

PLATO'S THEORY OF EDUCATION: IMPLICATION FOR NIGERIAN SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

This paper sought to examine Plato's Theory of Education: Implication for Nigerian System. Plato was the pace-setter of Western education who conceived education as indispensable for formation of the ideal state. Plato's educational ideas are meant to reconstruct the sociopolitical situation of Athens of his time. The positive contributions of Plato in the field of education have great relevant implications on Nigeria's educational system. It provides the rationale for Nigerians to educate and elect their government responsively. Plato sought to develop a political system in which the leaders would be knowledgeable and good. Security challenges are one of the basic problems bedeviling Nigerian society in this present era. The proper education of Nigerian military will make them to be highly spirited, patriotic and strong. However, the massive unemployment of Nigerian graduates necessitates the need for technical and vocational training. Plato's idea of education of the artisans (masses) according to the needs of each craft conforms to vocational training, which is indispensable for skill acquisition for useful living in the society.

INTRODUCTION

The desire to read, write and equip oneself for life is generally pursued by people and nation across the globe. Education is geared towards self-actualization. No wonder, Nwafor (2007) conceived that education is designed to equip individuals with desired knowledge; skill and attitude that will enable them live a fulfilled life in the society. Hence, education enhances national transformation. The knowledge, skills and positive dispositions or attitudes acquired in school are applied towards the well-being of the society. Thus, education is a worthwhile engagement, which is valued in every society. The school and society are meant to complement each other. On this note, Onwuka (2002) portrayed that education should take into consideration the cultural background of the people where it is situated. However, true education cannot be actualized outside the terrain of philosophy. Philosophers are conceived as the ultimate educators of mankind. Plato was a renowned Greek philosopher, whose educational theory is geared to reconstruct the Athenian socio-political situation of his time.

According to Barrow (1973), the formal Athenian education propagated by the sophists in 5th century B.C. was inadequate to address the problems of Athenian society. The aim of Athenian education of his time was to inculcate the art of rhetoric and persuasive speech at a high cost for the rich or upper class who might use it to achieve their selfish political ambitions. Plato was aggrieved by the way his master, Socrates, was killed by the corrupt Athenian government. He sought to form an ideal state in his Republic where future leaders will be educated in order to remedy the ills in the society.

Conceptual Clarification of Basic Terms

The key terms associated with this study are education and Nigeria. Before plunging into the mainstream of this work, it is important to clarify these basic terms in order to enhance a better understanding of this work. Education is an ambiguous concept. There is no universally or succinct definition of education. Nwabuisi (2002) recorded that the concept of education is derived from two-fold etymological definitions. The first school of thought has it that education is derived from the Latin word "educare" which means "to train" or "to form". Education is one of the important factors that distinguish man from other animals. John Locke was one of the chief proponents of this school of thought. He upheld that the child's mind at birth is a "tabula rasa"- a clean slate or blank sheet

on which nothing is written on it (Stumpf, 1994). The newly born child is to be trained with dedication, high level of commitment and undiluted patriotism because education is what separates man from other lower animals. Education is the process of training and bringing up the child physically and mentally. This school of thought applies to informal education. Informal education is the initial education the child receives at home as a member of a social group. In this regard, education is all the procedures by which a child builds up the ability, attitudes, and other forms of behaviors which are the positive value of the society in which s/he lives.

On the other hand, the second school of thought holds that education is derived from another Latin word "educere", which means "to lead" or "to pull or draw out". The main proponent of this school was Plato. Plato conceived that man is born with some innate ideas which is used in educating the child. In this sense, education helps to develop the mind. This is the rationale propounded by Socrates that education is a midwifery which helps people to bring out what nature is endowed (Omoregbe, 1991). Thus, education is the process of helping the child to develop his/her potentials. This ideology conforms to formal education. According to Hornby (2011), formal education is education or training received in a school, college or university, with lessons, exams, etc, rather than gained just through practical experience. It is systematically planned and implemented in an institution of learning. Education in the context of this work is to be understood in the sense of formal education. Plato's notion of education was in line with the second etymological definition of education. In this work, Plato's theory of education is geared to be implemented in Nigeria.

