

PLATO'S EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIO-POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY: IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examines Plato's educational and socio-political philosophy and the educational system arising from that philosophy in his search for the ideal society. This is with a view to identifying aspects of his prescribed education that are relevant to our period and which can be preserved for posterity. Plato found the Greek education of his days unsystematic and hence established the Academy to serve as a model. Plato divided the ideal state into three parts-the workers, the guardian soldiers and the rulers, with implications for education. This division did not take sufficient notice of environmental influence on individuals. The most central of Plato's aim of education was the development of virtue, courage, temperance and physical fitness which were also emphasized. His curriculum included music, gymnastic, poetry, literature and geometry. Through these subjects the ideal society based on justice and the good life will be achieved. Regrettably, technical subjects were completely left out in his educational arrangements. His contributions to education include his emphasis on virtue as a basis for moral education, considerations for overall development of the individual, his suggestion that education should be made compulsory, and his idea of equality of men and women and state control of education, among others. It is recommended among others that equal opportunity for education should be promoted, vocational and technical education should be expanded, moral education should be boosted while education should be made compulsory.

Keywords: Socio-political, education, Philosophy and Society.

There is need for educators and students to study “the Doctrines of the Great Educators” today, (Rusk, 1976). For instance Akinpelu (1984) has clearly stated that, since these great educators have contributed immensely to the development of education of their time, there is need to examine the relevance of their ideas to modern education. It implies that we can make use of past experiences to solve the present and future problems. It is also necessary for their educational ideas to be studied because they will serve as guide to modern educators especially when they have problems in education. Akinpelu (1984), has emphasized that problems in education are almost the same all over the world. Therefore, in such problematic situations, they could conveniently make use of educational thought of ancient educators but modify them to meet the needed aspirations of modern societies. In this way, the system of education will be sound and the learners will benefit and so will the society. Plato’s philosophical ideas of education seems to be relevant to the Nigerian educational system, which informed this research study.

In Plato’s educational arrangement, he placed emphasis on the study of the humanities (Language, Literature, Philosophy, Religion, History, Fine Arts and Social Studies). These in his view are the studies whose content consist basically of “ideas”. To him, they awaken humanity to the basic “ideas” of the universe. In fact, an important area such as technical education was totally left out in his curriculum. However, vocational training and the sciences were not left out or eliminated from the curriculum but they were underrated. The graduates in these areas therefore were not highly regarded in the estimation of the idealists as the graduates in the area that study the things of the “mind”. Today, technical education and the sciences are in vogue. This is due to their importance in the development of the nations scientifically and technically. In Nigeria, science and technology have continued to dominate our educational policy and orientation. According to Kosemani (2000) in Nigeria since 1947, the objective of science education has been to the introduction of the child to the understanding of nature. Also, the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2014), states that one of the cardinal goals of science education includes the development of scientific literacy among the citizenry. In the view of Kosemani (2000) the Federal Government has a policy of admission which is deliberately shifted in favour of science and technology, which is the 60/40 ratio of admission of students into Nigerian universities. This admission policy stipulates that 60% of total students’ in-take into universities in Nigeria, should be admitted into the sciences.

This notwithstanding, Plato’s educational prescriptions are still relevant to our contemporary education system. His educational ideas cannot be completely ruled out in the modern day educational theory and practices. In this modern times in Nigeria, students offer courses/subjects in the humanities and sciences at all levels of our education system. For instance, the principles of logic, ethics, and politics which Plato and Aristotle enunciated are generally regarded as universally valid in addition to some

science courses and subjects. Besides, in the view of Rusks (1976:1), the writings of the Greek poets are still read; the Greek tragedies are acted before modern audience.

In Nigeria today, English language is a compulsory subject being offered by students at the West African School Certificate Examination, and it is one of the requirements for admissions into Nigerian universities irrespective of one's area of specialization. The Communication Skills, is a very important general course and also compulsory in all higher institutions in Nigeria. Another area is the study of Philosophy of Education. Philosophy of Education (that is philosophy in the technical sense), which Plato is the originator is a compulsory course for all education students in faculties and institutes of education in Nigerian universities and colleges of education.

