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Platonic Influence on Zimbabwe's Updated Curriculum 2015-2022

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Abstract: This reflective effort is motivated by the xenophobic mind-set which seeks to decree the African philosophy of Unhu/Ubuntu as the only epistemology germane to education in a postcolonial Zimbabwe whilst dismissing the profound influence which the Euro-Oriental philosophies like Platonic idealism have on the same education. The reflection is informed by the ideological globalisation perspective which explains the coming of foreign philosophies like Platonic idealism to Zimbabwe and the exigency of ideological hybridisation and complementarity. In terms of methodology, it is literary reflection in the form of secondary research. This literary reflection, thus, observes that the Platonic philosophy of education, which reached Zimbabwe and Sub-Saharan Africa at large through colonialism as embedded in globalisation, has profound influence on Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework 2015-2022. This reflection, therefore, recommends the architects of the Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 to consider revisiting the philosophical underpinning of education with a view to providing for a hybridity of educational philosophies from home and abroad. This is capable of tapping into the foreign philosophies of education like Platonic idealism thereby complementing Unhu/Ubuntu in informing education in Zimbabwe.

Keywords: A Platonic influence, idealism, Updated Curriculum or Curriculum Framework

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Like the Socratic idealist philosophy, Platonic idealism found its way to Sub-Saharan Africa in general and Zimbabwe in particular mainly through colonialism, which, in itself, is a manifestation of globalisation. Being a Western philosophy founded in around the 5th Century B.C., the Platonic idealist philosophy could be considered as archaic and obsolete within Zimbabwe's postcolonial dispensation. Authorities such as Kaputa (2011) polemically brand idealism as one of the inappropriate epistemologies of education in a postcolonial Zimbabwe – a country whose instructional system should, according to Nziramasanga (1999), be grounded in *Unhu/Ubuntu*. Contrary to this bigoted mind-set, the author hypothesizes that the Platonic idealist philosophy exerted profound influence on the invention of Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework for Primary and Secondary education for period 2015-2022, herein called Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 or GoZ (2015).

Problem Postulation

As mentioned earlier, the inquirer is perturbed by the chauvinistic mind-set which seeks to decree the African philosophy of *Unhu/Ubuntu* as the only epistemology germane to education in a postcolonial Zimbabwe whilst it dismisses the profound influence which the Euro-Oriental philosophies like Platonic idealism have on the education system in question. Thus, it is reminisced that Platonic idealism, being one

of the classical Western philosophies of education, came to Zimbabwe through colonialism, which, in itself, is a form of globalisation. Hence, Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru (2014) argues that “while the experience of colonialism was largely negative and inhibiting, we cannot ignore its influence on education in Africa in general and Zimbabwe in particular.” The author, therefore, seeks to unpack the influence of the Platonic idealist philosophy on Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 in particular.

Conceptual Framework

This reflection is conceived within a framework anchored in the concept of globalisation. Globalisation is the process of international integration arising from the interchange of worldviews, ideas, and other aspects of culture (Rouse, 2016). This portends the cross-pollination of philosophies across continents and regions, which readily manifests the ideological globalisation perspective. Notably, the ideological globalisation perspective does not refute the belief that the so-called Western philosophy comprises of ideas stolen from Africa, *id est*, Ancient Egypt in particular. This counter-argument is substantiated by James (2009) who, in his *Stolen Legacy*, submits that Socrates and Plato acknowledged receiving instruction from African Egyptian Mystery Priests and borrowing ideas from the African Egyptian Mystery system. However, Georg Hegel attempts to dissociate Egypt from Africa. Nonetheless, Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru (2014) argues that “Plato's ideas influenced the development of Western education which in turn influenced education in Africa through the experience of colonialism.” Since

colonization was, in itself, a form of globalisation, therefore, the coming of Platonic idealism and many other Occidental philosophies of education to Sub-Saharan Africa in general and Zimbabwe in particular is readily fathomable within the framework of the ideological globalisation perspective.

