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## contextualising critical thinking pedagogy in south african teacher education

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### abstract

Since 1994, South Africa, a developing democracy, has endeavoured to improve the quality of its education. Crime, poverty, and unemployment among other socio-economic ills decry quality living. While politics and economics have driven education policy and curriculum transformation, these are symbolic in practice. Critical thinking pedagogy emphasises the importance of developing and enabling critical consciousness for quality living and healthy citizenry. Though complex in nature, critical thinking pedagogy is considered a student-centred inquiry-based dialogical approach. Contextualising critical thinking pedagogical practices embedded in theory needed for sustainable change and ongoing transformation is about quality education especially in South African higher education. In line with the call for quality education from local Non-Governmental Organisations and international institutions like the United Nations, this paper seeks to contextualise critical thinking pedagogy as an approach through the culture of collaboration and inquiry in South African teacher education. The paper

advances an explicit inclusion of critical thinking pedagogy in teacher education at South African higher education institutions. Lipman's Philosophy for Children framework is offered as a means for engaging a context-driven, collaborative, storytelling pedagogical approach centring fairness, respect and dignity sensitive to local and universal application that could address quality education.

**keywords:** higher education; communities of inquiry; critical thinking pedagogy; quality education; philosophy for children; teacher education.

### **contextualizar la pedagogía del pensamiento crítico en la formación del profesorado sudafricano**

#### **resumen**

Desde 1994 Sudáfrica, una democracia en desarrollo, se esfuerza por mejorar la calidad de su educación. La delincuencia, la pobreza y el desempleo, entre otros males socioeconómicos, empañan la calidad de vida. Aunque la política y la economía han impulsado la política educativa y la transformación de los planes de estudio, en la práctica son simbólicas. La pedagogía del pensamiento crítico hace hincapié en la importancia de desarrollar y habilitar la conciencia crítica para una vida de calidad y una ciudadanía sana. Aunque compleja por naturaleza, la pedagogía del pensamiento crítico se considera un enfoque dialógico basado en la investigación y centrado en el alumno. La contextualización de las prácticas pedagógicas del pensamiento crítico integradas en la teoría necesaria para el cambio sostenible y la transformación continua tiene que ver con la educación de calidad, especialmente en la enseñanza superior sudafricana. En consonancia con la exigencia de una educación de calidad por parte de las organizaciones no gubernamentales locales e instituciones internacionales como las Naciones Unidas, este

documento pretende contextualizar la pedagogía del pensamiento crítico como un enfoque a través de la cultura de la colaboración y la investigación en la formación del profesorado sudafricano. El documento propone una inclusión explícita de la pedagogía del pensamiento crítico en la formación del profesorado en las instituciones sudafricanas de educación superior. El marco de la Filosofía para Niños de Lipman se ofrece como medio para adoptar un enfoque pedagógico basado en el contexto, la colaboración y la narración de historias, centrado en la justicia, el respeto y la dignidad, sensible a la aplicación local y universal, que podría abordar la educación de calidad.

**palabras clave:** educación superior; comunidades de investigación; pedagogía del pensamiento crítico; educación de calidad; filosofía para niños; formación del profesorado.

### **contextualizando a pedagogia do pensamento crítico na formação de professores sul-africanos**

#### **resumo**

Desde 1994, a África do Sul, uma democracia em desenvolvimento, busca melhorar a qualidade de sua educação. O crime, a pobreza e o desemprego, entre outras mazelas socioeconômicas, depreciam a qualidade de vida. Embora a política e a economia tenham impulsionado a política educativa e transformado os currículos, na prática são apenas simbólicas. A pedagogia do pensamento crítico enfatiza que desenvolver e possibilitar a consciência crítica é importante para uma vida de qualidade e uma cidadania saudável. Apesar de ser complexa por natureza, a pedagogia do pensamento crítico é considerada uma abordagem dialógica, centrada no aluno e baseada na investigação. A contextualização das práticas pedagógicas de pensamento crítico, incorporadas na teoria necessária para a mudança sustentável e a

transformação contínua, está relacionada com a educação de qualidade, especialmente no ensino superior sul-africano. Em consonância com o apelo por uma educação de qualidade feito por Organizações Não Governamentais locais e instituições internacionais, como as Nações Unidas, este artigo busca contextualizar a pedagogia do pensamento crítico como uma abordagem, através da cultura de colaboração e investigação na formação de professores na África do Sul. O artigo defende a inclusão explícita da pedagogia do pensamento crítico na formação de professores das instituições de ensino superior sul-africanas. A estrutura da Filosofia para Crianças de Lipman é apresentada como meio de adotar uma abordagem pedagógica baseada no contexto, na colaboração e na narrativa de histórias; centrada na justiça, no respeito e na dignidade, sensível à aplicação local e universal – que poderia abordar a educação de qualidade.