Nevertheless, there are other subject areas that are also of relevance to our education system, propounded by Plato, that will be fully treated in due course. The purpose of this paper is therefore to look at Plato's ideas on education, social and political relations in society and their bearings on education. From the study of Plato's educational thought, teachers of modern times can examine his ideas thoroughly and then try to relate their relevance to the present day education. The teacher can as well draw experiences by being familiar with the roots of education, i.e. the entire process, and its origin and then make some modifications where necessary so as to meet the needs of present day education. For this reason, it is therefore necessary to examine the relevance of his ideas, to modern education.

The Man Plato

With such a rich background, Plato came up with a generally grounded educational thought, improved upon politics, and the good man in society through his writings. Plato was an Athenian, the greatest of the disciples of Socrates, father of philosophy. He was born around 427 BC of a wealthy family in Athens. He was largely known for his writings in a series of dialogues dealing with almost every conceivable topic. Three of his famous works are the Republic, the Laws and Protagoras. Others are Apology, Crito, Euthyphron Phaeac, which are about Socrates last days. Plato was associated with the school of thought known as idealism, (Ozmond & Craver, 1976).

In his three books, he spells out in details how to educate the elite and the development of character from early childhood to old-age, (Okoh & Omordu, 2014). In the words of Osaat (2010) Plato was interested in the problems of metaphysics, ethics, mathematics and epistemology. In the world of forms, Plato believed the objects of opinion and of sense perception as particular concrete individual things that are to be found in this world. The objects of true knowledge are the essence of things, the ideal things or the perfect nature of things, for example, the object of true knowledge is not any particular beautiful thing, but the essence of beauty, that is beauty itself.

Plato also believes that why particular things that are good and beautiful come and pass away, goodness itself never passes away, justice itself never passes away, the essence of man itself never passes away, although individual men come into existence

and pass away. He is in essence saying that the material body can die but reality is eternal. Knowledge is constant, endures, and is eternal. He also believes man comes from the world of ideas to the material world. He puts forward a system of education based on what he considered the strength of the Spartan and Athenian education but also on a new and fully developed political philosophy for the state.

Plato's Conception of the School

In Athens, before Plato came to the scene of education, early education had an unstable curriculum and the system of education was not organized. There were two systems of education that existed at different times, the old and the new. In the old system of education, children were only given training in gymnastics, physical drill and games. But at about the age of 12 and 13, they set up to acquire skills in the five-fold course called "pentathlon" which comprised jumping, wrestling, hurling the javelin, and throwing of discus, and probably learning the national dances. This aided and groomed them for the act of war, and at the same time, gracefully developed their bodies (Aminigo, 2008).

The boys were sent to music schools where they learnt under a player of the lyre. The rest of the subjects included reading, writing, and counting. At age seven, the boy child is taught to pay much attention to his conduct, then to the letters and music. As soon as he could read, he began to study and to memorize the Homeric poems and later he would be called to recite them to his teachers with a dramatic representation of the actions narrated. However, the length of time devoted to this part of the boy's education is varied.

According to Boyd and Kings (1983) the details of this first part of education were not known, for instance, the times, for practice of music and gymnastics were not specified (that is duration) or how the school day was spent was not stated either. No one knew whether the wrestling, and music schools were separated. No provision was made at this period for moral and intellectual education of the older boys. At the age of 14-15 the sons of the wealthier citizens were transferred to the Palestra, for gymnasium, to a more advanced course of physical exercise for two years under the expert care of a pædagogue. They were then, permitted to attend the civil assembly and also expected to attend the theatre and the law courts. The child is also exposed to the discussions of men of apt speech and wide experiences on political questions. He might also be allowed to take his appointed place in the theatre of Dionysus and witness from morning till night the performance of the tragedies presented in competition for the prize, given annually for tragic poetry.

The new education was the inevitable result of the profound economic and political changes that came over the Athenian state in the first half of the 5th century BC. The above mentioned situation opened up the fresh changes for the ambitious youths, and there arose a demand for an education to fit them for the new conditions which were speedily met by the appearance of a new class of teachers called the sophists who

professed themselves able to supply the needed education. But then the teachings of the sophists were unsystematic and limited to those who could pay their fees. They were mobile professors. This method whereby the teachers (sophists) moved from city to city as itinerant teachers, was unsatisfactory.

