



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Social and Human Sciences Sector



Teaching philosophy

IN AFRICA

ANGLOPHONE COUNTRIES

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Published by the United Nations Educational,  
Scientific and Cultural Organization  
7, place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France

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Printed in France

(SHS/PH/2009/PI/AFR)

Cover and page layout: Mangaïa

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**Teaching philosophy**  
**in Africa**  
**Anglophone countries**

# Background

On 7 and 8 September 2009 in Port Louis, the Republic of Mauritius hosted the High-Level Regional Meeting on the Teaching of Philosophy in Anglophone African countries, co-organized by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources of the Republic of Mauritius, the Mauritius Institute of Education, the Mauritius National Commission for UNESCO and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

The meeting was inaugurated by H.E. Dr Vasant K. Bunwaree, Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources, Republic of Mauritius. It gathered some forty participants, among whom the representatives of eleven countries from the region: Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Mauritius, Namibia, Nigeria, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe. The meeting was also attended by Mauritian officials and philosophers, professors, philosophy practitioners, at primary and secondary levels and in higher education.

Two publications are devoted to Africa. Both were elaborated by UNESCO's Secretariat on the basis of a study published in 2007 under the title *Philosophy, a School of Freedom - Teaching Philosophy and Learning to Philosophize: Status and Prospects*. The first publication, in French, collects the outcome of the Bamako meeting (Francophone African countries); while the second one, in English, collects the outcome of the Mauritius meeting (Anglophone African countries). A joint meeting is foreseen in 2010 aimed at putting together the recommendations for the whole Africa region.

This publication reflects the debates and discussions held during the Mauritius meeting which allowed UNESCO to update and complete the data initially collected for the 2007 Study. A series of regional recommendations, elaborated and validated by the meeting participants, are addressed to Member States, to National Commissions for UNESCO, to philosophers, and to UNESCO and are included in the present publication, from page 42 to page 47.

The Social and Human Sciences Sector of UNESCO, together with the UNESCO Office in Dar-es-Salam would like to express their deepest gratitude to:

- The Mauritius authorities and their partners for their steadfast support and their warm hospitality;
- The representatives of the participating Anglophone African countries for their active participation and for their engagement;
- The philosophers, experts and representatives of philosophy associations and institutions for their substantial contribution to the debates.

# Table of contents

Foreword.....	page 6
Preface.....	page 8
Teaching philosophy at pre-school and primary levels .....	page 10
Teaching philosophy at secondary level .....	page 20
Teaching philosophy in higher education .....	page 30
Recommendations for the teaching of philosophy in Anglophone African countries.....	page 42
<b>Annexes</b>	
Address by H.E. Dr Vasant K. Bunwaree, Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources of the Republic of Mauritius .....	page 50
Address by Ms Sheela Thancanamootoo, Director, Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE).....	page 53
List of participants in the High-Level Regional Meeting on the Teaching of Philosophy in Anglophone African countries, Port Louis, Mauritius, 7 and 8 September 2009.....	page 56

# Foreword

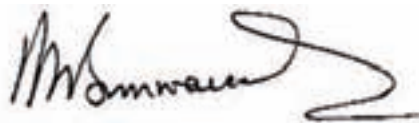
In the wake of the study conducted in 2007 and the subsequent landmark publication of the report *Philosophy, a School of Freedom*, UNESCO has charted new practical orientations for countries to take up the challenge of developing in their citizens the skills of critical reasoning through the teaching of philosophy. In a world characterized by an increasing complexity on the one hand but growing interdependence on the other, there is a universally felt need to initiate and sustain well argued reflections on our common future, to measure the congruence of national priorities and international urgencies.

The centrality of the goal to enhance the human condition was evidenced by the 1995 Paris Declaration for Philosophy which consolidated UNESCO's commitment to promote the discipline as a rampart against doctrinaire thinking and radicalism.

We can only legitimately support such a notable enterprise. It is indeed a great honour and privilege for Mauritius to be associated with this endeavour by hosting the High-Level Regional Meeting on the Teaching of Philosophy in Africa in September 2009. The June 1980 meeting of Philosophers in Nairobi and its resulting recommendations were a clarion call for the affirmative role to be played by philosophy in Africa. There are obviously challenges posed to the teaching of philosophy on the continent and this High-Level Meeting will, I am confident, address them and provide the necessary guidelines for a common regional strategy and targets set.

As a vibrant democracy and an aspirant regional leader in the economic and social domains, Mauritius wishes to play a pivotal role in building the foundations of a stronger African continent where open debate will enlighten analysis and lead to intelligent and concerted actions for a more humane and ethically just society. And this can only take place when reflection leads to knowledge generation and knowledge application. The Beninese philosopher, Paulin J. Hountondji, aptly captured this essence when he wrote: "the African Philosophers should fight to make all recognize that they have an obligation to think for themselves".

I believe that, today, the challenge for philosophy is to help us reconcile apparently mutually exclusive goals: thinking together and thinking differently. It is only by teaching philosophy and generating free philosophical discourse at all levels that we will develop minds empowered to resist the pernicious manifestations of intolerance and extremism, irrationality and fanaticism. Indeed, instilling in our children the drive to study philosophy and putting it to practical use is insurance for the continuation of democracy and pro-development growth in our continent.



**Dr the Hon. Vasant K. BUNWAREE**  
**Minister of Education,**  
**Culture and Human Resources**



Port Louis, Mauritius, September 2009

# Preface

## *Creating UNESCO was in itself a philosophical undertaking*

Let us look at the history of our Organization. It witnesses to the fact that philosophy has always been at the heart of UNESCO's action. So it is that, since UNESCO was founded, this organic bond has manifested itself in the existence of a programme devoted to philosophy and to the promotion of its teaching. Philosophy is understood here as working for peace, which is UNESCO's primary and fundamental mission. Indeed, building lasting peace requires thoroughgoing and ever renewed reflection on the very foundations of the action to be undertaken, which in turn call upon most creative and diverse philosophical convictions.

The teaching of philosophy is undeniably one of the keystones of a quality education for all. It contributes to open the mind, and to build critical reflection and independent thinking, which constitute a defence against all forms of manipulation, obscurantism and exclusion.

The Memorandum on the philosophy programme of UNESCO announced as early as 1946 that, “[i]t is not enough to fight against illiteracy. It is still necessary to know what one is going to have people read”. This reflection, philosophically significant in its own right, conveys a powerful and relevant message that applies, and will continue to apply, to today's and tomorrow's educational dynamic.

Since 2005, UNESCO's Member States have been intent upon strengthening the Organization's philosophy programme through, on the one hand, the adoption by the Executive Board of a three faceted Intersectoral Strategy on Philosophy comprising philosophical dialogue facing world problems, the teaching of philosophy, and the promoting of philosophic thought and research, and on the other hand, the proclamation by UNESCO's General Conference of a World Philosophy Day, and the inclusion of a reminder of the inherent bond between philosophical reflection and analysis and the building of peace in the Organization's Medium-Term Strategy for 2008-2013.

***Philosophy, a School of Freedom***, the study on the state of the art of the teaching of philosophy in the world, published by UNESCO in 2007, represents a milestone in the implementation of the Intersectoral Strategy on Philosophy. Based on the results of a worldwide qualitative and quantitative survey, addressed to Ministries of Education, National Commissions for UNESCO, philosophers, researchers, experts, teachers, educationalists, UNESCO Chairs in philosophy and any other UNESCO privileged partners in the field, this unprecedented work describes what exists, but also, and especially, deals with key questions and, as much as possible, provides proposals, innovative ideas and orientations.

UNESCO's ambition is now to go one step further by involving the largest number of concerned and committed Member States in providing durable support for philosophy within the educational system, both formal and informal. Within this framework, high-level regional meetings on the teaching of philosophy were organized in Port Louis, Republic of Mauritius, in September 2009, for Anglophone African countries; in Bamako, Mali, in September 2009, for African Francophone countries; in Tunis, Tunisia, in May 2009, for the Arab region; in Manila, Philippines, in May 2009, for Asia and the Pacific; and in Santo Domingo,



Dominican Republic, in June 2009, for Latin America and the Caribbean. The principal objective of these high-level encounters was to engage in concerted action with UNESCO's Member States so as to accompany them in the formulation of policies favouring the teaching of philosophy.

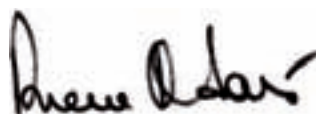
To this end, Member States have been invited to perform a diagnosis that is as thorough as possible of the crucial questions concerning the teaching of philosophy at national level, as well as suggestions for action that would deserve to be implemented.

By means of this publication, UNESCO wants to contribute to deepening the ongoing debate by putting forward a certain number of facts, practices having proven their worth and live questions raised by the teaching of philosophy, notably in the debates and discussions that took place in the Mauritius meeting in September 2009. We are convinced that combining the preliminary diagnoses performed at national level and UNESCO's specific contribution during each of the regional meetings will lead to a promising synergy. The ultimate goal will be to facilitate the establishment of national action plans, especially through strengthened regional cooperation.

We are most delighted to see the joint efforts undertaken by UNESCO and its Member States in favour of the teaching of philosophy.



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**Chief of the Human Security,  
Democracy and Philosophy  
Section (UNESCO)**



**Pierre Sané**  
**Assistant Director-General for  
Social and Human Sciences  
(UNESCO)**



# Teaching philosophy at

# **pre-school and primary levels**

Quality basic education is education that does not perceive schools as places for the mere transmission and assimilation of knowledge, but as places for questioning and as “the best time to learn to learn”.<sup>1</sup> The 1996 Report to UNESCO by the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, presided by Jacques Delors, stated that “it is at the stage of basic education (which particularly includes pre-school and primary school teaching) that attitudes towards learning are forged that last all throughout one’s life”.<sup>2</sup> In Africa, alongside the outstanding literacy movement that resulted in many children learning to read and write, it is quality basic education that will be the strength of a youth confronted by the major challenges in the region.

For several years, Philosophy for Children,<sup>3</sup> or more broadly the idea of introducing Philosophy in Schools<sup>4</sup> and of developing philosophical inquiry, has inspired growing curiosity and enthusiasm throughout the world since it fills a major gap in education today. Indeed, the importance of stimulating reflection and questioning at the youngest age, and doing so within the framework of basic quality education, is increasingly acknowledged. Even though learning to philosophize at pre-school and primary levels has not yet been developed in Africa, this region can contribute to enriching this innovative approach which is undergoing constant experimentation.

### **Learning to philosophize in schools for a quality basic education**

The idea of learning to philosophize in schools assumes that children only fully blossom in school when encouraged to take active and deliberate steps to seek to respond to the questions about existence that they raise at a very early age. Children are actually perceived as being “spontaneously philosophers” by virtue of their extensive, radical existential questioning. The idea of learning to philosophize in schools has given rise to very diverse experiments throughout the world, in order to attempt to take this philosophical uniqueness of children into account.