**palavras-chave:** ensino superior; comunidades de investigação; pedagogia do pensamento crítico; educação de qualidade; filosofia para crianças; formação de professores.

## contextualising critical thinking pedagogy in South African teacher education

*The power of education extends beyond the development of skills we need for economic success. It can contribute to nation-building and reconciliation.*

Nelson Mandela

### *introduction*

Critical thinking is a “rich concept” (Scriven & Paul, 1987, p. 70) that is an uncontested marker of high student achievement. Sought after by politicians and economists as an essential skill and competence for 21<sup>st</sup> century living, critical thinking is associated with quality living and education characterised by fairness, respect and dignity. While for some providers quality education is synonymous with enterprise and financial stock market gains, seen through the lens of education policy and practice, it is about addressing educational dysfunction and exclusion. This is especially so for places like South Africa. The demand for quality education through critical thinking is especially important for South Africa, a developing democracy, struggling to establish quality living for all its peoples since gaining liberation in 1994 from its Apartheid past; the geopolitical and socioeconomic setting of this paper.

Although South Africa since 1994 has endeavoured to improve the quality of education, crime, poverty, and unemployment among other socio-economic ills continue to decry quality living for the majority of its peoples. Though politics and economics have driven education policy and curriculum transformation since the inception of democracy, these have been symbolic in practice (Soudien, 2014). Despite the incessant call for quality education, the country continues to reel under a divided system of lack and disparity among its vastly divided populations (Christie, 2021). Yet a call to quality in education in South Africa must be addressed if its burgeoning youth population is to thrive and succeed in a 21<sup>st</sup> century globally competitive, fast-paced technologically advancing world.

Of importance, the state has not succeeded to significantly transform the public education system as indicated in the constitution as the quality of basic education provided to children largely depends on their race, class, gender and whether their schools are in urban or rural areas. Achievement scores in international tests like the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and Trends in International Maths and Science Study (TIMSS) are evidence that South Africa's education system is ranked among the lowest due to several complex factors, key of which is poor implementation of policies, resourcing of schools, and teacher education. Listed among South Africa's challenges to quality education are issues of weak institutional functionality, undue union influences, weak teacher content knowledge and pedagogical skills, wasted learning time and insufficient opportunity to learn, curriculum irrelevance, and misaligned post-matric and adult education needs of the labour market.

Though regarded as difficult to define amidst its several contested (UNICEF, 2024), and complex conceptualisations (Fomunyam, 2018) quality education within a South African context is regarded as educational success despite socio-economic and racial background (Mensah & Baidoo-Anu, 2022) for upward student mobility and the betterment of oneself and society. Also called for by such global bodies as the United Nations Organisation (UNO), the Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2008), and the Assessment and Teaching of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, among others, quality education according to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4, includes critical thinking as a crucial prerogative for positive social change (UN). However, contextualising critical thinking as pedagogy for quality educational practice is a complex endeavour and a concern that is afforded attention in this paper.

Critical thinking in education demands a pedagogical approach that is contextual and relevant while recognising power, culture, and competence. This paper aims to engage a contextualisation of critical thinking pedagogy offered through Lipman's (1988) Communities of Inquiry (CoI) and Philosophy for Children (P4C) framework. The objective is to argue for a Lipmanian P4C

approach to critical thinking pedagogy as a means towards enabling and engaging critical thinking pedagogy lacking in South African teacher education.

To be grounded on intentional philosophical stories inclusive of local and indigenous texts used as explained in the pedagogical relationships presented in **Figure 1** below, a P4C approach to critical thinking pedagogy in South African teacher education may improve teacher education quality while promoting democratic skills of listening, fairness, respect and dignity among other ethical morays in the search for truth and meaning toward quality living. The effort may illustrate that engaging critical thinking pedagogical practices through a P4C approach might demonstrate both P4C's versatility and applicability for local and universal purposes while aiming to enable quality education in South Africa.

