised, and this translates into a new understanding of the teachers' roles and learner's engagement. By way of example, an Afrophilic P4C supports Zimbabwean identity, norms, and values. For curriculum transformation to be reflective of this Afrophilic approach, it must encompass heritage knowledges that are considered an important part of the Zimbabwean identiy (Zimbabwe Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education 2014). Furthermore, as noted in Bhurekeni and Lotz-Sisitka (submitted for publication) teachers utilising this approach become aware

of the collective experiences of learners, hence they become alive to appreciating the pendulum shift from teacher-controlled learning to dialogue-driven learning. This increases learner agency and their participative role in stirring the dialogue.

The communicative diversity that was allowed for during the Community of Inquiry sessions in turn allowed for learners' growth in exhibiting diversity in reason (Eze, 2008).[3] Moreover, the Afrophilic lens and artefacts enables the learning process to become more situated. The formative intervention emerges as a stronger and more inclusive concept of universality that helps to mitigate the dualism between school and the leaners' life-worlds. This opens a space for re-imagining education as a public good in Africa and entails 'redefining the concepts of "educatedness", "progress", "success" and "relevance"' (Mgqwashu 2016) as guided by the African philosophy of unhu/ubuntu to bring into context the learners' life-worlds that have been silenced due to coloniality (Mgqwashu 2016). Philosophy for Children in Africa should appreciate the significance and role of the African *dare* (Shona) / *idale* (Ndebele) as a key Afrophilic concept and a representation of a discursive public sphere and utilise it as part of the learner's lived experience in learning spaces.[4] Situating P4C within an Afrophilic learning lens brings into focus the prospect that the African philosophy of unhu/ubuntu and its epistemologies could keep pace with the conceptual erudition of Western thought (Rainville 2000). Again, an Afrophilic philosophical lens has the potential to help avoid making educational research ineffective if it neglects philosophy's purpose of clarifying how diverse forms of enquiry are relevant and linked together in relation to certain educational issues and contexts (Peters & White1969).

Implications for practice

I argue that we should place children's heritage in relation to curriculum and pedagogical praxis, and consider situating these within a sociocultural approach. This approach has capacity to enhance and promote rationality in diversity. Instead of considering learning as a task that the teacher designs following ministry-modelled curriculum frameworks, the sociocultural P4C approach offers an opportunity to

[3] Eze (2008) considers diversity in reason to be 'the primary, generative condition of autonomy: the autonomy of the ethical and moral will' (p. 37)

[4] The terms *dare* (Shona) and *idale* (Ndebele) refer to a meeting place or a place of dialogue which is usually under a tree or where people can make fire and sit around the fireplace.

pivot towards a redefined understanding of learning as a task that is constantly interpreted and reconstructed by the learner's agency and cannot be fully controlled by the teacher (Lipman 2003; Vygotsky 1978). For example, facilitating sociocultural P4C sessions goes beyond simply giving learners activities and assessing and evaluating their competences later, but providing the learners with what Vygotsky (1978) has referred to as mediating tools or signs with which to scaffold their participation in the activity.

Considering this, the teacher needs to develop sensitivity towards the leaner's precise sensibilities and imaginations (Mohr Lone & Israeloff 2012). The teacher will be more prepared to monitor the direction of the discussion and is more likely to take and, if necessary, reword or help interpret some statements that learners may struggle to clarify (Lyle, 2018). Again, a sociocultural approach to P4C exposes how interaction (dialogue) plays an essential role in the way children learn and how 'teaching from expert to novice' takes place in co-participatory interactions (Rogoff 2003). Moreover, learning that foregrounds learner agency results in a change of roles, not only for teachers but also for learners, as they provide supporting evidence to each other's claims, hence building on the transformation of their competences.

Conclusion and prospects for future research

The paper has brought into focus that teaching children using an interactive approach and through culturally-oriented artefacts that speak to the learner's life-world promotes rationality in diversity and empathy as well as critically engaged responses. This model differs from Lipman's model of using explicitly written philosophical novels and was utilised to avoid importing a Western-centric understanding of rationality (Eze 2008; Rainville 2000) to the Sebakwe community, given that most available philosophical children's novels were written by Western philosophers. Much of the literature and methodology propounded in these novels is synonymous with Western knowledge paradigms (Rainville 2000), thereby attracting criticism from postcolonial as well as decolonial critics who question the Western claim to knowledge and modernity (Dey 2018). Thus, the inclusion of an Afrophilic learning lens in the programme suggests a need for improving the P4C curriculum both theoretically and in praxis, and a need to be cogniscent of the cultural and historical influences that shape diverse educational contours across the world. Empirical evidence has shown that primary school children are capable of, and interested in, epistemic depth enquiry around heritage issues**.** Moreover, the children were able to

effectively listen and respond to one another as well as being able to ask questions and shape one's thinking through inquiry. Future research should consider focusing on the implications of P4C for policy and assessment, especially in postcolonial nations like Zimbabwe where curriculum reform has a focus on the inclusion of heritage knowledges inherent in endogenous communities as a decolonial approach to education. Moreover, there is need to develop teacher education guidelines for implementation of the programme through capturing reflections on successes and challenges on facilitating P4C lessons in schools, drawing from the experiences of those who have done it.