Plato's Content of Education

1. Music and Gymnastics

This starts from the lowest level of education but also goes on higher education as Plato arranged it. According to him, we should begin education with music and proceed thereafter to gymnastics. Music includes narrative: In line with his emphasis on virtue, he says, however that whatever narratives are to be presented must involve considering of virtue. In music, are poetry and literature, hence he talks about true and fictitious narratives in poetry. And in relation to virtue he says about the content: A poet whether he is writing music, lyric, or drama, surely ought always to represent the divine nature as it really is and the truth is, that nature is good and must be described as such (Cornford, 1991).

2. Calculation (Arithmetic) and Geometry

These are particularly necessary for the rulers or potential rulers and are to be introduced to the youths. They are pre-requisites to the highest level of subject or educational content, namely dialectic or philosophy. As he puts it, arithmetic and geometry and all branches of the preliminary education which are to pave way for dialectic, should be introduced in childhood. Of particular interest is the following statement by Plato on the importance of mathematics to any other subjects and because of this it is considered compulsory for many university course in Nigeria today: Have you noticed too how people with a talent for calculation are naturally quick at learning almost any other subject and how a training in it makes a slow mind quicker, even if it does no other good (Cornford, 1991).

3. Astronomy: This is the next subject among those meant for higher training. Plato considers it as particularly important to the farmer and navigator. In the Republic he noted that if astronomy is important for military purposes, no less for agriculture and navigations, to be able to tell accurately the times of the month or year. In this regard, we cannot over-emphasize the idea of the military in the education of rulers.

4. Dialectic or Philosophy: This is the highest level of the subjects for Plato. Unlike the sciences which work on the basis of hypothesis, philosophy tries to proceed without any presuppositions but seek to examine the assumptions. This subject is compulsory for the rulers in Plato's ideal state. In stressing the importance of philosophy for the ruler (philosopher king), he says Cornford (1991:178-179):

Unless either philosophers become kings in their countries or those who are now called kings and rulers come to be sufficiently inspired with a genuine desire for wisdom, unless that is to say, political power and philosophy meet togetherthere can be no rest from troubles for states, nor yet as I believe, for all mankind.

Plato's Metaphysics of Education

Plato, the Greek philosopher is the father of idealism. Idealism is perhaps the oldest systematic philosophy in western culture dating back at least as early as (427BC). Plato believes that man should concern himself primarily with the search for truth since his definition of truth was that it was perfect and eternal, it could not therefore be found in the world of matter, for he held that matter was both imperfect and changing. Mathematics demonstrated that, eternal truths were possible for instance a concept such as $2 + 2 = 4$ from Plato's point of view has been true and always will be true. Ozmond and Craver (1976) state that "mathematics" showed that universal truth which all men could agree on could be found but mathematics only compasses a narrow range of knowledge. Plato believes that one must search for other universal truth in the realm of politics, religion, and education; hence the search for absolute truth should be the quest of the true philosopher according to him.

In the Republic, Plato writes about the separation of the world of ideas from the world of matter. The world of ideas (or forms) has the "Good" as its highest point; which is the source of all knowledge. In this regard St. Augustine really accepted Plato's notion of the dividing line between idea and matter but refers to the two worlds as the world of God and the world of man, that, the world of God was the world with spirit and the Good. The world of man was the material world of darkness, Satan, ignorance, and suffering. Augustine believes man should as much as possible release himself from the world of man and enter the world of God.

The world of matter, the ever-changing world of sensory data was not to be trusted. Man needed, as much as possible to free himself from a concern with matter through the use of the dialectic (or critical discussion) in which one moved from mere opinion to true knowledge. The process begins in the world of matter with the use of the brain, the tongue and gestures, and ended in the world of ideas with the discovering of truth.

