



THE CONTRIBUTION OF AUGUSTINE'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION TO LEARNING



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Abstract

Augustine and his teachings have impacted different areas of human endeavor. One of the aspects of his teachings that have made huge impact is his philosophy of education. Being a seasoned educationist, Augustine left the legacy of a philosophy of education which bases it itself on fundamental principles which are aimed not only at bringing out the best in every system of learning but most importantly at leading to the total (physical and spiritual) development and wellbeing of individuals. Like all his teachings, Augustine's Philosophy of Education is firmly rooted in his Christian Faith. From the standpoint of his faith, he teaches that true education should cater for both the spiritual and temporal needs of humanity. Delightfully, proceeding from this core, the different aspects and ideas of the Augustine's educational philosophy have proven to be perennial in terms of their importance. Centuries after centuries, generation after

generation, his ideas have underlain education programs and systems in one form or another. The question looming at the horizon of this research that requires the attention of scholarship is: what are the contributions of Augustine's Philosophy of education to learning? This work identified that Augustine's philosophy of education has contributed to learning in the following areas: i. religious studies ii. teachers and their roles iii. diversification of curriculum vi. critical thinking.

Keywords: Augustine, Contribution, Philosophy of Education, Learning

Introduction

Augustine of Hippo was born in Thagaste, Algeria. Although he was born to a pagan family he later converted to Christianity. His journey as a Christian peaked when he became the bishop of Hippo in his native Algeria. As a bishop Augustine proved to be an avid and an ingenious teacher who found fitting ways of making his teachings and lectures understandable and comprehensible to his listeners. He was also a seasoned writer whose works (even to this day) display great literary techniques and know how.

Augustine's parents ensured that he received good education; he was trained in rhetoric and worked as a teacher. His training, studies of several philosophies, vast experience in teaching and rhetoric played central roles in the sagacious and impactful bishop cum scholar he turned out to be.

The study of Augustine's life reveals that his educational endeavors made so much contributions to different facets of human life. In this work, we shall examine the contributions of Augustine's Philosophy of education to learning.

The Life Of Augustine

On 13th November 354 AD, St. Augustine was born to the family of Patricius and Monica with the names of Aurelius Augustine in the Numidian city of Thagaste, a city of great culture (the center of Berber culture) and the very hub of civilization. In present-day Algeria, Souk Ahras, a municipality in Algeria rests on the ruins of Thagaste. The town of Thagaste was situated in North-East highlands of Numidia, the present Anaba- a seaside city; and here, Augustine was to spend the last 40 years of his life. It is about 12 kilometers from Madaura, where he went for his first studies from 354-369 AD, and 200 kilometers from Carthage on the coast of the present Tunisia, where he went (during the autumn of 370 AD) for higher education and the early years of his teaching career.

The father of Augustine, Patricius, was a pagan who converted to Christianity on his death bed. He was a official in the Roman administration of the region. He was a counselor, and had the responsibility of collecting taxes. His mother, Monica was a devout Christian. Both

parents were from Thagaste, however, Monica was of the Berber race. Although Augustine's parents did their utmost best to give him the best of education, they were notably not a wealthy couple. They had financial challenges, in fact, they lived sometimes on borrowed money. As a matter of fact, although “he had at least one brother (Navigius) and one sister, he seems to have been the only child sent off to be educated as a result of financial constraints” (O'Donnell 2023).

Augustine did his elementary School in Thagaste, graduating at the age of 11. From 366-369 AD, Augustine did his secondary education at Madauros. In 369, he returned to Thagaste and remained at home, as his father had no money to finance his further studies. In 370, Augustine went to the University of Carthage to study Rhetoric with a view to becoming a lawyer, thanks to the financial assistance of Romanianus. While at the University, he gave up law to devote himself to literary pursuits and gradually abandoned his Christian faith taking a mistress with whom he lived for fifteen years and who bore him a son named Adeadatus in 372 AD. Augustine's life during this period and for most of younger years was characterized by loose living.