So it is that certain countries create all sorts of opportunities for discussion and debate about philosophical themes in the classroom and others are rethinking the teacher/pupil relationship in a way that appeals to the pupils’ intellectual curiosity. In Africa, although practically no such learning to philosophize exists in the schools, it is nevertheless possible to find resource people who reflect on these themes in three African Universities: in Kenya (Department of Philosophy, Kenyatta University),<sup>5</sup> in Nigeria (Institute of Ecumenical Education),<sup>6</sup> as well as in South Africa (University of the Western Cape, Faculty of Education and the Centre for Cognitive and Career Education).<sup>7</sup> These measures, scattered as they are, are contributing in their way to the reflection of education experts, who stress that “confrontation, through dialogue and exchanging arguments, is one of the tools necessary to education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century [...]. More than ever, the essential role of education seems to be to confer upon all human beings the freedom of thought, judgment, feeling and imagination that they need to make their talents blossom and also retain as much mastery of their destiny as possible”.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Learning: The Treasure Within*, Report to UNESCO by the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, Paris, 1996, p.131.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>3</sup> This term was first coined by Matthew Lipman. See in this publication “Practices that are tried and true”, p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Term adopted in Australia about 10 years ago.

<sup>5</sup> Professor Benson K. Wambari.

<sup>6</sup> Dr Stan Anih and Father Felix Ugwuozo.

<sup>7</sup> Professors Lena Green and Willie Rautenbach.

<sup>8</sup> *Learning: The Treasure Within*, op. cit., pp. 101-103.

There was general agreement among the participants at the High-Level Regional Meeting on the Teaching of Philosophy in Anglophone African countries, Port Louis, Mauritius,<sup>9</sup> that young children can learn to philosophize as they are naturally inquisitive. To this end, pilot projects showing the potential benefits of introducing children to philosophical thinking should be encouraged.

### **UNESCO makes a resolute commitment to encourage the learning to philosophize in schools**

Teaching philosophy for children and learning to philosophize had already been the object of a UNESCO study in 1998,<sup>10</sup> which had stressed that it was possible, and even necessary, to present philosophical principles in simple language accessible to young children. Reflection upon this matter went still further in UNESCO's 2007 publication, *Philosophy, a School of Freedom*,<sup>11</sup> which takes into account discussions currently underway on the subject of learning to philosophize in schools and formulates the principal live questions which, in themselves, constitute suggestions for reflection that altogether shed light on the forms of education we want for our children. What is at stake with learning to philosophize in schools concerns the very meaning we wish to give to tomorrow's schools, which will have to be places that foster independent thought, reflective citizenship, and the blossoming of the child. If education in general must provide children with "the maps of a complex world in a perpetual state of agitation", philosophy can probably be the "compass enabling one to navigate" in that world.<sup>12</sup>

The impact of philosophy on children may not be immediately appreciated, but its impact on tomorrow's adults could be so considerable as to make us feel astonished at having refused or marginalized philosophy for children up until now.

## **Live questions**

### *Is educating children in philosophy possible, is it desirable?*

**E**thical and psychological questions often come up when philosophy for children or learning to philosophize in schools is brought up.

### **Are children ready to reflect at such a young age?**

During the different stages of their psychological development, children naturally raise questions of a philosophical nature. And since they ask questions, at times anxiously, it is preferable to accompany them in their questioning and to reassure them with regard to the different questions about existence.

There is also the assumption upon which philosophy for children is based that exhorts us to demystify childhood and look at the reality, since many children experience very difficult situations, regardless of their social milieu or the state of development of their country. To confront this situation, one can resort

<sup>9</sup> The debates that took place during this meeting will be designated in this publication as the 'Mauritius debates'.

<sup>10</sup> Philosophy for Children, Meeting of Experts, Report, Paris, UNESCO, 26-27 March 1998.

<sup>11</sup> UNESCO, *Philosophy, a School of Freedom*, Paris, UNESCO Publishing, 2007.

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001541/154173e.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> *Learning: The Treasure Within*, op. cit., p. 91.

to learning to philosophize in which rational thinking enables one to understand an existential experience and acquire distance with respect to the emotions felt. This work is all the more operational within the context of the classroom since it is collective. In fact, it enables each and every person to experience being drawn out of their existential solitude and become aware that their questions are those of each and every person, which is reassuring and produces feelings of being part of a shared human condition helping one grow in community.

### *Box 1 – What is at stake with the learning to philosophize in schools*

#### **1) Thinking for oneself**

Being a matter of existential, ethical, aesthetic questions, thinking for oneself presupposes a reflective process that formulates problems, conceptualizes and argues rationally. Beginning to learn this as early as possible means guaranteeing awakening enlightened reflection on the human condition in children.

#### **2) Educating for reflective citizenship**

Learning to think for oneself develops freedom of judgment in future citizens, protecting them from ideological indoctrination and persuasive advertising. Teaching to philosophize through the debating of ideas encourages confronting others with reason while aiming for the truth, an ethical and intellectual requirement of genuine democratic debate.

#### **3) Helping the child's development**

Learning how to reflect is important for the construction of the personality of children and adolescents. It is an opportunity for them to experience that they are thinking beings, which strengthens their self-esteem and helps them grow in humanity by experiencing disagreement in discussion in peaceful coexistence, which raises the threshold of tolerance with respect to others and prevents violence.

#### **4) Facilitating the mastery of language and speech**

Verbalizing in order to think develops cognitive- and socio-linguistic capabilities. By working on the development of their thought, children work on the need for precision in language.

#### **5) Conceptualizing the philosophizing**

Practicing reflection with children calls for a redefinition of philosophizing and a conceptualization of its beginnings, its nature and the conditions for it.

#### **6) Developing a theory of teaching philosophy adapted to children and adolescents**

Theories about teaching philosophy are also brought into question. One cannot teach philosophy to children in big lecture halls, with major works or essay writing. But, one can theorize about their learning to reflect on their relationship to the world, to others and to themselves, by means adapted to their age group.

Michel Tozzi, Professor Emeritus in Education Sciences  
University of Montpellier 3, France

## What about their lack of scientific knowledge?

There is also the question of knowing whether children can engage in reflection without having the necessary scientific knowledge. The objection that is often made to Philosophy for Children is based on the argument that one philosophizes as an after effect of constituted knowledge, in order to go back to the knowledge one has and to understand the process in which it was built up. According to that paradigm, place of philosophy is at the end of the course of study.

This argument displays contempt for the scientific processes integrated as early as primary school by children, upon which they may reflect with the help of the teacher, especially when the methods are active, by working on the process and not only on scientific findings to be learned and memorized. Indeed, answering philosophically significant questions for children, to which science cannot respond, such as ethical questions, keeps them from thinking for themselves. These are questions to which children themselves will have to find their own answers in the course of their lives by evolving in their reflection on their own. So, although one must not answer for them prematurely, one must, however, accompany them as they go along in order not to leave them defenceless. This is the role of teachers at school – to support them in this search, by proposing situations in which they are going to develop tools for thinking that will enable them to understand their relationship to the world, to others and to themselves, and to orient themselves in these terms.

## *A matter of approach and pedagogy*

Within the framework of philosophy for children, it is appropriate to speak more about learning to philosophize than merely about teaching philosophy. The traditional model of teaching philosophy is based on what is called the transmission model. As for the way in which learning to philosophize in schools is practiced, this involves a new pedagogical approach, that of a teaching-learning process that places the pupil at the heart of the learning dynamic.

Indeed, since it is a matter of young children, who naturally cannot understand a purely theoretical course, learning to philosophize in schools fits in with a paradigm that is more problem-oriented and more focused on a logic of learning. It is thus the cultivation of questioning and not of answering that is aimed at in this case. Most of those practicing this method support the idea of leaving the answers open, in order to keep up the exploration of possible solutions. Therefore, how does one transmit philosophical ‘not-knowing’ if not by continuing to circulate it as a desire? That implies two fundamental attributes on the part of the teacher: on the one hand, modesty with respect to possessing truth; and on the other hand, the requirement regarding the desire for truth, where the status of the ‘discussability’ of the remarks allows for cooperative, shared and non-dogmatic quest for knowledge.

The pupils are therefore principally placed in the foreground in their role of actors rather than recipients. In this case, the process of learning to philosophize in schools is principally based on the discussional approach, in contrast to the institutionalized approach where the expository aspect for the most part prevails (as it is the case at secondary and university levels). Of course, discussion as the way to learn to philosophize can generate some reservations on the part of advocates of traditional teaching, for whom classroom discussion would be a superficial pedagogical method, while the teacher’s course would still remain the norm.

However, discussion is understood here as being an interactive process within a group of oral exchanges surrounding a specific subject with the teacher having intellectual responsibility. Many dimensions of this discussion may be philosophically oriented, among which the very nature of the subject dealt with often formulated as questions, and the manner in which students are going to infuse this questioning, through a rational, and not just emotional, approach. Besides, discussion is only one of the possible forms of learning, which does not exclude written work or traditional courses.

More generally, the pedagogical approach underlying learning to philosophize in schools requires the necessary conditions for bringing philosophical reasoning by and for children into play. Social psychology and the sciences of education often have recourse to the idea of the “Pygmalion effect”. The teachers, confident about the success of what they are doing, will create the material conditions necessary for practicing philosophy, and the pupils, finding that teachers have faith in their abilities, will see their self-confidence and their personal self-esteem grow.

During the Mauritius debates, questions were raised as to the relevance of introducing formal curricula for learning to philosophize at pre-school and primary levels. It was agreed that a formal curriculum would be too rigid and prevent the necessary freedom for teachers to respond to the diverse and spontaneous reactions of children. It was recommended instead to introduce children to philosophical thinking by taking into account their diverse experiences and social and cultural contexts. Mention was also made to the possibility of benefiting from the contribution of sages where and when possible in the classroom, as part of the dialectical activities.

### *A matter of teacher training*

Another important aspect requiring adapted action concerns the low level of philosophical training of primary school teachers. In fact, non-institutional training is left to volunteers and is often provided in a private context, or even by associations. When finding teachers without actual philosophical training, or who have only studied philosophy at secondary level, the first reaction would consist in proposing to provide them with classic academic training. This teaching would have its limits, however, because having knowledge is not enough to train skills. It is entirely a matter of having the teachers learn to philosophize, and not only learn philosophy, for them to awaken children’s minds to reflective thinking. It is the whole question of a theory of learning to philosophize that is raised for teachers, as well as for children themselves.

The appearance of a new subject in primary school should therefore lead the institution to introduce into the educational system – both in initial training and in in-service training – a consistent education of teachers in specific required practices in line with the objectives pursued by the programmes.

According to the Mauritius debates, though a formal curriculum does not seem appropriate at pre-school and primary levels, teachers need to be trained to the practices of philosophy with children. They have to be empowered with the methodology to ‘create’ critical thinking. Nevertheless, some participants think that only teachers who are interested should be involved in the relevant training in this field.

Since the teaching to philosophize is something new, a multidisciplinary team – including philosophers, sociologists, pedagogues, etc. – should be established to work together on a multidisciplinary approach



aimed at developing an integrated and comprehensive method to promote communities of enquiry in classrooms.

## Practices that are tried and true

Ever since its founding by Mathew Lipman in 1974, the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC), a pioneering institution as concerns Philosophy for Children, has given rise to several methods and practices throughout the world. Today, one finds a variety of models for teaching children to philosophize at pre-school and primary levels.

### *The Lipman method*

This method is recognized as being the one that has most influenced the development of Philosophy for Children in the world. When it was created, the Lipman programme was the only systematic philosophy programme for the 6-16 age group. It was therefore a model for many other countries, which translated and adapted it.

