Revisiting the African-Africana philosophy of education debate: implications for university teaching

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Abstract

This article explores conceptual links between African and Africana philosophy and its implications for university teaching in South Africa. My argument in defence of an African-Africana philosophy of education emanates from the response of Ben Parker (2003) to Philip Higgs's (2003) call for introducing an African discourse based on African philosophy into the conversation surrounding the re-vision of philosophy of education in South Africa. The Higgs-Parker debate brings into sharper focus the need to reconceptualise university teaching in South Africa along the lines of African-Africana thought. Whereas this debate has much to offer for reconceptualising university teaching in relation to African values, it falls short of engaging with what constitutes a deliberative African-Africana teacher because it fails to acknowledge/recognise that deliberative inquiry is central to what makes African philosophy what it is. This article is an attempt to bridge some of the gaps in the African-Africana debate in terms of what it means for teachers both to be deliberative and to cultivate deliberation.

Introduction

This article explores two salient and interrelated matters: Firstly, I explore the notions of an African and Africana philosophy of education. My contention is that an African and Africana philosophy of education are closer to each other than Parker wants us to believe. In fact these two approaches to philosophy of education seem to be two sides of the same coin, which suggests that Parker's critique of Higgs is not necessarily justified. Secondly, I agree with Higgs (2003, p.6) and Parker (2003, p.37) that university teaching ought to be framed within an "activist African philosophy of education" and "a 'positive' Africana philosophy of education . . . that appropriates values such as freedom, autonomy and human rights, truth and scientific knowledge, justice

and fairness . . .", respectively. However, both Higgs and Parker fail to explore what it means to be a deliberative university teacher in relation to African-Africana thought. Of course, Higgs's argument in defence of communalism, *ubuntu* and humanism does suggest that university teachers ought to become much more deliberative. Similarly, Parker's call for a (university) teaching community which is both critical and argumentative, on the one hand, and practically active and sensitive to the African context, on the other hand, does go some way to accentuate the need for university teachers to engage deliberatively. Yet, very little, if anything, is said of what it means for a university teacher to be deliberative. My contention is that university teachers ought to be or become deliberative if they are to appropriate more adequately the 'values' of an African-Africana philosophy, and thus respond to the needs and circumstances of African students (learners). Hence, this article attempts to explore deliberative inquiry more adequately in relation to African-Africana thought and its implications for university teaching in South Africa.

African-Africana philosophy of education: different entities or two sides of the same coin?

This section, firstly, explores African-Africana philosophy of education as understood by Higgs and Parker. Secondly, I draw on two theoretical statements with reference to the monumental works of Paulin Hountondji (2002) and Kwame Gyekye (1997) on what constitutes an African-Africana philosophy with the intention to show that Higgs and Parker are closer in their expositions of the concept than Parker contends. Thereafter, I shall move on to a discussion on some of the implications of an African-Africana philosophy of education for university teaching in South Africa.

According to Higgs (2003, pp.16-17), African philosophy can contribute to the transformation of educational discourse in South Africa, in particular empowering communities to participate in their own educational development, since it ". . . respects diversity, acknowledges lived experience and challenges the hegemony of Western Eurocentric forms of universal knowledge". His articulation of an African philosophy of education is framed in line with the sentiments of Oladipo (1992, p.24), who suggests that the empowerment of communities, as well as their educational development, could be achieved through the use of "whatever intellectual skills they possess to eliminate the various dimensions of the African predicament (that is, the amelioration of the human condition as a consequence of poverty, hunger, famine, unemployment,

political oppression, civil wars, colonialism (imperialism) and economic exploitation)". This notion of an African philosophy of education grows out of two earlier views expounded by Hountondji (1985) and others such as Appiah (1989) and Wiredu (1996), on the one hand, and Gyekye (1997) and others such as Kaphagawani (1998) and Kwame (1992), on the other hand. Hountondji (1985) posits that African philosophy is a rational, critical activity which happens independently of traditional African world views, whereas Gyekye (1997) contends that the rationalist approach to philosophy ought to be extended to traditional African world views through the practice of ethnophilosophy. Moreover, central to Higgs's argument in defence of a form of human activism which could ameliorate the disempowered African condition is the notion of *ubuntu* or humaneness. *Ubuntu* is a form of humanism which could engender "communal embeddedness and connectedness of a person to other persons" (Higgs 2003, p.13). Such an understanding of *ubuntu* could orientate an African philosophy of education towards the cultivation of "virtues such as kindness, generosity, compassion, benevolence, courtesy and respect and concern for others" (Higgs 2003, p.14).

