

## **Comparative Assessment of Philosophy of Education in the Ancient and Medieval period: A Critical Learning Lessons for the Contemporary Educational System**

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### **Abstract**

The history of education reveals that education has been in existence from time immemorial. The great philosophers of education speculate that education must have been in existence before it was systematized in the ancient times. As a matter of fact, the development of education has shown remarkable struggle to balance what traditionally was acceptable and regarded as true theories, methods and fundamental principles, on one hand and what modernity brings forth in responding to the exigencies of the contemporary society such as benevolent eclecticism, individuality, subjective consciousness, innovation, digitalization, freedom in leaning and teaching. What is however interesting is that both the groups are striving to bring out the best in terms of the fundamental principles, theories and practice essential in education. Modernity, as a matter of fact, has spurred drastic proposals which reject the fundamental principles and teachings given by ancient and medieval philosophers about the purpose, the aim and the goal of education. In light of this, this paper makes a bold move to disabuse this notion propagated by the modern educationist that ancient and medieval philosophical understanding of education cannot help on the contemporary times. Instead, the paper suggest that there are various components which are quite fundamental and form the basis of life (values, skills, and knowledge) and should not be altered even in the modern times. The paper concludes that even if the society concerns, interests and needs have changed in the contemporary times, there remain several fundamental aspects that cannot change because they underpin any expansion and enrichment of the aim, purpose and goal of education. Moreover, in responding to the exigencies of the society such fundamental principles must be the guiding standards and practice. The paper recommends that contemporary education should not deviate from the fundamental and foundational principles, theories and practice in education. Instead it should foster an integrated approach that seeks to advance multifaceted and multidimensional education which cultivates intellectual knowledge and competence, moral character and finally religious values.

**Key words:** Philosophy of Education, Theories, curriculum and educational practice

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### **1.0 Introduction**

The people's beliefs, culture, tradition, values, norms and taboo are thought to form their worldview. Hardly will you find people talking about what they have no experience. Experience can be remotely through mythology or even through practical observation instances. Ideally these aspects form one's general outlook at expression of life. As well these aspects are the measure and the yardstick of how people view themselves among others. Such are the basis of the general estimative and expectation of life. When these aspects are thought and reflected upon and explained reasonably, they form the philosophy of the people. Admittedly, the philosophy of the people is what determines their education; in terms of their values, knowledge and skills. This is true because in the western world their philosophy underpins their persuasion in almost all spheres. The ancient and medieval philosophy determined and offered the fabric upon which they laid their education as well as their social economic and political pursuits. This paper will bring forth the understanding of the ancient and medieval philosophy of education which has been referred to as traditional educational theoretical perspective. The paper intends to explore and highlight the ancient and medieval philosophical understanding of education with a view to flash out the most fundamental aspects which have remained the same and essential in education regardless of what epoch or era the human development is. Various ideas and teachings from philosophers of education will be presented, interrogated and analyzed so as to show which fundamentals principles and teaching have remained unchanged even in the influence of modernity which emphasizes on; benevolent eclecticism, individuality, subjective consciousness, innovation, digitalization, freedom in learning and teaching.

### **1.0 Statement of the problem**

Education being the process by which knowledge, values and skills are transmitted from one generation to the other is thought to have been in existence from time immemorial. Many scholars (Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, Rousseau, Pestalozzi) believe that it is as old as humanity, especially when man started being conscious of his place in the universe. However, this has not remained the same. Throughout its existence, education has continually improved and sparked changes not only in its aim, vision, mission and objectives, but also in the theories, methods of instruction, curriculum development, educational policies and finally management and administration. All these aspects touch on the systematic development of philosophy of education. In this endeavor, education has grown from a mere seed to a rugged tree full of wealth and acumen. This traces the development of philosophy of education from the ancient to the contemporary times with a view of teasing out the key lessons that contemporary education can learn. Philosophy of education being a philosophical discipline, our approach will be critical, speculative and analytical in attempting to answer the about question.

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## 2.0 Ancient Period

To start with, in the ancient period, education was regarded as an activity of freeman. It was characterized by studying Homer and Hesiod writing, mathematics, music and gymnastics. This was respected and highly esteemed. Higher education was unknown till the Sophists and other philosophers like Socrates established the art of learning. This received a boost later when plato started the first higher institution of learning called *Academia*.

## 2.1 The Sophists

These were a group of philosophers who taught that they were wise and everybody else was not. The term comes from the Greek term Sophia, which meant wise or skilled in particular craft and especially hand craft. This term could also mean somebody who was wise in general matters especially practical issues dealing with governance or politics. In early ancient time, the term sophist was synonymous to the seven Greek sages.