An Abridged Review of Related Literature

Literature is available on Platonic influence on education in general. This is true of submissions by Akinpelu (1981); Barker (2003); & Stumpf & Fieser (2008), among others. Submissions from these sources seem to be applicable to education across the globe, hence they are not in the Zimbabwean context which happens to constitute the settings of this reflection. This manifests a geographical gap in knowledge which this reflection seeks to fill by focusing on Platonic influence on education in Zimbabwe. Literature is also available on Platonic influence on Zimbabwe's education system. This finds testimony in eruditions by Mangena (2005); & Hapanyengwi (2014), *inter-alia*. However, these reflections are not in the context of the Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 or GoZ (2015). Mangena's and Hapanyengwi's reflections, thus, manifest a temporal gap in knowledge in the sense that the two wrote before the promulgation and rolling out of the Curriculum Framework 2015-2022. A conceptual gap also manifests in the literature generated by the authors in question as evidenced by the fact that it is not in the context of the Updated Curriculum. This reflection, therefore, seeks to address the said gaps by reflecting on Platonic influence on education in the context of Zimbabwe's Updated Curriculum 2015-2022.

METHODOLOGY

This inquiry is in the form of literary criticism which constitutes desk or secondary research. The reflection, thus, seeks to ruminate essentially on Plato's dialogue - the *Republic*. Upon hearing the title '*Republic*', one is tempted to think that it is a treatise on politics yet it is a fundamental educational dialogue which enunciates the Platonist instructional ideas most of which are rooted in Socratic idealism. Alongside the *Republic*, this write-up reflects on the internet sources, journal articles and textbooks that discuss the Platonic philosophy of education, of course, undertaken within the context of Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework 2015-2022.

Plato Summarised

Plato (circa 427 -347 B.C.) was Socrates' student who later on founded a school or academy – the first University in the Ancient world located within the walls of the City of Athens, particularly on the grave of a sacred Greek hero *Academus* (Stumpf & Fieser, 2008), hence the derivation of the word 'academic'. According to Brassel (n.d.), Plato's philosophical works were composed over three periods: "The early dialogues are generally thought to adhere most closely to Socrates' questioning of traditional understandings of

virtue, human well-being and self-knowledge." Hence, these treatises are called Socratic dialogues, and this group of early writings includes the *Apology*, *Crito*, *Charmides*, *Laches*, *Euthyphro*, *Euthydemus*, *Cratylus*, *Protagoras* and *Gorgias* (Stumpf, 1975). "The second, or middle, group in which the theory of Ideas and metaphysical doctrines are expounded includes the *Meno*, *Symposium*, *Phaedo*, *Republic* and *Phaedrus*" (Stumpf, 1975). The third group "dealing with the structure of nature and a mood of deepening religious conviction" includes the *Theaetetus*, *Parmenides*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Philebus*, *Timaeus* and *Laws* (Stumpf, 1975). According to Brassel (n.d.), the Middle and Late dialogues are generally thought to exhibit Plato's increasing independence from the older philosopher – Socrates. Thus, the *Republic*, which, in itself, is a Middle generation dialogue, comprises of Plato's enunciation of the Socratic metaphysical doctrines as well as ideas which Plato himself originated.

In agreement with Socrates his mentor, Plato fundamentally rejects sense experience (Stumpf & Fieser, 2008). Thus, he rejects empiricism because sense experience is in a state of flux. This, he exemplifies with a breaking bottle, for instance, and his argument is that all the many fragments of the broken bottle are still parts of the bottle. Using the melting wax as another example, Plato argues that the idea of wax still remains after the solid wax has melted. Thus, the ideas of wax and bottle are the abiding elements – the 'Universal Forms' which are in the world of permanence.

To Plato, the universal 'Forms' or 'Ideas' are the basis of knowledge not sense experience which is second-hand true opinion (Stumpf & Fieser, 2008). Plato, thus, intimates that sense experience is not knowledge. Hence, Plato adopts the Socratic ideal that 'Forms' are true knowledge which is objective, unavailable to the senses, universal/true to all, unchanging and grounded in a rational understanding. For further exemplification, Plato argues that there are circular objects like coins, rings, etcetera, but the universal 'Form' is circularity. However, Plato espouses the dualistic approach with which he separates 'Forms' from 'matter' thereby deviating from Socratic idealism which recognises the union of 'Forms' and 'matter'.

Plato argues that man has the knowledge of 'Forms' but not to conscious level because when the soul gets buried into flesh knowledge is forgotten (Stumpf, 1975). Teaching is, thus, reminding the child of the forgotten knowledge definitive of the reminiscence theory of pedagogy. To trigger the recollection of 'Forms' or 'Ideas', Plato adopts the Socratic dialectical questioning which reminds the child of what he or she dimly knew but could not consciously apprehend.

