

Quadrant-I E-text

Details of Module and its structure

Module Detail	
Subject Name	Education
Course Name	Contemporary Indian Education
Course Code	EDU501
Module Name/Title	Educational thoughts and practices: critical reflection on the educational thoughts and practices of Plato with respect to the relevance in the present education system.
Module Code	CIE012
Pre-requisites	
Learning Outcome	<p>After going through this lesson, the learners will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluate and relate educational thoughts of Plato in present education system.• Apply educational thoughts into various practices of education.
Keywords	

1. Development Team

Role	Name	Affiliation
Principal Investigator (PI)	Dr S K Bawa	School of Education, Central University of Punjab, Bathinda, Punjab
Subject Matter Expert (SME)	Dr. Aneet Kumar	School of Education, Central University of Punjab, Bathinda, Punjab

Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Educational thoughts and practices	3
3. Meaning of Education	3
4. Objectives of Education	4
5. Education system	5
6. Organization of curriculum	6
7. Methods of Teaching	6
8. Role of the Teachers	8
9. Women Education	8
10. Education as a state's function	9
11. Summary	10

1. Introduction

Plato was born in Athens in 427 B.C in a well-to-do and influential family. Plato was a classical philosopher and he founded an Academy in Athens, which was the first institution of higher learning in the Western world. He was widely considered as the pivotal figure in the development of western philosophy. His entire work is believed to have survived intact for over 2,400 years in contrast to his contemporary philosophers.

Along with his educator, Socrates and his well-known pupil, Aristotle, he laid the foundations of Western philosophy and science. Alfred North Whitehead once noted: characteristic of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato. He was a foundational figure for Western science, philosophy, and mathematics and often been cited as one of the founders of religion and spirituality in the West. Plato was the innovator of the written dialogue and dialectic forms in philosophy. He has been the founder of political philosophy and provided some of the earliest existing political questions from a philosophical perspective.

2. Educational thoughts and practices

Plato summarizes his ideas about education and their applications to schooling and curriculum in *Republic* from four different perspectives. First, he talks about the meaning of education. Education is the main responsibility of the state, education has a significant role in providing science and art of governance. He talked about the conceptual, theoretical, and impracticable class education. Education is a part of Plato's utopian state in which philosophers should rule. In *The Laws*, he discusses a practical code of laws for a state.

3. Meaning of Education

Plato regards education as a means to achieve justice, both individual and social justice. Plato emphasized that justice can be achieved when each individual develops ability to the optimum level. For the Greeks and Plato, excellence is virtue. Plato contended that reality is known only through the mind. Higher world, independence of the world we may explore through our senses. Because the senses may deceive us, it is necessary that this higher world exist, a world of ideas or forms of what is unchanging, absolute and

universal. In other words, although there may be something from the phenomenal world which we consider beautiful or good or just, Plato postulates that there is a higher unchanging reality of the beautiful, goodness or justice. The task of education is to live in accordance with these universal standards and to grasp the ultimate truth.

4. Objectives of Education

Plato talked about four cardinal virtues to be developed through a process of education; these are wisdom, courage, self-control and justice. Keeping in mind above four virtues following objectives are suggested:

- I. The first objective of education must be to develop the sense or feeling of community life. The state is more important than the individual. Every citizen must be trained to dedicate himself unreservedly to the state and to sacrifice private interests. All people must be ideal citizens.
- II. Second objective was to develop virtue or civic efficiency; Education should instil habits of temperance, courage and military spirit into the youth. Plato aimed to prepare for the higher duties of civil and social life by imparting to the youth accurate knowledge of the government and of the absolute truth. Education should train an individual in his duties and rights as a citizen.
- III. The next objective is to establish the rule of reason in the growing life of a child.
- IV. Another function is the development of the aesthetic sensibility. Education must aim to produce a love for the truth, the beauty and the goodness. The child should be kept in a beautiful environment. The child must become a man with passionate interest in ideal reality.
- V. Another function of education is to teach children to live in harmony. The school should be the greatest humanizing and socializing agency.
- VI. The aim of education is to achieve human perfection. It involves the total training of character and aims at producing a morally mature individual. Its goal is to produce people who are attracted to the good and repulsed by the evil.
- VII. The object of education is to turn the eye to the light. The whole function of education is not to put knowledge into the soul, but to bring

out the best things that are latent in the soul. This can be achieved by directing it towards the right direction.

5. Education system

As for as system of education is concerned he emphasised that children enter school at six where they first learn the 3R (reading, writing and counting) and then engage with music and sports. Plato's philosopher guardians then follow an educational path until they are 50. At eighteen they are to undergo military and physical training; at 21 they enter higher studies; at 30 they begin to study philosophy and serve the state as army or civil service.

