AN ANALYSIS OF UNDERGRADUATE PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

By

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DECLARATION

I declare that AN ANALYSIS OF UNDERGRADUATE PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

_____ _____

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CNE	Christian National Education
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DoE	Department of Education
FET	Further Education and Training
IKS	Indigenous knowledge systems
OBE	Outcomes-based Education
ODL	Open and distance learning
P4C	Philosophy for children
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
UNESCO	United Nations Educational and Scientific Organisation

ABSTRACT

This study provides a critical interrogation of the perceptions held by the undergraduate Philosophy of Education students at an open and distance learning institution, towards African philosophy. The study is premised on famed Kenyan philosopher, Odera Henry Oruka's classification of African philosophy into four trends: ethno-philosophy, philosophic sagacity, nationalist-ideological philosophy and professional philosophy. These trends confirm that African philosophy is more than traditions, culture or *ubuntu*, and more complex than the students make it to be. The study makes a link between the students' flawed perceptions of African philosophy with their lack of critical thinking skills.

The study has attempted to answer questions such as why students have flawed perceptions of African philosophy; how critical thinking assists in changing their perceptions of African philosophy, and what role can the education system play in equipping students with critical thinking skills. The study's findings show that undergraduate Philosophy of Education students conflate African philosophy with African people's traditions and cultures, and with *ubuntu.* Students perceive that African philosophy lacks reason and rationality - key elements of critical thinking. The study's findings show that students lack critical thinking skills. The study notes that the way students are taught makes a large contribution to their perceptions and lack of critical thinking skills.

The study makes the following recommendations. Firstly, to deal with the problem of students' conflations, the study recommends the introduction of the principles of African philosophy, namely, *ubuntu,* communalism and indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) in the school curriculum, and to emphasise these principles in the curricula of higher education institutions. Secondly, the study recommends the introduction of philosophy for children (P4C) in schools. It is envisaged that P4C will assist learners to acquire critical thinking skills at an early stage of learning. Thirdly, the study recommends the teaching of critical thinking skills at universities. Finally, the study recommends that in-

service training be made an integral part of teachers' and lecturers' professional training, to bring them up-to-date with new ideas and methods of teaching.

Key words: African philosophy; Africanisation; *ubuntu*; communalism; indigenous knowledge systems (IKS); conflations; critical thinking skills; philosophy for children (P4C).

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The importance of philosophy in research and education cannot be overemphasised. As Ayer (1972:65) argues, the function of philosophy is wholly critical. It tests the validity of our scientific hypotheses and everyday assumptions. When educationists and researchers draw on philosophy to analyse educational matters, they are called upon to be critical of their practice. Enslin (1993:3) also argues that philosophy is important for the understanding of educational issues, more especially because education has always been a complex and contested concept. It may be for these reasons that there has been an advocacy for philosophy of education as a discipline. Waghid (2005:126) defends philosophy of education against the charge of "being too theoretical and failing to be responsive to practical situations in universities and schools". He argues that philosophy of education does not simply involve abstract theories, but facilitates "practical" action such as "compassionate imagination – an aspect of human action which can help us counteract claims that the philosophy of education is simply academic jargon reflecting esoteric, incomprehensible theorising" (Waghid, 2005:126).

Morrow (1989: xiii) argues that philosophy of education is the theoretical discipline, which has as its aim the critical investigation of forms of understanding relevant to education. It is a discipline which is concerned with issues which are of profound importance to everyone, not only to professional philosophers of education, but also as an aspect of public critical debate about education and schooling in the society. He further argues that philosophy of education is concerned with the investigation of forms of understanding and has as its principal objects the disciplined analysis, criticism and construction of arguments, or chains of thought (Morrow, 1989:xiv). The foregoing arguments highlight the importance of philosophy. Teaching philosophy to school children has the potential to contribute to their acquiring of basic critical thinking skills. I

explore elements of philosophy for children, otherwise known by the acronym P4C, in Chapters 3 and 6 below and will therefore not belabour the issue here. By the same token the teaching of philosophy to first year university students would provide continuity to the foundation laid by P4C with a view to concretising the critical thinking skills which are essential for university teaching and learning.

At the institution where I lecture, Philosophy of Education is offered as an undergraduate course in which nine different philosophical frameworks are used as a basis for inducting the students into a philosophical mindset. One of these frameworks is African philosophy. The idea of an African philosophy has been a contentious issue among philosophers for a long time. Most Western philosophers such as Kant and Hegel disputed the existence of Africa and of African philosophy. I explore this idea in detail in Chapter 2. When the existence of African philosophy is not an issue, the dispute concerns what form it takes and what it consists of (Bodunrin, 1981:161). Though numerous African philosophers and scholars (Hallen, 2002; Gyekye, 1997; Ayisi, 1992; Oruka, 1990; Mbiti, 1975; 1969) have undertaken much research to confirm the existence of African philosophy, the question of what form it takes continues to be highly contested. This will be highlighted in the literature review in Chapter 2. In the same way, the issue of what African philosophy is and how it is meant to play itself out in educational practice continues to elude most undergraduate Philosophy of Education students that I teach at an open and distance learning (ODL) institution in South Africa. There is ongoing debate in South Africa on ways of anchoring curricular offerings within the African context. This debate, which has come to be known as Africanisation, is pertinent to my project. To that end I shall make a case for the role of African philosophy in the Africanisation of South Africa's schooling as well as higher education teaching and learning. The imperative to Africanise the curriculum is dealt with by numerous South African authors and academics (Msila, 2009; Makgoba & Seepe, 2004; Lebakeng, 2004; Le Roux, 2001; Higgs & van Wyk, 2006). What drives these authors and academics in their quest for Africanisation is their collective recognition of the imperative to anchor the curricular offerings within the African context.

The tendency among undergraduate Philosophy of Education students is to regurgitate information they receive from their tutorial letters, textbooks and the notes lecturers give to them during discussion classes and this can be attributed to their under-preparedness for university study (Nyamapfene & Letseka, 1995; Singh, 2000; Boughey, 2005; Slonimsky & Shalem, 2006). Commenting on learning difficulties among Australian students, Holder, Jones, Robinson and Krass (1999: 26-28) note that many of the students "lack the prerequisite literacy skills for successful university study" and that "literacy deficiencies are associated with failure to finish the degree in the minimum time". It seems that students at the institution where I conducted the research exhibit similar deficiencies to those which the above authors found among the students they studied. As research done worldwide shows, schooling does not seem able to prepare learners adequately for university studies. Most studies done on first year or undergraduate university students show similar results, that undergraduate university students tend to either regurgitate what they have read and heard. They tend to rely on common sense where they need to be technical. They cannot argue, justify their arguments and/or analyse a text (Slonimsky & Shalem, 2006; Holder, Jones, Robinson & Krass, 1999; Boughey, 2005).

In South Africa, the government has introduced policies and programmes that are meant to deal with these challenges at school level. One of these is that of Outcomes-based Education (OBE), which was introduced in schools in 1998. OBE placed a heavy premium on critical outcomes that should help learners to develop critical thinking dispositions as well as the ability to communicate logically (Lombard & Grosser, 2008:561). However, Lombard and Grosser's (2008:572) research shows that there is little evidence of the development of any critical thinking skills at school level. What I intend to do in this study is to draw on the literature review and philosophic inquiry to analyse students' written assignments, with a view to ascertaining the extent to which their lack of critical thinking skills affects their understanding of African philosophy.

1.2 Problem statement and motivation for the research

I have worked as a lecturer in Philosophy of Education at an ODL institution in South African for six years. In my experience I noticed that when undergraduate Philosophy of Education students respond to questions that require them to draw on African philosophy to solve practical classroom/school or community problems, and show the advantages and disadvantages of using this philosophy, they tend to exhibit a flawed understanding of the latter. As I will show in the brief literature review below, Kenyan philosopher Odera Oruka's formulation of the four trends of African philosophy underscores the fact that African philosophy cannot be simply reduced to traditions and cultural practices or worldviews such as *ubuntu*. On the contrary, it is more than that. To that end, this study seeks to analyse these conflations and flaws and to delineate the conceptual cleavages that frame African philosophy. The study will further seek to establish the link between the students' lack of critical thinking skills and their flawed understanding of African philosophy. This study arose from the recognition that even though the Department of Education[1] has, since the transition from apartheid to democracy, issued policies and plans meant to alter the South African education from a completely Euro-centric/ Western type, to an education that is consistent with the call for the Africanisation initiative, the changes have been slow, mainly because universities have not fully committed themselves to driving this agenda to its logical conclusion.

1.3 Research questions

Against the backdrop of the above problem statement, the following research questions become pertinent:

Main research question

- Why do Philosophy of Education students have difficulties conceptualising African philosophy?

[1] In 2009 the South African government decided to split the Department of Education (DoE) into the Department of Basic Education and the Department of Higher Education and Training with a view to prioritising basic education. See the Department of Basic Education's (2011) *Strategic Plan 2011-2014* and the Department of Education's (2009) *Department of Education Annual Report 2009/2010*.

Sub-research questions

- Why is African philosophy so complex?
- What role can critical thinking play in enabling Philosophy of Education students to conceptualise African philosophy?
- What role can schools play in equipping students with critical thinking skills and readiness for the philosophical complexities of higher education teaching and learning?
- How best can universities intervene in the teaching of critical thinking skills to undergraduate students?

1.4 Aims of the study

My general aim in this study is to interrogate the aforementioned tendencies of undergraduate Philosophy of Education students to conflate African philosophy with *ubuntu* and traditions and cultural practices of the African people. My central argument is that African philosophy is more complex than traditions and cultural practices of African people. I shall argue that *ubuntu* is only a worldview within African philosophy.

Specific aims

The specific aims of this study are:

- To highlight the complexities of African philosophy;
- To link undergraduate students' conflation of African philosophy with their under-preparedness for higher education;
- To argue a case for the teaching of philosophy for children (P4C) in school as a building block for philosophical and critical thinking skills for undergraduate Philosophy of Education students;
- To make recommendations for positioning African philosophy as a key factor in the Africanisation of the curriculum at schools and at universities.

1.5 A brief literature review

A good starting point in coming to grips with African philosophy is to be found in John S. Mbiti's seminal works: *African Religions and Philosophy* (1969), and *Introduction to African Religions* (1975). His starting point in articulating African philosophy is the African community and its interdependent nature. Mbiti (1969:108-9) argues that this community is marked by communal interdependence, and that in traditional African life the individual owes his or her existence to other people, including those of past generations and his or her contemporaries. By this he means that the individual cannot exist alone: rather, he or she is part of the whole community, and hence the saying "whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say: I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am" (Mbiti, 1969:108-9).

The idea of communalism and *ubuntu* as a southern African notion or worldview are central to conceptions of African philosophy. In my effort to clarify this issue I draw on Oruka's fourfold formulation of the classification scheme of African philosophy to argue that such philosophy cannot be simply reduced to traditions and cultural practices of African people or be equated with *ubuntu*. As Oruka (2002:120-124) points out, the four trends demarcate African philosophy into ethno-philosophy, philosophic sagacity, nationalist-ideological philosophy and critical or professional philosophy. Ethno-philosophy is embodied in communal African customs, poems, taboos, religions, songs, and dances, the result being that African philosophy is identified with communal or 'folk philosophy' (Oruka, 2002:121). Philosophic sagacity is practised by indigenous thinkers or sages, people who have not had the benefit of modern education but are considered critical independent thinkers who are capable of using their own thought and judgements based on the power of reason and inborn insight rather than the authority of the communal consensus (Oruka, 2002:121). Nationalist-ideological philosophy advocates the revival of the cardinal ethical principle of traditional humanist African communalism (Oruka, 2002:122). It is practised by politicians or statesmen: for instance, leaders such as Amilcar Cabral of Guinea Bissau, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana,

and Julius Nyerere of Tanzania (Higgs & Smith, 2006a:91). Higgs and Smith (2006b:46) go on to argue that critical or professional philosophy is practised by African philosophers trained in Western philosophies such as empiricism, existentialism and existentialism. Given the breadth and complexity of African philosophy this study makes a case for the infusion of critical thinking into higher education teaching and learning in South Africa, especially in Schafersman (1991:3) defines critical thinking as correct the teaching and learning of African philosophy.

thinking in the pursuit of relevant and reliable knowledge about the world. Correct signifies that it is reasonable, reflective, responsible, and skilful thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do. A person who thinks critically can ask appropriate questions, gather relevant information, efficiently and creatively sort through this information, reason logically from this information, and reach reliable and trustworthy conclusions about the world that enables one to live and act successfully in it. Schafersman (1991:3) also notes that critical thinking is critical inquiry, so that critical thinkers investigate problems, ask questions, pose new answers that challenge the status quo, discover new information that can be used for good or ill, question authorities and traditional beliefs, challenge received dogmas and doctrines, and often end up possessing a power in society greater than their numbers. Schafersman (1991:3) argues that most people are followers of authority: most do not question, are not curious, and do not challenge authority figures who claim special knowledge or insight. The majority of people, therefore, do not think for themselves, but rely on others to think for them. Thus critical thinking enables an individual to be a responsible citizen who contributes to society, and is not merely a consumer of society's distractions.

As Hamdan (2006:59) points out, critical thinking is not only relevant to school knowledge but also to everyday matters. Along the same lines Van den Berg's (2000:97) definition of critical thinking emphasises cognitive strategies such as the analysis, evaluation and construction of arguments, inductive and deductive reasoning and the identification of fallacies in argumentation. She argues that the majority of learners recognise the importance of acquiring skills that could assist them in identifying

and solving problems, in thinking critically and independently, in being culturally sensitive and in making reasoned decisions (Van den Berg, 2000:105-106). What remains a philosophical conundrum is the fact that even though the learners recognise the importance of acquiring critical thinking skills in reality, it seems they do not acquire them. The questions that I grapple with in this study are, how should these skills be developed? At what level should the learners acquire them? Should it be at the school level or upon entry into the university? As mentioned in the section on research questions, one of the arguments I shall advance is for the teaching of philosophy for children (P4C) in schools as a preparatory stage to equip first year university entrants with the philosophical and critical thinking skills that are necessary for university teaching and learning.

The development of critical thinking faculties is at the heart of the South African education policy framework. For instance, the Department of Education's (DoE) (1995) *White Paper on Education and Training* is unequivocal about the centrality of critical thinking in all aspects of education provision. Indeed the cardinal principles of *Curriculum 2005* (1998), which has been developed into the *Revised National Curriculum Statement* (2002), are the development of critical and creative thinking, promotion of the learner's ability to think logically and analytically, as well as holistically and laterally. However, it seems that policy ideals and imperatives do not always translate into reality. While South Africa's educational policies and legislative imperatives require the development of critical thinking at all levels of education, the newly designed education system is not yet able to deliver on the stated policy ideals and imperatives. It has been described as "in a crisis" (Bloch, 2009; Fleisch, 2008).

1.6 Research design

In this study I used a qualitative research design and employed philosophical inquiry, document/content analysis and extended literature review to analyse students' assignments, prescribed textbook for Philosophy of Education, tutorial letters and notes lecturers use in discussion classes. The written assignments of the undergraduate

students doing Philosophy of Education constituted the documents whose content was analysed. Secondary sources such as books, journal articles, conference papers and reports on African philosophy, as well as education policy documents and legislation were used to critically analyse these assignments.

1.6.1 Qualitative research

Quantitative research methodologies have dominated social and educational research for a long time. However in more recent years, qualitative research has become a preferred methodology for social science research, mainly because quantitative research has been found to be inadequate for investigating educational problems where numbers are not the only concern, but reasons, attitudes and perceptions are also important (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh & Sorensen, 2006: 25).

While quantitative researchers start the research process with a general area of study or issue of personal or professional interest, qualitative researchers begin with a self-assessment and reflection about themselves as situated in a socio-historical context. Furthermore, quantitative researchers rely more on gathering and analysing statistical data, while qualitative researchers seek experiential understanding of the phenomena under investigation by using all their senses: sight, smell, touch, taste and hearing (Neuman, 2006:14-15, 396). In this study I used a qualitative research design on the grounds that it involves students' personal perspectives (Ary *et al.,* 2006).

1.7 Research methods

1.7.1 Philosophical Inquiry

Ellis (1983:212) points out that philosophical inquiry involves using intellectual analysis to clarify meanings, make values manifest, identify ethics and study the nature of knowledge. Furthermore, "philosophic inquiry is used to expose, clarify, and articulate perspectives, beliefs, conceptualisations and methods that characterise a field" (Ellis,

1983:212). Enslin (1993) attests that philosophical enquiry scrutinises the language we use when we talk about education, provides the means of clarifying educational issues and the assumptions we bring to bear on them, and explores different conceptions of the good life and the good society and their implications for education (Enslin, 1993:3-4). Burns and Grove (2001:616) argue that the data for most philosophical studies consists of written materials. In the light of this, this study's data comprised students' written assignments, which were critically analysed for information relevant to the research question(s). Because the data was derived from the students' written assignments, which are essentially educational documents, its analysis is philosophical rather than empirical (Pring, 2007:315).

1.7.2 Extended literature review

According to Hofstee (2006:121), an extended literature review is a research design "undertaken to provide an overview of the scholarship in a particular aspect of a field, or of a field in its entirety". Literature reviews cannot be used as research designs on their own since they cannot produce any new knowledge. Their purpose is to offer a new perspective on what has occurred previously. Neuman (2006:111) adds that a literature review is based on the fact that knowledge is always growing and that people learn from and build on what others before them have done. He suggests a number of different types of literature reviews, two of which are relevant for my study. These two are a context review and integrative review. The former involves linking a study to a wider body of knowledge. It introduces the study by situating it within a broader framework and showing how it continues on a developing line of thought. An integrative review is often combined with context review and involves summarising the current state of knowledge, highlighting any agreements or disagreements in it (Neuman, 2006:112).

1.8 Analysis and presentation of findings

1.8.1 Document/content analysis

According to Holsti (1969:2), content analysis is a multipurpose research method developed specifically for investigating any problem in which the content of communication is the basis of inference. Document study is closely related to content analysis in that the document being studied contains the content to be analysed. For the purpose of this study the students' assignments comprised the written forms of communication that were investigated. Patton (1999) asserts that qualitative research consists of three kinds of data collection, namely in-depth open-ended interviews, direct observation and written documents. The interviews consist of direct quotations from people about their experiences, while in direct observation the researcher describes in detail the participants' experiences. Written documents may include: memoranda and correspondence; official publications and reports; personal diaries and open-ended written responses to questionnaires and surveys (Patton, 1999:140). Data for this study was extracted from student's assignments in African philosophy which contained an open-ended question that required students to draw on their knowledge of African philosophy to solve a practical problem either in class, in the school, or in the community.

1.8.2 Analysis of documents

I used the extended literature review, philosophic inquiry and document/content analysis on the students' written assignments, the prescribed textbook, tutorial letters (see Appendices B and C) and the notes the lecturers use for discussion classes (see Appendix D). I have utilised the extended literature review to locate my arguments, findings and recommendations within a wider body of knowledge in African philosophy and critical thinking. I used document/content analysis for my analysis because I derived all the data from written documents.

1.8.3 Presentation of findings

The findings in this study will be presented in the narrative form. Narrative approaches to the analysis and presentation of data are invaluable in that they interpret people's stories (Elliott, 2005:36). Elliott (2005:41) further argues that a narrative provides a relatively accurate description of experiences through time. Furthermore, narrative offers an insight into how the narrator has chosen to interpret the events recounted (Elliott, 2005:43). Narrative is an appropriate presentation of the findings as the study is based on the students' experiences with African philosophy.

1.9 Sampling

1.9.1 Defining the population

Van Dalen (1979:128) defines a research population as "a well-defined group (set) of human beings or other entities". Researchers are rarely able to investigate an entire population of individuals who interest them, so they have to select a sample of individuals to study (Gall *et al.,* 1996:215). For the purpose of this study, the population entailed one thousand seven hundred and seventy eight (1778) undergraduate Philosophy of Education students in the 2009 academic year. Of these 1778 students, one thousand three hundred and thirty four (1334) submitted the assignment already described in Section 1.8.1 above.

1.9.2 Selecting a sample

In qualitative research, the sample is usually small and, according to Gall *et al.* (1996:217), it may only be a single case. The sample has to allow the researcher to "develop a deeper understanding of the phenomena being studied" or discover or test theories (Gall *et al.,* 1996:217).

1.9.3 Purposeful sampling

As Patton (2002:230) points out, “the logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting *information-rich cases* for study in depth.” Purposeful sampling was deemed the most suitable type of sampling for this study because I purposefully selected the assignments that furnish evidence of undergraduate students’ particular perception of African philosophy. The cases I selected provide information that is pertinent to the flawed perception and critical thinking, which are the areas of interest in this study.

1.10 Credibility and trustworthiness of the study

Once the assignments were selected they were rigorously analysed through philosophical enquiry. The researcher has the responsibility of ensuring that the study carries some form of credibility and trustworthiness. One way of doing this is to employ rigorous methods when collecting and analysing data (Patton, 2002:552). Mertens (1998:180-186) argues that in the end the study will be judged for its credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. The credibility of the study will be judged on whether or not there is correspondence between the way the respondents perceive the social constructs and the way the researcher portrays their viewpoints. Transferability means that the researcher should provide the reader with sufficient details to enable him/her to generalise the results of the study. Unlike quantitative research, which emphasises consistency of behaviour in similar circumstances, qualitative research expects variability because the context of research is never constant. With respect to dependability Ary *et al.* (2006:509) suggest that “consistency in qualitative research is seen as the extent to which variation can be traced and explained”. Lastly, conformability in qualitative research means that the study is free of bias in the procedures and interpretation of results and that the data collected and the conclusions drawn would be confirmed by other researchers investigating the same situation (Ary *et al.,* 2006:511).

1.11 Statement on research ethics

In this study I have complied with the research ethics principles of respect for persons, beneficence and justice. I will return to these principles in more detail in Chapter 4, and will therefore not dwell much on them at this stage.

1.12 Chapter outline

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter provides the background information to the assumptions and principles that frame this study.

Chapter 2: African philosophy in education and training

This chapter sketches existing literature on philosophy, African philosophy and some of its components like *ubuntu,* communalism and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS). It will interrogate current education policy and legislative imperatives, as well as initiatives to Africanise schooling and higher education teaching and learning.

Chapter 3: Critical thinking in education and training

This chapter discusses literature on students' under-preparedness for tertiary education and their lack of critical thinking. It reflects on the role schools can play in equipping students with critical thinking faculties in readiness for higher education learning and the best ways in which universities can intervene.

Chapter 4: Research methodology

This chapter describes the research methodology preferred for this study – philosophic inquiry, which involves critical analysis to clarify meanings, make values manifest,

identify ethics and study the nature of knowledge; content/document study, which analyses specific documents with a view to understanding their underlying assumptions; and an extended literature review.

Chapter 5: Findings & discussion

This chapter critically analyses the students' responses, and clarifies the philosophical and conceptual areas that students tend to conflate and misunderstand. The analysis is supported by literature on African philosophy and critical thinking.

Chapter 6: Recommendations, contributions, limitations and concluding remarks

The chapter offers recommendations and clarifies some limitations to the study. It also provides some concluding remarks. Given the government's initiatives (through its education policies and legislatives) to Africanise the curriculum, this chapter seeks to position African philosophy as a key role player in these initiatives.

1.14 Conclusion

In this Chapter I have outlined what my study is about. It is an attempt to show what motivated me to undertake the project and what I aimed to achieve in doing so. In the chapter I further outline the research methodology which I have followed. Furthermore, I show how the credibility and trustworthiness of the study will be determined. Then, I outline the research ethics I have adhered to and lastly, I present the demarcation of the chapters. In the next chapter I will attempt to review the literature with the view of clarifying the research position on African philosophy. I will further investigate the development of an African philosophy of education, and incorporation of African philosophy into the education system of South African universities.

CHAPTER 2

AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

2.1 Introduction

For a very long time the idea of an African philosophy was frowned upon and any discussions on this topic concerned what African philosophy consists of, whether or not there is an African philosophy and if so, what it is (Bodunrin, 1981:161). As Gratton (2003:61) contends, the very term of African philosophy was controversial and for a long time, as noted, western philosophers following the lead of Kant and Hegel had concluded that "Africans did not and could not have a philosophy". For instance, in his lectures on Philosophy of History, Hegel (1956) planned to give "not a collection of general observations respecting it [history], suggested by the study of its [history's] records, and proposed to be illustrated by its facts, but Universal History itself" (Hegel, 1956:1). By "universal" one would understand the whole world including Africa, yet in the whole book there is no reference to an African history. The neglect of the existence of an African history is further indicated where Hegel says that "the history of the world travels from East to West, for Europe is absolutely the end of History, Asia the beginning" (Hegel, 1956:103). Taiwo (1998:5-6) suggests two ways in which Europe could be the end of history: Firstly, it is the end by being the point beyond which there is no other; and secondly, as in being the goal, the purpose, the final product to the achievement of which earlier efforts were tending. This indicates the importance Hegel attaches to Europe as the be-all and end-all of universal history. This attitude towards Africa and its "lack" of history resulted in African philosophy being completely ignored and as Gratton (2003:61) observes, the only African philosophers read were those who were trained in the west and practised western philosophy such as metaphysics and epistemology. Gratton (2003:62) suggests that to even consider African philosophy as a conceptual field, one has to take its history into account.

One of the scholars who attempted to come up with a history of African philosophy is Barry Hallen in his book: *A Short History of African Philosophy* (2002). Hallen (2002:11)

argues that one factor the African scholars and intellectuals agree on is that the criteria used to define what is and what is not philosophy are biased by and towards "philosophy" in the western sense. In the end, Hallen (2002:12) concludes that in order to understand the history of African philosophy, three points have to be taken into consideration: firstly, that philosophy in the African context had and has a history; secondly, African scholars would want their African cultures and civilizations to be recognised and appreciated for their own integrity and thirdly, attention has to be paid to the history of academic philosophy in countries formerly colonised by European countries. Having established what African philosophy should or should not be, the chapter will interrogate the works of scholars such as: Higgs (2003; 2007), Parker (2003), Wagid (2004a; 2004b), Nakusera (2004) and others.

I mentioned earlier that African philosophers and scholars have argued that the criteria used to define what is and what is not philosophy favour "philosophy" in the western sense. The next section will therefore briefly explore what philosophy in the latter sense entails in order to be able to contrast it with African philosophy.

2.2 What is philosophy?

A good starting point in coming to grips with African philosophy would be to explore what philosophy is in the first place. For most philosophers there is no direct answer to this question. Okafor (1997:264) contends that philosophers have never reached a consensus on the definition of philosophy. Heidegger (1956:19) has shown that "with this question we are touching on a theme that is very broad .... Because the theme is broad, it is indefinite. Because it is indefinite, we can treat the theme from the most varied points of view". As Sprague (1961:3-4) comments, "the question like 'what is philosophy?' is like the question 'what is furniture?'" because 'philosophy' and 'furniture' are "words that can be applied to many things". However, this does not mean that an attempt cannot be made to come to an understanding of what philosophy is and how it is carried out.

According to Heidegger (1956:29), philosophy originated in Greece. The word 'philosophy' comes from the Greek word *philosophia,* which denotes 'path', meaning a path along which we are travelling. Yet we have only a vague knowledge of this path although we possess and can spread much historical information about Greek philosophy. Heidegger (1956:45-46) contends that the Greek adjective *philosophos* expresses something completely different from the adjective philosophical. It is the love for conceptual clarity. Heidegger (1956:31) argues that philosophy is in its nature Greek, which means that "in origin the nature of philosophy is of such a kind that it first appropriated the Greek world, and only it, in order to unfold". He further argues that we can only find the meaning of philosophy "if we enter into the discussion with the thinking of the Greek world" (Heidegger, 1956:35). Deleuze & Guattari (1994:2) believe that the answer to the question "what is philosophy?" has always been that "philosophy is the art of forming, inventing and fabricating concepts". However, philosophy is more than this because "concepts are not necessarily forms, discoveries or products.... Philosophy is the discipline that involves *creating* concepts". Furthermore, "the object of philosophy is to create concepts that are always new" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994:5). This notion of philosophy is supported by Priest (2006:203), who sees philosophers as having a responsibility "for creating new ideas, systems of thought, pictures of the world and its features". Priest (2006:201) also believes that "learning philosophy is not simply learning a bunch of facts; it is learning how critically to evaluate people's ideas, including ... one's own ideas and those of one's teachers". Russell (1946:xi) believes that from the earliest times, philosophy has not merely been the affair of the schools or of the disputation of a handful of learned individuals, but has been an integral part of the community.

Like Heidegger (1946), Russell (1946:15) states that philosophy originates in Greece. For him this is the case because even though some form of civilization had already existed in Egypt and Mesopotamia, it is the Greeks who "invented mathematics, science and philosophy; they first wrote history as opposed to mere annals; they speculated freely about the nature of the world and the ends of life, without being bound in the fetters of any inherited orthodoxy". These were the epitome of the intellectual realm

(Russell, 1946:15). Along the same lines, Heidegger (1946:23) suggests that philosophy "is not only something rational but is the actual guardian of reason". Sprague (1961:10) proposes that philosophy can mean philosophy of life, meaning "the principles by which someone conducts his life". He further contends that "philosophy is both the critique of human powers and an effort to use those powers to understand the world and to lead a good life" (Sprague, 1961:11). For Beardsley and Beardsley (2005:7), any thinking which concerns investigating a belief to discover its logical connections with other beliefs, or questioning a belief in an attempt to find whether or not it is based on good reasons, is philosophical thinking. Philosophy is also associated with the "study of sense and consistency, of nonsense and self-contradiction" which belongs to logic (Sprague, 1961:7).

It can therefore be reasonably argued that western philosophy can be seen as originating from Greece (Heidegger, 1946; Russell, 1946); as a philosophy of life (Sprague, 1961); and as logical, rational, reasonable and critical (Beardsley & Beardsley, 2005; Sprague, 1961; Heidegger, 1946; Priest, 2006). Western or European philosophy has always been associated with logic and individuality. Individualistic, because it usually contains bodies of thought produced by different individuals (Oruka, 2002:120-121). Should these characteristics attributed to philosophy disqualify African thought from being philosophy? Besides the fact that philosophy is deemed to originate from Greece, there is nothing else that disqualifies African philosophy from being a philosophy, as was believed by philosophers such as Hegel (1956). Africa has a way of life which should be its philosophy.

Indeed other philosophers such as Gyekye (1997) and Presbey (1999) provide a comprehensive definition of philosophy, which encompasses both Western and African philosophies. Gyekye (1997:3) argues that philosophy in the Western sense is usually considered by non-philosophers as abstract, theoretical, elitist, aprioristic and uninvolved with practical affairs of life. This academic view of philosophy excludes African philosophy which is usually seen to involve the study of the wisdom of proverbs and the wisdom of the sages (Presbey, 1999:92). Presbey (1999:92) contends that for

philosophy to be real philosophy, both the academic and wisdom forms are needed. As will be demonstrated in the following sections, African philosophy can be logical, reasonable and rational.

2.3 African philosophy

As mentioned, John S. Mbiti's seminal works: *African Religions and Philosophy* (1969), and *Introduction to African Religions* (1975) provide a starting point in articulating African philosophy. According to Mbiti (1969:108-109) African societies are characterised by communal interdependence. Communal interdependence is premised on the existence and flourishing of the extended family. In traditional African livelihood an individual lives in or is part of a family, that is, the extended family (Mbiti, 1975:176). Ayisi (1992:16) contends that the extended family "forms the *raison d'être* of all social co-operation and responsibility. It acts as a social security for the members of the group". Mbiti (1975:176) makes a similar point – he argues that the extended family is a microcosm of the wider society. It presupposes a broad spectrum of associations including children, parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, nieces, and other distant relatives. Similarly, Gyekye (1997:292-293) notes that "one outstanding cultural value of the traditional African society that is a feature of ever-present consciousness of ties of kinship is the emphasis on the importance of the family – the extended family". In this study it is my contention that *ubuntu* and communalism find expression in the community.

2.3.1 Oruka's four trends in African philosophy

Mbiti's emphasis on communalism as the basis of what constitutes African philosophy was initially contested by Henry Odera Oruka during the period which Ochieng'-Odhiambo (2002) refers to as "The pre-1978 era: The struggle against ethno-philosophy". Oruka (1990) himself indicates that he published a paper called "Mythologies as African philosophy" in 1972 as a reaction to Mbiti's view of African philosophy. The main argument of his paper was: "unless there is no real distinction

between ethnography, religion and mythology, on the one hand, and philosophy, on the other hand, then the position held by ... Mbiti about African philosophy cannot obtain". He went on to argue that if this distinction exists in other philosophies, then it must exist for African philosophy too and concluded that Mbiti's and others' views about African philosophy "can be philosophy only in the 'debased' or pejorative sense" (Oruka, 1990:4). In the above article cited by Ochieng'-Odhiambo (2002:21), Oruka warns that:

> *African mythologies should not be substituted for African philosophy. Mythologies thrive well where the past is placed above everything, above the present and above the future. One gives mythology a wonderfully high place when one calls it 'philosophy', and then it can be a great obstacle to progress and development*

The above belief was held by not only Oruka, but also by his fellow Western trained philosophers such as Peter Bondunrin, Kwasi Wiredu, Paulin Hountondji and others. These philosophers, Songolo (1990:48) argues, spent most of their lives in Western cultures and are skilled in "the techniques of philosophical analysis". To them, if African philosophy was to be considered a philosophy, it was obliged to follow the same techniques of philosophical analysis as Western philosophy. These are professional philosophers who believe that the works which are referred to as African philosophy lack critique and argument, which form the essential characteristics of anything which is to pass as philosophy (Bodunrin, 1981:163). As Ikuenobe (1997:192) contends, in order for African philosophy to be considered as philosophy in the same way as Western philosophy, it "should involve both the study of individual works and 'confrontation' in terms of logical argumentation, intellectual discussion, and debate". Ikuenobe (1997:193) further asserts that the Western trained philosophers, whom he refers to as universalists, believe that philosophy owes its existence to literacy and a system of writing, so that a lack of documentation amounts to a lack of the rigour necessary for a legitimate formal thought system.

The period between 1978 and 1983, referred to as "the period of philosophic sagacity" by Ochieng'-Odhiambo, marked Oruka's change of heart. This is when he formulated the four trends of African philosophy in which he also introduced philosophic sagacity

(Ochieng'-Odhiambo, 2002:22). In formulating the four trends of African philosophy, Oruka was attempting to distinguish between ethno-philosophy and philosophic sagacity in order to justify the existence and status of African thought. Ochieng'-Odhiambo (2002:20) demonstrates that before he introduced the notion of philosophic sagacity, Oruka did not regard ethno-philosophy as philosophy, but as mythology and ethnology and that these two constituted a "debased" usage of the term philosophy, which exists when mythology is substituted for philosophy. Oruka viewed the works of writers such as John S. Mbiti and Placide Tempels as instances where philosophy had been used in the "debased" form (Ochieng'-Odhiambo, 2002:20). The paper which Oruka wrote in 1978 called "Four trends in current African philosophy" marks his softening stance towards ethno-philosophy. He now "accepts and affirms that ethno-philosophy is one of the four significant trends in African philosophy besides philosophic sagacity, nationalist-ideological philosophy and professional philosophy" (Ochieng'-Odhiambo, 2002:22).