In contrast to the Cartesian tradition, for which childhood is the place and time of prejudice and error, Lipman hypothesized that children are capable of thinking on their own once a method adapted to their needs is applied. The method that he developed includes instruction material that is consistent, useful to all teachers who have not received philosophical training. Lipman wrote seven novels (see box 2) taking into account the major philosophical questions and the age of the children, and covering the entire course of study from nursery school to the end of secondary education. Each of the novels is accompanied by a teacher's manual, which consolidates what is learned in the discussions and supports what the pupils and teacher do with diversified exercises which are suggestions, and not obligations, leaving the teacher completely free to use initiative. This method counts at least three well-established strong points: first, cultivating questioning in the schoolroom by relying on the questions of the children themselves; second, proposing written supporting material that is narrative, in order to facilitate the children's identification with the characters and situations, and has highly anthropological content; third, setting up a place in the classroom organized for speaking and exchanging ideas about human problems, where the speaking is democratically shared, but with a critical requirement for which the duty of argumentation is the counterpart of the right to express oneself.

### *Michel Tozzi's "democratic-philosophical" method*

Growing around Professor Michel Tozzi, this method pursues goals close to those pursued by Lipman, but proposes a structured democratic mechanism, assigning specific functions among the pupils, and philosophically oriented intellectual requirements (problem-solving, conceptualization and argumentation). Practice is enriched by coordinating debates about the interpretation of a text (literature for young people) and philosophically oriented discussion, as well as by the use of myths as a basis for reflection.

Even if the themes of the discussions vary, the mechanisms remain practically the same: the questions that are the object of the reflections come from the life of the classroom. The children form a circle. The mechanism is set up through the assigning of several different functions: the *chairperson* oversees the

## Box 2 – The teaching material for the Lipman method

Whether it is a matter of an innovation to be introduced or to be strengthened, of experimentation to begin, or in progress, or yet the institutionalization of this type of practice, learning to philosophize in primary school can be greatly facilitated with the help of teaching material that already exists or is yet to be created. Several options are possible after the fashion of what many countries have been doing, namely:

1. Translating Lipman's novels into the language of the country, as well as the manuals he designed for teachers, with many complementary proposals for discussion between and with students;
2. Adapting the content of Lipman's novels to the local culture, by transforming certain episodes in a way that makes them more meaningful for the culture, traditions and context of the country concerned;
3. Writing new 'Lipman-style' novels, conceived in terms of the same objectives for the same process, but rooted in the specific culture of the country concerned;
4. Producing new supporting material on the basis of Lipman's material, such as albums with pictures, comic books, or other audio-visual materials.

### Lipman's seven novels

- *Elfie*, 3 volumes, 1988
- *Kio and Gus*, 1986
- *Pixie*, 1981
- *Mark*, 1980
- *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery*, 1974 and 1980
- *Suki*, 1978
- *Lisa*, 1976.

Adapted from the publication UNESCO, *Philosophy, a School of Freedom*, Paris, UNESCO Publishing, 2007, p.23

exchanges by recalling the rules of functioning; the *reformulators* explain in their own way what they have understood about what has just been said; the *synthesizer* sums up the progress of the exchanges; the *scribe* notes the important ideas he has isolated on the blackboard; the *discussants* participate in the exchanges by giving their opinion; the *observers* have chosen not to participate in the discussion, in order to help a schoolmate make progress in their speaking; the person running the group (generally the teacher) endeavours to maintain the intellectual requirements of philosophizing. Organized in this way, this discussion among peers initiates the children both to reflecting philosophically and to practicing living together as citizens.

## Oscar Brenifier's Socratic method

This method harks back to Socratic maieutics, with significant guidance of the group by the teacher with a view to progressive logical reflection on the basis of questions, reformulations and objections. This method has generated a substantial amount of internationally published teaching material.

It is the teacher who guides the class with demanding intellectual requirements. Faced with a question, a pupil proposes an idea that others must reformulate in order to understand whether they have understood it well. If not, reformulations must continue until the idea is understood by everyone. Then,

the speaker asks if anyone disagrees with this idea and why. Pupils reformulate the objection until everyone understands it. The teacher then asks the group to respond to this objection, etc. The progress of the group's ideas can be followed on the blackboard in accordance with a methodical and rigorous process.

### Jacques Levine's method

The objective of this method is to foster the development of children's personality by anchoring it in their condition as thinking beings, by having them experience that they are able to comment on a fundamental question that people, including themselves, face. As early as 1996, Jacques Levine formulated a set of practical and research guidelines based on his experience as a developmental psychologist and psychoanalyst. This approach is put into practice as follows.

First, the teacher tosses out a subject or a question of interest to mankind and to all children (for example, growing up), expressing his/her interest in finding out the children's opinion. The teacher then voluntarily remains silent.

Second, children are asked to express their opinions about this topic for about ten minutes. They thus become the author of their own thought, no longer expecting a right answer from the teacher. The session is recorded.

Third, in the presence of their peers, the group listens to the tape for ten more minutes and children can interrupt whenever they want to express themselves again. By means of this exercise, the conditions of psychological possibilities of constructing autonomous thinking are worked out so as to allow the individual to become aware that he/she is thinking in connection with others, but remains nevertheless distinct from them. Children undergo a community experience that binds them together in a common culture of shared oral expression. This confers on each of them a feeling of being both serious and pacified.

### Children philosophize



UNESCO, *Philosophy, a School of Freedom*, Paris, UNESCO Publishing, p. 31.

# Teaching philosophy at

# secondary level

Teaching at secondary level comes at a time of profound change in an individual's life – that of adolescence. The evolution-revolution experienced during this period has significant consequences to be taken into account in education. During adolescence, one's relationship to the world, with others and with oneself sets into motion a process of structuring and problematic restructuring, with its questioning, fears, joys and suffering. In addition, one's perception of others changes by becoming a determinant factor in the way one sees oneself and reacts. Adolescence is, therefore, a propitious time for philosophical questioning.

Teaching philosophy at secondary level should thus find a legitimate place in the educational system.

To that end, it is necessary to restore the place of teaching philosophy, often the first to be sacrificed, in comparison to literature and history, which generally benefit from being firmly anchored in the cultural identity of the different countries. It is also necessary to restore the place of the human sciences in general, which they continue to lose to the benefit of the scientific and technical fields. As secondary education has a tendency to become increasingly technical in an overall context of pursuing economic growth, it is fitting to envisage development in terms of all of its dimensions — ethical, cultural, social and human.

## Overview

Africa has been resolute in its determination to undertake measures in favour of quality education, particularly at secondary level. For this reason, teaching philosophy, similarly to other disciplines, must face a certain number of challenges.

The survey conducted by UNESCO in 2007<sup>13</sup> found that in Africa philosophy is taught at secondary level in a limited number of countries, namely Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritius, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal and Zimbabwe.

In African Francophone countries, teaching philosophy is obligatory and takes place during the last year of secondary school, while Anglophone African countries,<sup>14</sup> philosophy is not a required course. No information has been received from the Lusophone countries of the region.

In certain countries, philosophy is taught at secondary level in conjunction with scientific, literary, economic or social studies, as well as in the technical and professional branches of study.

Beyond this finding that reveals a certain disparity regarding the place accorded to teaching philosophy in Africa, it must be noted that the promotion of philosophy teaching in certain countries of the continent has inspired optimism of many respondents to the survey conducted by UNESCO.

<sup>13</sup> UNESCO online Questionnaire on the state of the art of philosophy teaching, whose results are published in the UNESCO Study *Philosophy, a School of Freedom*, op. cit.

<sup>14</sup> This is something that exists in other regions of world.

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For example, in Côte d’Ivoire, philosophy is already taught in the next to the last year of secondary school and it is even a question of introducing it as early as the year before that. This optimism is also reflected in the introduction of innovative comparative philosophical studies in which African writers are studied in the Central African Republic.

In what follows, the principal issues are set out and an attempt is made to present some constituents of a response for the purpose of contributing to the future formulation of appropriate policies regarding the subject.

## Challenges

### *What place for philosophy in quality teaching?*

It is necessary to stress that teaching philosophy aims at training people to think independently and at fostering a critique of knowledge, rather than the mere assimilation. In fact, according to the Mauritius debates, “philosophy plays a critical role in quality education by contributing to enhance the discussions among students and developing conflict resolution skills; enhancing basic skills of listening, writing and critical thinking, exploring notions of truth, namely through a Socratic method; understanding the rationale of the different subjects that are taught; building the character of the individual; fostering creativity.”

Two main questions that emerge from UNESCO’s Study inquire on the place of philosophy and its links with the other subject matters.

On the one hand, one of the main challenges is not confusing teaching philosophy with teaching civics, ethics and religion, whose respective goals are by nature different. In other words, it is a matter of granting philosophy its full place and its autonomy. Philosophy has its own requirements and methodology for educating about the values and ethical principles indispensable for peace and democracy to set in durably.

On the other hand, as a genuine asset for quality education, philosophy must be conceived as enabling people to think about knowledge acquired all throughout their secondary education, within a dynamic of complementarity with the other subject matters. Teaching philosophy must thus inspire concrete interdisciplinary reflection that in turn develops the criteria for asking questions about knowledge acquired in other fields. Philosophy courses will then be a special opportunity to encounter different kinds of knowledge, providing coherence in tune with everything taught through practicing dialogue based on the desire to question. By avoiding disciplinary fragmentation, philosophy can for example complement scientific knowledge through constant questioning on the foundations of scientific truth, as mentioned during the Mauritius debates.

### *Box 3 - Excerpts from the Paris Declaration for Philosophy*

“We, the participants in the International Study Days on “Philosophy and Democracy in the World” organized by UNESCO in Paris on 15 and 16 February 1995, [...]

Emphasize that philosophy teaching encourages open-mindedness, civic responsibility, understanding and tolerance among individuals and groups;

Reaffirm that philosophy education, by training independently minded, thoughtful people, capable of resisting various forms of propaganda, prepares everyone to shoulder their responsibilities in regard to the great questions of the contemporary world, particularly in the field of ethics;

Confirm that the development of philosophical debate in education and in cultural life makes a major contribution to the training of citizens, by exercising their capacity for judgment, which is fundamental in any democracy.

Committing ourselves to do everything in our power in our institutions and in our respective countries to achieve these objectives, we therefore declare that: [...]

Philosophy teaching should be maintained or expanded where it exists, introduced where it does not yet exist, and designated explicitly as “philosophy”; [...]

Philosophy as the free pursuit of inquiry, cannot consider any truth to be final, and encourages respect for the convictions of the individual but should in no circumstances, at the risk of denying its own nature, accept doctrines which deny the liberty of others, affront human dignity and sow the seeds of barbarity”.

Quoted from Intersectoral Strategy on Philosophy, 171 EX/12, UNESCO Executive Board Paris, 2005. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001386/138673e.pdf>

### *What approaches to teaching at secondary level?*

Among other things, the UNESCO Study relayed the opinions of many professors pleading for a critical, relevant reshaping of programmes. Indeed, in an age of rapidly accelerating globalization, the traditional manner of teaching philosophy has reached certain limits. Would it not be appropriate to establish new approaches that, while presenting certain ideas and concepts, would open the way to broader debate? Should one, and how, “revolutionize” or reform the ways and means of teaching philosophy?

