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The Implication of Plato's Philosophy of Education to the Learner-Centred Teaching in Tanzania Secondary Schools

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08 Jul 2022 The study focuses on the contribution of Plato's philosophy of education to the learner-centred approach in Tanzania. The study intended to establish how Plato

Keywords: Plato Philosophy of Education, Learner-Centred Teaching in Tanzania. The study intended to establish how Plato philosophy of education can improve the learner-centred approach despite the challenges facing these methods. Meanwhile the study adopted a documentary review from various sources such as library, internet sources and books. However, it was discovered that for Plato education is an important tool to ensure the mastery of knowledge and skills at every stage of the growth of children and adults. Hence the quality of education in Tanzania system depends on the good teaching methodology in order to improve the quality as well as teaching learning materials. Therefore, in this study we want to see the Plato's philosophy of education in improving the learner-centred methods in Tanzania.

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INTRODUCTION

Education, like any other product on the market, is not only a requirement and moral value in today's digital world, but it is also expensive. Meanwhile, the education system has changed dramatically throughout history, with the traditional system being replaced by the modern education system. As a result, this modern system is aided by a wide range of technology, including computers, projectors, the internet, and laboratories.¹ Plato made a contribution to the modern educational system by introducing formal education as one of his ideas. When education is formalized, he believes it should be divided into sections that cover the developmental stages of children and adults. Furthermore, he proposed that curriculum in formal education be offered to learners in a specially designed place called school where the atmosphere is entirely academic and where learners are given time to do their own activities, which improves their performance and level of understanding.²

Socrates saw a learner as a potential being capable of learning something. What was required of him or her was exposure to the method and the internalization of the self-discovery process. Socratic ideas are thus innate, and the teacher only serves as a guide in the discovery process. Teacher dominance was discouraged because the learner was expected to discover for himself. This method was more learner-centered than teacher-centered.³

Furthermore, Socrates' view on education is the awakening of universal validity ideas that are dormant in everyone's mind. "The main feature of the Socratic Method is that it is not teaching in the traditional sense." "A teacher is an observer, a helper, a guide, but not a knowledge provider."

Plato, as a philosopher, introduced a concept of education that is inextricably linked to his larger concept of virtues such as prudence, courage, temperance, and justice. Ideals, according to Plato's education, lie in providing clarity to educators as well as the meaning of various concepts that have appeared in the history of education discourse. Concepts include ideas, reason, goodness,

metaphysics, dialectics, sense perception, representation, virtue, motivation, and truth. When one examines these concepts closely, one can easily see how Plato's philosophy helps us understand these terms in any discussion of educational philosophy. Plato's presentation of his philosophy of education helps us understand these terms. Plato addressed education in his book "The Republic." Plato saw education as more of a discovery of previously acquired knowledge as a result. As a result, Plato's metaphysical philosophy of man and his soul served as the foundation for the goal of education as knowledge rediscovery. That is, each man's soul previously existed in an ideal world, referred to by Plato as the world of ideas, where it had complete knowledge of everything in this world.

Tanzania's education system is dominated by traditional teaching methods, such as teacher-centered methods; this is an old method of teaching in which knowledge is transferred from teachers to students. The students are kept inactive and idle during the teaching process because only the teachers know what is to be done and when it is to be done. This method is also known as a banking system because teachers provide lessons, drills, practice, and memorization. Despite efforts to increase access and equality at all levels of education, Tanzania continues to face a major crisis in its efforts to improve the quality of its education system.

Despite this, the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training has implemented learner-centered teaching in secondary schools. The learner-centered approach is the result of a paradigm shift in teaching from the teacher-centered approach to the learner-centered approach. The implementation of the standard level secondary school curriculum should emphasize a learner-centered approach. As a result, the learner will be at the center of all decisions regarding curriculum and delivery methods. This method will support

¹ Cf. H. Kabalah, *Platos Contribution to the Education System*, 1.

² Cf. H. Kabalah, *Platos Contribution to the Education System*, 1.

