



THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF AUGUSTINE'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION



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Abstract

In the academic sphere, several thinkers have stipulated what should constitute the nature of education. Expressed in their unique Philosophies of education, the different stipulations that have emerged have given rise to several schools of thought including Idealism, Realism, Pragmatism and Existentialism. In no small measure, these schools of thought represented respectively by great minds such as Kant (1724 – 1804), Locke (1632 – 1704), Dewey (1859 – 1952) and Nietzsche (1844-1900) have shaped systems of education in different parts of the world. Before great minds like the ones mentioned above, there were other earlier thinkers whose thoughts helped shape the educational landscape and portrait of their time. In line with the popular adage “Old is gold”, a close examination of the philosophies of education of these earlier thinkers will go a long way in helping to shape for good the systems of education of both our time

and of the future. One of the earlier thinkers who made contribution to education was Augustine of Hippo. The question looming at the horizon of this research that requires the attention of scholarship is: what are the Basic principles of Augustine's Philosophy of education? This work studied Augustine's Philosophy of education. It then identified the following as the basic principles of Augustine's Philosophy of Education i. The teacher and the experience of God ii. The peculiarity of each student iii. Platonic principle iv. The teacher and the principle of love, and v. Teachers as guides. These were followed by an evaluation, a conclusion and some recommendations. The research was conducted using the content analysis method of research.

Keywords: philosophy, education, Augustine, learners, teachers

Introduction

The world as it is, as far as its existence is concerned, has a long and rich history. Its wealth of history has been informed among many other factors by natural disasters, wars and epidemics. Another important factor that has shaped the history of the world, and perhaps, more than any other factors is humanity. Humanity has produced individuals whose ingenious contributions have left indelible marks on world's history. These individuals despite their death (several years or centuries ago), have remained relevant, and (due to their great contributions to different facets of life) will remain so moving in to the future.

One of the names that command mention when talking about people who are still alive through their enormous contributions to the betterment of human life is St. Augustine of Hippo. Although he lived in the 4th century, St. Augustine made huge contribution to knowledge and learning so much so that it always seems he died few years ago. He is one of the thinkers whose ideas are quoted by people centuries after centuries. Augustine is quoted in matters of theology, philosophy, morality, education etc....

St. Augustine himself or his views have been the topic of many research papers; scholars have written a lot of papers on his person and others have made efforts to expatiate his views on different subjects. This work shall be a contribution to the efforts of the scholars who have carried out studies on his views. It shall examine his view of education uniquely from the perspective of the “Basic Principles of his Philosophy of Education”.

The Man Augustine

Augustine lived from 13th November 354 to 28th August, 430. He was born in Thagaste in the then Roman Province of Africa. Thagaste is the present-day Souk Ahras in modern Algeria. His mother was called Monica, she was a devout Christian. His father's name was Patricius (Patrick). Patrick was raised a pagan and remained so until he was baptized on his deathbed.

As a child, St. Augustine's parents enrolled him to study grammar and rhetoric in the provincial centers of Madauros and Carthage. They hoped that the studies would “pave his way for a future career in the higher imperial administration” (Tornau, 2019). Moreover, being a devout Christian, Augustine's mother made it her goal to see that her son grew up in the Christian way; she made him enroll as a catechumen early in his life.

However, contrary to what Augustine's Christian mother would have expected of her son, as a youth Augustine lived a hedonistic lifestyle for a considerable period of time, associating with young men who boasted of their sexual exploits. It is on record that “The need to gain acceptance [among peers] forced inexperienced boys like Augustine to seek or make up stories about sexual experiences. (The Conf. 2,3,7). At about the age of 17, Augustine began a relationship with a young woman in Carthage. The woman eventually gave birth to his son Adeodatus (372–388).