Too often, in fact, philosophy is taught in a pompous, esoteric, even pedantic way, by summoning up the great names of the history of philosophy. This way of teaching tends to discourage students and to deaden their interest in the field. While it is undeniable that teaching philosophy fundamentally involves a presentation of the history of ideas, it cannot, nevertheless, be limited to that. In that case, would it not be appropriate to develop new methods oriented also toward the



knowledge underlying the theories of the major philosophers from Plato to Sartre in such a way as to stimulate or create genuine philosophical reflection in the students?

The teaching methods must certainly be adapted to different contexts, to the most varied audiences, while keeping in mind that philosophy teaching is supposed to educate free, aware, responsible citizens and not necessarily philosophers. Philosophy teachers surely sometimes find themselves defenceless before listeners unaccustomed to analysis or uncomfortable with abstract subject matter that can seem dull by definition.

This question cannot be dissociated from that of supporting materials, like textbooks, the teaching tools and instruments that should always take into account both the audience to which they are destined and the issues that philosophical reflection grounded in ethical considerations raises. Thus, by starting from concrete examples drawn from daily experience, one can also lead students to ask questions about their conscience, actions, etc. Philosophy taught using these kinds of flexible supporting materials can thus provide students with opportunities to think and compare, particularly in relation to their concerns.

Finally, the question of traditional types of evaluation should also be dealt with, and especially the preponderance of written exercises like essays. Why not, for example, envisage taking oral participation throughout the year into consideration when it comes to evaluation, and not just written work? It is fundamental to envisage means of evaluation other than just the written exercises often deemed to be the means par excellence of expressing reasoning. Students must be brought to free themselves of commonplace ideas and reflexes they possess in order to reason fully and autonomously without for all that reciting a lesson.

### *What kind of teacher education?*

In Africa, like in other regions, one of the principal findings concerns the lack of preparation of philosophy teachers at secondary level.

The first point is that the training that teachers have received is not always adapted to the real demands of teaching at secondary level. According to the study, three main scenarios can be identified: cases in which a university diploma in philosophy is required, as in Côte d'Ivoire, Mauritius, Senegal, Chad, Lesotho; cases in which teacher education is required, as a complement or not, to philosophical training, as in Botswana, Congo, Madagascar, Niger and Senegal ; and cases in which other credentials, like university diplomas in other subjects, qualify one to teach philosophy, as in Burkina Faso, Burundi, Rwanda and Zimbabwe. The last case shows that the educational system has a tendency to consider that teaching philosophy at secondary level does not necessarily require specialization. Added to that is the lack of in-service training so essential to keeping the teachers' interest alive, improving skills and updating knowledge of the field.

A suggestion coming from the Mauritius debates is that there should be philosophy per se modules, including pedagogy, in teacher training programmes, and more particularly at PGCE (Professional Graduate Certificate in Education) level.

The second point is that teaching in schools only represents one of the professional opportunities open to philosophy graduates, and not always the most enticing one. This situation partly leads to a gap between the number of philosophy teachers and the number of university graduates. Moreover, a coherent, complementary link is missing between, on the one hand, the training offered in universities and, on the other hand, the needs of teachers at secondary level.

This situation is all the more complex because the African countries are experiencing the more general problem of 'brain drain' – a factor often brought up in the UNESCO Study – owing especially to the recruiting of the best researchers by universities in other regions of the world. This problem is a huge academic challenge since it not only deprives the continent of its best resources, but it also destroys any chance of regenerating them again.

### *What impact can African philosophies have?*

The matter of the content of philosophy teaching with regard to local cultures is also an issue of the utmost importance. The UNESCO study shows that teachers in African countries are most enthusiastic about introducing and promoting the teaching of African philosophy and African philosophers.

To accompany this dynamic, it is necessary to make an anthology of African knowledge available to teachers, so that they can overcome the difficulties involved in establishing the link between their philosophy teaching, African cultures and the pertinent African writers and specialists of Africa.

Something major is at stake here, because while training people to think critically cannot be reduced to a culture-bound pedagogical approach, teaching content coming from other contexts often risks to be perceived by students and teachers as abstract and unrelated to the concrete realities of the culture within which they live. In line with the Mauritius debates, it appears that the adoption of an intercultural and comparative philosophy could help young people understand that the process of identity construction is dynamic and that the self is neither inherited nor imposed, but it is collectively constructed.

### *Philosophizing in a multilingual context in Africa*

Africa is acknowledged as the continent offering the far greatest amount of linguistic diversity.

However, as pointed out by the participants in the Mauritius debates, nowadays the dialogue on philosophy in Africa is hampered by linguistic barriers. It is thus suggested on the one hand to favour more regular interactions among French, English and Portuguese-speaking philosophers in the region; and on the other hand, to encourage multilingualism at all levels of the teaching of philosophy and to explore the possibility of translating basic philosophical texts into African languages and vice versa.

In fact, when duly taken into consideration by the educational system, this plurality of African languages constitutes extraordinary cultural resources, from which teachers and students must

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draw their knowledge. In this regard, philosophy is one of the disciplines that best enable people to take full possession of these infinite resources. Indeed, philosophizing within a multilingual context requires carefully working out the meanings that a given concept can take on when transposed into another closely related or totally different language. It is this setting up of a dialogue between several languages, each one expressing the very same philosophical concept in a different way, that genuinely provides food for thought. The term used to express, for example, the concept of 'individual' in one's language does not invoke the same association of ideas in that of another person.

Thus, in African schools in which several languages have been taught for a long time, students can considerably and continually enrich themselves by engaging in philosophical reflections grounded on the very diversity of the languages in use. Therefore, it will be absolutely fundamental for philosophy teachers, when giving students a philosophical text to read in one language, to draw their attention to the fact that it is precisely the multilingual reality that they experience on a daily basis that makes possible and gives rise to a fruitful plurality of meanings. In order to favour such differentiated reflection, it is necessary for students to have access to texts written and/or translated into the language they best master. Then, starting from that stage, comparative semantic work can really begin.

For African students to derive real benefits from their multilingual heritage, specific innovative philosophical work can be envisaged. That consists of analysing the African languages themselves to detect, first of all, some major ideas of philosophical significance (such as Nature, Truth, Death, etc.). Then, it is necessary to study the semantic network into which they fit. Finally, one has to understand how this network functions within a language by relating it to networks of other African or European languages.<sup>15</sup> This type of work will progressively chart a whole set of terms that signify philosophical concepts in African languages. Students will then be able to see the specific way in which their languages manipulate these concepts and furthermore, they will deepen their understanding by comparing certain terms in their own language with equivalent terms in other languages that they master. These efforts could lead to the publication of a multilingual lexicon collecting important philosophical terms accompanied by their differentiated meanings in the languages used in African schools.

In parallel, possibilities other than translation exist to respond to the linguistic challenge, in particular that of genuine philosophically oriented discussion in which the speech has a central role and the students are granted the freedom to express their thoughts in the languages they best master. These are some of the many advantages that have to be taken into account, especially in the process of educator training.

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<sup>15</sup> See Barbara Cassin, *Vocabulaire européens des philosophies*, Paris, Sueil, 2004, p. XVII.

# Suggestions for possible action

There is a great variety of means of transmitting a taste for philosophizing and awakening interest and curiosity for this field. Africa is a continent where innovative practices when it comes to teaching philosophy can be engaged in using the rich human and intellectual potential underlying each country's educational system to the best advantage.

## Strengthen the place of philosophy in schools

- Accord a full, complete, autonomous place to philosophy. In doing so, a complementary and interdisciplinary approach in relation to other disciplines can be envisaged.

## Initiate innovative approaches

- Foster creativity and innovation with regard to methods of teaching philosophy. To this end, draw in particular from the store of innovative practices developed for learning to philosophize, such as according value to oral expression in the evaluation process, the use of philosophically oriented discussion, etc.
- Support the exchange, diffusion and circulation of knowledge and practices related to the teaching of philosophy at intra-regional and international levels.
- Optimize the production of philosophy teachers' and students' manuals and textbooks through a permanent search for quality. This requires incorporating innovative teaching methods and taking into account challenges facing philosophy teaching in Africa.

## Conceive adequate training for philosophy teachers

- Accord value to specializing in philosophy in order to ensure specific professional opportunities, knowingly to ensure that philosophy teaching posts at secondary level are filled by faculty members who are specifically trained for that function.
- Guarantee the training of philosophy teachers at primary level that combines both the didactic and pedagogical content, and a specialization in philosophy.
- This training could be sustained and updated with relevant in-service training.

## Ensure the impact of African philosophies

- The collection of the philosophical knowledge of the African continent by and for African countries is an indispensable, effective prerequisite to directly impact philosophy textbooks and teacher's manuals. In this respect, relays of regional and international cooperation, such as the UNESCO networks, are high potential support systems.
- Benefit from the informal teaching relays for the diffusion and dissemination of African philosophical knowledge.

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### Use the multilingual dimension to its best advantage

- Facilitate access to texts written and/or translated into the languages that are best mastered.
- Develop a multilingual lexicon collecting the important philosophical concepts, accompanied by their differentiated meanings in the languages used in African schools.
- Encourage philosophical work directly using African languages, especially through philosophically oriented discussion where oral expression is an asset when it comes to reflective thinking.

# Teaching philosophy in

# higher education

The hybrid nature of university teaching – a mixture of teaching/educating and research – is all the more at work in the area of philosophical studies since they do not in general have other institutional places where they can develop. University teaching does not only contribute to shaping characters and building up human beings in their multiple dimensions – cognitive, emotional, moral, cultural or social. It is above all intent upon putting students in a position to produce new knowledge and making them capable of reacting to the incessant transformations that characterize knowledge within different cultures.

Philosophical knowledge is taught at universities in the form of research methods, categories, concepts, criteria of valid argumentation and more or less formal structures enabling people to construct physical, historical, moral and rational worlds. Whether it is a matter of educating educators, of nurturing historical culture, of learning universal structures of reasoning or of building up the culture of tomorrow's teachers-researchers, it is definitely the presence of technical knowledge of the field and of a properly philosophical *savoir-faire* that sets university teaching apart and is the basis of all its relevance. Moreover, in the countries where philosophy is taught in the schools, the dynamic between the secondary school teachers and those in higher education constitutes an essential asset in the philosophical educational process.

It is worthwhile noting that this part does not deal with the question of actual philosophical research, but of teaching philosophy at university level. Even though it is obvious that the university structure encompasses the 'research' component, this will be the subject of a separate UNESCO Study, since the issues involved are nonetheless of a distinctly different nature from that of actual university teaching.

## Overview

In most African countries, philosophy is taught at university level. Among the responses to the UNESCO Questionnaire,<sup>16</sup> respondents from 28 African countries<sup>17</sup> indicated that philosophy was taught as a distinct field in higher education: Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Swaziland, Togo, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

A general characteristic emerges with regard to the teaching of philosophy at university level in Africa. In Anglophone countries, where a comprehensive approach is favoured, philosophy is frequently incorporated into centres or departments whose scope extends beyond the field of philosophy. In Francophone countries, the approach is more targeted, especially through the *Écoles Normales*, which are numerous on the continent, where philosophy and more generally the human sciences are taught. No information has been received from the Lusophone countries of the region.

