
PLATO'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS TO COUNSELLING

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ABSTRACT : *The focus of this work is on the implication of Plato's philosophy of education on counselling. It unveiled that Plato's philosophy of education hinges on education for all boys and girls to the limits of their ability and in the same analysis, people should be educated according to their various talents and abilities. This has implication for trait and factor theory in counselling which surmises that decisions about vocations are not adequate if one does not understand himself as much as the characteristics of the vocation which an individual want to pursue. At the end, recommendations were made which includes, for the avoidance of wastages, talents should be engaged where they fit in and that the curriculum should be flexible.*

KEYWORDS: philosophy of education, counselling, implication

INTRODUCTION

There can be no today without yesterday. From antiquity till date, man has continued to search for the ideals and philosophy which give shape to educational system. It is in conformity with the above statement that, Rusk (1976) noted the need for educators and students to study "the Doctrines of the Great Educators". Brutus and Brauner (1976) noted that, educational administrators, educators and students at all levels, should study to understand the philosophical views of great educators like Plato as their approaches' and suggestions can be carefully applied to present day educational problems.

In the same vein, Akinpelu (1984) clearly stated, that since past great educators contributed immensely to the development of the education of their time, there is need to consider the relevance of their ideas in contemporary education as past experiences can be useful in solving present and future problems (p. 24). Therefore, the ideas will serve as a guide to modern education in solving educational problems. The fact is that certain problems have been in existence in education from the onset. Thus, Boyd and King (1972) recommended that, because of the dynamic nature of the society and its peculiar problems, emphasis should be laid on the development of critical abilities needed for tackling contemporary problems of education.

One of the cardinal reasons for this study is to show that philosophy as a course is a wave cutting across all disciplines and hence philosophy of education. Again, guidance and Counselling is crucial to education and intricately linked to the attainment of all educational goals. Philosophy as a course brings an equilibrium in the approaches to education. It is good to know that all the tentative generalizations in discipline like Guidance and Counselling is given further analysis through philosophy of education which leads to the expansion of knowledge. The philosophy of a nation is the bedrock on which the philosophy of education depends. A well-packaged counseling program wears coat of indispensability for a successful educational programme which brings efficiency and national development. The philosophy of human dignity and equality is the building brick of counseling in which an individual is incontrovertibly important.

Education aims at self-realization, self-discovery which is equally counseling-based. It recognizes individual differences, a cooperative enterprise, development of the individual's growth, etc.

Conclusively, any academic programme that lacks philosophy has no foundation to stand on and may not stand the test of time.

Background information to this philosophy

According to Lombardi (1994), Socrates, Plato and Aristotle were three of the greatest philosophers of their respective times. They had their different views on philosophy, government form/matter, reality, knowledge and a host of other issues. None the less, they opened our minds to the truth. The first of these three, Socrates, was a man who changed the views of many. Most of what he said was recorded by Plato his student in his book titled 'the Republic' in 427 B.C. (p. 133 – 142). Socrates was a very wise man because "he knew nothing"; this was a paradox he commonly used. In reality, Socrates thought everyone could recognize and participate in right behaviour. Plato conversely that thought philosophical leadership was restricted to a few who could master it through philosophical studies. Socrates taught us much and his successor built on his teachings.

The student teacher relationship of Socrates and Plato leads to some parallels between their philosophies, such philosophies, for instance ideas about knowledge, Plato states that, we are born with the knowledge we will ever have. This means that knowledge is present in human mind at birth. It is not so much that we 'learn' things in our daily experiences, but we 'recollect' them. This is a subject that Socrates may have agreed with Plato upon. Aristotle on the other hand refutes this statement; he would rather see the teacher having great input in the learner's process of learning.

Aristotle thought that knowledge comes through experiences and that we were not born with it. A recurring theme among the three is that they felt that the government was corrupt. Plato most likely feels this way because the government killed Socrates, his friend and teacher. Plato agreed with Socrates that we should question the government. He said that the government is corrupt because it uses emotion, not logic. Aristotle thought that monarchy can turn into tyranny, aristocracy into oligarchy and moderate democracy into rapid democracy or anarchy. But of the three, he (Aristotle) viewed moderate democracy as his preference.

Aristotle has certain peculiar thought about the physical. He thought of air, fire, water and earth; and claims that they tend to go their original place. Fire and air move up, whereas earth and water fall down. Later when he expresses his fifth element, star, he expressed a slight reference to religion. He says that something sets the world in motion, the unmoved mover that he later refers to as God. Aristotle changed the face of philosophy having views that opposed those who came before him. Aristotle thought that nature could best be understood by observation and reason and that all knowledge should be subject to observation and reason, science education has shown a renewed interest in Aristotle's work.