Plato also adopts the Socratic ‘divided line’ with which he expatiates the Form of the Good capped by ‘Forms’ and ‘understanding’ (The *Republic Book VI*). Using Mathematics, Plato demonstrates that eternal truths do exist and that these are the ‘universal truths’ which all men agree on. Such ‘universal truths’ constitute the Good which should be studied by Philosopher-Kings.

Moreover, Plato espouses the Socratic ‘Allegory of the Cave’ which he uses to discuss the philosopher and the ‘Forms’. From this allegory, Plato also adopts the Socratic conclusion that “true education is the turning around of the soul from shadows and visible objects to true understanding of the ‘forms’ (The *Republic Book VII*). Thus, the teacher should deliver the learner from the darkness of ignorance as represented by shadows and appearances in the cave to the limelight of knowledge in the medium of ‘Forms’ as represented by reality outside the cave.

The Platonic ‘concept of justice’, again adopted from Socrates, accentuates virtue and functionality in the society, which is good for social development. This is illustrated in the ideal state (The *Republic Books IV*). According to Plato’s *Republic Book III*, all people sprang from earth: Some should have Gold mixed into their souls and these are the Philosopher-Kings who should have the virtue of wisdom so that they rule the state wisely; Some should have Silver and these are Guardians who should have the virtue of courage to defend the state; The rest should have Iron/Copper and these are the Manufacturers who should have the virtue of temperance/obedience. This envisaged differentiation of people by metal is supported by a ‘noble lie’ that there is a chance for some to move from manufacturers to guardians or rulers and vice-versa. Just like Socratic education, Plato’s envisaged education was differentiated with the Guardians getting esoteric instruction which was configured into age-gradations, as shall be unpacked subsequently.

Plato’s moral philosophy is anchored in the ‘notion of soul’ comprising the appetites, the spirit and the reason – so analogous to social classes in the Platonic Ideal State. Justice also means the cooperative functioning of all parts of the soul (Stumpf & Fieser, 2008), which implies a level of self-regulation that not every life will manifest. Just as the Manufacturers are supposed to remain subordinated to the Guardians and Philosopher-Kings, the appetites should also remain subservient to the ruler ship of spirit and reason. Hence, the largely appetitive body should not be left to rule the spirit and reason as this occasions disharmony within an individual human being.

Plato’s Idealist Aims of Education and the Curriculum Framework 2015-2022

“Plato drew on what he considered to be the strengths of the Spartan and Athenian education systems. This he explained in his book, the *Republic*” (Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru, 2014). Thus, Plato undertook to achieve a synthesis of the best of both the Spartan and the Athenian systems with “the organisation being Spartan, the form and content, Athenian” (Barker, 2003: 21). Accordingly, Plato sought a hybridity of Spartan athleticism and devotion to the state, and Athenian intellectualism and individual achievement. Therefore, the *Republic* was Plato’s masterly treatise on education which sets out to enunciate the instructional system which he envisaged to bring about justice in the Athenian society.

The main Platonic aim of education was “to produce a man who is beautiful in the body and good in conduct” (Akinpelu, 1981). This explains why he maintained a good balance between the different parts of the curriculum, thus, up to secondary education, Platonic education retained a good mix of music and gymnastics, with the latter being partly for physical fitness and partly for the development of the soul. The Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 seems to concur with this Platonic predisposition because it attaches value to subjects such as music and gymnastics under the “Music, Dance and Drama/Physical Education and Mass Displays” Module (GoZ, 2015). The Physical Education and Mass Displays Module, which subsumes Gymnastics, has since been declared one of the compulsory subjects at Ordinary Level, an inclination which readily epitomizes the Platonic but Spartan programme of education within the current Zimbabwean curriculum.

Platonic education also sought to develop humankind materially and, above all, to help the soul progress beyond mere fallible opinions and beliefs to the certainty of true knowledge (Akinpelu, 1981: 32). Thus, beyond developing man materially or physically, Plato undertook to turn around the learner’s mind from the inherently flawed world of appearances to the World of Ideas or Forms or Universals constitutive of the reality. To this end, Plato balanced up the mathematical and science subjects, which he considered to be of utilitarian value, with literary studies. The Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 seems to adopt this Platonic mindset as it fundamentally brings sciences (STEM) into equilibrium with literary studies like languages and humanities, among others. This is good for both the body and the soul in line with Plato’s envisaged graduate who is ‘beautiful in the body and good in conduct’.