In 373 AD, Augustine came across the work of the Roman writer and historian Cicero titled *Hortentius*. Augustine's intellect was awakened by this piece, and he became inspired with the quest for knowledge and truth. About this book, he wrote, “In the ordinary

course of study, I lighted upon a certain book of Cicero, whose language, though not his heart, almost all admire. This book of his contains an exhortation to philosophy, and it is called *Hortentius*” (*Confessions*, III, 4.7). Augustine's encounter with this work set him on the path of search for answers to life's basic questions. In search for answers, Augustine got involved with a number of sects of his time who claimed to hold answers to the questions he had. Famously, he joined a sect known as Manicheism, named after its founder “Mani”. Manicheism was a dualist corruption of Christianity. It taught that the world of light and the world of darkness are in continuous war with each other, and humans are caught in this unceasing struggle. For nearly nine years, he remained an adherent of that sect. “In fact, from 373-375 AD, Augustine was an auditor of the Manichean sect” (Kanu 2014). He later left the Manichean sect due to what he revealed as the presence of contradictions and the meaninglessness of their teachings and their glaring inconsistencies (*Confessions* III.13.8.15.)

In 384, Augustine went to Milan to teach rhetoric. He taught while still continuing his quest for truth. During his stay in Milan, Augustine was notably impacted by the teachings of bishop Ambrose of Milan. He admired greatly the depth of Ambrose's knowledge and his distinctive eloquence; and little by little found himself drawn to the Faith of his mother (Christianity) which he had drifted from.

In the summer of 386, Augustine underwent a total conversion to Christianity. While he was out one day, he heard the voices of children singing, "Tolle lege! Tolle lege!" or, "Take up and read! Take up and read!" Initially, he thought he was hearing the voices of children playing some sort of game, however, he eventually realized that this may instead be a call from God. Augustine then picked up a bible and read the first passage he saw: "[...] Not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual excess and lust, not in quarreling and jealousy. Rather, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the desires of the flesh. (Romans 13:13-14) Augustine later explained that from that passage alone, dispelled the darkness in which his life was. On Easter Vigil the following year, on April 24, 387, Ambrose baptized Augustine and his son Adeodatus in Milan.

After Augustine's conversion and subsequent baptism, he, his friends and his mother set out to return to his native Thagaste. Unfortunately, while on their way, in the autumn of 387 AD his mother Monica died at Ostia. Once in Thagaste, he and friends established a lay ascetic community in which they spent time in prayer and the study of the Scriptures. Here, Augustine together with his friends, immersed themselves in contemplative scriptural studies and the pursuit of holiness.

As time went by, little by little news about Augustine's piety spread throughout Thagaste and the surrounding regions. In 391,

One day, having been summoned to Hippo by a friend whose soul's salvation was at stake, [Augustine] was praying in a church when the people suddenly gathered about him, cheered him, and begged Valerius, the bishop, to raise him to the priesthood. In spite of his tears Augustine was obliged to yield to their entreaties, and was ordained (Portalié 1907).

Augustine spent five years as a priest, and subsequently at the age of 42, became the bishop of Hippo, following the death of bishop Valerian. Augustine led the diocese of Hippo for the 34 years.

Overview Of Augustine's Philosophy Of Education

After becoming a Christian, Augustine's Christian faith became the springboard from which every aspect of his worldview (including philosophy of education) emanated. "Augustine's philosophy of education centered on Christianity, so he advocated that the core of the Christian curriculum should be the Bible" (Ijekeye, 2019). Puolimatka (2005) notes that Augustine's theology was the basis for his entire worldview; no discipline was separated from his religious beliefs. That no views of Augustine could be

separated from his theology, was beautifully put by Thomas(2022) as follows:

He believed no bifurcation between the sacred and the secular was possible; any attempt to do so would only result in further confusion, for it was a false dichotomy. Thus, his philosophy of education was rooted in his theological convictions. His approach to knowledge and intellectual life began and ended with God. Augustine believed that people were inherently incapable of grasping all things apart from God. Whether natural or supernatural, profane or divine, nothing was comprehensible to the individual mind without God. Consequently, the mind needed to be purified by the fires of the divine in order to know the truth in a fuller sense(4).

In Augustine's view, the ultimate purpose of education, is turning toward God; by this, he meant that the purpose of learning/education is so that the learner grows ever closer to God (the Truth), and by extension prepare for life in heaven. Ellen G. White (1923) reechoed this view of Augustine's when she said that “the best education that can be given to children and youth is that which bears the closest relation to the future, immortal life”. Augustine further held that the

soul (individual) grows toward God by looking into itself, (interiority). In his Confession, he recalled how he searched for God outside himself, only to eventually find out that God was actually within him not outside, “Late have I loved you, beauty so ancient and so new: late have I loved you! Lo, you were within, but I outside, seeking there for you, and upon the shapely things you have made I rushed headlong [...] You were with me, and I was not with you...” (Bk X,27).