While studying in Carthage, Augustine read a dialogue by the Roman writer and historian Cicero titled “titled “Hortensius”. He later narrated that the reading of the piece left a lasting impression on him; enkindling in his heart the love of wisdom and a great thirst for truth. It sparked his interest in philosophy (the confessions 3,7). Following his burning quest for

truth, Augustine began a journey which made him dabble into exploring the teachings of some sects (of his time) which claimed to be custodians of the truth. The prominent sect which Augustine was a part of for some time was the Manichaean sect. Members of this sect practiced a religion known as Manicheism. The religion propagated a teaching that centered on dualism; it taught that in the universe, there is a constant strife between good and evil, light and darkness, and that every of our actions can be interpreted in the context of this strife.

After spending about ten years with Manichaeans Augustine became disillusioned with their teachings. He moved on to another sect known as New Academy movement; not long after, he left this sect for the Christian faith. His mother Monica, Simplicianus and the Ambrose (Bishop of Milan) were all very instrumental in his becoming a Christian. Ambrose baptized Augustine and his son Adeodatus, in Milan on Easter Vigil 24–25 April, 387.

After converting to Christianity, Augustine ceased practicing his profession as a rhetoric professor in order to devote prayers and meditation on the scriptures. In 391, he was ordained a priest in Hippo Regius (now Annaba), in Algeria. Due to his background in rhetoric Augustine excelled in his teachings of the Christian scriptures. He became a famous preacher, and was noted for combating the Manichaean

religion, to which he had formerly adhered.

In 395, he was made coadjutor Bishop of Hippo and became full bishop shortly thereafter, hence the name "Augustine of Hippo"; and he gave his property to the church of Thagaste. He remained in that position until his death in 430. Apart from being a preacher, Augustine was also a prolific writer; of all his writings the two most notable are the Confessions written 397–398 and The City of God, which was written to console his fellow Christians shortly after the Visigoths had sacked Rome in 410.

Clarification Of Terms

Principles: According to Collins English Dictionary, a principle “is a basic law or rule underlying a particular theory or philosophy” (628). In other words, principles are those claims or truths upon which theories or philosophies are founded. Principles serve as foundations for belief systems, philosophies, chain of reason, etc., they function as the bases upon which views held by individuals or group of individuals are established. Basic Principles of Augustine's Philosophy of education refer to the bases upon which Augustine's Philosophy of education stand.

Philosophy of education: This is the branch of philosophy that is concerned with the nature and aims of education and the philosophical problems arising from educational theory and practice. It is a discipline

that strives to solve educational problems through philosophical approach. According to Kneller (1971), philosophy of education seeks to comprehend education in its entirety, interpreting it by means of general concepts that will guide our choice of educational ends and policies, in the same way that general philosophy coordinates the findings of different sciences. From the words of Kneller, two things can be deduced; first, philosophy of education is said to be at play when philosophy is being used as a tool to explore matters and issues with respect to how they impact on or affect education; second, when philosophy is serving as an instrument to investigate education in general for the purpose of making better educational choices and policies. In agreement with Kneller, Omaseye (1985) said philosophy of education deals with the setting of goals for education in line with our needs as people. The main preoccupation of Philosophy of education is to drive educational endeavours in such a way that the best results are arrived at in terms of goals, policies and general outcome.

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 and 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).

Basic Principles Of Augustine's Philosophy Of Education

Below are some of the basic principles of Augustine's Philosophy of education.

The Teacher And The Experience Of God

St. Augustine approached education from a highly Christian perspective. Following the Christian injunction to seek God above all else (Matt. 10:37), St. Augustine 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” (Del Rio, 49).

Augustine urges all teachers to make sure that their curricula are so designed that God is the ultimate target. Even though Augustine held that biblical scholars and learners should be knowledgeable in other disciplines such as Mathematics, Science and Logic, (because these can lead to knowledge about God), he was very loud and emphatic that “at the top level of every curriculum should be knowledge of God” (Searson 2020).