Oruka (2002:120-124) argues that ethno-philosophy is embodied in communal African customs, poems, taboos, religions, songs, and dances, the result being that African philosophy is identified with communal or 'folk philosophy'. Ethno-philosophy implies that the community can philosophise, which according to Oruka is denied by Plato's maxim that multitudes cannot philosophise. Oruka (2002:121) argues that the greatest shortcoming of ethno-philosophy is that "it is not derived from the critical but the uncritical part of African tradition" such as "beliefs and activities of the type found in religions, legends, folk tales, myths, customs, superstitions" (Oruka, 2002:121).

The second trend of African philosophy according to Oruka is philosophic sagacity. This is the philosophy practised by indigenous thinkers or sages; people who have not had the benefit of modern education but are considered critical independent thinkers who are capable of using their own thought and judgements based on the power of reason and inborn insight rather than the authority of the communal consensus (Oruka, 2002:121). This shows that "Africans, even without outside influence, are not innocent of logical and dialectical critical inquiry; that literacy is not a necessary condition for

philosophical reflection and exposition" (Oruka, 2002:121). Thus philosophic sagacity is individualistic, dialectical, rigorous and philosophical in the western sense (Oruka, 2002:122). Oruka (2002:122) suggests that even though evidence for the presence of these sages was mainly found in Kenya, it could be inferred that there are such sages all over Africa. According to Ochieng'-Odhiambo (2002:22), Oruka, avers that philosophic sagacity "is a philosophy in traditional Africa that avoids falling into the pitfall of ethnophilosophy, in spite of the latter being a major trend in African philosophy". Oruka defines philosophic sagacity as:

> *the critical reflective thought of sages. It differs fundamentally from ethnophilosophy in that it is both individualistic and dialectical: It is a thought or reflection of various known or named individual thinkers not a folk philosophy and, unlike the latter, it is rigorous and philosophical in the strict sense"* (Oruka cited by Ochieng'-Odhiambo (2002:22).

While philosophic sagacity may not be the same as the conventional, long-winded philosophical arguments, "most of it is explicitly expressed in enthymematic form ... a short-cut logical or philosophic argument in the exact sense of philosophy" (Oruka, 2002:122).

The advocates of nationalist-ideological philosophy feel that African philosophy must be different from the Western philosophies such as capitalism, socialism or communism (Higgs & Smith 2006b:46). They want this philosophy to be peculiarly African and embrace communalism as one of its basic tenets (Oruka, 2002:122). It is practised by politicians or statesmen (most African leaders having been men). For instance, African leaders such as Amilcar Cabral of Guinea Bissau, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, Steve Biko of South Africa and Julius Nyerere of Tanzania (Higgs and Smith, 2006a:91) can be regarded as African nationalist-ideological philosophers. Most of the contributions to this trend are not strictly philosophical, yet they differ from ethno-philosophy in that they do not "assume or imply that European thought or philosophy is radically different from or irrelevant to African thought. Secondly, the authors do not give the impression that the philosophy they are expounding is not theirs,

but of a whole African community or continent" (Oruka, 2002:122). Even though this philosophy is rooted in traditional or communal Africa, it is clear that it is the philosophy of its author. Unlike ethno-philosophy, which appears to consist of "apolitical and free-for-all-metaphysics", nationalist-ideological philosophy is practical and has explicit national and individual problems to solve (Oruka, 2002:122).

Critical or professional philosophy is practised by professional philosophers who are trained in western philosophy and conceive philosophy as a universal discipline whose meaning cannot depend only on racial or regional make-up (Higgs & Smith, 2006a:91). Most of this philosophy rejects the assumptions of ethno-philosophy (Oruka, 2002:123). According to this trend, philosophy involves critical, reflective and logical inquiry, that is, philosophy in the western sense. This would include "all what has been produced or can be produced by African thinkers or in the African intellectual context in any branch of philosophical thought in the strict sense" (Oruka, 2002:123). This trend in African philosophy has been criticised for being Western not African. However, some African philosophers claim that Greek philosophy actually originates from Egypt, which is part of Africa; as such, Africa does have a share in modern philosophy (Oruka, 2002:123; Okafor, 1997:252 citing George G. M. James 1954). Some philosophers like Bodunrin (1981:178) are of the view that professional philosophy should be the only recognised form of philosophy and should not be seen to belong to particular cultures or traditions. This philosophy can be appropriated by any culture, including African cultures. For instance, one of the most prominent British philosophers was Bradley, a Hegelian; Hegel himself being German. In the same breath, British philosophy was influenced by the "Greek thought (itself informed by early Egyptian thought), continental idealism, and scientific philosophy (the philosophy of the Vienna Circle). These philosophers believe that the historical law of intellectual development dictates that "intellectual offerings in a given culture are appropriated and cultivated in other cultures" (Oruka, 2002:123).

It would seem as if later debates by scholars and philosophers such as Oruka (1972, 1990), Ochieng'-Odhiambo (2002, 2006), Kalumba (2002), Bodunrin (1981), Wiredu (2004), Songolo (1990), Ikuenobe (1997), Presbey (2007) and others regarding what

constitutes African philosophy have concentrated on ethno-philosophy and philosophic sagacity to the exclusion of nationalist/ideological and critical/professional philosophies. This could be because the latter two embrace European/western philosophy. Nationalist/ideological philosophy "does not assume or imply that European thought or philosophy is radically different from or irrelevant to African thought" (Oruka, 2002:122), while critical/professional philosophy is European/western philosophy practised by African intellectuals schooled in the west (Oruka, 2002:123). These two trends do not really need much debate as their philosophical status is accepted by almost all who believe in them. Contrarily, ethno-philosophy's and philosophic sagacity's status as philosophies is questionable as ethno-philosophy is referred to as a "debased" form of philosophy (Oruka, 2002:121), while philosophic sagacity is still not philosophy in the proper sense but a fall back on ethno-philosophy (Oruka, 2002:122). All this changed, however, in 1983 when Oruka introduced 'sage philosophy' as a trend of African philosophy which includes ethno-philosophy and philosophic sagacity. Oruka now believed that ethno-philosophy should no longer be relegated to the "debased" form of philosophy, but should be recognised as a role player in what defines African philosophy.

Oruka's introduction of the phrase 'sage philosophy' came about as a result of a project on *Thought of Traditional Kenyan sages*, which Oruka initiated in 1974 (Ochieng'-Odhiambo 2002:24). Oruka (1990:5) undertook this project to

> *help substantiate or invalidate the claim that traditional African peoples were innocent of logical and critical thinking. Was traditional Africa a place where no persons had room or mind to think independently and at times even critically of the communal consensus?*

According to Oruka (1990:28), sage philosophy

> *consists of expressed thoughts of wise men and women in any given community and is a way of thinking and explaining the world that fluctuates between popular wisdom (well known communal maxims, aphorisms and general sense truths) and didactic wisdom, an expounded wisdom and a rational thought of some*

> *given individuals within a community. While the popular wisdom is often conformist, the didactic wisdom is at times critical of the communal set-ups and the popular wisdom.*

From the above usage of the phrase sage philosophy, it would appear that Oruka (1990:28) now includes ethno-philosophy and folk sagacity as both central to sage philosophy. A folk sage would be

> *the sage whose thought, though well informed and educative, fails to go beyond the celebrated folk-wisdom. Such a sage may not have the ability or inclination to apply his own independent critical objection to folk beliefs. He is therefore, a folk sage in contrast to the second type of sage, the philosophic sage. The former is a master of popular wisdom while the latter is an expert in didactic wisdom.*

Oruka's (2002:120) argument is that African philosophy has always been perceived as being in contrast with Western or European philosophy. Where the latter is known to manifest critical and rigorous analysis and logical explanation and synthesis, African philosophy is considered "innocent" of such characteristics. It is considered to be intuitive, mystical, and counter or extra nationalistic (Oruka, 2002:120). By introducing sage philosophy as the fourth trend of African philosophy, and dividing it into folk-sagacity and philosophic sagacity, Oruka embraced ethno-philosophy as an integral part of African philosophy instead of dismissing it as he did before 1978.

Oruka's introduction of sage philosophy and its two divisions into folk sagacity and philosophic sagacity has sparked a great deal of debate among contemporary African scholars and philosophers. While Ochieng'-Odhiambo (2002:23) believes that by formulating the four trends in African philosophy, Oruka made a clear distinction between philosophic sagacity and ethno-philosophy, Presbey (2007) argues that when Oruka switched from philosophic sagacity, which he used in 1978, to sage philosophy, in 1984, "he did not just 'backslide' and end up embracing ethno-philosophy with all the shortcomings he pointed out in the beginning", he actually "articulated a positive role for studies of African traditions and thought, which avoided the shortcomings of ethno-philosophy" (Presbey, 2007:128). It was in the period 1984 – 1995, when Oruka included folk sages in the sage philosophy project, that philosophic sagacity ceased to

be synonymous with sage philosophy, and became part of a larger sage philosophy project which included folk sages or popular wisdom (Presbey, 2007:129). Sage philosophy not only includes evidence that Africans can philosophise, but it is also “both philosophical and interdisciplinary, in that it also makes use of methods of the oral historian and social scientist” (Presbey, 2007:150). In sage philosophy Odera Oruka has provided evidence that myths, folklores and folk wisdom, which were once regarded as a debased form of philosophy, are equally important in preserving and championing aspects of tradition which were in danger of disappearing due to western influences on the lives of the youth (Presbey, 2007:147).

However, Kalumba (2002) contends that Oruka’s sages are not immune to Western influence; as a result, philosophic sagacity should not enjoy any privileges over the other trends of philosophy (Kalumba, 2002:39). Kalumba postulates that in order for philosophic sagacity to be of any significance, it has to move away “from its current goal of demonstrating that pre-colonial Africans practiced philosophy in the strict sense”, because “the rapid Westernisation of Africa is making it increasingly difficult ... to find sages that are traditional ...” (Kalumba, 2002:39). Instead, sage research should be conducted to gather the philosophical contributions of individual sages, to collect their valuable views as “raw data” for further philosophical reflection, while they should be consulted for their input into the process of designing and implementing socio-economic development policies and programmes. In these cases, the sages need not be traditional (Kalumba, 2002:39-40).

2.3.2 Other views about African philosophy

Bodunrin (1981:178) is of the view that there is no need to try and search for a purely African philosophy, as nothing like that would exist. All that needs to be done is that which the professional philosophers are doing, using Western/professional philosophy, be it logical empiricism, metaphysics, hermeneutics, in the African context. As he put it, “the philosophy of a country or region of the world is not definable in terms of the thought-content of the tradition nor in terms of the national origins of the thinkers”,

because "the view that anything can pass as philosophy will hurt the development of philosophy in Africa" (Bodunrin, 1981:178). For Bodunrin (1981:178), a philosopher of a particular culture does not necessarily have to be born within that culture as is illustrated by the fact that Ludwig Wittgenstein, Karl Popper and Isaiah Berlin were some of the most influential British philosophers, yet they were not born in Britain. Thus, African philosophy should not be a domain only for philosophers born in Africa.

However, the professional philosophers are challenged by African philosophers such as Songolo (1990), who argues that trying to apply the Western techniques of philosophical analysis in Africa is problematic in that it is not an easy thing to do. For Songolo (1990:49) this "amounts to a mere reformation of known philosophical problems without actually attempting to solve them". Furthermore, this "approach reduces to a process of linguistic translation in which age-old philosophical problems are recouched in African languages". Songolo proposes an African philosophical option that would best deal with the questions of what is and what constitutes African philosophy. He advocates a philosophy which "will be uniquely African not only in content but also in methodology; which has cultural relevance in so far as it is mounted on materials peculiar to African thought; that puts one foot ahead of ethno-philosophy and the other beside professionalism by way of domestication" (Songolo, 1990:51). Songolo (1990:50) further suggests that myths, African culture and traditions can be regarded as philosophical as long as they raise philosophical questions and highlight the creative skills of the teacher or the student.

Despite all the arguments raised as to whether or not African philosophy exists, and if so, in what form, it would seem that for Oruka, Wiredu, Bodunrin, Songolo, Ochieng'-Odhiambo, Kalumba, Presbey and others, African philosophy exists in whichever form each wants to believe. The fact that Oruka started off criticising the inclusion of ethno-philosophy in African philosophy and then displayed a change of heart by including the folk sages in his sage philosophy project is important in that it brought to light the fact that Africans can philosophise as evidenced by the sage philosophy project he undertook. This issue is strongly supported by Letseka (2000:179) who contends that

“all people have a philosophy that guides the way they live, their perceptions of otherness, and the decisions and choices they make about every aspect of their lives” and that “such a philosophy often stands out among other philosophies as a distinct set of beliefs and values with which such people identify”. It is also important to note that this philosophising would not have taken place if the sages had not possessed the myths, folklores, traditions and culture to philosophise about as Africans on the African continent. Below I am going to discuss some of the most notable principles of African philosophy in general. They include *ubuntu,* communalism and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS).

2.3.3 *Ubuntu*

How does *ubuntu* fit into this equation? From the different conceptions of African philosophy above it is evident that according to Oruka’s pre-1984 sage philosophy project, *ubuntu* would be part of the idiosyncrasies of the traditional or communal African customs, poems, taboos, religions, songs and dances which were a “debased” form of philosophy. It is also evident that after the sage philosophy project and Oruka’s ‘change of heart’ regarding the role of African customs and traditions in shaping the sages’ philosophical minds, we can now no longer downplay the importance of *ubuntu* in African philosophy. *Ubuntu* is a way of life, or a worldview which sustains the wellbeing of a ‘people’, community or society. Even though *ubuntu* is often regarded as a purely South African concept, it is not. Every ‘people’ or community displays its own version of *ubuntu* (Sindane and Liebenberg, 2000:38). In some European societies it is known as *Bildung*, understood as the cultivation of the person’s humanity (Biesta, 2002:378). Others have suggested that the principal aim of *Bildung* is to strengthen the person’s innate powers and character development (Løvlie & Standish, 2002:318).

Broodryk (2002:13) defines *ubuntu* as a comprehensive ancient African worldview based on the values of intense humanness, caring, sharing, respect, compassion and associated values. In the same vein Letseka (2000:180) argues that *ubuntu* has normative implications in that it encapsulates moral norms and values such as “altruism,

kindness, generosity, compassion, benevolence, courtesy, and respect and concern for others". There is a link between the communal interdependence characteristic of African communities and the notion of *ubuntu*. Communal interdependence among the Southern Sotho people, for instance, involved cooperative community farming or *letsema*, whereby four or more families would come together and agree on a duty roster that would allow them to cultivate each other's fields to make them ready for planting (Letseka, 2000:183). In the same way that *ubuntu* has a link with communal interdependence, it also has a link with the value of tolerance. In its document *Values, Education and Democracy,* the DoE (2000:22) stresses that tolerance does not "mean the shallow notion of putting up with people who are different, but a deeper and more meaningful concept of mutual understanding, reciprocal altruism and the active appreciation of the value of human difference". *Ubuntu* becomes a vehicle for achieving such a level of tolerance as it instils in human beings "not only a truthfulness about the failures and successes of the human past but the active and deliberate incorporation of differences in the moral traditions, arts, culture, religions and sporting activity in the ethos and life of a school" (DoE, 2000:23-24). According to Gibson and Gouws (2003:6) tolerance helps us to sustain the sort of competition over political ideas that is essential to democratic politics. For Finkel (2003:139) political tolerance can be influenced by new information and efforts at political persuasion, as well as by short-term economic, political and contextual factors. He further suggests that taking part in civic education does more to increase tolerance than does belonging to traditional civil society groups such as churches or religious organisations, youth or hobby groups or unions (Finkel, 2003:141).

From the link between *ubuntu* and communal interdependence, democracy and tolerance, it is clear that the importance of incorporating *ubuntu* in the school as well as higher education curricula in South Africa cannot be over-emphasised. The ideal of *ubuntu* can help to instil in South African learners and students the values mentioned above. These values are espoused by both the Departments of Basic Education and of Higher Education and Training.

Among Southern African communities *ubuntu* is associated with the maxim *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, which, loosely translated into English, may be construed to mean that to be a human being is to affirm one's humanity by recognising the humanity of others and, on that basis, establish humane relations with them (Ramose, 2002; Ramphele, 2001): a point which Sindane (1994:8-9) underscores, saying that "*ubuntu* inspires us to expose ourselves to others, to encounter the difference of their humanness so as to inform and enrich our own". Letseka (2000), one of the philosophers who have written on *ubuntu* argues that this concept illuminates the communal embeddedness and connectedness of a person to other persons and also highlights the importance attached to people and to human relationships (Letseka, 2000:183). It is essential to understand that *ubuntu* does not wholly reject material wealth acquired through individual effort, as is evidenced by this saying among the Sotho communities: '*U tla phela ka mofufutso oa phatla ea hau'* which loosely translated means 'you will live by the sweat of your brow' (Letseka, 2000:183). *Ubuntu* rejects competition and arrogance arising from being rich, as these can be detrimental to cooperative living within the community. Individual effort is good as long as it generates resources for the maintenance and sustenance of human life. The main concern of *ubuntu* is the welfare of others. This is why when two Africans meet in the street, it is likely they will enquire about the health and welfare of family members rather than the weather as most Westerners would do (Letseka, 2000:183-184). For Venter (2004:159), *ubuntu/botho/menslikheid/*humaneness is a philosophy that promotes the common good of society. It contains the potential to enable South Africans to succeed in their quest for reconciliation and nation building.

2.3.4 Communalism

Closely related to *ubuntu* is another characteristic of African society, which is communalism (the sense of community and interdependence). This is evidenced in the works of Mbiti, mentioned above. Communal interdependence is premised on the existence and flourishing of the extended family. In traditional African living an individual lives in or is part of a family, that is, the extended family (Mbiti, 1975:176). In some

societies, it was normal for children to be sent to live with relatives for months or even years as part of these families (Mbiti, 1969:106). Venter (2004:151), citing Boykin *et al* (1995), explains communalism as an awareness of the fundamental interdependence of people whereby duty to one's social group is more important than individual rights and privileges. Gyekye (1987:155) defines communalism in African societies as the doctrine whereby the group becomes the focus of the individuals' activities. This doctrine places emphasis on the success of the wider society though not at the expense of the individual.

Another scholar who explores the importance of community in African life is Letseka (2000). He emphasises that belonging to the community constitutes the very fabric of African life (Letseka, 2000:181) and points out that African communities are unlike the West which takes

> *an individual as some sort of entity that is capable of existing and flourishing on its own, unconnected to any community of other individuals, not bound by any biological relationships or socioeconomic, political and cultural relationships, obligations, duties, responsibilities and conventions that frame and define any community of individuals* (Letseka, 2000:181).

Communalism is thus a very important component of African philosophy. African philosophy should

> *speculate about the communality of the individual in the African setting. It should provide conceptual frameworks for interpreting and analysing the humaneness that botho and ubuntu capture. It should provide rational tools for critical reflections on personal wellbeing or human flourishing, on communal ethics and how these ought to impact on human conduct* (Letseka, 2000:182).

However, Gyekye (1987:154) warns against the presumption that because of their communal nature, African communities do not allow individuality to thrive. He argues that communalism has been criticised for submerging and being antithetical to individuality. This is not so because as Gyekye (1987:155) explains, individuals are by nature social beings. They are originally born into a society and as a result, cannot survive a solitary life. Communalism therefore, "is not a negation of individualism; rather

it is the recognition of the limited character of the possibilities of the individual, which limited possibilities whittle away the individual's self-sufficiency" (Gyekye, 1987:156). Gyekye (1987:155-156) uses many Akan proverbs to demonstrate the importance of communal as opposed to individual efforts in contributing towards the "successful achievement of even the most difficult undertakings".

In the next section, I discuss literature on another principle of African philosophy, indigenous knowledge systems (IKS).

2.3.5 Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS)

In recent times, indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) have become the cornerstone of transformation in all spheres of society. Governments have been trying to explore and encourage the integration of IKS into technological, social, economic, philosophical, learning and governance systems (Gudyanga, 2007:32). Scholars and policy makers alike feel that colonialism and subjugation have done great harm to Africa by depriving it of its sovereignty, self-confidence and self-respect. Africa "has lost its self-steering, and with that, came the loss of freedom of choice as to what it is that should change in African culture, or what to copy or reject from other cultures". As a result, Africa also lost the power to decide when and how to participate actively and consciously in history (Odora-Hoppers, 2001:74).

What is IKS? The term, according to Gudyanga (2007), "refers to intricate knowledge systems acquired over generations by communities as they interact with the environment" (Gudyanga 2007:32). Odora-Hoppers (2001:76) describes IKS as characterised by "its embeddedness in the cultural web and history of a people including their civilization, and forming the backbone of the social, economic, scientific and technological identity of such a people". For Higgs, Higgs and Venter (2003:40)

> *indigenous knowledge is unique to a particular culture and society. It is the basis for local decision-making in agriculture, health, natural resource management and other activities. Indigenous knowledge is embedded in community practices,*

> *institutions, relationships and rituals. It is essentially tacit knowledge that is not easily codifiable.*

Most African scholars and philosophers feel that it is high time indigenous African knowledge systems' contribution to the overall development of African countries is acknowledged by both Africans and Westerners. They contend that for a long time African IKS were negated and devalued while European knowledge systems remained powerful (Higgs *et al* 2003:41). Higgs *et al.* (2003:41) go on to show that "Eurocentric sentiment often locates innovative ideas and authentic knowledge only within its own political and cultural boundaries, while at the same time concluding that the ideas and knowledge derived from African people are non-scientific". Gudyanga (2007:32) asserts that the integration of IKS into African political, economic, cultural and educational life might help to deal with the psychological, intellectual, and economic problems which stem from "the mode of evolution of historical process in the continent, as well as the structures of intellectual dominance and dependence associated with colonial and postcolonial hierarchies and power elites". These would include "disinformation embedded in Eurocentric colonial and post-colonial education, including the selective omission of non-European achievements, inventions and technologies; the distortion of data; surreptitious naming; and several other strategies of colonization and recolonization" (Gudyanga, 2007:32).

Some scholars feel that IKS may well be an important vehicle for reclaiming an African identity whereby the thoughts, technologies and activities that are a unique creation of African hands and minds can be identified (Higgs & van Niekerk, 2002:40). However, this does not mean that people should strive to regain the past as it was since it is conceptually difficult to do so. Societies evolve constantly and it would be difficult to re-discover any African society as it was before colonialism (Higgs & van Niekerk, 2002:40). In addition, while trying to find a replacement for the colonialist mindset, there is a possibility of replacing one evil (colonialism) with another (recolonialism by another foreign mindset such as globalisation) (Higgs & van Niekerk, 2002:41).

Can African philosophy and its components discussed above contribute to the development of higher education in South Africa? The following section will interrogate the literature on this question.

2.4 African philosophy and the educational discourse

That there has been so much debate regarding what constitutes African philosophy makes it even more of a challenge to talk about such a philosophy in relation to teaching and learning or adopting an African philosophy of education in education institutions. In some institutions, including the one where I lecture, African philosophy is studied as part of a Philosophy of Education course. However, this does not seem to be enough to fully instil the values which the Department of Education wants implemented in education. These values are entrenched in the country's constitution and have already been noted earlier. As I have discussed in the foregoing sections, the Department of Education expects the teachers, who are trained by the universities, to inculcate the African values in the school learners. It follows, therefore, that universities have to first inculcate these values in the teacher trainees. However, it would appear that students of Philosophy of Education in my institution simply study African philosophy to pass it, not to embrace it or to put the values implicit in it into practice. This issue will be dealt with in detail in Chapter 5. It would therefore make sense not only to begin teaching African philosophy at university, but also to locate the educational system, including the school curriculum, in the context of the African continent.

Many authors have responded to the call by the Department of Education to introduce African values in education and to Africanise higher education. Scholars such as Higgs and Van Wyk (2004), Nakusera (2004), Higgs (2003; 2007), Waghid (2004), Wiredu (2004), Venter (2004), Parker (2000), made a call for an African philosophy of education as a way of dealing with the discrepancies created by western education in Africa. While these scholars contend that the time has come for Africans to devise their own type of education, which would be embedded in the experiences and conditions of African

communities, others such as Enslin and Horsthemke (2004) and Horsthemke (2004) contest the appropriateness of relying on Africanism or IKS to form a basis for South African education because they declare that the whole "Africanist/Afrocentrist project faces numerous problems and involves substantial errors; political, moral, epistemological and educational" (Enslin & Horsthemke, 2004:546). Horsthemke (2004:31) advances two arguments against Africanisation:

> *(1) indigenous knowledge involves at best an incomplete, partial or, at worst, a questionable understanding or conception of knowledge; (2)"as a tool in anti-discrimination and anti-repression discourse (e.g. driving discussions around literacy, numeracy, poverty alleviation and development strategies in Africa), indigenous knowledge is largely inappropriate.*

I will elaborate on these criticisms in the next section.

For Waghid, "it is not implausible to refer to an African philosophy of education because a philosophy or philosophies of education are activities of methodical inquiry which enable one to understand, explain, explore, question or deconstruct the lived experiences of people" (Waghid, 2004a:56). Waghid (2004a:56-57) further asserts that in the same way that (Western) philosophy of education helps people to attempt to make sense of, and strive towards achieving 'the good life', African philosophy of education ought to reflect on, and attend to what it means for Africans to live a way of life compatible with their experiences.

Waghid (2004a) draws on Wiredu (2004) in attempting to extrapolate what it means to be educated, for we cannot speak of an African philosophy of education without establishing what would entail 'being educated in the African sense'. According to Wiredu (2004:17) the qualities of an educated person are that he/she must be sensible, possess basic knowledge about his/her culture and cultural environment and master a selected branch of knowledge or skill. These qualities should be accompanied by logical reasoning and refined articulation. A sensible person should have a degree of moral maturity, be tolerant and be open to dialogue in interpersonal relations. If these are the qualities of an educated person, then it follows that an African philosophy of education

should emphasise the "importance of being reasonable – the ability of people to articulate clear, logical and defensible arguments, on the one hand, and to demonstrate a willingness to listen carefully to others, on the other hand" (Waghid, 2004a: 57).

Another important quality of an educated person, which Waghid (2004a: 59) takes up, is that this person has to be able to engage in dialogue and argumentation. In a different article, Waghid argues that ethno-philosophy, which philosophers such as Hountondji do not consider as philosophy because it is not a science, "takes into account the narratives and life experiences of Africans, and that 'structures of dialogue and argumentation' invariably involve listening to other voices (no matter how ill-informed), then it follows that 'structures of dialogue and argumentation' cannot simply dismiss oral traditions and cultural narratives" (Waghid, 2004b:132). This confirms that though ethno-philosophy has for a long time been dismissed as non-philosophy, it is as much a significant part of African Philosophy as sage and professional philosophy. It should therefore be part of any African philosophy of education discourse. Narration of oral traditions and culture involves not merely listening to and uncritically accepting everything that is said, but also challenging and questioning the points of view of others (Waghid, 2004b:133).

The question of African philosophy's relationship with Africa's myths, systems of folklore as well as superstitious beliefs crops up again as occurred in the debate about what constitutes African philosophy. It has already been demonstrated that all these are important components of African philosophy, as indicated by Odera Oruka in his sage philosophy project. In relation to education, Waghid (2004a:58) highlights that the issue is not really about whether or not African philosophy of education will be attracted to what is seen as unreasonable and illogical (as the myths, folklore and superstitions have been regarded), but about the arguments, which are very lucid and logical, put forward for the existence of such beliefs. Hence an African philosophy of education will not be "mainly concerned with the validity of the belief or story, but with the procedure as to how the story is narrated – with lucidity and logical argumentation that will present reasons for one's views" (Waghid, 2004a:58).

Another important aspect of philosophy which African philosophy is said to lack is rationality. However, as has already been mentioned earlier, this is not the case. Gyekye (1997:29) argues that rationality is culture-dependent, which means that the way Western cultures understand rationality can be different from the way it is understood in African cultures. African culture embraces criticism, self-reflection and innovation (creativity), qualities that are cornerstones of rationality. It follows therefore that the insights, arguments and conclusions offered by an African philosophy of education will be tied to being critical, innovative and self-reflexive (Waghid, 2004a:59).

The argument concerning rationality in African philosophy is further taken up by Higgs (2007). Like Gyekye and Waghid, Higgs (2007:4) believes that rationality is not universal, but arises as a practice growing out of plural conversations in which human thought, feeling and motivation operate in practical everyday experiences. The notion of reason and rationality which Higgs advocates is one that is "modest about its claims to universality and sensitive to intellectual and cultural differences...located in plural conversations which have their origin in practical activities such as speaking, listening and reflecting..." (Higgs, 2007:4). This is not far from Gyekye's and Waghid's argument that rationality and reasonableness in African philosophy embrace self-reflection, criticism and creativity. It is clear that for most scholars of African philosophy, rationality in African philosophy should veer away from that which is universally espoused by Western philosophy. African rationality should have cultural relevance based on materials and concepts peculiar to Africa; it should see philosophy as a product of or a reflection on reality (Higgs, 2007:11). Higgs (2007:11) sums this all up by describing the merits of a rational discourse for African philosophy as

> *...its acknowledgement of alternative forms of reasoning and their accompanying cultural expressions; its insistence that knowledge production is not independent of moral and political value; its grounding of rationality in social relations; and its recognition of the role of commitment, caring and feeling in rationality – all of which speak of the true essence of indigenous African knowledge systems.*

Although Parker (2003) and Higgs (2003) seem to be on opposite sides of the debate about the role African philosophy can play in education, in actual fact they are

advocating the same thing. On the one hand, Higgs calls for “an African Renaissance in educational discourse..., a call which insists that all critical and transformative educators in Africa embrace an indigenous African world view and root their nation’s educational paradigms in an indigenous socio-cultural and epistemological framework” (Higgs, 2003:7). In other words the educational curriculum should be indigenous-grounded and orientated (Higgs, 2003:7). On the other hand, Parker advocates for an African philosophy of education as a basis for the curriculum in South Africa. According to Parker, “Africana philosophy draws on oral traditions, early writings..., and cultural artifacts such as music as well as rigorous techniques of reason and analytical philosophy to construct African philosophy as a distinct discourse” (Parker, 2003:31). Parker (2003:37) argues that the discourse of an African philosophy of education must arise from addressing philosophical questions in our (African) context, and that it needs a community. However, this is not very different from Higgs’s rationale for an African Renaissance in educational discourse above. They may differ about what constitutes African philosophy, but they both advocate one that would reflect the life experiences and circumstances of Africans (Parker, 2003:38). This argument is supported by Waghid (2004b:130) who also avers that Higgs and Parker have more in common than Parker claims. He shows that

> *Parker’s call for Africana philosophy of education as a kind of activism which would cultivate critical argumentative reason and fragility and trust among vulnerable (African) communities is commensurate with Higgs’s notion of an African philosophy of education which has the potential to liberate disempowered communities through critical reasoning and humaneness (ubuntu)* (Waghid, 2004b:130).

Another scholar who also advocates an African philosophy of education as a basis for an educational discourse is Nakusera (2004). He contends that higher education transformation can have a positive effect on change if implemented according to an African(a) philosophy of education (Nakusera, 2004:127). He claims to draw his understanding of what constitutes African philosophy from Lucius Outlaw. According to Outlaw (1997:265) “’Africana philosophy’ is a gathering notion used to cover collectively particular articulations, and traditions of particular articulations, of persons African and

African-descended that are regarded as instances of philosophizing". This is meant to cover also "philosophizing efforts of persons not African or African-descended, efforts that are nonetheless, contributions to the philosophising endeavour that constitute African philosophy" (Outlaw, 1997:265). Nakusera (2004: 130) advocates that culture, language and narratives should form a basis for an African(a) philosophy of education. Concerning culture he asserts that it is not true that African culture cannot contribute to science because it is static. He believes that this seems so because commentators concentrate on the negative aspects of the culture such as belief in unfounded claims of superstition and witchcraft. However, he avers that if these concepts could be open to critical analysis and questioning, they would be better understood (Nakusera, 2004:130). Subjecting these concepts to analysis and questioning would enable one to establish which of them are rational and which are irrational. One must also understand that rational knowledge is not the preserve of the West and that superstition is not peculiarly African (Nakusera, 2004:131).

Language is an aspect of culture whose importance cannot be overemphasised. It is through language that we dream, desire, have a consciousness, and it is the area where images are located. It is easier for children to acquire scientific concepts in their own language than a foreign one. That is why it is important that indigenous technologies and African knowledge systems are utilised to allow African children access to scientific subjects which seem to be difficult for them (Nakusera, 2004:131-132). Language is also a means by which cognition is developed and knowledge is acquired and expressed (Nakusera, 2004, citing Chumbow, 1998:52). A recent study by German and French academics (Mampe, Friederici, Christophe & Wermke, 2009:3) confirms the importance of the mother tongue in learning by showing that newborn babies cry in their native language. Newborns start learning language in the womb, and their cries resemble the sounds of their parents' language. This confirms how important it is for anyone learning something new to be exposed to it in his/her mother tongue.

Linked to language and culture is the concept of using students' narratives to aid in their learning. Nakusera advocates the incorporation of these narratives in higher education

because in this way a student who comes from a rich storytelling background can reveal his/her experiences so that he/she can be understood (Nakusera, 2004:132). He posits that this is important as unlike deliberations, which are said to be disadvantageous because the deliberators are not equal (these privilege the dispassionate, the educated, or those who feel they have a right to assert themselves), narratives reduce such disadvantages (Nakusera, 2004:132). In this way it is believed that story telling can help an African student to learn as long as stories include clarifications and argumentation, aspects which constitute 'philosophy' (Nakusera, 2004:133). Most importantly, Nakusera (2004:134) contends that the introduction of culture, language and narratives in higher education is important as according to Waghid (2004), students should sometimes be made to realise that they do not always have to rely on prescribed texts and course readings in their learning.

2.4.1 *Ubuntu*, communalism and IKS in schooling and higher education

Higgs and van Wyk (2004) make a case for the Africanisation of the curriculum as an imperative of the transformation of higher education in South Africa. This can be achieved by ensuring that higher education in South Africa involves communal life and *ubuntu,* socio-ethical themes which transcend the culture, language and ethnic diversity of Africans (Higgs & van Wyk, 2004:205). They contend that higher education discourse within this context would enable Africans to function in relation to one another in the communal tradition. This would be characterised by a spirit of *ubuntu* in which human needs, interests and dignity are of a fundamental importance and concern (Higgs & van Wyk, 2004:205). This kind of education will not only foster the spirit of *ubuntu*, but will also develop cooperative skills, which will promote and sustain the sort of communal interdependence and concern with the welfare of others that is encouraged by *ubuntu* (Higgs & van Wyk, 2004:206).