“It was made absolutely clear by Plato that whatever the content – be it gymnastics or mathematics – the aim was the development of the soul, and aiding it in the progress toward true knowledge” (Akinpelu, 1981). Although he also recognised the necessity of developing man physically-materially, Plato

apotheosized the development of the soul. The Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 seems to have a flare of this Platonic disposition especially where it sets a premium on *Unhu/Ubuntu*, a philosophy, which, beyond articulating intellectual and psychomotor development, exalts significantly the learner's moral development consistent with the development of the human soul. As a wellspring of African ontology embedded in African metaphysics, *Unhu/Ubuntu* has the vast potential to aid the learner's soul to progress toward true knowledge.

Barker (2003) argues that Plato's educational philosophy was directed entirely towards the theme of social justice. Hence, Plato's *Republic* sets out his prescription for how social justice could be achieved. To Plato who had adopted the Socratic conception of justice, "the ideal state, in being composed of different classes, each doing that to which it was best suited, would be the ultimate expression of social justice" (Barker, 2003). This substantiates the Platonic view that "the fundamental purpose of education was to select and train men and women according to merit for the various duties and functions of the state" (Barker, 2003). Thus, Platonic education had a meritocratic urge. The Platonic system of education also aimed at orientating the Manufacturers to embracing the virtue of obedience, the Guardians adopting the virtue of courage and the Philosopher-Kings espousing the virtue of wisdom. The three virtues of obedience, courage and wisdom, thus, constituted the overarching Platonic virtue of justice, which was the *telos* of Platonic education. This is substantiated by Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru (2014) who argues that Platonic education is intended to prepare the learners for their positions in society.

The Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 recognises civic education, which, in itself, subsumes the ideal of justice. This may sound Platonic in flavour. However, a deeper reflection on this Zimbabwean concept of justice as embedded in civic education is bound to demonstrate that it is not justice of a Platonic making. The Curriculum Framework, thus, aims to achieve the modern conception of justice which harmonises with the cognate principles of equity, equality and fairness. Hence, this is where the said framework deviates strikingly from the Platonic idealist philosophy of education. Nonetheless, the Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 still follows the meritocratic principles evident in the Platonic cycles of instruction from Kindergarten to higher levels.

Plato's Idealist Curriculum and the Curriculum Framework 2015-2022

Departing from Socrates's informal instructional *modus operandi*, "Plato founded something like a formal 'school' that came to be known as the academy" (Brassel, n.d.). This Platonic formal school had a well-articulated and elaborate curriculum

with age gradations and learning areas as shall be enunciated subsequently. Therefore, the ideal of 'formal school' as embedded in the Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 and many other curriculum documents across the globe seems to have philosophical underpinnings from the classical Platonic idealism.

Plato envisioned a system of education that was state-planned, state-funded, state-controlled and organized, not based on private institutions, not discriminatory between male and female, and which was meritocratic in stature (Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru, 2014). Plato must have derived this vision largely from the Spartan system. Similarly, Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 is a manifestation of state-planned, state-funded, state-controlled and organised education, which, in itself, is gender sensitive and meritocratic. This has vivid Platonic idealist underpinnings.

According to Akinpelu (1981), "Plato was the first to divide education into the formal levels, which we now commonly use, and to assign them appropriate ages and curricular contents." This means Plato was the first person on the globe to give structure and form to education. Plato's idea marked a significant step in the development of the formal school system and a formal school curriculum which are now so familiar to the modern world, thus, marking an end to the uncoordinated 'Sophists' education (Akinpelu, 1981; & Stumpf & Fieser, 2008). Thus, having introduced formal education, Plato proceeded to introduce age-appropriate gradations within the formal instructional system. To Akinpelu (1981), the levels advocated by Plato were the nursery/kindergarten for the ages 3-6 which was to be devoted to play and games; followed by the elementary stage for 7-10 years of age, with curriculum made up of games and sports, basic elements of reading, and story-telling about the gods of Greek mythology for moral and spiritual development.