Augustine believed and taught that education must lead to the understanding of the faith and the experience of God. For Augustine, every learning is good in so far as it helps the learner not only to grow in knowledge but to grow closer to God; He who is the giver of all good gifts (Js. 1:7).

The Peculiarity Of Each Student

In order to effectively impart knowledge on learners, Augustine held that it was important for teachers to realize that learners vary in terms of their abilities and aptitudes; whereas some may be fast learners, others could be slow. He notes that the teacher must respect and stimulate each of his student's individuality, that is, each student's unique and original unrepeatable character. A good teacher he says is one who succeeds in carrying along not only fast learners but also the slow learners.

Augustine taught that for education to be effective, teachers must understand that individual differences exist among students; hence each student ought to be treated as a unique entity. Teachers must therefore resist the temptation to use the same standard to judge students academically. This goes to mean that 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).

St. Augustine was a successful teacher; according to Kanu (2018), one of the reasons for Augustine's success was that he was able “adapt to the circumstances of his audience”. Kanu notes further that Augustine believed that teachers should adapt their teachings to the students whom he distinguished into three kinds:

- i. those well educated in liberal arts
- ii. those who had studied with inferior teachers of rhetoric and who thought they understood things they did not actually understand, and
- iii. those who were uneducated.

Augustine understood that it is only by adapting to learners that teachers can actually bring out the best out of each of them. Hence, he did his best possible to

descend to the unique levels of his students so that he can be a guide to each of them as they seek to ascend to higher levels of knowledge. Augustine wrote “Nobody is able to lift someone else up to their level if they cannot in some sense, descend and put themselves in the situation of the other: (Letter 11, p.4). Augustine insisted that an important attribute of a good teacher is that the impact of his teaching is felt by each learner, he further stressed that it is important that the teacher takes into consideration the uniqueness of each member of his audience while preparing for his encounter with them and during the encounter. Augustine writes, “Different people must necessarily affect the teacher in different ways. The teacher's talk should, as it were, affect the hearer in different ways according to how his frame of mind varies” (Catechesis for Beginners, 15:23).

Augustine taught that in every teaching session, teachers should begin by finding out what the learners already know. And, when teaching well educated students, Augustine cautioned teachers not to repeat for them what they already knew, but to move along quickly to material they had not yet mastered. When teaching the superficially educated, the teacher needed to insist upon the difference between having words and having understanding. These students need to learn docility and to develop the kind of humility that was not overly critical of minor errors in speech of others. With regards to the uneducated student,

Augustine encourages the teacher to be simple, clear, direct and patient (Kanu 2018).

According Augustine, the process of taking into consideration the peculiarity of each learner also involves using the best language comprehensible to the learner. Teachers must communicate using not only the right language but the right terminologies and vocabularies. “A language is meant for communication, and if the teacher uses a language that the student does not understand or is not familiar with, then he fails in teaching. Augustine held that teachers should choose a befitting language for communication; and that the choice of language is not made on the basis of what sounds good, but on whether it indicates or suggests to those listening what the speaker wishes to communicate.

In order to bring out the best out of learners Augustine says that it is important to consider the disposition of learners. The teacher should know when the learners are excited and ready to learn and when they are not. “He should know when they are tired and yawning so that he would know when to chip in a story to make them laugh or catch their attention” (Kanu 2018). Augustine's likened learning to eating: “Eating and learning have something in common, both are means of subsistence: one for the body, the other for the soul. Because many people are fussy and fastidious, even those foodstuffs without which life cannot be

supported need their pickles and spices” (Augustine on Christian Teaching, 4,26).

Beside a learner's disposition, another factor that teachers should consider regarding helping teaching learners is the time in which learning takes place. For him, just as a student's disposition affects learning, so also does the time in which learning takes place. Alongside knowing the right time to teach Augustine says teachers must also take into cognizance the age and maturity of each learner. Augustine writes, “The good teacher knows what to pass on and what to hold” (Commentary Psalms, 36,1,1) adding further that, “Due to lack of capacity or maturity of your students you may decide not to address certain issues or facts at a certain time” (Against lying 10,17).