They were the first people to be called teacher and they were renowned for teaching and instruction (Guthrie, 1961). They taught others because they were regarded as people who had particular skills and knowledge to impart. They could ask students to pay so as to be taught. Socrates later remarked that ‘those who sell their wisdom for money to anyone are called sophists’ (Plato, *Protagoras*, 349a). Aristotle saw this group of philosophers in a negative sense. At this time, knowledge was not supposed to given freely to the society. Due to this, in his writing and commentaries, Aristotle described the sophist as ‘one who makes money out of an apparent but unreal wisdom’ (Aristotle, *Politics*, 1337a5)

In terms of development of teaching and learning, the sophists are not clearly known. However, they are thought to have originated from southern Italy, Asia Minor, from Cicily as well as from Greece. The Sophists Movement developed as a result of dissatisfying philosophy, aftermath of 5<sup>th</sup> C philosophers who failed to agree on the question “what is the ultimate material the universe is made up of?” Many philosophers right from Thales had suggested one of the following; air, water, fire or earth. Due to this, it was found that the system of philosophy ‘hither to’ proposed excluded one another. It was then logical that the thinkers of the 5<sup>th</sup> B.C began to think negatively. They proposed that it was useless to insist on metaphysical inquiry of the objective reality without having first studied the subject and determined with exactness the value and significance of human cognitive capacity. Thus, Sophists devised a philosophy and an education which was humanistic and centred on gnoseology.

However, negatively and away from the philosophy of the time, the Sophists did not intend to find out the objective truth. Their aim was to teach man a way of life which had a practical end and not a speculative one. Their pre-occupation was how to succeed in life. This was of great interest to young men of good faith whose natural career looked forward to the political life of the city. For this reason, they needed the skills to speak persuasively in public.

Since political leadership was not an inheritable birth right, it involved those who were interested in speaking to the electorate. In many occasions, to succeed in all these, one had to be able to move the jury’s emotions. Based on these ultimate and fundamental goals, the aim of education shifted drastically. It shifted from teaching that is centred on virtues of courage, loyalty, personal honour and moderation to the more worldly talents of facility to deliberate on oratory skills. This is really to say that education only shifted its goal to the acquisition of skills which confirmed to the dominant cultural pattern of the time. Thus, education serves people’s interests. The things the community or the society values is what

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education teaches the young people. At this time, the values were essentially political and secular. Due to this, education had to reflect on this change. Teachers were obliged to teach and train young people on public life. (Aristotle, Op. Cit. : 318d-319a)

In the higher education, the Sophists insisted that the teaching of wisdom should become a profession. They could move from one city to the other picking up their pupils wherever they could find them. The basic teaching was the art of convincing others. In order to convince people, a person was to be versed in all subjects and he had to be able to speak always on any subject that could be offered. For example, Protagoras was once asked how one can always convince others. He answered “the speaker must be able to turn a weak argument into a strong argument.” (Guthrie, Op. Cit. :64) This is really to say that the major concern for education was to train students uniformly in as many subjects as possible and composed. Later, specialization was discouraged for one needed to learn and be well versed with the topic and subject. Thus, the measure for their understanding was based on learning as much content as possible to enable one to become a jack of all trades.

Gorgias of Leontine, echoed the Sophist diction that knowing how to speak and how to convince was important. For him, this was one major training that one was supposed to undergo. He, in particular, insisted that speech is a poison with which a person can do everything, poison or bewitch consequently. Conviction does not serve simply to convey the truth but to accomplish whatever the speaker might desire. In this one’s aim is not to convince but to persuade. Persuasion is not concerned with the objective truth but with personal subjective truth (interest). This took the centre of their teaching and learning among their followers.

## **2.2 Socrates**

Socrates was one of the proficient and greatest philosophers of the ancient time. He was of great and ingenious mind in politics as well as in ethics and education. He came up with a method that is now referred to as Socratic Method. He first reacted against the destructive theory of the Sophists; materialism and skepticism. He condemned the sophist for killing knowledge and removing the objectivity and universality making knowledge to be weakly relative. He started to build knowledge on a new foundation after the decay brought about by the Sophists.

According to him, education should help one to understand and expound the details of the city. Here, he emphasized communism and gender equality. In his submission, he insisted that a state should be ruled by a philosopher (Plato, 503b) He is supposed to get the best education which prepares him to be all round, to love with wisdom, be wise and be harmonized. He criticized the previous education which was given to the guardian and which for him was incomplete (Plato, 504b). He contends that those who were to be the philosophers, kings or the potential ones should receive a new form of education that identifies, tests and refines their philosophical natures. In his words, Socrates says, “It must also be given gymnastic in many studies to see whether it will be able to bear the greatest studies or whether it will turn out to be a coward” (Plato, 503e)

This is really to say that according to Socrates, the aim of education is not to fashion men or molding men in a given way but to help identify those who are capable of philosophizing and help to strengthen the characters of those who are capable.

From the above statement, one could say that Socrates saw education and philosophy to be intimately related. Nobody could be called educated if he was not a philosopher, a person who uses his intellect to think, brainstorm and contemplate high ideas. It is in this

regard that he recommended a high-level education for the philosopher king. This kind of education could teach them true love of learning and philosophy as opposed to the false love of learning of the purples (Plato, 376b)

Socrates identified four virtues that education should aim at; the virtue of temperance which is attributed to the appetitive part, the virtue of courage which is attributed to the spirited part of the soul and the virtue of wisdom which is attributed to the rational part of our soul. The philosopher king was supposed to acquire all these three plus the virtue of justice which harmonizes all the above virtues. In essence these are the facts upon which he contended that education should build one to have wisdom and harmony.