Secondary level for ages 11-17 was, according to Akinpelu (1981), more rigorous and its curriculum was a good balance of gymnastics and music education. Some of the subjects to be included were introductory mathematics and literature. Thus, "secondary education was a preparation for the higher level through whose curriculum the soul would be able to repossess the knowledge of Truth, Beauty and Goodness" (Akinpelu, 1981). Hence, secondary education was the orientation of the neophytes to the knowledge of Forms, aesthetics and ethics. "At the age of 18, those who showed ability would continue their education, while the others would leave to become tradesmen, artisans, merchants and the like" (Barker, 2003). Therefore, those who failed at this stage were shunted to the Manufacturer class.

"Those that remained in the system would be given two years training, mainly of a military nature, and then a second selection procedure would take

place” (Barker, 2003). Plato seems to have adopted this military flavour of education from Sparta. “The ones found unlikely to profit from further intellectual training would be expected to pursue a military career and be charged with the task of defending the country” (Barker, 2003). This gave rise to the Guardian class.

Those deemed capable would continue but with a more intensive course of study in abstract reasoning, and this consisted of higher mathematics, astronomy, dialectic and philosophy. This was for age 20-35 and it was only for those whose natural talents had marked them out as predominantly rational and, therefore, qualified to be trained as Philosopher-Kings (Akinpelu, 1981). This screening and bottleneck is confirmed by Barker (2003) who submits that:

An ever-constricting screening process would continue to apply so that the final outcome of the whole system would be a few select – the Philosopher-Kings. Those who continued beyond the military stage, but failed to reach the ultimate peak of Philosopher-Kingship, would constitute the ‘auxiliaries’ – administrators, governors and lesser rulers.

Thus, attestation to any of the classes in the ideal state was based on merit – merit for the various duties and functions of society.

The Platonic age-gradations elucidated in the foregoing seem to inform the age-gradations which characterise Zimbabwe’s education system. In more specific terms, the Platonic Kindergarten seems to coincide with the Infant Education level, which, according to the Curriculum Framework 2015-2022, incorporates Early Childhood Education A and B as well as Grades 1-3. The Platonic Elementary Stage seems essentially to concur with the Junior Level, which, according to the Curriculum Framework 2015-2022, subsumes Grades 4-7. The Platonic Secondary School level appears to correspond with the lower Secondary School level, which, according to the Curriculum Framework 2015-2022, covers Forms 1-4. Lastly, the Platonic Higher level purports to tally with Advanced level as provided for in the Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 or with tertiary level as in polytechnic education or university. Above all, the ideal of screening inherent in the Platonic cycles of education equally manifests in the Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 wherein only those deemed capable can progress to Advanced Level and University.

Platonic idealism exalts a curriculum which promotes the acquisition of language, scientific, normative and aesthetic skills (Akinpelu, 1981). Firstly, language skills are needed to introduce the student to culture (Akinpelu, 1981) – cultural education, which, in itself, is consistent with the Greek-Platonic *paideia*. Similarly, the Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 (GoZ,

2015) contains the languages pathway, which, in itself, coincides with the Platonic language skills.

Secondly, scientific skills are those with which the student is going to survive physically. Moreover, “sciences are taught for the insight they give us into the orderliness of nature, to enable us to appreciate the wonders of nature and see the hands of God behind it all” (Akinpelu, 1981). Correspondingly, the Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 (GoZ, 2015) integrates the STEM pathway, thus, it provides for the learning of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics from Infant Education level to Advanced Level. These are the STEM subjects, which, according to Chitate (2016), are the *sine qua non* of economic recovery, industrialization and national development, hence they are highly valued by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education [MoPSE] and that of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technological Development [MoHTESTD]. This seems to have philosophical underpinnings from Platonic idealism, which, in itself, accentuates sciences that are instrumental in developing man materially.

Thirdly, the normative skills are those which promote morality, proper relationship with fellowmen, and religion which relates the learner to God (Akinpelu, 1981), as Immanuel Kant similarly presupposes. Likewise, the Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 incorporates the arts pathway and importantly the humanities pathway, which, of course, is straddled with the languages thereby propagating the Platonic normative skills. Thus, beyond promoting the learner’s intellectual development, the arts and humanities turn out to be handy in fostering moral development. Considering the fact that the said Curriculum Framework values the learning of Family, Religion and Moral Education as a humanity subject, for instance, it can be argued that the Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 seeks to promote the good of the soul, *id est*, the education of the heart which is consistent with moral development. Hence, the same framework seems to be informed by Platonic idealism, a philosophy preoccupied with the good of the soul and education for virtue. On the whole, the fact that the Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 seeks to equilibrate between cognitive-intellectual development and moral development bears testimony to the assertion that the same framework’s holistic education agenda has philosophical underpinnings from Platonic idealism.