³ Cf. K.A. Simiyu, *Socrates Legacy in Education*, 6.

learning by doing, in which both the teacher and the students will be active participants.⁴

The teacher should serve as a facilitator, motivator, and promoter of learning during classroom interactions. However, learning must be based on the constructivist concept, in which students interact with their surroundings through well-organized tasks, dialogue, and reflections. Evaluation and learning are now inextricably linked, with various methods used to collect evidence about students' learning. Learner-centered teachers understand the value of expanding on the conceptual and cultural knowledge that students bring to the classroom. A teacher's/role instructor's is to ensure that students play a larger role in the search for and application of knowledge that enriches, including internalization.⁵

Objective of the Study

To examine the implication of Plato's philosophy of education to the learner-centred teaching in Tanzania secondary schools.

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

The researcher used the critical research design; whereby it is the design for researches which are evaluative in nature focusing on examining strengths and weaknesses of certain system or practice mechanism. Moreover, it is the core service of philosophical consultancy from methodological point of view, the eclectic nature of critical discourse analysis allows the researcher certain freedom in the formulation of new perspectives that help to translate the theoretical assumptions into critical instruments of analysis.⁶

Data Collection Tools and Procedures

Documentary review was used in this study to collect information, and some of the sources of information were used when conducting the

literature review. These are: journal articles (particularly useful for up-to-date information about Plato's philosophy of education and Tanzania's educational system because they provide a relatively concise, up-to-date format for research); books, conference proceedings, university libraries, theses, and dissertations; government or corporate reports, particularly those produced by government departments and corporations commissions; and government or corporate reports (published findings). All of these sources, as well as the internet, contributed useful information (the fastest-growing sources of information).⁷

STUDY FINDING

Socratic and Platonic Teaching Method as A Way to Improve Learner-Centred Method

By teaching, we mean the general principles, pedagogy, and management strategies that are used in the classroom. The method of instruction chosen is determined by the teacher, educational philosophy, classrooms, demographics, subject areas, and school mission statement. However, teaching theories are primarily divided into two categories or approaches: teacher-centered and student-centered.

The learner-centered method faces a challenge in Tanzania because of the culture of both teachers and students. This is to say that in Tanzania, elders were traditionally regarded as a source of wisdom and knowledge. Meanwhile, based on teacher and learner characteristics as well as teaching methods, it could be argued that traditional education was teacher-centered, with teachers possessing knowledge, values, norms, and societal beliefs that were transferred to learners who did not have them.⁸ As a result, traditional education fosters teacher authority and autonomy while creating inferiority complexes in students. Meanwhile, children were expected to respect their elders as sources of knowledge and wisdom at all times, which meant that the type of relationship between the elder and

⁴ Cf. Ministry of Education And Vocational Training, Curriculum for Ordinary Level Secondary Education in Tanzania, 29.

⁵ Cf. S. Kitta – F. Tilya, "The Status of Learner Centered Learning and Assessment in Tanzania in the Context of the Competence-Based Curriculum", *Journal of the School of Education University of Dar es salaam*, (70-84) 77-79.

⁶ Cf. D.T. Msabila – A.G. Nalaila, Research Proposal and Dissertation Writing, 34.

⁷ Cf. D.T. Msabila – A.G. Nalaila, *Reserch Proposal and Dissertation Writing*, 69-70.

⁸ Cf. E.A. Mtitu, Learner Teaching in Tanzania, 47-48.

the child had a negative impact on teaching and learning practices. Furthermore, the implementation of learner-centered teaching in Tanzanian secondary schools is hampered by the historically inherited teacher-student relationship, in which teachers believed they were acquiring knowledge and authority to pass on to their students who lacked it.⁹

The Socratic method of teaching is an interactive method in which teacher and students cooperate in the pursuit of knowledge through the dialogue.¹⁰ We see similar views in Martin Buber who observed that the authentic existence of man is realized in a relationship. According to Buber, “man becomes authentic when he continuously tries to relate with people directly and a direct encounter will build a relationship as the end without any intervention”.¹¹ Therefore, a series of questions and answers involve the two parties in the same cognitive pursuit. However, the Socratic Method serves to bolster the idea that the student lacks nothing. He needs only a midwifery to bring forth all the knowledge residing in the mind.¹²

In the case of midwifery, another student may be able to do the job just as well as, if not better than, a teacher. Furthermore, the Socratic Method, named after the Greek philosopher Socrates, is a dialectic teaching approach in which the teacher uses questions to get the student to think about what he or she already knows as well as what they do not know.¹³ This question-and-answer session engages the learner and can bring new ideas to life, especially if the teacher is over thirty and lacks the style and idiomatic mastery required to connect with the student. In contrast, the Socratic Method is unfamiliar with the concept of professional or administrative expertise.

