CHAPTER III

REVIEW OF LITERATURE
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India has a very long and varied tradition of philosophical thinking. In every age there has been a continuous search for the ultimate truth and a constant discourse about the nature, reality and values. There have also been repeated attempts by great thinkers to reinterpret the past in the light of present needs.

The researches in humanities and social sciences have a determining influence on educational practices. To the extent the educational practice do not develop on the basis of research, the educational process lags behind other social sciences. It is therefore necessary that periodic reviews be made of the status of educational research in a country to study the trend of development as a guide to future action and to fill the existing gap in educational research. It not only allows the researcher to acquaint himself with current knowledge in the field or area in which he is going to conduct his study, but describes the procedure for organizing the related literature in a very systematic manner. It determines and defines the limits of one’s field and help in suggesting the areas and scope for further researches, which provides proper guidelines for more investigations successfully and help the researcher.

In the review presented the researcher has included those studies on existentialism which are directly or indirectly related to the study. The researcher has gone through several theses and dissertations, journals, survey of educational researches, books, encyclopedias and other sources of information.
Review of Literature based on Dissertation Abstracts

Long (1972) made an analysis of aspects of existentialism and humanistic psychology relevant to education with special reference to informal education in the primary schools of Great Britain. He concluded that contemporary vacuum in terms of the loss of old beliefs, values and goals has led to widespread feeling of anxiety, alienation, loss of identity and meaninglessness. This calls for the development of an educational system emphasizing freedom, self awareness, choosing and personal responsibility, that is, an education stressing individualism and activism i.e. existentialist education.

He further argued that an examination of the main tenets of existentialist philosophy, particularly from Sartrean view, led to the conclusion that an existentialist school would be one which stressed freedom, individualism and activism in order to foster in its students qualities of self awareness, initiative, decisiveness and personal responsibility.

He found that the informal education system being employed in the primary schools of Great Britain have been able to develop the existentialist qualities of self-awareness, initiative, decisiveness and personal responsibility in a warm, humane environment.

Also the existential education stressing freedom, individualism and self-activism along the lines suggested by existentialist ideas might have significant implications in the area of moral education.

Finally he argued that the informal education system presently being employed in the primary schools of Great Britain offers the best hope of realizing, for
the present, the educational ideals implied by existentialism and emergent new humanistic psychology.

Jabbar (1976) made a critical study of educational implications of existentialism. The objectives of this study were to analyse the main philosophical ideas of existentialism and to discuss the aims of education, method, content and relationships between the teacher and taught in existentialist schools and universities.

The major conclusions of the study were:

i) Existentialism seeks a way out of the dilemmas of life to an authentic and more meaningful existence for man.

ii) Existential knowledge is a direct outcome of man’s interaction with his world of experience.

iii) The aim of existentialist education is to liberate the mankind from all social taboos and cultural norms.

iv) The existentialist curriculum will include subject matter which helps in the development of the student’s whole being.

v) The existentialists recommend Socratic Method of teaching.

Chantharaskul (1977) in a comparative study of existentialism and Theravada Buddhism focussed on philosophical beliefs of the two philosophies. The comparison of the meanings and aims of education, theories of learning, teacher, teaching and curriculum were also made.

He identified that both philosophies are seriously concerned with the nature of human existence and describe its predicament. Both explain existence in terms of self
creation. Theravada Buddhism explains self creation according to the law of karma, existentialism explains it according to individual’s choice.

Comparison of educational philosophies of these schools of thought indicated that both encourage educational meaning to place impetus on subjective realm of human existence such as suffering, misery, birth, death, joys and authentic existence. Both philosophical systems derive the theory of learner from the concept of human existence. Existentialism views learner as the self, a unique human being, Theravada Buddhism sees learner as a non self, self is only a momentarily changing compound of five psychological factors called skandvas. However, to the existentialist authentic is the individual’s responsibility. Also, in Buddhist philosophy the burden of responsibility for attaining ultimate liberation, nirvana, resolves in the individual for the individual attains enlightenment through inner self realization.