Is Higgs's elucidation of African philosophy of education different from Parker's suggestion that Africana ought be connected to philosophy of education? For Parker (2003, p.31), who draws on the ideas of Outlaw (1998), "Africana philosophy draws on oral traditions, early writings (for example, Frederick Douglass) and cultural artefacts such as music as well as the rigorous techniques of reason and analytic philosophy to construct African philosophy as a distinct discourse". Similarly, Higgs depicts an African philosophy of education as a particular kind of discourse which draws upon "whatever intellectual skills" people possess in order that they may eliminate "the various dimensions of the African predicament". Firstly, the phrase "whatever intellectual skills" has a clear connection with analytical reasoning and intellectual rigour, that is, the Hountondjian view on which Higgs draws. Secondly, "whatever intellectual skills people possess", following Higgs, does not exclude oral tradition or sagacity (that is, the wisdom of sages) nor African cultural discourses such as music and drama. In this way Higgs and Parker are not exclusively different in the exposition of African and Africana philosophy of education, since they both develop an understanding of African thought and practice inextricably related to rigorous analytical, critical and rational inquiry, on the one hand, and ethnophilosophy (oral traditions, sagacity and cultural discourse), on the other hand. Consequently, African and Africana expositions of philosophical thought, following the Higgs-Parker debate, seem to be two sides of the same coin. In addition, Parker's (2003, pp.32-33) analysis of

Africana philosophy of education as being a "disciplined articulation" of African culture, which "locates human rights, historically and contextually, in the real life experiences of Africans", is not far from Higgs's explanation of *ubuntu*. *Ubuntu* is a practical discourse which Africans could experience in the context of Africa and its historical legacy of neo-colonialism and neo-liberalism so that they (Africans) may "move beyond" what Higgs refers to as Eurocentric hegemony, and what Parker (2003, p.34) refers to as "a desire (for Africana philosophy of education) to challenge a false universal humanism". In this way Higgs and Parker have much more in common than Parker claims. In fact, Parker's (2003) call for Africana philosophy of education as a kind of activism which could cultivate critical, argumentative reason and fragility and trust among vulnerable (African) communities is commensurate with Higgs's notion of an African philosophy of education which has the potential to liberate disempowered communities through critical reasoning and humaneness (*ubuntu*). This brings me to a discussion of two theoretical statements of African-Africana philosophy in order to show that the Higgs-Parker debate about what constitutes an African philosophy that is different from an Africana philosophy of education seems to be making a misplaced distinction.

The first theoretical statement comes from Hountondji (2002, p.84), who is most famous for his critique of ethnophilosophy. For him, philosophy cannot be considered as oral narratives that repeat stories that were heard, but rather a "strict science" aimed at "challenging, explaining, interpreting with a view to transforming (Hountondji 2002, p.91). He argues that ethnophilosophy does not enable one to learn to think creatively but, rather, entails "lazily seeking refuge . . . behind the thought of the ancestors" (Hountondji 2002, p.128). He warns against "the temptation of a reductive, unilateral and overly simplifying reading of cultures and, especially, of the world views of the African continent" (Hountondji 2002, p.81). His valorisation of 'science' seeks to locate African philosophy as a legitimate form of methodological inquiry with the same aims as those of any other philosophy in the world in the geographical origin of its authors (Hountondji 2002). In short, African philosophy is that form of methodological inquiry which relies on rational justification and interpretive argumentation with the intent to bring about a critical transformation of African thought and practice. In the main, his task, as he puts it, is to establish the legitimacy of an intellectual project that was both authentically African and authentically philosophical (Appiah in Hountondji, 2002).