Though citizenship education is not the concern of this thesis, Enslin and Horsthemke's article "Can *ubuntu* provide a model for citizenship education in African democracies?"

provides evidence for why some scholars are opposed to the use of African philosophy and specifically *ubuntu* as a basis for educational discourse. According to Enslin and Horsthemke (2004:546) the call for *ubuntu* to form a basis for citizenship education faces numerous problems and involves substantial errors, including educational errors. They contend that unlike popular belief, *ubuntu* is not unique to Africa. Western thought also has a long tradition of humanist concern, caring and compassion. Secondly, they do not believe that *ubuntu* fosters respect for the environment as this could be enacted for human benefit rather than for the environment's intrinsic value. Thirdly, they argue that African philosophy cannot be a uniting force for Africans worldwide because of the incidents of genocide, dictatorships and autocratic rule, sexism, corruption, heterosexism, homophobia and environmental degradation in Africa (Enslin & Horsthemke, 2004:548-549). I want to maintain, though, that the fact that *ubuntu* is not unique to Africa does not mean that it cannot play a vital role as a basis for an African philosophy of education discourse. Enslin and Horsthemke (2004:550) themselves acknowledge that the communitarians and the defenders of *ubuntu* have a point in their concerns that institutions like schools, and the values they reflect, should cohere with the cultures of those they serve. If the principle of *ubuntu* is a common thread among the African cultures, why then should it not play a crucial role in education? Again, if African countries are plagued with problems such as genocide, dictatorships, homophobia and others these authors mention, perhaps the principles of *ubuntu* when embedded in the education systems in Africa would help deal with those problems. Another perspective on this could argue that these problems are not peculiar to Africa. History tells us about Nazism in Germany; Fascism in Italy; communist dictatorship in Romania and military dictatorships in Chile, El Salvador, Panama and Argentina; and most recently genocide in Croatia.

Enslin and Horsthemke (2004) base their rejection of a uniquely South African education as a basis for democratic citizenship on what they deem to be inadequacies in Adeyemi and Adeyinka's (2003) principles of African traditional education, namely: preparationism, functionalism, communalism, perennialism and wholisticism (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2003:431). Preparationism regarded teaching and learning as a way of

equipping children with skills appropriate for their gender. This principle further implied that children were prepared to adjust to the community and play a useful role in it. Functionalism was a participatory kind of education, where children learned through imitation, initiation ceremonies, work, play or oral literature. This allowed learners to be productive as they were learning and were smoothly integrated in the community. In communalism, the society owned items in common; children belonged to the community and could be disciplined by any member of it. Under perennialism, education was viewed as a vehicle for maintaining and preserving the cultural heritage and the status quo, which is why learners were discouraged from and punished for experimenting with the unknown. Wholisticism equipped learners with related skills for doing different jobs. This made young people productive in many ways (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2003:432-433). It is important to highlight that from the very beginning of their article Adeyemi and Adeyinka (2003:425) emphasise a call for a “return to the indigenous education system albeit in a modified form”. These authors may be aware that the above principles may not be applicable to the present Africa in their unmodified form. They do discuss the weaknesses and strengths of African traditional education at the end of their article. What is useful is that they acknowledge that there are weaknesses to the traditional system. There is surely nothing amiss with modifying these principles to fit in with modern day Africa. For instance, the principles of preparationism, perennialism and wholisticism can be modified to be non-gender specific. They would still prepare young people to adjust to the community and play useful roles which are not necessarily gender specific. The call by Adeyemi and Adeyinka (2003:439) for a merger of what is good in African traditional education with the positive aspects of Western education is a sound one considering the fact that modern Africa is not the same as pre-colonial Africa: for example, instead of embracing the idea and practice of indoctrination, which traditional education is known to do, modern day learners could be introduced to the idea of reflexive thinking ((Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2003:438).

Given the importance which African societies place on communities, it is logical for communalism to have a special significance for African philosophy of education (Wiredu, 2004:21). This is echoed by Higgs and van Wyk (2004:208), who maintain that

“the discourse in higher education in South Africa needs to take note of the contributions that African philosophy can make to the transformation of higher education theory and practice”. Similarly, Venter (2004:157) contends that education for community life is important from an African point of view, whereby communalism and respect for the community, which involves sharing with and helping others, take precedence. She calls for the integration of a pluralistic view of philosophy of life and cultural backgrounds into the school setting in order to solve problems and for cultures to co-exist in a meaningful way. This could also apply in the higher education setting. Letseka (2000:189) also makes a case for communalism when he says that “there is no doubt ... that interpersonal and cooperative skills are *sine qua non* to traditional African life”. These skills help to promote communally accepted and desirable moral norms and virtues (Letseka, 2000:189). He believes that the inculcation of cooperative skills in young people will play a crucial role in promoting and sustaining communal interdependence and concern with the welfare of others (Letseka, 2000:189).

Nowadays, most African scholars believe that in order for education to benefit communities, IKS must be integrated into the education system. Some even consider that this will help improve the academic performance of African children, especially in mathematics and science subjects. Odora-Hoppers (2001:75) contends that African children do not perform well in these subjects because their prior knowledge of indigenous scientific and mathematical cosmologies is not always taken into consideration before the new subject contents are introduced. Universities are especially guilty as they, along with the disciplines they offer, “acquire that air of ‘ethnographic exotica’ in relation to society” (Odora-Hoppers, 2001:81). As a result they insulate themselves from society and protect the status quo, encapsulated and cocooned inside of their walls (Odora-Hoppers, 2001:81). In order to correct this situation, Higgs *et al* (2003:43) maintain that “indigenised innovations and knowledge systems would also have to be taken into account in higher education curricula”. There should be new ways of thinking about the history, economics and social status of local IKS in South Africa (Higgs *et al.,* 2003:43). For Higgs *et al.* (2003:44), indigenous knowledge is used by communities for making decisions about food, human and animal

health, education and other activities. As part of the community "the higher education sector needs to support local and regional networks of traditional practitioners and help disseminate useful and relevant indigenous knowledge so that communities can participate more actively in ongoing development processes" (Higgs *et al.,* 2003:44).

South Africa is a country that is undergoing transformation from apartheid rule to a democracy with an African identity. This transformation can be achieved if the universities strive to define, engage and respond to societal challenges (Makgoba & Seepe, 2004:17). Makgoba and Seepe (2004:19-20) add that for a university to be truly African and fulfil the challenge above, its central intention should be to create

> *an institutional transformation in higher education that will provide for the production of knowledge that recognises the African condition as historical and defines its key task as one of coming to grips with it critically...The African University should be the custodian of African knowledge, both aesthetic and functional, so that it can dictate terms of appropriation to the world.*

Similarly, Lebakeng (2004:115) contends that

> *the dire need for Africanisation, especially in relation to curriculum, is not simply a struggle for power, but is an exigency of justice that demands the restoration of equilibrium in the contending epistemological paradigms between the alien conqueror and the indigenous African conquered... It is imperative that South Africa develops theoretical models underpinned by indigenous African philosophy so as to interpret correctly and coherently the problems and prospects of a democratising society.*

It is not surprising, then, that not only scholars and intellectuals are mooting that African philosophy and some of its most important principles should be used as the basis for an educational discourse in (South) Africa. Even the South African Department of Education has entered the fray. In 2000, the then minister of Education, Professor Kadar Asmal, requested the formation of a working group on values in education. The group released a report on the promotion of values such as equity, tolerance, multilingualism, openness, accountability, and social honour in schools (DoE, 2000:6).

These are the values which African philosophy and *ubuntu* espouse. The report identifies the notion of *ubuntu* as key to enabling individuals to attain tolerance – a state of human consciousness that requires truthfulness about the failures and successes of the human past (DoE, 2000:22). *Ubuntu* also features in another Department of Education publication on values, which observes that

> *out of the values of ubuntu and human dignity flow the practices of compassion, kindness, altruism and respect which are at the very core of making schools places where the culture of teaching and the culture of learning thrive; of making them dynamic hubs of industry and achievement rather than places of conflict and pain..., ubuntu embodies the concept of mutual understanding and the active appreciation of the value of human difference.... Ultimately, ubuntu requires you to respect others if you are to respect yourself* (DoE, 2001a:14).

As some of the authors discussed above have indicated, it would be futile to overhaul the present education system completely, considering that South Africa is a multi-cultural society. Adeyemi and Adeyinka's (2003:425) view has been mentioned. Higgs and van Niekerk (2002:40) maintain that people should not strive to regain the past as it was, because societies change constantly and people interact with the environment in a unique and unrepeatable way. Not all aspects of the present education system are negative, and so these should be modified to accommodate the Africanness of the South African society. From the discussion of various authors above, it is evident that African philosophy and its worldviews hold a very significant place and are expected to play an extremely important role in education in South African. Most of the literature reviewed advocates the inclusion of African philosophy of education in higher education; however, it would seem futile not to begin the Africanisation process at the school system level. School children should be familiarised with values such as *ubuntu* and communalism, as required by the Department of Education, from an early age. This will ensure that when they reach institutions of higher learning, where they are prepared for the job market and adult life, they will be able to put these values into practice. In higher education institutions African philosophy should not only be part of the curriculum, but its ideals and values such as *ubuntu,* communalism and IKS should also form the basis for all subjects.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter represents an attempt to review the literature relevant to African philosophy and African philosophy of education. The various authors I discussed confirm the contestation that has existed about what constitutes African philosophy. While Western philosophers such as Kant and Hegel had concluded that "Africans did not and could not have a philosophy", scholars and philosophers in post-colonial Africa rose up in defence of such philosophy. Mbiti, Hallen, Oruka, Bondunrin, Wiredu, and Hountondji have come up with what they understand to be African philosophy. However, the most influential of all these philosophers is Oruka, whose different projects on what constitutes African philosophy have become the basis for all the debate surrounding this contentious issue. When Oruka formulated the four trends of African philosophy, he distinguished ethno-philosophy from philosophic sagacity, with ethno-philosophy being embodied in communal African customs, poems, taboos, religions, songs, and dances, which constituted a "debased" usage of the term philosophy. It seems that for Oruka, African philosophy could only be found in the other three trends: philosophic sagacity, nationalist-ideological philosophy and critical or professional philosophy. However, in his later projects, Oruka evidenced a change of heart, whereby he recognised ethno-philosophy as an integral part of African philosophy. Ethno-philosophy (in the form of folk sagacity), together with philosophic sagacity became known as sage philosophy. Sage philosophy, according to Presbey (1999:93), should give credence to African philosophy as it fits the existentialists' view of philosophy as questioning, reflective and meditative. This should be a "fuller definition of philosophy" (Presbey, 1999:93). Presbey (2007:129) further explains that in sage philosophy Oruka proved that myths, folklores and folk wisdom are equally important in preserving and championing aspects of tradition and as such should be integral to what constitutes African philosophy.

How do all these contentions play themselves out with reference to education, in particular, African philosophy of education? The above views indicate that *ubuntu*, which is part of ethno-philosophy, is an integral part of African philosophy. However, it is important that students of African philosophy of education should move beyond the

particular, that is, away from focussing only on *ubuntu* or traditions and culture when discussing African philosophy. Instead, they should embrace all aspects of African philosophy as sketched by Odera Oruka in his trends in African philosophy.

African philosophy of education students should be critical, innovative and reflexive instead of merely accepting African traditions and cultures as the only form of African philosophy. Waghid (2004a:57), drawing on Wiredu's (2004:17) qualities of an educated person, emphasises that students of African philosophy should be reasonable. They should be able to articulate clear, logical and defensible arguments, and strive to find out how or why certain traditions and customs came about and what their significance was or still is, instead of dismissing them as barbaric or illogical. This also means that they should not just accept what the prescribed textbooks say without subjecting them to a rational, critical and logical scrutiny. In other words, students of African philosophy should develop sound critical thinking skills. I will explore the literature on critical thinking in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

CRITICAL THINKING IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

3.1 Introduction

The development of critical thinking faculties is at the heart of South Africa's education policy framework. For instance, the Department of Education's (DoE) (1995) *White Paper on Education and Training* is unequivocal about the centrality of such thinking in all aspects of education provision. Section 17 of Chapter 4 of the *White Paper* states that "the curriculum, teaching methods and textbooks at all levels and in all programmes of education and training, should encourage independent and critical thought, the capacity to question, enquire, reason, weigh evidence and form judgements, achieve understanding, recognise the provisional and incomplete nature of most human knowledge, and communicate clearly" (DoE, 1995:22). Indeed the cardinal principles of *Curriculum 2005*, which became the curriculum design of the Department of Education after apartheid, are anchored on the development of improved thinking skills. These principles have been evident in almost all the subsequent curriculum statements such as The *Revised National Curriculum Statement* (2002) and the *National Curriculum Statement* (2002), which have now been revised and combined into *National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12* (2011). Furthermore, the Department of Education envisaged a "transformed, democratic, non-racial and non-sexist system of higher education" that would among other things "support a democratic ethos and culture of human rights through educational programmes and practice conducive to critical discourse and creative thinking..." (DoE, 1997:10-11)

The 1996 *Lifelong Learning through a National Curriculum Framework* document, which was the first major curriculum statement of a democratic South Africa, sought to promote "a prosperous, truly united, democratic and internationally competitive country with literate, creative and critical citizens ..." (DoE, 2002:4). The *Framework* further states that one of the aims of the school curriculum should be to "create a lifelong

learner who is confident and independent, literate, numerate and multi-skilled, compassionate, with a respect for the environment and the ability to participate in society as a critical and active citizen" (DoE, 2002:8). The emphasis on critical thinking and learners being critically reflective is evident in almost all the learning areas. In two of the outcomes in the learning area of Languages (listening, reading and writing), learners should be equipped to "listen for information and enjoyment, and respond appropriately and critically in a wide range of situations". They should be "able to read and view for information and enjoyment, and respond critically to the aesthetic, cultural and emotional values in texts". In Mathematics, learners should be equipped "to collect, summarise, display and critically analyse data in order to draw conclusions and make predictions, and to interpret and determine chance variations". The Social Sciences learning area is expected to develop "informed, critical and responsible citizens who are able to participate constructively in a culturally diverse and changing society" while Arts and Culture as a learning area is expected to develop learners who can "reflect critically on artistic and cultural processes, products and styles in past and present contexts". The Economic and Management Sciences learning area aims to produce learners who, while studying "private, public or collective use of different types of resources in satisfying people's needs and wants", can also reflect "critically on the impact of resource exploitation on the environment and people" (DoE, 2002:20-27).

It is evident from the above sketches that critical thinking is regarded as one of the most important outcomes of most learning processes, which should be instilled at school level. The infusion of critical thinking at this level is necessary to enable the learners to cope with the demands of higher education teaching and learning which require one to think "on their feet", take a stance and make one's voice audible. This study consequently makes a case for the infusion of critical thinking in teaching and learning in South Africa, especially as regards African philosophy in higher education. The acquisition of critical thinking skills from early on has the potential to enable African philosophy students to understand, recognise and challenge some of the misconceptions about African philosophy. It will be argued that current students of education are not able to conceptualise African philosophy because they lack critical

thinking skills. This lack poses a serious problem because the students are not able to read their prescribed books critically. They accept all information they read, even controversial and highly contested issues, without critical analysis.

Critical thinking skills are not only useful in education, but also in life in general. As Freeley and Steinberg (2000:2) attest, our success or failure in life depends on our ability to make wise decisions for ourselves and to influence others' decisions for our benefit. Critical thinking skills are therefore a prerequisite for effective participation in "human affairs, pursuing higher education, and succeeding in the highly competitive world of business and professions" (Freeley & Steinberg, 2000:1). Research has shown that throughout life, communication happens either intrapersonally or interpersonally, by means of which we need to be able to "weigh pros and cons of an important decision in our minds or listen to arguments intended to influence our decision or participate in exchanges to influence the decisions of others" (Freeley & Steinberg, 2000:2). The importance of critical thinking skills cannot be over-emphasised in a democracy because democracies succeed and flourish when citizens can hold their leaders accountable by critically challenging and questioning the assumptions that frame their pronouncements and policies which have a direct impact on the way the lives of citizens are governed.

However, it is worth mentioning that policy ideals and imperatives do not always translate into reality. For instance, while South Africa's educational policies and legislative imperatives require the development of critical thinking at all levels of education, the newly designed education system is not yet able to deliver on the stated policy ideals and imperatives. This chapter offers insights into the literature on conceptions of critical thinking. One of the aims of this review of literature is to underscore the connections, at the philosophical and psychological levels, of social skills, cognitive skills, and emotional coping skills with critical thinking skills. The review will then touch on the literature on teaching critical thinking, with a view to highlighting the link between critical thinking and the ability to engage in critical inquiry. The review will then locate the value of teaching critical thinking in South African education.

Research by South African scholars shows that the majority of South African university students are underprepared for the rigours of university teaching and learning (Lombard & Grosser, 2008; Morrow, 2007; Slonimsky & Shalem, 2006; Boughey, 2005; Singh, 2000; Van den Berg, 2000; Nyamapfene & Letseka, 1995). These scholars argue that students lack the necessary "epistemological access" to succeed and flourish in their studies, which can be attributed to the fact that they are often first generation university students in their families. These families lack the social networks of experiences of university teaching and learning. This chapter will conclude that critical thinking is the epitome of good thinking and should therefore be incorporated into all aspects of teaching as recommended by the DoE's *White Paper in Education and Training* (1995).

3.2 Conceptions of critical thinking

> *Every parent wants their child to be prepared to "make it" in the world once they leave the shelter of their growing home. We start by teaching them how to feed themselves, how to dress themselves and how to pick up their toys; later we move on to lessons in answering the phone, preparing simple meals, keeping track of money and driving a car. Now and then, we are rewarded with a chance to see them do something for themselves and do it well – a sign of hope for their future as an independent person* (Casey Family Programs, 2001:57)

As indicated in the quotation above, children are groomed from an early age for participation in adult life by inducting them into the skills necessary for their personal development and flourishing. Theories of human development and adolescent behaviour confirm that there are specific life skills which are essential for healthy development and defining a resilient child (Mangrulkar, Whitman & Posner, 2001:5). For instance, Mangrulkar *et al.* (2001:6) identify three categories of life skills that are critical for young people's development and flourishing. Below is a table illustrating these three categories:

Table 1: Life skills

Social skills	Cognitive skills	Emotional coping skills
- Communicative skills - Negotiation/refusal skills - Assertiveness skills - Interpersonal skills (for developing healthy relationships) - Cooperation skills - Empathy and perspective taking	Decision making/problem solving skills - Understanding the consequences of actions - Determining alternative solutions to problems Critical thinking skills - Analysing peer and media influence - Analysing one's perceptions of social norms and beliefs - Self evaluation and values clarification	- Managing stress - Managing feelings, including anger - Skills for increasing internal locus of control (self-management, self-monitoring)

Source: Mangrulkar, Whitman, & Posner (2001)

While the focus of this study and this chapter in particular falls on critical thinking skills, it is necessary to acknowledge that these are only a part of the larger family of life skills that fall under the umbrella of cognitive skills. The latter comprise competencies needed for human development and adoption of positive behaviours which enable children to develop into adulthood, commanding skills to help them to effectively deal with everyday life challenges (Mangrulkar *et al.,* 2001:5).

Having identified critical thinking as part of cognitive thinking skills, the next task is to relate these to general thinking skills. According to Smith (2002:662), a thinking skill has to do with knowing how to perform mental activities. Smith (2002:663) contends that

thinking skills lie between two extremes. On the one hand, they must be sufficiently structured and be teachable, consciously controlled mental activities that can be exercised at their possessor's volition. On the other hand, they must not be so highly proceduralised as to lack thinking *per se.* A thinking skill is a teachable, partially proceduralised, mental activity that reaches beyond normal cognitive capacities and can be exercised at will. Thus when an individual thinks, it is for the purpose of producing a specific meaning – a solution to a problem, a new truth, a clearer understanding, a judgement, and so on. A thinking skill is therefore a mental operation such as recall or analysis or inductive reasoning, used in conjunction with similar operations to execute a thinking strategy (Beyer, 1988:54). In other words, possessing a thinking skill means having "special capacities", extending beyond the "mere ability" to think (Smith, 2002:662). Smith (2002:662-663) contends that thinking is a low level of competence which most people can do. However, possessing such skills means that one can go beyond mere thinking. Beyer (1984:486) argues that there does not seem to be any consensus about what is meant by thinking skills. However, he maintains that for most educators, these skills refer to mental skills, "which enable human beings to formulate thoughts, to reason about, or to judge" rather than social or psychomotor skills (Beyer, 1984:486). It is clear from the above definitions that thinking skills involve a variety of skills, of which critical thinking forms part.

Beyer (1988:57) identifies ten characteristics of critical thinking skills that, for the purpose of this study, are worth mentioning. These are:

- *Distinguishing between variable facts and value claims*
- *Distinguishing relevant from irrelevant information, claims, or reasons*
- *Determining the factual accuracy of a statement*
- *Determining the credibility of a source*
- *Identifying ambiguous claims and arguments*
- *Identifying unstated assumptions*
- *Detecting bias*
- *Identifying logical fallacies*
- *Recognising logical inconsistencies in a line of reasoning*
- *Determining the strength of an argument or claim*

Briefly then, critical thinking consists essentially of judging the authenticity, worth, or accuracy of something. That is, it is essentially evaluative. It involves precise, persistent, and objective analysis of any claim, source, or belief in order to judge its accuracy, validity, or worth (Beyer, 1988:61). Ennis (1964:599-600) identifies nine proficiencies in judging that should characterise a critical thinker. These are judging whether:

- A statement follows from the premises.
- Something is an assumption.
- An observation statement is reliable.
- A simple generalisation is warranted.
- A hypothesis is warranted.
- A theory is warranted.
- An argument depends on an ambiguity.
- A statement is overvague or overspecific.
- An alleged authority is reliable.

Beyer (1988:62) points out that the most all-inclusive act of critical thinking is probably that of argumentation – namely, argument making and argument analysing. An argument, in critical thinking terms, is an assertion or claim accompanied by a line of reasoning that supports this claim and that denies any alternative claim. As I will demonstrate in the following chapters, the characteristics of critical thinking, identified by Beyer and his definition of it, identify what skills are expected from university students. These students have to be able to form their own opinions by putting the above characteristics into effect while reading and studying a variety of sources and engaging with people who hold different opinions. The literature will confirm that students who enrol in South African universities are not able to perform tasks that require them to use critical thinking skills.

The debate on critical thinking has not only been about its meaning, but also on its transferability to a wide range of subject areas and on how to teach it (Norris, 1985:40). Ennis (1964:599, 1989:4) defines critical thinking as “the correct way of assessing statements” and “reasonable reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe or do”, while Bailin, Coombs & Daniels (1999:286), view “competence in critical thinking in

terms of intellectual resources, which include background knowledge, knowledge of critical thinking standards, possession of critical concepts, knowledge of strategies or heuristics useful in thinking critically and certain habits of mind". For McPeck (1984:28), the common thread running through these meanings is that "critical thinking strives towards the improvement of day-to-day reasoning ability". All these definitions reflect the ten characteristics identified by Beyer above. The majority of authors assert similar ideas as to what constitutes critical thinking.

Schlosser, Visser and Visser (2003:401), assert that as much as critical thinking requires a deep understanding of the issues being discussed, it also requires flexibility, which is the willingness to alter one's point of view as a result of examining and re-examining ideas and facts. The importance of critical thinking is evident in the fact that it is not only regarded as a learning outcome in education, but that it can also make it easy to understand other learning disciplines. In other words it can be "a mediating mechanism for the attainment of other learning outcomes" (Schlosser *et al.,* 2003:402). If students possess adequate critical thinking skills, they will not only be able to perform well in critical thinking disciplines such as philosophy, but they will also perform well in other subjects such as history, wherein there are invariably tensions and contestations around the politics of historiography. Students need to develop critical thinking skills in order to be able to engage with these tensions and contestations. For example, in history, what makes a particular event and not the other historical? Do certain events simply become historical or does this depend on how they are cast by historians? Is history then a simple manipulation of events by historians (Carr 1990)? Learners have to be aware of the fact that most subjects are not neutral. On the contrary, they are value-laden. Critical thinking skills will equip learners with such awareness.

Pithers and Soden (2000) have reviewed bodies of literature on critical thinking which show that nowadays national governments and employers demand that graduates should be able to "think smarter" than was the case previously (Pithers & Soden, 2000:237). "Thinking smarter" presupposes "thinking well" or "good thinking". These are attributes commonly associated with "critical thinking". Pithers and Soden (2000:238)

proceed to argue that literature on critical thinking seems to imply that “good thinking ... involves being able to identify questions worth pursuing, being able to pursue one’s questions through self-directed search and interrogation of knowledge, a sense that knowledge is contestable and being able to present evidence to support one’s arguments”. Some of the authors whose work was reviewed by Pithers and Soden, such as Raths *et al* (1966), consider good thinking operations to include “comparing, interpreting, observing, summarizing and classifying; suggesting hypotheses; taking decisions; creating; criticizing and evaluating; designing investigations; identifying assumptions; and coding, gathering, and organizing data or information, as well as applying principles to new situations” (Pithers & Soden, 2000:241).

However, it seems that in order to be able to think critically, one has to have adequate dispositions. Commeyras (1993:486) describes such dispositions as “open-mindedness, reason seeking, sensitivity towards other’s feelings and knowledge” and appropriate abilities such as “engagement in argument analysis, question identification, credibility assessment and inference”. Another author who makes a point for critical thinking dispositions is Ennis (1996), according to whom critical thinking dispositions are so important for critical thinking that they have to be incorporated both in critical thinking instruction and in assessment (Ennis, 1996:168). Ennis outlines three broad dispositions where critical thinkers are disposed to:

- Get it right to the extent possible, which includes seeking alternatives; endorsing a position to the extent that it is justified; be well-informed; and consider points of view other than their own.

- Represent a position honestly and clearly, which includes being clear about the intended meaning of what is said, written or otherwise communicated; determining, and maintaining focus on the conclusion or question; seeking or offering reasons; taking into account the total situation; and being reflectively aware of their own basic beliefs.

- Care about the dignity and worth of every person, which includes discovering and listening to others’ views and reasons; taking into account others’ feelings and level of understanding; and being concerned about others’ welfare (Ennis, 1996:171).

At this juncture, it is necessary to elaborate on the relationship between critical thinking and philosophy. Critical thinking, as we shall see below is a logical by-product of philosophy. When one philosophises, one uses critical thinking skills. This is the reason why in the 1970s philosophers such as Matthew Lipman and Margaret Sharp advocated for and developed philosophy for children (P4C) to be taught in schools. I will illustrate the relationship between critical thinking and philosophy through the discussion of arguments for and against the introduction of P4C in schools.

3.3 Relationship between critical thinking and philosophy

In the 1970s philosophers such as Matthew Lipman and Margaret Sharp developed P4C as a way of introducing children to philosophising and thinking critically at an early age. These philosophers based their work on Vygotsky's theory. Vygotsky considers learning through instruction rather than age as a fundamental feature of human intelligence (Roberts, 2006:12). Vygotsky's theory is important in that it highlights the role played by adults (teachers, parents, educators), peers and others in fostering and enhancing cognitive development in children, through communication, language and social interaction (Roberts, 2006:12).

P4C is meant to integrate "the methods and content of philosophy and pragmatic ideal of community inquiry in order to facilitate critical, creative, caring, and communal thinking skills, as well as the social skills and attitudes necessary for democratic citizenship" (Bleazby, 2011:453). The community of inquiry has its roots in the times of Socrates and claims that "deliberative and collaborative communities are exceptional in their ability to foster critical, creative and caring thinking, leading to sounder reasoning, understanding, and judgement" (Lipman, 1998:278). For P4C the classroom becomes such a community in which emphasis is placed on "dialogue and reflection, with the class discussion building upon the philosophical issues present in the philosophical novels for children" (Hagaman, 1990:151). Lipman and Sharp believed children can learn philosophy at an early age. They demonstrated that just as much as the "proper teaching of history generates historical thinking, and the proper teaching of mathematics

generates mathematical thinking, so the proper teaching of philosophy must generate philosophical thinking" (Lipman & Sharp, 1978:85). This argument is supported by Murris (2000:263), who argues that primary school children do not study mathematics or history as capably as professional mathematicians or historians, yet there has never been a call for them not to study these subjects. Young children will obviously not engage in philosophical arguments in the same way as adults or professional philosophers, but they can be taught from an early age to be able to engage in such arguments later in their lives. I endorse Murris's (2000:263) contention that abstract concepts do not just develop but can be taught. By also relying on Vygotsky's theory, Murris argues that training is more important than age in developing philosophical inquiry.

Philosophy should be an enjoyable subject for children so that their interest in it can be developed. For example, one way of making the learning of philosophy interesting for children is by using children's stories and poetry. Lipman & Sharp (1978:86) assert that:

> *Children for whom the formal presentations of philosophy are anathema may find hints of the same ideas entrancing when embedded in the vehicle of a children's story. Young people who find the writing of a philosophical essay unthinkable can be induced to express philosophical notions in verse with little apparent reluctance.*

P4C has been criticised by philosophers who believe that philosophical thinking is too complicated for children. These criticisms stem from Piaget's theory on the stages of development. Piaget's theory claims that cognitive development is a natural progression and has clearly definable stages (Lyle, 2000:46). Piaget's cognitive development stages are lucidly summarised by Roberts (2006:8):

> *Piaget emphasised that children pass through a series of four cognitive developmental stages before they construct the ability to perceive, reason and understand in mature and rational ways. The sensorimotor stage (birth to 2 years) is characterised by behaviour that is goal-directed, with goals moving from concrete to abstract. The preoperational stage (2 to 7 years) is characterised by the acquisition of semiotic functioning and the engagement in symbolic and language games, and a difficulty in seeing another person's point of view and where thought and communication are egocentric. The concrete operational*

> *stage (7 to 11 years) is characterised by the performance of true mental operations and solving of concrete problems in a logical fashion, and a difficulty in thinking hypothetically and in systematically considering all aspects of a problem*

One of the most notable implications of Piaget's theory is that "children have to reach a particular cognitive developmental stage to be able to reason about abstract matters and think philosophically" (Roberts, 2006:10). Piaget's argument that children under 7 years are at a pre-logical stage and cannot engage in formal operations was challenged by Lipman, who argued that philosophically, children are likely to ask more interesting questions than adults (Vansieleghem & Kennedy, 2011:175).

Philosophers who are critical of P4C such as Kitchener (1990) and White (1992) contend that because children are incapable of higher order learning, they should not be taught philosophy. For instance, White (1992:77) opines that "presenting philosophy to children as a fun activity may impede rather than promote any understanding they may come to have of what philosophy is all about". However, what the opponents of philosophy for children do not refute is the view that rather than teaching them to philosophise, P4C can help children to develop critical thinking skills (White, 1992:77). Nineteen years later, White (2011:8) is still "unconvinced that philosophy has a place in primary education". White's (2011:9) difficulty is that "philosophical reasoning is not the only sort of reasoning. We reason about politics, about practical problems, about relationships, about artistic preferences, etc". It is confusing to talk about "philosophy" if what P4C does is to teach children reasoning or critical reflection. White (2011:9) suggests that if improving school children's reasoning in these various fields is education's major concern, then this is what should be taught. Kitchener (1990:421-422) supports Piaget's theory when he asserts that doing critical thinking does not translate to philosophising. He claims that critical thinking involves the lower order thinking skills while philosophy involves "very complex reasoning skills".

I want to argue that this should not be judged as a weakness of P4C. I consider critical thinking an important aspect of philosophising, hence it is my view that one cannot

philosophise without critical thinking. Just as children start learning simple mathematical or historical concepts at an early age, it follows that they can learn basic philosophical concepts early and develop more complex concepts as they grow. P4C is essential for the schooling level in that it has the potential to equip children with reasoning and critical thinking skills. By using this approach, children will have acquired the ability to apply philosophical and critical thinking skills to their interactions with texts and to argumentation by the time they arrive at university.

Notwithstanding the above criticisms, it is my view that P4C can be a valuable tool for teaching children to philosophise: to “define common concepts more clearly, learn how to question, how to reason, and how to articulate their ideas and subject them to examination” (Lyle, 2000:58). In a community of inquiry, children learn to “aim at common objectives, share ideas and information with each other, and try to be impartial and objective in their mutual criticism” (Daniel & Auriac, 2011:422). Daniel & Auriac further show that in a community of inquiry children also learn to be tolerant towards each other by showing interest in each others’ beliefs and interests and to respect each others’ differences of perspective. For Sharp (1987:39), community of inquiry “allows children to perceive the other’s point of view and to take it into account in constructing his/her own world view”.

The importance of philosophy for the acquisition of critical thinking skills does not end in schools. University students also need to be acquainted with philosophy during their study. In my view, a university level Philosophy of Education course that does not require students to have any of Plato’s dialogues as prescribed reading, seems to me to miss the mark as far as teaching students to ask appropriate questions, to learn to effectively and creatively sort through information and to reason logically is concerned. Canadian philosopher Egan (1992:646) argues that at the heart of Plato’s academic concept is the ideal of immersing students in forms of knowledge that would give them a privileged rational view of reality and carry them towards a better informed understanding of the nature of the world and human experiences. This privileged rational view makes students sceptical of prevailing norms, values and beliefs. It is no

wonder Athenian rulers deemed it necessary to execute Socrates for fear he was the "doer of evil, who corrupted the youth, who did not believe in the gods of the state but had other divinities of his own" (Plato, 2000).

The question that needs to be asked at this stage is: Are there other ways of teaching critical thinking in schools besides through P4C? This question can be answered by determining what kinds of skills constitute critical thinking skills. It has already been made evident in the foregoing exploration and analysis that in order for one to acquire critical thinking skills, one must possess both dispositions and abilities. The next section explores what skills constitute critical thinking skills and looks into other ways in which critical thinking skills might be taught in schools.

3.4 Teaching critical thinking in schools

Schafersman (1991:1) contends that all education, whether schooling or university, has the task of transferring two kinds of skills to learners and students. Firstly, it transmits the subject matter (what to think). Secondly, it transfers the correct way to understand and evaluate this subject matter (how to think). The greatest challenge is that while teachers and lecturers do well in teaching the subject matter (what to think), they often fall short in teaching understanding and evaluation of the subject matter (how to think). Schafersman (1991:2) contends that this is because teaching the subject matter is so obvious that everyone focuses all their energies and efforts on it, while critical thinking is not easily recognisable. He defines critical thinking as correct thinking in the pursuit of relevant and reliable knowledge about the world. It is reasonable, reflective, responsible and skilful thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do. A person who thinks critically can ask appropriate questions; gather relevant information; efficiently and creatively sort through this information; reason logically about this information and come to reliable and trustworthy conclusions about the world to enable them to live and act successfully. Critical thinking is also critical inquiry. Critical thinkers investigate problems, ask questions, pose new challenges for the status quo, discover new information that can be used for good or ill, question authorities and traditional beliefs,

and challenge received dogmas and doctrines. As mentioned earlier, most people are followers of authority: they do not think for themselves, but rely on others to think for them (Schafersman, 1991:3). In schools learners rely on their teachers to provide them with all the knowledge they need. This is not in accordance with what the education authorities expect of schools: namely, as indicated earlier (Chapter 1 and the introduction to this chapter), schools are expected to produce learners who can work independently, discover information on their own and think critically and creatively. This trend should continue up to university.