Both philosophies view all learning as self learning or self experience therefore the teacher does not cause learning to take place but encourages and guides it. Both reject the teacher’s authority upon the learner. ‘Maeutic method’ or the method of dialogue is emphasized in existentialism, while the debate method, the dialectical method and the ‘Danna’ method are significant teaching-learning methods in Buddhism.

He concluded that existentialism as a western philosophy compare favourably with Theravada Buddhism therefore it is recommended that Thai University which prepare teachers provide learning experiences which present existentialism as a variable philosophic approach in the classroom.

Chun (1985) studied the relation to education of guilt and conscience in the philosophy of Soren Kierkegaard and Martin Heidegger. Kierkegaard’s description of
ontological guilt refers to a disrelationship within the self which is also an expression of exister’s separation from the eternal happiness. Guilt consciousness is part of the dialectic of inward transformation or edification by which the self becomes aware of its limitations in relation to the absolute telos or God. For Heidegger, guilt signifies the existential nudity which permeates the being of Dasein. Guilt refers to the existential constitutionality of human being in its contingency, finitude and throwness.

Conscience plays an instrumental role in summoning the individual to his or her own possibilities for being and in guiding the process of choice. Once choices are made, conscience unifies and consolidates the self in resoluteness.

The study concluded with specific recommendations for education with reference to the areas of teaching, learning and curriculum design. Methods of application in classroom settings were explored and course offerings in the education of the self, moral education and aesthetic education are suggested.

Heston (1986) made a study on strengthening confluent education through a philosophical analysis of the concept of dialogue. He studied the implications for education of the concept of dialogue as it was analysed in the philosophical writings of Martin Buber, Hans George Gadamer and Karl Jaspers. Writings on the concept of dialogue were analysed to provide a set of guidelines for thinking about dialogue. This work was based on the premise that philosophical analysis of the concept of dialogue can enhance the effectiveness of confluent education, which attempts to integrate affect and cognition in the education process.

The study then attempted to demonstrate that an understanding of the dialogue can provide both a general philosophical grounding of confluent education and specific implications pertaining to pedagogical obligations, teacher-student
relationships, content selection and teaching methodology. This work was based on the premise that education is most effective if it is ontologically rooted. From the philosophical perspective used in this study, human beings self actualize through and in dialogue as a central dynamic. Three pedagogical obligations that follow from this perspective are first, education should heighten students awareness of themselves as unique, emergent, self actualized persons; second, education should enhance students’ understanding of the human tradition; third, education should enhance students’ ability to participate in dialogical relationships.

Liter (1987) studied the existential factors of death anxiety, purpose in life and alienation and their relationship to adjustment during the freshmen year of college. The purpose of this study was to examine whether a relationship existed between the freshmen adjusting to college and the existential variables of purpose in life, death anxiety and alienation. Subjects (N=100) were first time freshmen at Texas A and M University in college station, Texas. One group of subjects (N=50) were solicited as volunteers within the university, with a second group (N=50) who were receiving counseling services from the counseling centers at the university. Purpose in life was assessed by the Purpose in Life Test. Death anxiety was assessed by Death Anxiety Scale and alienation by Alienation Scale. Adjustment was measured by the College Adjustment Scale and the Behavioral Assessment Questionnaire.

Results indicated that a relationship did exist between the factor of adjustment and the existential variables. In particular death anxiety and purpose in life were found to be significantly related to personal emotional adjustment with death anxiety also shown to be significantly related to a measure of somanticism. Alienation exhibited the greatest number of significant relationship with adjustment measures.
e.g. full scale adjustment, academic adjustment, social adjustment and personal emotional adjustment.

Counselors are advised to be familiar with the existential concerns of students, particularly issues of alienation and estrangement.

Pandey (1991) made a critical study of existentialist philosophical thoughts and its educational implications. The objectives of this study were:

i) To study those situations and influences which provided a special feature to the philosophy of existentialism

ii) To discuss philosophies of some important existentialist philosophers

iii) To bring out educational implications for philosophical thought of some important existentialist philosophers.

iv) To examine critically the utility of existentialist thought in contemporary Indian context.

