

## EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY AND CONTRIBUTION OF PLATO TO THE FIELD OF EDUCATION

*Shabnum<sup>1</sup>, <sup>2</sup>Monika Sangral & <sup>3</sup>Sunil Kumar*

*<sup>1</sup>Shabnum, scholar, Department of Education, Central university of jammu, jammu and Kashmir, India*

*<sup>2</sup>Doctoral Student/ Research Scholar, School of Education, Lovely Professional University, Phagwara, Punjab, India*

*<sup>3</sup> Doctoral Student/ Research Scholar, Department of History central university of Himachal Pradesh, Kangra, Himachal Pradesh, India*

### ABSTRACT

Plato was a poet and mystic, as well as a philosopher and dialectician combining, in a rare degree, great powers of logical analysis and abstract thought with wonderful poetic imagination and deep mystical feeling. His character was noble he was an aristocrat by birth and by temperament, an uncompromising idealist, hostile to everything base and vulgar. Plato was born between 424 and 423 B.C.E. Both of his parents came from the Greek aristocracy. Plato's father, Ariston, descended from the kings of Athens and Messenia. His mother, Perictione, is said to be related to the 6th century B.C.E. Greek statesman Solon. Plato had three siblings, two brothers, Adeimantus and Glaucon, and a sister Potone. As per popular sources, his father is believed to have died when Plato was very young. Eventually, his mother married Pyrilampes, an ambassador to the Persian court several times. Plato grew up in the household of six children which included a stepbrother, a sister, two brothers and a half-brother. According to Diogenes, Plato was named after his grandfather Aristocles following the tradition of the naming the eldest son after the grandfather.

**KEYWORDS;** Education, philosophy, implication, teaching

### INTRODUCTION

Plato received the common Athenian education, both physical and mental. He was taught grammar, music, painting, and gymnastics by the most distinguished teachers in the Athens. He also attended courses of philosophy. In his youth, Plato took the profession of poetry. At first he wrote dithyrambs and then turned into writing lyric poems and tragedies. Later when he met Socrates, he burnt his poems and turned to philosophy. As a young man, Plato experienced two major events that set his course in life. One was meeting the great Greek philosopher Socrates. Socrates's methods of dialogue and debate impressed Plato so much that he soon he became a close associate and dedicated his life to the question of virtue and the formation of a noble character. After Socrates's death, Plato travelled for 12 years throughout the Mediterranean region, studying mathematics with the Pythagoreans in Italy, and geometry,

geology, astronomy and religion in Egypt. During this time, or soon after, he began his extensive writing. As far as the actual relationship between Socrates and Plato is concerned. From Apology of Socrates, we can derive that Plato was the most devoted young follower of Socrates. In the dialogues, Plato himself declares, “no writing of Plato exists or ever will exist, but those now said to be his are those of a Socrates become beautiful and new”. Historians like Xenophon and Aristophanes present a different image of Socrates unlike the one shown by Plato. Plato travelled to Italy, Sicily, Egypt and Cyrene and returned Athens at the age of forty. On his return to the city, sometime around 385 B.C.E., Plato founded a school of learning, known as the Academy, which he presided over until his death. The Academy operated until 529 C.E., when it was closed by Roman Emperor Justinian I, who feared it was a source of paganism and a threat to Christianity. Over its years of operation, the Academy’s curriculum included astronomy, biology, mathematics, political theory and philosophy. Plato’s final years were spent at the Academy and with his writing. he founded one of the earliest known organized schools in Western Civilization, The Academy, on a plot of land in the Grove of Hecademus or Academus. Many prominent intellectual people schooled in The Academy including Aristotle. In 367 B.C.E., Plato was invited by Dion, a friend and disciple, to be the personal tutor of his nephew, Dionysius II, the new ruler of Syracuse (Sicily). Dion believed that Dionysius showed promise as an ideal leader. Plato accepted, hoping the experience would produce a philosopher king. But Dionysius fell far short of expectations and suspected Dion, and later Plato, of conspiring against him. He had Dion exiled and Plato placed under “house arrest.” Eventually, Plato returned to Athens. He died in Athens around 348 B.C.E., when he was in his early 80s.

**Plato: Stages of Education** Plato’s model of education can be called “functionalist”: a model designed to produce competent adults to meet the needs of the state.

#### **First stage:**

Plato believed that education began from the age of seven and before this children should stay with their mothers for moral education and genders should be allowed to play with each other. Plato was of the opinion that for the first 10 years, there should be predominantly physical education. In other words, every school must have a gymnasium and a playground in order to develop the physique and health of children and make them resistant to any disease. Apart from this physical education, Plato also recommended music to bring about certain refinement in their character and lent grace and health to the soul and the body. Plato also prescribed subjects such as mathematics, history and science.