### *defining critical thinking*

Critical thinking is defined as a "rich concept" (Scriven & Paul, 1987, p. 70). Developed as a vision of Socrates more than 2500 years ago (Paul et al., 1997), critical thinking is the human desire to know; in other words, the search for knowledge and meaning through inquiry. Increasing in attention since the mid-20th century, the term's most widely recognised descriptions are found among others in Ennis (1964), Glaser (1941), Lipman (1988), Paul et al. (1989), and Siegel (1985).

Within formal education the above contributors associate critical thinking with complex universal human cognitive processes and skills used to evaluate and make sense of information. These processes often employ pedagogical strategies aimed toward nurturing and developing student capacities for logical inquiry and reasoning.

Further to this notion, critical thinking practices have become synonymous with "moral, ethical, and political intentions, and purposes for seeking to nurture critical thinking in education as social practice" (Moodley & Chetty, 2024, p. 13). Drawing on Cowden and Singh (2015) who purport that critical thinking is an "educational philosophical approach that seeks to connect forms of education to wider political questions by arguing that processes or acts

of learning and knowing are themselves inherently political” (p. 559), critical thinking here is associated with power.

This notion of critical thinking as power follows the extensive contribution and ideations of the work of Foucault (1976). Foucault in Arbeláez-Campillo et al. (2020) asserts that a culture of critical thinking “subsumes to different notions such as: freedom of conscience, freedom of expression, autonomy of the person, rights of resistance to oppression and free development of personality” (p. 6).

Foucault (1970) contends that a notion of critical thinking as power “preserves an external prudent distance with all forms of power that produce and reproduce institutionalised political, economic, scientific and religious orders” (in Moodley & Chetty, 2024, p. 13). Critical thinking therefore is about questioning the types of authority that resist systematic criticism and change (Arbeláez-Campillo et al., 2020). In so doing, critical thinking enables continuous improvement in the relation of knowledge and power; a way of being in the world (Kohan, 2013).

Notwithstanding the above, a notable definition of critical thinking adopted by The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) as a key global competence for academic and social lifelong learning success is that of Lipman’s (1988), especially argued for in this paper. Influenced by Vygotsky, Freire, Dewey and Arendt, Lipman (1988) defines critical thinking as “skilful, responsible thinking that facilitates good judgment because it (1) relies upon criteria, (2) is self-correcting, and (3) is sensitive to context” (p. 39).

Viewed as inseparable from critical consciousness, creativity, and care, Lipman’s (1988) definition of critical thinking is one that starts in awe and proceeds to reason (p. 20) which in essence is about opening up problem-solving processes that seek new solutions through deep reflection, reasoning and dialogue while respectful of curiosity, authenticity and originality. In other words, valuing individual thought and reason within a community’s context and ethos. Employing a socio-philosophical stance, critical thinking for Lipman is about enabling individual democratic engagement and social awareness. Such a

definition, though emanating out of a western-centric context is universal and arguably applicable even in non-western settings.

Lipman's P4C is considered a well-researched, universal, yet context-sensitive, approach that is valuable to addressing issues of quality education especially within teacher education in South African higher education.

### *higher education and teacher education in South Africa*

Higher education institutions in South Africa play a pivotal role in knowledge creation and distribution in their quest to address quality living. In recent years higher education institutions (HEIs) have undergone considerable transformation (O'Keefe & Courtois, 2019). In South Africa the *#Rhodes Must Fall* and *#Fees must Fall* student movements of 2015 ignited a vanguard for addressing transformation in curriculum and pedagogical practices.

However, South Africa's higher education system is affected by highly unequal socio-economic contexts and is diverse and differentiated. The differentiation pre-2003 was based on apartheid laws of race. Post-2003 saw the restructuring of higher education institutions in the postcolonial turn in South Africa which gave rise to 26 publicly funded universities. The approach to dismantling apartheid structures within higher education was sought through merging racially categorised institutions across the country.

Higher education is further differentiated between rural and urban, and historically advantaged and disadvantaged universities. These differentiations are significant in terms of understanding how the higher education system functions and often struggles to work as a whole (Human and Infrastructure Capacity Development, 2024). How universities operate is deeply influenced by the ways they are funded, the resources at their disposal, the structure and culture of the institution, the location, the governing bodies of staff and students as well as the vision and mission of the institutions (Human and Infrastructure Capacity Development, 2024).