In her article on “Arab women’s education and gender perceptions: An insider analysis”, Hamdan (2006:54) examines the reasons why Arab women were not able to question some of the entrenched gender perceptions in their communities. She attributes this to the kind of education these women were exposed to. She recalls that when she was a student and later a teacher, critical thinking was not encouraged. Teachers were required to teach the content, while learners were expected to memorise this content and reproduce it in the exams. She argues that this education system reinforces prevalent gender ideologies rather than challenges them (Hamdan, 2006:55). Although Hamdan’s article is specific to Arab women’s perceptions on gender, it highlights the consequences of not including critical thinking as part of engaging with knowledge claims.

Although this study is investigating the problems of undergraduate students, it will be shown that it is important to introduce or teach critical thinking skills from school level. This will ensure that by the time they reach university, students will be able to achieve what is expected of them at this academic level. As indicated, Schafersman (1991:3), believes that university students should be able to demonstrate independent thinking, as well as reliably and responsibly begin to make decisions which affect their lives. They should, by this stage, be able to perform all the tasks that require the use of critical thinking skills such as asking questions, questioning authority, discovering new information and logical reasoning.

In Section 3.2 of this chapter it was shown that critical thinking skills are part of a large family of life skills. At school level, critical thinking can be introduced to learners as part of life skills development. Mangrulkar *et al.* (2001:12-13) suggest that it is important to teach life skills to children, especially adolescents, because at this age children undergo changes in their life which they might not understand. These changes occur in their bodies (puberty), social cognition (understanding others, self and relationships), cognitive development (organising and making meaning of experience) and social development and family context (peer and family interactions). As a result of all these changes some form of intervention is needed to help "promote a healthy development and prevent harm and risk" in adolescents (Mangrulkar *et al.,* 2001:22). Miller and Bowen (1993:71) conducted research to determine the correlation between life skills programmes and self-esteem and found that "self-esteem and the ... development of competency, coping and contributory life skills are ... complementary constructs". Young people who participate in life skills programmes develop into contributing and responsible members of the community. Mangrulkar *et al.* (2001:5) suggest that in order for these programmes to be effective in helping young people develop life skills they should be taught "through interactive methods that include role plays, open discussion, skills rehearsal and small group activities".

Other methods of teaching critical thinking at school level besides P4C are explored by authors such as Schafersman (1991). Schafersman (1991:6) suggests two other ways of doing so in the classroom and to some extent, in the lecture room. Firstly, he suggests the easiest, least time-consuming and the least expensive method where one can modify one's "teaching and testing slightly to enhance critical thinking among one's students". Secondly, there is the more difficult, time-consuming, and expensive method which uses "formal critical thinking exercises, programmes, and materials that have been prepared by specialists and can be purchased for immediate use by the teacher or instructor". The first method where critical thinking is incorporated within the subject or course as part of teaching and testing methods is the most favourable since it does not require any specialised materials or programmes. It can be included easily in courses or subjects by presenting the material in such a way that students are encouraged to think

critically about the course or lecture. In a science lesson, for example, critical thinking can be included by using methods such as laboratory and quantitative exercises, and writing term papers and exams. This is Schafersman's (1991:7-13) suggestion on how critical thinking can be part of the subject or course during lectures, laboratory work, homework, quantitative exercises, term papers and exams:

- During lectures the subject matter is presented in such a way that learners or students are encouraged to think critically about it. Students or learners can be questioned in ways that require them to understand the material, analyse it and apply it to new situations. The teacher or lecturer can stop during a lecture to ask thought provoking questions about the material he or she has just presented.
- The nature of laboratory work itself promotes critical thinking, so it makes sense that experiments conducted in laboratories should be part of the critical thinking exercises. In the same way, subjects which require problem solving techniques are actually employing critical thinking, so subjects such as mathematics, chemistry and physics would be ideal for critical thinking activities.
- Doing written homework encourages learners to think critically about the material they have to read. Learners are encouraged to make the information their own by paraphrasing, summarising or outlining what they read.
- Critical thinking is promoted in the writing of term papers as in these exercises, students or learners are required to acquire, synthesise and logically analyse information in written form.
- Examinations should have a few short-answer essay questions which encourage learners or students to analyse information and draw conclusions. Multiple-choice questions can also enhance critical thinking if they are designed properly. Questions should not only test recall of information, but should also require some thinking about why a particular alternative, and not the others, is correct.

Some of the methods of teaching critical thinking skills discussed above can easily be applied to teaching these skills at university. However, there are methods which would be appropriate to higher education, including open and distance learning institutions. In

the next section, I discuss literature pertaining to the teaching of critical thinking in higher education institutions.

3.5 Teaching critical thinking in higher education

Most authors agree that although the importance of critical thinking is known, it is not always easy to help students to become critical thinkers (Egege & Kutieleh, 2004; Pithers & Soden, 2000; Sternber, 1987). Students in higher education institutions are expected to possess and display certain levels of critical thinking skills, yet there is little evidence of these being taught in secondary and high schools. So many varying definitions of this concept exist that in most cases educators and instructors are left with no clear indications of what needs to be taught (Egege & Kutieleh, 2004:78). Some authors believe that while trying to help students acquire such skills, teachers, instructors or educators may actually inhibit their acquisition. A teacher can inhibit critical thinking if she or he "simply agrees or disagrees, demonstrates and explains, cuts off students' responses, uses reproof rather than praise, shakes the learner's confidence in the value of new ideas or uses basically only retrieval or recall types of questions" (Pithers & Soden, 2000: 242). The author Sternber (1987), as reviewed by Pithers and Soden (2000), identifies eight fallacies which obstruct the teaching and learning of "generic critical thinking". These are:

- Lecturers who believe they have nothing to learn from the students. On the contrary, a teacher is also a learner who should be receptive to new ideas.
- Critical thinking is solely the lecturer's job.
- There is a 'correct programme' for teaching critical thinking. Teaching critical thinking will depend on the programme goals and content and the context or culture in which the learner's thinking is situated.
- The choice of critical thinking programme is based on a number of binary choices when it should actually be a combination of approaches from a wide range.
- What is important is the right answer.
- Discussion is a means to an end.

- Mastery-learning, which unreasonably implies some ceiling on good thinking. Usually thinking and performance can be improved.
- The role of a course in critical thinking is to teach critical thinking. However, most writers agree that students have to learn this skill on their own (Pithers & Soden, 2000:242-243).

In addition to the above-mentioned inhibitors, it can also be added that in most cases lecturers cannot give a clear explanation of or elaborate on their concept of critical thinking (Egege & Kutieleh, 2004:78-79). Bailin *et* al (1999:286) view competence in critical thinking in terms of intellectual resources which include background knowledge, knowledge of critical thinking standards, possession of critical concepts, knowledge of strategies or heuristics useful in thinking critically, and certain habits of the mind. For them critical thinking must be directed towards a purpose such as answering a question, making a decision, solving a problem, resolving an issue, devising a plan, or carrying out a project (Bailin *et al.,* 1999:286). However, thinking that is sloppy, superficial, careless, rash or naive does not count as critical thinking (Bailin *et al.,* 1999:287). Lectures should understand critical thinking in terms of the following three features: it is done to help one to make up one's mind about what to believe or not; to fulfil standards of adequacy and accuracy appropriate to the thinking; and the thinking should fulfil the relevant standards to some threshold level (Bailin *et al.,* 1999:287). In other words, lecturers should have a pragmatic view of critical thinking in that it exists as a means to an end, and not as an end in itself.

Students become confused about how to conceive the notion of critical thinking because while they are often expected to develop their own point of view and be critical thinkers, the culture in many educational institutions operates for students to produce the "right answers" (Schlosser *et al.,* 2003:402). Research has confirmed that at school level teachers influence the learning strategies of their students (Tsui, 2000; Schlosser *et al.,* 2003; Jones, 2005). "What teachers do, the way they teach and assess, their styles of thinking, and the ways in which the discipline is constituted by the teacher all have a powerful influence on the way in which students approach learning" (Jones,

2005:351). Often this trend continues through to university. In order to adequately prepare learners for university study, they should be encouraged to think critically by "emphasizing analysis over recall, promoting active learning methods, encouraging collaborative exploration of knowledge, and setting learner's work on questions and problems with no known or verifiable answers and solutions" (Tsui 2000:436). Students also find themselves hindered from being critical thinkers due to the fact that there is not enough time during lectures to engage in in-depth critical thinking activities (Schlosser *et al.,* 2003: 403).

Schlosser *et al.* (2003) observe that it may be difficult to teach critical thinking skills in a traditional university, but it may be even more difficult to do so in distance education institutions. They identify five key issues which can hinder teaching of critical thinking skills in distance education.

- *Distance education has a tendency to adhere to an industrialised process that makes little room for creativity, and tends to discourage flexibility and change. Learners and instructors thus have to confine their creativity to the parameters of industrialised process.*
- *Curriculum and courses are often very much prescribed in a lock-step fashion. Students are given little or no opportunity to take electives.*
- *Given the constraints of the distance education format as it tries to fit into traditional conceptions of education, most instruction in distance education requires students to demonstrate acquisition of key outcome skills and knowledge. Little emphasis is placed on practice and the assessment of reasoning, argumentation, and inferential thinking skills that are the "building blocks" of critical thinking.*
- *Often little attention is given to the specific communication skills needed in distance education.*
- *Distance learning requires high levels of self-regulation and meta-cognition. However, the focus of instruction tends to be on transmission of content, rather than on learning to learn* (Schlosser *et al.,* 2003:404).

Distance learning can, however, also provide a fertile environment for learning critical thinking skills. Firstly, Schlosser *et al.* (2003:406) suggest that collaborative problem solving can be fostered by using modern technology to engage in on-line discussions with fellow students or instructors (assuming that all or most students have access to on-line facilities). During these on-line interactions, lecturers can guide students'

discussions by posing questions in line with a Socratic style of questioning. As Letseka (2008:313) indicates, Socrates engaged in dialogues with his point of departure being the presumption that he did not know the answer, but was in a constant quest for self-examination and critical introspection. It will be recalled that examining issues was for Socrates, the very purpose of life; hence his statement that “the unexamined life is not worth living”. Secondly, because distance learners are mature adult learners who operate within their professional and social contexts, the experience they bring with them provides ground for developing and applying critical thinking skills (Schlosser *et al.,* 2003:406). This is important because as Schlosser *et al* (2003:406) suggest, distance learners operate within diverse contexts, which enables them to offer each other a variety of experiences and insights which in turn give them opportunities to negotiate the complexity and ambiguity of the world.

Although Egege and Kutieleh (2004) have concentrated on teaching critical thinking to foreign students in Australian universities, their arguments would be appropriate anywhere, especially in South Africa where there is a myriad of cultures and languages. For many students, English, which is a medium of instruction in most higher education institutions, is a second or third language. Egege and Kutieleh (2004:75-76) comment that although language proficiency is seen by some researchers as the major hindrance to the foreign students’ academic achievements, other research findings have revealed that beyond language proficiency other factors affecting foreign students include learning styles, participation, collaboration, independence, plagiarism and structured / non-structured learning. These issues are exacerbated by the fact that educational learning is not a homogeneous concept. Learning is conceptualised differently in different cultures (Egege & Kutieleh, 2004:76). It is important for educators to acknowledge that as much as they want their students to possess good reasoning skills as an indication that they can think critically, what counts as good reasoning is not universal (Egege & Kutieleh, 2004:79).

It can therefore be reasonably argued that critical thinking skills are culturally entrenched and as such, it would be difficult for students from one culture to learn these

in a culture to which they have not been previously exposed. Egege and Kutieleh (2004: 80) argue that it would seem that “what counts as critical thinking in the West, the type of reasoning techniques used, and the style of written critiques expected ... is not something universal”. Every culture possesses its own style of reasoning, which may not necessarily follow the Western style of critical thinking. However, this does not mean that schools or universities should not teach critical thinking skills. This could still be done, albeit in a more culturally sensitive way. Egege and Kutieleh (2004: 81) suggest three steps in teaching critical thinking at university level in a culturally sensitive way.

- Firstly, the students should be made aware of the history and the cultural assumptions behind the legacy. This helps the students to be aware that this concept comes from a culture they may not be familiar with, that is, Western culture, in general. This might also help to clarify that the Western type of critical thinking is not universal.
- Secondly, lecturers should acknowledge that critical thinking is one of the many culturally different approaches to learning. This will help to legitimise other cultural ways of knowledge acquisition, while emphasising the importance of why and how critical thinking is useful for university study.
- Lastly, the students should be taught the techniques and mechanisms within Western thinking. Lecturers can design tasks in which students are expected to “recognise, assess and construct arguments by using the analytic techniques taught”. This, it is hoped, would make students understand the role critical thinking plays in university study.

Jones (2005) undertook research to explore the ways in which Chinese students adapt to a western learning environment. The purpose was to determine whether the Chinese culture would hinder their performance of a western style critical thinking task. She found that though the students’ culture and educational background were important, the way in which assessment tasks were presented was even more important (Jones, 2005: 340). There was a considerable similarity in the way in which Western and Chinese students understood the critical thinking task, which is a reflection of the guidelines

provided for the task (Jones, 2005:345). Despite the fact that this study was limited to Chinese students, it confirms that regardless of the different cultures, students can be taught to think critically by providing clear guidelines for every critical thinking task that has to be performed.

While most research focuses on the relationship between culture and critical thinking, Tsui (2000:422) brings a different dimension to the culture discourse in university. She focuses on the influence of campus culture as opposed to social culture and argues that student culture affects many aspects of college experience, including learning. She suggests that a college environment nurtures critical thinking by encouraging students to apply it not only in their studies but also to a variety of collegiate activities (Tsui, 2000:436). Tsui further suggests ways in which the institutions can tap into the campus culture to help students think critically. She proposes the creation of meaningful avenues where students can engage in self-reflection and assume greater responsibility for the path of their own education; grooming students to become authentic critical thinkers by training them to make salient connections within their coursework and by contemplating the wider implications of these ideas beyond academic boundaries; and using the campus culture of social and political awareness to build critical thinking skills by generating an educational atmosphere where students are stimulated to engage in discussions and debates about social and political matters (Tsui, 2000:437). The next section sketches the challenges of critical thinking in the specific context of South African education.

3.6 South African education and critical thinking

As has been shown earlier, research on higher education learning and teaching in South Africa confirms that upon entry into higher education, the majority of students are underprepared for university study. These students are products of the highly authoritarian, unsystematic, practices of apartheid education that are antithetical to the development of learning, literacy, knowledge depth and independent thinking required in university study (Singh, 2000:6). Thus Slonimsky and Shalem (2006:35) argue that the

majority of first year university entrants are first generation university students with little access to the social networks that possess reservoirs of experiences of university study. I should mention that apartheid education policies and legislation excluded the vast majority of non-whites from political, educational and economic opportunities, leaving in their wake a family fabric marked by disadvantage, poverty and adult illiteracy. As Ramphele (2001:3) argues, whites were raised to become citizens. Generally educated, they were prepared to exercise their agency as morally autonomous beings, while until 1994, the majority of black Africans were denied not only the rights of citizenship, but also the kind of education that would prepare them to become morally autonomous agents. This point is endorsed by Enslin (2003:76), who argues that apartheid "gave to whites the status of full citizens while providing restricted, ethnically ascribed, second class citizenship for blacks in separate and ostensibly independent states".

In the 1980's, the above state of affairs caused the black people to rise up to demand "one education for all" (Christie, 1985:157). The question is: what kind of education were people thinking about when they were making such a demand? Christie (1985:157) suggests that they might have been thinking that it would be fair for everyone to benefit from the kind of education the whites were receiving. There could have been advantages in white education such as: compulsory education from age 7 to 16; free education; better qualified teachers; smaller class sizes and better facilities (Christie, 1985:157). However, this does not necessarily mean that white education was really good for everybody else. White education was also a part of apartheid education and in the same way that apartheid education damaged the other racial groups, white education was detrimental to the whites. Msila (2007:149) asserts that "apartheid education not only domesticated the people but indoctrinated them as well". Indoctrination here suggests that people are not encouraged to question or to be critical of the information they receive. Critical thinking does not form part of learning in this type of education. According to Christie (1985:157), white education was based on the worldview of Christian National Education (CNE). "The CNE movement expressed the worldview of the Dutch-Afrikaner people. It expressed their views about the role of the Calvinist church – in education. It expressed their views about a nationalist education

for Dutch-Afrikaner children" (Christie, 1985:160). Christie (1985:161) goes on to show that CNE also came about as a form of resistance to British culture and language domination. When the National Education Policy Act was passed in 1967, the Christian-National worldview was evident in its principles. Two of the principles as summarised by Christie (1985:162) are worth quoting:

> *(a) Education in schools, maintained and managed by the state or by a provincial education department shall have a Christian character, but the religious conviction of the parents and pupils shall be respected in regard to religious instruction and ceremonies.*
> *(b) Education shall have a broad national character.*

Because "Christian" and "national" are so broad in meaning, the minister of education was obliged to supply official definitions in 1971 as follows:

> ***Christian*** *Education in schools shall have a Christian character founded on the Bible and imprinted (a) through religious instruction as a compulsory subject, and (b) through the spirit and manner in which all teaching and education as well as administration and organization, are conducted* (Christie, 1985:162, quoting Malherbe, 1977).

and.

> ***National*** *Education in schools shall have a broad national character which shall be imprinted (a) through the conscious expansion of every pupil's knowledge of the fatherland, embracing language and cultural heritage, history and traditions, national symbols, the diversity of the population, social and economic conditions, geographical diversity and national achievements, and (b) by developing this knowledge in each pupil into understanding and appreciation by presenting it in a meaningful way where appropriate, in the teaching of the two official languages, national history of the fatherland, civics and geography in school teaching and further through the participation of pupils in national festivals, and their regular honouring of the national symbols, so as to*
>
> *(i) Inculcate a spirit of patriotism, founded on loyalty and responsibility towards the fatherland, its soil and its natural resources;*
> *(ii) Enable every pupil to gain a balanced perspective; and*
> *(iii) Achieve a sense of unity and a spirit of co-operation.* (Christie 1985:162-163, quoting Malherbe, 1977).

White education would definitely not be suitable for other racial groups in South Africa, as the definition of “national” only refers to whites to the exclusion of other races. As Christie (1985:164) attests, it also excludes English-speaking whites as it seems to be based on Afrikaner nationalism.

> *Essentially, CNE proclaimed that education must be adjusted to the life and world view of the Afrikaners: all school activities must reveal the Christian philosophy of life, Calvinist beliefs, and promote the principle of nationalism in education, i.e. the national ideal, traditions, religion, language or culture of each social group. From the 1920s onwards, these ideas were associated with the need for Afrikaner pre-eminence in the sphere of the state and the restructuring of the relations between white and black people in the light of CNE doctrine, in contrast to previous concern for the survival of Afrikanerdom* (Cross, 1996:186).

According to the CNE ideology, “childhood was characterised as a deficient condition requiring adult guidance” (Karlsson, 2004:328), and the teacher was an authority figure who imparted guidance to the learner according to the principles of CNE. This concept is also advanced by Pryor and Lubisi (2002:677) when they contend that the Calvinist theology gave rise to the doctrine that the ignorance of the child was considered a moral deficit. The role of the teacher was that of a “representative of God”, and as such she or he had to “lead the child towards some sort of redemption, but only in as far as the knowledge communicated was suitable for their expected adult life”. Children would not voice their own opinion about or question the type of knowledge they were receiving. Someone had to decide what was suitable for their future. Thus, critical thinking did not feature in CNE.

This takes us back to the fact that white education which was founded on CNE could not have been healthy for white students, let alone all South African students. In the definitions of both “Christian” and “national”, there are also certain words which make white education questionable. Christie (1985:165) shows that the hidden curriculum in the white education, that is, “flag-raising, festivals ‘honouring’ (white) heroes, religious assemblies, and so on are all designed to ‘imprint’ Christian-National views”. These

words are “imprint” and “inculcate”. They imply some form of indoctrination which permits no room for critical thinking as defined earlier.

The ideas above are supported by some of the conclusions reached by Karlsson (2004:341) from her research into the experiences of eight adults from different racial groups who attended apartheid era schools. These adults all seem to recall fond and positive memories about their school days. In general all of them made “claims about the benefits of attending apartheid-era schools” **(**Karlsson, 2004:340). Karlsson suggests reasons as to why this could be the case; one which she advances is that the “complimentary attitude to apartheid schooling implies that they had not formulated or adopted highly critical analyses and politicised personal perspectives about apartheid education. Neither were they critically reflexive of their own experiences of privilege and subjugation”. Thus understood, it can be reasonably argued that apartheid education did not only affect black learners negatively, but also the whites who it was meant to benefit. However, there is still evidence that it affected black pupils severely, as the literature below will indicate.

With the advent of democracy, the South African government through its Department of Education responded to the education crisis brought by apartheid education via introducing a series of reforms. In the introduction I have already discussed some of the policies which came into existence after 1994. For these reforms to be realised a new curriculum structure: *Curriculum 2005* was introduced. This curriculum was underpinned by the philosophy of Outcomes Based Education (OBE). Fundamental to OBE are “Critical Cross-field Outcomes... which are generic in nature, are subdivided into seven critical and five developmental outcomes” (Lombard & Grosser 2008:562). However, as research by notable South African scholars reveals, not much has changed since the change from apartheid to democracy. Research conducted on first year university students reveals that they still lack critical thinking skills.

In their article on learning problems among first year students in South African universities, Nyamapfene and Letseka (1995:160) classify the learning problems they identified into two groups: failure to understand the objective and structure of university education and to understand concepts and principles; to know the difference between

capturing information and “knowing” it; to develop appropriate study skills. Understanding concepts and principles requires effective communication skills which involve “the ability to say and to write what one means; to hear what is said and what is hidden; to defend one’s point of view; to argue, to persuade, to negotiate; to create, to reflect, to invent; to explore relationships, personal, structural, political; to speak, read and write with confidence; to make one’s voice heard; to read print and resist it where necessary” (Nyamapfene & Letseka, 1995:160). Lack of good communication skills ties in well with the argument by Egege and Kutieleh (2004) concerning the language of instruction in universities. In most South African universities English is the medium of instruction, so it becomes difficult for students who come from non-English speaking backgrounds to understand concepts and principles in this language.

Van den Berg (2000:96) conducted a survey amongst first year university students to establish whether there was a need to develop critical thinking skills modules. She was motivated to do this by the call from government for higher education institutions in South Africa to modify their courses, so as to promote positive learning outcomes which are translatable into terms of specific goals which can respond to a rapidly changing employment market. In order to fulfil this need the Department of Education identified critical outcomes which learners need in order to give them the competitive edge in the job market and life in general. Prominent among these skills is critical thinking (van den Berg, 2000:96). When students enrol at university, there are certain assumptions and expectations which educators have about the students’ background knowledge. These include their analytical as well as critical skills. Educators expect a reasonable consistency and coherence in reasoning, reflected in students’ assignments, discussions and examinations (van den Berg, 2000:98). Van den Berg asserts that the development of critical thinking in learners will contribute to their personal development and assist them in developing the tools for negotiating meaning and for being more sensitive to cultural diversity, stereotypes and multiple perspectives. This would be in line with the Department of Education’s vision as set out in the Green Paper on Further Education and Training of 1998 (van den Berg, 2000:98). At this stage van den Berg

proposes what she believes critical thinking should be able to achieve. It should enhance

> *the learners' reasoning skills to the extent that it helps them examine their own assumptions, evaluate their biases and prejudicial attitudes through self-reflection and critical debate so as to come to a greater understanding of how values, beliefs and cultural attitudes influence their perceptions of others and fashion their understanding of the world* (van den Berg, 2000:98).

More than ten years after the shift away from apartheid the situation has not changed much as evidenced by Lombard and Grosser's (2008) research. Lombard and Grosser (2008:562) conducted research to "establish the critical thinking abilities of first year education students in an attempt to determine whether the OBE ideal of critical thinking had been realised in these students during their school careers". The results of their research discovered "little evidence pertaining to the development of the research participants' critical thinking abilities at school level"; they attribute this deficiency to four possible causes: "teachers' teaching practice, educational change, the socio-cultural environment, and language ability" (Lombard & Grosser, 2008:572). Lombard and Grosser (2008:573) summarise the reasons why teachers are not able to impart critical thinking skills to their learners as:

- *Teachers dominate classroom interaction and too much time is devoted to instruction;*
- *teachers are likely to teach the way they themselves were taught;*
- *teachers place very little focus on the construction of knowledge and thinking skills;*
- *teachers lack cognitive skills and are not sure how to teach thinking strategies or how to evaluate them;*
- *teachers emphasize the assimilation and recall of knowledge and learning is measured against learners' competence to reproduce facts;*
- *teachers' intuitive knowledge of meta-cognition of thinking skills is unsatisfactory for the purpose of teaching higher-order thinking in classrooms;*
- *teachers are not applying much declarative meta-cognitive knowledge of thinking skills during the process of designing learning activities;*
- *teachers who teach higher-order thinking do so on an intuitive basis, not being aware of the fact that they were actually engaged in the teaching of such thinking;*

- *teachers may be proficient in solving problems requiring procedural knowledge of some skills, but the majority are not able to verbalize the thinking patterns that they used during their problem-solving;*
- *teachers confuse critical thinking with active involvement in learning;*
- *curricula are not designed in such a manner that cognitive development is structured; and*
- *prospective teachers have an apparent inability to handle tasks requiring critical thinking abilities, including deduction, semantics, credibility, induction, definition and assumptions.*

Even though OBE demands a learner-centred approach to teaching, the above summary indicates that most teachers still adhere to the teacher-centred approach, which "deprives learners of critical and creative thinking opportunities". This may be because most teachers continue to teach the way they themselves were taught (Lombard & Grosser, 2008:573). However, blame should not be laid squarely on the teachers. There are systemic reasons for this. For instance, while policy provides that OBE success is dependent on manageable teacher / pupil ratios of 1:40 at least, the reality of schooling is that in schools which service mostly black learners (township schools and rural community schools) the teacher pupil ratio of 1:40 is only a pipe dream. Standard teacher / pupil ratios in such schools are anything between 1:60 and 1:80. These ratios rule out the possibility of learner-centred teaching and learning approaches. Another hindrance to learner-centred approaches to teaching is that there are also too many changes being effected in education, a situation which has an overwhelming effect on the teachers. "A myriad of new policies and regulations that teachers had to come to grips with, large classes and the strong hold of traditional practices on teachers contribute to the fact that the curriculum is not always successfully translated in the classroom" (Lombard & Grosser, 2008:573).

Though Lombard and Grosser (2008) believe that culture and language can become inhibitors to the acquisition of critical thinking skills, it has already been indicated in Section 3.3 above that critical thinking is possible across cultures, provided the students are guided early and properly on the rules of engagement. Critical thinking is informed by a particular (Western) culture, and if learners are from a different culture, "it does not always prepare students for the execution of critical thinking abilities" (Lombard &

Grosser, 2008:573). As has already been mentioned, critical thinking puts emphasis on cognitive strategies, such as the analysis, evaluation and construction of arguments, inductive and deductive reasoning and the identification of fallacies in argumentation (van den Berg, 2000:97). Lombard and Grosser (2008:574-575) suggest that in order "to accomplish these critical thinking actions good language ability is crucial". The language used in this case would be English as it is the medium of instruction in most South African schools. In South Africa, there are eleven official languages and the problem which presents itself is that English is a second or third language for most students and learners. It is consequently difficult for students to fully express themselves, let alone perform such high level thinking in a language that is not their mother tongue. Where questions, instructions, or discussion topics require critical thinking, students regurgitate facts without arguing or explaining them clearly (Lombard & Grosser, 2008:575).

It is important to note that not only the educators or the government deem it necessary for learners to develop critical thinking skills. From her survey, van den Berg also found that the majority of students also recognise the importance of acquiring skills that could assist them in identifying and solving problems, in thinking critically and independently, in being culturally sensitive and in making reasoned decisions (Van den Berg, 2000:106). Commeyras (1993:486) confirms this need for students to acquire critical thinking skills to be able to "cope with the complexity of the age of information because as citizens and consumers they will be bombarded with conflicting information, some of which is misleading or erroneous". However, as has been indicated above, Schlosser *et al* (2003) have shown that students do not always gain the opportunity to acquire critical thinking skills because they are expected to produce the correct answers or else there is not enough time in the lecture room to engage in deeper critical thinking activities.

3.7 Conclusion

While the literature on critical thinking discussed above may have been published in countries other than South Africa, I want to assert that the arguments and conclusions arrived at can well fit the South African situation. In South African higher education institutions, learning is carried out in English which is not a first language for the majority of the students. In the same way Western philosophy, is foreign to the majority of the students in South African universities. The arguments advanced by Egege and Kutieleh (2004) and Hamdan (2006) also apply in the South African situation as will be demonstrated in the subsequent chapters.

One of the most vital issues about critical thinking is the assumption that the kinds of thinking required in this skill are not only beneficial and attainable, but are also universally valued. Critical thinking is perceived as the epitome of good thinking (Egege & Kutieleh, 2004: 79). The problem is that what may be considered as good thinking in one culture may not necessarily be so in another. Critical thinking emerges from Western philosophy, which is different from other philosophies. But as I argued in the previous chapter, there are semblances of critical thinking in African philosophy: for instance, the role played by the sages is described as critical to the power structures. Thus the common thread in the body of literature above is that critical thinking is an essential component of not only education, but also of life in general. As McPeck (1984:28) states, the common thread running through all definitions of critical thinking is that it strives towards the improvement of day-to-day reasoning ability. It is important then that because education institutions are meant to equip students with the necessary skills to survive in the world, critical thinking should be incorporated into every aspect of education, inside and outside of the classroom. Tsui (2000) advances this case when she advocates for the utilisation of the campus culture to enhance critical thinking in students. It is also important that in order to prepare students for higher education, critical thinking should be taught from as early as the school level. In the next chapter, I discuss the research design and methodologies I used in undertaking this research.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This study is premised on the assumption that education is a difficult and contentious concept (Egan, 1992:641-655; 2001:923-941). Egan (2001:923) argues that the dominant concept of education that currently shapes our schools is not only difficult and contentious, but it is also incoherent. This is because thinking about education during the 20th century has been based almost entirely on three notions – Durkheim's theory of socialisation, Plato's notion of the academy, and Rousseau's developmental theory – which are mutually incompatible (Egan, 2001:923). These three concepts have become entangled with each other through the centuries and produced our contemporary schools, curricula and teaching practices. "Socialisation", in this context, aims to *homogenise* children; that is, to initiate them into prevailing social norms and values and make them alike in important ways. Plato's academic approach aims to immerse students in those forms of knowledge that would give them a privileged, rational view of reality and carry them towards a better-informed understanding of the nature of the world and human experiences. The aim of this privileged, rational view is intended to make students sceptical about prevailing values, norms, beliefs, and commitments. Rousseau's developmental ideal requires the education of students to conform to their nature of learning, to attend to their individual differences, their stages of development, their learning styles and forms of motivation (Egan, 1992:643). As indicated, Egan (1992:646) points out that when we look closely at the implications of each of them, we run into problems of mutual incompatibility. He argues that our general concept of education that has incorporated all three seems radically incoherent.

The incompatibility and incoherence sketched above require clarity of thought and articulation of what one understands by education and the practice of educating. This is

because where socialisation requires successful inculcation of set beliefs, values and norms of behaviour in the growing child, academic programmes are meant to enable the growing child to question the basis for any beliefs, values and norms of behaviour. Thus the two ideas strain against each other (Egan, 2001:937). It is my contention that the best way to examine and clarify the above incompatibility and incoherence is to apply the philosophical inquiry approach. This method will be discussed in detail later in the chapter. It falls under the main umbrella of qualitative research. Research of this nature is preferred over quantitative research for this study, but this is only as far as the study utilises document/content analysis to collect and analyse data. The research will be conducted at an ODL institution where there is no direct contact with the students. Likewise direct contact with the "respondents" will not be possible and as such only students' written assignments will be analysed. I employ philosophical enquiry throughout to interrogate, critique and analyse the assignments written by the undergraduate Philosophy of Education students that I teach. Thus, my study can also be regarded as a form of action research. Below I provide a brief description of both qualitative research and action research.

This chapter is divided into four sections. In Section 4.2 I supply a brief sketch of the qualitative research design, which is preferred for social science research. In Section 4.3 I describe philosophical enquiry and the extended literature review, which are the research methods I used. In Section 4.4, I outline the procedure used for collecting the data, and for analysing it. In Section 4.5 I describe the sampling procedure adopted in the study. In Section 4.6 I briefly outline the ethical considerations that guided the conduct of this study, and in Section 4.7 I furnish concluding remarks.

4.2 Research design

According to Nieuwenhuis (2010:70), a research design is "a plan or strategy which moves from underlying philosophical assumptions to specifying the selection of respondents, the data gathering techniques to be used and the data analysis to be done". In support of this, Hofstee (2006:113) suggests that the research design section

should be a naming and discussion of the techniques that are used to test the thesis statement. In his view of a research design as a plan, Babbie (2001:91) suggests that because scientific observation involves “making observations and interpreting what you have observed”, the researcher first has to devise a plan, which is the research design. Such a design involves what is to be observed and analysed, why and how. Nieuwenhuis (2010:71) proposes a number of research designs from which researchers can choose: conceptual studies, historical research, action research, case study research, ethnography and grounded theory. McMillan & Schumacher (2010:24) suggest analytical research designs which include analytical studies, concept analysis, historical analysis and policy analysis. Analytical studies investigate concepts and events through an analysis of documents. For the purpose of this study, I will focus on conceptual studies as the research design to be used. A conceptual study uses a methodology that is largely based on secondary sources, which critically engages with understanding concepts, and that aims to add to our existing body of knowledge and understanding. Conceptual studies are also abstract and philosophical in nature and also employ critical analysis of literature, especially where concepts need to be explained and clarified (Nieuwenhuis, 2010:72).

It is on the basis of McMillan and Schumacher’s abovementioned view that this study is regarded as an analytical study employing research methods such as philosophical enquiry, extended literature review and document/content analysis. In addition to analysing the students’ written assignments, I will also provide a comprehensive analysis of the complex concepts such as African philosophy and critical thinking. The analysis of these concepts will clarify reasons why students experience problems understanding these and how they can be helped to understand these better.