Today, theories in science are often based on abstract and mathematical models of the world. Students sometimes use the theories and equation without understanding how they are developed, their limitations or even what problems they address. The development of an idea from Aristotle to the present world make physics more interesting and understandable. Aristotle's works are reconstruction from fragmentary notes. He had the most rudimentary of scientific equipment, his measurements were not quantitative, and he considered only things that were observable with the eyes. Ignoring these limitations has caused some to distort the significance of his work sometimes to the point of considering Aristotle an impediment to the advancement of science. Aristotle suggests that the principles of nature could be found within nature and could be discovered using careful observation and inductive reasoning. Observation must be capable of being done by the senses and should include the four causes;

the composition, the shape (or form), the motion (or change) and the end result (or purpose). Identifying the four causes insured a thorough understanding of the vent. Chance or spontaneity was not considered among the causes. He thought all the observation in nature should be open to examination.

Aristotle founded a school in Athens at Lyceum which provided the world's first comprehensive study of human knowledge from the perspective of natural philosophy. His lectures followed a pattern that formed the scientific methods, they include, the statement of the idea of problem, the precise definition of terms, a statement of what he and other scholars thought about the matter, the observations, arguments based on how well the idea agree with observation and finally what could be concluded (Rusk, 1976).

Plato's Philosophy of Education

When examined in more details, Plato's philosophy can be found to have great relevance to contemporary education. He was, for instance, disturbed by the Athenian carefree attitude towards education, especially by the absence of special training for the rulers of the state. He considered the administration of the state a technical matter and thus he considered need for specialist training for the rulers, and specialist training for other categories of people too. Plato's ideal state was where social justice and harmony were the predominant values. According to him, social justice refers to the responsibility each citizen owes the state; which means, the contribution of an individual towards state's welfare in area where he had natural talent and expert training without meddling in the area of competence of others (Akinpelu, 1984).

Plato's educational ideals lie in giving a clear view to educators about the meaning of different concepts that appeared in the discourse on education in history. These concepts include ideas, reason, goodness, metaphysics, dialectics, sense perception, representation, virtue, role play as a medium of instruction, motivation and truth. If one looks closely at these concepts, one can easily find that in any discourse on educational philosophy, Plato's philosophy helps us in understanding these terms. Plato presented his philosophy of education helps us in understanding these terms. Plato presented his philosophy of education in his book titled 'The Republic' (p. 197-205). For Plato, education was more of the discovery of previously acquired knowledge. This theme of education as a rediscovery of knowledge was based on a metaphysical philosophy held by Plato about man and his soul. Each man's soul had a previous existence in an ideal world, which Plato called 'the world of ideas'. In which it had a perfect knowledge of all that exist in this world. When this soul was later planted in the body of man, it lost that knowledge and education is now the process by which the soul can be helped to regain it.

The curriculum content of Plato's educational system differs from one level of education to the other, geared towards producing men for physical fitness, for moral and spiritual development of the soul, for utilitarian value and much more still to help the soul progress beyond mere fallible opinions and beliefs to the certainty of true knowledge through abstract reasoning thereby making him useful to himself and his society (The Republic, p.281).

The table depicts the educational level, age and curriculum content of Plato's educational system.

S/N	Educational Level	Age (Years)	Curriculum content
1	Nursery/kindergarten	3 – 6	Playing and games
2	Elementary	7 – 10	Games, sport, basic element of reading and story telling
3	Secondary	11 – 17	Gymnastics, music, introductory mathematics (arithmetic, geometry, solid geometry) and literature
4	Tertiary	20 – 25	Higher mathematics, astronomy, philosophy and dialectics

Table 1: Plato (427BC p. 301-319), Akinpelu (1984).

Influencing factors to Plato's educational ideas

Plato's writings were the product of his immediate environment. For example, he developed his idea of state from the instability and chaos that took place in Athens at a time that the control of the state became a problem. All these resulted from the Athenian experience during the Peloponnesian wars. His style of writing was mostly based on the Socratic and the sophist's methods. According to Akinpelu (1984), four basic influences are identified namely; Socrates, Heraclitus, Pythagoras and the Athenian society in his book titled 'The Republic' (p. 113 – 117).

Firstly, Socrates was Plato's teacher, and so his interest in the universals or ideas arose essentially from his discussions on moral qualities such as courage and justice. The arguments, which were never conclusive, begun with isolated incidents like courage and justice. Then Socrates through series of questions and answer attempted to get "correct definitions". These definitions were never arrived at, from these discussions; Socrates influenced his pupil Plato.