Now, if one considers that Africana philosophy, following Parker, has become a movement that embraces the African continent, then Africana philosophy does not seem to be different from African philosophy, since Africa is also the latter's concern. However, Parker also claims that Africana philosophy is a discipline which draws on oral traditions and writings about African culture, together with rigorous analytical reasoning. In this sense Parker seemingly explains Africana philosophy as ethnophilosophy – what Hountondji critiques as not in consonance with 'strict science' or methodological inquiry. Nevertheless, although Parker seemingly describes Africana philosophy as ethnophilosophy, it still remains a form of African philosophy, despite Hountondji's critique of it. If this argument is plausible, then one can justifiably conclude that Africana philosophy is (or is linked to) ethnophilosophy, which in turn is a form of African philosophy not necessarily supported by Hountondji. Yet, Parker's Africana philosophy as analytical reasoning does seem to be connected to Hountondji's notion of African philosophy as methodological inquiry, since analysis and methodology are interrelated instances of inquiry. This is where Higgs, who is not averse to the idea that an African philosophy also contains constitutive elements of critical, rational inquiry, seems to be much closer to Parker than the latter wants us to believe. The point I am making is that Higgs's African philosophy of education, Parker's Africana philosophy of education and Hountondji's valorisation of 'science' in African philosophy have one common thread: the African continent is central to philosophy (and philosophy of education). Consequently, the African-Africana philosophy of education distinction seems to be a somewhat misdirected debate.

For me, the weaknesses in the expositions of Higgs and Parker lie in their failure to relate African-Africana philosophy of education to what Hountondji posits as progressive "structures of dialogue and argument without which no science (that is, African philosophy) is possible" (Hountondji 2002, p.73). In my view, these "structures of dialogue and argument" are constitutive of what an African-Africana philosophy of education is about. Any lack of discussion about "structures of dialogue and argumentation" does not do justice to what constitutes an African-Africana philosophy of education. The point I am making is that Higgs's idea of human activism and Parker's notion of Africana philosophy cannot begin to manifest themselves in African practices (life experiences and other modes of critical engagement amongst people of Africa) with the aim of either challenging and undermining forms of Western hegemony or to reconstitute the priority of 'Africanness' through a reliance on oral tradition and cultural activity. This would be difficult to achieve if not

subjected to "structures of dialogue and argumentation", or what I would refer to as modes of deliberative inquiry. Deliberative inquiry ought to be considered as a necessary (although not sufficient) instance of African-Africana philosophy of education, which neither Higgs nor Parker seem to pick up on. But before I explore some of the constitutive meanings of (African-Africana) deliberative inquiry, I first need to take issue with Hountondji, whose call for African philosophy to be connected to "structures of dialogue and argument" seems to be paradoxical in his critique of ethnophilosophy.

Now if one considers that ethnophilosophy, which seems to be closely linked to Africana philosophy, takes into account the narratives and life experiences of Africans, and that "structures of dialogue and argumentation" invariably involve listening to the voices of others (no matter how ill-informed), then it follows that "structures of dialogue and argumentation" cannot simply dismiss oral tradition and cultural narratives – unless, Hountondji assumes that "structures of dialogue and argumentation" relate only to offering persuasive arguments through a rational articulation of points of view. But rational argumentation and persuasion are not necessarily related to eloquence and philosophical justification alone. To my mind, listening to what the other has to say, even if it is unimportant or inarticulate justification, brings to the fore the voices of people which would otherwise have been muted or marginalised.

For instance, listening to the views of an African sage or his followers in conversation should not necessarily imply that, because such a view is perhaps not eloquently expressed, it ought to be dismissed as irrelevant to the dialogue. What makes dialogue a conversation is that people are willing to listen to what they have to say to one another without putting them down or dismissing their subjective views as not worthy of consideration. A dialogue becomes a legitimate conversation when points of view are expressed in a way that allows the other to offer his or her rejoinder, no matter how ill-informed. In view of this, Hountondji's critique of ethnophilosophy does not hold water, since this critique reflects the moral standpoints and cultural justifications of people whose exclusion from the dialogue would nullify it as legitimate conversation amongst people. Hountondji himself values the importance of listening to others as an "advantage of facilitating dialogue and moderating, on occasion, the excessive passion of the most aggressive opponents" (Hountondji 2002, p.81). This is perhaps why he claims that his critique of ethnophilosophy and rejection of collective thought through dialogue were "a bit excessive" (Hountondji 2002, p.128).