According to Plato the objects of knowledge are not the things of the material world, but ideas or forms in the world of ideas. The things of this world are simply reflections or shadows of these forms. Berkeley an idealist also maintains that the objects of knowledge are ideas. To Berkeley, the things of this world which we think are material things are infact ideas, and they exist only in so far as they are perceived. Hegel and his followers (e.g. the British philosopher Bredley) are also idealists and their own version of idealism holds that the things of this world are mere appearances or manifestations of absolute spirit.

Some philosophers (notably Descartes, St Augustine and the Platonists of the 16th and 17th centuries) did not go as far as Plato did; they did not postulate that the soul

pre-existed in the world of ideas in which it knew the forms or ideas of things before coming into this world. But they held that every man is born with certain basic ideas in his mind and that these basic ideas are known immediately and spontaneously as soon as man reaches the age of reason, without having to learn them. Infact, the process of learning begins with these basic ideas known as innate ideas. They are in our minds when we are born and we do not have to learn them before we know them as soon as we reach the age of reason.

But other philosophers, the empiricists notably John Locke and David Hume, rejected the theory of innate ideas. They denied any such ideas in man's mind at birth and maintained that all knowledge and all ideas come from experience. Man is not born with any idea; the human mind at birth is completely blank. This view was held by Aristotle and others, especially St Thomas Aquinas. While the empiricists held that all knowledge begins from experience, and emphasized the indispensable role of sense — experience, as the foundation of knowledge, the rationalist (notably Spinoza and Leibniz), ignored experience and emphasized the role of reason operating through the mathematical method in order to attain clear and certain knowledge.

Plato on Justice and Education

The Republic is an enquiry into the nature of justice, but justice can only be seen in the social and political relationship of man. According to Rusk (1976) to determine the nature of justice, Plato was driven to construct in thought an ideal state wherein he hoped to find justice. To really understand the nature of Justice Plato then brought the principle of the division of labour. This is a way of satisfying man's material needs such as shelter, food and clothing in an organized society since one man cannot produce all he needs. The application of the principle of division of labour is to him vital in any state. This is one of the most highly regarded doctrines for which Plato is most famous. His divisions of the state into three parts are the artisan or working class, the soldiers or guardians and the rulers or philosopher kings, with progressive levels of recognition in that order. Infact, whenever, the name of Plato is mentioned, this is the doctrine that first crosses people's minds. Hence we need to consider it and try to also highlight its educational implications.

With reasonable degree of correctness, Plato believes that people are born with types of ability and should also be assigned to duties in the state which correspond to their innate abilities. However, there may be some challenges, for instance, Plato did not consider the issue of heredity to be paramount; for he makes allowance for a man of gold giving birth to a child of silver or a man of brass giving birth to a child of gold. Plato's justification for this division of the state into three classes is from the angle of justice.

The problem however, is to what extent we can accept these ideas of justice according to Plato. Thus, we can say that whether in social life or in education, this Plato's idea cannot be considered as acceptable. This is mainly because, Plato's interest

in people's innate or what can also be called natural abilities, without regard for what training or education can do to move a citizen from a class suggested by his nature at birth to another class, where that other class is superior. We would realize that environment plays an important role in all this, whereas if we are to go by Plato's opinion environment will be relegated to the background. Plato's idea of justice demands fundamentally, that the natural rulers should rule and natural slaves should slave (my underlining). This is to emphasize the point that Plato's interest is in natural or innate abilities, and the unfairness in this, hence Crossman (1937) has also remarked that Plato's philosophy is the most savage and most profound attack upon liberal ideas which history can now show. To Plato, education is a means to achieving justice, both individual justice and social justice. To him, individual justice can be obtained when each individual develops his or her ability to the fullest. In this sense, justice means excellence.

Plato's Ethics

Plato is also of the view that through contemplation and training, a man may come to grasp the "good" enabling him actually to be good. Plato demonstrates the connection of justice and knowledge in his Republic, where he divides the soul into three parts, reason, spirit and appetite. This division of the soul is patterned after a division of social classes where labouring guardians and governing classes may be distinguished. The just society is one in which each class tends to do its own business, everyone benefiting from a division of labour. Such a society must be governed by someone with knowledge of how the labour should be divided. A state runs on the basis of anything other than knowledge of the "good" is bound to suffer from some defects.