This complex nature and differentiation of the higher education contexts in South Africa complicate the ability to address quality and development of an academic identity that is equal for all. The landscape of higher education has

changed drastically over the last three decades due to national and global crises and imperatives (Lange, 2017). Universities have been challenged to respond to today's knowledge societies, worldwide debates on transforming the curriculum, and the responsibility to foster a socially just education (Lockett, 2016) of quality for all.

Higher education institutions in South Africa are yet to embrace transformed curriculum practices, non-traditional, dialogical, more student-centred approaches that could meet transformational goals toward a more contextual and relevant education in understanding and meeting the language, cultural and social needs of its students and citizens. Among others, Govender and Naidoo (2023, p. 566), in their comprehensive exposé and challenges of colonial education in South Africa describe the country's still prevailing traditionally steeped western-centric model of education which continues to deny access and upliftment to all, in their call for a "decolonial" more contextually relevant curriculum in higher education.

Much earlier, this call was taken up among others by Sayed et al., (2017) within teacher education. While the issue of a decolonial Africanising curriculum is receiving foremost attention at all levels of education in the country, the urgent matter of a fair, peaceful and productive implementation approach to relevant pedagogical practices is lacking.

Of importance, teacher education at higher education institutions is at the forefront of the call to transform practice. The role of teacher educators is important in enabling future teachers, that is, initial teachers, and the learners that they will teach, in shaping and informing ways of being and participating in the world.

While South African teacher education post-apartheid (1994) has held its attention on social and political redress and equity, poverty alleviation and unemployment, and the provision of basic education for all, Moodley (2014, p. 17) asserts that this attention has left "little for higher, deeper, creative ways of learning for academic and global significance" that could address quality education for its citizens going beyond access.

Of concern is the acute disjuncture between school and system expectations, individual and diverse learner needs, and the level of expertise required by teachers especially in sound pedagogical practices to meet the context of a new generation of students in South Africa. Teacher education is a learned profession. Subject knowledge, pedagogical subject knowledge, and educational knowledge are three necessary pillars for teacher knowledge. This knowledge is established in theory and practice, and is the responsibility of higher education (Shulman, 1987).

Yet, in post-apartheid South Africa this challenge is hard to meet given the call for a culturally and socially relevant education in meeting the diverse needs of all its peoples (Christie, 2021). Teacher knowledge needs to engage with critical contextual knowledge both theoretically and pedagogically.

However, teachers' critical knowledge and understanding of their professional practice in a changing world is a challenging concept. Organising professional practice and systematic learning of academic and social knowledge within institutional contexts, inclusive of ethical dimensions, are categories of competence that teachers should possess, and teacher education should provide (UNESCO, 2011). Of essence, meeting the breadth and depth of initial teacher education for enabling quality education for future generations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century calls for authentic, relevant, and context-sensitive (Adams et al., 2013) engagement with knowledge.

While the challenges of the changing structures of work in contexts burgeoned by the search for social cohesion and economic redress intensifies (Sayed et al., 2016), attention is drawn to the increasing recognition and role of critical thinking and critical thinking pedagogy in visioning education for relevance, authenticity, and hope. With new cultural practices, social formations and media, and the predominance of multicultural and multilingual communities, there is a need for teacher educators to engage in new ways of teaching to deal with critical reality and relevance. These new ways inadvertently challenge instructional approaches and practices developed in early and mid-twentieth century school systems designed for mono-cultural,

homogenous conditions (Moodley, 2014) far removed from the typical South African educational landscape.

### *critical thinking as an enabling context*

According to several research studies on critical thinking in initial teacher education conducted in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, the Middle East, Africa, and Australia, researchers found that teacher educators and student teachers considered critical thinking highly necessary and valued for academic learning success (Ndofirepi & Cross, 2016). In including such skills as reasoning, decision-making, problem-solving, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, learning how to learn, and metacognition, among other such elements, research on critical thinking in teacher education reveals that there is a similar singular shared understanding of critical thinking (Huber & Kuncel, 2016) as a concept of higher order thinking.

However, while teacher educators view critical thinking as a process necessary for rigorous academic learning, student teachers approach critical thinking as a product and “an outcome for achievement in tests and assignments” (Bahr, 2010, p. 13). This notion of critical thinking held by student teachers, according to Carlgren (2013, p. 64), is “as a direct result of current western models of education”. Here the demand of high stakes achievement tests leaves little time and attention for deeper understanding and appropriate acquisition (Carlgren, 2013) of critical thinking as a practice of ethics and freedom or a pedagogy of hope (Giroux, 2013).