Nigeria is a country in West Africa. According to Njoku (2000), the term "Nigeria" was coined by Flora Shaw, a journalist who later married Lord Lugard who suggested in an article for the Times that the several British Protectorates on the Niger be known collectively as Nigeria. The country came into being in this present form in 1914 when the two British protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria were amalgamated by Sir Frederick Lugard. But, before the creation of Nigeria by British lords, Nigeria was made up of a number of great kingdoms that maintained complex systems of government independent of contact with Western world. Nigeria gained her independence in 1960 from the British colonial government. The country is made up of thirty-six states with more than two hundred and fifty ethnic groups. The major ethnic groups among them are: Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba.

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 discuss, 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

exert care of a pardo-tribe. 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, Iyric, 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):

Plato's Theory of Education

Plato was born in 428/27 to 547 B.C. in the Greek city of Athens. He came from Oligarchic family. The teaching of his master Socrates influences Plato in his philosophy. He found his academy where he lived and worked for the rest of life as an educator, philosopher and political scientist. His theory of education stems from the rationalist conception of education. Plato was a rationalist who believed that true state of things lies in the world of forms. In other words, the world of forms is intelligible realities of visible things. On the other, Plato envisaged that sensible things are not the object of

true knowledge. He proposed the theory of innate ideas, where certain ideas are inborn in the mind. Plato's *Metaphysics* in Russell (1945) conceived that the soul has pre-existed in the world of forms prior to its existence in this physical world of human experience. Education helps the mind to recollect and remember what it already knows in the world of form prior to its existence in this world.

Education deals with acquisition of knowledge. According to Omeregbe (1991), Plato's theory of knowledge portrayed that knowledge is virtue. In this sense, to know how well it is to do good, ignorance is the source of evil. In this sense, Plato conceived that one cannot do evil willingly. Since ignorance is the source of evil, education is geared to lead the mind out of ignorance.

Furthermore, Plato categorizes the different levels of knowledge. Hence, Stumpf (1994) portrayed that he used theory of divided line to show many levels of knowledge which depicts that a sensible thing is not the object of true knowledge. At the lowest level of knowledge is the opinion. Here, we have imagination and belief. Imagination is lower than belief because the mind takes sensory impressions of sense perception as deceptive and cannot be an object of true knowledge. Above the visible realm lies thinking and intelligence or dialectics. Here lies the object of true knowledge. Thinking is lower than intelligence because in thinking, the mind makes abstraction and rises above the sensible objects. The highest object of knowledge is intelligence or dialectics. It deals with the art of abstract reasoning and looking beyond particulars and appearance. Education is geared to attain this level of knowledge. Training at this level requires reflection and proper understanding of things.

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 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.

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.

Education of Citizens

The aim of education for Plato is to make men good as citizens. Plato proposed to form ideal state in his Republic. In this state, the citizens are classified into three: the artisans, the guardians and the rulers. Each is to be educated to carry out their task efficiently in the society. No wonder, Plato conceived in Ferrari (2000) that there is justice in the state when each class is performing its proper function. The artisans are to be educated according to the need of each craft to provide goods and services for the state. Education of the artisans or masses synchronizes with vocational training. On the other hand, the guardians are to be educated to defend the state from internal and external aggression.

Plato believed that both men and women could be guardians. And to ensure that the guardians carry out their tasks efficiently, special training and provision are made for them. Plato buttressed in Cooper (1997) that education in music and physical training are very important for the guardians to develop a character that is both gentle and high spirited. This is geared to make them absorb the laws and preserve its belief against corruption from pleasure, pain, fear and desire. Moreover, Stumpf (1994) envisaged that in order to preserve the unity of guardians, they should own properties in common. The permanent individual family would be eradicated, and there would be a single family of guardians. Sexual relations would be restricted only to special marriage festivals. Young men who have distinguished themselves in war and duties should be given more opportunities to sleep with women in order to breed stronger children. The children born to the guardians will be detached from their mothers and given to officers appointed to take care of them. The children will be brought up in a crèche in the care of nurses living in a special part of the city. However, Plato portrayed that education is necessary for good management of a state. The ruler is to be educated to pilot the affairs of the state. Hence, he sought to develop a political system in which leaders would be knowledgeable and good. In this regard, the leaders are educated to acquire the highest level of knowledge (dialectics). Through the study of dialectics, he will be well grounded in abstract reasoning, knowing the vision of good and bad. This was what Plato meant when he said that a state will be good only when philosophers become kings and kings become philosophers.