In addition, some particular characteristics are to be noted. For example, there is no necessary correlation between studies pursued and diplomas granted *in fine*. Thus, if philosophy diplomas are granted, it is possible that philosophy courses only represent a minor part of the course of study undertaken. This

<sup>16</sup> UNESCO online Questionnaire on the state of the art of philosophy teaching, whose results are published in the UNESCO Study *Philosophy, a School of Freedom*, op. cit.

<sup>17</sup> It goes without saying that these figures need qualification insofar as, on the one hand, the UNESCO survey involved a limited number of people questioned and, on the other hand, the number of responses per country must imperatively be weighed in terms of the number of universities and the type of programmes that may exist and about which the teachers responding to the Questionnaire did not necessarily have up to date information, or even did not have any information available at all.



disparity is especially found in the case of Uganda where the Philosophy Department of the University of Makerere grants a departmental diploma for education at Masters level in ethics and public management and in human rights.

Another observation, philosophy is only taught from time to time in certain universities and is not considered as a separate class. It does not constitute a specialization as such. One thus finds philosophy being taught in departments of literature, human and social sciences, etc. It is not rare for philosophy courses to be consigned to law schools, schools of economics, social sciences or education. This is the case, for example, in Burundi, where philosophy is taught in the department of African languages and literature. This lack of a specialization devoted entirely to philosophy is also manifest in the significant lack of institutes and departments of philosophical research strictly speaking, even though certain universities do have them.

## Challenges

### *Philosophy studies and then what?*

The links with the working world and the essential question of professional opportunities for philosophy graduates play a key role in the responses to UNESCO's Questionnaire. In fact, the responses collected by UNESCO reveal a sense of weakening of philosophy teaching throughout the region due precisely to the lack of job opportunities after specializing in the field. In Niger, two respondents agree in decrying the students' "lack of employment prospects", the fact that "many students leaving University turn to other fields of professional activities" and, even within the human and social sciences, the tendency to abandon philosophy for a "more professionalizing specialization like sociology". Two Indologists write from Mauritius that "those who are looking for work choose other fields".

The problem is that philosophy is often considered as not being very apt to contribute to economic and scientific progress. It is as if economic development might display contempt for philosophical reflection. Philosophy also suffers from the redeployment of resources to satisfy other priorities, especially those of the applied sciences and industrial research – a phenomenon found in other regions of the world and an area of possible intervention. Observed in Botswana, for example, is the "present tendency to allocate resources to science and to technology"; in Kenya "the concern about profit-making and the lack of jobs after obtaining the university diploma condition the choice of the subjects studied"; or yet in Lesotho, a deplorable "lack of sponsors, because the human sciences do not figure as priorities on a par with the exact sciences". A respondent from Gabon has decried the perverse effects of a structural lack of teachers combined with little motivation on the part of students at university and pre-university levels. According to a respondent from Nigeria, people more generally cite "a lack of a sense of the value of philosophy".

Most philosophy graduates in Africa manage to find employment corresponding to the training received, even if it can take a longer time than for other types of careers. Not everything is discouraging therefore. Often, obtaining a philosophy diploma represents a means of social affirmation. In this respect, a paragraph devoted to career prospects in the presentation of the Philosophy Department of University Makerere (Uganda) appears interesting: "the courses taught in the Philosophy Department can offer

opportunities to teach in tertiary institutions or to work as a civil servant in different offices such as that of the Cabinet of the President of the Republic, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Labour and Social Welfare, Gender Issues, Culture and Community Development, as well as the opportunity to work in NGOs or other private institutions. Philosophy graduates can also join the security forces, particularly within the police force and prisons”.<sup>18</sup>

### *Human resources above all*

It is important to give thought to the ties and interaction between secondary and higher education, particularly from the angle of professional opportunities and in-service training for philosophy teachers. Porosity between the two levels seems endangered today in many cases. This was communicated by respondents who emphasize the fact that in countries where secondary education no longer furthers subsequent development of university careers, teaching personnel often seem to lack motivation. Other respondents, namely from Mali and Niger, mention that “teaching has become a precarious profession due to the contractualization of teaching and the lack of written resources”. In the Central African Republic “the declining number of students at the university” was attributed to the “lack of motivation on the part of the faculty”. A respondent from Senegal mentioned the difficulty of reconciling a great number of students with “very insufficient infrastructures and support services”.

It is also urgent to solve the problem of the exodus of African researchers to European and, especially North American, and in the future, no doubt, Chinese universities, which considerably diminishes the attractiveness of the academic community to young students from the African continent. As Moses Akin Makinde, a professor at the Obafemi Awolowo University in Nigeria, pointed out in a paper given at the World Congress of Philosophy held in Boston in 1998 that “there is no doubt that the exodus of philosophers to western countries – because of the bad economic situation in their country of origin and the retirement and death of certain philosophy professors – has a negative impact on university programmes. The consequences of this phenomenon may prove disastrous for philosophy in Africa. In short, it will be difficult, even impossible, to train doctoral students who would replace the former professors after they retire”.<sup>19</sup> The situation has scarcely changed since. How can a sufficient number of philosophers be trained to ensure the continuity of the discipline?

The brain drain issue was discussed at length during the Mauritius debates and one proposal that was put forward to mitigate the adverse effects of brain drain in African universities is the creation of counter professional flows. By attracting new flows from other places, including in the framework of South-South axis, the negative influence of brain drain by opulent countries could be partly reduced. Scholars from abroad could be invited periodically to share their knowledge with local students. These exchanges could also be fostered over the African continent itself, by encouraging manpower mobility in Africa. The creation of this continental community of philosophers would enable Africans to better know and understand each other in a number of respects and would also be an alternative to overcome budgetary constraints. Still in a bid to address some of the problems related to the unavailability of financial resources in Africa, a database containing seminal works in philosophy should be made available to philosophy students and academics in Africa.

<sup>18</sup> UNESCO, *Philosophy, a School of Freedom*, op. cit., p. 106.

<sup>19</sup> See <http://www.bu.edu/wcp/Papers/Afri/AfriMaki.htm>

Another important issue raised during the Mauritius debates was gender representation and a recommendation was made to pay particular attention to facilitating women's access to philosophical training and teaching.

### *Innovative, varied written resources*

What is at stake in strengthening and enriching the holdings of university libraries in Africa in the field of philosophy is not limited to the university domain, but has a much broader dimension. As indicated in the World Information Report 1997-1998, the university libraries in Africa, when they exist, not only serve students, but also “play a key role in the provision of public library and information services [...]. In some countries, university libraries also serve as national libraries, either on a temporary basis (as in Nigeria before the National Library Act of 1964), or because a national library has been neither planned nor implemented. Consequently, large library collections of between 100,000 and 500,000 books, periodicals, unpublished manuscripts and non-book materials are not uncommon in many African university libraries”.<sup>20</sup> This shows, therefore, the extreme importance and the great interest of supplying university libraries with philosophy works. These libraries serve in fact to transmit knowledge of philosophy to the general public.

Nevertheless, the same report goes to state that “the downturn in the economic fortunes of African countries during the last decade or so has had a devastating effect on the quality of library services in academic institutions, virtually all of which are publicly funded. Most of them can no longer afford to buy new books, and large proportions of periodical subscriptions have been cancelled”.<sup>21</sup> This observation is particularly true for philosophy, the teaching of which in Africa faces a dearth of written material, of up-to-date philosophical bibliographies and other reference tools. However, contemporary scholarly publications about philosophy exist, and international symposia are held throughout the world, producing proceedings in every way important for realizing advances in the field. It is those publications, among others, that African universities must endeavour to acquire for their libraries. The report concludes with a reminder that “effective library and information services underpin every decision and policy process everywhere”.<sup>22</sup>

Moreover, today, information and communication technologies can provide certain solutions, provided that they are well-conceived and adapted. Access to computer technology in fact constitutes an essential factor in strengthening university training and teaching. Most researchers who are philosophers make up for the lack of local servers by using the e-mail services of international servers like Yahoo, Google, MSN, or networks such as Refer. In this way, professors and students can have access to a variety of written material on the subjects of concern.

Within the evolving context of publishing in the human sciences which, particularly in the case of journals, finds most publishers focusing more and more on publishing and distributing in a digital format, a new challenge arises when it comes to the means of acquiring access to these intangible collections. Most academic publishers today propose distribution contracts on a nation-wide basis enabling networks of libraries and teaching establishments to acquire access to all their publications. Thus, in South Africa, a

<sup>20</sup> Y. Courier and A. Large, *World Information Report 1997-1998*, Paris, UNESCO Publishing, 1997, p. 63.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

project aiming to ensure access to digitalized publications to all of the country's research and teaching centres is being implemented, with local consortia seeking to join in the South African Site Licensing Initiative (SASLI), a nation-wide consortium. It would be most opportune to encourage the proliferation of these portals to the acquisition and distribution of scientific information continent-wide in Africa.

### *Philosophy: Agora for public debate*

One of the major roles of the university, and of philosophy teaching at this level, is to foster the debating of ideas in order to advance the state of knowledge. In these debates, what is political or, in other words, matters concerning the evolution and future of the polis, has a very significant place. However, for philosophy to be an authentic agora for public debate, academic freedom must be guaranteed at university.

The problem in many countries in the world is to reach an adequate conception of the ties uniting philosophy, politics and academic freedom. The danger arises when political regimes or systems claim the right to impose on teachers/researchers and students some forms of obedience, or even certain forms of political fidelity, thus reducing philosophy teaching to a mere means of dissemination of an ideology. This is the case, for example, when oaths of fidelity or political orthodoxy are periodically imposed on academic communities. Political constraints also concern the prohibition that is still found in many circumstances to include certain subjects in the teaching programmes, or yet again the imposition upon a country's researchers of a philosophical orthodoxy to which they are expected to conform.

These are just some of the hypothetical situations that may interfere with freedom of research, teaching and learning of the academic community and students, especially when their field, philosophy, is specifically based on constantly questioning certainties. There exists also a more subtle form of pressure on teachers and students, difficult to detect, and which several research teachers have denounced. This pressure is caused by the political climate established within a scholarly community and taking the form of self-censorship on the part of the members of this community, particularly where politically sensitive or controversial subjects are concerned.

With regard to the present-day situation in Africa, as stated by the Congolese philosopher Phambu Ngoma-Binda, the importance of taking political issues into account is the principal element that determines the degree of political consciousness of a philosophical activity; and, the degree of political consciousness of philosophy is the essential gauge of potential practical effectiveness.<sup>23</sup> For this remark to take on its full meaning, and for philosophy to have a real, direct impact on politics, all the actors in African academic and political life must work together to resolutely and durably defend academic freedom in the continent's universities.

Academic freedom was also mentioned by the Mauritius debates as an essential issue in ensuring the independence of curriculum developers so that the teaching of philosophy is not distorted by political demands. The difficulties and dangers for philosophers to express themselves on social and political matters were also pointed out, particularly in the African context. One way in which this problem could be addressed is through the setting up of organizations and societies to which philosophers could be affiliated in order to avoid personal reprisals. It was thus recommended that philosophers establish links with the International

<sup>23</sup> Phambu Ngoma Binda, *Philosophie et pouvoir politique en Afrique*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2004, p. 25. In French.

Federation of Philosophical Societies (FISP) and other concerned partners in order to define common actions in defence and promotion of philosophy and philosophers throughout the region.