At 50 they are ready to rule. This is a model for what we now describe as lifelong education. It is also a model of the learning society i.e. the state is to be serviced by educators. It can only exist as a rational form if its members are trained and continue to grow. The object of Platonic education is therefore moral and political not an apprenticeship for know-how but an education in life skills. Health and beauty of body and mind are essential goals of Platonic education. For schooling the child, Plato recommends following levels:

- i. From birth to third year of the child i.e. during infancy period, more emphasis should be given to physical and sensory development. He should be trained to remain free from fear and able to react to pain and pleasure.
- ii. From 4 to 6 year at the nursery stage of schooling the emphases is to be given on reading, writing, numbers, playing, dancing etc.
- iii. From 6 to 13 years at elementary education importance should be given to reading, writing, numbers, playing, dancing, singing, poetry, religion, manners and geometry.
- iv. Fourth level ranges from 13 to 16 called Instrumental Music focussed on playing musical instrument, memorization of religious or patriotic poetry and arithmetic theory.
- v. Fifth level is Gymnastics and the military during 16 to 20 years of age.
- vi. Sixth level is the level of science from 20 to 30 years focussing on physical sciences, reasoning, and habit formation.

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- vii. Seventh level is dialectic and it ranges from 30 to 35 years of age. It focussed on Philosophy, Psychology, Sociology, government, law education.
 - viii. Eighth level is from 35 to 50 year and it focussed on service of the state or society.
 - ix. Last level is called Philosopher from 50 years to end of the life.

6. Organization of curriculum

- i. *Elementary:* Common education for both boys and girls up to the age of eighteen years, which comprises mathematics, literature, poetry, and music.
- ii. *Military Training:* After elementary education, provide physical education for two years to ensure their proper bodily development to make them fit for defencing the state.
- iii. *Higher Education:* After military training best brains would be selected for the higher education and should be treated as future guardians of the state. During the ages ranging from 20 to 35, these best brains would receive higher education for ruling the state. Their studies include mathematics, music, and literature. At the age of thirty, they would have enough maturity to think independently. By the age of thirty-five, their formal education would finished and minor administrative assignments should be given to develop undertaking about the governance of the state before giving them more important governing position.

7. Methods of Teaching

Plato wanted motivation and interest in learning. He was against the use of force in education. "Knowledge which is acquired under compulsion obtains no hold on the mind." According to Plato, 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.

Plato recommended play method at elementary level; student should learn by doing School should be a place where children love to go and stay and play with things, this will make their education durable for greater life. Plato gave importance to nursery education, as nursery education plays a

vital role in the education of man and it helps to build his moral character and state of mind.

At higher level of education, students should be trained in the processes of thinking and abstracting which will develop reasoning skill among them.

Use of the Socratic Method or dialectic method of teaching in higher education promotes higher order thinking in the learners. The teacher use questions to get the student to think about what he/she already knows and to realize what they do not know. This question and answer session stimulates the brain, engages the learner, and can bring new ideas to life. Both the didactic and dialectic methods are necessary for teaching.

According to Plato musical education is essential, it causes rhythm and harmony into the soul, filling it with beauty and making the man beautiful minded. So emphasized on education, which comprises gymnastics for the body and music for the soul.

In Plato's view, storytelling is the main tool for the formation of character. Stories should provide models for children to imitate and as ideas taken in at an early age become indelibly fixed, the creation of fables and legends for children, true or fictional, is to be strictly supervised. Mothers and nurses are not to scare young children with stories of lamentations, monsters, and the horrors of hell, to avoid making cowards of them.

Physical training may take two or three years, during which nothing else can be done; for weariness and sleep are unfavourable to study. At the same time, these exercises will provide not the least important test of character. Children who are sturdy enough should go to war as spectators, if one can contrive that they shall do so in safety, so that they can learn, by watching, what they will have to do themselves when they grow up. Girls should be trained in the same way and learn horseback riding, athletics, and fighting in armour, if only to ensure that if it ever proves necessary the women will be able to defend the children and the rest of the population left behind.

In Plato's educational system, a child, beginning at the age of ten, will spend three years on reading, writing. Another three years for learning the lyre and other instruments and will study elementary mathematics up to the age of seventeen or eighteen, all with as little compulsion as possible. This

learning will be useful in his/her future life in which one has to fight a war or run a house or administer a state". Enforced exercise does no harm to the body, but enforced learning will not stay in the mind. He give special stress for the study of the four disciplines that prepare the student for Philosophy i.e. Arithmetic, Geometry, Astronomy and Harmony. These disciplines lift the soul to the level of the immutable.

Children are to be brought together for the games. The sexes are to be separated at the age of six, but girls too should attend lessons in riding, archery, and all other subjects, like boys. Similarly, both boys and girls should engage in dancing (for developing grace) and wrestling (for developing strength and endurance). Plato attached much importance to children's games.

8. Role of the Teachers

In Plato's plan of education, the educator is considered to have greatest importance. He is like torch bearer who leads a man lying in the dark cave, out of the darkness into the bright light of the outside world. The teacher is thus the constant guide of the students. The teacher must be a person of high integrity and must possess high self-worth. He must have pleasing personality, in-depth knowledge and professional training. He should be deeply committed to his profession, have high sense of responsibility and a true role model. Teachers should lead a true moral life. They should practice what they preach.