Similarly, listening to the stories of others does not mean that one uncritically accepts everything they have to say. Dialogue also means that one challenges and questions the points of view of others, if these points of view appear to lie outside of the matrix of one's own understanding or if one has not been convinced of the legitimacy of the articulation of the other person. Hountondji (2002, p.139) acknowledges the importance of criticising the views of others in the sense that "higher-level formulation" requires that one does not passively accept the viewpoints of others or "the questions that others ask themselves or ask us from their own preoccupations" – a practice he refers to as conscious rationality (Hountondji 2002, p.255). His contention is that rationality is not given in advance. Instead it needs to be developed "in a spirit of solidarity and sharing. . . so that the germs of ignorance and poverty will be eliminated forever from planet earth" (Hountondji 2002, p.258). To my mind, Hountondji paradoxically advocates a notion of dialogue and argumentation which does not necessarily have to exclude the stories of others – that is to say, he is making a claim for ethnophilosophy which he seemingly finds irrelevant to the discourse of African philosophy.

The second theoretical statement on African-Africana philosophy I shall now explore relates to the work of Kwame Gyekye (1997). Gyekye's (1997, pp.5, 24) main argument in defence of African philosophy incorporating African thought – that is, African-Africana philosophy – is twofold: firstly, (African) philosophy or the philosophy practised by Africans ought to be essentially a critical and systematic inquiry into the fundamental ideas or principles underlying human thought, conduct, and experience involving a clarification of concepts (conceptual analysis); and secondly, (African) philosophy should interact with the African experience, in particular with the way in which understanding, interpretation and reflection ought to be used not only to respond to the basic issues and problems generated by that experience, but also by suggesting new or alternative ways of thought and action. The idea that African philosophical inquiry relates to actively analysing the African experience seems to be connected to rationally and humanely examining the values, beliefs, practices and institutions of African communities – a notion which finds expression in Higgs's explanations of *ubuntu* and human activism, and Parker's thinking on Africana, which suggests that philosophical inquiry examines the life experiences, cultural traditions and oral narratives of Africa's peoples. Likewise, philosophical inquiry as critical and systematic conceptual inquiry could be linked to Parker's idea of critical and argumentative reasoning as touchstones of Africana philosophy of education. This suggests that there seems to be sufficient justification to relate Parker's

Africana philosophy of education and Higgs's African philosophy of education to Gyekye's ideas. By implication it seems feasible to talk about an African-Africana philosophy of education, since both concepts can be considered as theoretically intertwined. This also suggests that Higgs and Parker are not necessarily adversaries as far as an exposition of African-Africana philosophy of education is concerned.

As far as deliberative inquiry is concerned, Gyekye (1997) makes the point that African-Africana philosophical discourse embeds two interrelated processes: rational discourse and the application of a minimalist logic in ordinary conversations without being conversant with its formal rules. Although Gyekye recognises the importance of rationality and logic in deliberative inquiry, he does not go far in explaining what these processes entail, besides claiming that rationality is a culture-dependent concept and that less formal rules are required if people want to engage deliberatively in conversation (Gyekye 1997).

By claiming that rationality is a culture-dependent concept, Gyekye means to convey that the way rationality is understood, for instance, in Western culture may not necessarily apply to the way that is it understood in African cultures. In other words, it would be quite possible, he contends, to find within the African past itself a rational ethos, such as in African traditional folktales, which embodies critical thought that might be understood differently to the notion of rationality as understood in Western culture (Gyekye 1997). Gyekye's notion of a culture-dependent rationality can be related to a critical re-evaluation of received ideas and to intellectual enterprises related to practical problems and concerns in African societies. In other words, African rationality is a critical, re-evaluative response to the basic human problems that arise in any African society (Gyekye 1997). By critical re-evaluation Gyekye (1997) means the offering of insights, arguments and conclusions relevant to the African experience by suggesting new ways or alternative ways of thought and action. If I understand Gyekye (1997) correctly, he also relates the articulation of insights, arguments and conclusions to being critical of political authority and well as to self-reflection and the cultivation of an innovative spirit. If I consider criticism, self-reflection and innovation (creativity and imagination) as touchstones of rationality, then it follows that the insights, arguments and conclusions one offers cannot be unrelated to being critical, creative and reflexive. If I relate Gyekye's thoughts on African rationality to deliberative inquiry, then, logically speaking, deliberation ought to create space for critically questioning one another's perspectives, allowing

for a reflexive re-evaluation of the position one holds in a spirit of openness and non-dogmatism, and the re-evaluation of one's earlier position in the light of new information in quite an imaginative way. These are important aspects of an African-Africana philosophy of education which would go some way towards making conversations (dialogues) justifiably deliberative.