Plato's most famous pupil Aristotle did not agree with Plato's notion of the "good". Plato had argued that there must be one thing which made all the individual acts which are rightly called the "good" good. But on the other hand, Aristotle rejected this argument, and maintained that, there are different ways in which the term "good" is used.

According to him some things are good in themselves, while others are good as means, while there are variations within the categories. It is wrong to suppose that one thing makes all things good though generally the realization of human, growing food, providing clothing, is all good as a means to preserving and protecting man.

In Christian ethics, the greatest virtue, the all-embracing virtue or 'the mother of all virtues is love. But in Greek, ethics is justice. Plato rejects two notions of justice current in his time; according to one of them, justice is the interest of the stronger, that is, might is right. Plato rejects this notion of justice which he attributes to sophists. The other notion of justice consists in doing good to one's friends and doing evil to one's enemies. Plato rejects this on the grounds that, it is never good to do evil, even if it means doing it to one's enemies. A just man should not make an unjust man worse;

otherwise he too will become unjust. A man does not become morally better by making his enemy worse.

Plato on Equal Education for Women

One good point about Plato in his division of the state into three parts is the equality accorded women in relation to men and the implication for education.

According to Cornford (1991:235) Plato states thus:

.....should the females guard the flock and hunt with the males and take a share in all they do, or should they be kept within doors as fit for no more than bearing children and feeding their puppies, while all the hard work of looking after the flock is left for to the males? They are expected to take their full share except that we treat them as not quite so strong can you employ any creature for the same work as another, if you do not give them both the same upbringing and education. Then if we are to set women to the same tasks as men, we must teach them the same things. They must have the same two branches of training for mind and body and also be taught the act of war, and they must receive the same treatment.

In Plato's view therefore, women should not be discriminated against in distribution of social roles and benefits including education. From the above discussion, it is clear that if we go by Plato's doctrine of division of the state into parts, we will not be able to do justice to the ideals of equality, except the aspect of women equality with men. This will mean also that we may not be able to implement all those sections of our national policy on education, which relates to equality of opportunity. This includes efforts at providing special education to those with all forms of handicaps including handicaps that some were born with. We believe for instance that those born mentally retarded should be specially catered for in education, whereas if we go by Plato's emphasis in born abilities we shall not be able to do this.

Plato's Philosophy of Education: Its Influence on Current Educational Theories and Practices in Nigeria

Having incisively discussed Plato's ideas of the education of his time, it has clearly shown that, his theories and proposed practices have a great deal of bearing on our current educational thinking and practices. This is so because the type of education we operate here in Nigeria is the western system of education which is common with the third world countries since these countries were colonized by different western European nations. They then inherited such systems of education up till today with some modifications and adaptations having known the roots of the systems. The following areas of relevance have been identified.

Relevance of Plato's System of Education and Curriculum to Nigerian Educational System

In Plato's curriculum, he included the study of languages. For this, in Nigeria today, English language is a compulsory subject offered by students in schools yearly in West African School Certificate Examination, and it is one of the requirements for admission into Nigerian universities irrespective of one's area of specialization. Also, since as the nation has no common language for her citizens, English language is the Lingua Franca. Communication Skills is another important course in the humanities that is offered as a general course but is also a compulsory course for students in higher education. The next subject in the languages is French. In the view of Ezewu (1993) French is important in the Nigerian education system because of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). This is to enable Nigerians communicate effectively with members from the francophone countries during summit meetings and also trade and diplomatic relations among nations. In addition, philosophy of education (that is philosophy in the technical sense) which Plato is the originator is a compulsory course for all education students in faculties and institutes of education in Nigerian universities and colleges of education.

Many of the countries of the world today invest huge sums of money on education as a demonstration of the need such societies have for education. Plato during his time valued education as we are doing today and hence he spent his life reorganizing the state in order to give proper ordering to the education system of his Athens. He warned in Rusks (1976) no man should bring children into the world, who he is unwilling to take care of to the end in their nurture and education. He wanted good quality education for the Athenian youths so that they, especially the guardian class, could protect the state with sympathy and good spirits.

