

Country Report:

Philosophy Teacher Training in Burkina Faso

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The history of philosophy didactics and teacher training in Burkina Faso is very short. Until the 1990s, philosophy teachers, like their counterparts (i.e. teachers of other disciplines), would teach on the basis of their degrees. They would imitate their teachers to such an extent that sometimes, instead of planning their own classes, they would just read the lessons they were taught when they were students. With the creation of the national education science institute (*Institut National des Sciences de l'Education*, I.N.S.E) the training of philosophy teachers became systematic. The content of the training firstly emphasized methodology and was complemented by further subject-related knowledge. At the same time, the body of secondary school pedagogical supervisors evolved.

Teachers would follow a pre-service, theoretical training at school and an in-service, practical training with pedagogical supervisors. The training system from the time of the national education science institute (I.N.S.E.) to the present national teacher training College (*Ecole Normale Supérieure*, E.N.S) of Norbert Zongo University in Koudougou remained unchanged: a theoretical training followed by a practical one during which students-teachers serve as full teachers in a high school.

In the context of Burkina Faso, the content of philosophy didactics is provided and enriched by many sources. Amongst those sources are the activities of the philosophy inspectorate. Philosophy teaching supervisors have addressed the question of philosophy didactics by working to the improvement of philosophy teaching practices. The first concern to be dealt with was the improvement of the assessment practices that gave philosophy the bad reputation of being arbitrary. Thus, methodologies were harmonized through assessment grids and the clarification of the different forms of annotation.

The second source of enrichment of the content of philosophy didactics is constituted by the pedagogical supervisors' (i.e. advisors and inspectors) research work composed of traineeship reports and mainly the inspectors' research work.

In academic research, we can mention Bayama's thesis (2011). This research work argued for the legitimacy of philosophy didactics in Africa, as an epilogue to the problem of African philosophy developed therein. The conclusion reached by the reflection on the existence of an African philosophy is this: Africans must philosophize. But the question of what is the best way to philosophize in Africa has not yet been answered. Anyway, we believe that for Africans, there is no other way to philosophize than through the teaching of philosophy, the efficiency of which presupposes a steady and rigorous didactic reflection. We have been working in this perspective.

All of the sources of knowledge mentioned above are used to elaborate the content of

didactic courses. The introduction addresses the theoretical aspects and provides an outline of epistemology. The rest of the components are: the do's and don'ts of certified grammar and secondary school teachers; the program of philosophy; the class planning and teaching that demand the exploitation of the yearly schedule and the lesson plan; the methodologies of dissertation and commentary with assessment grids; the assessment of teachers' performances with the lesson grid; and finally, the teaching methods, techniques, and procedures.

A philosophy didactics class is both theoretical and practical and includes guided work. Guided work will cover all the different parts of the planning of philosophy classes in order to familiarize student-teachers with the methods and techniques of the planning and teaching of philosophy classes with the lesson plan and the lesson grid. For want of experimental classes or facilities for micro-teaching, we resort to simulations that consist of role play. One after the other, student-teachers play the role of the teacher while their classmates play the role of students. At the end of the class, they play the role of the pedagogical supervisor and evaluate the class before the synthesis by the trainer. When there are student-supervisors being trained at the teacher training college, they join in the role play with student-teachers and they play the role of full supervisors.

This way of training in philosophy didactics complies with the clinical method, which means that the trainer watches the trainees perform and offers constructive criticism. This method seems to be efficient in the sense that it allows for trainees to learn the skills of teaching and to be critical about their practices. Indeed, during classroom visits, we realize that student-teachers teach accordingly, by following all the different steps of the philosophy class. Therefore, a few student-teachers fail in their final exams which consists of teaching a class. A board of examiners evaluates their performances.

In Burkina Faso, we are witnessing a development of the didactics of philosophy that is progressively improving teaching practices, due to the pre-service and the in-service trainings. Sources to keep up the progress do exist and are rich in their contents.

References

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