Secondly, Heraclitus was another philosopher that influenced Plato greatly. He had thought a doctrine of change or flux. For him, the world is in a constant state of flux. Precisely put; nothing is the same from one moment to the other. This theory has epistemological implications. For instance, if everything changes, it will imply that, knowledge in fact would appear impossible in his book titled 'The Republic' (p. 231-232). Plato was inclined to accept the idea but he was convinced that knowledge is both necessary and possible. Therefore, if the ever changing world cannot be known, then the universals, which seem to be permanent and stable, provide some avenues for knowledge.

The next influence on Plato was Pythagoras. This was the philosopher that gave form to Plato's thought about the universals. Pythagoras had a strong mixture of mathematics and justice. He organized a religious society in southern Italy at the end of the 6th century BC. This was where he carried out research into mathematics. He did not only invent geometrical theory that bears his name till today but also discovered and impressed musical notes in simple numerical ratios. It is very clear that Plato gained his mathematical interest in the universals under Pythagoras's (musical dimension).

Furthermore, in the view of Rusky (1975), Athenian life and politics provided a personal incentive to Plato's investigation of the universals. The tragic years of wars and its aftermath of revolution and intrigues coupled with political and social instability which found expression in the collapse in the fractional values and conduct, brought in strong moral decadence and made research for ethical universal imperative, Plato's though in the ethical sphere such as goodness and justice, might restore

stability and sanity in the Athenian moral life, whereby Plato too would have influenced the society. He thought that his ideas would result in the reorganization of the society.

Another important influence on Plato was the fact that he was a Greek by birth and history reveals that the Greek have contributed immensely to mankind in all spheres of life especially education. Boyd (1981) submits that; *The proper starting point for a study of educational beginnings which aim at an understanding of our time is Greece, the cradle of modern civilization. At the name Greece as Hegel said, the modern cultural man feels himself at home; what is here, what is present, science and can all that makes life satisfying and elevates and adorns it, is derived directly or indirectly from Greece, (p. 35).*

The main question Plato raised was about justice. Within the discussion of justice, he examines his idea of education. His elitist theory is a systematic one, which concludes that education is for all. He believed that education and justice are connected. Therefore without education, there will be no justice which include individual, social, excellent and knowledge virtue. It is then important to examine what Plato means by justice. According to him (Plato), justice is the highest social good and ideal. Wedberg (1982), states that the Socratic Method, helps to draw out what is already there. Plato proves here that the role of education is not to teach in the sense of feeding people with information they do not know or own, but rather to shed light on things they already know in his book titled 'The Republic' (p. 224 – 227).

The major ideas in Plato's philosophy of education include the following:

- **Education for all:** Plato would want all boys and girls to be educated to the limit of their abilities in all realms of knowledge and understanding; including, metaphysics, epistemology and axiology.
 - **State Education:** All children should be taken from the parents and educated by the state.
 - **Teaching Method:** Plato recommended making learning as close to play as possible at the elementary level. Upon reaching the higher levels of education, the student's reasoning should be encouraged in the processes of thinking and abstracting.
 - **Organization and Curriculum:** Organization and Curriculum is one of the educational ideas of Plato and his idea has the following points:
 - i. **Elementary:** All boys and girls should be educated together. They should study mathematics, literature, poetry and music until they are eighteen years of age.
 - ii. **Military Training:** The next two years of the youth's life should be devoted to physical education alone.
 - iii. **Higher Education:** Between the ages of twenty and thirty-five, the future guardian should receive a higher education to prepare him for ruling the state.
- Moreover, everybody should be educated in the final analysis according to their various talents and abilities demonstrated and observed such that each person would contribute to the philosophical underpinnings in counselling.

Implications of Plato's philosophy of education to counselling

Plato's philosophy of education to education can be summarised as follows:

- That boys and girls are to be educated to the limit of their abilities in all realms of knowledge and understanding.
- All children should be taken from their parents and educated by the state.
- Learning should be play-way method.

- In the final analysis, everybody should be educated according to their various talents and abilities demonstrated and observed such that each person would contribute to the development of the state either as a ruler, security personnel or a producer.
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The above has implication for trait and factor theory in counselling. The proponent of this theory was Frank Parson (1908) who is regarded as the father of vocational guidance movement. He was the pathfinder to the talent-matching approach later developed into trial and error theory of occupational choice. According to Richman (1989), a trait is a relatively stable and enduring patterns of thinking, feeling and behaviour that are measurable in aptitude, achievement, personality, interest etc. He surmised that a factor is a constellation of pattern trait present in an individual's overall thinking, feeling and behaviour through psychomotor properties, vocational counsellors can determine the occupation best suited to an individual's personality factor.