Critical thinking pedagogy emphasises the importance of developing and enabling a critical consciousness for healthy citizenry. It claims to support the interconnection between power and culture. Critical pedagogical practices embedded in theory are necessary for sustainable change and ongoing transformation for quality education.

Examining critical thinking pedagogy that is liberatory in nature and aimed toward developing support of academic, social, and cultural awareness, responsiveness, and emancipation is a crucial endeavour for teacher education.

This examination is especially important in enabling voices (Kizel, 2017a), for both student teachers and teacher educators.

Though often underpinned within the ethos and character of an institution and as an unspoken expectation of students (Shaughnessy & Seevers, 2003), critical thinking is presumed present and understood in teacher education. Moreover, student teachers are expected to teach learners on how to employ critical thinking strategies and skills that are aligned with content/ subject matter. There is an assumption among student teachers that they can and do already possess critical thinking abilities. Several global studies conducted on student perceptions of critical thinking and its influence on teacher education confirm this assumption (Shaughnessy & Seevers, 2003).

Although a large scale meta-analysis of critical thinking practice at colleges conducted by Huber and Kuncel (2016) suggests that students at higher education institutions made some gains ( $0.59 SD$ ) through implicit engagement in critical thinking processes over a longer time period, Celuch et al. (2009, p. 32) confirm that only through repeated explicit use of a “consistent critical thinking system” over time that significant increases in student critical thinking knowledge and skill is possible.

This claim is confirmed in Gashan’s (2015) quantitative research that investigated initial teachers’ knowledge, perceptions, and understanding of critical thinking for classroom practice. His research reveals an “empirical gap of information” (Gashan, 2015, p. 27) posing a significant contradiction in initial teachers’ critical thinking knowledge and application. Gashan (2015) attests his findings to the varying “cultures, values, and educational backgrounds” (p. 27) of his participants, bringing into attention the complexity of critical thinking practice in academic learning, and the need to consider overt pedagogies for engaging critical thinking. Gashan’s (2015) study, among others, draws attention to the role social and situational contexts play in investigating critical thinking practices, bidding further research.

While research confirms the fundamental contributions of critical thinking for academic success (Celuch et al., 2009), the crucial position critical thinking and context holds for social and cultural learning remain largely void. This is

particularly pertinent in South African education. While there is a miniscule number of scholars like Green and Collett (2021) and Murriss (2016) who have engaged with P4C in South Africa, these have in the main revolved around psycho-behavioral samples, the use of picture books in childhood education, post-structural and post-humanist postulations.

Moreover, although Letseka (2014) and Ndofirepi and Cross (2016) have attempted to advance the notion of P4C and African philosophy through communities of inquiry, there is a tremendous lack of research and literature on teacher education, critical thinking pedagogy and P4C in higher education and thus, the argument for an overt pedagogical treatment of critical thinking for quality education in South Africa. As a means to contextually address quality education in this arena, critical thinking pedagogy founded in Lipman's (1988) P4C approach offers both local and universal adaptability and application in this debate.

### *philosophy for children*

Philosophy for Children (P4C) is a well-researched, relational, textual and dialogical approach of critical thinking practice created by Matthew Lipman (Lipman et al., 1980). P4C employs critical, creative, and caring thinking through practice within a philosophical community of inquiry (Lipman, 1998). Endorsing a philosophical, participatory pedagogical approach, P4C aims to build democratic communities (Lipman, 1998). Philosophy for Children assumes an authentic, interactive, and enabling pedagogical approach for higher-order thinking skills and knowledge acquisition even among children. The following is a brief description of the seminal beginnings of P4C.

Lipman (1988), a professor of philosophy at Columbia University in the 1960s, and founder of the Institution for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC) at Montclair University in New Jersey, was greatly influenced by pragmatist philosophers Pierce and Dewey, philosophers Socrates, Plato and Arendt, and social theorist, Vygotsky (Lipman, 2003). Lipman (1996) was especially disposed towards the social justice praxis and pedagogy of Freire (2001), and the transformative intellectual formation of Giroux (1988), for

enabling awareness of the self and the other (Kizel, 2017a). Stirred by student riots at Columbia University in the nineteen sixties, Lipman (1988) came to the realisation that education could deeply benefit from philosophical thinking, wonder and wisdom, for building democratic communities for cognitive and social quality.