Lastly, the aesthetic skills are those which deal with the appreciation of beauty through literature, arts and nature in general. Hence, “Plato’s education must have consisted of a wide range of arts – from dance and music to poetry” (Brassel, n.d.). Congruously, the Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 includes the Arts pathway which, therefore, tallies with the Platonic aesthetic skills. Thus, beyond promoting the good of the soul, the arts uphold the appreciation of beauty. The

Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 is, therefore, an extension of the Platonic curriculum.

Plato's Idealist Pedagogy and the Curriculum Framework 2015-2022

Platonic idealism sets a premium on the learner-centered approach to instruction. Hence, Akinpelu (1981) argues that "the child's mind, like his body, is immature and has to be developed. The real activity of learning is to be done by him." The later part of the foregoing quote accentuates self-learning activity which places the child at the center of the educative process. Hence, Platonic idealism amplifies the basic idealist thesis that, whichever method is used, self-learning must remain the core of education. In the same vein, the Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 (GoZ, 2015) "stresses the learner-centred approach. The focus of learning revolves around learners as they engage in the search and discovery of new knowledge." In such a scenario, the teacher acts as a co-explorer and facilitator in knowledge discovery. This seems to have philosophical underpinnings from Platonic idealism.

For Plato, the process of education is that of "turning the eye of the soul from darkness to light" (Akinpelu, 1981; & Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru, 2014), by which he meant leading a person from the dark cave of ignorance into the limelight of knowledge. This, according to Akinpelu (1981), does not equate to putting knowledge into a person's soul as one puts water into an empty pot, but rather it is aiding the individual to discover knowledge through his own reasoning process. In fact, it is more of the rediscovery of a previously acquired knowledge (Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru, 2014). This theme of education as rediscovery is based on a metaphysical philosophy held by Plato about man and his soul. The metaphysical position is articulated thus:

Each man's soul has a previous existence in an ideal world which Plato called the World of Ideas, in which it had a perfect, first-hand knowledge of all that exists in this world. Our world is an imperfect copy of this world of ideas. When the soul was detached from the perfect World of Ideas and planted in the body of man, it lost the knowledge, and education is now that process by which the soul can be helped to regain it (Akinpelu, 1981).

This expresses the reminiscence theory of pedagogy; which Plato seems to have adopted from his mentor – Socrates. In view of this rediscovery theme as embedded in the reminiscence theory, the educational process is not to feed the mind with new knowledge, but rather the awakening of the mind through well-framed, leading questions to elicit the right answers – a method of teaching which the modern world still uses and which is called the Socratic dialectic from its wide usage by Socrates. Through its various subject syllabi, the Updated Curriculum 2015-2022 accentuates the

Socratic method – a predisposition which seems to have philosophical underpinnings from the Socratic but importantly Platonic idealism.

Since children are thinking beings, Platonic idealism emphasizes the sharpening of the mind, which is considered to be the real self of the individual. Hence, the Socratic method is recommended as "it particularly helps to develop the child's sense of judgement, since he is encouraged to reason out and infer correct answers by himself" (Akinpelu, 1981). The inquiry-based learning emphasized by the Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 subsumes mainly the development of questioning and this questioning seems to be of a Socratic-Platonic making.

Plato also accentuates the project method "in which the pupils singly or jointly initiate a learning task, pursue it by themselves, and, with the help of the teacher learn the principles behind their raw experiences" (Akinpelu, 1981). To Plato, the learners' raw experiences repose in the appreciation of and belief in images and shadows definitive of the world of appearances which could be misleading since they are in a state of flux. Thus, the principles behind the learners' raw experiences are, in themselves, the Ideas or Forms or Universals, which, according to the Platonic Divided Line, are at the apex of the intelligible world and are constitutive of knowledge of the Good - the reality. Therefore, the Inquiry-Based Learning as "an approach that aims at nurturing thinking, reflection and problem-solving among learners," articulated the Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 (GoZ, 2015), seems to derive from Platonic project-based method.