Moreover, St. Augustine viewed education as a passion and a process of opening up the mind to ideas through critical thinking. For Augustine, growth was a property not just of the body, but of the mind as well. In his view, as the mind opens itself to critical thinking and new ideas, so it grows. He maintained that this growth of the mind is a product of education; hence, he famously stated: “the soul grows by learning” (Colleran, 53).

Contributions Of Augustine's Philosophy Of Education To Learning

Religious Studies

In many parts of the world, religious studies are an important part of the school curricula. In Nigeria for instance, pupils of primary schools and students of secondary schools are obliged to have some studies in in the field of religion. These studies are done by learners to ensure that as they grow in knowledge (say of mathematics and science), they also grow in their knowledge of God.

The idea that learners should grow in their in the knowledge of God was central to Augustine's philosophy of education. Several centuries ago, he taught that education must lead to God; he strongly opined that the aim of education “is none other than to lead us to God, to our ultimate salvation” (Rio 2006). With his emphasis on theocentric education, Augustine influenced learning both in his time and the centuries that followed. He devoted his time to write on a number of core teachings of Christianity. His treatise *on the Trinity*, teaching on *Just war*, and discourse on *grace* are just some of his intellectual pieces he churned out. The ideas he expressed in these write ups and others have since formed the bases for myriads of intellectual discourses. Many of his ideas have themselves become topics for religious instructions Dupont(2015).

In the Middle Ages for example, educational endeavours principally centered on religion and God, this was to a large extent due to the prevalent influence of St. Augustine of Hippo. As Hansard (2018) notes, “his philosophical and theological ideas had an enormous influence on the Middle Ages—an influence that continues today”. Scholars spent time (and continue to do so) discussing many of the ideas he advanced. Through his writings and teachings, Augustine bequeathed to posterity the hunger to continue to learn about God the creator.

As a lover of knowledge and of God, Augustine was a firm supporter of all intellectual exploits that had God

as its focus. Nevertheless, although he encouraged people to discuss and philosophize about God, he clearly pointed that they should not do it to the point where they lose God's grace and by extension jeopardize their salvation. Brachtendorf (2010) comments, "For Augustine, those who have the intellectual power to do so should philosophize, but the simple believer will suffer no harm from not doing philosophy. On the contrary, the learned are in danger of taking pride in their knowledge and thus of losing God's grace".

From the Period of enlightenment to contemporary times, there has been a great shift regarding the focus of education, Liberalism and Science now command a lot of attention. However, be that as it may, religious studies within Christianity remains very important. Many Christian schools which offer studies in sciences and other liberal arts, insist that learners carryout studies in the field of religion too. This insistence is directly or indirectly linked to the teaching of St. Augustine and other early Christian thinkers who propagated that the studies of all disciplines, (scientific, philosophical etc.) should help learners in their knowledge of God, and draw them closer to Him and not otherwise.

Teachers And Their Roles

Augustine was a lifelong teacher. He reportedly owned a school in Thagaste (where he taught), later on he taught at the University of Carthage, and subsequently

in Milan. And once he became a bishop, spent the rest of his life teaching the people whose bishop he had become.

Based on his experiences, Augustine viewed himself and other teachers simply as guides to help students find knowledge. Teachers are to support the main actors (which are the learners), they are never to be at the center stage. The teacher says Augustine, must not see himself as the most important element in the learning process. He teaches in relationship; and thus, must delegate the foremost role in education to his students (Ord. II. 26). By this teaching, Augustine is revealed as one of the founding fathers of the system of learning known as “learner-centered learning”; a learning approach which insists on shifting the focus of instruction from the teacher to the learner. Learner-centered learning gives prime position to students' interests; it takes and crowns the learner's voice as the focal point of all the learning experiences. This method of learning is in contrasts to the traditional method known as “teacher-centered learning”; a method in which teachers choose what the students will learn, how the students will learn, and how the students will be assessed on their learning.

Concerning the learner-centered method of teaching scholars have identified a number of aims:

- i. Learner-centered learning aims to develop learner autonomy and independence, (Leo 2007).