Competing interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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Appendix A

More detailed analytical tool for mediating and critically observing Philosophy for Children lessons. Note: These also expand learning in the Zone of Proximal development and should be socio-culturally interpreted.

W	**What do you mean?** • What do you/they mean by ____? • What is missing here? • What have I forgotten to ask? • What is going on here? What is the problem? • What does this have to do with me?
R	**Reasons** • What reasons are there that support what he/she said? • Why do you say that? • Can you give a reason? Is it a good reason? • What makes a reason a good reason?
A	**Assumptions** • What are we assuming (taking for granted as true)? • What other assumptions might we make? • How are our assumptions influencing what we are seeing /judging/thinking/ saying?
I	**Inferences; If...Then; Implications** • What inferences have we made from what was said? • If what was said is true, then what? • What are the implications of what is proposed?
T	**Truth** • Is what is being said true? • How do we know? • How could we find out?
E	**Examples; Evidence** • Can you think of an example to illustrate what you mean? • What evidence can we find to support the claim being made?
C	**Counter-examples** • Can you think of a counter-example to the claim being made?

Appendix B (A folklore story narrated by Mr Sibanda)

Once upon a time

There was a boy and a girl who lost their parents whilst they were still young. The children had to grow up living with a grandmother who was very cruel to them. The boy was a dreamer and was possessed by a spirit of hunting. He would go for hunting excursions with the other boys of his age. The boys would kill a lot of game, but the boy's grandmother would not give them any meat, they would eat Sadza with okra but most of the time it was Sadza with whey.[5]

One day, the boy said to his sister, 'Let us run away'. The two went away and built their shack shelter near a very big cave. During the afternoons they would sit under the shade of a big tree and then during the night they would sleep in the cave. The boy dreamt of a word telling them not to braai[6] any meat, and he told his sister about the dream. His sister was very obedient, so each time when the boy went for his hunting expeditions, she would boil the meat and then go to sleep in the cave by night. The cave could only be opened by someone from within. On his return the boy would sing:

> *Hwerure hwerure shamwari we-e*
> Hwerure hwerure (come and dance) my friend,
>
> *Ndinde ndinde mukaranga, wandoswerepiko shamwari we-e?*
> Ndinde ndinde (imaginative sounds of dancing and drumbeat) my fellow friend, where were you today, my friend?
>
> *Ndinde ndinde mukaranga,*
> Ndinde ndinde, my friend,
>
> *ndandoswera seri kwemakomo shamwari we-e!*
> I was near the hills and mountains, my friend!
>
> *Ndinde ndinde mukaranga*
> Ndinde ndinde, my friend.

The girl would open the door. All these days the boy would remind his sister of the dream, and his sister would promise him that she would never braai any meat. One

[5] Sadza refers to thick porridge made from mealie meal
[6] braai' = to grill or barbecue

day the girl remembered when she was still a young ~~a~~ girl celebrating her brother's birthday. It was a joyful celebration; people wining and dining, dancing, and braai. The aroma of barbecued meat filled the shack shelter even when there was no meat to braai. The girl brushed away these memories, and when her brother come back, she opened the door for him.

Days and seasons passed and one day the childhood memories became so powerful that they overcame her. She grilled a large piece of game meat. Then she went to sleep in the cave. The aroma of grilled meat spread throughout the forest and a large beast Zidyavanhu, who lived in the forest, searched for the source of the aroma. He got to the cave and tried to open the cave but failed. Later, he saw the boy coming towards the cave armed with his hunting weapons, and the beast dodged into the forest for fear of been attacked by the boy. The boy started singing:

> *Hwerure hwerure shamwari we-e!*
>
> *Ndinde ndinde mukaranga, wandoswerepiko shamwari we-e?*
>
> *Ndinde ndinde mukaranga,*
>
> *ndandoswera seri kwemakomo shamwari we-e!*
>
> *Ndinde ndinde mukaranga*

The cave opened and the beast went away. On the following day, the boy saw large footprints. He asked his sister if she had braaied some meat, but the girl said she would never do such a thing. During the evening Zidyavanhu returned and imitated the boy's singing, but the singing was not perfect:

> *Bhethuthe … bhethuthe …*
>
> *Bhethuthe … bhethuthe …*

The girl realised the voice was not her brother's voice and she did not open the door. Later the boy arrived and sung the song and the girl opened the cave. On the third day Zidyavanhu returned, this time his voice was fine tuned to imitate the boy's, so he started singing and dancing. The girl realised that the person outside was not her brother since he has never danced while singing. Her brother returned and sung their usual song; the girl opened the door. On the morning of the next day the boy saw the large footprints again and he asked his sister if she once braaied meat, but she said 'No', swearing that she would never do such a thing.