Platonic Principle

Beside Augustine's mother (Monica), Simplicianus and Bishop Ambrose of Milan, a great historical figure who had great influence on Augustine's Christian Faith was the philosopher Plato. Interestingly, while it is understandable that Augustine's Christian Faith could be influenced by Monica, Simplicianus and Ambrose (being Christians themselves), one would wonder how Plato (a non-Christian philosopher) who lived before the advent of the Christianity could influence Augustine faith-wise.

The justification for Plato's influence on Augustine is evident in Augustine's works. To begin with, Augustine held Plato and Neo-Platonists in high regard, he famously stated, “none are closer to us [Christians] than the Platonists” (City of God 304); Burnaby (1938) wrote about Augustine thus, “without regard to the Platonist foundation upon which all his thinking is built” it is difficult to understand his teachings. Augustine saw in Platonic views a prefiguration of aspects of the Christian faith; the aspects he understood thus eventually served as springboards for a number of his Christian views. For instance, “Plato's metaphysics and epistemology shaped Augustine's understanding of God as a source of absolute goodness and truth” (Robinson 2022). Plato had taught that every entity in this physical world is a representation of a perfect idea of that entity which exists in an ideal and perfect world, which he named the “world of forms”. According to Plato, a mountain which exists in this physical world for instance, is an imperfect version of a perfect tree in the ideal world (world of forms). Building on this teaching of Plato, Augustine taught that the origin of everything in the world of forms is God. In other words, Augustine held that, the origin of all the perfect things which are found in the world of perfection which Plato speaks about is God (who is absolute perfection, absolute goodness and absolute truth).

According to Robinson (2022), other areas of Augustine's teachings which were influenced by

Platonic and Neo-Platonists include:

The transcendence and immateriality of God; the superiority of the unchangeable over the changeable (cf. Plato, *Timaeus* 28d); the ontological hierarchy of God, soul and body (Letter 18.2); the incorporeality and immortality of the soul; the dichotomy of the intelligible and the sensible realms (attributed to Plato in *Contra Academicos* 3.37); the non-spatial omnipresence of the intelligible in the sensible (*Confessiones* 1.2–4; Letter 137.4) and the causal presence of God in his creation (*De immortalitate animae* 14–15; *De Genesi ad litteram* 4.12.22); [...] the inwardness of the intelligible and the idea that we find God and Truth by turning inwards (*De vera religione* 72); the doctrine of evil as lack or privation of goodness; the understanding of the soul's love of God as a quasi-erotic desire for true beauty (*Confessiones* 10.38; cf. Rist 1994: 155). [Robinson emphasizes that], a distinctly Platonic element is the notion of intellectual or spiritual ascent. Augustine thinks that by turning inwards and upwards from bodies to soul (i.e., from knowledge of objects to self-knowledge) and from the sensible to the intelligible we will finally be able to transcend ourselves and get in touch with the supreme being that is none other than God and Truth and that is more internal to us than our innermost self (*Confessiones* 3.11).

Augustine believed that Platonic views and writings would always help to deepen the knowledge of

teachers. He considered their continuous studies as an essential part of education. Hence, he regarded platonic studies as an indispensable part of education.
The Teacher And The Principle Of Love

St. Augustine was a strong advocate of the fact that for a mission to be effective and successful, the missionary must be in love with the mission. He believed that anything (including teaching) that was not founded on love, would not only be ineffective but grossly inadequate. Augustine believes that a teacher who loves his work loves the learners too. As matter of fact, he had the firm believe that teaching as a profession is more than just a career, it is a “Vocation that must be guided by love” (Kanu 2018). Kanu writes further,

For many years he [Augustine] had worked simply to boost his own personal interests of fame and making money, but at the end he was still not satisfied. It was only later that he discovered that only through love freely given that can one educate.