Major findings were

i) Jean Paul Sartre considered education essential for creating awareness about man’s existence and preparing him for life’s struggle.

ii) The nature of education should be such that it inculcates self confidence, freedom of choice, awareness of self and preparation for life.

iii) Education need not be tied down to curriculum.
iv) Existentialists are opposed to scientific subjects. They do not disapprove
technical and religious education.

v) In Indian context, through existentialist objectives of education, we can strike a
balance between spiritualism and materialism.

Ashai (1998) studied existential concept of alienation. In the study she
discussed problem of alienation as perceived by different existentialists – Marx,
Kierkegaard, Sartre, Heidegger and Jaspers and suggested the ways to overcome
alienation. According to her man ought to believe in a power which seems to control
the destiny not only of his own but also of the world at large. That is the ultimate
remedy for delineation

Fatima (1999) made a critical study on existentialistic view of education that
led to following conclusions:

1. Soren Kierkegaard is the main propounder of existentialism. Other important
existentialists are Friedrich Nietzsche, Karl Jaspers, Martin Heidegger,
Gabriel Marcel and Jean Paul Sartre.

2. Important themes of existentialism include priority of existence over essence,
anxiety, dread and despair, authenticity, death and nothingness, facticity,
individualism, freedom, alienation and subjective approach to life.

3. Existential ontology holds that universe is cruel and unfriendly. As far as
knowledge is concerned man is responsible for his own knowledge. Values
that are freely chosen by man are valuable.

4. Existentialistic aims of education include development of self realization in
student, development of authentic self, the unique personality and choice
making power in child and to help the child in social adjustment. It also aims
4. Jaspers holds that realization of authenticity is actualized through the channels of communication.
5. For Marcel, individual can discover his authenticity only under the condition that the subject-object dichotomy be dissolved.

6. For Sartre, authenticity involves acknowledging the realities of the human condition and explicitly accepting their consequences.

Finally he explored how authenticity located in the existential milieu takes on a distinctive stance towards ethics and value theory clearly stating that the possibility of authenticity is a mark of an individual’s freedom. It is through freedom that the existentialism approaches its most recognizable doctrines. He however stated that a clear cut conclusion become antithetical to the idea of authenticity and hence closed his thesis with a postscript.

**Review of Literature based on Journals**

Morris (1961) studied existentialism and the education of twentieth century man. He acclaimed that thoughtful attention should be given to the authentic message of existentialism and what this message has to say about the management of the educative process.

He argued that in existentialism, we are placed, into a circumstance of choice and responsibility and are on our own and therefore can creatively assign meaning to the world. Thus boys and girls, as they grow up and go to school, might be inducted into this open-ended world than into the ready-built worlds our traditional educational programs would have them know.

The consideration of school as only a social institution deteriorates the developing individual. The school is not just a social institution; it is also an ‘individual’ institution, i.e. an institution for individuals.
The school is dominated by the tyranny of middle class society. The task therefore is to perform a bit of social surgery to separate at least a part of the youngster’s school life from the moral tyranny of the community. This might be done in a number of ways. We become existentially awake around the sixth or seventh grade, at this stage the elementary school should seize upon every opportunity to present moral problems to the youngster at the level of his understanding. They should open up the moral sphere to youngsters to introduce them to the most difficult sector of the world they inhabit. In later years of schooling, a youngster should be given a more systematic exposure to the ethical questions of life. From this point forward, into college and beyond, the individual should be constantly provoked to expand upon this plan for his developing self, checking here, amending there, but always mindful of the control he has over his own single life, the precious offering he is to contribute to the developing Idea of Man.

Finally Morris suggested that the ultimate questions and destiny should have some place in the educative programme along with penultimate and lower-order questions which currently claim the student’s entire attention. If we could somehow simply awaken boys and girls to the ‘need for ultimate recognition’, to the idea that we ourselves are the authors of the response this need must have through our own lives and works, then we should be on our way to a newer and higher kind of meaning in the education of the young.

Emery (1971) examined existentialism in classroom setting. He held that existentialists education emphasized learners’ experience of getting involved in subject matter and in significant situations. Teachers emphasis thus should be on the importance of personal involvement with the ideas and commitment to the fact that
they are part of the living and learning process. He further argued that exploring personal meaning is a creative process and new teachers should be introduced to following elements of an atmosphere in which such creativity is fostered: 1. encourage experimentation 2. value openness, flexibility and individuality. 3. encourage communication and problem solving 4. encourage differences, uniqueness and integrity. And 5. provide an atmosphere of acceptance.

