CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS
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Existentialism is primarily, a reaction to and a voice of protest against, all the rationalistic and speculative philosophies. It emphasizes human existence and the qualities which are distinctive in man. It signifies restoration of man to himself and calls him to face the problems and to realize the possibilities of his own existence as a ‘concrete individual.’ Existentialism is a philosophy concerned with finding self and the meaning of life through free will, choice and personal responsibility.

Existentialism has both theistic and atheistic forms. Theistic Existentialists consider God to be ‘the source of one’s being’, ‘the ground of all being’, or ‘one’s ultimate concern’. Religious existentialists include Soren Kierkegaard, Karl Jaspers, Gabriel Marcel, Martin Buber and Paul Tillich. The atheistic existentialists’ presuppositions and belief systems preclude any supernatural or any idea of God. Atheistic existentialists include Jean-Paul Sartre, Martin Heidegger, Simone de Beauvoir and Albert Camus.

Atheistic view of existentialism from our point of view does not leave a strong impression. Now thousands of studies prove the spiritual nature of man. Man is not simply a material being but in essence is spiritual. When man comes to understand himself he also realizes his spiritual nature and the existence of God. A famous Sufis dictum is “one who knows himself, knows his lord”. So self actualisation through self analysis and self progress will eventually lead to spiritual realization.
Themes of Existentialism

The main themes of existentialism are existence precedes essence, freedom, choice and responsibility, anguish, anxiety, dread and despair, alienation, nothingness, anguish, death, authenticity and inauthenticity, individualism, facticity, anti-intellectualism and intentionality.

All existentialists believe and emphasize the priority of existence over essence. They hold first the object exists then it is conceived by the mind/idea. Every subject is first an existing subject. Man knows his existence through his existential struggle.

Spiritual thinkers like Sufis believes that man can know his existence in this world through spiritual practices. The essence (spirit or soul) existed before man was given existence (earthly existence) by God.

Freedom is the nature of man. It a genuinely existing and valuable feature of the human condition. Freedom means facing choices, making decisions and recepting them. The focus on freedom in existentialism is related to the limits of the responsibility one bears as a result of one’s freedom: the relationship between freedom and responsibility is one of interdependency and a clarification of freedom also clarifies that for which one is responsible. Man is free in his actions and is responsible for them as well. The freedom of will (choice) is advocated in both Jeudo-Christian-Islamic traditions and it is only because of this freedom of choice that a man is accountable for his actions in this life or (in religion) life after death.

Man suffers from anguish when he realizes that his existence is open towards an undetermined future, the emptiness of which must be filled by his freely chosen
actions. Man despairs when there is a breakdown in one or more of the “pillars” of one’s self or identity.

Anxiety is the persisting human condition. Man is anxious about death, about the meaninglessness and about what he has made of himself. Existentialism suggests the individual live with the anxiety, rather than seek ways to eliminate it.

Like anxiety, guilt is also a persisting condition of man. Existential guilt is guilt about unfulfilled potential, about self-betrayal and anger at one’s weakness. The feeling of guilt make us aware that we are betraying our own wisdom that tells us about our purposes and the choices before us. To be mature we should identify ourselves with our guilt, it will give us strength. This identification demands us to assume our responsibility fully. Moreover in existential guilt we hear the voice of our conscience, that when taken seriously leads to development of our conscience.

Existentialists view the deterministic dimension of concrete existence as the main source of guilt. However religious existential philosophy consider original sin as the source of guilt which is based on Christianity. In Muslim philosophy the repentance from sin is considered as a way to spiritual progress. When man repent sin he progresses spiritually. It doesn’t matter whether he does the same sin, he can repent again. The importance of feeling guilt and repentance comes from an anecdote of Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia Rahmat Ullah Alaihi. A person came to him and said I have never committed a sin. The saint kept quiet , the man again repeated the same sentence I have never committed a sin . The saint said “Alas if you could commit a sin”.

Alienation that is loneliness alienates man from the source of his being, from the world, from society and from God. This isolation can be minimized by having a
firm belief in holy scriptures and the feeling of adjustment and compromise. The symptoms of alienation are pathological and many of the psychological disorders happen due to this alienation- when man cannot relate himself to others, to life, to death and to great extent to life after death.

There is also a feeling of dread that refers to dread of nothingness in particular. Behind and under all human activities the dreadful nothingness is present. Life is cast up between being and nothingness and it is existence of man that brings nothingness into being.