**Second stage** This stage is till the age of seventeen. The content of education comprises Gymnastics, literature, music elementary mathematics. Gymnastics is essential for the physical and mental growth. Music is chosen as the medium of education, an avenue for the spiritual growth, and ideas are the contents of education for this stage. After the age of six years both girls and boys should be separated, and boys should play with boys and girls with girls and they should be taught the use of different arms to both sexes. This stage goes up to the age of seventeen years

**Third stage** This stage is till the age of twenty. This stage is meant for cadetship and is related to physical and military training. The youth are brought into the stage of battle in this age. After the age of seventeen years the youth should be brought to battle field to learn real life experiences.

**Fourth stage** The four stages start at the age of twenty five to thirty years and in this age they get the training of Mathematical calculation and last for another ten years, after the completion the selected one's are admitted in the study of dialect. Here students undergo mathematical training preparatory to dialectic. Plato has highlighted the qualities needed for an individual to enter higher education. He proclaimed that preference should be given to the surest, bravest, fairest and those who have the natural gifts to facilitate their education.

**Fifth stage** This age is from ages thirty to thirty five. Plato restricted the study of dialectic to this age because he felt that an individual should be mature enough to carry on the study in dialectics especially about ultimate principles of reality.

**Six stage** This age is from thirty five to fifty years, when according to Plato, an individual is ready as a philosopher or ruler, to return to practical life to take command in war and hold such offices of state as befits him. After reaching 50 one should spend the life in contemplation of "the Good" their chief pursuit should be philosophy and should participate in politics, and rule for the good of the people as a matter of their duty.

### **Selection of Students**

Plato discussed the selection of students together with examinations of the student. According to Plato, a child must take an examination that would determine whether or not to pursue higher education at the age of 20. Those who failed in the examination were asked to take up activities in communities such as businessmen, clerks, workers, farmers and the like. These selections were in accordance with the age and stage to which these students were admitted. In Greece, pupils were being accepted in the first level at the age of six. Plato emphasised that education must start early. In Greece, boys and girls were being separated. As Plato says, "when the boys and girls have reached the age of six, the sexes should be separated; boys should spend their days with boys and girls with girls." Boys and girls were being taught the same things separately, but the spirit in which they were taught, differed because boys were destined to be soldiers, while girls would become mothers of families, they would only be called upon in an emergency to defend the state. Plato considered the role of tradition in learning. It is through tradition that one learns or knows about the history of his/her society.

### **The Role of Teacher**

Education in Greece was a matter of private individuals. Sophists were considered as educators. These were selling their wisdom; in their schools they admitted only pupils who were able to pay. Consequently, poor families could not manage to pay. Sophists moved from one town to another. This situation didn't please Plato since they were not the best channels of education, neither second best because they desired money and fame rather than knowledge. Plato's attitude toward these itinerant teachers, who picked up as much information and technique as possible in town and moved on to the next to purvey it, who usually lacked any firm commitment to truth, and who were happy to sell what they had picked up in rather expensive packages of private or semi private instruction, is a mixed one. He is the man who persuades in the market place or in the privacy of a small gathering; he is a person with a skill such as weaving or flute playing; he is the head of the state who guides his subject; he is person who discloses arcane mysteries to the particular audience fitted to receive them. Plato believed, and demonstrated, that educators must have a deep care for the well-being and future of those they work with. Educating is a moral enterprise and it is the duty of educators to search for truth and

virtue, and in so doing guide those they have a responsibility to teach. As Charles Hummel puts it in his excellent introductory essay (see below), the educator, ‘must never be a mere peddler of materials for study and of recipes for winning disputes, nor yet for promoting a career. In the case of formal education Plato emphasised the role of teachers. Plato thought that the role or the function of teachers is to communicate a subject matter to the pupils. Teachers are those who know the subject matter. He emphasised that teachers should have enthusiasm, they should have a spirit of helping students, and good behaviour, treat students with equality and friendship. He believed that students learn many things from their teachers, not only what teachers teach, but also social behaviour through the example shown by their teachers. In another place he writes “Do not then train youths by force and harshness, but direct them to it by what amuses their minds so that you may be better able to discover with accuracy the peculiar bent of the genius of each.”

### **Organization of Curriculum**

In The Republic, Plato has discussed his aim of Education, his notion of how education should proceed at different stages of life, and about the content of education and a well defined curriculum. for it. In the republic he has drawn up a blue print of what our ideal society should be and what role education has to play in the maintenance of justice and the functions of different social classes.