The platonic method followed the question-answer method employed by Socrates, especially at the advanced levels of education.¹⁴ Nonetheless, as the

teacher-student relationship evolved from one-to-one, Plato discovered that the best way to honor his master was not to transcribe the history of his master's conversations, but rather to continue his practice. The platonic method, on the other hand, allowed us to understand the one-to-many authority relationship in other political terms. As a result, legitimate educational authority in terms of the platonic method will be dependent on the ability to apply the dialectic method in one-to-many relationships. Plato, like his teacher Socrates, prefers to be an observer to a preacher.¹⁵

Plato believed that teaching should be more of a game than a chore. The instructor must be knowledgeable about his or her subject; students must be instructed in the arts, but not in a rigid and intensive manner; and instruction must be presented in the form of games and amusing exercises.¹⁶ There are two major interpretations of dialectic in Plato's thought: a type of reasoning and an intuitive method. Plato's dialectic is the process of eliciting the truth by asking questions that reveal what is already implicit.

Dialectic is the intuitive art of imagining divine originals, forms, or ideas in order to reveal the great mystery hidden behind every day man's world of appearances. Dialectic proper seeks pure contemplation of the world of forms, without reference to the material world.¹⁷ The dialectic method begins with the comprehension of scattered particulars in one idea and ends with the division of the idea into species, i.e., generalization and classification. This is the method for discerning and knowing platonic ideals (forms), and it begins when one goes beyond the senses and hypotheses to consider forms themselves.¹⁸

The dialectician is philosophically and epistemologically privileged because, unlike others, the dialectical has a waking view of reality through the use of dialectic. The thing as it is truly

⁹ Cf. E.A. Mtitu, *Learner Teaching in Tanzania*, 48.

¹⁰ Cf. C. Hummel, “Plato”, *UNESCO: International Bureau of Education*, 7.

¹¹ S.H. Shim, *A philosophical Investigation of the Role of Teachers*, 515.

¹² Cf. C. Hummel, “Plato”, *UNESCO: International Bureau of Education*, 6.

¹³ Cf. C. Hummel, “Plato”, *UNESCO: International Bureau of Education*, 7.

¹⁴ Cf. M. Murphy, *Plato's Philosophy of Education and the CommonCore*, 10.

¹⁵ Cf. M. Murphy, *Plato's Philosophy of Education and the CommonCore*, 10.

¹⁶ Cf. M. Lamarre, *Plato's Dialectical Method*, 4.

¹⁷ Cf. M. Lamarre, *Plato's Dialectical Method*, 4.

¹⁸ Cf. M. Lamarre, *Plato's Dialectical Method*, 4.

comprehended.¹⁹ “The teacher must possess knowledge and also be able to instruct the young in the proper practice of the dialectic method in order to bring the student to a state of enlightenment.”²⁰ Furthermore, Plato's methodical perspective on education is rooted in dialectic, which reflects a method that can be taught and applied after a long and complex period of education beginning with mathematics studies and used as a vehicle for assisting students in moving from a concern with the material world to a concern with the world of ideas and speaks of it as the most effective way to reach the truth.²¹

Dialectic also is a process that leads us to the knowledge of the forms and finally to the highest form of the good, through discussion, reasoning, questions and interpretation.²² Here for Socrates, the dialectic is the philosophical method par excellence for achieving knowledge of the good itself by giving an account of it in terms of a definition that is propositional in nature. Meanwhile Socrates practiced dialectics through the method of oral dialogue which he says the art of the birth of souls²³.

As a result, if a university professor has a little more expertise in a particular field than his students, he is unlikely to be able to challenge them in a way that will advance their personal and intellectual development. This implies that the platonic approach demonstrates how university authority can be based on educational rather than political considerations. As a result, truth-telling appears politically authoritarian when professional competence is defended solely on the basis of the intrinsic importance of the subject matter. Meanwhile, the student is required to learn certain facts or skills not because he has expressed an interest in them, but because he is a citizen of a totalitarian intellectual state. Therefore, Plato shows us how professional competence can serve as something other than a tool for the individualizing indoctrination.²⁴

Plato also advocated for the play method at the elementary level. Students should learn through

practice. Plato's play had its own niche in the serious world. "It was educationally valuable because children should never be forced to learn because compulsory learning never sticks in the mind; instead, their lessons should take the form of play."²⁵ And as he or she advances in education, his or her reason will be trained in the process of thinking and abstracting. Plato desired learning motivation and interest. He was opposed to the use of force in education; knowledge obtained under duress has no hold on the mind. So, according to Plato, do not train youth by force and harshness, but rather by what amuses their minds, so that you can discover the peculiar bent of each genius with greater accuracy.