9. Women Education

Plato also emphasised on women education. Women should have the same physical and educational training; they should know the art of war. The main aim of education was that each member of the society should undertake his work and responsibilities. Plato believed that women are equal to men and that, although some women are physically smaller or weaker and some women are physically equal to men. Therefore, those women who are physically strong should be allowed to learn the same skills that men do. In his book Republic Plato describes how male and female receive the same education and be given the same duties in society as given to the male member. These people are the ones who will be in charge his republic which

would be an ideal society, where philosophers are the kings. In other words, who know what is good for the people and for the mankind and take their decisions based on that knowledge.

10. Education as a state's function

According to Plato, education is primarily a state function. Plato emphasized that the education should be completely under the control of the state. The state provides the teachers, buildings and controls the curriculum and methods of teaching. The failure of the old Athenian education was due to the failure of parents to inculcate the virtues and training to the children. He was intolerant towards tender sentiments and individualising tendencies of family life. His conclusion was that the family training cannot be trusted; the good of the state demands public control of breeding, nursing and training of the children.

In a nutshell, Plato's polis (state) is essentially an educational community. It is created by education and 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.

This state is a strict meritocracy, where the citizen body is divided into the functions (commonly but erroneously called classes) of producers, auxiliaries (in charge of internal and external security), and philosophers, the last two jointly referred to as guardians. The Republic is concerned with the education of the guardians, but in the Laws, where Plato draws up an actual system of laws for a state conforming as much as possible to that standard, the same education is provided to all citizens, according to their abilities. As such, he believes that the child belongs to the state and its education is the responsibility of the state.

11. Summary

In this section, we discussed about the life of Plato in brief, his educational thoughts. In which he education is the main responsibility of the state, education is a part of Plato's model of state in which the philosophers govern state. He regarded education as a means to achieve justice, both individual and social justice. Plato, emphasised that justice can be achieved when each individual develops ability to the optimum level. He talked about four cardinal virtues wisdom, courage, self-control and justice be developed through education. He emphasised on children centred process of education that can cater the needs of the child throughout his/her life, so Plato give to model of education, which ensure lifelong education. It is also a model of the learning society i.e. the state is to be served by educators. In Plato's plan of education, greatest importance is given to the educator. He is like torchbearer and must be a person of high integrity. Teacher must have self-worth, good human being, deeply committed to his profession; have high sense of responsibility and a true role model. Plato also emphasised on women education and believed that women are equal to men. Education enable each member of the society to undertake his work and responsibilities properly. Education is primarily a state function and is should be under the control of the state completely. It is the responsibility of the state to provide the teachers, buildings and curriculum and methods of teaching according to Plato

Quadrant-III**References****Books:**

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Glossary:

Virtue: A virtue is a trait or quality that is deemed to be morally good and thus is valued as a foundation of principle and good moral being. Personal virtues are characteristics valued as promoting collective and individual greatness.

Harmony: A situation in which people are peaceful and agree with each other, or when things seem right or suitable together.

Platonic education: Plato regards education as a means to achieve justice, both individual justice and social justice. According to Plato, individual justice can be obtained when each individual develops his or her ability to the fullest.

The Socratic method: is a form of cooperative argumentative dialogue between individuals, based on asking and answering questions to stimulate critical thinking and to draw out ideas and underlying presuppositions.

Dialectic method: It is a discourse between two or more people holding different points of view about a subject but wishing to establish the truth through reasoned arguments.

Philosophers: A philosopher is someone who can involve in rational thinking and practice virtue. Plato argues that kings should be philosophers or philosophers

should become kings, as they possess a special level of knowledge, which is required to rule the Republic successfully.

Quadrant-IV Self-Assessment

Description: In self-assessment Question No. 1 to 4 learner has to identify about true/false statements and Question No. 5 to 10 consist of multiple choice questions in which learners are required to select the correct one out of the four alternatives

1. Plato was the innovator of the written dialogue and dialectic forms in philosophy. ()
2. Plato appears to have been the founder of Western political philosophy, with his Republic. ()
3. Education has a significant role in providing a true science and art of politics. ()
4. For the Greeks and Plato excellence is virtue. ()
5. He feels that education is the main responsibility of the _____
 - A. State
 - B. Personal
 - C. Family
 - D. None of these
6. Education is a part of Plato's utopian state in which _____ should rule.
 - A. Philosophers
 - B. Sociologist
 - C. Politian
 - D. Scientist
7. According to Plato there is a higher world, independent of the world we may experience through our senses. He argued that reality is known only through the _____.
 - A. Mind
 - B. Teacher
 - C. Parents
 - D. Sense organs
8. Which of the following is not the objectives of education according to Plato?
 - A. To live in accordance with universal standards and to grasp the ultimate truth.
 - B. To develop the sense or feeling of community life.
 - C. To trained to dedicate himself completely to the state but not to sacrifice private interests.
 - D. Education should instil habits of temperance, courage and military spirit into the youth.
9. Which of the following is true regarding the methods of teaching advocated by the Plato?
 - A. The Socratic method
 - B. Storytelling
 - C. Dialectic method
 - D. All of above
10. All boys and girls would be educated together. They would study mathematics, literature, poetry, and music until they were eighteen years of age.
 - A. Elementary
 - B. Military Training
 - C. Higher Education
 - D. All of above