- ii. Learner-centered instruction focuses on skills and practices that enable lifelong learning and independent problem-solving (Lynne 2007).
- iii. It places learners in a pole position to be responsible participants in their own learning and with their own pace of learning (Eli 2013).
- iv. Enables teachers to guide learners while giving due consideration to the reality of individual differences.

Many schools in contemporary time have shifted from employing the teacher-centered method of learning to the learner-centered method. A school like All Saints' Episcopal Day School located in Phoenix, Arizona, USA which has since begun the employment of the learner centered system, has the following points (on its website) as some of the motivation for adopting the policy.

i. Labor Markets Need Problem Solvers

Learner-centered schools empower kids to own their learning paths by focusing on how the knowledge they're gaining can solve problems or add value to a situation. Starting this from a young age will encourage little learners to grow into adults who inherently look for ways to solve problems and get to creative solutions.

In this teaching model, students don't sit around and passively wait for their teachers to give them answers; instead, they're encouraged to go seek and discover opportunities for learning. This often requires a collaboration with other students who may have different skills or insights—a vital skill that will be essential later in life.

ii. Learner-Centered Learning Encourages Diversity

As noted, different students will have different backgrounds and perspectives. This model teaches students from a young age that it's not only okay for people to be different, but that it's something they should lean into when they're trying to solve problems.

Beyond this, teamwork is essential in the process. Students must learn to discuss issues, work with others, and collaborate if they want to come up with a solution. This is a difficult skill for some people to learn as adults, but when introduced during childhood, the results are astounding.

iii. Students Are Involved In Decision-Making

It's easy for kids to check out when they're being talked at. Learners, especially at a young age, need to be engaged with their schooling. When students are involved in the decision-making process, they'll find relevance in the curriculum that is being presented to them. This, in turn, will increase engagement and generate excitement around the learning process.

iv. learner-based [learning] improves retention of knowledge

Learner-centered approaches place a high emphasis on relevance and engagement; these greatly impact the level of retention students experience in the learning environment. When the information is more relevant to their interests and day-to-day activities, they are more likely to retain and gain the knowledge teachers are providing them.

v. Learner-Centric Models Are More Fun

Often, learner-centric teaching involves the use of games and stories, rather than lectures and slide decks. Generally, students are given options to choose from, allowing them to explore topics of interest that they find fun or entertaining.

vi. Learner-Centered Curricula Facilitate Personalized Learning

Just as every human is unique, so, too, is their learning style. All students do not have the same learning needs. Some might understand basic concepts when they're simply explained by a teacher, while others might need to really dig in and get their hands dirty before they have an epiphany.

Traditional teaching models have a hard time taking this factor into account, often teaching to classrooms of 20 or 30 individuals in one standard format. With learner-centered curricula, teachers work to accommodate each student's needs, allowing for individual personal growth and discovery amidst collaboration with others.

In addition to his favourable view of the learner-centered learning system, Augustine teaches that the teacher's attitude is key to an effective and formative education. He strongly opined that the teacher's attitude would determine the student's enthusiasm for learning. He held that it was better not to teach than to teach ineffectively and with a poor attitude. Talking about attitude, Augustine held that Teachers must educate joyfully (Cat. Rud. X. 14). Kanu (2018) corroborated this view of Augustine when he said that the level of joy that radiates from the teacher and the quality of love he shows the students that he teaches affects the student's disposition towards learning and thus the impact of education.

Without doubt, a joyful teacher is what every learner deserves. A teacher who does not exude joy in his/her teaching will certainly kill the interest of learners. Augustine held that joy is an important quality for all teachers to have, if they are to be effective in their profession. Learners are easily put off by unhappy teachers. Hayes (2007) in the book *Joyful teaching and learning in primary school*, shared the experience of a trainee teacher, Ava, thus:

At the age of nine my family moved from an inner-city to a rural area to live. My experience of school had been very negative up until then. I was regarded as very low ability in all subjects and

although I had friends, I didn't enjoy school at all. My first day in my new junior school arrived. It was just after the Easter break and I was dreading being 'the new girl'. I walked into the room and there in front of me was the kindest face with the biggest warm smile I had ever seen. My new teacher was the best thing that ever happened in my schooling. She gave me confidence and enthusiasm for learning. My ability in all subjects seemed to rise effortlessly and I enjoyed going to school (8).

