
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Revisiting the Aged-based Educational Ideas of Plato

Hamidur Rahman

Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Social Foundation and Educational Leadership, Kulliyah of Education (KOED), International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), Jalan Gombak, 53100 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Corresponding Author: Hamidur Rahman, **E-mail:** rahman.hamidur@live.iium.edu.my

| ABSTRACT

Education is crucial to the overall development of all communities. Since the early days of Greek philosophy, philosophers have made significant contributions to the advancement of education for both individuals and the states. Greek philosophers, notably Plato, emphasized the importance and relevance of education for his conceptual ideal state. His educational ideas were rooted in his philosophy, notably idealism, and it continues to have a great effect, particularly on education. Idealism focuses on ideas and believes that genuine knowledge can be found in the ideas' world. His age-based educational system advocates both public education and equal access. The purpose of this paper is to revisit his educational ideas in depth and have a better understanding of them in terms of contemporary education. This paper adopts an analytical strategy to achieve its purposes, and it maintains, based on secondary evidence, that the features of the educational ideas of Plato are truly pertinent and might be applied to contemporary education after appropriate integration.

| KEYWORDS

Education, Plato, Idealism, aged-based education, philosopher kings

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

ACCEPTED: 03 July 2023

PUBLISHED: 11 July 2023

DOI: 10.32996/ljahs.2023.3.3.1

1. Introduction

Despite philosophical differences over the philosophy of education and its objectives, it continues to play an important role in all spheres of life. Philosophers have introduced numerous ideas about education, educational systems, and theories, the most notable and influential of which is idealism, which Plato pioneered. His educational ideas are mostly included in his major works, the *Republic* and *Laws* (Williams, 1903). Plato strengthened his idealism about knowledge and education by emphasizing human ideas and conceptualizing the world of ideas, thereby distinguishing between the actual world and the world of ideas. The goal of education, according to Plato, is to attain knowledge. He addressed aged-based education and the need to acquire and sustain it for the benefit of people as well as the state by obtaining the philosopher kings. The purpose of this paper, which is based on secondary sources, is to explore his educational ideas to better comprehend them concerning contemporary education.

2. The Significance of Education

Growth, prosperity, progress, security, and safety are important indications of a welfare state because when every citizen wants to live in sound, safe, and peaceful surroundings, they also desire to advance personally, and all of these are dependent on education and its qualities. From ancient times to the present, philosophy has dominated the field of knowledge, and the philosophy of education is one of its most significant branches, dealing with the philosophical study of education and its techniques, processes, and issues. Education, according to Sultana, "...to help someone in improving gradually in attaining perfection in all the aspects of growth (2012, p. 13)." Consequently, hands-on skills, personal motivation, self-expression, remaining current, conscious experience, actively receiving instruction, and importing knowledge for a learner are all part of education. Education, like a light, offers insight and capacities to distinguish what is right and wrong, as well as other pertinent topics. Education is the ultimate instrument for distinguishing between good and evil and guiding one's life in the proper direction. Therefore, the aim of education is both to

prepare individuals for work as well as to maintain a high standard and responsibilities in life, with fairness, integrity, dignity, and a comprehensive mentality. As a result, it is the accountability of the government to guarantee quality schooling for the betterment as well as the growth of the people as well as the state. Plato, the Greek philosopher, addressed similar issues of education and its rights to offer education for everyone and prepare them for public service. According to Williams, "he deems essential to assure the success and perpetuity of a state (1903, p. 165)."

3. Legacy of Plato

Plato (429-347B.C.) (Williams, 1903) was a noteworthy educator and the forefather of educational philosophy known as Idealism (Cooney et al., 1993; Robertson, 2021). As a pupil of Socrates, Plato faithfully portrayed his teacher's philosophy in his works throughout his life. Consequently, in his Academy, rather than imparting a philosophical dogma, the Socratic method was adopted (Shawal, 2015; Robertson, 2021). Among his important writings, the *Republic*, *Phaedo*, *Laws*, *Symposium*, *Apology*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Timaeus*, and *Gorgias* are notable (Mondal, 2014; Great Thinkers, 2020). During his time, Athens was the hub of ancient Greece, and it was here that Plato founded his well-known Academy in 387 BC (Robertson, 2021; Kampouris, 2023), where Aristotle enrolled as a student of Plato. Plato delivered only one public lecture in the Academy, titled "On the Good" (Robertson, 2021). The educational mindset of the Academy established a healthy instructional culture in Athens. However, the Emperor Justinian prohibited Pagan teaching in 529 C.E., thereby putting an end to Neo-Platonism in Athens, and Slavonic invasions in 580 C.E. both contributed to the closure of the Platonic Academy (Lynch, 1972; Trelawny-Cassidy, n.d.; Turan, 2011).