Profoundly, Socrates underscores that philosopher king's education should not only help him to acquire these four virtues, but also to acquire the greatest and the most beneficial study which is the study of the good. (Plato, 505a). The good is the greatest virtue and its knowledge is prerequisite and necessary for the acquisition of the four virtues. This knowledge must be good and ought to be absolute as opposed to what the Sophists had thought probable.

Socrates says that when it comes to good things, no one is satisfied with what is opined to be so but one each seeks the things that are (Plato, 505d). This was in reaction to the teaching of the guardian where education consisted of telling false tales to children so that they would absorb the material and have correct opinion. This is because in the education of the guardian children were unable to determine what is right and wrong for themselves and therefore they were to be guarded from the truth when it was not wholly good. Socrates held that knowing is superior to opining. He advocated that everyone must profess ignorance saying that he didn't know the truth and everybody must learn the truth by himself. Consequently, he thought it wise to always have educational experience in an effective pedagogical method that benefits both the student and the teacher. For instance, Socrates used this method when teaching Glaucon. Using the power of images, Socrates evokes an analogy of the obscure good and the familiar sun. Using this analogy, Glaucon was able to understand the way human beings come to know. Just as the sun illuminates objects and allows our eyes to see them, so too, the good allows our existing intellect to know. Knowing therefore takes place when our light fixes itself on that which is illuminated by truth and that which the intellects knows and appears to possess intelligence in (Plato, 508d).

### **2.2.1 Education and the Analogy of the Cave**

Socrates used this analogy to help his scholar to understand how human beings come to know. He demonstrates how the process of knowing come to completion using this imagery. Perhaps, it helps if we start by narrating this analogy. Socrates describes a cave in which humans are chained from birth facing a wall. Behind them, puppet masters carry figurines which cast shadows on the wall in front of the prisoners. Because they know nothing else, the prisoners assume the shadows to be the extent of reality. However what they see and hear is actually only a small segment of the intelligible world (Plato, 515a)

Critical analysis of this analogy reveals a very strange and unique mind by Socrates about education. It is evident that the new education is meant to free the prisoners from false opinions and conviction, beliefs and world views as opposed to the old education which was given to the guardian and which aimed at chaining them within the cave and making them believe that shadow are reality.

In this analogy, there is a common question that is asked; 'what would happen if a prisoner was unchained and allowed to leave the cave and see reality?' This question attests



and reveals two aspects about education. The first one is that learning is often resisted because it reveals what is not usual or what one is not accustomed to. The second aspect that comes out from this is that the learning process is always enlightening and progressive. The answers given by Socrates to Glaucon are not only surprising, but also, stimulating. Socrates shows that if prisoners were released, they would be pained and disoriented by the foreign sights. They would rebel at the reality and say that all they knew in the cave is real. If the prisoners are allowed to see things in direct sun after leaving the dark cave, they would be blinded and would want to return to the comfort of their familiar past surroundings. Thus, the prisoner must be led out gradually, slowly and carefully. This is to enable his eyes to adjust slowly. First, he has to see shadows then reflections in water, then things themselves, the night's sky and finally the sun which is an image of the good and what 'is' (Plato, 516b)

Socrates contends that if these prisoners are led to this state and they focus on what is, they will be happier than before and will never want to return to the cave. This is what education is meant to be; a process that leads one to discover the good, the truth, the IS, the reality and this good is the cause of all that is right and fair in everything. Socrates concludes that education is supposed to be progressive in the sense that it should teach men to use their existing capacity for knowledge. This was what he proposed to be taught to philosopher kings.

In addition, education is not what many professions take it to be. Ideally, it is possible to put sight into a blind person but it ought to be as that of the soul of each man which is proper. It must be focused on the truth and the ability of one to know that the role of education is always within man. Such role never falters but is useful depending on whether it is focused on the truth. This is really to say that the nature of children or students matter less than their education. Education plays a greater role in making one a philosopher king and this is achievable through right training.

Contrary to the first education which was given to the guardian, philosophical king's education is to eventually teach children how to distinguish right from wrong by showing them the whole truth. Due to this, Socrates was prompted to revise the prior education by introducing the study of numbers, calculation, geometry and cubes. This is because Mathematics was not only useful for practical matters but its abstractness causes students to exercise their intellect and ask questions about what really IS. In his words, Socrates says "It leads the soul powerfully upwards and compels it to discuss numbers themselves." (Plato, 525d). Moreover, in Mathematics, he insists that those to be taught must have a suitable nature. They must be steady, courageous, good looking, noble, tough and quick learners (Plato, 355a).