Ava's case above, justifies Augustine's insistence on why joy is an important quality any good teacher must possess. As we can see clearly, her new teacher's joy and enthusiasm became for her a catalyst and a stimulant for growth in all her academic activities. In line with Augustine, experts in the field of learning do agree that the teacher's joyful attitude or otherwise has great effects on learners; "If the teacher has a lousy attitude, the students are going to have those kinds of attitudes as well. If the teacher is joyful, the students are going to be joyful" (outputed. 2016).

In addition to being joyful, Augustine says teachers should teach learners to be grounded in virtue. This goes to mean that alongside teaching students in different fields of learning such as philosophy, mathematics and geometry, Augustine said it was the role of teachers to teach learners to reject vices and

follow the path of virtue. He emphasized that the teacher must lead the students in path of virtue by urging them to overcome what is evil (Cat. Rud. XVI. 24). Augustine understood that teachers play important roles in not only shaping the individual but in shaping the larger society. By emphasizing that teachers should inculcate virtues in learners, he was simply warning teachers to be careful that they do not produce mathematicians or philosophers who are bankrupt in terms of acceptable character; for that indeed will be a recipe for societal disorder. The educationist Angela Lumpkin (2013) says that “schools and teachers should educate for character especially through respect and responsibility” [adding that] “As teachers interact with students, it is vital for them to serve as role models of character by making professional judgments and decisions based on societal moral virtues” (45). Lumpkin as seen above, urges teachers to not only instruct learners on virtues but to be practical role models as far as virtuous living is concerned. This simply means that teachers should not only teach learners to be honest, patient, respectful, punctual, just, compassionate etc., but they should exhibit these virtues themselves.

From those early times, Augustine understood that the teacher was essential to the learning processes. As can be seen above, he emphasized that the teacher must possess the appropriate teaching skills in order to guide learners rightly. Interestingly, despite the advancements recorded in the field of education, it is

still indisputable that without the appropriate teaching skills a teacher will have little or no positive impact on learners. As a matter of fact, the many teachers' training institutions (Colleges and Universities) which exist nowadays just for the purpose of training and producing well equipped and skilled teachers, do not only reinforce Augustine's view but also reveal the extent of his influence on contemporary learning systems.

Diversification Of Curricillum

According Kpee (2017), Diversification in education is an “educational technique that blends a variety of diverse curricula for the students to choose from”. The process involves developing and planning curricula in such a way that each learner's background and ability is taken into consideration. This consideration is done among other reasons on the basis that individual differences exist among learners; and due to the differences, learners' learning ability may vary also.

As early as the fifth century, Augustine understood and taught the necessity of curriculum diversification. He taught that students have unique skills and capabilities; hence, teachers should form the curriculum to meet the uniqueness of each child; the teacher must respect and stimulate each student's individuality, that is, each student's unique and unrepeatable character (Cat. Rud. XV. 23). For Augustine, it is important for teachers to

adapt to the condition and rhythm of each pupil; each child/learner ought to be treated on the basis of his/her capacity. Augustine writes “if a child is fed according to his capacity, he is being prepared to take more gradually as he grows, but if he is given more than his capacity can tolerate, he will perish before developing” (Civ. Dei XII, 15, 3).

In contemporary systems of education, the following points (which are) deeply rooted on the concept of curriculum diversification are strongly recommended regarding curriculum development.

- i. A curriculum should be structured in such a way that they are easily understood by students.
- ii. A curriculum should allow learners to pursue personalized learning opportunities.
- iii. A curriculum should allow not only for personalized learning, but should also accommodate the unique learning styles of all students.

Many scholars have opined that for education to have great impact on the larger society, curriculum diversification is paramount. Kpee (2017) says “Educational curriculum should be diversified so that student engage themselves in different types of work, study different subjects so as to meet the diverse needs of society” commenting further on the need for diversification, Cummings (2013) held

that the younger generation be given education in various subjects in general, practical and commercial subjects, so that various needs of the society may be fulfilled.

All the above recommendations have one common factor: teachers must always be conscious of the fact that learners are not all the same, they are unique in different ways; and different approaches may be needed in order to help them learn. This common factor was advocated by Augustine several centuries ago, and the fact that even educational thinkers of the 21st century keep on advocating it clearly reveals the extent of Augustine's influence on and contribution to learning.