4. Idealism and Plato

Plato expanded his philosophy of knowledge and education by emphasizing human thoughts and conceptualizing the world of ideas, attempting to distinguish between the existing world and the world of ideas, which is known as idealism. His idealism holds that the everlasting truth belongs only in the domain of ideas, not in sensible reality (Akinpelu, 1985). According to the interpretation of *the Allegory of the Cave*, he contends that physical or material knowledge is flawed and is simply a copy or reflection of infinite genuine knowledge (Plato, 1905; Plato, 1991; Losin, 1996; Edubirdie, 2021). He believes that since they are simply reflections of their infinite forms or ideas, all of the world's forms or ideas, such as justice, affection, human beings, all creatures, and others, correlate with their infinite forms or ideas. Consequently, anything we perceive or obtain as knowledge through our physical sensations is only a copy of its supreme or prime form or idea (Maheshwari, 2016). His idealism maintains that our knowledge is intrinsic and just has to be recovered, revived, or stimulated in the same manner that we have a mental idea of the kitten so that whenever we perceive it, it instantaneously coincides with the infinite idea of the kitten. According to Plato, to achieve the purpose of education, the duty of educators should be to focus on simple and effective ways to effectively turn the power of the soul rather than implanting or generating sight in organs since he believes that eyesight is already there, but is not properly oriented or gazing in the right direction (Plato, 1991; Losin, 1996).

5. Educational Ideas of Plato

Plato established his educational ideas about knowledge and education based on his idealism. According to Plato, the role of education should be the art of orientation (Losin, 1996). Knowledge, according to Plato, may be obtained via education. According to Lee, "...Plato concludes that virtue can be obtained through three stages of development of knowledge: knowledge of one's own job, self-knowledge, and knowledge of the Idea of the Good (1994, p. Abstract)." In his *Republic*, he pioneered the concept of an ideal state (Plato, 1991), and for it, he recognized the necessity for the guardians and the philosopher kings to protect justice (Plato, 1905). He mentioned, "And our guardian is both warrior and philosopher (Plato, 1991, p. 204)." As a result, he devised a unique educational system.

In Plato's ideal state, all men are entitled to pleasure and a happy existence; thus, education should be assessed through the lens of ethical, political, and philosophical ideas in connection with the Ideal state (Turan, 2011; Shawal, 2015). According to Williams, the educational ideas of Plato are best established in his political writings, the *Republic* and *Laws*. *Republic* defines education as an essential component of his utopian vision of a communist world ruled by philosophers. *Laws* offer a practical set of laws for a tiny commonwealth, emphasizing the necessity of education for a state's prosperity and permanence (1903). Plato asserts, "- "What is the education? Isn't it difficult to find a better one that was discovered over a great expanse of time? It is, of course, gymnastic for bodies and music for the soul (1991, p. 54)."

An impartial analysis of his educational system reveals that it was a state-controlled educational system since the state is the responsible agency for insuring it (Williams, 1903; Turan, 2011); thus, the state will select the subjects of teaching and learning, as well as the ages of learning. Furthermore, since military training is mandatory at one point, the state is powerful overall in terms of educational content. His educational system maintains mandatory education for all students, regardless of gender, so that their bodies, as well as mind, can be grown in a balanced way (Plato, 1991). According to Rousseau, those interested in understanding the concept and purpose of public education should study the *Republic* of Plato. He continues, "Those who merely judge books by their titles take this for a treatise on politics, but it is the finest treatise on education ever written (Rousseau, 1955, p. 8)."

5.1 Objective of Education

Barrow believes that Plato's objective of education is "...to produce adults who may successfully contribute to the happiness of the whole community, which themselves enjoying happiness within that community (1975, p. 1)." Plato contends, "- "What is the education? Isn't it difficult to find a better one that was discovered over a great expanse of time? It is, of course, gymnastic for bodies and music for the soul (1991, p. 54)." Plato's educational ideas are rooted in philosophical, ethical, and political ideologies, including idealism, happiness, and justice. Education aims to identify an individual's natural talents and prepare them for service in the ideal state. (Shawal, 2015). Plato recognized the importance of education for both the state and the individual in ensuring the prosperity and sustainability of justice and happiness in his ideal utopian state, which is why he emphasized individual happiness and the betterment of the state, both of which can be attained through education. According to Williams, "he deems essential to assure the success and perpetuity of a state (1903, p. 165)."