4.2.1 Qualitative research

This section provides a justification of the preference for qualitative research over quantitative research. The distinctions between the two approaches are outlined in Table 2. Quantitative research approaches, “which emphasise objectivity in measuring

and describing phenomena" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:21), have dominated social and educational research in the past years. Nieuwenhuis (2010:51) argues that qualitative research approach is "concerned with understanding the processes and the social and cultural contexts which underlie various behavioural patterns and is mostly concerned with exploring the "'why' questions of the research". Patton (2002:39) describes qualitative research as research that "takes place in real-world settings and the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest." Thus a qualitative conceptual study critically engages with understanding concepts, and aims to add to our existing body of knowledge and understanding. Nieuwenhuis (2010:51) clarifies why, for education, qualitative research is preferred over quantitative research:

> *unlike quantitative methods, qualitative research methodology places little importance on developing statistically valid samples, or on searching for statistical support for hypotheses, or on measuring the size or scope of phenomena. On the contrary, qualitative research focuses on describing and understanding phenomena within their naturally occurring context ... with the intention of developing an understanding of the meaning(s) imparted by the respondents ... so that the phenomena can be described in terms of the meanings that they have for the actors or participants.*

Creswell (2007:37) provides a very comprehensive definition of qualitative research, which includes how it starts, the process (how it is conducted) and the final presentation. He posits that

> *qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning of individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is inductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of the participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, and a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and it extends the literature or signals a call for action.*

Table 2 summarises the differences between quantitative and qualitative research approaches in terms of their orientation. I draw on these differences to clarify why this study uses the latter rather than the former:

Table 2: Distinctions between quantitative and qualitative research approaches

Orientation	Quantitative approaches	Qualitative approaches
Assumptions about the world	A single reality, i.e., measured by an instrument	Multiple realities, e.g. interviews with principal, teachers, and students about a social situation
Research purpose	Establish relationships between measured variables	Understanding a social situation from participants' perspectives
Research methods and process	Procedures (sequential steps) are established before study begins	Flexible, changing strategies; designs emerge as data are collected
Prototype study (clearest example)	Experimental design to reduce error and bias	Ethnography using "disciplined subjectivity"
Research role	Detached with use of instruments	Prepared person becomes immersed in social situation
Importance of context	Goal of universal context-free generalizations	Goal of detailed context-bound summary statements

Source: McMillan, & Schumacher (2010).

In relation to assumptions about the world, quantitative researchers believe in positivism, which assumes that there is a single reality where people's feelings or beliefs do not matter. Qualitative researchers on the other hand believe in constructivism, which assumes the presence of multiple realities which are constructed through individual and collective perceptions of the same situation. Quantitative researchers perceive their research purpose as establishing relationships and explaining causes of changes in measured outcomes while qualitative researchers are more concerned with understanding social phenomena from the perspectives of the participants. Unlike quantitative researchers, who follow an established set of procedures in their research, qualitative researchers are more flexible in their strategies and research processes. According to quantitative research, the researcher has to be

detached from the study to avoid bias, but for qualitative research, the researcher becomes immersed in the situation and the phenomena being studied (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:12).

There are other explorations of the differences between quantitative and qualitative research approaches. For example, while quantitative researchers start the research process with a general area of study or issue of a personal or professional interest, qualitative researchers begin with a self-assessment and reflection about themselves as situated in a socio-historical context. While quantitative researchers rely more on gathering and analysing statistical data, qualitative researchers seek experiential understanding of the phenomena under investigation by using all their senses: sight, smell, touch, taste and hearing (Neuman, 2006:14-15, 396). A qualitative research approach is "concerned with understanding the processes and the social and cultural contexts which underlie various behavioural patterns and is mostly concerned with exploring the 'why' questions of the research" (Nieuwenhuis, 2010:51).

Against the backdrop of the above exposition this study will therefore be qualitative because it seeks to understand why students of Philosophy of Education perceive African philosophy the way they do. Patton (2002:39) describes qualitative research as research that "takes place in real-world settings and the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest." This is also supported by Nieuwenhuis (2010:51), who points out that qualitative methodology "typically studies people or systems by interacting with and observing the participants in their natural environment and focusing on their meanings and interpretations". In this study the real world is the tertiary institution where the researcher works as a lecturer. The undergraduate students whom I teach constitute the population sample whose assignments are critiqued and analysed. The goal of qualitative research is to attain a "holistic picture and depth of understanding rather than a numeric analysis of data" (Ary *et al.,* 2006:31). For Ary *et al.* (2006:449), human behaviour cannot be reduced to variables in the same manner as physical reality. It should always be judged within the context in which it occurs. As mentioned, I made use of the assignments which philosophy of education

students wrote and submitted for assessment. The students' responses in the assignments are equivalent to open-ended written interviews in which students are expected to express themselves in whatever form they can. I did not interfere with the data but critiqued and analysed it to ascertain students' perceptions. The next sections provide a brief description of each of the research methods and the analytical tool employed to drive the inquiry, namely, philosophical inquiry, an extended literature review and document/content analysis.

4.3 Research methods

4.3.1 Philosophical inquiry

Philosophical inquiry is pertinent to this study as an analytical tool in Philosophy of Education. It deals with educational as well as philosophical issues. Ruitenberg (2009:316) notes that this method refers to "the various ways and modes in which philosophers of education think, read, write, speak and listen, that make their work systematic, purposeful and responsive to past and present philosophical and educational concerns and conversations". Against the backdrop of Ruitenberg's articulation above, what this study sets out to do is to use philosophy as a method of research with a view to deriving an understanding of philosophical and educational concerns. Document analysis is used specifically to analyse the assignments. The assignments are treated as an expressive and projective type of personal documents (Allport, 2006:4).

For Enslin (1993:3), education is a complex and contested concept in that it picks out a variety of activities, including teaching and learning. It is a moral concept. Enslin further argues that education exhibits complex connections with a host of other concepts to which it is related, so that clarifying the concept of education involves the elaboration of the broader conceptual scheme within which it is implicated. Because of the complexities and contestations that characterise education, understanding education requires a rigorous philosophical inquiry. Wilson (1988:84) reminds us that the

education enterprise "is inextricably bound up with concepts and values that are unclear, controversial, and hence very much in need of … examination. Discipline, learning, teaching, the curriculum, indoctrination, morality, politics, intelligence, the emotions, subject-titles (science, English, history), administration, counselling, pastoral care – there is hardly a single concept in the world of education which does not fall into this category" (Wilson, 1988:84). Philosophy is not only important in educational research, but also in research within the social sciences in general (Bridges & Smith 2006:131). Holma (2009:325) argues that "philosophy is an academic discipline specialised in analysing and understanding the wider processes of the construction of theories, questioning their hidden background premises, and revealing and examining the values affecting academic – as well as other – human practices". Philosophy may also be regarded as a therapy. As Smeyers (2006:11) puts it, "doing philosophy is therapeutic in the sense that it changes a person by undoing the knots in her understanding". In this study I use the therapeutic aspects of philosophy to undo the knots in my understanding of my students' notion of African philosophy. In the process, I acknowledge the importance of philosophical research in education.

The function of philosophy is entirely critical (Ayer, 1972:65). It tests the validity of our scientific hypotheses and everyday assumptions. When educationists draw on philosophy to analyse educational matters, they are called upon to be critical of their own practice. Morrow (1989: xiii) argues that philosophy of education is a theoretical discipline, which has as its aim the critical investigation of forms of understanding relevant to education. It is a discipline which is concerned with issues which are of profound importance to everyone, not only to professional philosophers of education. It is an aspect of public critical debate about education and schooling in a particular society. He further indicates that philosophy of education is concerned with the investigation of forms of understanding and has as its principal objects the disciplined analysis, criticism and construction of arguments, or chains of thought (Morrow, 1989: xiv). Thus, a philosophical enquiry sets out to examine arguments carefully; to see whether they actually show what they purport to prove, and construct arguments that are sound. It scrutinises the language we use when we talk about education, provides

the means of clarifying educational issues and the assumptions we bring to bear on them, and explores different conceptions and their implications for education (Enslin, 1993:3-4).

It is not usual that philosophy is used to conduct research because, as Burns & Grove (2001:74) assert, “philosophy is not generally thought of as a discipline within which one conducts research, because philosophy is not a science”. However, in a study that intends to investigate students’ understanding of philosophy, as in the present study, it is necessary that the research methodology should draw on philosophical inquiry. This is essential because such inquiry involves clarification of values, identification of ethics and study of the nature of knowledge. As Ellis (1983:212) states, “philosophic inquiry is used to expose, clarify, and articulate perspectives, beliefs, conceptualisations and methods that characterise a field”. Manchester (1986:229-249) points out that philosophical analysis does not seem to differ from philosophical enquiry. Philosophical analysis seeks two goals: one, to clarify the language of science and the other, to show the possible reconciliation of apparently different concepts (Manchester, 1986:241). Though Manchester seems to link philosophical analysis only with reconciling different concepts in nursing research, this method can also be used to expose, clarify and articulate perspectives, conceptualisations and methods as postulated by Ellis above. Given that this study’s main aim is to investigate how undergraduate students conceptualise African philosophy, it follows that philosophical inquiry should form part of the methodology. This is because philosophical enquiry sets out to examine arguments carefully; to see whether they actually show what they purport to prove; and construct arguments that are sound. It scrutinises the language we use when we talk about education, provides the means of clarifying educational issues and the assumptions we bring to bear on them, and explores different conceptions of the good life and the good society and their implications for education (Enslin, 1993:3-4). Philosophical inquiry will thus help to investigate why students fail to understand concepts such as African philosophy; why they are unable to think critically so that they can examine arguments, construct sound arguments, scrutinise the language used as suggested by Enslin above.

4.3.2 Extended literature review

Neuman (2006:111) adds that a literature review is based on the fact that knowledge is always growing and people learn from and build on what others before them have done. Neuman stipulates the goals of a literature review as follows:

- *To demonstrate a familiarity with a body of knowledge and establish credibility.*
- *To show the path of prior research and how a current project is linked to it.*
- *To integrate and summarise what is known in an area.*
- *To learn from others and stimulate new ideas* (Neuman, 2006:111)

Adhering to the above goals accords credibility to the research project because a "good review increases a reader's confidence in the researcher's professional confidence, ability and background". It also demonstrates the research's "relevance by making connections to a body of knowledge". A sound review reveals agreements and disagreements with and between previous studies while also indicating which procedures, techniques and research designs are worth copying (Neuman, 2006:111). In this study I apply two of Neuman's (2006:112) types of literature reviews which are relevant for this study, namely, context and integrative literature reviews. Through the context literature review, I linked this study to the already existing body of knowledge. I reviewed extant literature on African philosophy and critical thinking. Debates which continue to abound among scholars concerning what these consist of warranted the use of integrative literature review method, the purpose of which is to bring to light agreements and disagreements within a body of knowledge.

Another form of extended literature review relevant to this study is the conceptual one. The latter is also concerned with "gaining new insights into an issue (Kennedy, 2007:139). The conceptual literature review may be theoretical, historical, methodological or integrative in nature. It asks why "we don't know more". All these types of literature reviews highlight and critique the already existing body of knowledge in African philosophy and critical thinking in this study. For this thesis, I firstly used the

literature on African philosophy and critical thinking to define the two concepts. I then attempted to show how each concept fits into the South African education scenario. Lastly, I made a link between the concepts to establish how the acquisition of critical thinking can benefit students when learning about African philosophy. Through the extended literature review, I was able to determine how exercising critical thinking can assist undergraduate Philosophy of Education students to understand African philosophy better.

4.4 Analysis of documents and presentation of findings

4.4.1 Document/content analysis

Analysis of documents can be an invaluable source of information in qualitative research. Such documents might include official records, letters, newspaper accounts, diaries and reports as well as the published data used in the review of literature (Hoepfl, 1997:54). According to Ary *et al.* (2006:464), document analysis is "... research applied to written or visual materials for the purpose of identifying specified characteristics of the material..." and for the purpose of discovering the relative importance of, or interest in, certain topics. Although sources of document study are usually personal documents such as autobiographies, diaries and letters, this study will treat the students' assignments as personal documents under the category of expressive and projective documents. These include compositions or assignments, which are usually written in the first person, as described by Allport (2006:3-4). The assignments submitted by the students, required them to illustrate how they would use their knowledge of African philosophy to help them solve a practical classroom, school or community problem. These assignments become personal documents because while students may start off just "carrying out an assigned task, in the process of writing, their interest becomes deeper and personal motives are brought into play" (Allport, 2006:7). For Gall *et al.* (1996:356) document analysis is performed on written documents such as textbooks, students' completed homework, assignments and tests, computer printouts of school data, newspapers and memoranda. Judging by the above explanations, there does not

seem to be any difference between content analysis and document analysis. Content analysis is used for analysing the contents of documents.

Document or content analysis in qualitative research is different from quantitative research in that quantitative researchers believe that meaning is found in the text itself; for qualitative researchers the meaning of a text is discovered in the minds of its writers and its readers (Gall *et al.,* 1996:362). Gall *et al.* reiterate that the text will be understood better if it is studied within its context, that is, the purpose of writing it, the author's working conditions, intended and actual audience, and the audience's purpose in reading it. While the purpose of writing the assignments, the audience (lecturer) and the audience's (lecturer's) purpose in reading them can be established straight away, in an ODL environment it is difficult to determine the conditions under which the students write assignments because there is no direct contact between the students and the lecturer.

As with all research methodologies, document analysis faces limitations. The most glaring is that of bias. This is because the documents are usually not meant to be researched (Strydom & Delport, 2005:316). Some are affected by an ulterior motive, be it that of financial gain or of influencing others. Gall *et al.* (1996) outline some of the most glaring problems of which the researcher has to be aware when using document analysis. For instance, was the document written by someone other than the person whose name appears on it? Was it altered in some way from the original document? Was it ghost-written? Is the date on the document correct? Under what conditions was it written (Gall *et al.,* 1996: 658)? I recognise the possibility that some of these problems might apply to this study as the students' responses to their assignments might be driven by the desire to pass, rather than the need to reflect scholastic requirements. They could have been copied from or written by other students who have done this course before. This is all the more likely given that some of the responses reflect evidence of memorisation and not individual engagement with the theoretical frameworks. However, instead of this being a blight on the credibility of the study, it was taken as affirmation of the argument that some of the students lack critical thinking

skills, hence the copying of other students' work and the regurgitation of the course notes, prescribed textbook, tutorial letters and study guide.

4.4.2 Analysis of the documents

For Patton (1999) qualitative research consists of three kinds of data collection, namely in-depth open-ended interviews, direct observation and written documents. Whilst interviews consist of direct quotations from people about their experiences, in direct observation, however, the researcher describes in detail the participants' experiences. Documents that can be analysed include: memoranda and correspondence; official publications and reports; personal diaries and open-ended written responses to questionnaires and surveys (Patton, 1999:140). As has already been mentioned, data for this study was derived from the assignments which students of Philosophy of Education wrote, the prescribed textbook for the Philosophy of Education course, the discussion class notes (Appendix D), tutorial letters (initial – Appendix A and feedback - Appendix C tutorial letters) and the study guide (Appendix B).

The ODL setting is such that face-to-face meetings between students and lecturers are very rare. Students receive their tuition through tutorial letters designed by the lecturers. For instance, the initial tutorial letter (Appendix A) introduces students to the course; provides them with the aims and outcomes; a list of study materials they will need such as prescribed textbook, recommended books, tutorial letters and study guide (Appendix B); a list of assignments and how to answer them; information about how to communicate with their lecturers and the university; and important information about matters such as submission deadlines and examinations. The study guide is a brochure compiled by the lecturers and it is meant to either simplify the prescribed textbook for students to understand. It is meant to be used alongside the prescribed textbook and other study materials. Furthermore, students receive feedback on their assignments through subsequent tutorial letters (Appendix C) and discussion classes. These tutorial letters provide feedback on correct answers to multiple choice assignments and sample essay questions, while discussion classes are normally conducted once a year and are

the only face-to-face contacts between lecturers and students. Their aim is to provide time and space for lecturers and students to find solutions to logistical challenges pertaining to students' understanding of study material, assignments and examinations. This new ODL setting is unfamiliar to most undergraduate students who often expect to be taught as is the practice at contact institutions. To that end most ODL undergraduate students tend to regurgitate the information they receive from their tutorial letters, textbooks and the notes lecturers give to them during discussion classes (Appendix D).

I selected the assignments according to the manner in which the students had responded to the assignment question. Only the assignments which reflected a skewed perception of African philosophy were purposefully selected, as has been indicated earlier, by employing purposeful sampling. Sixty (60) assignments were selected and photocopied after being marked. I wrote to each student whose assignment had been selected to seek permission for it to be used in this study (Appendix E). This is explained in detail in the section on ethical considerations below. Once the assignments were selected they were rigorously analysed through philosophical enquiry and document/content analysis. Through the extended literature review I was able to identify common themes of the students' flawed understanding of African philosophy, the inconsistencies in the prescribed textbook and the shortcomings in the tutorial letters and discussion class notes. Mertens (1998:180-186) argues that because in the end the study will be judged for its credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability, the researcher bears the responsibility of ensuring that the study exhibits these. One way of doing this is to employ rigorous methods when collecting and analysing data (Patton, 2002:552).

4.4.3 Presentation of findings

Given that the research method used is that of qualitative research, the study's findings are presented in a narrative form. The kind of narrative presentation I use is the one whereby data is "presented as quotations of participants' actual language" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010382). In this study evidence is supplied in the form of the actual

excerpts from the assignments which students wrote. For Jones (2004:105), narrative is useful in a variety of ways. Firstly, the narrative provides access to the specific rather than the abstract; secondly, narratives allow experiences to unfold in a temporal way; thirdly, everyday language and its nuances are encouraged and finally, narrative allows personal dynamics to reveal themselves in the actions and relationships presented as well as the reviewers' response to them. It is Jones' (2004:108) contention that narrative is a particular knowledge-generating method, particularly useful to the interpretation of language-based research.

4.5 Sampling

4.5.1 Defining the population

Van Dalen (1979:128) defines a research population as "a well-defined group (set) of human beings or other entities". The population and methods of analysis were described earlier. I used document/content analysis, extended literature review and philosophic inquiry to analyse the students' written assignments. This analysis was meant to determine the students' perceptions of African philosophy.

4.5.2 Selecting a sample

Researchers are rarely able to investigate an entire population of individuals who interest them, so they must select a sample of individuals to study (Gall *et al.,* 1996: 215). As I have described earlier, qualitative research deals with small samples and for this study I selected only sixty (60) assignments to analyse. The assignments were selected without any consideration of age, sex or race of the students. For the purpose of this study I did not consider whether or not the aspects of the location of students (urban versus rural), age divide, or race/culture would have any impact on the manner in which the undergraduate students perceive African philosophy. The reason for is that this would require the use of quantitative research approach, especially the use of

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to plot the location and isolate geographic densities. This approach would also require reliance on a huge sample, all of which would be incompatible with the qualitative approach as well as the philosophical thrust of the study. As Taylor, Richardson, Yeo, Marsh, Trobe and Pilkington (1995:632) point out, on the one hand quantitative data is numerical in form – in the form of numbers. Questionnaires and structured interviews are the usual research methods. Some researchers even claim that unless human behaviors can be expressed in numerical terms, it cannot be accurately measured. On the other hand qualitative data covers a range of material from the descriptions of social life provided by participant observation and unstructured interviews to information from written sources, such as diaries, autobiographies and novels. Some researchers argue that qualitative data provides greater depth, a richer more detailed picture of social life. In concurrence, Leszcznski (2009) argues that the inability to fully reconcile a critical–theoretic epistemology with the explicitly ontological metaphysics of GIS complicates qualitative engagements with the technology.

4.5.3 Purposeful sampling

Purposeful sampling, which is sometimes referred to as purposive sampling, refers to "selecting participants according to pre-selected criteria relevant to a particular research question" (Nieuwenhuis, 2007:79). McMillan and Schumacher (2010:138) describe purposeful sampling as the kind of sampling where "the researcher selects particular elements from the population that will be representative or informative about the topic of interest". While sampling in quantitative research focuses mainly on representativeness, sampling in qualitative research focuses on information-rich samples which are likely to be knowledgeable and informative about the phenomena being investigated (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:326). Purposeful sampling is ideal for qualitative research because researchers who undertake this kind of research recognise that "some informants are richer than others and that these people are likely to provide insight and understanding" (Marshall, 1996:523) to them. Denvers and Frankel (2000:264) attest that purposeful sampling is designed and used "to enhance understandings of selected

individuals or groups' experience(s) or for developing theories and concepts.... by selecting 'information rich' cases, that is, individuals, groups, organizations, or behaviours that provide the greatest insight into the research question".

As Patton (2002: 230) sums it up, "the logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting *information-rich cases* for study in depth." Purposeful sampling was deemed the most suitable type of sampling for this study because the researcher purposefully selected the assignments that offer evidence of undergraduate students' particular perception of African philosophy. The cases that I selected thus provide information that is pertinent to the study. The assignments written by some students reveal that the students lack critical thinking skills, which in turn leads to a misunderstanding of African philosophy and what it represents. The type of purposeful sampling which I used in selecting the assignments to be analysed is theory-based sampling. According to Patton (2002: 238), in theory-based sampling "the researcher samples incidents, slices of life, time periods, or people on the basis of their potential manifestation or representation of important theoretical constructs." The sampled assignments that are analysed indicate that Philosophy of Education undergraduate students have a flawed perception of African Philosophy either due to their poor critical thinking skills or due to ambiguous articulation of African philosophy, as shown in some of the students' learning support material. As indicated earlier, flawed perception and critical thinking are the areas of interest in this study. I selected 20 assignments which conflated African philosophy with *ubuntu* and 20 which conflated it with African traditions and culture; 20 which claimed African philosophy lacks critical thinking. These 60 assignments are all evidence that these students lack critical thinking skills. Five (5) of the assignments above belong to students who did not make any conflations, and yet still claimed that African philosophy lacks critical thinking.

4.6 Credibility and trustworthiness

In the present study credibility has been ensured through my six years of involvement in the tuition, assessment and observation of undergraduate students of Philosophy of

Education. This is what Mertens (1998:181-182) refers to as prolonged and substantial engagement and persistent observation. The length of the time of the researcher's involvement in this course gives the study its credibility. The study was conceived six years ago when the researcher noticed the flawed perceptions of the students regarding African philosophy. To further ensure that the study is credible it underwent rigorous peer debriefing as advocated by Mertens (1998). This exists where the findings, conclusions, analysis and hypotheses of the study are discussed with disinterested peers (Mertens, 1998:182). Besides the study's supervisor, elements of the study were peer reviewed by other colleagues in the department and in the area of philosophy of education. Parts of the study were presented at research seminars in the school of education where a professor is selected as a critical reader. I also presented some parts of the study at two conferences. One of the conference presentations was submitted and accepted for publication in an accredited journal (see Appendix F). All chapters were read and critiqued by the Chairperson of the Philosophy of Education interest group before their final submission to the supervisor.

Given that the study is conducted through philosophical inquiry and document analysis, transferability of the findings will be assured by the extent to which the analysis of the data reflects the rigour, soundness and logical argumentation that should characterise philosophical inquiry. In this study dependability will be assured by acknowledging that the hurdle being studied is not insurmountable, but alters depending on advances in changing students' perceptions of African philosophy. Hopefully, other studies on a similar problem might discover that such perceptions have altered. Should this arise, the researcher will respond to these changes through seminar and conference papers as well as articles in peer reviewed scholarly journals. Conformability will be assured by the extent to which the conclusions and inferences drawn can be said to have been consistent with the requirements of philosophic inquiry as sketched above. The works of authors and researchers such as Slonimsky & Shalem (2006), Nyamapfene & Letseka (1995), Boughey (2005) and Morrow (2007) establish the credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability of this study as some or most of my findings correlate with them.

4.7 Ethical considerations

Given that part of the data for this study was drawn from an analysis of the students' responses to a specific assignment question, I undertook to comply with the research ethics principles of *respect for persons*, *beneficence*, *justice*, *confidentiality, non-disclosure*, *voluntary participation* and *informed consent. Respect for persons* demands that people have a right to decide whether or not they want to participate in the research (Burns & Grove, 2001:195). Nobody should be coerced or threatened in any way. The students whose assignments were used for analysis were informed and their permission was sought in writing (see Appendix D). It was made clear that they had a right not to participate if they were uncomfortable with the exercise. Furthermore, their names or identities were not disclosed. Only the information from their scripts was used in compliance with the ethical principles of anonymity and non-disclosure.

Beneficence requires the researcher to do good and, above all, to do no harm (Burns & Grove, 2001:195). In other words the research should be more beneficial than harmful. The researcher does not foresee any potential harm or discomfort done to the students since their names or identities will not be disclosed. Even though this study will not benefit the participants directly, it will be of benefit to those who will enrol for this course in future. The study will encourage the lecturers to improve their methods of teaching.

Justice holds that people participating in the research should not be treated unfairly (Burns & Grove, 2001:195). Everybody should benefit equally from the research. It is my contention that seeking the students' permission to use their assignments and ensuring that they remain anonymous complies with the principle of justice. The assignments were photocopied without the cover page which reflects the name and contact details of the student. This was intended to ensure that the identities of the students are not disclosed.

The principle of c*onfidentiality* ensures the right to privacy of the participants. It demands that the researcher does not share private information obtained from the

participants without their authorisation (Burns & Grove, 2001:201). I was obliged to obtain *informed consent* from the students. The ethical requirement of informed consent is that it should be *voluntary, informed* and given by a *competent individual* (Ary *et al.,* 2006:588). Potential participants have to be able to decide whether or not they wish to participate in the study. To be able to make such a choice, they must "understand the purpose of the study, the procedures, the risks and the benefits of the project, as well as the obligations of both the participants and the researcher" (Ary *et al.,* 2006:589).

4.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined and discussed the different methods which I used to collect and analyse the data. The qualitative research design was the preferred approach for investigating educational problems, mainly because reasons, attitudes and perceptions, rather than numbers, are important. Given that this is a philosophy of education study, and the basic data from which it draws is written material (students' assignments, prescribed textbook and other tuition materials), philosophical inquiry and document analysis were the research techniques and tools preferred to drive the inquiry. In this study the written materials are selected assignments written by Philosophy of Education students that I teach. To that end I highlighted the importance of observing and complying with the code of research ethics, namely the principles of respect for persons**,** beneficence, justice, confidentiality, non-disclosure, voluntary participation and the imperative to seek informed consent of the owners of the written materials (assignments) that constituted the documents that I analysed. The next chapter considers the findings.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

As I have indicated, for five years I have been involved in assessing a course in Philosophy of Education, in which one of the components is African philosophy. The aims and outcomes of this course are stipulated to:

- *provide* [students] *with the concepts and vocabulary needed to assess critically the claims that are made about the nature and aims of education and teaching*
- *provide* [students] *with the conceptual tools and experience necessary for creative and independent thought*
- *help* [students] *develop an understanding of the relationship between education and the context in which knowledge is created*
- *expose* [students] *to a problem-centred approach to educational discourse*
- *encourage* [students] *to interact critically with contemporary issues in education*(see Appendix A)

At the same time, students are also expected to play a role in achieving the aims and outcomes of this course. They are expected to

- *carefully read through and interact with the contents of* [their] *prescribed text by working through the set of self-study questions included in the tutorial letter*
- *identify the main ideas in* [their] *text by*
    - *distinguishing fact from opinion*
    - *distinguishing argument from illustration*
    - *prioritising ideas according to significance or other criteria*
    - *identifying the main characteristics/ideas of the different philosophical perspectives.*
- *Commit main ideas to memory by acquiring an overview of the characteristics of a range of philosophical perspectives.*

- *reflect on issues with respect to the main ideas of several philosophical perspectives* (See Appendix A).

The aims and outcomes stipulated above constitute a reflection of what critical thinking is about. Students are expected to apply their critical thinking attributes and skills when reading their textbooks and other study materials, so that they can, for instance, distinguish fact from opinion, and argument from illustration. Encouraging students to interact critically with contemporary issues in education does not end there, though, since students should also interact critically with sources of information about education such as prescribed textbooks, tutorial letters and lecturers' class discussion notes. When responding to the assignment questions students are required to demonstrate that they have acquired knowledge that would help them reflect critically on their own teaching and on the contemporary issues in education. The assignments therefore focus on the students' ability to identify the main ideas and proponents of the different philosophical perspectives and then to apply and use those ideas to help them develop an understanding of contemporary educational issues.

One of the questions requires students to draw on African philosophy to solve practical classroom, school or community problems, and to describe the advantages and disadvantages of African philosophy. In their responses, the majority of students tend to reduce African philosophy to traditions and cultural practices of the African people, and to equate African philosophy with *ubuntu*. This is highly debatable. Firstly, African philosophy is much more complex than the traditions and cultural practices of the African people. Secondly, *ubuntu* is merely a worldview within African philosophy. As such it cannot, by and on its own, be African philosophy. Thirdly, students tend to reproduce the information in their textbooks without applying any critical thinking skills to analyse the information.

This chapter describes the sources of data used in the study, such as the students' assignments, the prescribed textbook, which almost all the students have used as their main source in doing their assignments, as well as other tutorial materials made

available to students for tuition. The chapter is divided into four sections. Section 5.2 focuses on the primary data collection source of the study – the students' assignments. In this section other documents such as the prescribed textbook and various other tuition materials like tutorial letters and lecturers' class discussion notes, are described and analysed. In Section 5.3, the students' assignments are analysed to determine their perceptions of African philosophy. Finally, I expound on whether or not students' perceptions could be influenced by their lack of critical thinking skills. Section 5.4 provides concluding remarks.

5.2 Description of the documents analysed

The documents which I used mostly to collect data are assignments written by undergraduate BEd students enrolled for the course in Philosophy of Education in the 2009 academic year. The responses to the assignment questions constitute the data that is described in this chapter. The assignment questions are contained in tutorial materials which are also included among the documents being used. The students are required to answer any one of the following questions:

> *Question 1 (To be answered by the Early Childhood group)*
>
> *How would you use your knowledge of **African philosophy** to help you deal with the problem of an AIDS orphan, who seems to have a problem keeping awake and can't concentrate in the classroom?*
>
> *Question 2 (To be answered by the Intermediate and Senior Phase group)*
>
> *How would you use your knowledge of **African philosophy** to help you deal with a problem of a learner who is being bullied by the other learners in your classroom or school?*
>
> *Question 3 (To be answered by the Further Education and Training, Senior Phase and General Education groups)*
>
> *Identify a problem in your classroom (FET and Senior Phase) or community (General Education) which you think might be solved by relying on the knowledge of **African philosophy*** (see Appendix A).

The students are given a guideline on how to structure their answers. Their essays should have the following structure:

1. ***Introduction***
   Briefly describe the problem and give reasons for your use of African philosophy in solving it.

2. ***Content***
   Discuss African philosophy briefly and show how you can use it to solve your problem.

3. ***Conclusion***
   Draw your own conclusion by referring to the advantages and disadvantages of African philosophy in solving the problem (see Appendix A)

Questions 1 and 2 require students to use their knowledge of African philosophy to solve a given problem. This consequently provided me with a wider choice of assignments to use in the analysis. Another significant document that I analysed was the prescribed textbook for the Philosophy of Education course, namely, *Rethinking our World* (2006) by Philip Higgs and Jane Smith. Chapter 4 (What of an African world?) is the most important source of data as it focuses on African philosophy. It is this chapter on which students relied almost entirely to answer their assignment questions.

In an ODL environment, the study materials which the lecturers send to students play a critical role in influencing the direction that the students take in their learning. It is not only the prescribed textbook and the tutorial letter providing students with a list of assignments they have to do that influences the students' learning. There are also follow-up tutorial letters which provide students with feedback on the assignments. This feedback is important in that it is meant to assist students to prepare for the examination which they write at the end of the course. For this particular course, the feedback tutorial letter provides students with samples of how the assignments should have been answered, and guidelines on how to prepare for the examinations (see Appendix C). This is one of the documents which students consider to be the most critical in assisting them to pass the examination. This is evidenced by the fact that most students who are

repeating the course tend to reproduce the sample answers which lecturers provide for the assignments.

The ODL environment also provides an opportunity for lecturers to meet face to face with their students for discussion classes at least once a year to help them with some of the areas of study with which they might be experiencing difficulties. The trend in this particular course is that set notes are used by the lecturers every year for these discussion classes. These notes are primarily summaries of the chapters in the prescribed book. The summaries do not provide any critical analysis of the chapters, instead they emphasise the areas in the book which the lecturers expect the students to focus on for the assignments and examinations.

In the next section I discuss the findings derived from analysing students' assignments. These findings are supported by the answers which students gave in their responses to the assignment questions and the contents of the African philosophy chapter in their prescribed book. I will demonstrate that the mode of tuition through the tutorial letters and the lecturer notes used in the contact sessions perpetuate these perceptions and misconceptions about African philosophy.

5.3 Findings

The assignment questions listed in Section 5.2 above required students to draw on African philosophy to solve practical classroom/school or community problems, and to show the advantages and disadvantages of African philosophy. The analysis of the students' answers revealed six major themes. These are:

Theme 1 Conflation of African philosophy with *ubuntu*

The first finding is that students conflate African philosophy with *ubuntu.* That is, in discussing how African philosophy can be used to solve a practical problem in their community or school, they do not differentiate between African philosophy and *ubuntu,*

instead they treat the two as if they were the same. It is essential to note that u*buntu* is only a worldview within African philosophy and not the philosophy itself.

Theme 2 Conflation of African philosophy with African traditions and cultures

The second finding is that students conflate African philosophy with the traditions and cultural practices of African people. This is seriously thinking flawed given that African philosophy is much more complex than the traditions and cultural practices of African people.

Theme 3 Misconception that African philosophy lacks critical thinking

The third finding is the misplaced criticism that African philosophy lacks reason and rationality, which are key elements of critical thinking. This criticism is not only prevalent among students, but it also emanates from their prescribed textbook. In discussing the weaknesses/disadvantages of African philosophy, the prescribed textbook mentions the lack of critical thinking without substantiating the claim. Students simply accept this as a fact and reproduce it as such.

Theme 4 Students' lack of critical thinking

This finding arises from the third theme. The criticism that African philosophy lacks critical thinking is evidence that undergraduate students themselves lack critical thinking. They uncritically accept the information they read in their study materials, including their prescribed text book.

Theme 5 Role played by study materials

The fifth finding is that while I acknowledge that undergraduate students lack critical thinking skills, it is not solely their fault. There are other factors which contribute to this state of affairs. The prescribed textbook, tutorial letters and the discussion class notes

perpetuate some of the students' conflations of and misconceptions about African philosophy.

Theme 6 The ODL set-up is not always conducive for the application of critical thinking skills

The final finding is that the open and distance learning (ODL) setting in which students study is not conducive to the acquisition and application of critical thinking skills.