Drawing on Dewey's (1906) experiential and child-centred pedagogy, the resultant conceptualisation of P4C was about developing a "higher-quality democracy" (Lipman, 1998, p. 277). Through the use of dialogue within a community of learners /scholars and the notion of "distributed" higher order thinking, Lipman (1998) proposed that philosophical thinking embodied in P4C was not merely for "a privileged elite, whether the basis of the privilege be wealth, power, or intelligence" (p. 277), but for all people. Through the cultivation of rational and relational social institutions, Lipman (1998), asserted that P4C was an enabler for "shared values as health, justice, and friendship" (pp. 277-278). Lipman (1988) held that doing philosophy by using the discipline of philosophy helped students intellectually and socially.

Conceived during a time characterised by the social conflicts of the sixties and seventies, and as a response to a growing concern in students' incapacities for reasoning and argumentation, and a lack of interest in schooling (Lipman, 2003), Lipman designed his critical thinking pedagogy of Philosophy for Children (P4C). Emanating from his deep interest in educational programmes for successful independent critical and creative thinking, and learning skills (Lipman, 1998), Lipman saw P4C as a pedagogical tool to be engaged with and experienced among all ages.

In his critique of failure among students in institutions, irrelevant and traditional forms of education (Vansieleghem, 2014), and in recognition of such forerunners as Wittgenstein, peers Glaser, Ennis, Matthews, and Mead, among others (Välitalo et al., 2016), Lipman urged that the intellectual benefit of doing philosophy could produce energetic, curious, critical, creative, reasonable, and confident students aware of others and themselves as productive citizens (Lipman, 2003).

Lipman believed that given “the opportunity for careful thinking as well as conscious action” (Echeverria & Hannam, 2013, p. 111), students would be enabled and equipped for academic and social learning success for quality living. This claim is significant in persuading an explicit treatment of critical thinking pedagogy in teacher education.

Embodied within the philosophy for children (P4C), Lipman (1998) defined critical thinking as “skilful, responsible thinking that facilitates good judgement because it (1) relies upon criteria, (2) is self-correcting, and (3) is sensitive to context” (p. 39). Embedded in raising existential and critical questions examined and explored through critical texts and dialogue (Lipman, 2003), experienced through relationship within a community of inquiry (CoI), Lipman (1998) was convinced that P4C had the potential to be a rich and influential pedagogical approach for educational reform and a high-quality education.

#### *design of philosophy for children approach*

Lipman’s (2003) approach, **Figure 1** below, as depicted by the authors, is designed on the assumption that philosophy’s central practice of questioning and critical thinking developed over centuries, was an obvious choice for teaching thinking skills. Possessing the tools of logic and argument necessary for critical thinking, communities of inquiry promoted questioning, open mindedness, clarity in language, and precision in thinking, offering a means for collaboration, coherence and meaning that could be explored and employed in all subjects, with meaningful application for transformation and change.

The design of P4C (Lipman, 2003) further aims to enable critical thinking through relationships between facts and values, means and ends, and among diverse social groups with meaningful application for enabling dialogue and critique with sensitivity and respect (Kizel, 2015) within local and universal contexts.

Drawing heavily on Ennis (1964), Dewey (1933) and Freire (1970), in the context of holistic, experiential, and contextual learning for redress and equality, critical questions central to human concerns such as fairness, justice, truth,

freedom, responsibility, and right and wrong, are philosophically practiced for real world application through logic and reasoning.

At the foundation of Lipman's (2003) philosophical and pedagogical design, lay his several philosophical thinking stories (Lipman, 2003) seen in the bottom circle of **Figure 1** below. Lipman's (1992, 1996) *Harry Stottlemeier* and *Natasha*, among several other fictional stories, were specifically written as a pedagogical method, approach, and model for prompting and persuading critical, creative, and caring thinking practice within communities of inquiry.