Socrates emphasized techniques such as reasoning through questioning and answering, brainstorming, supposing and exchanging arguments which teaches one to give account of oneself. This helps to show what one knows and thus identifying the good in oneself and the good in the world. Furthermore, education must be presented first as voluntary play. Socrates says 'Don't use force in training the children in the studies, but rather play. In that way, you can better discern what each is naturally directed towards (Plato, 537a)

### **2.3 Plato**

Plato in his REPUBLIC recognizes that education is the key to the best republic. The purpose of education cannot be less emphasized. Its aim is to build an ideal nation where the idea of the Good is embodied. Plato agrees to the fact that education is the prime responsibility of the

state. The citizens in a state should be molded to suit the existing form of government so that someone who lives in a democracy should believe in all democratic principles. To mold does not mean to coerce. Plato understood and perfected an ideal society which was communistic in character. For him, the differing phases of education were to be controlled by the state. The reason behind this suggestion is not hard to underpin. Its aim was to attain the truth. The attainment of this truth enables a person to make correct decisions, to adapt wise courses of action and to see things as they really are, that is, in a balanced way. This attainment of the equilibrium in all things, particularly nature, was a journey to realize the form of the good. Any system of education, taught Plato, must lead one to the concept of the truth and the attainment of the knowledge of the good. This state, which is virtuous, is achieved after a 'correct' system of education. Furthermore, a true system of education must be a means to model citizens to be righteous persons. Such a person is ideal for a healthy state.

In emphasizing this, Plato argues that reading and writing are paramount. Secondly, he thought that physical training is important so that one can be fit both mentally and physically. This should involve the teaching of music. In view of the above, one could say that the ultimate end of education is knowledge of the form of the good. The forms of things are the turning of the right of the soul. Education should engender one to discover the form of the good. By this, he meant that education should help one to build the understanding of the very essence of the innermost nature of anything, for instance, the nature of an idea or the form or the essence of things, situations or phenomena. This is the ultimate state which education should drive one to seek those forms and the good. The appropriation of such essential qualities is timeless and universal.

Furthermore, as regards to learning, Plato was for the view that talents are distributed non-genetically. This implies that talents were found in all classes of children. Those suitably gifted were to be trained and educated by the state. This ideally implies that Plato believed and advocated a system of public selected schools. This could train a section of the students and by virtue of their education and inborn educability, such students were up to the task of sufficient governance.

Contrary to many Greek Philosophers, Plato supported the education of women. For him, women are equal and should be in his ideal world. Even properties were to be held by both men and women. They should also be free to express themselves. While emphasizing curriculum, he stressed on the importance of correctly choosing subjects of study and agrees that physical training should be practiced before the cultivation of rigorous mental discipline. In advanced stages, the curriculum should incorporate practice and theory. This is ideally to mean that learning the theory of something is by itself of little value unless the student knows how to make that thing altogether. This points out to the fact that one should develop a scientific mind. This, according to him, is essential and conducive to knowledge of the truth than liberal arts.

## **2.4 Aristotle**

Aristotle is one of the proficient philosophers of ancient times. He wrote a lot on various themes starting from physics which dealt with physical universe, biology and even anthropology and politics which concerns man. One of the issues touching man is education. Aristotle, like his teacher Plato, understood that the provision of education is a responsibility of the state. In his *POLITICS*, book 8, he acknowledges that “No one will doubt that the

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legislator should direct his attention above all to the education of the youth, for the neglect of education does harm to the constitution.” (Aristotle, Politics: 1337b25)

Nevertheless, in his *Treatise of Education*, he underscores the fact that in education, there are three components which should be developed and actualized. These are; nature, habit, and reason. These components should be inculcated in education. He considered repetition to be key to develop good habits. This is really to say that, for him, the best way of teaching is through repetition. In this, the teacher should lead his students gradually and systematically so as to form a pattern of repeated activities which endure and eventually form habits. This reveals a fundamental difference between his teaching and that of Socrates whereby Socrates insisted more on questioning his students so as to discover alone. This perhaps explains why Aristotle insisted that the aim and the mission of education was to produce good and virtuous citizens for the polis. In book 8, he further recognizes that all those who have mediated on the art of governing mankind have been convinced that the fate of an empire depends on the education of the youth (Aristotle, 1337b15)

Aristotle, contrary to his teacher, rejected the idea of giving private education. Education should be one and the same for all. All children belong to the state and there should be no such thing as privately educated pupils. This was meant to disabuse the Greek notion that education was virtually the preserve of the wealthy who could afford private tuition. Aristotle postulated that training of all young men should be the same for all, that is, it should be public. Education was to have a role of making one an integral member of the state to which they belong. Everybody who is a member of a society need to submerge his individuality fostering the aim of the nation which has a collective “virtue” that is, strength through truth.

Aristotle thought that education is seen as much social as intellectual. This is ideally to say that education must play a paramount role of integrating and socializing its members to the society. This will mean that education has a relation to the society and it helps one to know the truth which is the ultimate goal of education. This contention is shared by both Aristotle and Plato. Plato emphasizes that education is a way to the truth and the attainment of this state enables a person to make correct decisions and see things as they really are. Furthermore, it should be said here that the goal of education is the truth which when acted upon leads to the attainment of virtues. These virtues are attained through training and habituation. These two are fundamental for the practice of the virtues. This is not very far from Plato’s teaching. Plato shares these sentiments when he insisted that the concept of truth and attainment of knowledge of the good is essential. This good is attained only through a correct system of education.