Gyekye seems to suggest that Africa's peoples – taking into account their history and cultures – ought to be less formal in deliberative conversations. If my reading of Gyekye is correct, then the implication is that conversations should not be confined only to articulating points of view in a logically defensible way through rigorous argumentation and debate whereby points of view are challenged and undermined, nor to situations where persuasion and the quest for the better argument become necessary conditions for deliberative inquiry to unfold. I agree with this view, since illiteracy and the lack of eloquence amongst ordinary citizens would otherwise exclude them from the deliberative conversation. Gyekye (1997) contends that the African colonial and postcolonial experience has had enduring effects on the mentality developed by many Africans – a colonial mentality which engenders 'apism', i.e. the notion that people should look for answers to Africa's problems outside of Africa, and more specifically in European culture. It is this same 'apist' attitude on the part of most of Africa's people that leads to their suppressing their own opinions in preference to the wisdom of sages.

I do not think that Gyekye would dismiss the need for sagacity in deliberative discourse, since the individual's inclinations, orientations, intuitions and outlooks are important to philosophical inquiry (Gyekye, 1997). However, Gyekye's view suggests that ways should be found to enable the less eloquent, illiterate and seemingly inarticulate person to express his or her thoughts. For this reason his call for the application of fewer formal rules in deliberative conversation seems to be valid. In this regard, I suspect that Gyekye's emphasis on the application of a minimalist logic in deliberative conversation has some connection with allowing Africa's people to articulate their oral narratives about their beliefs, values, folktales, drama and cultural traditions without having to convince others entirely of their orientations. This makes sense because many of Africa's peoples do not necessarily know the logical reasons for their beliefs and the sources of the values bequeathed to them by their ancestral past. So, the idea of asking for a minimalist logic would establish conditions that would include rather than exclude people from the deliberative conversation. In fact, including them in the conversation might open up possibilities for them to begin to challenge and question their own

positions self-reflexively.

Of course, my potential critic might claim that Africana philosophy is a subset of African philosophy and not a synonym or an equivalent for it. DuBois' idea of philosophy suggests we talk about African American philosophy (DuBois in Moseley, 1995). Senghor's notion of philosophy could be explained as cultivating dialogues amongst all Africa's people (Senghor in Crawford, 2002). In this sense one could legitimately refer to African philosophy which would then exclude the ideas of those who might be African American or 'Africanists' who contribute to the efforts of the African experience. Therefore, Outlaw's African(a) philosophy seems to be a 'gathering' term which best explains philosophy done by those who are geographically located on the African continent, others who are not based on the African continent but who explore and study the African experience (Africans and their political, economic, cultural and social contributions) (Outlaw, 1992). In this way it does not help us much to refer to an Africana philosophy as a subset of African philosophy because the former could be said to be the 'gathering' notion which perhaps subsumes what is characterised as African philosophy. However, this is not the line of argument I wish to explore.

To summarise this section: what seems to emanate from the discussion on deliberative inquiry is that African-Africana philosophy consists of three aspects: recognising and listening to the stories of others, culture-dependent rationality, and non-formal conversations infused with a minimalist logic. The question arises: how could these touchstones of deliberative inquiry in relation to an African-Africana philosophy of education shape university teaching in South Africa? It is to this discussion that I now turn.