Educational Aims

Education in most countries, had before now emphasized intellectual education to the detriment of character and physical education. Plato had during his time shown the need for a balance in aims of education involving education of the head, the soul and body. Today our Nigerian schools also in addition to intellectual education expose children to morally developed education through moral instructions from teachers and also through Islamic and Christian religious studies.

The Need for a National System of Education

The democracy in Athens made it possible for private individuals to own schools and charge fees as they liked. What the state did in matters of education was to give directives on: the opening and closing hours of the schools and, insistence on proper moral supervision of the youths. Plato saw that lack of concentration on the business of education on one source ie. the state was responsible for such people like the sophists to teach all sorts of knowledge and charge exorbitant fees. Plato therefore

proposed a state of national education under which all citizens were trained according to the functions they were to perform in the society. In this direction, all the schools in Nigeria have borrowed leave and are following suite with the federal government directives on education, and the National Policy on Education is a step towards a national system of education.

Diversification of the Curriculum Content

In Plato's educational arrangement he recognized that in the practice of education, not all children would be able to go through Grammar schools and then universities. He was of the opinion that as societal needs were numerous; people should be trained in diversified curriculum so as to be able to cater for the diversified needs of the society.

Thus, there were some he called the **workers**, whose type of education may be regarded today as vocational and technical education, others whose education was to protect the state, **guardian soldiers**, and others still whose education was to govern the state, **philosopher king**. Although Plato's curriculum diversification was limited to the above three areas which was according to the realities of his time and country, he did suggest the need to diversify our curriculum now to cater for the needs of our present-day societies.

Relevance of Plato's Ethical Ideas on Education

Plato's central doctrine on education was based on "Justice" and the "Good Life". Plato believed that education means more than just imparting information. It involves the redirection of the whole personality. Precisely put the moral development of the children is one of the most important aspect according to Plato. He advocates that all subjects are subjects of morals. Based on the above backdrop, he stated in his curriculum subjects that could be taught to the guardians in order to achieve the purpose of the good.

Plato's guiding principle is that nothing must be admitted which does not bring about the promotion of virtue. For 'true and false', he substitutes the standard good and evil, although Plato did not take it upon himself to compose tales suitable for children, using his principle above, he assumes a moral censorship over the tales then current. This is also practical in modern times and also in Nigeria, with states banning pornographic materials or immoral books from reading list of students.

Concerning teaching of tales, Rousseau in contrast to Plato advocates beginning with the tales first. Rousseau protests against young children learning tales. To him, men may be taught by tales; children require the naked truth. The reason, he adds is that the child is attracted by what is false and misses the truth, and the means adopted to make the teaching pleasant prevents him profiting from it.

Plato also advocates the teaching of mathematics to children. Boyd and Kings (1984:34) state:

The mathematical studies Plato points out develop the soul in two ways. In the first place, they provoke reflection and bring out all the contradictions that he hid in opinions based on mere sense of knowledge. In this way they made it impossible for the learner to remain satisfied with his first impressions of things and prepare him for the advance from imagination to reason in the place, they take him to part of the road towards the good which is the soul of all learning and all life.

Concerning imitation the reason Plato gives is that ‘imitation’ beginning in early youth and continuing far into life, at length grows into habits and becomes a second nature, affecting the body, voice, and mind. With regard to music in its modern sense, Plato maintains that all harmonies which will make the citizens temperate and courageous be maintained, but those that are unmanly, that is those that are womanish and those that are festive in nature should be discarded. But the rhythm is to be determined by the nature of words, just as the style of words is determined by the disposition of the soul. Furthermore, the work began by ‘music’ and is carried further into adolescence by the sciences.

What has been discussed above, does not mean that music, poetry, science and mathematics are the only areas of study that help in the development of the soul to bring about the knowledge of the “Good” but, all other crafts or arts could do the same. It has also been mentioned earlier that the teachers of all subjects should be teachers of morals.