Moreover capacity for acceptance is most likely to be learned in classroom climate which encourage self revelation, give each person a feeling of belonging, create the impression that difference is good and desirable and emphasize the existential, ongoing character of learning. In such atmosphere the student will proceed towards authentic and functioning self realization. Curriculum should always aim towards self realization of both teacher and student.

Finally, he held that how man relates to education and his search for meaning in life is the main concern for the existentialists. The best way to find meaning is through one’s realization of freedom of choices. When man realizes he has the ability to choose his life and be responsible for himself, he is on his way to self-realization. Achieving this awareness is the goal of the existentialists. This is a personal approach which stresses the importance of communication in such manner that other people feel accepted and worthwhile. The existentialist teacher is the caring and concerned one and is involved with the pupil. He believes that all learning is for self realization and self fulfillment.

Vandenberg (1979) examined existential and phenomenological influences in educational philosophy. He claimed that existentialism and phenomenology both have exercised a potent influence over the development of American educational
philosophy in the latter half of the twentieth century. He outlined the relevance of these philosophical positions to the educational process.

The essence of existentialism has been concisely captured in Kierkegaard’s 1846 dictum: “Subjectivity is truth”. The existentialists have repeatedly stressed the cultivation of inwardness—the individual’s awareness of his authentic feelings, thoughts, moods, desires and goals. Self-conscious awareness is never given, but must be achieved by an often heroic effort. Existentialism is relevant to education since education attempts to facilitate the unfolding of an authentic personality.

While phenomenology also concerns itself with the task and process of self-awareness, it differs from existentialism in its objective rigour and outward emphasis. Phenomenology has striven to develop public methods to describe the elements of awareness, removing from its description as many distinctive elements as possible. Its analysis of consciousness thus yields intersubjectively valid results.

The complementary subjective and objective approaches to awareness developed by existentialists and phenomenologists provide effective techniques for understanding the complex personal and more broadly human factors involved in education. Reacting to some theorists objections that the existentialist view of the world unduly stresses negativity—forever dwelling on homelessness, powerlessness, facelessness and even nothingness, Vandenberg argued that existentialists explore the negative aspects of life in order to transcend them. Thus, they examine homelessness to prepare for homecoming, meaninglessness to discover personal significance. This balance of optimism and pessimism provides a much needed corrective to the almost unquestioned faith in progress which pervaded American educational theory until the end of the 1950s.
Recognizing the value of existentialist and phenomenological contributions to educational theory, Vandenberg warned against the dangers of falling into entrenched ideological positions which could hinder understanding as much as facilitate it. He advises future educational theorists to assert their autonomy from other disciplines as well as from pseudophilosophical prejudices in order better to formulate a theory which would clarify the phenomena of education.

Lieberman (1985) enquired specific aspects of existentialism and their relevant implications for an educational system. He held that that the existentialistic aim of education is to ‘awaken awareness in the learner’ (existential awareness of himself as a simple subjectivity present in the world). Existentialist education assume the responsibility of awakening each individual to the intensity of his/her own selfhood (defining self as the phenomenon of the awareness of subjectivity). The self constitutes a choosing, free and responsible agent. Thus such learning situation is needed in which the structure and significance of the self is meaningfully conveyed. Existentialists argued that the educational system could stress the vital function of death, to enhance the value of life. Education toward death can be converted into an experience to enhance the authentic life and to separate the essential components of life from the trivial. In existentialism, education concentrates on the freedom of the total inner being, accepting facts only in-so far as they have significance for the individual.

According to existentialism “know thyself” becomes “choose thyself”. Existential education can begin as soon as the child wants to know him/herself and teachers must accept the challenge to present both the beauty and tragedy of life at
exactly the correct moment. An education for perfectibility is no education at all, but an irresponsible indulgence in unreality.

Existentialists do not want mass education as it results in rote learning, which causes the students to repeat what they have been taught in the classroom.