Moreover, Aristotle maintained that education should be regulated by the law (Aristotle. 1337b20). By this, he meant that there should be a general guideline which should be followed in the choice of curriculum and the method of instruction. This is because he wanted to avoid a scenario where the students are taught different curriculum. In this accord, he grouped subjects into those which are vocational and those which are for pure enlargement of personal horizons. The former leads one to attain the ‘best life’ that is to be satisfied in material sense. This shows that Aristotle appreciated the role played by education, especially vocational training which helps one to acquire a finished product. Early in his book the *Physics*, such subjects were regarded as productive sciences which are taught to enable one to make a finished product. These subjects include Music, Architecture, Carpentry, Masonry, Tailoring etc. All these involved acquisitions of skills, that is, *techne*. The latter leads one to attain virtues which satisfy one in moral sense. Aristotle, by talking about virtues never



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meant only moral virtues like prudence, courage and honesty but states in the *Nichomachean Ethics* that there are also intellectual virtues. He called this, Intellectual Dispositions. He says “The aim of education can be to an extent to cultivate the useful, to inculcate higher knowledge, leading on to virtues. The choice of subjects, and with it, the aims of education are perplexing.” (Aristotle, 1337b25)

In addition, Aristotle presents a case showing dichotomy between liberal and illiberal arts. Liberal arts are subjects like Mathematics, Geometry, music, Astronomy, Rhetoric, Grammar and dialectic (Logic). They are seven in number. They were taught to enable learners to open their minds, to reason and think critically about nature, the world and themselves. However, contrary to liberal arts, Aristotle exposes illiberal arts. For him, these subjects lead people away from the exercise of virtues, for instance, manual work which is paid on monetary or quid pro quo basis. This is because in paid manual labour, the work is inclined to money one can earn and not in liberating or improving one’s mind. In addition, Aristotle echoes Plato in emphasizing the importance of correctly choosing subjects of study and agrees that to achieve the best from a learner; physical training should be practical before the cultivation of rigorous mental discipline. In this sense, he advocated that the curriculum must allow moments of theoretical and practical endeavours. Both should be cautiously implemented.

In terms of parental involvement, Aristotle remained original. He emphasized that parents have a duty to train/ educate their off springs in the pursuit of nobleness. Perhaps, what Aristotle had in mind is the aspiration towards intellectual level of which a child is inherently capable. In other words, a child was inherent or had a potency to become anything.

### **3.0 Medieval Philosophy of Education**

Philosophy in the ancient times is totally different from philosophy in the medieval period. Due to this, the nature and form of education in the ancient times differed from education in the medieval times. As concerns the goal of education, the Greek education aimed at developing good people who would serve the society, but in the Christian period the goal shifted from this to cultivating people who would live Christian ideals. During this period, one was supposed to love and respect God and his neighbours. Education was undertaken, first and foremost by Catholic institutions like monasteries which would not only empower one academically but also spiritually while inculcating virtues of purity, honesty, poverty and submission. Among the greatest philosophers of education in the medieval times are Augustine of hippo and Thomas Aquinas.

#### **3.1 Augustine of Hippo**

To start with, Augustine was a pagan who attempted and studied many faiths/doctrines. He later converted to Christianity. This struggle influenced his educational focus which was more on interpretation of scriptures and Christian beliefs. According to Augustine, written and spoken words were powerful skills worth learning. He advocated playful debates with students and friends. For him, this kind of intellectual gamesmanship could help students to think critically. He insisted that Mathematics was to be taught to every student because understanding of numbers (abstract) helps one to understand (being) the truth which is God purpose.

He saw the aim of education to be happiness. This is because one’s soul grows by learning (Weber, 1992: 19). Inversely, ignorance leads one to attainment of unhappiness. For Augustine, knowledge is the object of learning. It is the product of a learning process of

gathering information. This is through reading or listening to learned speakers. This information on a given subject must be examined thoroughly. This activity is called reasoning. He recommended that in order to start a reasoning process, some knowledge must be present and this is inborn (sentiments shared by Plato). In this process of reasoning:

The sight of the mind which we call reason is directed upon some object and sees it: that is called knowledge, but when the mind does not see, though it focuses its sight, that is called not knowing or ignorance (Colleran, 1964:79)

Every act of learning should help one to acquire knowledge thus attain happiness by being closer and in union with God. Learning as such should lead one to happiness. Learning has various components. First, the use of senses such as the eyes to read a book or ears to hear a speaker. Second, we have another vital component which is the mind. It uses reason and intellection to get information.

In a discussion, Augustine tells Vilusianus that skills and knowledge are acquired through the study of written and spoken words and interaction with learned people. He strongly advocated that when one interacts with learned people, he is able to obtain skills and knowledge. This interaction included formal schooling. It would appear that Augustine viewed schooling as an important method of acquiring skills and knowledge.

As concerns the methods of transmission, there seems to be a difference between what he wrote and what he actually did. In his book, *The Teacher*, Augustine concludes that “Man cannot teach one another. God is the only teacher of men” (Colleran, 1964: 17). This assertion is based on medieval belief that it was God who would reveal and illuminate to man the truth. Thus, He alone teaches man the truth. Despite this summation, Augustine once more accepted that God always uses man’s word as a mechanism to teach. This is in line with instrumentation (Colleran, 1964, 129).