Platonic idealism seems to place value on the lecture method. As inferred from Plato, cited in Akinpelu (1981), the lecture method capacitates the teacher to develop a point clearly, logically and systematically so that the pupils can come to understand the interrelation of the parts of the topic being presented. Notwithstanding the value of this lecture method, it is observable that this is where the Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 deviates from the Platonic idealist pedagogy because the said curriculum framework evidently detests the lecture method on the grounds that it usually degenerates into rote learning and indoctrination.

Plato's Idealist Teacher and the Curriculum Framework 2015-2022

In his moral philosophy as applied to education, Plato is of the conviction that the teacher is crucial in character development (Stumpf & Fieser, 2008), *id est*, in building the learners' characters. Platonic idealism, thus, exalts a morally upright educator who is worthy of emulation. As the first philosopher to emphasise the importance of the environment in the learning process, Plato argues that "the environment must be such that the learner can

develop into a morally upright person. Bad examples have to be kept away from the learners” (Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru, 2014). This, therefore, exhorts the teacher to be a good example and role model, as endorsed in the Nziramasanga Commission Report of 1999 and the Curriculum Framework 2015-2022.

Platonic idealism stresses the importance of self-realisation. Hence, it calls upon the teacher to guide learners through the process of discovering who they are in line with the Platonic ‘know thyself’ precept. Through, for instance, Heritage Studies, which, according to the Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 (GoZ, 2015), subsumes identity as one of the transversal themes taught in context, the Zimbabwean teacher assumes the role of assisting the learner discover who he/she is and this seems to have vivid Platonic idealist underpinnings.

Critiquing Plato’s Idealist Philosophy of Education

Plato was accused of totalitarian politics (Barker, 2003), hence he sounded adversative to democratic principles which have since gained currency in modern educational discourse. Like his mentor Socrates who clamoured for the censorship of poetry, “Plato canvassed for the censorship of literature claiming that this would ensure that corrupt stories are thrown away from the students’ reading lists” (Akinpelu, 1981). This conflicts sharply with the progressive thought which seeks to subject all literary claims to an immortal conversation. Moreover, this diverges acutely with Zimbabwe’s Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 whose democratic acumen does not coexist with the censorship of literature.

Though with a meritocratic urge, Plato proposes a classist education system as each class is educated for its role in society. But in his discussion Plato, like his mentor Socrates, focuses more on the education of the *rulers*, the *guardians* with the aim of making philosophers out of the rulers or guardians (Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru, 2014), or having philosophers to rule the state (Stumpf & Fieser, 2008). Platonic education, thus, sounded esoteric and elitist – an outlook which makes it adversative to the inclusivity agenda inherent in Zimbabwe’s Curriculum Framework 2015-2022.

Considering Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru’s (2014) submission that Platonic education is “intended to prepare the learners for their position in society – their profession,” the Platonic view of education could be criticised for being conservative and for aiming to maintain the *status quo*. Thus, the Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 is not amenable to Platonic conservatism because it commits to accommodating the incessant, unrelenting and ever-intensifying forces of globalisation. Hence, maintaining the *status quo* can, in this regard, be construed as an affront to the principles of educational reform.

As an idealist, Plato distrusts sensual knowledge, hence he prefers knowledge that comes through contemplation. “Yet these should be regarded as equally important and trustworthy and should both be part of the school curricula. In fact, this contradicts his advocacy for holistic education” (Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru, 2014). Plato, thus, generates a contradiction *cum* dilemma for Zimbabwe’s Curriculum Framework agenda on STEM because his philosophy recognises the importance of sciences yet it distrusts sensual knowledge which is the empirical basis of science.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The Platonic philosophy of education, which reached Zimbabwe and Sub-Saharan Africa at large through colonialism as embedded in globalisation, has had profound influence on Zimbabwe’s Curriculum Framework 2015-2022. Thus, the said curriculum framework’s proclivities towards having an education for moral and intellectual formation, towards balancing up literary studies with sciences, towards a pedagogy which is learner-centred and the teacher who is a role model, *inter-alia*, seem to owe a lot to the Platonic philosophy of education. It is, therefore, recommended herein that the architects of Zimbabwe’s Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 consider revisiting the philosophical underpinning of education with a view to providing for a hybridity of educational philosophies from home and abroad – an undertaking capable of tapping into foreign philosophies like Platonic idealism thereby complementing *Unhu/Ubuntu* in informing the country’s education system.

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