Authenticity means remaining true to oneself in one’s own freedom. It is the authenticity that can promise a most fulfilling life.

**Existentialism and Aims of Education**

Existentialism would favour any system of education which helps the individual living an existential life. Following are important existentialistic aims of education:

1. To develop the authentic self of the child
2. To assist in development of self realization in the child
3. To prepare child to face tragic situations of life
4. To inculcate choice making power in individuals
5. To prepare child for social adjustment
6. To develop unique personality of child
7. To develop sense of responsibility in child
8. To develop creative abilities in children

9. To develop spirituality in child

10. To develop individuality/individual potential of child.

11. To develop integrity in child.

12. To develop self mastery in child.

13. To develop critical attitude in child.

14. To develop self-actualisation.

**Existentialism and Curriculum**

Existentialism recognizes the ‘individual difference’ and lays emphasis on diverse curricula suiting the needs, abilities and aptitudes of the individual. Curriculum should satisfy the immediate as well as the ultimate needs.

As far as subjects are concerned, humanities and arts acquire central place in curriculum. Arts, humanities courses, especially in the secondary schools, could provide challenging opportunities for the introduction of existentialism since it is during the adolescent years that the young confront crucial questions of life’s meaning and value and of the search for personal identity. Adolescence, indeed, is a process of self-definition. places great importance to humanities i.e. history, literature, philosophy and art.

Existentialism attaches less importance to social sciences. Social sciences are taught for inculcating moral obligations and for knowing the relationship of the individual to a group. Science should be taught but not to the extent of extreme specialization or overspecialization because overspecialization stunts the growth of
the pupil’s total inner life. Vocational training should be given to some extent. Moral education must be based on moral principles which one has consciously chosen or is about to choose for his ‘self-realization’. For religious existentialists, religious education becomes vital subject matter. Secular existentialists hold that religious education is genuine if it can be conceived as the awakening of an already latent and authentic intelligence possessed by the student. Jaspers gave the idea of political education. Thus existentialists emphasize humanities and social sciences then science because they are much related to human beings. They say that science subjects should be shifted from natural sciences to social sciences.

**Existentialism and Methods of Teaching**

For existentialists, the Socratic method of teaching is the ideal mode of education since by it the student learns what he personally asserts to be true. Moreover, it is personal, intimate and an I-thou affair in which knowledge and wisdom are achieved through the mutual interaction of the teacher and the taught. However ‘problem method that Socratic method includes is not advocated by them. It is permissible only if the problem originates in the student’s life who has to find the solutions. Existentialism also emphasizes the importance of play.

Existentialist methods focus on the individual. The existentialists advocate individualized instruction. Use of programmed instructions is discouraged as they inhibit the growth of students’ independent thought and creativity. Learning in existentialism is self-paced, self directed, and includes a great deal of individual contact with the teacher, who relates to each student openly and honestly. An existentialist can make his own choice and does not depend on others for his
judgment. Thus existentialism leads to self reliance and self directedness which is an important aspect of new methodology of learning.

Existentialism and School

For existentialists, home is more organic and profound in the education that it imparts than schools will ever be. But if we derive the idea of school from existentialists perspective then the existential school is a place where man’s non-rational, i.e. his aesthetic, moral and emotional self are more evident than his scientific, rational self. Moreover democratic ideals pervades the school. Mechanization and impersonality is neutralized in school. Schools exist to assist children in knowing themselves and their place in society.

Existentialism and Teacher

The teacher should act as a resource person, a helper to students when they need assistance in developing understanding of a subject or the solution of problems. The teacher must encourage their creativity, their discovery and their inventiveness, but should not attempt to direct them or impose his will on them. The existential teacher in his treatment of ‘other’ must have to hold his own subjectivity at the same time realizing the subjectivity of that other. The task of teacher is to awaken in students self awareness and help them to be ‘original’ and ‘authentic.’ Nietzsche advocates that teacher must satisfy students’ hunger for education with auspicious teaching and must know how to stimulate hunger. This implies that teacher should have additional quality of motivating students.
Existentialism and Teacher-Pupil Relationship

Existentialism stresses informal, intimate, lively and personal relation between the teacher and his students. Both teachers and student are treated as individuals.

Relevance of Existentialism to Human Existence and Progress in the Light of its Basic Themes and Educational Implications

Existentialism through its themes explores how man can live existentially and existential education develops the skills required for existential life.