For existentialists, home is more organic and profound in imparting education than schools. Classrooms levelise the child while the home provides a setting for cultivating the authentic self and can instill a spirit of love and fellowship which extends to extra-familial relationships.

Harlow, Michael and Bentler (1986) examined a theoretical model of adolescent behaviour separately for males and females (N=722). The model hypothesized that depression and self-derogation may lead to a lack of purpose in life, which in turn, may lead to suicide ideation and substance use. Confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation procedures were used to examine the model, using Bentler’s (1984) EQS computer programme, which is available from BMDP. For both the men and women, the model adequately accounted for the data although there were some important differences between the sexes.

The study concluded that in response to psychic discomfort (i.e. depression and self-derogation), men are more apt to drug and alcohol, whereas women consider suicide. Conversely, the situation changes in response to feeling of meaninglessness or a lack of purpose in life. Here, the females appear to turn to substance use, whereas the males react with thoughts of suicide.

Horn (1993) made a study on Karl Jaspers. He presented Jaspers’ thought on education in the context of role of family, tradition and the state and education. He
also discussed Jaspers’ idea of formal and university education. He maintained that from personal experience and conviction, Jaspers assigns to the family the task of laying the ground for all education. Tradition is the only means through which man can come into his own thus education through the study of great men is purposeful. Regarding state education Jaspers described two possible extremes of the state’s attitude to education. ‘Either it leaves education free or else the state takes over education which it goes on to shape in peacefulness or violence to serve its own end’.

He further argued that political education impart constitutional knowledge and acceptance of the authority, the generation of images and ideas, practical exercises in the solution of common problems, formulization with thinking and the ability to see through mere slogans. This political education presupposes ‘constant self-education of adult citizens in their attitudes’.

As far as formal education is concerned Jaspers emphasizes the exceptionally important role of the primary school that lays the moral, intellectual and political foundations for the entire population. He advocates the need for a moral content in all teaching. Secondary schools must also pursue the same goal. Regarding university education he said that the tasks of the university include research, teaching and education, training, communication, the whole world of the sciences. According to him research is the fundamental task of the university.

The investigator also presented the central philosophical concept of ‘all embracing’ and highlighted its importance for education. He concluded that the notion of ‘all-embracing’ is absolutely indispensable if unlimited breadth and rich differentiation of education are to be focussed on something individual and propagated and exercised to use a convenient formula as an obvious solution. One
sided theories can be resisted if the notion of ‘all-embracing’ is to govern the theory and practice of education.

Remakes (2001) held that Nietzsche’s view of education needs to be understood by the importance Nietzsche attaches to being embedded in a particular historical and cultural frame. Education in the early stages is a matter of teaching the child to see and to value particular things or, in Nietzsche’s words, teaching the child to lie. In the study the investigator developed an interpretation contrary to those who emphasize Nietzsche’s radical individualism and thus viewed his overman in subjective terms. He argued that Nietzsche’s most important lesson is not that we are to create anything radically new, but rather that we are to take up a serious engagement with respect to what we stand for.

Guignon (2008) studied authenticity and discussed the ordinary, the existentialist and the virtue-ethics senses of it. The term ‘authentic’ in ordinary usage suggests the idea of being ‘original’ or ‘faithful to an original’ and its application implies being true to what someone (or something) truly is. It is important to see, however, that the philosopher who put this technical term on the map in existentialism, Martin Heidegger, used the word to refer to the human capacity to be fully human, not to being true to one’s unique inner nature. Authenticity might also be thought of as a virtue and interesting questions arise whether such a virtue should be regarded primarily as a personal or as a social virtue.

Ian and Lawler (2008) carried out a study on existential communication and leadership. They attempted to introduce and explain a number of important existentialist philosophers and concepts that can contribute to a critical approach to a leadership theory. Emphasis was placed on understanding the nature of
communication from an existentialist perspective and so Jaspers’ conceptualization of existential communication was introduced along with important related concepts that may be regarded as important facets of leader communication including being-in-the world, the other, intersubjectivity, dialogue and indirect communication. Particular attention was paid to Buber’s ideas on communication as relationship and dialogue. Throughout references were made to contemporary and orthodox thinking regarding the centrality of communication to leadership practice as a means by which to highlight the relevance of an existential analysis.