Below is an in-depth analysis of the findings in relation to the sources of information described in Section 5.2, supported by the original unedited quotations from students' assignments. Chapter 2 provided a discussion on what African philosophy is and what it is not. The discussion below will confirm how students perceptions deviated from the conclusions made in the chapter on African philosophy.

In answering the assignment questions, students tended to conflate African philosophy with traditions and cultural practices of the African people, and to equate African philosophy with u*buntu*. Oruka's (2002:120-124) formulation of the four trends of African philosophy shows that African philosophy cannot be simply reduced to traditions and cultural practices of African people or be equated with u*buntu*. African philosophy is made up of four trends, namely, ethno-philosophy, philosophic sagacity, nationalist-ideological philosophy and professional philosophy. Among the four trends, ethno-philosophy is the only trend that consists of the cultural, religious and moral beliefs of the Africans (Oruka, 2002:121; Higgs & Smith, 2006b:45). The other three trends have nothing to do with traditions, religion, culture or customs as discussed earlier. When the students discuss African philosophy, they concentrate on *ubuntu,* which can be classified under ethno-philosophy, at the expense of sage philosophy, nationalist-ideological philosophy and professional philosophy.

In discussing the advantages and disadvantages of using African philosophy, students tended to quote verbatim some of the controversial disadvantages mentioned in their

prescribed textbook without critically analysing them. For instance, this is what the authors of the prescribed book suggest about African philosophy:

- *It does not challenge power structures.*
- *It is unable to accept women as men's equals.*
- *It does not encourage critical thinking.*
- *It tends to ignore the needs of the individual person.*
- *It tolerates cruel superstitious practices (e.g. burning of witches)* (Higgs & Smith, 2006b:49).

These claims are controversial and misleading to students. One of the four trends, philosophic sagacity, reveals that African societies have wise people or sages, who are capable of thinking critically and challenging authority. These individuals are also known to be wise and visionary and can think critically. To later suggest that African philosophy does not encourage critical thinking or challenge power structures is a contradiction. It is also important that students read these claims with critical minds. They should not merely accept them because they are in their prescribed textbook. Some students did not even make an effort to answer the questions on their own; instead they copied the sample answer provided by the lecturer verbatim and submitted it as their own. It is important to note that not all students exhibited the above difficulties when answering the assignment questions. There were some who answered the questions according to the guidelines provided and critically analysed some of the issues in the prescribed textbook.

5.4 Discussion on the findings

Theme 1: Conflation of African philosophy with *ubuntu*

This tendency seems to be followed by majority of the students who are not able to differentiate between African philosophy and u*buntu*. Below are some of the verbatim and unedited responses given by students who regard *ubuntu* as African philosophy:

- *African philosophy is ubuntu the Zulu word from traditional African philosophy that encourage people to live and work together.*

- *African philosophy which is ubuntu is an African philosophy which embraces the notion of humanity to other.*

In the two excerpts above, the students literally refer to African philosophy as *ubuntu.* One refers to it as *ubuntu* in Zulu, while to the other it is *ubuntu*.

Below, another student uses the two concepts interchangeably by referring to "*ubuntu* or African philosophy". The disadvantage the student mentions is attributed to African philosophy according to the authors of the prescribed book. The authors mention that one of the ways in which African philosophy cannot help us is that "it tends to ignore the needs of the individual person" (Higgs & Smith, 2006b:49). The authors have listed the disadvantages of African philosophy not those of *ubuntu*, however, the student does not seem to differentiate between the two concepts. Besides, it would be contradictory to aver that *ubuntu* ignores the needs of the individual because taking care of individuals is what *ubuntu* is all about. This is what the students wrote:

- *Although it is difficult because the disadvantages of ubuntu or African philosophy is that you tend to ignore the needs of the individuals person.*

In the excerpt below, the student has used the two concepts, *ubuntu* and African philosophy interchangeably. He/she starts off by writing about African philosophy and merely proceeds to write about *ubuntu* without indicating how it is related to African philosophy.

- *African philosophy claims that happiness at least partially consists of living for others, in supporting each other. It is an anti-materialistic philosophy....*

This is a correct representation of African philosophy, according to the prescribed textbook. However, in the same paragraph, without indicating the link between African philosophy and *ubuntu,* the student writes that "the idea of ubuntu is related to human happiness and well-being". It would appear that to the student there is no difference between African philosophy and *ubuntu.* Oruka's (2002:120-123) four trends of African philosophy should serve as an illustration that there is more to African philosophy than

its worldviews such as *ubuntu.* Other illustrations of the use of *ubuntu* instead of African philosophy are cited below:

- *African philosophy is a response to the problems and troubles of Africa and the domination of western thought. Ubuntuism which is a commitment to peaceful co-existence among ordinary South Africans in spite of their differences.*

- *What is African philosophy? Ubuntu embraces hospitality, caring about others, wiling to go the extra mile for the sake of others.*

Below is another case of a student who uses u*buntu* when referring to African philosophy. In their prescribed textbook, the authors have clearly attributed the four methods of inquiry the student has discussed to African philosophy (Higgs & Smith, 2006b:45-46). However, the student has discussed them as though they belong to *ubuntu.* The student writes

- *In African philosophy, ubuntuism is the central idea and was formed by using the four methods of enquiry. These methods are: Ethnic, sage, political and pure philosophy.*

From here onwards, the specific student ceases to mention African philosophy anywhere in the essay. Even the advantages and disadvantages of African philosophy are attributed to *ubuntu* as indicated in the next excerpt.

- *There are a few things with ubuntuism, however. One being that it doesn't see females as the equivalent of males.... Another area in which ubuntuism falls short is that it doesn't allow for critical thinking.*

Another student starts off with a good discussion on African philosophy, but when it comes to the application suddenly switches to *ubuntu* without indicating that ubuntu is merely a worldview of African philosophy and not the philosophy itself:

- *African philosophy consist of ethnic, sage, political and pure philosophy.... To solve a problem I will involve the idea of Ubuntuism which will put them together to care for each other.*

These students do not realise that even though *ubuntu* is a principle of African philosophy, it cannot be accorded any attribute of African philosophy. Still more students have treated African philosophy as if it is part of *ubuntu.* The excerpt below gives the impression that *ubuntu* is the philosophy and African philosophy is merely a part of it. *Ubuntuism* should be the one rooted in African philosophy and not the other way around. Here is what the student wrote

- *The advantages of African philosophy is that it is rooted in ubuntuism that means it is related to human values.*
- *According to Higgs & Smith, African philosophy is based on the concept of "ubuntu", which means "humanity" and "i am because you are".*

Students still conflate African philosophy with *ubuntu* despite the fact that in their chapter on African philosophy, the authors of the prescribed textbook correctly make it clear that *ubuntu* is only "a central ethical idea of African thought", not African thought itself (Higgs & Smith, 2006b:47). Another glaring shortcoming of these students is that in their discussion on African philosophy, they mention Oruka's four trends of African philosophy only fleetingly, and devote most of the discussion to *ubuntu*. It seems that to them, *ubuntu* is the only or the most important aspect of African philosophy. This tendency diminishes the significance of the other trends such as sage philosophy, nationalist-ideological philosophy, professional philosophy and other aspects of ethno-philosophy. Discussing these trends in detail would indicate to the students that even though their prescribed textbook does not mention it, *ubuntu* is only part of ethno-philosophy.

Theme 2: Conflation of African philosophy with African traditions and culture

Oruka's (2002:120-124) four trends of African philosophy clearly indicate that there is more to African philosophy than just traditions and culture, which would be represented by ethno-philosophy. Yet most students fail to acknowledge the other three trends:

sage philosophy, political philosophy and pure philosophy (see Section 2.3 of Chapter 2). Most students, relying on this misconception, conclude that African philosophy relies on culture and traditions. Below are some examples of students' responses in relation to the disadvantages of using African philosophy:

- *African philosophy tolerates cruel superstitious practices.*
- *African philosophy can only guide and remind Africans of the roots and culture.*

The fact that African philosophy relies on traditions should not be viewed as a disadvantage because as Bodunrin (1981:171) argues "there is no *a priori* reason why proverbs, myths of gods and angels, social practices etc., could not be proper subjects for philosophical enquiry". This is because philosophy can deal with various things and subjects. However, as Oruka's works have already illustrated, it would be wrong to confine African philosophy to only traditions and culture or ethno-philosophy. The prescribed textbook also mentions the four methods of inquiry, which are actually the four trends of African philosophy distinguished by Oruka. So, the student who believes that the purpose of African philosophy is "only" to remind Africans of their roots and culture is misrepresenting African philosophy.

Some student teachers believe that some of their learners in their classrooms would not adopt African philosophical principles because these do not stem from their culture, while others think that African philosophy would work better for their learners because it is their culture. This is what one student saw as a disadvantage of using African philosophy to solve a problem in her class.

- *Some learners may feel that they do not need to adopt ubuntuism because it is not part of their culture*

The excerpt above does not stem from any of the study materials that the students have to read. This student has used his/her own discretion in determining what the disadvantage of using African philosophy would be. This is good, which is actually encouraged in this course. However, the discussion about *ubuntu* in Chapter 2 has revealed that its principles are not confined to any specific culture. The principles could

be universal. I have already shown that authors such as Sindane and Liebenberg (2000:38), Biesta (2002:378), and Løvlie and Standish (2002: 318) have provided evidence of versions of *ubuntu* such as *Bildung,* which exist in other cultures. The argument that some learners may not want to practice *ubuntu* simply because it is not part of their culture does not really hold water.

Below are excerpts from the same student's essay. The whole essay seems to refer to African cultures, rituals and traditions without addressing African philosophy. The question which the student chose concerns helping the AIDS orphan to cope with her school work. From the start the student does not discuss African philosophy at all but makes unsupported references to "rites and rituals". The student seems to assume that rites and rituals make up African philosophy. Below is the first sentence of the student's content section, the discussion on African philosophy in general. There is no mention of African philosophy at all, only a continuous reference to rites and rituals.

- *Most African communities have rites and rituals through which they communicate with their gods (ancestors and spirits).*

The reference to the child's need to contact her family every night seems to be a trivialisation of African philosophy. This kind of understanding of African philosophy would support Oruka's (1990:4) earlier claim that mythology constitutes a 'debased' form of philosophy. It is unthinkable that even the firm believers in rites and rituals would feel the need to communicate with their dead relatives every night to learn about culture.

- *By speaking to the child I was able to find out that the child felt she has to contact her family every night. She spent a lot of time trying to find out more about their cultural rituals. By understanding the child's religious rites and rituals I am able to help her understand that she does not need to "speak" to her parents every night. She would rather leave that for the weekends.*

The observation which the student makes above is evidence of someone who does not understand African philosophy and as a result simply conflates it with rites and rituals. The student continues with the conflation by stating that if he/she understood the African rituals he/she would be able to help the orphaned child. "Speaking" to her dead

parents on weekends would not really help the child with her school problems. Unfortunately, understanding rites and rituals does not mean understanding the philosophy. The student makes another reference to rituals by linking them to girls and their responsibilities in the home.

- *By understanding African rituals we can understand that girls have to help in the house.*

There is no link between African rituals and girls helping in the home. The fact that females are expected to help in the house is not peculiar to African rituals. This phenomenon can be attributed to patriarchal societies, which are not only found in Africa.

In discussing African philosophy, the students tend to concentrate on ethno-philosophy, which comprises communal African traditions, rituals and cultural practices as remarked on by Oruka. As much as myths, folklore and folk wisdom are important in preserving and championing aspects of tradition and as such should be integral to what constitutes African philosophy, other trends are equally critical to understanding African philosophy. Giving prominence to ethno-philosophy devalues the other trends, which are equally important. However, the blame is not wholly on the students. Their study materials also neglect to emphasise the significance of the other trends of African philosophy. The prescribed book refers to these trends as the methods of enquiry into African philosophy (Higgs & Smith, 2006b:45). It might be confusing for the students to understand why they are referred to as methods of enquiry instead of forms of African philosophy. In the same manner, the lecturers, when compiling the study guide, the discussion class notes and the feedback tutorial letters do not emphasise the other three trends. Sample answers on how African philosophy could be used to solve problems always involve a discussion on *ubuntu.* The discussion on African philosophy thus ends up being a discussion about *ubuntu* (see Appendix C).

Theme 3: Misconception that African philosophy lacks critical thinking

From their responses, it seems that students miss this link between African philosophy and critical thinking. They take what they read and accept it as the 'truth'. In their concluding statements, students were required to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of using African philosophy to help them solve a problem of their choice. In their responses, the advantages were properly linked to the solution. However, the disadvantages contradicted the advantages they had already mentioned in their discussions on the solution. One example stems from a student who writes that African philosophy "is about wisdom and recognising people who are wise and far sighted and who can think critically", yet the same student concludes that one of the disadvantages of African philosophy is that *"if the Nduna or Nkosi would make a community decision about the child, she couldn't be challenged, as African philosophy does not encourage critical thinking"*. The contradiction here is evident.

African philosophy's lack of or failure to encourage critical thinking was mentioned as a disadvantage or weakness by many students even though they referred to the sages. One example follows:

- *... African philosophy and in particular, Ubuntu, has a few disadvantages like not having the ability to encourage critical thinking....*

Another student mentions some of the disadvantages of African philosophy as:

- *It doesn't help critical thinking.*

The same student had, earlier in the essay, mentioned the sages and the role they play in their communities:

- *African philosophy is divide into four headings. They comprise of Ethnic philosophy ..., Sage philosophy, which deals with the wise....*

From the above excerpts, it would seem that most students agree with the authors of their prescribed textbook, that African philosophy lacks critical thinking. However, the discussion on African philosophy in Chapter 2 has confirmed that this is not so. Authors such as Higgs (2007), Waghid (2004), Wiredu (2004) and Gyekye (1997) attest to the fact that African philosophy possesses the qualities attributed to critical thinking, such as reasonableness, rationality, argumentation, innovation, refined articulation and a willingness to listen to others. However, we have observed that there has always been an ongoing contest over the definition of reason, its nature and practices, in the arena of scholarly discussions in Africa (Oladipo, 1995:28). Critical thinking has always been associated with Western thought and this tendency has excluded other forms of thought like African philosophy. Senghor (1976:33-34) alludes to the lack of African reason because it is intuitive and participates in the object, unlike the classical European reason which is analytical and makes use of the object. Coming to African reason, Oruka (1987:66) argues that whatever the difference is between African and Western philosophy, it does not qualitatively lie in the use of *reason* which appears to constitute an integral part of critical thinking. Reason is reason regardless of whether it is European or African. Wiredu (2004:57) asserts that “African philosophy accentuates the importance of being reasonable – the ability of people to articulate clear, logical and defensible arguments, on the one hand and to demonstrate a willingness to listen carefully to others, on the other hand”. Bodunrin (1981:162) similarly demonstrates that “in Africa there are critical independent thinkers who guide their thought and judgements by the power of reason and insight rather than by authority of the communal consensus”. For Ochieng’-Odhiambo (2006:22), in including philosophic sagacity as one of the four trends of African philosophy, Oruka “sought to show that traditional Africa is not a place free of a critical independent mode of inquiry and that this mode of thought does not begin and end with Western tradition and influence”.

Theme 4: Students' lack of critical thinking skills

The lack of critical thinking among the Philosophy of Education students is evidenced in their discussion on the disadvantages of using African philosophy to solve problems. Some of the controversial disadvantages which students accept as disadvantages of African philosophy are contained in the excerpts below:

- *It does not challenge power structures. It tends to ignore the needs of the individual. It tolerates cruel superstitious practices (eg burning of witches) (*Higgs & Smith, 2006b:49)

Even students who answered the question relatively well, that is, without conflating African philosophy with *ubuntu* or African traditions and culture, still did not critically discuss the disadvantages of African philosophy provided in the textbook. One student discussed the four trends of African philosophy, linked them properly to the problem and discussed how each trend would contribute to the solution of the problem. However, when it came to the conclusion, the student could not identify the contradiction in the acknowledgement of sage philosophy and then claiming that African philosophy has no critical thinking. This is a verbatim citation of the conclusion to the essay that the student wrote:

- *Although African Philosophy tends to ignore an individuals needs, tolerates superstitious practices and does not encourage an individual's critical thinking, it does give one a deeper understanding of oneself and it helps to appreciate mysteries in life as well as our communities. Thus I feel that African philosophy could help a child in the above mentioned situation and through ubuntu, happiness and well-being can be transferred onto the child from those around him.*

Some of the excerpts above were taken verbatim from the prescribed textbook. Students simply regurgitated the disadvantages without providing any critique. For example, they failed to notice the contradiction between the fact that the authors claim that African philosophy does not encourage critical thinking when earlier in the chapter they mention that one of the methods of enquiry into African philosophy is sage philosophy, which "focuses on those individuals in society who are known to be wise

and far-sighted and who can think critically" (Higgs & Smith, 2006b:45). On the point of African philosophy not challenging power structures, there is a contradiction in that the same sages are also "people whose views challenge authority of the community's decision". These are the people who, in the Western sense of "wisdom', are viewed as social critics and innovators (Higgs & Smith, 2006b:45). Ignoring the needs of the individual and tolerating cruel superstitious practices are also very controversial disadvantages of African philosophy, which need to be critically interrogated.

The situation to which the students were required to apply African philosophy certainly involves the needs of an individual child. All the students discussed different ways in which African philosophy could be used to assist the learner who is an orphan or one who is bullied by other learners. Yet, when it comes to discussing the disadvantages of using African philosophy, they mention that "it tends to ignore the needs of the individual person", a claim that comes from their prescribed textbook. None of the students challenged this claim which seems to be in contrast with the positive ways in which individuals benefit from *ubuntu,* for example. *Ubuntu* or in this case, African philosophy, caters for the individual's needs. When an individual requires any form of assistance, all the members of the community are prepared to offer such help, so the idea is not to ignore the needs of the individual, but for the members of the community to ensure that the individual is taken care of. It would not matter whether or not they are relatives or close friends. That is where a sense of community applies in African philosophy. It does not mean that only communities are taken care of. It also means that an individual's needs could be taken care of by any member of the community. So from the students' responses it is evident that undergraduate students fail to critically analyse their textbooks, lecture notes or tutorial materials. The next section explores the underlying assumptions of critical thinking and seeks to understand factors that might be attributable to the lack of critical thinking skills amongst Philosophy of Education students in my ODL institution.

The excerpts quoted above and the situation described in the foregoing sections suggest that the cohort of students whose assignments are analysed in this study lack

critical thinking ability. According to Lampert (2007:17), critical thinking ability is generally regarded as a desirable outcome of undergraduate liberal arts education. Although this study deals specifically with African philosophy and not with liberal arts education it ultimately advocates the importance of critical thinking among undergraduate education students in general. Lampert (2007:17-33) undertook a study on 141 undergraduate students at a university on the east coast of the United States of America to investigate variances in critical thinking dispositions between arts and non-arts undergraduate students. Her aim was to demonstrate that arts students "actively engage in open-ended problem solving, critical inquiry and reflection" (Lampert, 2007:18). Lampert's findings confirmed the influence of enquiry-based education on critical thinking and the fact that an "arts curriculum and instruction enhance the disposition to think critically" (Lampert, 2007:31). What Lampert's research reveals is that the years spent in undergraduate education should increase students' disposition to thinking critically. However, studies undertaken in South Africa and other countries (Lombard & Grosser (2008); Slonimsky &Shalem (2006); Lampert (2007); van den Berg (2000) and Nyamapfene & Letseka (1995) reveal that most undergraduate students still encounter problems when it comes to critical thinking.

An emergent tendency among undergraduate Philosophy of Education students, which is also evident in the responses to the assignments analysed above, is for students to regurgitate the information they have read from their prescribed textbooks. This can be attributed to their underpreparedness for university study. In the light of Slonimsky and Shalem's (2006:46-47) study, alluded to earlier (Chapter 3), students who have matriculated are generally expected to be highly practised in working with text-based realities and creating these through writing; however, a significant proportion of students enrolling in universities do not appear to have mastered the properties of text-based realities. On the contrary, they tend to follow a series of pervasive patterns in their approach to texts and epistemic practices when they first engage in university study. For instance, they show:

- *A tendency for verbatim reproduction or plagiarism in essays*
- *A tendency to describe rather than analyse, and to offer tautologies in place of justification*

- *A tendency to focus on examples (tokens) rather than on principles (types), and the relations between them. This includes offering anecdotes of personal experiences in place of formulations of general principles or relating principles and particulars, or claims to alignment without explanation why.*
- *A tendency to write from a highly subjective viewpoint without depersonalising, which frequently leads to solipsistic texts and some of the other patterns discussed above.*
- *A failure to pull out arguments in text or cast them. This may include syncretic lifting of isolated facts which make no sense outside of the broader structure of argument in which they are presented, poor structuring and systematisation of ideas in writing; illogical arguments and claims or discussions marked by non sequiturs*
- *A tendency to include anecdotes as a justification for claims.*
- *A tendency to be prescriptive or normative when asked to be analytic* (Slonimsky & Shalem, 2006:47).

This unpreparedness of students for university study is confirmed by educationalists and researchers such as Nyamapfene & Letseka (1995:159-167), who argue that most first year university students lack the necessary knowledge base required for university learning and teaching. This is supported by Boughey (2005:640-641), who argues in her study of first year political philosophy students that students are not able to apply "technical classifications to describe what they perceive". Instead, their "engagement is informed by common sense understandings. As a result their texts fail to make meanings that are academically satisfactory". Morrow (1992) describes this as "lack of epistemological access".

Morrow (2007:19) envisions an ideal teaching situation as one that is characterised by a teacher:student ratio of about 1:15; with plenty of rich face-to-face discussion; the detailed marking of students' scripts, and so on. He argues that any departure from this 'ideal' is a deficient and degenerate version of teaching. For instance, large class teaching, which is a typical experience in most schools and in this ODL institution (2 lecturers for 1778 Philosophy of Education students in 2009), according to Morrow, would be defined as a degenerate version of teaching, and at the extreme, not real teaching at all. Case and Deaton (1999:1048) note that some black schools have teacher:pupil ratios of 80 children per teacher. Fedderke, Kadt and Luiz (2000:263) also report on ratios in black schools ranging between 50:1 and 70:1. The ratios have not

changed much for even in 2008 Milner and Khoza (2008:156) found that most schools still had approximately 70 students per class. For Morrow (2007:19), the teacher's job is to give learners access to knowledge, hence 'epistemological access'. When students suffer from lack of "epistemological access" they end up carrying a number of learning deficiencies with them, some of which are lucidly described by Slonimsky & Shalem (2006). It is reasonable to argue that such students would be deficient in critical thinking dispositions. It follows that the Philosophy of Education students whose assignments are the subject of this study lack critical thinking qualities.

Theme 5: Role played by study materials

Another significant finding is that study materials such as the prescribed textbook, study guide, tutorial letters and the notes lecturers use in their discussion classes perpetuate students' conflations of and misconceptions about African philosophy. The textbook places emphasis on *ubuntu* which is an aspect of ethno-philosophy at the expense of other trends of African philosophy. After mentioning the four trends of African philosophy, the chapter discusses *ubuntu* in detail and then goes on to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of using African philosophy in order to solve a problem in their classroom, school or community. These advantages and disadvantages do not even apply to *ubuntu.* A closer scrutiny reveals that these advantages and disadvantages do not include other trends of African philosophy, but they focus mostly on ethno-philosophy. Some of them, such as tolerating cruel superstitious practices like the burning of witches (Higgs & Smith 2006b:49) would only apply to ethno-philosophy. Even this would still be controversial as there is no evidence that those who burn the so-called witches do so because they practise African philosophy. I view this as the perpetuation of the negativity that is often associated with Africa. There is no evidence that witchcraft, and the burning or killing of witches for that matter is typically African. If this was so, William Shakespeare would not have depicted witchcraft the way he did in his play *Macbeth.* The most notable evidence that witchcraft is not typically African is depicted in the play *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller. This play is a depiction of actual witch trials which occurred in 1692 in Salem, Massachusetts (Bergeron, 1969:48).

Other study materials which may contribute to students misunderstanding of African philosophy are tutorial letters (see Appendix C) and notes that lecturers use in their discussion classes (see Appendix E). These notes are simply summaries of various chapters which are meant to help students understand the different philosophies. The notes do not in any way provide critical appraisals of these philosophies. Tutorial letters, especially the one that provides feedback and examination guidelines give students memorandums on how they should have answered assignment questions; how to study for the exams and how they are expected to answer them. Because ODL students rely on written communication in the form of tutorial letters for most of their tuition, they tend to accept whatever information is conveyed in these tutorial letters as the truth. In a way, by not being critical of what is in the textbook when compiling tutorial letters and notes, lecturers themselves are perpetuating students' lack of critical thinking skills which in turn leads to their misunderstanding of African philosophy.

Theme 6: The ODL set-up is not conducive to the acquisition and application of critical thinking skills

In Chapter 2, it is noted that researchers such as Schlosser *et al.* (2003) argue that teaching critical thinking skills in distance education institutions can be very difficult. They posit that distance education can sometimes inhibit rather than facilitate the acquisition and application of critical thinking skills. Below are some of the issues, which the authors argue can inhibit the acquisition of critical thinking skills.

- *Given the constraints of the distance education format as it tries to fit into traditional conceptions of education, most instruction in distance education requires students to demonstrate acquisition of key outcome skills and knowledge. Little emphasis is placed on practice and the assessment of reasoning, argumentation, and inferential thinking skills that are the "building blocks" of critical thinking.*
- *Often little attention is given to the specific communication skills needed in distance education.*
- *Distance learning requires high levels of self-regulation and meta-cognition. However, the focus of instruction tends to be on transmission of content, rather than on learning to learn* (Schlosser *et al.,* 2003: 404).

The third issue which Schlosser *et al.* (2003: 404) believe inhibits the acquisition and application of critical thinking skills ties in well with how our students deal with their assignments. Because of the focus on content, some students tend to repeat what they believe their lecturers expect from them. These students, which are usually repeating the course, reproduce the sample answers which the lecturers provided for them in the feedback tutorial letters. Besides a few grammatical errors, these sample answers are reproduced almost verbatim. Below are excerpts of a student's assignment, which are identical to the sample assignment in the feedback tutorial letter. Typed in bold print are the instructions from the lecturer which the student has reproduced as if they are part of the answer (see Appendix C for comparison).

> *Content*
> *African philosophy has its roots in spoken tradition and emphasises the importance of the community rather than individual. African philosophy is a response to the troubles and problems of Africa(n). African thinkers seek to disprove the claims that Africans cannot develop rational and scientific thought. African philosophy is also appealing that even the west is borrowing from it for example the new age movement owes a great deal to African thought.* ***Discuss the methods of enquiry in African philosophy in short.*** *African philosophy asks question like who is my neighbour and what is my duty to my community these questions are very important because they are meant to instil a sense of communities and humanity in people. We have to treat people as we could want to be treated this encompasses the principle of ubuntu, within is central to African philosophy.* ***Discuss the ubuntu principle in detail.***

The hindrances to teaching and learning critical thinking skills quoted above confirm the findings of this study. Some of the major constraints of distance education are the lack of or little contact between lecturers and their students and between students themselves. This lack of contact makes it difficult to engage in any activities which encourage critical thinking. Even with the existence of modern technology, which allows students to engage in discussions with one another, it is still difficult for them to receive proper guidance from the lecturer. The only contact they have once a year during discussion classes for about an hour and a half is not adequate for critical discussions. It is merely an information session whereby the lecturer informs students about the techniques for tackling examination questions. Sometimes the lecturer only has time to summarise the prescribed textbook for the students. This problem is exacerbated by the

large numbers of students enrolled for this course. A typical discussion class would have 200 or more students. This is a situation which Morrow (2007) does not find ideal for a teaching and learning situation that would encourage critical discussions among students. As was discussed in the previous section, Morrow (2007:19) advocates a teacher:student ratio of about 1:15, which is ideal for a rich face-to-face discussion. It also allows enough time for all the students in a group to engage in fruitful discussions among themselves. Unfortunately, this is not the case in this ODL institution. At the beginning of this study (2009), 1778 students had registered for the course. In 2011 almost 10,000 students had registered for this course. This is far from the ideal situation that Morrow is advocating. The only way to address this problem would be for the lecturers to make sure that besides setting assignments which require the application of critical thinking skills, they also provide feedback that cannot be easily reproduced, but rather challenges the students to think critically about their answers. Other ways of addressing this problem are discussed in detail in the recommendations in Chapter 6.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has made an attempt to present and analyse the findings of this study. The findings were derived from students' assignments and tuition materials which include the study guide, tutorial letters, lecturers' notes for discussion classes and the prescribed textbook, *Rethinking Truth.* The initial tutorial letter, which students receive immediately after registration, provides students with important information about the course: what the course is about, the study materials to be used (tutorial letters, prescribed book and recommended books), aims and outcomes of the course and all the assignments students have to do.

The findings are that students tend to conflate African philosophy with *ubuntu;* conflate African philosophy with African traditions and culture; and misunderstand the relationship between African philosophy and critical thinking. The conflation and misunderstanding which the students exhibit ties in well with the theory that most first year university students are ill-prepared or underprepared for university study as argued

by Slonimsky & Shalem (2006), Holder *et al* (1999), Nyamapfene & Letseka (1995), and Boughey (2005). Because of this underpreparedness, they fail to make appropriate distinctions between African philosophy, the culture and traditions of the African people and *ubuntu*. They also fail to link between African philosophy and critical thinking.

The failure to distinguish between African philosophy and its different components and to link critical thinking to African philosophy can be attributed to the students' lack of critical thinking skills. They read their textbooks and their tutorial lectures and notes without submitting them to any kind of critique. When they have to answer questions, they simply regurgitate the material without critiquing it. If the students had adequate critical thinking skills they would be able to evaluate whatever they read. According to Beyer (1988:61), they would be able to analyse any claim, source, or belief precisely, persistently and objectively. They would be able to judge its accuracy, validity, or worth. The conclusion drawn from this discussion is that if the Philosophy of Education students had adequate critical thinking skills, they would have been able to read their prescribed textbook critically, thus avoiding conflations and misconceptions about African philosophy.

While one of the findings of this study is that students lack critical thinking, it is also important to argue that the study materials themselves might have an influence on this deficiency. The assignment questions and the guidelines on how to answer them might not provide the students with sufficient scope to critique what is in the textbook. For example, in the conclusion, students have to conclude by referring to the advantages and disadvantages of African philosophy. The majority of students simply listed the advantages and disadvantages of African philosophy without critiquing them. In the same manner, the notes the lecturers use during the few discussion/contact classes as well as the study guide do not provide any critical analysis of the information in the prescribed textbook. They simply provide a summary of that which is in the prescribed textbook.

The next chapter will confirm whether or not the initial aims and research questions of the study have been achieved and answered. It will offer recommendations in relation to the findings discussed above. I will also discuss the contributions which this study will make and some limitations thereof.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION: RECOMMENDATIONS, CONTRIBUTION AND LIMITATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The findings of this study have revealed that undergraduate students of Philosophy of Education conflate African philosophy with *ubuntu* and traditions and cultural practices of the African people. The students also claim that African philosophy does not encourage critical thinking. The conflation and claims about African philosophy were found to arise *inter alia* from the study materials with which students are provided. Another finding which arises from the ones mentioned above is that the undergraduate Philosophy of Education students lack critical thinking skills. They lack the ability to critically engage with their study materials.

The literature review section in this study has revealed that African philosophy does not only consist of *ubuntu,* traditions or cultural practices of the African people. Oruka's formulation of the four trends of African philosophy indicates that African philosophy can be categorised into ethno-philosophy, philosophic sagacity (sage philosophy), professional philosophy and nationalist philosophy. The literature has highlighted that it is a contradiction to claim that African philosophy does not encourage critical thinking when philosophic sagacity is the philosophy practised by wise African people who think critically and are capable of challenging authority.

Literature on critical thinking suggests that most first year university students in South Africa are not adequately prepared for university study (Slonimsky & Shalem, 2006; Boughey, 2005; Singh, 2000; Nyamapfene & Letseka, 1995). The findings of this study as detailed in Chapter 5 confirm that this can be attributed to their lack of critical thinking skills. The study has also revealed that the tuition materials such as the prescribed textbook, study guide, tutorial letters and the notes lecturers use for discussion classes perpetuate this lack of critical thinking skills and the subsequent misunderstanding of

African philosophy. Another significant finding is that the ODL set-up is not conducive to the acquisition of critical thinking skills and the application thereof.

This chapter offers recommendations and contributions of the study arising from the findings; discusses limitations of the study and provides some concluding remarks. Given the government's initiative (through its education policies and legislation) to Africanise the curriculum, one of the recommendations of this chapter is to position African philosophy as a key role player in the Africanisation initiatives. Thus the Africanisation of the curriculum in schools and higher education institutions occupies centre stage in the assumptions and principles that frame this study. As demonstrated in the previous chapters, Africanisation is a common thread in the Department of Education's policies and manifestos, thus it is important that universities embrace it as providers of initial teacher training and in-service training programmes.

As an answer to why students of Philosophy of Education experience difficulties conceptualising African philosophy the study presented two major findings. Firstly, the study materials provided for the students contained misleading information about African philosophy. The prescribed textbook, which is the students' main source of information, contained conflicting analyses about what African philosophy is and its weaknesses. Secondly, the students' lack of critical thinking skills made it difficult for them to engage critically with the complex nature of this philosophy. They found it easier to simply regurgitate the information they received from their textbook, tutorial letters, study guides and even their lecturers.

6.2 Recommendations

Evidence from Chapters 1, 2 and 3 suggests that despite government's policies on Africanisation and critical thinking these do not happen in schools or institutions of higher learning. The undergraduate university students are a case in point. These are the same students who at the completion of their teacher education degrees, go back to

schools to teach. Considering that they will not have acquired adequate critical thinking skills, they will not be able to impart these skills to the learners they teach.

Against the backdrop of these observations and arguments it is my view that the study has highlighted a more serious challenge to university undergraduate teaching and learning, that is, the gap in the knowledge base that students possess or bring with them from their schooling. South Africa's education policies make a strong case for the promotion of critical thinking and the inculcation of the ideals of African philosophy such as *ubuntu* and communalism[2] in the schools and universities. However, the fact that there are no guidelines as to how this should occur renders it difficult to achieve. Coupled with this is the fact that a large proportion of teachers who are in the schooling system themselves do not possess sufficient capabilities to promote these attributes, while others believe that anything that has to do with African philosophy should only be applicable to black African teachers and learners. In this study, I make these key recommendations.

- Firstly, in order to combat the problem of lack of critical thinking skills, philosophy and critical thinking should be taught in schools and universities. This will help to foster critical thinking, philosophical thinking and argumentation in learners and university student teachers.
- Secondly, African philosophy with its principles of *ubuntu*, communalism and IKS should also be introduced in schools, as well as in initial teacher training programmes at universities. This initiative will ensure that the promotion of African values advocated by the Department of Education becomes a reality. I deem this critical as an initiative that will position the development of philosophy and critical thinking dispositions at the heart of teacher training.
- Lastly, another recommendation is that universities should offer intensive short courses on African philosophy and critical thinking as part of in-service training for teachers who are already teaching in schools.