Critical Thinking

Vaughn (2008) defines Critical thinking as “the systematic evaluation or formulation of beliefs, or statements, by rational standards”. Augustine was a proponent of critical thinking, he strongly held that true knowledge comes from the objective analysis and evaluation of matters. During his lifetime, Augustine rejected writings and doctrines which he considered to be purely based on emotion, prejudices, presuppositions or biases rather on reason. In the words Yogis (2010), Augustine was a strong advocate of critical thinking skills that was referred to as 'skeptical philosophy'. In his letters, he scorned analysis of

Scriptures by others that were not fully backed by logical thinking (yogis 2010). Vaughn (2008) says:

Critical thinking, of course, involves logic. Logic is the study of good reasoning, or inference, and the rules that govern it. Critical thinking is broader than logic because it involves not only logic but also the truth or falsity of statements, the evaluation of arguments and evidence, the use of analysis and investigation, and the application of many other skills that help us decide what to believe or do.

Augustine's teachings (Philosophical or theological) sprang from his Christian faith as mentioned already, he however was very clear that reason/critical thinking was very critical in clarifying and understanding matters of faith. His teachings reveal his conviction that even matters of faith should be logical and reasonable. He held that faith does not prevent an individual from thinking, hence according to Meredith (2008), "Augustine's faith was essentially a thinking faith, endeavouring to bring together the belief of his heart and the abilities of his mind". Carter (2019) adds "To Augustine, faith and reason were in no way conflicted; in fact, he found it to be quite the contrary". Chadwick (1986) shades more light thus, "The theology and philosophy of the medieval schoolmen and the creator of medieval universities

were rooted in Augustinian ideas of the relation between faith and reason". Augustine saw faith and reason operating in a reciprocal manner in Christian thinking.

Plato stressed the importance of reason in the acquisition of knowledge. Aristotle emphasized the role of empirical data, the information we acquire through the five senses, in human knowing. Augustine embraced both of these perspectives, but he did so under the governing biblical principle that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge"(Prov.1:7). Empirical facts, said Augustine, are important, but we get true knowledge only as the mind reasons through what our senses tell us, drawing conclusions, making inferences, and so on. ("Augustine" 2012).

Augustine was an avid Christian Apologist. He defended the Christian Faith against sects and heresies of his time. To do this, he followed the path of faith that was closely connected to reason. Toeing the line of Augustine, the use of reason in the defense of the faith has become a veritable tool in the hands of Christian apologists regardless of age and time.

Augustine by his teachings, particularly of *Faith and Reason*, left a legacy that upholds the use of reason

(critical thinking) in the pursuit and advance of knowledge. His influence was not limited to the Middle Ages, the current emphasis on sharpening the human mind (especially from childhood) reveals how Augustine and other proponents of critical thinking continue to influence successive generations of people. In many learning institutions enormous resources are put into sharpening the critical thinking/reasoning ability of learners. This is because scholars have identified many benefits attached to critical thinking some of which can be seen below.

- i. Critical thinking enables problem-solving, active learning, and intelligent self-improvement (Vaughn 2008).
- ii. Critical thinking leads you to knowledge, understanding, and-if you put these to work-empowerment (Vaughn 2008).
- iii. Enables you to critically examine your beliefs for yourself to see if they are supported by good reasons.
- iv. Critical thinking complements both our emotions and our creativity (Vaughn 2008).
- v. Critical thinking helps in determining what we're justified in believing, being open to new perspectives, and fairly assessing the views of others and ourselves (Vaughn 2008).
- vi. Critical thinking helps to arrive at well-reasoned

conclusions and solutions, testing them against relevant criteria and standards (Paul and Elder 2006)

The ancient Greek philosopher Socrates famously declared that "The unexamined life is not worth living", Augustine's insistence on the use of reason even in matters of faith simply reveals that for Augustine, any process of education or field of knowledge that eschews reason and critical thinking is not worth a drop of sweat.

Evaluation And Conclusion

In this work, we examined the influence of Augustine's Philosophy of Education on learning. We found out that his influence fall under the broad umbrellas of i. Religious studies ii. Teachers and their roles iii. Diversification of curriculum and vi. Critical thinking Augustine says that education must lead to God. This is an important fact that learners at all levels must never forget. As human beings we are mortals, our end is God, it is therefore of utmost importance to ensure that out bearing always has God in focus. Jesus Christ warned in the Bible that sidelining God ultimately does no good when he declared "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Mark 8:36-37). At the end of our lives on this earth there are two possible destinations for our souls, heaven or hell. Augustine cautions all to make heaven their target; for in heaven, we will have eternal life which is the highest good (*City of God* Bk 19, Chp 4). Care must therefore be

taken by learners, that in all their learning processes their ultimate destiny is enhanced not sabotaged.