### *Philosophy and religious institutions*

Another fundamental question that must be considered concerns the connection between philosophy as an independent university field, and the religious teaching which, often in Africa, also educates future philosophy teachers. Indeed, the gap left open by the lack of public policy in favour of philosophy teaching has provided opportunities to numerous religious organizations to provide instruction and philosophy teaching.

People responding to UNESCO's survey in fact lay stress on a distinctive feature of higher education in Africa, namely that it is above all institutions of higher education that educate priests and ministers who obligatorily teach philosophy. This is the case, for example, in Rwanda where religious establishments settled in after 1994 within the framework of a reconstruction of the country's higher education system, but the presence of philosophy in the religious establishments extends throughout the whole continent. Of course, such initiatives can have beneficial aspects since these establishments ensure that philosophy is not totally absent from higher education. However, one has to ask what kind of approach these religious establishments adopt towards philosophy. In this respect, a recommendation that came out of the Mauritius debates was to maintain a distinction between philosophical inquiry and religious doctrines.

At another level, a respondent from Kenya has pointed out that "combining philosophy, theology and religious studies in public universities has deprived the teaching of philosophy of some classroom hours"; while another specialist from the same country insists on the fact that teaching philosophy is "limited and confined to the university and theological institutions". In Uganda, it is considered that philosophy instruction "is wrongly understood as religion and ethics, and is seen as being the monopoly of the Clergy, for whom career perspectives are limited to teaching".

### *Teaching philosophy and interdisciplinary approaches*

An interdisciplinary approach that constantly inquires about the connections between philosophical thought and the different forms of cultural expression in Africa would be a good means of succeeding in restoring dynamism to philosophy itself. Indeed, in the African context, it seems difficult and reductive to limit the teaching of philosophy to works or authors who would be recognized as properly philosophical in a purely academic sense, because the African oral culture, myths or stories, for example, are can also be examined from a philosophical view.

The interdisciplinary approach is all the more well-founded today since cultural studies centres are in fact places of philosophical research as important and as rich as the philosophy departments. This expansion reflects a desire for interdisciplinary approaches that many researchers share and plays a growing role in the organization of academic teaching and research. The examples of ethnophilosophy in Africa, reflection on neo-Confucianism in China and East Asia, the dialectic interplay between religion and secularization in the West, or yet again the connections between philosophical rationality and Indian values, all illustrate the cultural significance that philosophical reflection has.

Such an approach will give the debate about 'African philosophy' all its significance and its complexity, bearing in mind the three tendencies that have appeared over these last years regarding the definition of 'African philosophy'.<sup>24</sup> The first tendency affirms that African philosophy is essentially found in the speculative ideas underlying the different traditional literary forms of expression, such as the proverbs, myths, or rituals that African societies have passed on (position of John Mbiti, for example). In contrast, the second position holds that only individual reflections about contemporary problems are really philosophical (position of Paulin Hountondji, for example). And, finally, the third position defines African philosophy as a critical approach adopted by contemporary philosophers, or by "Sage-philosophers", consisting in exploring the ancient intellectual heritage by questioning it anew (position of H. Odera Oruka). It is in fact an interdisciplinary approach that will clearly show how much African philosophy is an immense and varied resource that must be tackled as such. Since philosophy is a critique of knowledge, or a general theory of cultural forms, its impact on cultural traditions is significant, while at the same time they nourish its reflections considerably.

Thus, it would be of great interest for African universities to profit from this new academic trend towards interdisciplinary studies, in order to develop fully debates about the idea of "African philosophy" that have not ceased stirring up the African scientific community for years.

During the Mauritius debates, successful examples of the embedding of philosophy courses into other disciplines, like fine arts and performing arts were shared. The effects of philosophy teaching were reported to have been very fruitful. In the same respect, beginner courses in philosophy for adults were said to have brought very commendable outcomes.

In a situation where philosophy is no longer a fashionable subject, with dwindling student intakes, philosophy can be approached as a subject that can enhance understanding of other disciplines, e.g. the application of ethics via philosophy. The applied side of philosophy (e.g. philosophy of law, science or education) was discussed very extensively during the Mauritius debates and it was pointed out that it had to be properly valorized at university level. In a proposal to render philosophy more appealing as a subject and to make sure that it offers secure job prospects, the possibility of associating it with other subjects in the field of human sciences, for instance, was put forward.

## Suggestions for possible action

It is fundamental to take these challenges into account, to study the suggestions for action, and to see to what extent it is possible to implement the educational policies deriving from them.

### Protect academic freedom

- Safeguard the principle of academic freedom.

<sup>24</sup> Kwasi Wiredu, "Postface I: Some issues in philosophy in Africa today". In *Teaching and research in philosophy: Africa*, Paris, UNESCO, 1984, pp. 263-265.



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- Ensure that it is actually respected by preventing anybody external to the dynamic of scientific exchanges from laying claim to setting priorities for research, judging the relevance of the discussions, or placing limitations on the range of the field covered.
  - Support research and philosophical teaching with a view to strengthening the place of philosophical communities, while leaving them free to develop in accordance with a maximal diversity of approaches and thematic, methodological and conceptual choices.

### **Promote philosophy as an autonomous field**

- Encourage the creation and/or the strengthening of autonomous philosophy departments within institutions of higher education with a view to promoting philosophy per se.

### **Favour interdisciplinary studies**

- Develop an interdisciplinary approach to teaching philosophy, in order to contribute in an effective way to academic reflection on the different aspects of traditional and contemporary philosophical thoughts in Africa.

### **Strengthen human resources**

- Encourage the creation and/or strengthening of philosophy departments in terms of human resources and budget, so that they may provide valid opportunities for philosophy graduates.
- Support partnerships with the public and private sectors with a view to promoting professional opportunities for philosophy students.
- Ensure durable, systematic interaction and collaboration between secondary school teachers and university professors, especially through in-service training, joint research projects, or teacher assistance, with a view to guaranteeing the faculty's motivation.
- Take steps to encourage the "brain gain" by fostering the development of young researchers within universities and/or recurring to agencies specialized in supporting research, in order to set up programmes to bring students completing their research courses abroad back to the region.

### **Consolidate documentary resources**

- Work to create networks with publishers, or more broadly with the private sector, in order to ensure the acquisition of recent philosophical publications by African university libraries.
- Encourage the creation of digital portals for the acquisition and distribution of scholarly information in the field of philosophy.

# Conclusion

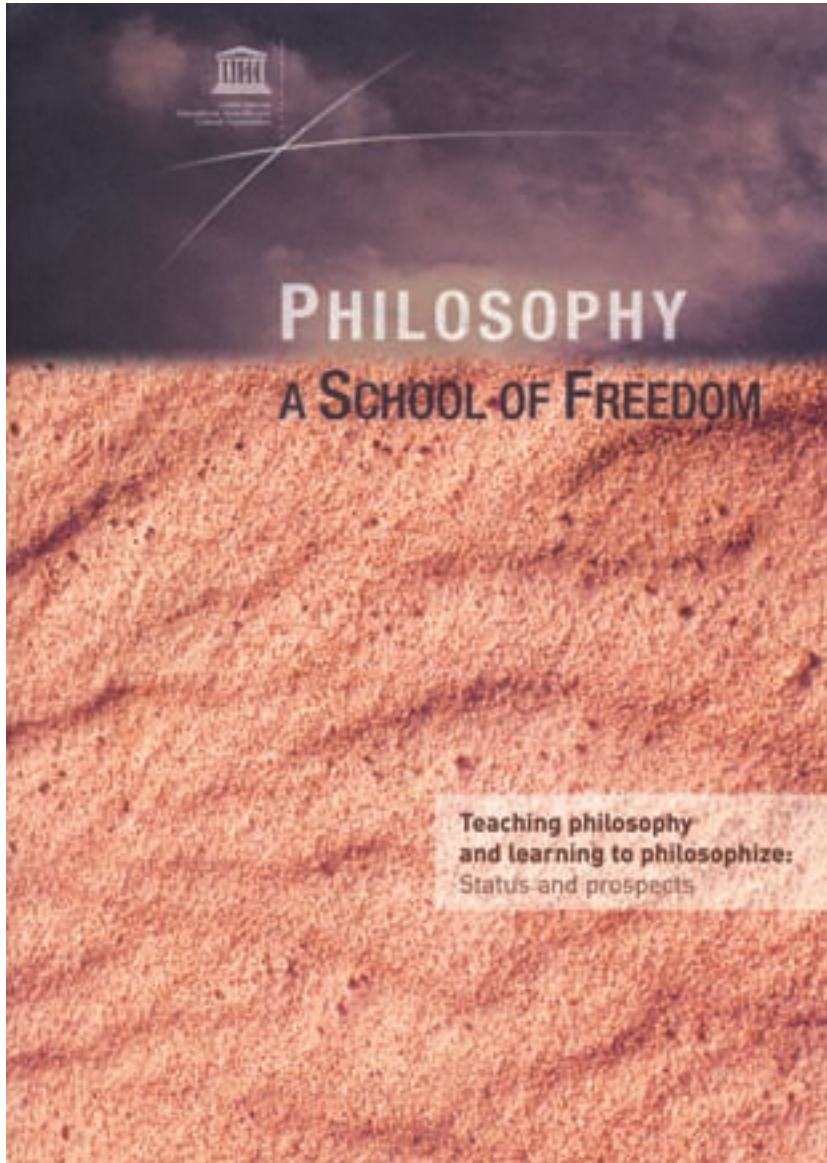
Philosophy is a most useful tool for the training of a critical mind and responsible attitudes. Philosophy is not impromptu. It is above all a kind of savoir-faire that requires responding to its own requisites and confronting the challenges necessary for its implementation. It is a field built up all throughout one's life, childhood, adolescence and adulthood, in an interdependent fashion, be it within an institutional framework or not.

Philosophy teaching must be supported energetically and insightfully, infused with new manners of teaching, transmitting and sharing, just as it must also integrate the legacy of the past, without being imprisoned by it, and take other modes of thought into account, while constructing its own identity for today and tomorrow.

Teaching philosophy must endorse its full role of stimulating people to the free exercise of thinking – critical, responsible thinking – just as it must contribute to the construction of peace and the promotion of sustainable development. The emergence of citizens fully conscious of their role, of their responsibilities and the stakes this represents is an asset in face of challenges that arise.

Envisaged from the perspective of quality education, philosophy for everyone, at all levels of instruction, is becoming a necessity in today's world. For this to be realized, a decision must be taken at the highest political level, targeting an educational policy formulation that integrates philosophy into an overall process of reform.