[2] See DoE (2005) *National Curriculum Statement*; DoE (1995) *White Paper on Education and Training;* DoE (2000) *The Report on Values, Education and Democracy;* DoE (2001) *Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy,*

6.2.1 Teaching of philosophy for children (P4C) in schools

As revealed earlier, critical thinking permeates all the education policy statements since the advent of democracy. The latest policy document, *The National Curriculum Statement Grade R-12* (2011) is no exception. From Grade R to Grade 12 the general aims of the South African curriculum are the same. One of the principles which specifically refers to critical thinking is to encourage "an active and critical approach to learning, rather than rote and uncritical learning of given truths" DBE (2011:4).

While I am mindful of challenges that could arise from the different understandings of Piaget's stages of development, I wish to make a case for the introduction of philosophy for children, otherwise known by the acronym P4C, in the school curriculum. As I have already asserted in Chapter 3, P4C can be a useful channel for introducing children to critical thinking within the community of inquiry that is the classroom. The community of inquiry in P4C "invites children to critically question the ideas around them; and to take each other as seriously as they wish to be taken; to forward new ideas of their own and to support each other in building common understanding" (Ndofirepi, 2011:250).

Initially, P4C could be taught as a separate subject as not every teacher would be able to teach it. Training a selected few teachers in a school to teach philosophy for children would be much easier and attainable than training all teachers in P4C. However, as the curriculum takes root and more teachers are trained, P4C can be incorporated into other subjects. Trickey & Topping (2004:367) have shown that P4C methodology has the potential to be infused into a range of subjects. Trickey & Topping (2004:369) describe a typical P4C lesson as one where the teacher introduces a short story, poem, picture, object or some other stimulus. Learners then think of and discuss questions about any of the stimuli with the guidance of the teacher. Then the learners agree on a question which they want to discuss extensively. This is where the community of inquiry comes into play. The teacher has to provide an environment conducive to the development of thinking skills by laying down the ground rules, allowing respect for each learner, providing non-threatening activities, accepting individual differences,

modelling thinking skills and allowing learners to actively participate in the discussions. In this manner the teacher sets an example of the behaviours which learners emulate in their own quest to learn to think critically. Robinson (1995:7) attests that P4C has the potential to be infused into other subjects because “all subjects have a foundational dimension that is philosophical [and] all subjects make use of philosophical thinking”.

P4C also holds the potential to clarify how African philosophy works. The similarity between P4C’s community of inquiry and African philosophy’s *ubuntu* and communalism cannot be overlooked. In a community of inquiry, learners learn to work together, listen to and care for each other. These are the same values found in *ubuntu* and communalism. Ndofirepi (2011:248) contends that “philosophy for children in Africa will involve a great deal of African philosophical thought, knowledge and wisdom”. P4C could be one of the channels through which children in Africa are transformed into reflective, responsible and progressive citizens (Ndofirepi, 2011:249). In attempting to justify the merits of P4C, Robinson (1995:8-9) asserts that philosophy is about the whole person, not just about the techniques; it is about values; and about how we treat others. He maintains that philosophy enables young people to think critically about values as well as to learn how to be reasonable in their communal life because learning involves community. Most of the successes in human endeavours have occurred through “shared experiences (experiments) of multitude of inquirers and by the productive clash of viewpoints” (Robinson 1995:9-10). Ndofirepi (2011:250) asserts that through the community of inquiry, P4C “facilitates the development of autonomous, independent students who also recognize their interdependence and interconnectedness with others”. From the discussion on African philosophy in Chapter 2, the close relationship between P4C, through the community of inquiry, and some of the principles of African philosophy such as *ubuntu* and communalism is evident.

The relevance of P4C in South Africa has already been articulated by Professor Lena Green who introduced P4C in primary schools in the Western Cape Province. Professor Green is a registered educational psychologist and professor of educational psychology at the University of the Western Cape. Even though she is not a philosopher, she is

convinced that P4C can help children to become better at thinking if they talk together in a community of inquiry (Shaughnessy, 2006). Unfortunately, it seems that the P4C initiative in the Western Cape has been the only one in South Africa thus far (UNESCO, 2007:42). It would be helpful were similar initiatives to take place throughout the country. In the Western Cape, eleven (11) teachers attended a programme of ten (10) sessions where they learned the theory and practice of P4C and developed materials relevant to South Africa (Roberts 2006:27). Using these local materials, which are referred to as *Stories for Thinking,* was not only valuable to the learners, but also to the teachers who participated in their development. The teachers benefitted both professionally and personally from writing the stories, by gaining insights into their learners' capabilities and by reflecting on their personal relationships (Roberts, 2006:60).

The P4C experiences in the Western Cape have revealed its usefulness and relevance in changing not only the learners' but also the teachers' perceptions regarding philosophical thinking. Roberts' (2006:59) research findings reveal that P4C

> *can make a difference to various aspects of a child's academic performance such as, pupils' achievements in tests of literacy; children's self esteem and self concept as thinkers and learners; the fluency and quality of children's questioning; the quality of their thinking; and their ability to listen to others and engage effectively in class discussion. Research evidence also indicates positive effects in the area of teachers' professional confidence and self esteem.*

P4C has also been seen to be relevant for South Africa because of its close relationship with the notions of the South African curriculum, the *Revised National Curriculum Statement* (RNCS) (Roberts, 2006:66) and the latest curriculum statement, the *National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12* (2011) as discussed earlier. The RNCS aims to develop critically reflective learners who possess values of social justice, equity and democracy (DoE, 2002:8). The new curriculum statement for Grades 4-6 also aims to produce learners who are able to:

- *Identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking;*
- *Work effectively as individuals and with others as members of a team;*
- *Organise and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively;*
- *Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information;*
- *Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem solving contexts do not exist in isolation* (DBE, 2011:5).

It also emphasises that teachers should be "mediators of learning, interpreters and designers of learning programmes and materials, leaders, administrators and managers, scholars, researchers and lifelong learners, community members citizens and pastors, assessors and learning area/phase specialists" (DoE, 2002:9). The kind of learner and teacher which the RCNS envisages is the kind of learner and teacher which P4C aims to develop through participation within the community of inquiry.

6.2.2 Introduction of African philosophy and its principles of *ubuntu*, communalism and IKS in schools

Another recommendation from this study is the introduction of African philosophy and its principles of *ubuntu,* communalism and IKS. In making this recommendation it may seem that I am re-inventing the wheel as it has been a subject of scholarly articles from the time when the Department of Education made the promotion of African values a basis for its policies. However, evidence from this study has shown that these aspirations have merely remained at policy level and scholarly discussions. They have not really been acted upon at ground level, that is, at schools and in classrooms. Some student teachers still believe that they cannot apply African philosophy in their classrooms because "s*ome learners may feel that they do not need to adopt ubuntuism because it is not part of their culture".* Seventeen years after the advent of democracy, it is not fitting for South Africans to dissociate themselves from African philosophy and its principles and values. The significance of *ubuntu* in the South African education is indicated by its inclusion in numerous government policies and reports as shown in Chapter 2. As indicated in Chapter 2, some Western philosophies also embody

principles similar to those of *ubuntu.* The principles of *ubuntu* should not only be significant for Africa in general and South Africa in particular, but they should be accepted by humanity in general.

Communalism is another important aspect of African life which suggests that the sense of community should be instilled in learners from an early age. Schools are the best suited for this task. Venter (2004:157) argues that education for community life is important from an African point of view, whereby communalism and respect for the community, which involves sharing with and helping others, take precedence. She calls for the integration of a pluralistic view of philosophy of life and cultural backgrounds into the school setting in order to solve problems and co-exist in a meaningful way. In this manner, learners will not only learn to co-exist meaningfully, but will also "glean from one another in an unselfish manner" (Msila, 2009:312). Through communalism and *ubuntu* learners can also learn to work with others rather than individually (Msila, 2009:314).

Nowadays, most African scholars believe that in order for education to benefit communities, IKS must be integrated in the education system. Some even argue that this will help improve the academic performance of African children, especially in mathematics and science. Odora-Hoppers' (2001:75) arguments about African children's poor performance in these subjects were noted in Chapter 2. The children's performance may improve if their teachers are conversant with these indigenous knowledge systems. Teachers can only obtain this knowledge from their training, which most of them acquire from university. They can also acquire this knowledge from interactions with elders in communities in which schools are located. As I recommend in the next section, universities need to ensure that student teachers are equipped with the values and principles associated with African philosophy so that they can pass them on to their learners. Universities can ensure that through community engagement and other research projects, students are encouraged to forge relationships with elders in the communities and to engage them on issues relating to indigenous epistemologies.

Higgs & van Wyk (2004) make a case for the Africanisation of the curriculum as an imperative of the transformation of higher education in South Africa. There is no doubt that schooling can also benefit from Africanisation. This can be achieved by ensuring that the school curriculum in South Africa revolves around communal life and *ubuntu,* socio-ethical themes which transcend culture, language and ethnic diversity of Africans (Higgs & van, Wyk 2004:205). This would be characterised by the spirit of *ubuntu* in which human needs, interests and dignity are of a fundamental importance and concern (Higgs & van Wyk, 2004:205). This kind of education will not only foster the spirit of *ubuntu*, but also develop cooperative skills, which will promote and sustain the sort of communal interdependence and concern with the welfare of others that is encouraged by *ubuntu* (Higgs & van Wyk, 2004:206). African philosophy and its principles of *ubuntu*, communalism and IKS are deemed very valuable in the Africanisation of the curriculum. For instance, Msila (2009:313) demonstrates the importance of the role of African philosophy as follows:

> *the call for an African renaissance in educational discourse, therefore seeks to demonstrate how indigenous African knowledge systems can be tapped as a foundational resource for the socio-educational transformation of the African continent and also how indigenous African systems can be politically and economically liberating.*

The above contentions clearly indicate that if African philosophy is to be understood, accepted, and appreciated by learners, teachers, university students, student teachers and lecturers, it should be inculcated in children at school level. This means that they will grow into it and with it. By the time they reach university, they will be able to appreciate African philosophy in such a way that it will be an integral part of their lives. It would seem futile not to begin the Africanisation process at the school level. Children should be familiarised with African values such as *ubuntu* and communalism, as required by the Department of Education, from an early age. This is necessary to ensure that when they reach institutions of higher learning, where they are prepared for the job market and adult life, they are able to put these values into practice. In higher education institutions African philosophy should not only be part of the curriculum, but the ideals and values of African philosophy such as *ubuntu,* communalism and IKS should cut across the curriculum.

6.2.3 Teaching of philosophy, philosophy of education and African philosophy with its principles of *ubuntu*, communalism and IKS in the higher education curriculum

Another recommendation I advance is for universities to teach African philosophy as a course or module on its own, rather than as one of the sections in the Philosophy of Education course. In this course, the four trends of African philosophy advanced by Oruka should be taught in an elaborate way so that the students can realise that African philosophy does not only refer to *ubuntu*, communalism and IKS. African philosophy should also be taught in such a way that its applicability in the lives of all South Africans regardless of culture or race is emphasised. As our student teachers qualify as teachers and become more conversant about what African philosophy entails, they will be in a position to pass the knowledge to their learners. Odora-Hoppers (2001:81) believes that universities do not seem to be doing this properly because they become detached from the communities they are supposed to serve. In order to correct this situation, Higgs *et al.* (2003:43) maintain that "indigenised innovations and knowledge systems would also have to be taken into account in higher education curricula". There should be new ways of thinking about the history, economics and social status of local indigenous knowledge systems in South Africa (Higgs *et al.,* 2003:43). Higgs *et al.* (2003:44) argue that because indigenous knowledge is used by communities for making decisions about food, human and animal health, education and other activities, "the higher education sector needs to support local and regional networks of traditional practitioners and help disseminate useful and relevant indigenous knowledge so that communities can participate more actively in ongoing development processes".

The DoE (2001b:27) expressed the concern that important fields of study which impact on the development of a common sense of nationhood, and that could play an important role in contributing to the development of the African renaissance, continue to be marginalised in higher education institutions. These include African languages and culture, African literature (and not only in its English form) and IKS and more generally, the transformation of the curricula to reflect the location of knowledge and curricula in

the context of the African continent. To that end, the DoE's (2001b:70) goal of a transformed higher education system is the creation of higher education institutions whose identity and cultural orientation is neither black nor white, English or Afrikaans-speaking, but unabashedly and unashamedly South African, or what has been described as the Africanisation of higher education teaching and learning. Thus Africanisation is linked with the perception that the African identity of an institution should be located in the treatment of African issues, not as a by-product, but by moving African issues in the academic, social, political and economical milieu from the periphery to the centre (le Roux, 2001:34).

Given the importance which African societies place on communities, it seems logical for communalism to have a special significance for African philosophy of education. As Wiredu (2004:21) argues, communalism is the head and spring of African values. Values such as mutual aid and respect for age are specific to African culture. At the level of tertiary education such values need to be systematically brought up for rational study. This is echoed by Higgs and van Wyk (2004:208) who argue that "the discourse in higher education in South Africa needs to take note of the contributions that African philosophy can make to the transformation of higher education theory and practice".

6.2.4 Teaching critical thinking in higher education

Teaching critical thinking in schools has already been delineated in Section 6.2.1 above. In this section I sketch the teaching of critical thinking in higher education. There have been numerous debates on whether critical thinking should be taught as a separate subject or incorporated within another subject or course. While authors such as Schafersman (1991:7) seem to believe that it will be much easier and less costly to incorporate critical thinking within other courses, some argue that this way of introducing critical thinking to students can be inhibiting rather than helping. There are lecturers who can inhibit critical thinking through the methods they use in their teaching, as Pithers and Soden (2000:242) point out. Such lecturers can be assisted through workshops, seminars, conferences and colloquia on critical thinking skills. In this

manner lecturers can learn the skills and how to teach them to students. Critical thinking skills are not only essential in a critical thinking course, but most courses at university demand that students apply them when they respond to assignment or examination questions or when they engage in discussions. In the light of this argument, critical thinking should be incorporated within all courses at university level. This means that lecturers of different courses have to create environments in which students can engage in activities which encourage the acquisition and application of critical thinking skills.

McKechnie (2009:56) suggests a number of ways for teaching critical thinking within all courses, which include seminars/tutorials, group work, presentations and work experience. Tutorials and seminars are already common ways of teaching in higher education and they could be ideal in developing critical thinking skills because they promote discussion. According to McDade (1995:10) “discussion method teaching builds on ideas, a progression of thinking from one point to the next logical point, a guiding of students through a sequence of critical thinking in which the students think out loud to share their thinking process with the teacher and their student colleagues”. During tutorials or seminars students engage with each other and their tutors or lecturers in order to get their points across. Class discussions are not the only way of developing critical thinking in students. Tsui (2002:742) posits that class presentations work as well. This could be because students have to respond to questions, criticisms, and comments from their peers and lecturers after the presentation. Group work would function in the same manner as seminars and tutorials, whereby students engage in discussions on a topic or problem and reach a consensus. They will have to listen to one another’s comments, suggestions and contributions. Work experience relates to the benefits of past/present employment in the acquisition of critical thinking skills. Students who are already involved in jobs are able to use their real work experiences as an advantage to help them acquire and apply critical thinking skills.

I have already discussed how P4C can be useful in developing and encouraging the application of critical thinking in school children. It is my contention that the basic principles of P4C can also be applied in higher education. In today’s education, a huge

emphasis is placed on “learner-centered environments, where the learning activities involve students engaged in inquiry and problem solving, typically in a collaborative framework” (Sloffer, Dueber & Duffy, 1999:1). These are typical characteristics of P4C. In a typical P4C situation lecturers become facilitators where students engage in problem solving activities. Students cease to be individualistic and instead engage in problem solving activities or discussions collaboratively as in a community of inquiry. This practice can be beneficial to student teachers who are at the initial stages of their training. Research among experienced teachers has revealed that being involved in P4C aided them by widening their knowledge, improving their teaching skills and self-esteem and also developing their thinking skills (Daniel, 1998:16; Roberts, 2006:36-41). There is evidence that P4C is not only beneficial for learners, but also for their teachers. Daniel (1998:16) suggests that even though the principles of P4C may be good for student teachers, the materials such as the Lipman novels would not work because the novels are meant for younger children and the plots and philosophical concepts involved may be too distant from their immediate needs. Student teachers are preparing to teach subjects other than philosophy or critical thinking when they qualify, so introducing P4C to them should happen in a way that would appeal to them. Instead of discussing children’s stories in their community of inquiry, student teachers could relate stories of their own teaching practice experiences (Daniel, 1998:17) to their peers where philosophical discussions can follow.

One of the findings of this study is that the ODL setting is sometimes not conducive to the acquisition and application of critical thinking skills. However, this should be seen as an advantage rather than an inhibition. The real-world experiences which most of the ODL students provide can supply “a testing ground” (Schlosser *et al.* 2003:406) where students can engage in collaborative problem solving within the communities of inquiry. This can also happen through online discussions. Schlosser *et al.* (2003:405) attests that as most distance education courses are already offered through the Internet, it is conducive for students to engage in discussions with their peers without being restrained by time or place. Online discussions can also be valuable where there are large numbers of students as is usually the case with ODL courses. Students are also

under no pressure to respond immediately, so they can analyse whatever information they receive from their peers (Schlosser *et al.,* 2003:405). The ways of teaching critical thinking suggested by McKechnie above can apply in the ODL set-up. For instance, utilising work experience allows distance students to "collaboratively exchange and reflect on authentic experiences, thereby ostensibly enhancing the overall learning culture and process" (Schlosser *et al.,* 2003:406). This is where critical thinking and P4C coalesce.

Critical thinking activities can encourage students to think critically as Tsui (2000:436) points out. When students possess critical thinking skills, they can "cope with the complexity of the age of information" (Commeyras, 1993:486). Critical thinking may help African philosophy students to better understand Oruka's four trends of African philosophy and not to conflate African philosophy with *ubuntu* or African cultures and traditions. They might be able to identify the contradictions and fallacious claims in their prescribed textbooks and not accept everything at face value. As the foundation would have been established through P4C, it will not matter which language students use in their critical thinking exercises or activities as seems to be the case at present. Students could avoid regurgitating or reproducing information where critical thinking is required (Lombard & Grosser, 2008:575). As discussed in the previous chapters, language is seen to play a vital role in determining the learning abilities of children (Nakusera, 2004; Mampe *et al.,* 1998; Lombard & Grosser, 2008; Egege & Kutieleh, 2004). Although authors such as Nakusera (2004) emphasise the importance of mother tongue for proper learning to take place, others such as Egege and Kutieleh (2004) and Lombard and Grosser (2008) have found that language is just one of the many factors that influences learning. When all the other factors have been dealt with, language ceases to constitute a major inhibiting factor. The students who join a university after being involved with P4C in their schooling should be able to transfer this knowledge to performing critical thinking activities and exercises.

6.2.5 Introduction of in-service training in African philosophy and critical thinking

While introducing philosophy and critical thinking in schools will be beneficial in the long run, the question is, who will teach P4C or critical thinking in schools if there are not many teachers with the necessary expertise in the two areas? While student teachers may have the opportunity to learn how to integrate P4C, critical thinking, African philosophy and its principles in their teaching during pre-service training, teachers who are already in the system might have to undergo in-service training to help them acquire these skills and attributes. *Ubuntu,* communalism, P4C and critical thinking can be taught within any subject where different methods of teaching such as group work and class presentations can be employed, so that any teacher can attend the in-service training programme. The merits of P4C have already been discussed in the previous section. Introducing teachers to African philosophy will enable them to understand and embrace it so that they can pass its merits and principles on to their learners. They should be able to link African values such as *ubuntu* and communalism, values which have become the basis of the DoE's policies, with African philosophy. At the end of these short programmes, the teachers should not only receive certificates for passing the examination; they should also be required to demonstrate that they have understood and grasped the concepts and can impart them to their learners by engaging them in activities where they are expected to use critical thinking or demonstrate that they can apply *ubuntu* or communalism during their learning.

As already indicated, in-service training will also be beneficial at universities. Lecturers will need to upgrade their knowledge as far as critical thinking skills are concerned. One of the findings of this research is that the ODL set-up has the potential to inhibit the acquisition of critical thinking skills mainly due to very little contact between lecturers and students. When that contact does occur during discussion classes, lecturers are confronted with multitudes of students who they cannot handle in a one-hour lesson. In order to resolve this problem I suggest the use of tutors who meet with the students on a regular basis. Where this system already exists plans should be put in place to

improve it. Most universities already make use of tutors to facilitate small group discussions. In the same way as lecturers receive in-service training, tutors should also be provided with workshops where they can acquire the necessary skills.

6.3 The study's contributions

In this study I have attempted to clarify how undergraduate students of Philosophy of Education perceive African philosophy and why they perceive it the way they do. The recommendations indicate how such perceptions can be changed by improving the schooling and higher education curricula. In my opinion the schooling curriculum can be improved by introducing P4C and the principles of African philosophy such as IKS, communalism and *ubuntu* while in the higher education curriculum African philosophy and critical thinking skills should be afforded greater prominence. I have attempted to demonstrate that in the ODL institutions teaching can be improved by placing emphasis on discussions among students or between students and lecturers through the use of technology. An improved tutorship system can also remarkably improve teaching. I have further attempted to emphasise the significance of in-service training, not only for school teachers but also for university lecturers and tutors.

6.4 The study's limitations

One of the limitations of this study is the fact that only documents in the form of students' assignments were used as data. The reason for this is that the research was conducted in an ODL institution where there are no residential students. It would have been very difficult to assemble students from all over South Africa and beyond the South African borders. Another limitation has already been mentioned in the chapter covering the methodology. This concerns document/content analysis as a research method. Under normal circumstances, documents are personal and are not meant to be researched. Therefore the said documents could well be biased. Gall *et al.* (1996:658) indicate that we may not be certain of the authenticity of the assignments: were they

written by those who were supposed to have written them or were they copied from other students? We may never know the circumstances under which the assignments were written. Were students driven by the desire to pass or the need to reflect their true perception of African philosophy? Maybe they just wrote what they thought their lecturers expected them to write. However, instead of impacting negatively on the study, the problems mentioned actually serve as confirmation of some of the findings, especially students' lack of critical thinking skills as well as the contribution of study materials such as lecturers' notes, the prescribed textbook, the study guide and the tutorial letters. Another limitation which has already been alluded to in Chapter 4 concerns aspects such as the location of students (urban versus rural), age divide, sex or race/culture. I did not consider these aspects when determining the students' perception of African philosophy because of the methodological constraints discussed in Chapter 2.

6.5 Areas for future research

Arising from this thesis are important emergent trends and key themes that constitute areas for future research, and which I will pursue as an offshoot project with a view to conceiving and developing articles to be submitted for publication in scholarly journals. There are four such key themes and emergent trends:

- The role of African philosophy in Africanising educational curriculum in Africa in general and in South Africa in particular. The thesis highlighted the importance of indigenising the African academy in terms of the development of the whole area of African philosophy.
- One of the critical trends that emerged from the thesis is the role of indigenous African philosophies in subverting the internalised colonial hierarchies of conventional schooling by promoting local teachings and ways of knowing that focus specifically on indigenous social values, community and spirituality. The thrust of this sub-theme is about the way African philosophy can be drawn on to act as a critical subversion of the ways in which post-colonial education in Africa has denied African heterogeneity.

- Conception of African philosophy in this thesis was anchored on Kenyan philosopher Odera Oruka's "Four Trends in African Philosophy". A rich and fascinating area for future research entails unpacking the interconnections, as it were the nexus and knowledge synthesis, or the cultural interface of Oruka's 'Four Trends'. Unpacking such a nexus would provide a critique of the Euro-Centric idea that philosophy originated from Greece.
- As a woman researcher in philosophy the key issues that emerged from the thesis, and which affect me as a woman, as a previously marginalised individual in a society ravaged by various forms of domination are issues of gender, age, class, ethnicity, sexual, religious and language identities. These issues require a reflexive investigation. Through reflexivity I intend to embark on a personal journey to explore personal experiences as a woman philosopher and how these experiences play themselves out within established epistemological and pedagogical fields.

6.6 Conclusion

As discussed in the previous chapters, the DoE, through its policies and manifestos requires certain values to be implemented in education. I consider that the Africanisation of the curriculum can contribute tremendously in the implementation of these values. In the same vein, African philosophy can play a major role in advancing Africanisation. However, student teachers, who will have to drive the process of Africanisation when they become teachers, need to receive a proper immersion and grounding in African philosophy. They need to form their own concepts of African philosophy without being misguided by other people's ideas as is the case with their prescribed textbook. The introduction of the principles of African philosophy such as *ubuntu,* communalism and IKS, P4C and critical thinking in the curriculum will familiarise learners and students with these principles and concepts and they will learn to be critical of issues whenever need arises. The recommended short intensive courses for teachers should help teachers who missed out on learning about African philosophy, *ubuntu,* communalism, IKS, P4C and critical thinking in schools and universities to catch

up and be able to teach these to their learners. However, I do not purport that the Africanisation of the curriculum can solve all the educational problems or that the current set-up should be discarded altogether. A balance between the good aspects of the current system and the Africanised version should be created. As Msila (2009:314) asserts, a society like the South African one, which is multi-cultural, should guard against alienating other cultures. Rather, it should embrace a multicultural, non-racial education and “ensure that other sectors of the community work closely with schools to create an effective society based on democratic ideals”.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Excerpts from the initial tutorial letter

1 ABOUT THIS MODULE

We would like to start by welcoming you to this module. We hope you find the contents of this module interesting and, more importantly perhaps that it gives you a new understanding of education and broadens your personal horizons.

We want you to regard this module as a journey of discovery - a journey that may well take you into the unknown. Although this journey may prove exciting, it may also make you feel very anxious at times. There may even be occasions when you feel totally lost, but do not give up if you start to feel that you have taken on something that is just too difficult. We are here to help you and give you the support and guidance you need.

Education as one of the human and social sciences is influenced by a number of philosophical perspectives, each with its own particular theoretical framework. In order to better understand our own practice and theorising in education, we need to be familiar with the basic ideas which characterise each of these philosophical perspectives which, to varying degrees influence educational discourse. Working within one perspective, which is accepted as a regulating frame of reference, has certain advantages. This one perspective will be truly tested, and any research undertaken will in this instance fit into an existing system of meaning, gaining much from the common perspective and hopefully enriching it. Another possibility is to move freely between the various perspectives, learning from all of them and using whatever seems helpful and valuable. A possible danger here is a form of superficial eclecticism. Of course we are not condemned either to be imprisoned within a single perspective or to flit from one position

to another. The important thing for us to appreciate is the wealth of insight to be gained from exposure to more than one perspective and to be on the lookout for possible points of convergence which may assist us to pursue our critical task in a more meaningful way.

In the light of what we have said, this module will deal with:

- the relationship between philosophy, theory and practice in the human and social sciences
- philosophical perspectives in the human and social sciences
- the influence of philosophical perspectives on contemporary themes and issues of concern in the human and social sciences

2 THE BACKGROUND TO THIS MODULE

If you have kept up with the educational debate in recent times, you will not need us to tell you that philosophical thinking about education in South Africa is fragmented. A number of South African educationists are working with Marxist and neo-Marxist models, others are working within the more general context of what may loosely be termed ‘democratic liberalism’ and others in the context of an analytic philosophy of education. Another group of educationists practise education as a science (pedagogics) in terms of a fundamental pedagogical approach.

There is, therefore, a need to formulate, or at least begin formulating, a new discourse (‘discourse’ is another word for ‘discussion’) in education.

The sort of educational discourse we are talking about will almost certainly be initiated within the context of more than one particular view of education. This discussion, if it is

to have any sort of credibility, will have to take account of the influence of race, class, gender and power on one's personal educational experience.

This educational discourse will inter alia focus on:

- teaching as an empowering practice
- learning as an empowering practice
- how knowledge is constructed in human society
- the fostering of a common public discourse on education that is open to all

People cannot be empowered if they are locked into ways of thinking that work to oppress them. Nor can people be empowered if they do not have access to knowledge. Finally, it is essential that our discourse about education is open to all. In the past, discussion about education has mostly been limited to the 'experts', those with specialist academic qualifications and those in positions of authority in government. One of our main aims in this module is to help you realise that there are many voices speaking about education. None of these voices should be regarded as 'right' or 'wrong'. You have as much right to be heard as anyone else.

To be able to join in the education discussion meaningfully, you will need to be thoroughly familiar with inter alia the different philosophical perspectives discussed in the prescribed text and how these relate to education. ***A philosophical perspective provides the underlying theoretical framework we use to view and construct our world, and determines the way we think and act, including the way we think and act in education.***

As you work through this module you will be looking at a number of different philosophical perspectives; perspectives that may be new to you and that may be used to critically assess contemporary issues in education. Studying the content of the prescribed text will also help you develop an awareness of the relationship between education and the context within which knowledge and understanding are created and shared.

3 AIMS AND OUTCOMES OF THIS MODULE

It is important for us to indicate what it is that we want to achieve in this module because these expectations determine the very nature of the module.

In this module we intend to:

- provide you with concepts and vocabulary needed to critically assess the claims that are made about the nature and aims of education and teaching
- provide you with the conceptual tools and experience necessary for creative and independent thought
- help you develop an understanding of the relationship between education and the context in which knowledge is created
- expose you to a problem-centred approach to educational discourse
- encourage you to interact critically with contemporary issues in education

As a learner, your part is to do the following:

- Carefully read through and interact with the contents of your prescribed text by working through the set of self-study questions included in this tutorial letter.
- Identify the main ideas in your prescribed text by
    - ✓ distinguishing fact from opinion
    - ✓ distinguishing argument from illustration
    - ✓ prioritising ideas according to significance or other criteria
    - ✓ identifying the main characteristics/ideas of the different philosophical perspectives

- Commit main ideas to memory by acquiring an overview of the characteristics of a range of philosophical perspectives.

- Reflect on issues with respect to the main ideas of several philosophical perspectives.

We hope that you as a learner, in the end, will be able to generate a rudimentary structure or framework that will enable you to develop your own knowledge base with respect to a set of theoretical frameworks in the human and social sciences.

4 WHAT YOU WILL NEED FOR THIS MODULE

- Tutorial letters
- The prescribed book
- Recommended books

4.1 Prescribed book

Higgs, P & Smith, J. 2006. *Rethinking our world*. 2nd Edition. Juta: Cape Town

4.2 Recommended books

Higgs, P (ed). 1995. *Metatheories in Philosophy of Education*. Johannesburg: Heinemann.

Higgs, P (ed). 1999. *Metatheories in educational theory and practice*. Johannesburg: Heinemann.

Higgs, P, Mda, T, Vakalisa, NCG & Assie-Lumumba, N. 2000. *African voices in education*. Cape Town: Juta.

You should mention the book numbers which are indicated at the end of this tutorial letter on the request card when requesting these books from the library.

6 SELF-STUDY QUESTIONS

We have constructed a set of self-study questions on each of the chapters in your prescribed text and suggest that you work through these questions systematically by recording your answers in a workbook of your own for future reference and study purposes. Your assignments and examination will be based on these questions and it is therefore advisable to give these questions your serious attention.

CHAPTER 1: Thinking clearly and learning from experience: the beginning of our new world

1. What method of enquiry in philosophy is concerned with finding the exact meaning of words?

2. Who were the most popular exponents of Linguistic analysis?

3. Which philosophy claims that if we fail to solve a problem no matter how much we try, we are dealing with a meaningless set of words?

4. On whose thinking was linguistic analysis based?

5. What did Russell and Ayer focus on, in their work?

6. Who moved away from supporting linguistic analysis because of his experiences in World War 1?
7. What can linguistic analysis help us to do?

8. What can't linguistic analysis help us with?

9. What did the philosophical movement that focused on linguistic analysis also focus on?

10. What is the aim of logic in philosophy?

11. What method of enquiry in philosophy emphasises that *experience* gives us our most reliable form of knowledge?

12. What method of enquiry in philosophy is modern science based on?

13. What can Empiricism help us to do?

14. What are the failings of Empiricism?

15. What would be the consequences for us if we ignored empiricism as a method of enquiry?

16. What philosophy did linguistic analysis, logical symbolism and empiricism, together form?

17. What is logical empiricism also known as?

CHAPTER 2: Asking questions: challenging what the world tells us

1. What do we call the method of enquiry in philosophy that is concerned with 'questioning and open-mindedness'?

2. Who is the most famous representative of Critical Rationalism?

3. Name four people who promoted Critical Rationalism.

4. Describe two main ideas in the teaching of Karl Popper.

5. Describe five characteristics that identify Critical Rationalists.

6. What does Critical Rationalism help us to do?

7. What can Critical Rationalism not help us with?

8. In trying to establish the truth what does:

- Empiricism focus on?
- Critical Rationalism focus on?

9. From which ancient philosophy did Critical Rationalism originate?

10. What would be the consequences for us if we ignored Critical Rationalism as a method of enquiry in philosophy?

CHAPTER 3: How in the world can we give our lives meaning?

1. What is the method of enquiry in philosophy that is concerned with the question 'What is the meaning of life'?

2. Name four people who promote(d) Existentialism.

3. Which method of enquiry in philosophy claims that there is no purpose in life?

4. What problem does Black Existentialism focus on?

5. Describe three main ideas in the teaching of Existentialists.

6. What does Existentialism help us to do?

7. What does Existentialism not help us to do?

8. What would be the consequences for us if we ignored Existentialism as a method of enquiry in philosophy?

CHAPTER 4: What of an African world?

1. What does African philosophy have its roots in?

2. When does written philosophy in Africa emerge?

3. What distinguishes Western thought from African thought?

4. Where can we trace the earliest forms of written African philosophy to?

5. Who was one of the earliest and best-known North African philosophers?

6. Give two examples of traditional African social and political communalism.

7. What methods of enquiry are employed by African philosophy?

8. Name the central ethical idea in traditional African philosophy and indicate what it means.

9. Name four proponents of African philosophy.

10. What can African philosophy do?

11. Where does African philosophy fail?

12. What does African philosophy challenge?

13. What would be the consequences for us if we ignored African philosophy as a method of enquiry in philosophy?

CHAPTER 5: Can we change our world?

1. What do we call the method of enquiry in philosophy that wants to change or 'beat the system'?

2. What is the most famous version of Critical Theory?

3. Name four people who promote(d) Critical Theory.

4. What philosophy claims that power structures do not only drive our economic and social life, but actually influence the way we think?