Furthermore, Augustine recognized that formal schooling was an important method of teaching. This is particularly the case because books were limited. He advocated that other than the study and acquisition of knowledge of the Bible, other areas were to be stressed too. He was sure that wider studies were necessary. He captured this contention when he says “A biblical scholar needed to know some history, geography, natural science, mathematics, logic and rhetorics, that is, how to write and speak clearly and appropriately” (Chadwick, 1986: 35).

In the question of who is to be educated, Augustine thought that education should be acquired by all so that people share a common culture through education. For him, he realized that his way of life was not due to his family culture but due to culture he acquired through education (Augustine, 1953: 1) Augustine clearly viewed education as a passion and a process of opening up the mind to ideas and critical thinking. On this basis, he recommended that all people, regardless of class, should be given the opportunity to be educated.

Perhaps, one radical idea which he introduced to the area of education is when he emphasized that teachers should respond positively to the questions they receive from students; he advocated for restrained style of teaching. This teaching style ensures the students’ full understanding of a concept because with this method, the teachers avoid pampering the students with too much material, thus focusing on one topic and item at a time. These are two basic styles of teaching for Augustine. These are called mixed style and grand style.

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To start with, in mixed style, one uses complex language to help students see the beautiful artistry of the subject under study. Grand style however, is not as elegant as mixed style. It is exciting and heartfelt. Its purpose is to ignite the same passion in the students' hearts.

### **3.2 Thomas Aquinas (1225 – 1274)**

Thomas Aquinas echoes Aristotle in his teaching about a number of aspects. In regard to education, Aquinas insisted that there are some skills and knowledge which are worthwhile. These skills and knowledge can be acquired through various subjects. Most fundamental in this is logic which assists one to learn methods of the sciences, Mathematics, natural philosophy, Moral philosophy and Divine science (Bourke, 1960). He recognized the role played by natural sciences as the best means of understanding man due to the use of reasoning. For him, logic is like a tool because other sciences depend on it. Secondly, mathematics is more certain than divine sciences. This is because divine science studies things which are further from issues of sensation of which knowledge originates. Due to this, he proposed that this subject should be incorporated in educational subjects for everybody. While analyzing the role of education, he insisted that the goals of education are to teach man issues which are worthwhile through knowledge of different subjects.

#### **3.2.1 Aquinas Theory of Learning**

Moreover, in his theory of learning Aquinas contends that learning takes place when one person teaches another and the teacher conveys knowledge to the pupil's mind by causing him to know what he previously had the capacity to know (Aquinas, 1949). In other words, he insisted that learning involves getting knowledge from another person. This is shared equally with what This statement leads one to have sure knowledge, which is called science.

Aquinas saw knowledge as a product of the activity of the student's mind. This is really to say that along with the acquiring knowledge with the aid of the teacher, students can also acquire knowledge by applying their mind to know the first principles of all knowledge. The role of the teacher is understood as pointing out issues which the pupil had not thought of and shows the relationship between concepts which the pupil would not have noticed. In his own words, he says "teachers are only for helping the student to know. The student must digest the knowledge. Otherwise, it is like pouring water into serve" (Ibid, *Summa Theologica*: 3)

#### **3.2.2 Aquinas Theory of Transmission of Knowledge**

In *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas presents three aspects which should be found in any person who is to become a teacher. These are stability, clearness, and purity of intention. These three elements meant a lot in reality. To start with, by stability is meant that the teacher should remain focused on the truth. He should not stray from it, should be firm, solid and have constancy. By clearness is meant that the teacher should have lucidity, lack of confusion, and should be directed and maintain comprehensibility. Lastly, by purity is meant that teachers should seek God's glory and not his own. This is based on medieval teaching that human intentions without God's assistance are thwarted.

#### **3.2.3 Aquinas on Pedagogy**

He advocated that students should be taught using few fundamental and primary questions. This is ideally to say that questioning method was an effective teaching method. This method

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should be directed towards the attainment of clear knowledge of issues. For him this is a general rule that should be observed in all educational institutions from primary school to university. To my understanding, Aquinas laid more emphasis on this because he wanted to help students to learn the core and fundamental issues in their respective areas so as to avoid producing graduates who have received a little bit of everything and knowledge of nothing (Ibid, *Summa Theologica* :2).

Secondly, Aquinas insisted that in order to achieve proper learning, there must be resources or books written with consideration for clearness and perception and helpful to the memory of the students. Repetition should be avoided so that teachers don't lose focus and lucidity thereby bringing disgust to the students. However, he recommended that repetition should be used to the young students cautiously.

### **3.2.4 Curriculum**

As pertain to what was to be taught in schools, Aquinas recommended that in order for the students to acquire any knowledge and skills which are worthwhile, it was imperative for them to learn logic. This was essential because it assists the learner to learn the method of sciences, mathematics, natural philosophy, moral philosophy and divine science (Ibid, *Summa Theologica*: 44). Mathematics was also compulsory and essential for the learner for it was more certain than divine science. Again, Aquinas saw it better for all students to learn natural philosophy to help them develop the methods of reasoning. In particular, metaphysics which stretches human intellect to be used at peak capacity.