Plato contributed a lot in the form of ideas and it inspired his follower to find new ways for education and training of the children. In fact Plato himself did not contribute directly to science and mathematics but he stress on these subjects, his philosophy of education influenced the developments of these subjects in centuries to come. In the philosophy of Plato we can see some signs of the philosophy of Socrates; However Plato covered the major aspects of philosophy discussed today. In addition to that Plato proposed that :Education should be carefully planned as it is universal, with subject matter, admissible candidates, age levels, examinations and rewards being taken up as pressing considerations in state- supported and state- administered schooling.

The Platonic approach to education comprises the following aspects: sciences and arts, which were to be communicated by teachers to their pupils; moral virtue, necessary to teacher and students, and finally political institutions, which were connected with the learning process. But practically, Plato was interested in the method and purpose of education, its transmission through the institutions, which help in education. Teaching and training in accordance with their ages, selection of educators (teachers) and pupils, content of education, effectiveness of those who have already acquired that education.

Plato prescribed a general type of curriculum prevailing in Greece at that time. The curriculum for the early training, that occupied first seventeen years of life, was comprised of music and gymnastics. The word music was used in a much broader sense than we use it today. It included poetry, drama, history, oratory and music in its more limited sense.

Plato , define different stages for the organization and curriculum; named three stages of education: reading and writing as the first stage; second stage: physical education; and the third stage: secondary or literary education.

### **Reading and writing**

Education was not started for the children after birth, even before birth a mother was supposed to exercise properly, to ensure the health of the baby. After birth, exercise must be supplemented by various means that will keep the child from becoming frightened or emotional. This was followed by supervised play, instruction for both boys and girls; although they were supposed to learn the same disciplines and sports, it was suggested to be done separately. In this stage children should be taught through music, play, physical work, geometrical exercises: this should be done when children are in the age of six. The major aim of this stage is to “promote culture and right living by exposing the child to the proper kind of environment and atmosphere through play, music, discussion, and criticism”.

### **Plato’s Method of Instruction- The Dialectical Method**

Plato is in favour of education in a free atmosphere without any compulsion or check. Plato doesn’t write treatises, but writes in an indirect way, encouraging the reader to ask questions and think for himself. But, like his teacher Socrates, Plato is often happy to play role of observer rather than a preacher. Plato says all elements of instruction should be presented to the mind in childhood, nor however, under any notion of forcing. He says that, ” it is better for a learner to be a free man and not to a slave in the acquisition of knowledge.” According to Plato knowledge which is acquired under compulsion detains no hold on the minds of the bearers. Plato believed that there was no compulsion in teaching, and it should be more of an amusement. The teacher must know his or her subject, but as a true philosopher he or she also knows that the limits of their knowledge. It is here that we see the power of dialogue – the joint exploration of a subject – ‘knowledge will not come from teaching but from questioning’. In this method, the philosopher collects all of the instances of some generic category that seem to have common characteristics, and then divides them into specific kinds until they cannot be further subdivided. The role of dialectic in Plato’s thought is contested but there are two main interpretations: a type of reasoning and a method of intuition. Plato’s dialectic is “the process of eliciting the truth by means of questions aimed at opening out what is already implicitly known, or at exposing the contradictions and muddles of an opponent’s position.” Dialectic is the art of intuition for “visualising the divine originals, the Forms or Ideas, of unveiling the Great Mystery behind the common man’s everyday world of appearances. “Dialectics is this art of thinking in concepts; concepts, and not sensations or images, constitute the essential object of thought. We cannot, for example, call a man just or unjust unless we have a notion, or concept, of justice, unless we know what justice is; when we know that, we can judge why a man is just or unjust. The dialectical method consists, first, in the comprehension of scattered particulars in one idea, and second, in the division of the idea into species, that is, in the processes of generalization and classification. In this way alone can there be clear and consistent thinking; we pass from concept to concept, upward and downward, generalizing and particularizing, combining and dividing, synthesizing and analysing, carving out concepts as a sculptor carves a beautiful figure out of a block of marble. Judgment expresses the relation of concepts to one another, articulates concept with concept, while the syllogism links judgment with judgment, in the process of reasoning. One of the significant features of the dialogical (dialectic) method is that it emphasizes collective, as against solitary, activity. It is through the to and from of argument amongst friends (or adversaries) that understanding grows (or is revealed). Such philosophical pursuit alongside and within a full education allows humans to transcend their desires and sense in order to attain true knowledge and then to gaze upon the Final Good (Agathon).



## EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

In last we can say that PLATO'S CONTRIBUTION TO EDUCATION For Plato, education is a matter of leading a person from mere belief to true knowledge. This education is of primary importance in the case of those who are to be statesmen, and leaders. Plato's educational theories have the practical aim of training for citizenship and leadership; his chief interest is education for character. An important maxim proposed by Plato is, "The quality of the State depends on the kind of education that the members (groups) of the state receive" and so again he would be in favor of the American federal government promoting the various states adoption of the common core standards Plato followed the question-answer method employed by Socrates, especially at the advanced levels of education. By using penetrating questions, the teacher can go beneath the surface of the things which the sense perceive and arrive at a purely intellectual understanding of the essence behind the objects of sense. The good teacher must become a dialectician who does not permit students to accept the appearances of things, but makes them use the eyes of the soul to perceive their real meaning. The teacher thus brings out the truth which is in the mind of the student, taking him out of the realm of sense experience. This dialectical method forces the student to leave the realm of sense knowledge with practical applications to life and soar to the heights of pure reason. In a nutshell, Plato's polis (state) is essentially an educational community. It is created by education. It can survive only on condition that all its citizens receive an education that enables them to make rational political decisions. It is up to education to preserve the state intact and to defend it against all harmful innovations. The aim of education is not personal growth but service of the state, which is the guarantor of the happiness of its citizens for as long as they allow it to be the embodiment of justice. Education must be compulsory for all.

## REFERENCES

- Barrow, R., Plato and Education, New York: Routledge, 2012.
- Chimakonam, Jonathan O., Edwin E. Etieyibo, and Ike Odimegwu, eds. Essays on Contemporary Issues in African Philosophy. Springer, 2022.
- Delic H., & Becirovic S., "Socratic Method as an Approach to Teaching," European Researcher (2016) (511-517).
- Guthrie, W. K. C., A History of Greek Philosophy, Plato: The Man and His Dialogue Earlier Period, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975.
- Hummel, C., "Plato", UNESCO: International Bureau of Education (1994) 329-324.
- Kabalah, H., Plato's Contribution to the Education System [<https://www.academia.edu/37986088/platos-contribution-to-education-system>, accessed on 26/05/2022, 2:30 PM].

- Kimario, J. R., Factors Hindering the Use of Participatory Teaching Methods in Secondary Schools in Tanzania, Morogoro: Jordan University Press, 2015.
- Kitta, S and Tilya, F., “The Status of Learner – Centered Learning and Assessment in Tanzania in the Context of the Competence –Based Curriculum”, Journal of the School of Education University of Dar es Salaam, (2010) 1-14.
- Kochalumchuvattil, T., ed., Essays on Contemporary Issues in African Philosophy, Bengaluru: Asian Trading Corporation, 2016.
- Lamarre, M., Plato’s Dialectical Method, [[https://www.academia.edu/2013/Plato’s Dialectical Method](https://www.academia.edu/2013/Plato’s_Dialectical_Method)], accessed on 21/06/2022, 2:30 PM].
- Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, Curriculum for Diploma in Teacher Education Programmes in Tanzania, Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Institute of Education, 2013.
- Msabila, D.T., ^ Nalaila, S.G., Research Proposal and Dissertation Writing: Towards Effective Researching and Dissertation Writing Principles and Practice, Dar es Salaam: Nyambari Nyangwine Publishers, 2013.
- Mtitu, E.A., Learner-Centered Teaching in Tanzania: Geography Teachers’ Perception and Experiences, A Thesis Submitted to Victoria University of Wellington in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Victoria University of Wellington, 2014.
- Murphy, M., Plato’s Philosophy of Education and the Common Core, Chicago: University of St. Francis, 2015.
- Ogilvy, A., “Socratic Method, Platonic Method and Authority”, Educational Theory (1971) 3-16.
- Sanni, A & Momoh, D., “Plato’s Philosophy of Education and its Implications to Counselling”, Anyigba: European Centre for Research Training and Development (2019) 66-73.
- Sanni, A & Momoh, D., “Plato’s Philosophy of Education and its Implications to Counselling”, Anyigba: European Centre for Research Training and Development (2019) 66-73.
- Sfetcu, N., “Plato’s Dialectics”, Telework (February 25, 2022), DOI: URL = <https://www.telework.ro/en/platos-dialectics>, Accessed on 21/06/2022, 2:54 PM.
- Shim, S.H., “A Philosophical Investigation of the Role of Teachers: A Synthesis of Plato, Confusius, Buber, Freire”, A Group of Globalizing Teaching and Research in Education (2007) 515-538.
- Simiyu, K.A., Socrates legacy in Education, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, 2016.