Maheshwari believes that the objective of his education is to benefit both society's safety and the food of individuals (2016). Plato intended to teach individuals to become guardians or philosopher kings (Losin, 1996) who efficiently control society to develop the finest leaders for the prosperity and good of society (Nyland, 2019). His objective was to build a man who was attractive in his body and of decent behavior (Akinpelu, 1985). According to Plato, to achieve the purpose of education, the duty of educators should be to focus on simple and effective ways to effectively turn the power of the soul rather than implanting or generating sight in organs since he believes that eyesight is already there, but is not properly oriented or gazing in the right direction (Plato, 1991; Losin, 1996). The ultimate purpose of education is to train individuals for the services of the state by developing their souls and bodies as well as ensuring happiness and happy life.

5.2 Subjects of Teaching and Learning

The educational system of Plato incorporates subjects for teaching and learning based on the needs of his day as well as the demands of his utopian ideal state (Williams, 1903). As a consequence, he incorporated physics, health, astronomy, mathematics, geometry, gymnastics, history, music, military strategy, and philosophy into his educational idea (Plato, 1991). In his *Republic*, he offered comprehensive suggestions on fundamental educational ideas, including gymnastics and music (Williams, 1903). Plato affirms,

"- "What is the education? Isn't it difficult to find a better one that was discovered over a great expanse of time? It is, of course, gymnastic for bodies and music for the soul."

- "Yes, it is."

- "Won't we begin educating in music before gymnastics?"

- "Of course, (1991, p. 54)."

According to Turan, Plato emphasizes the importance of gymnastics and music in education in the *Republic*, offering basic principles and passing comments throughout the book (2011). According to Williams, in Plato's education system, "...besides the general education, are to be further trained in the abstract sciences, numbers, geometry, and astronomy (1903, p. 166)." The impartial analysis indicates that his primary interests were music and gymnastics, with a secondary concentration on mathematics as a preparation for dialectics. It also demonstrates that the subjects were chosen based on their age group and ability since there were assessments at the end of each age group to pick people for the next level of education. He eventually seeks to produce guardians and philosophers, which is why he emphasizes philosophy in the last age group, even though his educational system covers courses other than music, gymnastics, mathematics, dialectics, and philosophy.

5.3 Aged-based Education System

Plato prioritizes age-based education and categorizes age into six for education. Education and learning are continuous endeavors in his educational system, with the goal of education being the guardians known as the philosopher kings. He offers the aged-based educational idea in his *Republic*, which includes:

5.3.1 Seven to seventeen years old

Students aged seven to seventeen will be taught physical education, music, arithmetic, history, and sciences under his educational system. This age group is based on general education with a concentration on music and gymnastics. According to Plato

"- "Won't we begin educating in music before gymnastics?"

- "Of course, (1991, p. 54)."

This age group is the cornerstone of future education, and completing this segment successfully will advance them to the following aged group of education.

5.3.2 Seventeen to twenty years old

Physical training, music, literature, and basic maths are addressed in depth for pupils aged seventeen to twenty as preparation for the following age group instruction. (Plato, 1991). Censorship will be used to approve truthful and good literature while rejecting false and inferior literature. Since Plato felt that much of the literature we teach or tell children is made up of myths and that myths are often false, even if they include parts of truth (Plato, 1991). According to Nyland, Plato deemed that children should be taught art, literature, and music since these things would help shape their characters. To continue their education, a person must go through an assessment around the age of twenty, and those who drop out at a particular point will be able to discover alternative vocations, occupations, or crafts that are a better fit for their talents (Nyland, 2019).

5.3.3 Twenty to twenty-five years old

Plato emphasizes hands-on experiences in his educational system, and he then emphasizes students' real-life experiences in connection with the teaching of war techniques and military training. As a consequence, students between the ages of twenty and twenty-five will get physical and military training, and they will be compelled to deploy to the battle for real-life experiences (Maheshwari, 2016).

5.3.4 Twenty-five to thirty years old

Plato places a high value on mathematics, especially for those who have the capacity and will be chosen for higher education. As a result, pupils aged twenty-five to thirty will get mathematical computation training. In his education, knowledge of math serves as a prerequisite for studying dialectic (Maheshwari, 2016). To continue their education, a person must go through an assessment at this point, and those who drop out will be able to discover alternative vocations, occupations, or crafts that are a better fit for their talents (Nyland, 2019).

