

Socialisation

Education



Plato sees education as having an explicit socializing function in society. Critically evaluate his account. See <http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/p/plato/p71r/book03.html> (the first sections of Part III The Republic.) I concur with Plato's statement that education has an explicit socialising function in society. In modern societies, education is the most important agent of socialisation after the family. Schools are the first impersonal and collective environment that children encounter. When a child starts school he/she enters entirely new situations and experiences that help the child to grow and develop personally.

Whereas schools' official function is the transmission of knowledge, they also promote certain values such as honesty, competition, respect and individualism. It is in school that children learn the norms of society; cheating is wrong, being punctual is important, you show respect to people with authority i. e. the teacher. Socialisation during education may be informal through the hidden curriculum e. g. interacting with others or it may be formal e. g. transmitting culture by learning the language or music of a society.

Schools are also important agents of social control. They encourage acceptance and compliance with basic school rules and ways of behaviour e. g. punctuality, wearing uniforms and respect for authority. Rewards and sanctions are used to encourage compliance. Education is an important factor in the holistic, emotional, intellectual and moral development of the individual. Dexterity is achieved by taking part in activities such as playing with building blocks and jigsaws. Physical skills are developed in subjects such as Science and Art.

Sport and Physical Education also contribute to the physical development of an individual during school going years. However, the first stage from Education by Plato we read that; ' Their minds and characters which are more important than their bodies'. This is a theory of Plato's that I strongly disagree with. Although, PE is a necessity in every primary school, I believe there still should be more of an emphasis on Physical Education as its benefits have been scientifically proven and the high levels of child obesity in Ireland is worrying.

Despite Plato's lax stance on physical education he does however make a significant reference to music as he states; ' The desired qualities can be about through exposure to, and practice in, fine speech, excellent music and rhythm'. This is still applicable in education today as we see the importance of music in the primary curriculum. Composing and chanting are significant to the holistic development of the child. The education process contributes to the emotional development of an individual as young children gradually gain emotional independence from parents.

School is often the first time children are away from their parents. They also learn to be sensitive to the needs of others and to be supportive of others. Certain subjects allow for discussion relating to emotions such as SPHE and Religion. Co - Educational schools allow for the development of healthy friendly relationships between the sexes. Education can contribute greatly to the intellectual development of an individual. Resources such as games, books and computers, and comfortable physical surroundings assist in attaining intellectual potential.

Plato believed that ‘ the function of the education at the initial stage is to provide basic literacy and general education’. This is still relevant in the classroom today as fundamentally reading is one of the first things children learn in school. The broad range of subjects offered in schools together with a variety of extracurricular activities provides young people with many opportunities for intellectual development. Classmates and exams provide intellectual challenges and competition which can encourage intellectual development and prepare them for the world ahead.

Moral development of an individual is encouraged in education through the ethos of the school, which sets down the values and the moral thinking of the school and defines what is expected of students. Certain subjects within the curriculum such as SPHE and RE cover topics dealing with morality. One of Plato’s theories which I found significant in relation to these subjects is that of the types of stories we elicit to children. He forbids stories which painted the Gods in a bad light. This parallels the curriculum today as teachers have to be careful in how they teach religion and how they can not dismiss any religion and not exclude anyone.

Also in the classroom today one must be sensitive to topics such as death in these subject areas and the stories we tell as the children in our class may have experienced the death of a loved one. Although socialisation continues throughout life it is extremely important during the formative years as it enables a person to fit into and be accepted by society. Education plays a very important socialising function as Plato noticed ‘ That is where they are easily moulded and when any impression we choose to make leaves a

permanent mark'. This is still relevant in the lives of the children today as what we do and say has measurable effects.

I will have to be very careful of my actions in the classroom as at this stage children are like sponges so I should take advantage of this. The school provides the experiences from which individuals develop knowledge, skills, customs, beliefs, interest, and attitudes that characterise them and shape their abilities to perform adult roles. There are many areas of socialisation fostered by education including communication skills, the ability to mix with others, consideration of others, punctuality, responsibility, leadership qualities, sharing, generosity, respect and patience.