UNESCO Publishing, 2007

# **Recommendations for the teaching of philosophy**

**in Anglophone  
African  
countries**

## High-Level Regional Meeting on the Teaching of Philosophy in Anglophone African countries – Port Louis, Mauritius, 7 and 8 September 2009



Republic of **Mauritius**



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

# Recommendations

Recalling the Paris Declaration for Philosophy (Paris, 1995)<sup>1</sup> stating that development of philosophical debate in education and in cultural life makes a major contribution to the training of citizens, by exercising their capacity for judgment, which is fundamental in any democracy, and affirming that philosophy education, by training independently minded, thoughtful people, capable of resisting various forms of propaganda, prepares everyone to shoulder their responsibilities in regard to the great questions of the contemporary world, particularly in the field of ethics,

Recalling UNESCO Intersectoral Strategy on Philosophy (adopted in 2005),<sup>2</sup> which stipulates that philosophy develops the intellectual tools to analyse and understand key concepts such as justice, dignity and freedom, by building capacities for independent thought and judgment, by enhancing the critical skills to understand and question the world and its challenges, and by fostering reflection on values and principles,

Recalling that Pillar 2 of the above mentioned Strategy urges UNESCO to encourage the teaching of philosophy in all countries, notably through the development of policy recommendations on the teaching of philosophy at secondary and university levels, and on comprehensive curriculum development, which would include the teaching of different philosophical trends as well as comparative philosophy,

Relying on the results of the Study published by UNESCO in 2007, *Philosophy, A School of Freedom – Teaching Philosophy and Learning to Philosophize: Status and Prospects*,<sup>3</sup>

Fully aware of the necessity to overcome the challenges facing philosophy teaching in Africa,

Aware that early learning to philosophize develops critical thinking, invites reflection and contributes to the development of a free-thinking citizen,

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in the Intersectoral Strategy on Philosophy, 171 EX/12, UNESCO's Executive Board, Paris, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> UNESCO, *Philosophy, a School of Freedom*, Paris, UNESCO Publishing, 2007.

Considering that training in philosophy at all levels of education constitutes a pressing need for the development of African societies, especially in the context of knowledge economy,

Acknowledging that philosophy plays a critical role in quality education by contributing to enhance the debate among students and developing conflict resolution skills; enhancing basic skills of listening, writing and critical thinking, exploring notions of truth; understanding the rationale of the different subjects that are taught; building the character of the individual; and fostering creativity,

Welcoming the perspective of an Interregional Meeting on Philosophy Teaching which UNESCO will organize in a near future, so as to share the results of the regional consultations,

We,<sup>4</sup> participants in the High-Level Regional Meeting on the Teaching of Philosophy in Africa, held in Port Louis, Republic of Mauritius, on 7 and 8 September 2009, call on

### **1. Member States to**

- Ensure that a common understanding of the term 'philosophy' is shared by all stakeholders;
- Consider the teaching of philosophy as a continuous process from primary to higher levels of education;
- Consider philosophy as a naturally open-ended discipline which takes into account universal principles mediated by different cultural contexts;
- Identify ways and means to introduce the learning of philosophy to develop critical and independent thinking at primary and possibly at pre-primary levels;
- Take care to encourage children to exercise their natural thinking ability through philosophical thinking rather than indoctrinating them;
- Adopt a multidisciplinary approach in developing an integrated and comprehensive method to promote communities of enquiry in classrooms;
- Encourage pilot projects showing the potential benefits of introducing children to philosophical thinking;
- Help to introduce children to philosophical thinking by taking into account their diverse experiences and social and cultural contexts;
- Introduce a specific discipline called 'philosophy' where it is not present and enhance its development where it already exists;
- Encourage a comparative approach to the teaching of philosophy at secondary level with a view to promoting intercultural dialogue;
- Develop multiple approaches in philosophical reflection on existential issues with particular focus on the needs of adolescents;

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<sup>4</sup> See list of participants, pp. 56-58.

- Emphasize citizenship education, ethics and the abilities for logical and rational analysis in the curriculum;
- Require philosophy teachers to have specific training in philosophy and in the teaching of philosophy;
- Pay particular attention to facilitating women's access to philosophical training and teaching;
- Increase the presence of philosophy teaching in all university faculties, in order to make it a theoretical support to the understanding and critique of other disciplines;
- Emphasize the relevance of applied philosophy across different disciplines;
- Safeguard academic freedom which is a core moral and theoretical requirement for philosophical teaching and research;
- Encourage a dialogical approach to the teaching of philosophy;
- Encourage multilingualism at all levels of the teaching of philosophy and explore the possibility of translating basic philosophical texts into African languages and vice versa;
- Support programmes of international exchanges of scholars to enhance the teaching of philosophy as an internationally-oriented practice;
- Promote exchange of scholars and students, and cross-fertilization of philosophical ideas in Africa;
- Support teaching and research in African philosophy with special emphasis on the critical assessment of the cultural traditions in Africa;
- Propose the creation of UNESCO Chairs in comparative and intercultural philosophy in Africa;
- Promote the development of multilingual teaching and research in philosophy;
- Maintain a distinction between philosophical inquiry and religious doctrines;
- Provide better resources for philosophy, particularly concerning the access to online documentation and publications, by making ICTs available to students and scholars, and by helping to create documentation centres and databases in philosophy.

## **2. National Commissions for UNESCO to**

- Establish sub-committees for philosophy within the National Commissions for UNESCO and giving high priority to projects promoting the teaching of philosophy when submitting proposals to the Participation Programme (PP);
- Celebrate the World Philosophy Day (November).

## **3. Philosophers to**

- Create networks of scholars and intellectuals through the constitution of philosophical societies and associations at national, sub-regional and regional level;

- 
- Establish links with the International Federation of Philosophical Societies (FISP) in order to define common actions in defence and promotion of philosophy and philosophers throughout the region;
  - Increase the presence and visibility of philosophy in public life.

#### **4. UNESCO to**

- Organize, jointly with the International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies (ICPHS), the International Federation of Philosophical Societies (FISP) and other potential partners, a Conference on philosophy with children, with renowned experts from all over the world, with a view to taking stock of existing diverse practices and identifying some main challenges;
- Create an environment conducive to the teaching of philosophy by drawing on elements of indigenous knowledge and value systems;
- Support regional efforts to reenergize the teaching of philosophy, mainly by bringing students together, establishing philosophical networks and helping to organize conferences;
- Help Member States in fostering capacity-building in the teaching of philosophy;
- Reinforce exchanges among French, English and Portuguese-speaking philosophers.

# Annexes



# Addresses Participants

## Address by H.E. Dr Vasant K. Bunwaree, Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources

*Delivered on the occasion of the opening ceremony of the High-Level Regional Meeting on the Teaching of Philosophy in Anglophone African countries – Port Louis, Mauritius, 7 September 2009*

### **Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I have the great pleasure of welcoming you to this high-level regional meeting on the teaching of philosophy in Africa. I would like to extend my warmest welcome to our colleagues from UNESCO and different parts of Africa.

These two days of deliberations will give you, I am sure, the opportunity to find out the best strategies for the integration of the teaching of philosophy into the school curriculum.

The world of education is effervescent and ever changing. New technology which is now a new world economic order, new awareness of even traditional knowledge, bestow upon us new responsibilities and it behoves us to review our former stances if we want to avoid exclusion.

The practices existing in different countries have made us realize that philosophy should not be relegated to an oligarchic concern that the common man cannot aspire to own. Indeed serious thought is required for its integration and this has to be considered from various angles. Is philosophy meant only for the tertiary sector? Should philosophy be treated narrowly as a subject without cross disciplinary qualities?

Are graduates of philosophy doomed to unemployment? Are their skills irrelevant in a world of technology? All these questions will invite answers during these two days.

The inclusion of philosophy into the curriculum makes us reflect on the transformative effect of the teacher pupil relationship. The teaching of philosophy to children should form part of a holistic strategy defining education not as a mere transmission of information but as a moral imperative of emancipating thought in the individual and training him for the right use of freedom in a democratic society.

What model of relationship should the teacher entertain with the learner in a world which is volatile, fickle, prismatic and whose future is very often baffling and uncertain? Philosophy implies therefore, a rethinking of pedagogy because it aims principally at developing autonomous and critical thinking.

I subscribe entirely to the affirmation made in the Paris Declaration for Philosophy, in 1995, that education should contribute to peace by training free, reflective minds, capable of resisting various forms of propaganda, fanaticism, exclusion and intolerance.

For too long philosophy has suffered from the prejudice that it is the preserve of an elite or meant only for those adults who can be interested in philosophizing. Today pioneers like you are helping to extract philosophy from a ghetto in order to democratize its use.

If we limit philosophy to a historical perspective and to the study of great philosophers, we are proscribing it for younger generations and causing the curriculum to be biased. The traditional school as a repository of 'knowledge' must convert itself into a foundation platform for the promotion of 'wisdom'. The sage on the stage gives way to the guide by the side. The teacher as the one who knows all has created models that are exclusive, oppressive and elitist.

This conference will demystify philosophy and demonstrate that it is an indispensable leaven that is needed for learning any discipline. One important objective of education is to help the learner seek Truth, not disaggregate Truth into multiple parts through different disciplines but find Truth as a whole. The Sanskrit saying "Truth is one, its manifestations many" has its relevance through the development of a philosophical mind.

Too often the teacher is governed by the control of the syllabus as though examinations were the only aim of learning. By so doing, we vitiate the national objectives of education by narrowing our goals. The teacher must exercise his freedom to use the text as a stepping stone to philosophical practices. The child has a capacity to react.

The child's freedom to react to his environment constitutes an important step towards constructing meaning. In fact philosophy seeks to give a meaning to life, without which man is reduced to a mechanical robot manipulated by others.

In Mauritius, reflecting the multicultural reality in the curriculum and using it as a context to understand our shared cultural wealth and to be aware that even the differences tend towards a unified whole is one of the tasks our primary curriculum reform has sought to achieve without claiming to teach philosophy.

In fact the basis for multicultural education is the promotion of self-esteem through the recognition of our heritage. Unfortunately the urgency of academic imperatives keeps eclipsing the opportunities provided by the multicultural platform to exploit the context for philosophical education.

I am myself very eager to introduce a philosophical cum-spiritual dimension to the education of our youth, while avoiding the doctrinaire religion in a secular school context. Though at secondary level a few students opt for Indian Philosophy or Islamic thought, it is unfortunate that the secondary curriculum does not offer every youth this opportunity.

I have recently reconstructed the school time table to provide for half an hour of extracurricular activities every day. Schools are expected to use this time to carry out debates or discussions on themes of universal interest so that we may reinforce the underlying virtues of our multicultural society especially, the capacity to appreciate each other's identity and find meaning beyond what we practice within our own circles.

One fundamental paradox of the education system is that every subsector is viewed as a training ground for the next, so that pre-primary prepares the child for primary and so on. I say that it is a paradox because it reflects the contradiction in our own lives of never being able to live the moment fully.

For Philosophy to form part of the curriculum, we should ask ourselves what the purpose of every stage of the system is. Our aim is to prepare the children of today as men and women who can assume their

responsibility as enlightened individuals and as citizens of the world, capable of independent thinking and of seeking meaning and finding fulfilment in the glory of creation.

Philosophy trains the individual to see the whole as greater than the sum of parts, to find the cosmos in a grain of sand and to respect the sacredness of the other as the inevitable concomitance of being in society. If we see the child only as a child, the adolescent as an adolescent and not as an adult in the becoming, we shall not understand that a curriculum does not prepare one just for the future, or that the future is not made up only of economic needs.

Education makes us understand the subtleties of existence. Adolescents are bound to go through periods of questioning. Philosophy helps the adolescent to undertake an existential search through conceptualization and argumentation.

That is why apart from giving a place to philosophy as a subject in the curriculum, it should act as a cross disciplinary subject. Science cannot be divorced from bioethical issues. Mathematics should raise debates about relativism. Humanities should provide a broad canvas for philosophical enquiries. In other words, we need to integrate philosophy into teacher training programmes as a skill-oriented discipline.