5.3.5 Thirty to thirty-five years old

The educational system of Plato is fundamentally founded on his philosophy idealism; hence he emphasizes its study and comprehension. He also used the Socratic method, known as dialectic, to convey his thoughts after his master Socrates. As a result, pupils aged thirty to thirty-five will be taught the dialectic and the ultimate concept of reality (Maheshwari, 2016).

5.3.6 Thirty-five to Fifty years old

At the age of thirty-five to fifty years, students will concentrate on philosophy, assume leadership in battle, and engage in politics for the benefit of both the individual and society. When this phase is accomplished, the person will go back to his everyday world as a philosopher or king, or ruler. He will find a career that suits him (Maheshwari, 2016). Tests are administered until the age of 50, with individuals who fail to satisfy the criteria dropping out. Successful, capable persons are designated as state guardians, managing a just and moral community. They are also referred to as philosopher kings (Nyland, 2019).

5.4 Early Education

Plato placed a high value on early education, and he was concerned about the tales that mothers and nurses used to tell throughout their upbringing phase. He suggested monitoring story makers to ensure true ones are approved, and the false one is rejected. He encouraged nurses and mothers to read true stories to their children, emphasizing soul development over the development of the body and rejecting the vast majority of existing false tales (Plato, 1991). Plato's Ideal State concept, according to Primeo, recommended that citizens' children be taken away from their mothers and reared and taught by the state. The state should identify and nurture each student's strengths and intellectual interests (2022). Early education will run until the age of seven before formal schooling begins, which will begin around the age of four. Character building, developing a habit of going to temples, supervision under a nurse to avoid unfavorable environments that contribute to the creation of poor character, and both boys and girls participating in javelin-throwing, slinging, and archery are all part of early childhood education (UKEssays, 2015). Plato thinks that it is critical to provide youngsters with study resources such as counting, geometry, and primary education for dialectics as opposed to mandatory teaching. Persuade youngsters to choose to play over coercion since it will help them discover their innate abilities and better grasp their learning preferences (Plato, 1991).

5.5 Compulsory Education

He advocates for compulsory education, notably in primary education. According to Williams, the *Laws*, and class system, which was founded on communism and educated the governing military class in the Republic exclusively, has been abandoned, and universal and compulsory education has taken its place (Williams, 1903).

5.6 Censorship of Educational Resources

Plato recommended censorship of educational resources to ensure that true literature and other resources remain truthful. He felt that much of the literature we teach or tell children is made up of myths and that myths are often false, even if they include parts of truth (Plato, 1991). According to Turan, Plato outlines the role of censorship and literature in teaching and learning (2011). Plato defined literature as either truthful or false (Plato, 1991). According to him, we must monitor the creators of stories, ensuring that excellent stories are approved, and poor ones are rejected. We will urge nurses and mothers to read authorized stories to their

children, emphasizing the importance of moulding their souls over their bodies. The majority of the stories they tell should be ignored (Plato, 1991). Nettleship's remark in this context is crucial since he stated:

...if they had seemed to him to embody ideas really vital to human life and character, he would have retained them, trusting to the child's mind to assimilate what was valuable, and to later education to preserve or to rectify its sense of historical truth (1906, p. 35-36).

5.7 No Place of Discrimination

There was no gender discrimination in his educational system. Plato believes in an equal educational system in which females may obtain the same education as males and acquire the same rank and position by educating themselves (Williams, 1903; Plato, 1991; Shawal, 2015). Plato firmly upheld public education, with the government acting as the responsible representative to guarantee it for populations. "He considers education as the most important of the duties of the state because he sees its great significance as part of the science and art of politics (Williams, 1903, p. 165)."

5.8 The Philosopher Kings

Plato proposed an ideal state in his *Republic*, emphasizing the need for educated citizens for the benefit of the state, such as safety, security, and progress (Williams, 1903), as well as other public services. His ideal state also requires the philosopher kings to preserve justice, morals, visions, and other civil rights, including education (Williams, 1903; Plato, 1905; Turan, 2011). He eventually realized the necessity of education for both members and the state, which led him to outline the education system. As a result, his educational system was designed to produce the philosopher kings (Plato, 1991; Nyland, 2019), and he maintained equal educational opportunities for citizens as well as to maintain and ensure social justice, even though the process of preparing an individual to be a philosopher king is quite lengthy but effective since there is a combination of theory and practice, which means that to be a philosopher king, one must undergo institutional study as well as hands-on experience (Williams, 1903).