In his writing, Aquinas underscores the importance of all human being becoming educated and schooled. He attests to the fact that education is important and vital for everybody and should start as earlier as possible. He saw that the first school for any child is family. The children need instruction from their parents, not as soon as they are born, but when they are able to arrive at discretion. Based on this, parents must be involved in teaching and instruction of their children. In *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, Aquinas insists that husband and wives, as first teachers, must remain together until the children were fully grown and educated (Aquinas, 1967).

In a nutshell, in *Summa Contra- Gentiles*, Thomas considers education or upbringing of children and insists that parents are primary educators Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles*, 1975). No wonder, when Aquinas talks of 'nurture' or upbringing (*nutritio*) and education as synonyms, is because the juxtaposition of these terms shows that when Aquinas speaks of education, he is not thinking of this merely as schooling limited to institutions by professionals or specialists who operate in their own sphere apart from the family.

## **4.0 Education in Renaissance**

Renaissance brought about many changes in philosophy, religion and politics. These changes influenced and changed the education of the time. In particular, education gained a human-centred world view which valued human dignity. This was contrary to the medieval educational practice which emphasized a God-centred worldview where obedience and abstinence were valued. Some of the great philosophers who contributed normative theories of education are:

### **4.1 Desiderius Erasmus (1466 -1515)**

He could be said to be the first and the main representative of the new humanistic education. He asserted that the purpose of education is to teach people. By people he meant those

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persons who were originally free. Education for this particular people was to help them attain the complete development of their human nature and to acquire a rich individual culture. By definition, human cultures are those humanistic aspects which are developed by man and which influence his pictorial life. For instance, literature, fine art and science are part of the aspect which belong to culture. He initiated physical education which had been forgotten during the medieval period. Education, for him, was to play a role of creating an ideal person. This was all round man whose mind and body are harmoniously developed.

#### **4.2 Joharm A. Comelius**

On his part, he insisted that the ultimate purpose of human life is to reach God and be united with him. This understanding was perhaps influenced by the Christian educationist who saw the aim of human life to be an attainment of eternal bliss in the life after death. He insisted that all men's life on earth was meant for preparation for that life one would join after his death. To realize this, he proposed three things. First, everyone should know all things. Second, one should become a person who can control things by oneself. And lastly, one should take the image of God. Based on the above foundation, he advocated three kinds of education, that is, intellectual education, moral education and religious education. In his mind, the appropriation of these could help teach all things to man. This is what has been famously nicknamed commelius theory of education and it is technically called *pansophia* that is, learning all things, God, Nature and human being. In this light, education has a special role of bringing out the talents and natural gifts endowed to man naturally. For him, parents are responsible in bringing out these natural gifts and when they cannot do so, school should take lead and help.

#### **5.0 Critical appraisal and the need for multifaceted contemporary philosophy of education.**

In this present section, we want to make a start with thinking about education in a philosophical manner. Education is a complex concept that cannot be restricted to one single characterization; it does not refer to a single idea. This is to admit the fact that education is not one step or a single unity of event but a process that is multidimensional where dynamic thinking and intellection is involved in shaping and igniting various spectrum of man's growth and development. As a multi – dimensional concept, there are mainly four dimensions of education, namely: the cognitive dimension, the normative dimension, the creative dimension and the dialogical dimension.

##### **1.5.1 The Cognitive Dimension of Education**

This dimension defines education in terms of learning and schooling. Here education is understood in terms of knowing and understanding. Psychologists generally distinguish between two types of learning, namely: associative learning and cognitive learning. Associative learning, on one hand, is the easy one out and it requires a learner to be subjected a given stimulus which is likely to illicit a given response. If this is done regularly a given pattern is formed which eventually leads to the formation of conditioned associations. This means that if one wants the learners to learn something about honest, look around and find a stimulus that can give such response. This is true even in other areas of studies. Cognitive learning on the other hand, that learning that is characterized by concept formation, cognitive learning, operational and formal thinking. Since cognitive learning is said to result in cognition or knowing, here we find the basis for the cognitive dimension of education. In line



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with this, it is only when we emphasize this dimension that are able to define education as acquisition of knowledge. However, education does not end in the acquisition of knowledge as such. Instead, education goes beyond knowledge to include values, skills and competencies. Thus, overemphasizing this dimension as the main educational concern and apparently nothing else counts would impoverish education in a proper sense (Njoroge et al., 1986). Therefore, as already said, thinking about education opens us to a reality that it should have a strong knowledge base however this approach should not be emphasized exclusively till education and schooling becomes one and the same thing. This will be a reductionist view about education. Njoroge et alia, reiterates that such thinking of education in terms of how much one has acquired or the amount of knowledge one has drifted educationist to think of examination as the only way to measure performance and assessment in education. In light of this, it is not the amount of knowledge that one has which counts in education, but what one does with this knowledge. This is really to say that the quality of knowledge and what one able to do with that knowledge is what counts in education. In conclusion, while this should form the base of education, it should not be over emphasized at the exclusion of the other dimension.