Plato's notion of education is designed mainly for the philosopher kings, it is expected that a person who is being prepared to rule must at least be conversant with the study of literature, music and elementary mathematics at the age of eighteen. Then, at the age of twenty, after a two years period of military training, those who give the evidence of their competence and suitability proceed to higher education and subsequent practical experience (Ferrari, 2000:104-107). At the age of twenty, few that distinguished themselves would be selected to pursue an advanced course in mathematics. At age of thirty, a five years course in dialectics and moral philosophy would begin. The next fifteen years would be spent gathering practical experience through public service. Finally, at the age of fifty, the ablest men who reach the highest level of knowledge, the vision of good, would then be ready for the task of governing the state.

Nigeria's Educational System

The memorandum of National Policy on Education of Federal Republic of Nigeria operates 9:3:4 system of education. It deals with nine years compulsory basic education. According to National Policy on Education (2004), basic education comprises six years of primary education and three years of junior secondary education. Those who still want to continue with education will proceed to three years senior secondary and four years tertiary education. Western education in Nigeria is a product of colonialism. Thakur (1980) lamented that although the emergence of western education enlightens our people in different ways but this does not serve the interest of our people in most cases. The bad effect of this type of education gave rise to the national curriculum conference of 1969 to address the problem of education. A foundation was laid for the changes in the Nigeria

educational system. The aims and the objectives of Nigeria education recommended at the conference covered the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education. They incorporated the cognitive, psychomotor and affective domain of human development unlike the old system which emphasized only the cognitive domain to the detriment of others.

The change in Nigeria's educational curriculum is designed in such a way that the students will receive enough intellectual education, adequate manipulative and physical training, well-grounded emotional, social and attitudinal guidance of people for each level.

Philosophy and Goals of Education in Nigeria

The school and society are two sides of the same coin. It is through the school that the young learners acquire the lifestyle of the society. Hence, the curriculum must reflect the cultural values of the society. Education must be directed according to the need of the people at a particular point in time. The needs and aspirations of Nigeria are seen in the five main national goals of Nigeria as enunciated in the National Policy on Education (2004: 6) as the building of:

- (a) a free and democratic society;
- (b) a just and egalitarian society;
- (c) a great and dynamic economy;
- (f) a land full of bright and full opportunities for all citizens.

These are the national aspirations for the foundation of the philosophy of Nigerian education. The national philosophy of education aims at integrating the individual Nigerians thus:

- (a) The development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen.
- (b) the full integration of the individual into the community; and
- (c) The provision of equal access of educational opportunities for all citizens at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system (National Policy on Education, 2004: 7).

However, the philosophy and goals of Nigeria's education would be fruitful if it is well implemented. It is evident that the National Policy on Education (2004) has provided not only the aims and objectives of education in Nigeria. Also, it has enunciated the steps and means to be taken in order that the aims and objectives it presents to the nation can be better achieved. But, the main problem of education in Nigeria is lack of implementation of educational policy as a result of political crisis among other factors. On this note, Ikejiani (1964) bewailed that there is a big gap between operations and policy makers. Thus, there is the need for the collective effort of the government, students, parents, the school authority and the general public towards actualization of the aims and objectives of education in Nigeria.

Implications of Plato's Theory of Education on Nigeria Platonic education served the need of the Athenians at the moment. Economic and political life of the Athens were reflected in his system of education, Plato sought to develop a political system in which leaders would be knowledgeable and good. And this can be very relevant to Nigeria's educational system. One of the main objectives which serve as foundations for the national policy, upon which the philosophy of Nigerian education is built, is to create a free and democratic society. Nigeria's philosophy of education is based on democratic principles. People should be educated to elect their government responsibly. The political and economic crises we have now in Nigeria are as a result of bad leadership. Achebe (1983) rightly observed that the problem with Nigeria is bad leadership. Bad people force themselves into government without the proper elective process. If people are educated properly, they cannot perpetrate such act in view of its consequences.

Hence, Nigerian leaders have to be educated in the knowledge of the good which will help them to seek for the common good of the people. It will contribute to form the necessary understanding which would assist the public to perceive, think, imagine, desire, choose and act in a way that is fully and distinctively human. Plato saw education in music and physical training as very essential for the guardians to develop a character that is both gentle and high spirited at the same time. Hence, Plato's Republic in Cooper (1997) elucidated that this proper nature and upbringing would

make them absorb the laws and preserve its belief against corruption from pleasure, pain, fear and desire. Nigerians should incorporate the positive aspects of Plato's philosophy into their military school. Nigerian soldiers have to be educated in order to carry out their tasks efficiently. They should not use their strength as an advantage to exploit the masses. Thus, they should be educated to resist the attraction of going into government to control the affairs of the state which is not meant for them.