5. Describe four identifying characteristics that mark the work of Critical Theorists.

6. What does Critical Theory help us to do?

7. Where does Critical Theory fail?

8. What do we call the method of enquiry in philosophy that is concerned with the nature of systems?

9. How does Systems Theory see things?

10. According to Systems Theory, how should we approach a problem?

11. Who is one of the most famous Systems Theorists?

12. What would be the consequences for us if we ignored Critical Theory as a method of enquiry in philosophy?

CHAPTER 6: Rethinking a woman's world

1. List four forms of Feminism.

2. On what three issues do all forms of Feminism focus?

3. What is African Feminism also referred to as?

4. How does Black Women's Studies in Africa interpret Feminism?

5. What is the main criticism that African Feminism levels at Western and European feminists?

6. What is meant by the politics of gender?

7. How do African Feminists generally view their role in relation to men?

8. On what theory do proponents of the women's movement in Africa rely and what does this theory explore?

9. What is the 'triple layer of oppression' identified by African Feminism?

10. What does patriarchal fundamentalism claim?

11. Name any four proponents of Black Women's Studies in Africa.

12. What does 'First Wave Feminism' argue for?

13. With what methods of enquiry in philosophy does 'First Wave Feminism' have links with and why?

14. What does 'Second Wave Feminism' claim?

15. With what methods of enquiry in philosophy does 'Second Wave Feminism' have links with and why?

16. Name four people who promote 'Second Wave Feminism'.

17. What can ‘Second Wave Feminism’ do?

18. Where does ‘Second Wave Feminism’ fail?

19. What two claims does Feminism make in general?

20. What would be the consequences for us if we ignored Feminism as a method of enquiry in philosophy?

7 ASSIGNMENTS

7.1 General information

It is important to acquire knowledge in order to be able to reflect critically on your own teaching practice and contemporary issues in education. Knowledge is an essential part of education. The purpose of this module is to help you to

- acquire a reasonable knowledge base in respect of a number of philosophical perspectives and their particular theoretical frameworks
- develop informational processing skills

In the light of these aims, the assignments we have set are focussed on your ability to

- identify the main ideas and proponents of the different philosophical perspectives

- commit information to memory

In order to complete the assignments successfully you will be required to read through your prescribed book slowly, reflectively and systematically. Also, do not neglect to answer the self-study questions based on the contents of your prescribed book in preparing to complete your assignments. Start on the first chapter in your prescribed text and then move on to the second and so on.

Your prescribed book consists of the following nine chapters, each with the following title:

CHAPTER 1: Thinking clearly and learning from experience: the beginning of our new world

This chapter deals with the philosophical perspectives referred to as Logical and Post Empiricism.

CHAPTER 2: Asking questions: challenging what the world tells us

This chapter deals with the philosophical perspective referred to as Critical Rationalism.

CHAPTER 3: How in the world can we give our lives meaning?

This chapter deals with the philosophical perspective referred to as Existentialism.

CHAPTER 4: What of an African world?

This chapter deals with the philosophical perspective referred to as African philosophy.

CHAPTER 5: Can we change our world?

This chapter deals with the philosophical perspective referred to as Critical Theory.

CHAPTER 6: Rethinking a woman's world

This chapter deals with the philosophical perspective referred to as Feminism.

CHAPTER 7: Who in the world am I?

This chapter deals with the philosophical perspective referred to as Phenomenology.

CHAPTER 8: Is there a world that speaks to us?

This chapter deals with the philosophical perspective referred to as Hermeneutics.

CHAPTER 9: Where in the world are we going?

This chapter deals with the philosophical perspective referred to as Postmodernism.

7.3 Assessment

Learners, in the end, will be able to generate a rudimentary structure or framework that will enable them to develop their own knowledge base with respect to a set of theoretical frameworks in the human and social sciences. This will be done through:

- Multiple choice questions (assignment 01)
- Written form of assessment (assignment 02)
- Self-assessment (assignment 03)
- Self-study - questions at the end of each chapter

Assignment 01 will contribute 20% to your final examination mark.

7.4 Hints regarding the answering of multiple-choice questions

We have set multiple-choice questions on chapter 1. These multiple-choice questions give you a broad overview of core aspects of this chapter. We believe that it is necessary for you to obtain such a broad overview so that you may acquire a reasonable knowledge base in all the philosophical perspectives that impact on the human and social sciences.

Each question has only one correct answer. Use your prescribed book and refer to your answers to the self-study questions in order to find the answers to the questions. This multiple-choice assignment should be answered on a mark-reading sheet (included in the package you received on registration). Study the brochure *Unisa: services and procedures* for information on how to use and complete a mark-reading sheet. This assignment is marked by computer on a specific date and no extension on the

submission date can therefore be given. Please remember to put the **unique number** for your assignment on your mark-reading sheet.

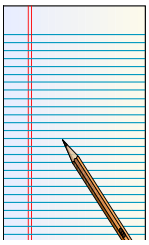
Hints

- Begin by answering the question for yourself without looking at the alternatives from which you have to choose the correct answer. Since all the alternatives suggested will invariably seem equally acceptable to you, try to prevent any doubt from entering your mind, by deciding on an answer on your own first and then looking for an answer among the alternatives that agrees with yours.

- When considering the alternative answers, always read the full question together with the given alternative to test the full statement=s correctness.

7.5 Assignment 01 (Compulsory)

Closing Date: 24 April
Passmark : 50%
Unique number: 579623



This assignment is based on chapter 1 of your prescribed book.

We suggest that you make a careful study of chapter 1 in your prescribed book, and that you also work through your self-study questions on the chapter in preparation for Assignment 01.

In each instance select the most appropriate answer from the options provided.

Question 1

What is one of the major tasks of this philosophy?

1. Analysing statements
2. Confusing the readers
3. Criticising advertisements
4. Providing proper languages for communities

Question 2

The first philosopher who challenged us to think clearly was…….

1. Socrates
2. Plato
3. Bertrand Russell
4. Ludwig Wittgenstein

Question 3

The philosophy that concentrates on trying to find the exact meaning of words is known as:

1. Linguistic analysis
2. Mathematical statements
3. Critical theory
4. Physics

Question 4

Linguistic analysis was based on the thinking of:

1. Njabulo Ndebele and Ezekiel Mphahlele
2. Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki
3. Ludwig Wittgenstein and Bertrand Russell
4. Stephen Hawking and Albert Einstein

Question 5

…….claims that almost all philosophical problems can be dispensed with once their underlying linguistic basis is exposed.

1. Phenomenology
2. African philosophy
3. Critical rationalism
4. Linguistic analysis

Question 6

Why, according to linguistic analysis, do we fail to solve a problem, no matter how hard we try?

1. Because we are dealing with a false problem.
2. Because we can't see properly
3. Because we speak a different language
4. Because we don't know the cause of the problem.

Question 7

Which two linguistic analysts focused on these three things: logic, linguistic meaning and verifiable facts.

1. Hannah Arendt and Helen Suzman
2. Karl Popper and Nelson Mandela
3. Dalai Lama and James Hillman
4. Bertrand Russell and AJ Ayer

Question 8

Linguistic analysis is concerned with the question:

1. What is the meaning of this word or sentence?
2. Why are we alive?
3. Who is God?
4. How can we find happiness?

Question 9

What did the philosophical movement that focused on linguistic analysis also focus on?

1. Mortality
2. Religion
3. Logic
4. Happiness

Question 10

Symbolic logic is used to express any statement that is…….

1. True or false by definition
2. True all the time
3. Controversial
4. Morally acceptable.

Question 11

What method of enquiry in philosophy asserts that our experience is the basis of all knowledge?

1 Logical Empiricism

2 Existentialism

3 Critical Rationalism

4 Empiricism

Question 12

What is the origin of empiricism?

1. African philosophy
2. British and American philosophy
3. Greek philosophy
4. Eastern philosophy

Question 13

Which philosophy is concerned with establishing the truth by means of scientific testing?

1. Empiricism
2. Feminism
3. African philosophy
4. Linguistic analysis

Question 14

Linguistic analysis, logical symbolism and empiricism together form the philosophy that is known as ……..

1. Critical theory
2. Critical rationalism
3. Hermeneutics
4. Logical empiricism

Question 15

What is logical empiricism also known as?

1. Logical positivism
2. Logical symbolism
3. Symbolic logic
4. Experience

Question 16

What is the aim of logic in philosophy?

1. To make mathematics an easy subject
2. To arrive at the basic structure of truth
3. To help with moral issues
4. To help with human relationships

Question 17

According to empiricism, how do we use our senses and experience in everyday life?

1. To establish and check facts
2. To check whether we are still alive
3. To enjoy music
4. To experience happiness.

Question 18

What is based on the empirical belief that what is true is confirmed or disproved by sense experience?

1. Linguistics
2. Modern science
3. Philosophy
4. Feminism

Question 19

Empiricists ask the following question:

1. How can I be happy?
2. Who is my neighbour?
3. How do I know that something is true?
4. Why am I poor?

Question 20

People who promote empiricism tend to be critical of …….

1. Modern science
2. Experience
3. Religion and ideologies like Marxism
4. Scientific claims

Question 21

Two of the most important sources of truth for empiricism are …….

1. direct experience and intuition
2. intuition and logical facts
3. logical facts and the senses
4. the senses and direct experience

Question 22

Which of the following is an advantage in using Logical Empiricism as a method of enquiry?

1. It helps one to think more logically
2. It helps one to think more morally
3. It helps one to think more creatively
5. It helps one to think more destructively

Question 23

Logical Empiricism, as a method of enquiry, is concerned with ……

1 the meaning of lived reality

2 the meaning individuals construct

3 the meaning of words and sentences

4 the meaning of the Gestalt

Question 24

Logical Empiricism originated in ……

1 Britain and the United States of America

2 Greece and Britain

3 Greece and the United States of America

4 The United States of America and France

Question 25

According to Logical Empiricism the term 'education' would refer mainly to helping learners to ……..

1 think clearly and solve problems

2 understand our physical world

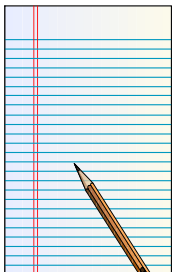
3 critically evaluate information

4 discover a meaning to life

Total : 25

7.6 Assignment 02 (Compulsory)

Closing Date: 12 June
Passmark : 50%



IMPORTANT

Please also submit the completed questionnaire (see section 11 of this Tutorial Letter) together with assignment 02.

Answer the following question in **not more than two typed pages.**

QUESTION 1 (To be answered by the Early Childhood Development group)

How would your knowledge of **African philosophy** help you to deal with the problem of an AIDS orphan, who seems to have a problem keeping awake, and who can't concentrate in the classroom? Your answer should have the following headings:

4. Introduction:

Briefly describe the problem and motivate your use of African philosophy in solving it.

5. Content:

Discuss African philosophy briefly and show how you can use it to solve your problem.

6. Conclusion:

Draw your own conclusion by referring to the advantages and disadvantages of African philosophy in solving the problem.

7. Bibliography:

Example of your bibliography, which should be in alphabetical order:

Higgs, P & Smith, J. 2000. ***Rethinking our world.*** Juta: Cape Town

Waghid, Y & Le Grange, L. 2004. ***Imaginaries on Democratic Education and Change.*** SAARDHE: Stellenbosch

QUESTION 2 (To be answered by the Intermediate and Senior Phase group)

How would you use your knowledge of **African philosophy** to help you to solve a problem of a student who is being bullied by the others in the school? Your answer should include the following headings:

1. Introduction:

Briefly describe the problem and motivate your use of African philosophy in solving it.

2. Content:

Discuss African philosophy briefly and show how you can use it to solve the problem.

3. Conclusion:

Draw your own conclusion by referring to the advantages and disadvantages of African philosophy in solving the problem.

4. Bibliography:

Example of your bibliography, which should be in alphabetical order:

Higgs, P & Smith, J. 2000. ***Rethinking our world.*** Juta: Cape Town

Waghid, Y & Le Grange, L. 2004. ***Imaginaries on Democratic Education and Change.*** SAARDHE: Stellenbosch

QUESTION 3 (To be answered by the FET and Senior Phase group, as well as the General Education group)

Identify a problem in your classroom (FET and Senior Phase) or community (General Education) which you think might be solved by relying on the knowledge **of** African philosophy **or** Feminism. (Choose one framework).

Your answer should include the following headings:

1. Introduction:

Briefly describe the problem and motivate your use of African philosophy or Feminism in solving it.

2. Content:

Discuss African philosophy or Feminism briefly and show how you can use it to solve your problem.

3. Conclusion:

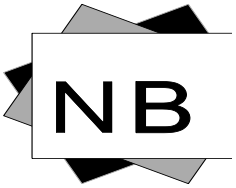
Draw your own conclusion by referring to the advantages and disadvantages of African philosophy or Feminism in solving the problem.

Bibliography

Example of a bibliography in alphabetical order:

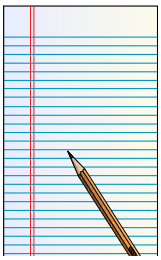
Higgs, P & Smith, J. 2000. **Rethinking our world**. Juta: Cape Town

Waghid, Y & Le Grange L. 2004. **Imaginaries on Democratic Education and Change**. SAARDHE: Stellenbosch



The next assignment *(Assignment 03) is an optional assignment.*

7.7(Optional)



Closing Date: 17 July

This assignment is based on chapters 7, 8 and 9 of your prescribed book.

This is an optional assignment,however, we encourage you to complete Assignment 03, because the material covered in Assignment 03 will also be dealt with in the examination.

In preparing for Assignment 03 we suggest that you make a careful study of chapters 7, 8 and 9 in your prescribed text, and that you also work through your self-study questions on these chapters.

This is a self-assessment assignment and no percentage mark will be allocated to this assignment. You will receive a memorandum for this assignment in a tutorial letter which you will receive soon after the closing date of this assignment.

CHAPTER 7:

Who in the world am I?

1. What method of enquiry in philosophy asks us to reflect on ourselves and the world we live in?

2. Name four persons who promote(d) Phenomenology.

3. What method of enquiry in philosophy claims that human beings and the world interact with each other the whole time?

4. What method of enquiry in philosophy claims that we have to connect with the real world?

5. What method of enquiry in philosophy claims that if I am to be real, then I need to have deep emotional connections with at least one other human being?

6. Name the three categories which Phenomenology can be put into.

7. What according to Phenomenology is the most dangerous thing?

8. What does falsity include? Provide examples.

9. What does Phenomenology help us to do?

10. Where does Phenomenology fail?

11. What does Phenomenology regard as our biggest challenge?

12. What would be the consequences for us if we ignored Phenomenology as a method of enquiry in philosophy?

CHAPTER 8:

Is there a world that speaks to us?

1. What do we call the method of enquiry in philosophy that is concerned with signs and symbols, and how we interpret and understand them?

2. Name four persons who promote(d) Hermeneutics.

3. Why is Hermeneutics ignored today?

4. On what areas of human endeavour does Hermeneutics focus?

5. List four main ideas that are propagated by Hermeneutics.

6. What can Hermeneutics help us to do?

7. What can Hermeneutics not help us to do?

8. With what, according to Hermeneutics, is our happiness linked?

9. What would be the consequences for us if we ignored Hermeneutics as a method of enquiry in philosophy?

CHAPTER 9:

Where in the world are we going to?

1. What method of enquiry in philosophy has dominated Western society in the last two centuries?

2. How would you define Modernism?

3. What, according to Modernism, will rule the ideal world?

4. What does Postmodernism tell us?

5. Identify four aspects of the human condition that Postmodernism examines.

6. Name four people who are associated with Postmodernism.

7. What philosophies are related to Postmodernism and why?

8. What does Postmodernism help us to do?

9. Where does Postmodernism fail?

10. What is Postmodernism a response to?

11. What would be the consequences for us if we ignored postmodernism as a method of enquiry in philosophy?

8 ADMISSION TO THE EXAMINATION

To gain entrance to the examination you will need to submit Assignment 01. In order to prepare for the examinations you should submit all assignments. You will, however, only be admitted to the examinations by completing and submitting Assignment 01 by the due date.

9 THE EXAMINATION

Assignment 01 and 02 contribute 20% to your final examination mark. The examination will contribute 80% to your final mark.

The examination will be held in October/November. The paper is two hours long.

We suggest that you refer to your answers to the self-study questions and assignments in preparation for the examination. Do not attempt to memorise the multiple-choice questions in your assignment, as the multiple-choice questions in the examination will be different from those in the assignment.

10 CONCLUDING REMARKS

If you have difficulties with your studies, please contact your lecturer as soon as possible - in writing or telephonically. You are also welcome to visit me personally from Monday to Friday between 07:45 and 16:00. However, please make an appointment beforehand.

12 LIST OF RECOMMENDED BOOKS WITH BOOK NUMBERS

When requesting recommended books from the Library, please supply **full book number** on your book request card.

EDC1015 2008

TITLE/CALL NUMBER **AUTHOR/BOOK NUMBER**

*Limited copies available. If unavailable, please request alternative.

African voices in education Higgs, P. (Philip),

HIGG 09-014750-EDC101-r

Metatheories in educational th Higgs, P.

HIGG 09-014785-EDC101-r

Metatheories in philosophy of Higgs, P.

HIGG 09-000270-EDC101-r

APPENDIX B: Excerpts from the study guide

UNIT 4

AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

SCHEMATIC OVERVIEW

African philosophy

Different strands/kinds/modes of inquiry

Ethnic philosophy

Sage philosophy

Political philosophy

Pure philosophy

Teaching and learning

Use different ethnic and cultural groups in examples

Tolerance, respect

Group work

Transmission of culture and traditions

Main ideas

Oral tradition

Indigenous Knowledge Systems

Anti-colonialism

Cosmos

Deity

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After having studied this unit you will be able to

- explain the central assumptions of African philosophy;
- explain the different strands of African Philosophy
- differentiate between African philosophy and Western philosophy;
- describe ways which African philosophy can/cannot help us understand societal problems;
- draw on African philosophy to apply in your teaching practice

KEY CONCEPTS

Cosmos

Deity

Humanness

Community/communalism

Ubuntu

Indigenous knowledge systems

INTRODUCTION

Activity 4a

Do you consider yourself as an African? Why/why not?

African philosophy has its roots in oral tradition. Its written form dates back from the pharaohs in Egypt. In Africa south of the Sahara, written African philosophy emerged as a response to the way colonialism and imperialism subjugated (controlled or dominated) the cultural, scientific, economic and political lives of Africans. The post-colonial era in Africa revolves around the continued struggle for an 'African' identity'. African philosophy developed because African intellectuals sought to disprove the belief by western philosophers that Africans cannot develop a fully-fledged philosophy. African traditional thought was concerned with the nature of the cosmos, conceptions of deity, the philosophy of the mind, a communalist and humanistic notion of moral responsibility and consensual philosophy of politics. In the overview we talk about the four types/strands of African philosophy.

OVERVIEW

The most important aspect of African philosophy is that unlike western philosophy, which regards the individual as the centre of life, it puts the community first. This is evident in Julius Nyerere's idea of Ujamaa; Kenneth Kaunda's humanism; Kwame Nkurumah and Sekou Toure's scientific socialism; Leopold Senghor's Negritude, and Steve Biko's Black consciousness.

Now go back to your RW and read pages 44 – 46. In these pages you will read about the different types/strands of African philosophy. These include: sage, ethnic, political and pure philosophy.

African philosophy emphasises the community and the sense of communalism

that we as human beings should have. Tradition and culture play a mayor role in

this way of thinking.

Ubuntu is considered as the central ethical idea of traditional African thought.

Read about Ubuntu on page 47 to the top of page 48 in RW.

Use the activities below to help you to discover by yourselves the importance of African philosophy in our lives.

Activity 4b

Other than the example given in the text you have just read, can you think of any other classic example of Ubuntu that has become part of the South African history since the advent of democracy?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Activity 4c

Most traditional African communities have religious rites and rituals through which they communicate to their gods (ancestors or spirits). Can you briefly describe a set of religious rites and rituals that your community practices?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Activity 4d

Over the years the Basotho people had a joint communal practice of working together as a team on family fields known as the Letsema. Describe a similar activity/activities that your community practices?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Activity 4e

In most traditional African cultures the political and social decisions are made by a gathering of senior men known as the Lekgotla (a national assembly). In modern-day democracies the Lekgotla is likely to come under heavy criticism. Can to think of any reasons why this might be the case?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Activity 4f

One of the characteristic features of African philosophy is the oral tradition. This is the practice of story telling that gets passed down from generation to generation, and has a specific moral purpose. Can you describe some of the morals that oral tradition seeks to uphold in your culture?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

PROBLEMS RESEARCHED BY AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

Activity 4g

A central component of African philosophy is generally referred to as Indigenous African Knowledge Systems (IKS). This encompasses a broad range of issues, e.g. indigenous technologies, indigenous medicines, indigenous games, et cetera. Can you list examples in each of these categories that are still being practiced either in your community or a community you have knowledge of?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

APPLICATION IN PRACTICE

There is a lot of talk about 'Africanisation of the curriculum' in education and training. This call is a call for an African-centred approach to educational discourse, for it is argued that all education in Africa must have Africa as its revolving point and focus, or else such education becomes alien, oppressive and irrelevant. The term 'Africa' does not mean as homogeneous conception of the term, but includes a variety of indigenous cultures characterised by diverse languages, beliefs, cultures and social practices.

Activity 4h

Imagine that you are a teacher at the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for girls. How can you draw on African philosophy to instil a sense of Ubuntu among the girls at a school that has raised concerns of the potential to alienate learners from their

communities by exposing them to excessive luxury and privilege?

APPENDIX C: Excerpts from the feedback tutorial letter

Dear Student

We trust that you have enjoyed your work in the module *Theoretical Frameworks in Education* thus far. We want you to regard this module as a journey of discovery – a journey that may well take you into the unknown. Although this journey may prove exciting, it may also make you feel very anxious at times. There may even be occasions when you feel totally lost, but don't give up in the belief that you have taken on something that is just too difficult. We are here to help you and give you the support and guidance that you need.

As you proceed with your work in the module *Theoretical Frameworks in Education* you need to constantly remind yourself of the aims and outcomes of this module.

In this module we intend to

- provide you with concepts and vocabulary needed to critically assess the claims that are made about the nature and aims of education and teaching
- provide you with the conceptual tools and experience necessary for creative and independent thought
- help you develop an understanding of the relationship between education and the context in which knowledge is created
- expose you to a pluralistic problem-centred approach to educational discourse
- encourage you to interact critically with contemporary issues in education

As a learner you should do the following:

- Carefully read through, and interact with the contents of your prescribed text by working through the set of self-study questions included in Tutorial Letter 101.

We suggest that you keep a written record of your responses to the self-study questions so that you can refer to them when preparing for the examinations. *You do not need to send your responses to the self-study questions to us for marking*. Rather use your responses to master the contents of your prescribed text and as a point of departure for discussions in a study group. *Your assignments and examination are based on these questions, so give these questions your serious attention.*

- Identify the main ideas in your prescribed text in relation to a wide range of theoretical frameworks.
- Memorise these main ideas for the purpose of your assignment and examination.
- Apply your knowledge of theoretical frameworks to educational practice.

We hope that, in the end, you will be able to generate a rudimentary structure or framework that will enable you to develop your own knowledge base with respect to a set of theoretical frameworks in the human and social sciences.

2. DISCUSSION: ASSIGNMENT 02

Many students concentrated on solving the practical problem and devoted long explanations to this. We wanted you to come up with solutions, but solutions originating from the theoretical framework that you used. The emphasis was supposed to be on the theoretical framework. Read through the example answers below and try to expand on your answers in the same way. The answers below are not the only answers to the questions. We give you examples in order for you to interact with your own answer and other possibilities mentioned below.

Question 1

How would your knowledge of African philosophy help you to deal with the problem of an AIDS orphan, who seems to have a problem keeping awake and concentrating in the classroom?

Introduction

I am a Grade 1 teacher. Two weeks ago I noticed that one of my best learners had a problem staying awake during the lessons. Even when she was awake, she couldn't answer any questions that were posed to her. This prompted me to investigate the problem. On questioning her, I discovered that her mother had passed away just a month ago. At the school we were all aware of her mother's HIV Aids status and the severity of her condition. I thought of ways she could be helped, and realised that my knowledge of African philosophy could be useful

In this essay I am going to focus on one of the central ethical ideas of African philosophy, namely the principle of *Ubuntu*. *Ubuntu* advocates a sense of community among the people, where the community is deemed more important than the individual.

Content

African philosophy has its roots in the spoken tradition and emphasises the importance of the community rather than the individual. African philosophy is a response to the troubles and problems of Africa. It is a rejection of Western domination and colonisation of Africa. African thinkers seek to disprove the claim that Africans cannot develop rational and scientific thought. African philosophy is so appealing that even the West is borrowing from it. The New Age Movement, for example, owes a great deal to African thought. Briefly discuss the methods of enquiry in African Philosophy.

As already mentioned in the introduction, one of the most important ideas of African philosophy is *Ubuntu*. (Discuss the *Ubuntu* principle and the idea of community involvement). It is the application of the *Ubuntu* principle that can help to better deal

with problems such as the AIDS orphan mentioned above. The *Ubuntu* principle can be applied in the following ways:

- Find out about the learner's situation at home.
- If the learner is living on her own, assist her to find a suitable home for children like herself – involve the community and family.
- If the learner is living with poor relatives who can't really provide for her, help the family to obtain the relevant social grants.
- If the learner has to look after her younger siblings, help them find relatives with whom they can stay; and if no relatives are available to help, then find a home where all the children can be looked after.
- In the meantime the teacher, as well as the community, family or class friends can help by providing the learner with accommodation, food and other basic essentials.
- The teacher could also provide extra tuition for the learner. School friends can also help.

Conclusion

All the actions listed above could be seen as a form of *Ubuntu* on the part of the teacher, as he is going out of his way to help the learner, without being asked or expecting anything in return. Members of the community who will be helping, will also be practicing *Ubuntu* in accordance with the tradition of African philosophy.

Feel free to elaborate on the advantages and disadvantages, if applicable.\

Question 2

How would you use your knowledge of African philosophy to help solve a problem of a learner who is being bullied by the others in the school?

Introduction

I am a Grade 4 teacher. Two weeks ago I realised that one of my best learners had a problem socialising with the rest of the learners in the class. After monitoring him closely, I realised that this problem was not only limited to the classroom but that he preferred to sit alone in the classroom during breaks. This prompted me to find out what was brothering him. On questioning him, I discovered that he was being bullied by his older classmates and schoolmates. The bullies believed that, because the learner came from a rich family, he must have a lot of pocket money, and he could therefore supply them with whatever they need. When he told them he had no money, he was threatened and sometimes actually beaten by the older boys.

African philosophy can be used in this case to make the other learners aware that it is inhuman to treat any person, and especially a person younger than them, in this way.

Content

African philosophy has its roots in the spoken tradition and emphasises the importance of the community rather than the individual. African philosophy is a response to the troubles and problems of Africa. It is a rejection of Western domination and colonisation of Africa. African thinkers seek to disprove the claim that Africans cannot develop rational and scientific thought. African philosophy is so appealing that even the West is borrowing from it. The New Age Movement, for example, owes a great deal to African thought. (Briefly discuss the methods of enquiry in African Philosophy).

African philosophy asks questions like: *Who is my neighbour?* and *What is my duty to my community?* These questions are very imporant because they are meant to instil a sense of community and humanity in people. We have to treat everyone as we would want to be treated. This encompasses the principle of *Ubuntu*, which is central to African philosophy. Discuss the Ubuntu principle in detail.

The learners who are bullying the younger learner would be made aware of the following important principles of African philosophy:

- People have to treat one another with the necessary humaneness and dignity.
- The older person is supposed to take care of and guide the younger person and not be cruel to him.
- Human beings should be humble.
- Bullying has the potential of causing discord rather than peace between learners.
- It is much better to receive a gift from a voluntary giver than to force someone into giving.

Ubuntu plays a very impotant part in African philosophy. The world would be a better place if everybody was aware of and practised the principles of *Ubuntu*. There would be very few bullies if we would choose to take care of one another instead of fighting with one another.

Conclusion

Write your own conclusion by adding any advantages and/or disadvantages.

Question 3

Identify a problem in your classroom or community that you think might be solved by applying the knowledge of African Philosophy or Feminism. Choose only ONE of these theoretical frameworks and discuss how you would approach the problem.

African Philosophy

Introduction

African Philosophy deals with problems that are related to African identity. A typical problem that could be solved by applying this theory, is that of ill-disciplined learners who do not live with their parents. Today, in South Africa, parents move from rural areas to big towns and cities and often leave their school-going children without any adult supervision or care. At times the children themselves have to go to the cities in search of better educational opportunities. While away from their parents, these children get into all sorts of mischief.

Content

Discussion of African Philosophy

African philosophy has its roots in the spoken tradition and emphasises the community rather than the individual. African philosophy is a response to the troubles and problems of Africa. It is a rejection of the West's domination and colonisation of Africa. African thinkers seek to disprove the claim that Africans cannot develop rational and scientific thought. African philosophy is so appealing that even the West is borrowing from it. The New Age Movement, for example, owes a great deal to African thought.

African philosophy consists of four methods of enquiry:

- *Ethnic philosophy*: This consists of moral and religious beliefs, and is holistic (looks at the "whole" experience of a human being) in nature.

- *Sage (wisdom) philosophy*: It focuses on individuals who are wise and far-sighted, and can challenge authority.
- *Political philosophy*: It has to be a particularly African philosophy that is different from capitalism, socialism or communism (eg the philosophy propagated by people like Kwame Nkurumah and Julius Nyerere).
- *Pure philosophy*: It is propagated by African philosophers in the areas of Empiricism, Existentialism and Critical Rationalism. Its proponents include people like Kwasi Wiredu and Peter Bodunrim.

Discuss the principle of *Ubuntu* and the idea of community involvement.

Ubuntu advocates a sense of community among the people, where the community is deemed more important than the individual.

African philosophy asks questions like: *Who is my neighbour?* and *What is my duty to my community?* These questions are very important because they are meant to instil a sense of community and humanity in people. We have to treat everyone as we would want to be treated. This encompasses the principle of *Ubuntu*, which is central to African philosophy. Discuss the Ubuntu principle in detail.

How African philosophy can help to solve the abovementioned problem

As mentioned above, African philosophy deals with problems that are related to African identity. In Africa, culture plays a very important role in determining a person's identity. Human beings are guided by their culture in order to become well-rounded, disciplined and respectful members of their communities.

According to African culture, a child belongs to the whole community and, as such, can be disciplined by any adult in his or her community. Children usually think that they can misbehave in the absence of their own parents. In African culture this is different: Children who misbehave in the absence of their parents will be disciplined by any

parent who is aware of their misbehaviour. In this way children's well-being is taken care of regardless of where they are, whether it is at school, the mall or the cinema.

Conclusion

It seems quite convenient for all adults in the community to raise their children together, thus building strong, humble and well-disciplined children for the future. However, in today's life (where great emphasis is placed on individual needs and freedoms) children often feel that their needs and freedom are infringed. They hate being under the constant watchful eye of an adult. African philosophy can thus also create problems instead of solve them. (Add more advantages and disadvantages if applicable).

NB: This is only a guideline and not a complete essay. You should add more details to the points that are provided. Also, do not forget to provide a bibliography at the end of your essay as proof that you have done the required research.

4 ADMISSION TO THE EXAMINATION

In order to gain admission to the examination, you needed to submit Assignment 01.

5. THE EXAMINATION

The examination will be written in October/November 2009.

The examination will consist of the following:

1. 50 multiple-choice questions (50 marks)

   The multiple-choice questions in the examination will include some of questions posed in the assignments. Do not attempt to memorise the multiple-choice questions in your assignments, as new questions will be given in the examination. It is therefore important that you understand the different theoretical frameworks, as understanding is much more important than rote learning.

2. Paragraph-type questions (25 marks)

   Here you have to refer to the self-study questions on the prescribed textbook, *Rethinking our World,* in Tutorial letter 101/2009*,* as well as the answers to the assignments.

3. Essay-type question (25 marks)

   The essay-type question will deal with your understanding of the different theoretical frameworks in Education as well as how they relate to your teaching and learning practice. Study all the theoretical frameworks in your prescribed text, *Rethinking our World,* as well as the essay-type question in your assignment.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

If you have any difficulties with your studies in this module, feel free to contact us as soon as possible, either in writing or telephonically. You are also welcome to visit us personally from Monday to Friday between 08:00 and 16:00. However, please make an appointment beforehand.

We wish you success in your studies.

APPENDIX D: Excerpts from the discussion class notes

AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

Different strands/kinds/modes of inquiry

Ethnic philosophy
Sage philosophy
Political philosophy
Pure philosophy

↓

Teaching and learning

Use different ethnic and cultural groups in examples
Tolerance, respect
Group work
Transmission of culture and traditions

↓

Main ideas

Oral tradition
Indigenous knowledge systems
Anticolonialism
Cosmos, Deity
Community
Ubuntu
Humanness

↓

Some proponents

Kwame Anthony Appiah, Kwasi Wiredu, Leopold Senghor

↓

Advantages	**Disadvantages**
Promotes African identity	Not widely accepted
Considers tradition to be important	Relies too much on tradition
Provides cultural unity	Comprises more than one philosophy
Orientated towards participatory/group	

APPENDIX E: Informed consent form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Hello, I am Mrs Matsephe Letseka. I am a lecturer in the Department of Educational Studies at UNISA. I am studying for my Doctor of Education (DEd) degree in Philosophy of Education with UNISA.

My study investigates perceptions of undergraduate students towards African philosophy. Central to my data are assignments (assignment 02) which you submitted for the module EDC1015. This study interrogates the extent to which undergraduate students conflate (mix up/confuse) African philosophy with traditions and cultural practices of the African people.

With this letter, I seek your informed consent (permission) to use the assignment you submitted for the above course as data (documents) on which I will base my analysis.

Please note that you are under no obligation to allow me to use your assignment. My use of your assignment is wholly dependent on your voluntary granting of permission. Should you feel uncomfortable with the arrangement you have a right to say so and I will not use your assignment. You will not be penalised in any way for not allowing me to use your assignment. However, I would like to draw your attention to the importance of an exercise of this nature to the support and promotion of research. Also please note that the conduct of this research is governed by UNISA's code of research ethics. The code requires that I comply with the principles of confidentiality and non-disclosure. What this means is that I will not disclose your name or your student number anywhere in the study. This avoids a scenario where anybody can link your identity to the study.

I would therefore appreciate it if you can supply the details as indicated below sign this informed consent form and return it to me in the enclosed envelop.

Please complete the form in full.

Signature.....

Place.....Date.....

APPENDIX F: Notice of publication of article

BULLETIN VIR CHRISTELIKE WETENSKAP
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KOERS

2011-09-29

Ms. M. (Matsephe) Letseka & Dr. Venter
Teacher Education
UNISA
PO Box 392
PRETORIA
0003

Dear Ms. Letseka & Dr. Venter

PUBLICATION NOTICE – Your article: Student teachers' understanding of African philosophy

The Editorial Board has received your revised article and we wish to inform you that the article is accepted for publication. It will probably be published in ***KOERS* 77(1&2) 2012**. The Editorial Board, however, has the right to change the issue number if necessary.

Kind regards

Ms. H. Hoogstad (Editor in Chief)