Aside from serving the ultimate destiny of humankind, a theocentric learning gives an avenue for young learners to be rooted in virtues that are essential to their personal developments and to community wellbeing. In a subject like Christian religious studies, virtues such as love for others, respect for elders, diligence in service and the role of truth in community building are important topics which are constantly taught or referred to. Practices like this have led many societies to have within their ranks many men and woman of integrity.

In the relationship that exists between the learner and the teacher, Augustine said that the teacher should be a guide, while the learner takes the driving seat. This is a very important approach to learning that carries the capacity to lead to the full unleashing of learner's potentials. Life experiences have revealed that individuals act with more responsibility and determination when it is their own initiative to follow certain paths or pursue certain life interests, than when they are simply executing another person's interest or agenda. A learner who receives the right guidance from his teachers has the better chance of specializing with excellence in his area of interest. One cannot deny the fact that the teacher would always be willing to assert his authority over learners in the learning process; teachers must however show great restraint in this regard. They must not assert their authority to the point

where they enforce their interests on the learners, particularly interests that are completely alien to the learner's aptitude, disposition, and dreams. Among many other things, and without doubt, one of the easiest ways to make learning uninteresting and ultimately fruitless is to make the learning process all about the teacher, while relegating the learner and his interests to the background.

St. Augustine's view on critical thinking suggests that one should put aside all biases while being logical in dealing with issues. This view of his can be challenged on the basis that even his own views were to a large extent influenced by his Christian faith. Notwithstanding however, the importance of critical thinking in matters of life cannot be overemphasized. Whatever one believes in or professes, one should be able to provide sufficient defense. In an increasingly sophisticated world as one the we have, there is no room for shallow mindedness. Every field of human endeavour needs people who are ready and willing to go beyond the periphery to deal with matters right into their core. This need is a clarion call on learners of all frames of interest to ensure that in their learning pursuits, reason is never left out.

Augustine's philosophy of education is without doubt an important formula for learning success. It is certainly not perfect, (as with any other thing in the world), but a careful consideration of its different aspects as can be seen above reveals that, it has overtime played significant roles in shaping systems of education

around the world.

The world is constantly moving forward, things (including learning systems) keep evolving. As things evolve, the temptation is there to consider former things as outdated. As well-meaning people however, we must be careful that our evolution does not involve getting rid of all great things of the past, as the popular saying goes, “Old is gold”. Consequently, as new learning (education) systems come into existence, care must be taken that the wisdom of Augustine as expressed in his philosophy of education is always taken in to consideration. Time and experiences have already proven that Augustine may be dead, his contributions will nonetheless never experience total irrelevance.

Recommendations

1. Learning should be holistic: Learning should programmes should be designed in such a way that both the temporal and spiritual wellbeing of individuals concerned are catered for. This goes to mean that systems of education should not focus only how learners can be successful in this world, but should as well prepare them for life in the hereafter.
2. Learner-Centered education should be prioritized :Learning systems should be designed to fully lead to the realization of the potentialities of learners. To realize this, teachers should not dominate the learning

experience. The aptitude and interests of the learners should drive the learning process. Teachers on the other hand should create the opportune environment within which learners interests and dreams can flourish. Here, the learner-centered system of learning becomes a veritable and an invaluable asset.

3. Teachers should be screened on the basis of virtue: Augustine clearly expresses in his philosophy of education that teachers should help learners grow in virtue. As they saying goes, 'one cannot give what one does not have'. Unvirtuous teachers cannot produce virtuous learners. Most often than not when teachers are being screened for employment, the questions they are asked usually center on how proficient they are in their area of specialization. Little attention is given to their moral character.

One of the reasons for moral decadence in many of our learning institutions is as a result of wrong influences from the learning environment (sometimes arising from teachers). To help curb this situation, moral uprightness should not be compromised when choosing teachers to guide learners. No matter how proficient a teacher is in his area of study, so long as he is found to lack the moral integrity needed, he should not be considered.

References

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