Francisco Fincias (2006) reported that in his effort to encourage teachers to have love for their mission and by extension their students Augustine said, “Let us join with our listeners in brotherly, paternal or maternal love, merged with their hearts, [...] Thus, let us dwell in one another”; he further quotes Augustine, “the good educator treats his pupils with the love of a brother, the love of a father, and unto the love of a mother” (Cat.

Rud. XII, 17 as cited in Fincias 2006). Augustine maintained that teachers must demonstrate a good attitude by showing love for learning and for learners; “[learners] immediately feel which teachers are teaching 'through attraction', and which others are through necessity; which ones enjoy their work and which tolerate it. And the educational impact is totally opposite” (Fincias 2006).

As already mentioned above, Augustine advocated that teachers should adapt their teaching to each of their students. Without doubt, this is not an easy affair. Adapting to each student would naturally cost the teacher more time, energy and resource compared to if the teacher were to focus only the brilliant members of the class when teaching. Because of the difficulty adapting to each student entails, Augustine held that the teacher must be willing to make sacrifices, “The sacrifice requires love” (Kanu 2018). Augustine writes, “Let us adapt ourselves to our students with love which is at once the love of a brother, of a father, and of a mother” (Catechesis for Beginners, 12:17).

In Augustine's view of education, anyone who is out to educate should have passion for his work; he should love and enjoy it. According to Augustine, one of the ways teachers demonstrate their love for knowledge and their students is by using positive reinforcements rather than simply punishing. They should patiently stimulate those who lag behind and encourage those

who are doing well. Augustine writes:

Let us guard against any excess in the use of punishment, and against any shortcoming in our readiness to pardon. Let us not punish if it is not for the sake of improvement, and avoid all indulgence that may lead to worsening behaviour. Let us consider as our family all those who have been put in our charge. Let us be at their service as if we were embarrassed at having power over them, and use the power in such a way that we enjoy serving them. (Order, 2,8,25).

While not rejecting punishment totally, Augustine urged teacher to be cautious about it. Teachers must be cautious because excessive punishment will hamper learning instead of enhancing it. As a measure of caution, Augustine advocated that all punishments should be grounded on love. For indeed punishment administered in love is corrective, whereas punishment that lacks love is intrinsically destructive.

Teachers As Guides

Augustine believed that the ideal learning process is a dialogue between the teacher and the learner. The teacher's work is not to handfeed learners, on the contrary, teachers should help students find knowledge within themselves. Teachers do not just regurgitate information and students should ingest; the role of the teacher is to teach the learner how to think and not just what to think. Chidili (2014) writes, Augustine in his educational theory proposes that the

teacher's duty is to encourage pupils to acquire education with all his skill. He maintains that the learner must be allowed to discover ideas by himself/herself. Teacher's job is to influence the learner with his/her examples, enthusiasm and love.

Augustine frowns at teachers who think they know it all, and so they are to feed learners with the content of knowledge; he vehemently rejected the idea of teaching as 'dictated education'; for him, "it is the educator's mission to turn on the lights. But his objective is to ensure that the pupil by means of them finds answers to the queries that his traveling poses for him" (Fincias 2006). "The Child should be given the chance to discover things by him/herself while the teacher patiently guides him" (Chidili 2014).

Augustine rejected the idea of seeing learners as a cleared farmland for the farmer to plant their seeds on. He rather sees learners as companions to teachers on the journey to acquiring knowledge; the teacher can guide and accompany the learner on this journey, but should by no means determine the outcome of the journey. He should not determine the outcome of the journey, because the journey is first that of the student; in the words of Fincias (2006) "The good educator knows that his success as such is reached when he has at last ensured that each one of his pupils becomes the main actor in his education".