### **1.5.2 The Normative Dimension of Education**

The Normative dimension of education tries to define education in terms of what ought to or should happen in relation to education (Njoroge, et al., 1986). This enters into the area of values and ideals. Normative dimension tries to define education in a wider context than cognitive dimension. He we move from mere cognitive knowing to how we ought to behave in front of that knowledge. This dimension tries to define education in terms of what ought to be the ideal situation. Ideally, when we define education in this way, what we intend is the prescriptive account of education. This dimension makes use of prescriptive approach of philosophy. Here the concentration is on the general principles that form the foundation of education. Second, it prescribes the standards that must be adhered to in bringing quality of education in all disciplines.

Third, the general guidelines that should direct educational policies and acts and finally, the value base that should constitute the totality of education in all levels of education. These guidelines, standards, values and fundamental principles are given by educationists, According to a French sociologist Emile Durkheim, “A society can neither create nor recreate itself without at the same time creating an ideal” (Durkheim, 1995: 425). These ideals are to be placed in a platform or framework where it can influence and guide learning and instruction. This ideally mean that the normative dimension of education is meant to instil and inculcate the social norms and social ideals or standards that are to be recommended for the educational enterprise, which in turn provide general guidelines for educational theory and practice.

### **1.5.3 The Creative Dimension**

The creative dimension of education is understood to mean ‘making the learner aware of his task as an actor, a producer and a creator’ (Njoroge, et al., 1986). Creative dimension of education deals with how knowledge is acquired in educational process. It emphasizes on methods and procedures used in the course of the educational process. Philosophically, education entails learning to become more and more human. In this endeavour one needs to be creative. This creativity is brought about by one learning to become more and more conscious of one’s limitation and possibilities. Education greatly must permeate this, so as to

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help one learn how to act upon the world, how to deal with it effectively, so as to become a master of his life. Thus, education becomes a dynamism by which we learn how to act consciously, reflectively and creatively. It stresses the importance of work as an integral part of man's task to be human.

Psychologically speaking, creativity involves divergent thinking. In respect to problem solving psychologists distinguish between divergent and convergent thinking. In divergent thinking, the individual's thoughts diverge along a number of different paths in an effort to conceive new solutions, new possibilities and to produce original ideas. Convergent thinking aims at originality. It is creative thinking and this is provided for by education.

#### **1.5.4 Dialogical dimension**

Dialogical dimension of education is usually treated last but it is not in any way least. It is of great importance to education especially in answering the question which is commonly asked namely; should teachers be self-knowledged, or are teachers supposed to be good communicators? This perhaps is what troubles students when they find a good teacher with credible certificates but is unable to deliver. As a matter of fact, dialogical dimensions, together with creative dimension are uniquely important for the learner's cognitive process in education. They coalesce what the learner has already grasped and how he is able to skilfully present or communicate it to others so that others can also grasp it. This is true because knowledge becomes and gains its nature when it is communicated.

The term dialogue is derived from the Greek word dial-logos which imply communication between two or more people. It means people speaking words (logos) to each other. Dialogue is radically different from monologue, where only one person speaks. In *Ethics and Education* R.S Peters (1996) contends that education itself is a public form of experience. It intended to be a social or public affair, a social institution. This is a direct reference to the social aspect or dimension of education which is called dialogical dimension. Dialogical rather than the social dimension of education is preferred since education, defined in existential terms involve dialogue.

Education defined as dialogue implies people communicating with each other on equal terms. The dialogical dimension of education is therefore opposed to authoritarianism in education whereby the learner is forced to accept the authoritative word of the teacher without being given a chance to question that word.

The dialogical dimension of education is opposed to authoritarianism in education in the sense that it open to learning and instruction or education and training to mode that encourages one listening, dialoguing, talking to each other, and encouraging ideation and conceptions from each other. Try to illustrate education as dialogical dimension. This was emphasized neither in the traditional educationist nor in the modern educationists. Traditional educationist emphasized on transmission of knowledge, wisdom and skills from one generation to the other. They wanted to prepare their members to fit in their particular societies. They dwelt upon transmission and socialization. The modern educationist, on the other hand, encouraged liberation and individualization. Contrary to this, education ought to be looked in relation to the social dimension of man. One is not educated for himself but for the society where he lives. This makes education to have a social concern. In regard to this, education can be defined as dynamism that involves inter-subjective process, which involves communication, encountering each other, participation and dialogue. Education is a social affair which involves human or interpersonal relationships.

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### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

This paper has deeply examined philosophy of education of the ancient and medieval period. It has been realized that during this period, philosophy of education was characterized by the emphasis on development of man as knowledgeable, responsible, virtuous and religious person. Indeed, the greatest and the final aim of education is to make man to be in union with others and God. The paper recommend that contemporary education should not deviate from this fundamental aim and purpose which education served in the ancient and medieval times, instead it should foster a three-dimensional education which cultivates intellectual knowledge, moral values and finally religious. As well, there should be a special regard for intellectual, moral and religious development so as to make man live harmoniously with his fellow men, nature and God.

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