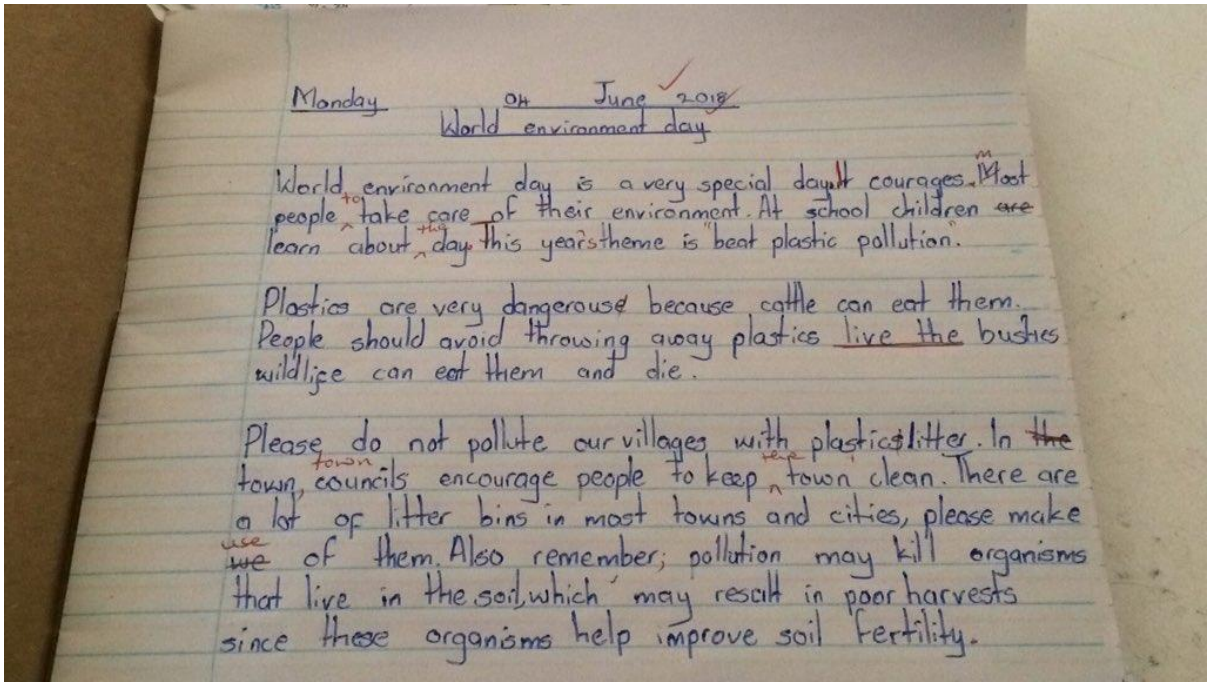
The two went to sleep and the boy dreamt of a voice telling him to leave behind his Chuma (a neck chain made of beads) when he goes out for his usual hunting trips. His sister saw the bead chain laying on the floor as she was sweeping and she wore the chain but forgot to remove it. Dusk came and Zidyavanhu returned to try his luck. He sung with a refined voice and this time he did not dance. The girl heard the singing and thought it was her brother. She opened the door and Zidyavanhu took her away. She cried and screamed, screamed, and shouted for help but no one was there to help her. She got tired of her crying. She grew weak from her shouting. Then she thought of a plan, she removed the bead chain and started dropping down a single bead at a time as the beast was going with her deep into the forest.

When the boy returned, he found the cave closed as normal. He sung and sung, he sung until the birds and wild animals that were listening to him go tired of listening. He sang so much that no one in this land could explain the tiredness that choked his voice. On the following morning he saw the large footprints and followed them. Then he noticed the beads from his necklace. He followed, picking up each bead until he got to a beautiful homestead in the middle of the forest. That was where Zidyavanhu and his family lived. The boys' sister was tied on a tree waiting to be eaten. In anger the boy bravely fought with the beast and his family. He killed all the beasts and untied his sister. From that day until today the boy and the girl are still living at the beautiful homestead they inherited after defeating Zidyavanhu.

The End

Appendix C

Example of children's written work as it emerged from the p4c discussions.



Monday 04 June 2018

World environment day

World environment day is a very special day courages. Most people take care of their environment. At school children ~~are~~ learn about the day. This years theme is "beat plastic pollution".

Plastics are very dangerouse because cattle can eat them. People should avoid throwing away plastics live the bushes wildlife can eat them and die.

Please do not pollute our villages with plastics litter. In ~~the~~ town, town councils encourage people to keep their town clean. There are a lot of litter bins in most towns and cities, please make use ~~we~~ of them. Also remember; pollution may kill organisms that live in the soil, which may result in poor harvests since these organisms help improve soil fertility.