Existential education makes student able to live existential life- the life that is meaningful to the living individual, the life that is by and for the individual and most importantly that can face existential reality. Existential reality is characterized by the existential conditions like inauthenticity, absurdity, anxiety, alienation, despair, dread, nothingness and facticity. Most individuals do not want to confront such issues and therefore there is always a lingering tension of uncertainty. All these conditions can bring man closer to the destruction of his life by attempting to suicide or indulge in substance use like drug addiction or attacking the mental state of man that is depression. A man living meaningful and purposeful life is far away from these tragic situations. Existential education through its aims, curricula and teaching methodology attempts to make man’s life meaningful and purposeful by inculcating in him the skills required for living such life.

According to existentialism, the aim of education is realization of inner truth. Self realization means to be one’s own genuine self, not deceptive. The education should make student realize his subjective consciousness-consciousness for his self. Being self conscious he will recognize his ‘self’ and get an understanding of his
‘being’. When one knows himself thoroughly, he knows his sufferings and weaknesses, he understands others and as human being he can respond more fruitfully and purposefully at global level. Understanding is critically important as many of the differences, issues, hatred and even violence result from the lack of understanding. So when man come to understand himself through authentic experience, he can understand others also, others suffering, others weaknesses and embrace them out of love. The Sufis in India e.g. Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti, Nizamuddin Aulia Rahmatullah Alaihi (P.B.U.H) gave practical demonstration of understanding and love to other human beings.

Existential education prepares individual to face death. This idea of education for death can be expelled into an experience for better understanding of good life and one's obligation in it. Man should remember one’s death quite often infact at every moment. Psychologically remembrance of death brings refinement and balance in one’s personality, he seizes to be cruel and violent. The awareness of death neutralizes emotions of both extremes i.e. of extreme happiness (particularly due to material achievement) and extreme sorrow. Under theistic paradigm of existentialism humans can be prepared to face death through spiritual development.

Looking at the large data of suicide, existentialism offers a solution. Since a person owes responsibility towards his own existence, he is nobody to end his life which is a sheer irresponsibility therefore a training of being responsible towards one’s existence brings a solution to suicide and depression—depression may be removed by being engaged in responsible actions and experiences which will bring authenticity, meaningfulness and purpose in life.
Existential education aims to develop creative abilities in children. Creativity is an important aspect not only for individual but also for the society. Since existentialism offers opportunity for individual experiences that may involve even those initiatives that are not taken by anyone before, such experiences bring out the creative spark inherent in individual. His creative potential is recognized that can take society to new dimensions, to reforms. And in this process of leading society to progress, human also progresses.

Existential education aims to develop individuality. When man takes himself as an individual seriously only then he can focus on his individual growth and thus progress. Existentialism is the most thoroughgoing philosophy of individualism in present time. To think that existentialism overemphasize individualism would not be correct. Self which comes through personal experiences, inner dialogues and introspection is essentially creative and can contribute to the society through the I-Thou relationship which is very much human and imparts discoveries/knowledge about authentic life experiences to others.

Furthermore, Existentialism holds that man is responsible for his deeds. Thus there is accountability towards world, but it is pity that existentialists have limited/narrowed man’s sense of accountability only to this world. Man’s nature is such that he wants continuation of life even after death.

Existentialism also aims to inculcate ideal of love in children. Love in its broader sense has the capacity for growth into leaps and bounds. The field of intellect is limited whereas love knows no bound it can lead man to progress immensely to the extent of wonder.
Existential education inculcates choice making power in individuals. Freedom of choice and will makes man or helps man to build his destiny and the destiny of society. In the course of building his destiny man progresses.

Thus existentialism by developing in children, authenticity, responsibility, spirituality, love, choice making power, sense of being oneself, self awareness, self knowledge, critical attitude, subjectivity, individualism and uniqueness enables them to live existentially that is making their existence meaningful, their life worthy of living, stopping them from committing suicides/ending their existence. It makes them able to face tragic life situations like anxiety, alienation, despair and frustration which helps them to resist from substance use and fall in depression. All these

**Suggestions for Further Studies:**

1. Though researcher has limited existentialism to western thinking. But eastern thinking on existentialism can be a very laudable study as existentialism has many affiliations with eastern philosophies.

2. Existential psychotherapy that has been generated from existential philosophy has its practical application only in clinical settings, though it can be applied to general public and students. Thus study on applications of existential psychotherapy in classrooms can be done.

3. Similarly study on applications of existential counseling in schools can be done.