Evaluation And Conclusion

With the aim of tapping wisdom from the past so as to enrich contemporary and future systems of education, this work studied the philosophy of education of St. Augustine of Hippo. In the study, the basic principles of his educational philosophy were identified as follows: i. The teacher and the experience of God ii. The peculiarity of each student iii. Platonic principle iv. The teacher and the principle of love, and v. Teachers as guides

From lived experiences, Augustine's Philosophy of education and some of the basic principles therein which have found application have proven to be great catalysts for educational success. For instance, in institutions where teachers not only exhibit love for their profession and for learners but as well take into consideration the differences that exist among learners when adopting curricula and methods of teaching, it has been noted that students' output are great. Learners have been known to always feel free and well-disposed to learn from teachers who by their actions show that they truly and really care for them, and the consequence has always been great on the learners' education.

Among the principles of Augustine's Philosophy of education mentioned above, the principle of 'The teacher and the experience of God' seems to be what our contemporary world is increasingly rejecting. The world is becoming very irreligious so much so that the

idea of God is treated with levity in many quotas. It is utterly sad that in many learning institutions (particularly in the Western World; formerly the bastion of Christianity) anything that points to God has little or no place. Well, the rejection of God will not do a lot of good to the world (if at all that it will do any good). God is the owner of the universe, anyone who thinks of doing away with his presence and living in peace, is like a tenant who thinks he can kick his landlord away from his house and then live in peace in the house which the landlord built. The rejection of God will ultimately be catastrophic to humanity.

Biblical principles such as do not commit murder, love your neighbour as yourself, you shalt commit adultery/fornication (Exodus 20:14), You shall not steal (Exodus 20:15), You shall not covet your neighbours property (Exodus 20:17), do unto others what you want done to you (Matthew 7:12), have helped in shaping societies for good for so many centuries. Being that these principles are divine instructions to human beings, it goes to mean that rejecting God will eventually lead to the erosion of these principles. As a matter of fact, the rising rate of suicides, indecent dressings, sexual immorality/pervasions, self-centeredness etc. around the world are pointers to the persistent erosions of and departures from these principles. The truth remains that when human beings reject God, they make themselves gods to themselves, when they become gods to themselves, they follow all

their inclinations, and such inclinations that are devoid of God will create a society that lacks true purpose. Augustine believed that that God is the highest moral principle (Bello et. Al 2009). This follows that a society that rejects God may be educated, but it will be an educationally-immoral society.

Augustine also insisted that education should include the study of Plato. This insistence clearly reveals that Augustine appreciated the wisdom of the ancients. He may not have accepted the teachings of all thinkers that came before, but by aligning with some ideas of Plato, he clearly demonstrated that past wisdom can help shape the future in a great way. Augustine's approach to Plato should be considered as a clarion call to never let go of the insights and knowledge of the men and women of history. Concerning how this can be assured, all systems of educations must give importance to the study of history and historical personalities. In a country like my own (Nigeria), where for several years historical studies have been relegated to the background (Particularly in Primary and secondary schools), learners who would have tapped from the wisdom of the past (like Augustine did) to break new grounds may never be discovered. Things therefore need to change if people of Augustine's caliber are to emerge.

St. Augustine was a man of great insight, this work in which some the principles of his Philosophy of Education were explored simply reveals the depth and

incisive nature of his thought. His contributions to learning confirm he was man whose thoughts were way beyond his time. Just as he insisted that Plato be studied, Augustine himself has gained every right to be studied generation after generation. Any age or system that relegates Augustine to the backgrounds would be doing so at its own peril.

Recommendations

1. Learning should be theocentric learning. Christianity as a religion emphasizes (among other things) character development. It places high priority on training children to form the right frame of conscience, to ground themselves in the right moral values, and enabling them to imbibe the right social attitudes; “Train a child in the way that he should go, even when he is old, he will not depart from it” says the Bible in Proverbs 22:6. As one whose worldview revolved round the Bible (the word of God), when Augustine insisted that education must lead to the experience of God, he implied also that as teachers instruct learners in arears (say of Mathematics and Greek), they must not forget to instruct them to appreciate God's words and imbibe the virtues therein. His emphasis that “at the top level of every curriculum should be knowledge of God” (Searson, 2020) is a clear demonstration that Augustine frowned at any form of human development and knowledge acquisition that will sever learners from God and make them live in ways that are discordant with His Way and Will.