Kalderimis (2010) investigated suitableness of existentialism to modern world in its ethical framework. He concluded that existentialism is well-suited to the complexities of a globalised, cosmopolitan world, in which different ways of living and acting take place in ever closer proximity. It requires discipline and responsibility and explains how meaning and values come to exist through individual choice. Most importantly, far from being a charter for relativism, it provides two bedrock values, self-awareness and empathy, which are needed to make authentic choices.

Existentialism thus offers a philosophical foundation on the basis of which some self-help style advice can be very useful. Anything which offers techniques to become more self-aware (perhaps by meditating and mastering one’s emotions) and more empathetic (perhaps by seeking to be more patient and listening better to others) is good advice.

Moreover, existentialism tells us, subject to the constraint of authenticity, one must decide one’s own values and how to live. There is much wisdom available to assist in making those decisions. The message of existentialism is simply that no
matter how good the advice or esteemed its author, one must always choose for oneself.

Mayes (2010) analysed five dimensions of existentially authentic education. He proposed that rather than the standardized, one-size-fits-all approach to education, education should incorporate five critical features: education as caring, education as art, education as liberation, education as encounter and education as transcendence. Education is caring when it involves genuine respect for who the student is and the development of a deeply relational pedagogy. When education is art, subject matter becomes a springboard for students to explore and expand their existence and then express the experience through media that display this growth. Education is liberating when students use the curriculum as a tool to examine their lives, expose the forces that are constricting it and devise ways of releasing those fetters. It becomes an encounter when relationships become more fully personal: I-Thou rather than I-It. Finally, it is transcendent when it leaves room for the spirit or sacred space in the classroom. He concluded that the application of the existentialist philosophy allows the development of student’s personal liberation and transcendence.

Koirala (2011) surveyed the historical development of existentialist philosophy, meaning of existence, its philosophical premises and perspectives. She dealt further with implications of existentialism in selection of aim of education, organization of curriculum, role of teachers and students and school organization.

The study concluded that existentialism opposes exploitation of man and is against the repression of his individuality but emphasizes the existence of individuality, thinking as introvert and subjective phenomenon. Education is to contribute in the realization of self. Subjective knowledge is considered more
important. It is beneficial to selection of educational policy, formulation of aim of education, organizing curriculum and selection of effective pedagogy. It also applies in organizing school programmes and classroom practices.

Review of Literature based on Encyclopedias

Stevens (2000) described existentialism as a philosophical movement oriented towards two major themes, the analysis of human existence and the centrality of human choice. He further argued that the roots of existentialism are in the writings of Soren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche. However as a philosophy of human existence its best exponent is Karl Jaspers and as a philosophy of human decision its exponent is Jean-Paul Sartre. Sartre finds the essence of human existence in the duty of self determination and the freedom of choice and therefore devoted time in describing the human tendency towards ‘bad faith’, reflected in humanity’s perverse attempts to deny its own responsibility and flee from the truth of its inescapable freedom.

Lagasse (2000) held that existentialism may be described as any of several philosophical systems all centered on the individual and his relationship to the universe or God. The important existentialists include Kierkegaard, Karl Jaspers, Martin Heidegger, Gabriel Marcel and Jean Paul Sartre. Other thinkers are Thomas Aquinas, Blaise Pascal and Friedrich Nietzsche. Kierkegaard’s fundamental insight was the recognition of the concrete ethical and religious demands confronting the individual. Kierkegaard’s analysis of the human situation provides the central theme of contemporary existentialism. Heidegger’s philosophy is an investigation of the nature of being in which analysis of human existence is only the first step. For Sartre, the central idea of all existential thought is that existence precedes essence.
Gabriel Marcel was most prominent exponent of Christian existentialism. Other theologians and religious thinkers often included in the orbit of existentialism are Karl Barth, Martin Buber, Paul Tillich and Reinhold Neibuhr.

Crystal (2002) considered existentialism as a philosophical movement closely associated with Kierkegaard, Camus, Sartre and Heidegger. Its most salient theses of existentialism are that there is no ultimate purpose or order in the world; the world is vaguely hostile; the persons choose and cannot avoid choosing their character and goals, by self creating ‘leaps’ and have the obligation only to be ‘authentic’. Our situation is revealed most clearly in moments of unfocussed psychological anxiety and dread. These themes greatly influenced continental literature, psychoanalysis and theology in the twentieth century.