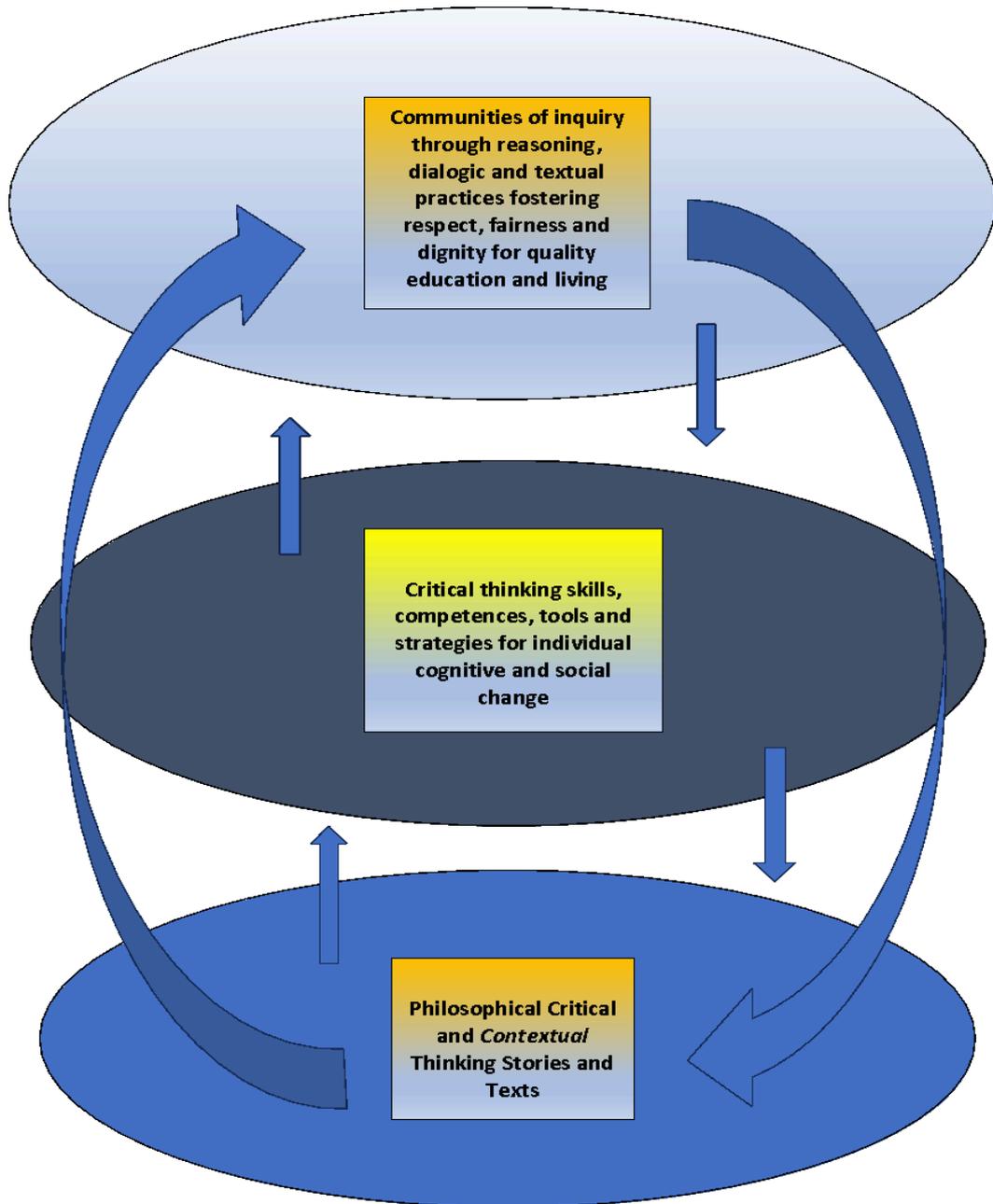
Pedagogically engaged with these philosophical, reflective, and thinking stories are critical thinking strategies, tools and skills seen in the middle circle of **Figure 1**. These tools are essential for enabling and sharpening awareness, deep thinking, and social skills. These elements draw on diverse perspectives making individual thinking accountable towards building a democratic community of peers (Lipman, 2003), the aim of which is seen in the top circle of **Figure 1**.

The framework described above expressed in **Figure 1** below illustrates Lipman's (2003) design of Philosophy for Children for enabling quality educational and social change through critical thinking pedagogy. However, while novel and innovative for its time, Lipman's model excludes local, indigenous and contextual stories for places outside western democracies; places like South Africa which has a vast history of non-western, indigenous and contextually diverse stories that could be philosophically and critically adapted for local and universal application.

An inexhaustive number of examples of such stories exist which include several South African folk tales like *The Tortoise and the Hare*, *Mantis and the Moon*, and *Anansi, the Spider*, wherein themes of interdependence, relationships between humanity and nature, greed and trust, among other cultural, traditional, ethical and moral contextual teachings are imparted.