Deliberative inquiry as an unexamined instance of African-Africana philosophy of education and its implications for university teaching

In 1994 the Department of Education (DoE) requested the Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD) to initiate a National Audit on Teacher Education. This audit was driven by two objectives: to develop an analysis of teacher demand, supply and utilisation; and to evaluate institutions offering teacher education together with their staff profiles, their governance structures and the quality of their teacher education programmes, both pre-service education and training (PRESET) and in-service education and

training (INSET) (Sedibe, 1998). The audit made the DoE aware of the quality of teacher education programmes, the classroom backlog, and the shortage and turnover of teachers in scarce subjects (Sedibe, 1998). The audit revealed how deeply apartheid had divided and undermined teacher preparation. Another audit revelation was the concentration of disadvantaged student teachers (more that 80% African) at institutions least well equipped to prepare them for their work as teachers, for example, at dysfunctional rural and 'township' colleges and 'correspondence' universities (Pendlebury, 1998). In addition to the audit, the Committee on Teacher Education Policy (COTEP) was charged with two other tasks: firstly, to develop a national qualification framework for teachers; and secondly, to propose national governance structures for teacher education (Pendlebury, 1998). This resulted in the Norms and Standards for Teacher Education gazetted as national policy in 1995. In this new teacher education document apartheid's discourse of duty and obedience to authority had been displaced by a discourse of rights and professional autonomy (Pendlebury, 1998). Teacher education should enhance the capabilities of prospective teachers to deal with human rights issues and to become autonomous, flexible, creative and responsible agents for change in response to the educational challenges of the day. In this regard, teachers are seen as makers of democratic citizens, and not so much as purveyors of knowledge (Pendlebury, 1998).

In 1997 the DoE released a discussion document, *Norms and Standards for Teacher Education, Training and Development*, which aimed to bring teacher education 'competences' into line with the new outcomes-based education system (OBE). This DoE initiative eventually resulted in the Norms and Standards for Educators policy of 2000. A central feature of the Norms and Standards for Educators (2000) is the seven roles that educators (teachers) are supposed to perform and also the competences that educators have to display for assessment and qualification purposes. The seven roles are: learning mediator; interpreter and designer of learning programmes and materials; leader, administrator and manager; scholar, researcher and lifelong learner; community, citizenship and pastoral role; assessor; and learning area/subject/discipline/phase specialist. Each of these seven roles is constituted by the following three competences: practical competence, foundational competence and reflexive competence (DoE, 2000). For purposes of this article, I shall focus only on what it could mean, following an African-Africana philosophy of education of deliberative inquiry, for a teacher to be or become a 'learning mediator'. In other words, I shall explore what university teachers ought to do in order to prepare pre-service teachers for the world of work.

Thus far, by following an African-Africana philosophy of education, I have argued for three logically necessary conditions which underscore deliberative inquiry: firstly, critical, reflexive engagement with the positions of oneself and the other; secondly, listening to what the other has to say, no matter how ill-informed or unwise the other's evaluative judgement is or might be; and thirdly, less structured formality and the application of a minimalist logic in conversations. To my mind, these logically necessary conditions of deliberative inquiry in relation to the African experience offer much potential to enhance the role of the educator (teacher) as a learning mediator. But this in turn means that the university teacher ought to 'perform' a particular role of cultivating deliberative discourse in his or her class or through engagement with in-service or pre-service teachers.

Firstly, a learning mediator's task (for instance, the role that a university teacher such as I ought to assume) does not only involve socialising learners (students) in an African university classroom by inculcating an inherited body of facts and knowledge constructs about society, human values and traditions of people, but also initiating them into a discourse of critical questioning in order that they (in my instance, pre-service teachers in their final year of a university education that would qualify them as teachers) challenge what they have been taught. Mediating learning requires that university teachers afford students with opportunities to systematically make university texts 'controversial', that is to say, to engage critically and reflexively with such texts. In this way deliberative inquiry becomes a mode of philosophical activity which requires that one engages carefully with the other so as to arrive at independent interpretive (rational) judgements, while at the same time one enters into controversy with other rival standpoints or articulations (MacIntyre, 1990). On the one hand, engaging carefully involves advancing inquiry from within a particular point of view, preserving and transforming the initial agreements with those who share the same point of view. On the other hand, entering into controversy with other rival standpoints involves both exhibiting what is mistaken in a rival standpoint in the light of one's understanding, and to conceive and reconceive one's own point of view against the strongest possible objections to them offered by one's opponents. By implication, deliberative inquiry firstly demands that a text be read in a way whereby one sets out the range of possible interpretations of the text and identifies and evaluates the presuppositions of this or that particular argument in the text; and secondly, a text should be read in a such way that the reader places himself or herself in a position to question the text as much as the reader being questioned by the text, that is to say, to engage in systematic

controversy. And the importance of reading a text in this way is that the outcome of one's reading is not a final (conclusive) answer, but rather a rational (interpretive) judgement which itself must be subjected to critical scrutiny by others who engage in similar intellectual debate free from the imperatives of constrained or unconstrained agreement.