Shinn (2002) maintained that existentialism is a philosophical and cultural impulse, with roots in ancient Socratic and Biblical thought that became a conspicuous self conscious movement in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Besides a variety of convictions its constant characteristic is concern for human existence, especially for the affirmation of freedom and the refusal to subordinate personal self awareness to abstract concepts dehumanizing social structures.

Kierkegaard was the founder of modern existentialism. He criticized the reigning philosophies for their abstract speculations and pretensions to answer grand questions without asking the immediate questions of self understanding. Truth he held is subjectivity. Other nineteenth century philosophers include Dostoevsky, Karl Marx and Friedrich Nietzsche. Dostoevsky opposed the mechanistic and utilitarian beliefs. Karl Marx’s description of alienation, his analysis of thinking as always embedded in a historical context and his call to philosophy to change the world instead of merely
understanding it have existential spirit. Nietzsche acclaimed the ‘unique wonder’ of every person, often suppressed by a cowardly herd morality.

In twentieth century Martin Heidegger explored the idea of human existence especially the experience of human anxiety, temporality and awareness of death. Karl Jaspers maintained that all fundamental thinking depends upon self comprehension. In the latter half of twentieth century existentialism entered into the mainstream of philosophy. Most philosophers like pragmatists, phenomenologists and analytical philosophers taken up existential themes. Existentialism therefore became less a distinctive philosophy and more a coloration in most philosophies. Existentialism also influenced subsequent theology and philosophy of religion. Religious thinkers like Boltzmann, Marcel, Tillich, Berdiaev and Buber acknowledged its impact.

Mackinnon (2005) defined existentialism as a name for a philosophical trend or tendency whose central figure is Heidegger and of which the following marks may be noted:

1. Abstract theory is critized for obscuring the roughness and untidiness of actual life.

2. The existentialist bias in favour of the particular and the concrete conflicts with Kant’s attempt to lie bare the universal principle of all moral action, though it harmonizes with his doctrine of the primacy of practical over theoretical reason.

3. Existentialist thought is sometimes profoundly religious (as in Kierkegaard) and sometimes overtly aesthetic (as in Sartre). But in existentialist atheism there is discernible an almost obsessationally religious note.
4. One might say that the professional philosophers will always find in the writings of existentialist thinkers, resources to corrector restricted and confined paradigms.

Thiselton (2006) analysed themes of existentialism, especially in Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Dostoevsky, Heidegger, Jaspers, Marcel and Sartre. The basic existential themes include emphasis upon the individual and the role of active personal engagement and decision for life and truth. They include most especially an insistence upon starting from concrete human situations i.e. existence against essence.

Truth for Kierkegaard is ‘subjectivity’. He advocated independent decisions. He also reminded us of sheer finitude of human existence. Nietzsche represents the atheistic side of existentialism. He claimed that ‘Will to Power’ is the most fundamental drive in human persons. He held that God is dead; therefore humankind is free to choose his destiny and identity. He argued that if rational philosophies and religion are fictions and lies than the starting point can be only human situations and human wills. This lead to a re-valuation of all values. Dostoevsky through his novel “The brothers Karamazov” showed that solutions to the problem of evil cannot take the form of a single morality, neatly packed system, but require address from various angles of finite human life.

‘Being’ Heidegger held can be approached only by questions about concrete, human, existent, beings in their finite ‘thrown-ness’ into the world. In relation to his religious thought there are two key points. First we cannot adequately philosophize about human, selfhood or personal agency by drawing only on categories of substance observation as if we were concerned only with objects of description. Second, all human interpretation of life and phenomena rests upon a hermeneutic of
understanding. This takes place within the horizon of time and operates through the principle of the hermeneutical circle. Jaspers held that man faces suffering, loss, guilt, isolation or imminent death and the most extreme of these experiences he called “limit situations” or “boundary-situations”.