Learning by Discovery as the Way of Improving Learner-Centred Teaching

We can see from this that there is a famous passage in the Meno where Socrates leads an untutored slave to the knowledge that the slave discovered the truth without being taught. "Socrates: do you notice, Meno, that I am not teaching the boy anything, but only asking him questions; and now he thinks he knows how long a line is required to produce an eight-square-foot figure; does he not?"²⁶ Instead the Socrates himself gave neither instructions nor explanations but merely asked questions. Therefore, we have an example of learning by discovery in some sense.²⁷ The teacher should be concerned with discovery learning and should provide material that he or she believes is appropriate for some specific purpose. He or she knows what goal he or she wants to achieve and guides the child toward that goal. As a result, he or she may provide children with a variety of materials to assist them in discovering for themselves. In this context, we can say that the modern education system is also known as progressive education. Its foundation is the idea that education is the preparation of the human person to actively (rather than passively) insert himself or herself in a dynamic and multidimensional society. However, in order to improve learner-centered teaching, education must follow the student's

¹⁹ Cf. J.M. Magrini, *Dialectic and Dialogue in Plato*, 22.

²⁰ J. Magrin, *Dialectic and Dialogue in Plato*, 4.

²¹ Cf. N. Sfetcu, *Plato's Dialectics*, 2.

²² Cf. N. Sfetcu, *Plato's Dialectics*, 2.

²³ Cf. N. Sfetcu, *Plato's Dialectics*, 2.

²⁴ Cf. J.A. Ogilvy, *Socratic Method, Platonic Method and Authority*, 14-15.

²⁵ W.K.C. Guthrie, *History of Greek Philosophy*, 61.

²⁶ R. Barrow, *Plato and Education*, 34.

²⁷ Cf. R. Barrow, *Plato and Education*, 34.

inclination as well as his or her freedom. Students should be encouraged to realize their full potential. Furthermore, neither their parents nor their teachers should impose any unwanted content on them.²⁸

Learner-Centred Teaching Requires more Work

Students resist because the learner-centered approach requires more work from the teacher, especially during the design phase, and when they first encounter them, students believe they are being asked to do the teacher's work. It is much more difficult for students to gather in groups with their peers and generate examples. As a result, it demonstrates that a learner-centered approach engages students and gets them working on learning tasks.²⁹ Plato, on the other hand, proposed that education take place at specific times of the day. This one was executed, but most schools across the country are increasingly abusing it. As a result, when students are given enough time to complete their activities, their performance and understanding improve.³⁰

CONCLUSION

memorizing facts while sitting in a classroom from childhood to maturity. To improve our education system, particularly learner-centered teaching, we must adopt Socratic platonic teaching, in which the teacher and students collaborate in the pursuit of knowledge through dialogue. This dialogical educational system is concerned with the student and his or her ability to learn through the mediation of the teacher (unlike the teacher-centred method in which it is about the teacher and their ignorance the student).

We discovered that this platonic teaching system is very relevant to learner-centered teaching, in which the teacher is no longer the criterion of knowledge. It is all about the student in this method, with the teacher serving as an auxiliary. Plato emphasizes

knowledge-centered teaching in this type of education. However, this interaction between teacher and student demonstrates that the focus of education is not deposits or narrations, but rather the relationship between two human beings. Meanwhile, it teaches students how to solve problems, discover new ones, and be innovative and creative. As a result, in order to improve our learner-centered teaching, we must employ platonic teaching methods.

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²⁸ Cf. V.B. Kapela, "The Ethical and Social Dimension of Critical Education, A Contribution to A Critical Philosophy of Education" in T. KOCHALUMCHUVATTIL., ed., *Essays On Contemporary Issues in Africa Philosophy*. 178-179.

²⁹ Cf. M. Weimer, *Learner-Centered Teaching*, 202.

³⁰ Cf. H. Kabalah, *Plato's Contribution to the Education System*, 2.

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