More extensive philosophical writings like Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country*, Nadine Gordimer's *July's People*, Ronnie Govender's *At the edge and other Cator Manor Stories*, and Gcina Mhlophe's *Stories of Africa*, among an august selection could be included. These are what this article refers to as *contextual thinking stories*.

The diagram below illustrates a critical thinking pedagogical relationship between each circle.



**Figure 1: Design of Philosophy for Children Framework contextualising Lipman's pedagogy using thinking stories for local and universal application**  
Source: Moodley, D. E.

### ***philosophy for children as an enabler of critical thinking pedagogy***

Grounded in Lipman's writing and thinking, Kizel (2015), among others, has extended the principles of philosophical inquiry with children to include that of Frankl, Sartre, and Levinas' ideas on searching and finding meaning as a human endeavour. Kizel's (2017b) fundamental argument is that philosophical

inquiry through critical thinking pedagogy is part of the essence of humanity, education and schooling, and a preoccupation with children. In his call for schooling to heed ethical approaches in education, Kizel (2017a) presents an engaging argument on the implementation and mechanics of Lipman's (1988) community of inquiry as a pedagogical dialogical tool in the quest of building human relationships in meaning making.

Kizel (2017b) views Lipman's (1988) notion of responsibility, as a result of meaning making based on Frankl's view that "the meaning of life was the taking of responsibility for fulfilling one's unique potential" (p. 91). This notion asserts that in the "dialogical activity" in which philosophical communities of inquiry engage lie "ethical relations" involving "mutual interpersonal understanding" (p. 91). Such understanding is in the relation between oneself and others. In other words, meaningful responsibility develops within social relationships.

Kizel (2017b) concludes that relationship building is inherently what humans seek and thrive on. It is here that a rationale for both theory and practice of critical thinking through a P4C pedagogy may be foundational for teacher education. Critical thinking pedagogy is also relevant for engaging ethical relationship building and meaning making for academic and social advancement built on hope.

While open to critique and limitations, as pointed out in Paul et al. (1989), Lipman's (1988) approach to critical thinking is important for its critical, creative, and caring application to diverse contexts, ages, and abilities. As a discreet framework for engaging philosophical higher order thinking and critical transformation at all levels of education, Lipman's (1988) approach to critical thinking as set out in his writings and thinking stories, offers an overt programme of intentional texts grounded in and respectful of social contexts. Lipman's P4C is a pedagogy of empathy and equity for transformative change affirming democratic principles and values for a pedagogical practice of freedom.

Gaining significant academic and empirical scrutiny among several higher education institutions around the world for its cognitive and social value (Topping & Trickey, 2014), P4C is recognised by UNESCO (2011) as a critical

thinking competence for academic and social life-long learning success (Välitalo et al., 2016). In their comprehensive, research-based teacher's guide, Topping et al., (2019) have provided ways in which P4C may be incorporated into processes and structures within school-based classroom programmes. Their practical guide to P4C provides tools and resources for classroom teachers to engage children in inquiring as a group into "moral, ethical and spiritual questions, while also considering curricular necessities and the demands of national and local standards" (p. 1). However, such guides are yet to become part of initial teacher education engagements where initial teacher knowledge and pedagogical practices are shaped and informed.

Of more crucial importance, P4C as an approach to critical thinking pedagogy in teacher education has yet to reach mainstream scrutiny within African and South African higher education institutions. Lipman's (2003) critical thinking pedagogy through Philosophy for Children offers an important contribution to explicit critical thinking pedagogical approaches that might offer a means to address quality education in teacher education.

### *conclusion*

In contextualising critical thinking pedagogy in South African education within its socio-political, educational, generational, subject disciplinary, and inquiry-based collaborative thinking arenas, this paper has argued for its overt inclusion employing Lipman's Philosophy for Children as an approach within teacher education, for enabling quality education. Quality education viewed as the need for authentic, relevant, and responsive education is advanced through Lipman's Philosophy for Children framework, necessary for quality higher education crucially required for a higher-quality democracy in South Africa. Through intentional contextual stories and texts and the application of knowledge employing critical thinking strategies and skills, this paper has contended that an overt inclusion of critical thinking pedagogy as a rich concept within the learned profession of teacher education may offer the opportunity to address quality education and living in South Africa and around the world today.

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