5.9 Safety of the State

He offered his thoughts on education in terms of the welfare of his Ideal notional state, and he later depicted a unique and unified educational system as a vehicle for achieving the specified aims of the outlined state (Williams, 1903). He was acutely conscious of both conflicts as well as the safety of the proposed Utopian Ideal state; consequently, physical training instruction, war strategies, and, at a certain age, real military drills are prioritized in the school system for the population. Maheshwari believes that one of the goals of his education is to ensure society's well-being and safety (2016).

6. Plato's Educational Ideas and Contemporary Education

Plato emphasized the importance of education in implementing his ideal state concept, aiming to create a system that benefits the state. He included an assessment in determining individuals' next level of education, regardless of their success or failure; if someone fails, he may go for the functioning where he is suited. Plato aimed to identify the philosopher kings through this assessment, as those who complete education till fifty years are likely to be wiser and more capable, making them better suited for the role of the philosopher kings in defending a just society. The educational ideas of Plato are pertinent to contemporary education, as they emphasize equal access, natural flourishing, public education, assessment of student capacity, selection of suitable professionals, and emphasis on physical, mental, and character development. It also advocates compulsory education until a certain age, ensuring morality and social justice for individual and state welfare. Plato's educational ideas can help achieve the welfare of an ideal state and its citizens. It can provide a better understanding of contemporary educational systems, which aim to ensure individual and national well-being. By integrating these ideas, the contemporary educational system can focus on both individual and national well-being, leading to a more prosperous future for all.

7. Conclusion

The purpose of this paper is to revisit the aged-based educational ideas of Plato in depth to have a better understanding of them in terms of contemporary education. This paper dives deeply into Plato's educational ideas and explores how his educational ideas were established based on his philosophy known as idealism, and states that for him, genuine knowledge resides in the world of ideas, and worldly knowledge is the reproduction of true knowledge. The paper also investigates why and how his educational ideas were presented concerning the utopian ideal state that he portrayed in his renowned work, *The Republic*. This study illustrates that Plato's utopian state intended for a public, equal access educational system that prioritized security, morality, values, ethics, and education to develop philosopher kings who protect justice for everyone. Additionally, his educational system was age-based as well as a life-long process, with an emphasis on hands-on experience that made his educational system unique for then and now. The findings of the in-depth analysis of Plato's educational ideas will comprehend a better understanding of their features concerning contemporary education since his educational objective was the ultimate justice and welfare of the individual as well as the state, which are also major objectives of the contemporary educational system. Using an analytical technique, this paper argues that Plato's educational system is critical for a modern welfare and justice state, requiring citizens to get quality and appropriate education. It also contends that his educational ideas are relevant and may be applied to contemporary education through proper integration. Though this paper digs into Plato's aged-based educational ideas and investigates their multi-

disciplinary and multi-dimensional aspects without comparing them to the contemporary education system. This paper paves the way for further research on comparisons with contemporary education, the integration process, the relevance of lifelong education, its strengths and flaws, and implications. However, this study will add to the current body of knowledge by filling information gaps about Plato's educational ideas and their distinctive characteristics.

Hamidur Rahman is a Registered Graduate (Reg. No: 2022043385) of the University of Dhaka in Bangladesh. He is from Jashore, a district in southern Bangladesh. In 2013 and 2012, he obtained his MA and BA in philosophy from the University of Dhaka in Bangladesh. He was named to the Dean's merit list of Honour in 2012, and the Dean's merit list of Academic Recognition' in 2011 for his excellent grades, and he was honored by the Dean, Faculty of Arts, University of Dhaka. He began his teaching career in 2013 at Western College in Katabon, Dhaka, as a logic lecturer. He has worked as a sub-editor for Dhakar News (an online news portal). The author is now pursuing a PhD in the Department of Social Foundation and Educational Leadership, Kulliyah of Education (KOED), International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), Jalan Gombak, 53100 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. He has held positions such as Research and Teaching Assistant (RTA), Graduate Research Assistant (GRA), and Student Assistant (SA). The author has a keen interest in philosophy and education, especially character education.

Statements and Declarations

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

ORCID iD: 0009-0008-4227-5850

Publisher's Note: All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers.

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