This theory, according to Saawua Apeh and Tor-Aruiyinn (2008);

1. Decisions about vocations were most adequate if one understands himself/herself as well as characteristics of the vocations he/she intends to enter. That the understanding of oneself and best matching vocation is a cognitive process.
2. Occupational choice is a straight single event, done once in life time.
3. Individuals that enter or decide on any one particular vocation are single personality type. Hence, teacher type, lawyer type, medical type occupations among others.
4. In spite of unique difference, every individual must be matched with a vocation to guarantee the survival of humanity and security of vocations.
5. School subjects are chosen based on the students' abilities. Hence success on them is based on the sustainability of the curriculum.

Saawua et al (2008) equally averred that the individuals' unique confirmation of capabilities, potentials and weaknesses are stable in adolescents to be measured at this time to provide an understanding of the person for proper direction on career choice.

Again, what are the requirements, conditions of success, advantages, compensations, opportunities, etc. available in different lines of work to match them with?

Lastly, fixing individuals to occupations through psychological tests.

There is no doubt that people are born with personal traits that are congruence with occupations. A good example is the acting career. The availability of people are not scarce with the materials for these various traits. However, the theory has the following pitfalls in line with Saawua et al.

1. Counselling has not found a strong footing in Nigeria and so there is scarcity of counsellors to handle the function as of now.
2. Emphasis of this theory hinges more on employment without cognisance to productivity and as Kolo surmised:
- 3.

Although a perfect matching does not mean eventual satisfaction and productivity, there is also supportive empirical findings that large amount of difference between one's personality type and the working environment can lead to career frustration, maladjustment and low productivity (p. 72).

Philosophy as a course is domiciled in all disciplines and for a counsellor to really have an understanding of the human mind according to Kottler and Shepard (2011):

Counselling inspires the student to be a knowledgeable generalist, a renaissance scholar, a devourer of truth in any palatable form we are not restricted to our texts for learning. We read literature, history, anthropology, sociology, biology, biochemistry, education, psychology and philosophy and they are all beneficial even necessary (p. 7).

It is clear from the above indent, that counselling as a discipline is a wave cutting across all.

A good counsellor needs to be versatile. He/She must be able to approach a counselling need from various sources of knowledge. Shertzer and Stone (1976) gave the following philosophical underpinnings to counselling:

1. The belief that every individual human being is a unique resource coming from the maker of the world, and so, should be cultivated so that with his unique personal resources enriched, he will be able to make his own unique contribution to world peace and progress.
2. That for effective democracy to ensue and for the aims of the society to be furthered, resources and skills of every individual ought to be harnessed and jealously counted?
3. That guidance and counselling enterprise especially in the school setting is usually a team work involving the teacher, the administrator, parents, other students and the counsellor therefore, that guidance practice demands cooperation and never roll exclusiveness.
4. That every individual human has a dignity and so need respect, unconditioned positive regard and worth.
5. That every man is a mystery in the world being an animal and set a spirit with such a delicate combination complicating his being, he needs to be effectively understood.

The school curriculum as discussed by Plato is very germane and has a lot of implications to counselling. Curriculum consists of all the learning activities mapped out for the total development of the learner. This is the avenue through which the school achieves its aims and objectives.

Counselling and curriculum are both geared towards the overall development of the child. Both provide reciprocal reinforcement for the benefit of the learner. However, according to Hutson (1995), the curriculum should be handy for pupils of different levels and kind of ability by providing them with the knowledge needed for educational and vocational planning.

It is a sine qua non for the curriculum to be flexible so that learners can discover themselves through personal exploration and palpable evidences where they can improve on their interests and abilities. Counselling provides facts that are important to each pupil's needed individualization of instruction. This provides a very edifying experience for individual pupil. Again, the facts could be used to interpret issues concerning each pupil. This helps teachers and administrators to know about the child for placement in the appropriate curriculum areas. Curriculum specialists will become acquainted with data that describe the student body's ability, strength and weaknesses, interests, socio-economic background (Shert & Stone, 1976).

Therefore, that the researchers are making inferences from Plato's educational philosophy as it affects counselling is not a surprise. Conclusively, the main focus of counselling is on human beings and human beings who have various chapters. These chapters are derived from various disciplines of which philosophy is one.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made for this study:

1. To avoid waste of manpower, people should be engaged where their potentials fit in.
2. Counselling is for all. Therefore, prospective employers should include counsellors in their interview team. The counsellor should be around with an instrument that relates to trait and factor theory to enable them choose the right person for the right job.
3. The 6-3-3-4 system of education should be pursued with vigour. Provisions for areas of specialization are contained there.

4. Counselling should not be limited to the educational setting alone. It should cater for other sectors of the society. They are needed everywhere and
5. Government should be sincere and be committed to issues bordering on education. This is where the light of the society comes from.

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