Many universities today have lost their original mission of creating centres of excellence to produce leaders of opinion. Our youth are driven by the quick-fix values that characterize our society. An equation is thus established between education acquired and employment opportunities available in the market. This equation discourages a few universities from offering Philosophy at degree level. The marketization of education has eroded the importance of philosophy in the tertiary curriculum.

Employers complain against the heavy theoretical bias of many degree courses and the lack of experience is decried because new recruits take a lot of adaptation time. In fact there are jobs in administration and management that would best be done by graduates in philosophy because they have sharp critical thinking skills, can look at parts without losing view of the whole, can become problem solvers with empathetic listening skills.

At this international meeting on the teaching of philosophy in Africa, you will not only study the results of surveys you have carried out, but will also reach certain conclusions based on your experience of education systems in other parts of the world. Your deliberations will blaze a trail and encourage governments to integrate your recommendations to the reforms that they are currently carrying out.

Ladies and Gentlemen,  
I now have the pleasure of declaring the conference open.

# Address by Ms Sheela Thancanamootoo Director, Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE)

*Delivered on the occasion of the opening ceremony of the High-Level Regional Meeting on the Teaching of Philosophy in Anglophone African countries – Port Louis, Mauritius, 7 September 2009*

**Honourable Dr Vasant Bunwaree, Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources,  
Mr Cheikh Tidiane Sy, Director, UNESCO Office in Dar es Salam,  
Ms Aubeeluck Supervising Officer Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources, and  
Chairperson, MIE Council,  
Ms Moufida Goucha, Chief of the Human Security, Democracy and Philosophy Section, UNESCO,  
Mr G. Gunesh, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources,  
Distinguished Representatives of Anglophone African countries,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

## **Welcome**

On behalf of MIE and, in my own name, let me extend a very warm welcome to all of you and especially to our foreign colleagues from the African continent and our guests from UNESCO. It is indeed a privilege to have such a plethora of distinguished personalities for the purpose of promoting a most noble cause: philosophy.

## **The Event hosting**

The present meeting in this part of the world comes at a most opportune time – a time of questioning and renewal for the entire world. The current world scenario – characterized by economic crisis, pandemic disease and wars – calls for decision-makers worldwide to pause and reflect. For Mauritius this two-day event holds even more significance. We are, as you may be aware, engaging in fundamental educational reforms to revamp the education sector. We welcome every opportunity for continental dialogue and are extremely keen to benefit from the rich ferment of ideas which emanate from discussion with our African brothers and sisters.

## **The Agenda**

Ladies and Gentlemen, we have ahead of ourselves two grinding days. I hope all our participants are prepared for it. The questions identified in the working document set the tone for some fundamental reflection on issues to which no simple answers or unilateral solutions can be found. As I see it, in deciding about the resolutions to be agreed upon, we venture in terrains which are rife with controversies and divergent opinions. The first issue to be thrashed out belongs to the realm of philosophy: which philosophy and which philosophical approach?

The traditional African philosophical landscape is complex and often embedded in ways of knowing and thinking which would not fit in a purely academic definition of philosophy as understood by the West. How are these traditions to be integrated in a programme for teaching philosophy at various levels? In a country like Mauritius, where we have a world cultural heritage, since we come from many continents, we would have to develop ways of bringing together eastern (Indian, Chinese), western and African philosophies and develop practices which help students use a multiplicity of sources to develop their own world view. The task is no doubt complex, but quintessential, if philosophy is to fulfil its educative mission. It is a delicate balancing act, which involves adopting an open ended approach to alternative forms of knowledge, and retaining the essence of philosophy, which is to doubt and question. The specificity of each and every country will produce unique courses of actions in response to the demands of specific contexts but, it is crucial for us to think together on a strategy for Africa. This desire to create a shared African philosophical identity emerges from an educational, economic and political urgency: to develop global, local, informed and participatory citizenry.

Once we have charted out our response to 'which philosophy', we face yet another important issue: which pedagogy? What resources? Though pedagogical practices in the domain of philosophy teaching and learning have multiplied in the West and even in Asia and the Pacific, there is significantly less visibility of home-grown pedagogical practices on the African continent. We must learn together how best to equip our children with the intellectual and emotional resources which would safeguard them against the onslaught of bigotry, against the dangers of allowing others or machines to think for us, against the easy appeal of present gratification and individualism. The question of researching pedagogical practices in the context of learning to philosophize and teaching philosophy as well as the possibility of creating networks of practitioners-researchers stands as crucial to furthering the objectives of UNESCO in the field.

Of course, the twin issues of teacher education and educational resources are also key considerations. In the context of resources and materials, I am convinced that the cultural richness of the continent can be a treasure house for developing innovative and imaginative supports. Africa is not only the cradle of humanity, but it has also influenced, as Cheik Anta Diop wrote, many great civilizations, that of Greece, to name only one. Once the stocktaking exercise of what is available and practiced is over, we must, by any means, address the issue of what could be further initiated and explored. I am sure every single participant already has an inkling of the endless possibilities which exist in their local contexts. The present meeting is the ideal platform to share them.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the hardest nut to crack is no doubt the issue of teacher education. The world of education is no doubt rocked by the economic compulsions which guide what gets included in the curriculum. The UNESCO document has highlighted the difficulties many countries face in maintaining philosophy in higher education and the dwindling number of philosophy graduates. Notwithstanding this, there is much competition at the level of deciding what gets included in teacher education programmes in contexts where the worth of teachers is measured in terms of the quantitative scholastic results produced. At MIE, I am proud to say it, we have resisted the growing instrumentalization of teacher's work. Thinking skills are a foundation module common to many teacher education programmes and teachers have the opportunity, during their training, to engage in philosophical reflection on the second-order epistemological and ethical questions in education.

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More importantly, we have collaborated in drafting the curriculum frameworks for pre-primary, primary and secondary, we have sought to set thinking skills as the generic core competencies. By re-orienting the curriculum on teaching thinking rather than content, we have paved the way for the introduction of philosophy at various levels. I must admit that the context of the MIE is unique in that sense. We are not only the sole public provider of teacher education but have the privilege to collaborate with the Ministry in setting educational aims and designing the curriculum. This position allows us to better synchronize efforts and influence in a more coherent way classroom practices. Of course, Mauritius is a tiny island compared to our African counterparts. Our geographical limitations and insularity can sometimes be an unexpected advantage. Despite our particularity, the very same questions we struggle with here are similar to your country. That is why we are so very honoured and pleased to welcome you, and we look forward to learning from your experience.

In the purest Socratic tradition of dialogue and maieutics, I am sure that many questions will be raised (sometimes more questions than answers, for the world has become more complex since the 5th Century B.C.), issues examined and viewpoints confronted. As philosophers, it is indeed, a very comfortable state to be in. But as we are also responsible for the management of educational systems, it is my wish that at the end of these two days, you will become valuable ambassadors in defence of a common project for teaching philosophy in Africa.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to few people who have been instrumental to the successful organization of this event. First and foremost, the Minister for his unflinching support, and the officers from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources, UNESCO, our resource persons who have graciously accepted to lead the sessions, colleagues from other tertiary education institutions for their interest and participation, my staff who have put in the extra effort to ensure preparations are completed in a timely manner, they are too many to enumerate but a special word of thanks here for the graphic section, Mariam Oudin, my secretary and Mr Saraye.

Allow me to reiterate my heartfelt welcome to every single foreign participant. We have tried, at our end, to give you a taste of the Mauritian hospitality and make every aspect of your stay comfortable, enjoyable and enriching. I hope you will find it so.

I wish all of you very fruitful deliberations.

Thank you.

# List of Participants in the High-Level Regional Meeting on the Teaching of Philosophy in Anglophone African countries – Port Louis, Mauritius, 7 and 8 September 2009

## *Host country – Mauritius*

**1. H.E. Dr Vasant K. Bunwaree**

Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources

**2. Mr G. Gunesh**

Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources

**3. Mr H. B. Dansighani**

Chief Technical Officer, Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources

**4. Ms C. Dookhony**

Secretary-General, Mauritius National Commission for UNESCO

**5. Mr S. Bhowon**

Director, Human Resource Management and Development

**6. Mr S. Mahadeo**

Adviser, Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources

**7. Ms S. Thancanamootoo**

Director, Mauritius Institute of Education

## *Representatives of States of the Anglophone African countries*

### **Botswana**

**8. Mr G. Gobotswang**

Principal, Molepololme College of Education

### **Ghana**

**9. Dr M. Odei Ajei**

Lecturer, Department of Philosophy, University of Ghana

### **Kenya**

**10. Dr D. Wamugunda Wakimani**

Dean of Students, University of Nairobi and Lecturer in Sociology Department

### **Lesotho**

**11. Rev. J. Khutlang**

National University of Lesotho



## **Namibia**

### **12. Professor A. du Pisani**

University of Namibia

## **Nigeria**

### **13. Mr O. Gregory Odewale**

Assistant Director/Head, Social and Human Sciences Sector,  
Nigerian National Commission for UNESCO

## **Swaziland**

### **14. Mr Ch. B. Silvane**

Lecturer in the Department of Educational Foundations and Management (UNISWA),  
Faculty of Education, University of Swaziland

## **Tanzania**

### **15. Ms G. Mugosi Kabaka**

Deputy Minister of Education for Education and Vocational Training  
Ministry of Education for Education and Vocational Training

## **Uganda**

### **16. Rev. Fr. A. K. Katarikawe**

Lecturer of Philosophy of Education, National Teachers College

## **Zimbabwe**

### **17. Mr F. Mabiri**

Chairman, Department of Religious Studies and Philosophy, University of Zimbabwe

## *Resource persons*

### **18. Mr L. Scarantino**

Deputy Secretary-General,  
International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies (ICPHS)  
Secretary-General, International Federation of Philosophical Societies (FISP)  
Paris, France

### **19. Ms L. Green**

Professor, University of Western Cape, South Africa

## *Mauritian Participants*

### **20. Dr P. Ragoobar**

Mahatma Gandhi Institute

### **21. Ms V. Hurdoyal-Chekhori**

Mahatma Gandhi Institute

### **22. Dr H. Mariaye**

Mauritius Institute of Education

**23. Dr V. Putchay**

Mauritius Institute of Education

**24. Dr I. Asgarally**

Resource Person

**25. Dr F. Khoyratty**

University of Mauritius

**26. Mr R. Boodnah**

Education Officer Secondary School

**27. Mr K. Dabee**

Association of Indian Philosophy

**28. Ms S. Balgobin**

Association of Indian Philosophy

**29. Mr Ganga**

Ministry of Education, Culture & Human Resources (Culture Division)

**30. Ms A. Ankiah-Gangadeen**

Mauritius Institute of Education

**31. Ms R. Baichoo**

Mauritius Institute of Education

**32. Mr P. Nadal**

Mauritius Institute of Education

**33. Mr R. Bungaree**

Mauritius Institute of Education

**UNESCO**

**34. Mr Ch. Tidiane Sy**

Director, UNESCO Dar es Salam Office, Tanzania

**35. Ms M. Goucha**

Chief, Human Security, Democracy and Philosophy Section, Social and Human Sciences Sector, UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, France

**36. Ms C. Maresia**

Human Security, Democracy and Philosophy Section, Social and Human Sciences Sector, UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, France