Furthermore, on the teaching of morals and its importance in the realm of education, Akinpelu (1984:34) states:

The role of education was first to develop the child so that he may become the best adult of his time. Second, it was to promote the reasoning ability of the person since that is the best and highest demand in man. Third, it was to promote the reasoning ability of the child since that is the best and highest demand in man. Fourth, it was to inculcate in all wisdom for practical living, good moral conduct and concern for the social welfare of his fellow citizens; and lastly, and most importantly to foster in the individuals who are capable of it the ability for intellectual and theoretical engagement.

Akinpelu went further to explain that in activities of development, the teacher should be the creative agent who will mould the child’s life in accordance with the ideal pattern and the idea of virtues of man. He also points out that, the teaching activity of the teacher will help the child realize the potentialities that is in him. Hence according to him, instruction is highly essential so as to guide the child’s development.

According to Plato, every class in the state has its own characteristic virtue; the common people-temperance, the soldiers-courage, the governors-wisdom; each representing the special development of some fundamental attribute of the soul. The quality of the state therefore depends on the kind of education that its component group receives. From the foregoing therefore, we can see clearly that Plato emphasizes the importance of the moral upbringing of the young through education, as this will enable

them play effective and vital roles later in life as adult members of the society to which they belong.

In Nigeria today, ethical teachings are carried out at home and schools. Even our traditional education aims at inculcating a high degree of morality among young children in our various communities. In addition to this, the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2014), also stresses the importance of developing good ethics in pupils/students, since it states, the inculcation of “moral and spiritual values in interpersonal and human relations”. Furthermore, in Nigeria moral instruction and religious studies are taught in schools. Also, in the northern part of the country Islamic religious studies, and moral instruction are also taught in schools. These studies are geared towards the development of good morals, in children.

The Nigerian government through the various Heads of State had at one time or the other introduced ethical revolutions in the country to tackle the problem of moral decadence in Nigerian communities. For instance Alhaji Shebu Shagari introduced Ethical Revolution in Nigeria when he was the Head of State. Also, during the Buhari's tenure in office as Head of State, he introduced War Against Indiscipline (WAI) for the same purpose mentioned above. In most cases teachers are concerned with imparting moral values and improving individual and social behaviour for this reason. In our schools today children are highly disciplined. This could be attributed to the influence of Plato's ethical ideas.

Levels of Education

It is obvious that he presented four levels of education: the nursery, primary, secondary and the tertiary. Plato and his Greek world for instance, to enter his Academy, which was an institution of higher education, the boy child was expected to have attained the age of seventeen (ephebus) and to enter our Nigerian universities today, requires the attainment of seventeen or eighteen years of age.

Free Education

Plato in some of his discussions and in his educational ladder proposed free and compulsory education at least up to the age of ten. J.H. Coomenius took over the idea in the 17th century, and since 1955 there has been practice of free primary education in Nigeria, especially in the old western region now Ogun, Ondo, Oyo and Ekiti states. Also in 1976, there was a national UPE in Nigeria. Presently, we are as well witnessing the Universal Basic Education (UBE) in most of the states in Nigeria. With all these, we can conveniently conclude that Plato's philosophy of education has relevance to the Nigerian education system. In writers' views, Plato is one of the greatest of the “Great Educators” though there are some flaws in his educational prescriptions. It is therefore not out of place to still maintain that through his educational ideas, he has contributed immensely to the development of education of his time in order to realize ideal societies, through the development of stable curriculum, definite aim of education, state

control of education, free and compulsory education, and women education among others.

The greatest problem however with Plato's educational content, is the fact that manual arts are over ruled. He finds them too low in the states for his educational arrangement as his interest is in the training of the rulers and for whom only intellectual education is considered relevant. This means if we are to go by Plato's views, we should not cater for vocational education in the way we now emphasize it in our National Policy on Education. It is inadequate, unfortunate and wrong for any education system to emphasize only intellectual development. Hence, the change in emphasis in recent times, especially in the spirit of self-reliance and the need for technological development through education.

Appraisal of Plato's Contributions to Education

Plato is one of the greatest of the "Great Educators" though there are some flaws in his educational prescriptions. It is therefore maintained that he has contributed immensely to the development of education of his time and this modern time through his works on how to realize ideal societies, through the development of stable curriculum, definite aims of education, state control of education, free and compulsory education, ethics in education, and women education among others.