Secondly, being or becoming a learning mediator involves in some way the capacity of one (the university teacher) to cultivate in others (students) the ability to listen to what others have to say (fellow-students and teachers), no matter how ill-informed or unimportant the points of view seem to be. The point about listening to others has some connection to understand others' reasons. Without listening to others we cannot begin to comprehend the kind of reasons for their actions that might be intelligible to us and that would enable us to respond to them in ways that they too might find intelligible (MacIntyre, 1999). In other words, we can only understand others and respond to them in ways which could be intelligible if we could justify to others why we find their reasons 'reasonable' or not. In this way, listening to others could contribute towards deliberative action. The point I am making is that listening to others involves 'standing back' or detaching oneself from one's own reasons and asking if others' reasons are in fact justifiable or not. Here one moves away from merely listening to others towards being able to evaluate others' reasons. And when one evaluates others' reasons (through listening) one would invariably set out to revise one's own or abandon them or replace them with other reasons (MacIntyre, 1999). In this way, one not only becomes a good listener, but also deliberative in the sense that one detaches oneself from one's own reasons to revise or abandon them in the light of what others (to whom one listens and with whom one engages) have to offer. MacIntyre (1999, p.96) argues that we come to know when we are able not just to evaluate our reasons as better or worse, but also when we detach ourselves from the immediacy of our own desires in order to "imagine alternative realistic futures" through engaging collegially (deliberatively) – I would say, by listening to what others have to say.

Thirdly, less structured formality and a minimalist logic in conversations do not mean that structure and logic ought to be dismissed in deliberative discourse, but rather that an excessive emphasis on the formal rules of dialogue and logical reasoning should not in any way exclude people from engaging with one another's point of view. The point about non-excessive

structure is aimed in the first instance at minimising the possibilities of eloquent and articulate voices of marginalising or silencing the legitimate voices of all people engaged in deliberative inquiry. In other words, (African) students should be able to tell their stories about what constitutes the good life whether along the lines of myth, religion and genealogy. Dialogical conversations are usually of the kind whereby one listens to the other and, after having been persuaded or not, offers a response either in defence of another point of view or simply dismisses (usually argumentatively) what the other had to say. Allowing others to tell their stories should not be subjected to a formal, structured response only, since often structure and formality bring into question the stories others want to reveal. I remember a Masters student whom I happened to be supervising reminding me once that, whatever he had to reveal about his tribal orientations (he belonged to the Ovambese ethnic group in Namibia) in seminar presentations should not always be subjected to formal and structured critical scrutiny, since the excessive use of these modes of rational activity in many ways mute the self-understandings of the person. The corollary is that the story is not told the way it might have been.

The point about an emphasis on a minimalist amount of logical reasoning in deliberative discourse is primarily related to listening to, comprehending and constructing a more justifiable story. Often in my Masters seminars, students - who come mostly from Southern African countries such as Lesotho, Namibia, Botswana and Zimbabwe - remind me that excessive logical reasoning does not always fit well with their articulations of a variety of religious, genealogical, mythic and proverbial arguments and claims. This means that subjecting their philosophical positions to excessive logical reasoning would in many ways undermine what stories (sometimes through folklore and ritualistic practices) they have to tell. In others words, simply subjecting the stories (African) students tell to excessive logical reasoning, which in many ways evaluates the stories, would do very little in defence of letting the story be told, that is to say, would do very little to mediate learning in the university classroom. In essence, deliberative inquiry framed within an African-Africana philosophy of education allows scope for critical and reflexive reasoning, listening, and less formality and logic in conversations, which hold much promise for mediating learning in university classes involving (African) students.

In conclusion, university teaching in South Africa along the lines of African-Africana thought has a better chance of addressing the 'African experience' if enacted along the lines of deliberative inquiry. I have argued that central to the

African-Africana philosophy of education debate is the notion of deliberative inquiry – an issue to which the Higgs-Parker debate fails to devote justifiable attention to.

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