This anomaly brings injustice, anarchy and corruption. Nigeria is still suffering the bad effects of military authoritarianism in their socio-political system. Furthermore, Plato's education of the masses according to the need of each craft is necessary for the provision of goods and services for the state. This can be very relevant to Nigerian situation. It will help to accomplish the national goals upon which the philosophy of Nigerian education is built. In order to achieve a united, strong and self-reliant nation, government should equip the schools with proper infrastructural facilities necessary for practical training in different fields of learning. Vocational training should be encouraged in schools to enable the students acquire the skills for useful living in the society. There is the need for Africans to embark on their technology instead of relying solely on manufactured goods imported from advanced economies of Europe and America.

On the other hand, Plato's system of education is quite different from Nigeria's educational system. Plato's *Timaeus* in Cooper (1997), gave room for moral education, which allow for cultivation of virtue and goodness. This seems to be lacking in Nigeria's educational system. Moral education should be introduced in Nigeria's educational system at all levels and not just only to primary or secondary education. Again, Nigeria's 9:3:4 system of education differs from Plato's system of education. Plato devised different form of education for each class of citizen. For instance, Platonic education of rulers stipulated that at the age of eighteen, that a person who is being prepared to rule must study literature, music and elementary mathematics.

After this, he pursues a rigorous physical and military training for two years. At the age of twenty, few that distinguished themselves will be selected to pursue an advanced course in mathematics. At age of thirty, a five years course in dialectics and moral philosophy would begin. The next fifteen years would be spent gathering practical experience through public service. But, physical and military training is lacking in Nigeria's educational system for the masses. On this note, physical and military training should be introduced into Nigeria's educational system after tertiary education before the practical experience of youth service. It will help to balance their intellectual learning with physical fitness of the body. Besides, it is a pre-requisite for effective experience of youth service.

Evaluation

Plato has contributed immensely in the field of education but there are certain loopholes in his philosophy. Plato's theory of knowledge specifies that a sensible thing is not the object of true knowledge. Hence, his theory of knowledge fails to recognize that certain knowledge can also be derived from the senses. On the other hand, intelligence and senses are the object of true knowledge. In line with this view, Aristotle in Eboh (1995) upheld that there is no knowledge in the mind which does not come from the senses. Thus, sensible world is the source of knowledge in the intelligible realm because one moves from what is known to the unknown. It is not the case in Plato's theory of knowledge to conceive that knowledge is virtue. In that sense, to know good is to do good and ignorance is the source of evil.

Hence Plato fails to recognize the weakness of human free-will. It is common to see some people who willingly indulge in evil acts. Aristotle sees the irrational part of the soul as the source of evil. Augustine (1960) sees on his part the fall of man as the cause of evil in the world. A close look at Plato's educational ideas suggests that Plato advocated for inequality in his classification of citizens. According to Stumpf (1994), Plato's classification of citizens is based on the 'noble lie' that the god who molded people mixed gold in the composition of those who are to rule and put silver in the guardians, and iron and brass in the farmers and craftsmen. Based on this assertion, the citizens of

a state can be demoted or promoted from one class to another. The noble lie implies that a person is determined by nature to belong to any class in the society. But, the question is: Are all men equal? All men are somehow fundamentally equal in their biological make-up. As such, they should be free to choose the job suitable to their abilities instead of the deterministic influence of nature.

Again, in the education of the guardians, communal ownership of property is utopic. This is so because people tend to take good care of their private properties at the expense of the public property. Hence, the guardians should have their private wives and properties for this will engender self-control and peace in the society. In addition, Plato did not support equal and universal education which is the main basis of philosophy of Nigerian education. His education is organized mainly for the philosopher-king. The education of the guardians and artisans is pursued for utility purpose and not for the purpose of gaining real knowledge. In this regard, the education of the guardians and artisans should be extended to include both the cognitive and affective domains of learning. Nevertheless, these loop-holes in Plato's system of education are not meant to encounter the great contributions of Plato in the educational field as the pace-setter of western education.

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. This paper has examined Plato's educational ideas and its implications on the Nigerian situation. Plato's theory on education is important for education of Nigerian leaders. Good leadership is indispensable for peaceful co-existence which drives development in all sectors of the society. The positive aspects of Plato's

philosophy are useful in Nigeria's military school and vocational training of the masses in order to acquire useful skills for effective living in the 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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