The greatest problem with Plato's educational content, is the fact that manual arts are not considered relevant. He finds them too low in states for his educational arrangement. This is not surprising when it is realized that his interest is in the training of the rulers and for whom only intellectual education is considered relevant. According to Plato in the Republic, he believes that manual crafts, are all rather degrading.

Plato's education did not cater for vocational education in the way we now emphasize it in our National Policy on Education. This can be described as "unfortunate education" where his education system only emphasized academic or intellectual development. Hence, the change in emphasis in recent times, especially in the spirit of self-reliance and the need for technological development through education.

Conclusion

One of the doctrines for which Plato is most famous is his division of the state into three parts, namely the working class, or the artisan, the soldiers, and the rulers. Plato believes that every person in the state irrespective of sex and of social rank should be assigned to duties they are best fitted for, that is duties that correspond to their innate abilities. By this he also believes that people are born with different types of abilities. His division of the state centres around justice. According to him, justice suggests that each person be made to function in accordance with his ability. Another area highlighted was his support of compulsory education. This means education is universal and not restricted to a particular class.

One good point about Plato's doctrine is the equality accorded women in relation to men and the implications for education. Plato advocated that women should not be discriminated against in the distribution of social roles and other benefits including education. In addition, was the development of physical witness. He believed in the development of the body and soul and the harmonizing of both. He therefore believed in producing citizens with sound minds in sound bodies, who could participate and contribute actively to the development of the state/society.

Recommendations

Having looked at Plato's philosophy of education and its influence in the Nigerian system of education, it is obvious that Plato's philosophy did not touch some vital areas in Nigerian education system. Hence, the below necessary recommendations.

1. Physical education although has been introduced in schools as early as the nursery level of education, it should however be compulsory and taken seriously, for the development of the body, mind and soul and again for competitions in schools; states and countries. Sports, games and gymnastics also should serve for recreational purposes.

2. Music should also be introduced in schools from the nursery level of education. This will help in harmonizing the soul and also groom young ones for professional music career later in life. In literature, schools should include books that will develop courage and virtue, in the reading list of children.

3. Mathematics is already a compulsory subject in schools, but many students are very poor in it, so new and easier methods of teaching mathematics should be researched into to make the teaching and learning process of mathematics easier for students, since it is relevant in all aspects or spheres of human endeavour. Teaching aids should also be adequately provided to make the study of mathematics more interesting. Incentives should also be given to mathematics teachers as this will make them put in more efforts and commitment in the job which will in turn attract more students to the study of the subject. Astronomy as prescribed by Plato is no longer in schools curriculum; rather in its place geography is studied which also is relevant in agriculture and navigation.

4. Philosophy as advocated by Plato should also be introduced in schools early enough for all students, so as to encourage mastery of the subject by children as they grow up in order to ease the abstract nature of the subject. It will make people see things holistically.

5. Vocational, technical and science subjects should be taught in all schools to encourage self reliance, scientific and technological breakthrough, though vocational

and technical subjects were completely left out in Plato's educational arrangement. For effective teaching and learning through experiments and practicals, technical workshops and science laboratories should be built and equipped. More science, vocational and technical teachers should be trained and given scholarships for higher studies. The resultant effect will be that Nigeria will produce qualified manpower who will manage our industries, so that we will be self reliant.

6. Children should not be assigned to do only things or duties, which correspond to their innate abilities. Opportunity should be created for disabled children, and also those from poor parental motivation and environment so that they will advance along with others.

7. Education should really be made compulsory for everybody, as advocated by Plato, in order to totally eradicate illiteracy in Nigeria.

8. Women should not be discriminated against in the distribution of social roles and other benefits including education. All children should be given equal opportunity in education, as has been entrenched in the National Policy on Education in Nigeria.

9. In order to check moral decadence in the Nigerian society, moral instruction and Religious studies should be made compulsory in schools at the primary level and the secondary school levels of education. Emphasis should be placed more on those areas that have to do with the development of good morals.

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