Augustine teaches that people should always live with eternity in sight. The view that everything we think about, we should be thinking about in relation to the future life is evident in the teachings of Augustine; “In sermon after sermon, [he] encourages his listeners to keep before them their future hope. [He emphasizes that] this world most definitely is not our home; God in Christ saves the Christian out of it and eventually brings one to one's true home” (Offner 2017). The continues encouragement regarding being always conscious of our future life in heaven by Augustine was directed to all (including teachers and learners). This goes to mean that even the activity of learning should be done in such a way that learners are ultimately directed towards this future life with God in heaven. It is a common knowledge that one of the core Christian teachings regarding life in heaven is that people must live morally upright lives in this world if they are to make it to heaven. Since morally upright living means living in accordance with the word of God, which is the main preoccupation of Christian religious studies, schools which have room for the studies of this discipline will play significant roles in bequeathing to the society learners and future leaders of sound moral character.

2. Learners should be exposed to the views of great men and women of history. Without doubt Augustine is one of the most influential thinkers to have graced the world; his contributions to the world of knowledge are nothing short of

phenomenal. Several generations of scholars and thinkers (one of whom is Rene Descartes) have been influenced in one way or the other by the life and teachings of Augustine. Interestingly, just as Augustine has influenced others, he himself was influenced by others. In terms of his doctrines, Augustine received the most influence from Plato; many of his teaching as already established above were inspired by Platonic views. Sometimes I wonder what would have been if Augustine had not come in contact with Plato's views and those of the Neo Platonists. May be or may be not we would have had him, but thanks be to God for how events turned out.

The greatness that came out of Augustine as a result of his studies of Plato's works is a testimony that with the right influence, learners can actually unleash the genius within them. Without doubt, as in the case of Augustine, one of the best influence learners can get is from the past. It is on this basis that I strongly recommend that individuals involved in educational management should make conscious efforts to create enabling environments for learners in all ages to have access to the intellectual works of great minds of the past. All that some learners need to unleash the greatness in them is a spark of inspiration. And being that one of Augustine's inspirations came from the past, it is undoubtable that the study of history (if thoroughly and adequately handled) in schools, will make available ideas that will constitute building blocks for potential great minds.

3. Learners should be encouraged to move out of their comfort zones.

One of the hallmarks of a good teacher according to Augustine is his ability to adapt to the learners he is guiding. Augustine argues that learners' learning abilities and aptitudes vary, and because of the variations, it is very inappropriate for teachers to use the same methods or approaches when teaching different students. Augustine says that to always get the best of learners, teachers should be able to condescend to the levels of each of them.

Although it is good that teachers always make efforts to put themselves into the shoes of learners, care must be taken because overstressing this point can be a great disservice to learning in particular and to the educational processes in general in the long run. The disservice it can do is that it has the potency to make learners to choose to remain in their comfort zones, and thereby reject any attempt by teachers to make them do things which the learners deem to be difficult. Alongside the need for teachers to adapt to the learners, emphasis needs to be made that as learners aspire to grow in knowledge, they must actively be willing to step out of their comfort zones. Learners should be made to know that their desire to be like their teachers and more importantly better the teachers in the future demands that they should dare to also make efforts to adapt to their teachers. They should be open to rising beyond what ordinarily they conceive to be

their level of operation to 'higher levels' in which teachers operate. I sincerely believe that if learners imbibe the willingness to rise beyond their comfort zones, there will be a number of benefits including:

- i. Maximum learning from minimum time of teaching
- ii. Development of the spirit of adventure in learners
- iii. Motivating teachers to master effectively their fields of specialization, and
- iv. The implantation and strengthening of 'can-do' spirit in learners

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