Marcel gave emphasis on personhood. He called attention to the dignity and sacredness of persons-in-relation-to-being, and in relation to one another. Sartre distinguished between two modes of being of persons and things. An object is complete, finished and self contained; it is being-in-itself. A person is always in process of making and shaping themselves as a self and an identity; a person is being-for-itself. Dread and nausea arises when an individual is placed by society in a pre-shaped, closed future. As for his religious attitude, Sartre endorsed Nietzsche’s declaration that God is dead.

Kamat and David (2009) discussed various philosophies of education including existentialism. They described existentialism as a highly individualistic philosophy that depends heavily on subjective factors like intuition, introspection, emotional commitment and alienation. They argued that existentialism appeal greatly to those who find meaninglessness, cruelty and horror in modern living and are oppressed by the industrial and technical institutions.

For existentialists, the individual human experience is the primary unit of explanation. They view the individual as exemplary philosopher, the person willing to freely choose, when all seems to overwhelm. Living for existentialists is a passionate confrontation with the dangers of and threats to existence, especially freedom and death.
The educational implications of existentialism are for student and teacher as individuals, both are the persons who passionately opposes the forces which deny the individual his or her freedom. The subjects of the existential curriculum are unspecified however any subject that help the student to strive to ‘become’ is worthy. The educational methods include dialogue, reflective inquiry and individual introspection. Schools or educational systems based on existentialism are virtually impossible but if the individual existentialist can exert his or her will regardless of deterministic forces, the will can survive even in the crucible of the school.

**Review of Literature based on Books**

Roberts (1957) surveyed existentialist writings with a view to show their relevance to Christian theology. He gave an exposition of Pascal, Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Sartre, Jaspers and Marcel. The first of these thinkers is included as being a precursor of modern existentialism. He ended each survey with a brief critique. In conclusion he listed the following features of religious importance in existentialism – i) It was against an idalateous attitude to science; ii) it offers a drastically realistic acquaintance with the stuff of human existence; iii) it illuminates the vexed relationship between faith and reason for the new philosophy may ontologize from inside the vivid personal language of drama and poetry; iv) it provides an analysis of unfaith and hence is indispensable to apologists; v) it draws attention to the problem of human freedom. Of these perhaps iv) is the most suggestive, for even though the spirit of existentialism seems irrationalist, it contains much that is, while not being natural theology in old sense, a sort of religious reasoning.

Kneller (1958) recognized the need for an interpretation and choice of existential themes which are pertinent to educational problems expressed in terms
readily understood by educator and layman interested in education. He discussed existentialism and education in the light of following themes—existence and authenticity, the knower and the known, man and his values, religious and moral values, freedom and authority, the individual and the group, death, anguish and commitment, the teacher and the student, the educational process and the challenge of existentialism. He argued that as far as educational theory and practice are concerned, they may be inferred since existentialism is not a systematic philosophy.

Existentialists hold that insistence in the classroom upon utilizing exclusively rational and empirical method inhibit the growth of students independent thought and behaviour. School subjects are only a tool of realization. The teacher must make student realize implications of his decisions. Concerning individual and group in educational context Nietzsche held that education should not aim at educating masses but a few. Marcel held only individual may be truly educated the masses can be trained. In classroom teacher is expected to use group instruction in a way by which each individual in the group would cut more than the group itself. Sartre holds that individual student must use group process to realize his own educational possibilities. Existentialists advocate religious and moral education. Existentialism also emphasize education for death. Regarding teacher and student relation, they held it should be I-Thou relation. Curriculum according to them cannot be prescribed and humanities have central place in it. Arts and literature should also be taught. Socratic method of teaching is favourable. Problem solving method is acceptable if the problem originates in the life of one who has to appropriate the solution. They also advocated playway method. Kneller acclaimed that for the modern educator existentialism is warning to discourage the demands and pressures of
organized society and strike out anew in the search of education of and for the individual.

Morris (1966) explored the implications his philosophy has for education. He elaborated the basic existentialist concepts of freedom, choice and the self (individual/personal) and its problems. He stressed the urgency and importance of the philosophical problems which are central to the existentialist position. He demonstrated following key points:

1. How self-determination and self-affirmation can be advanced to its next level of application to American life.
2. How to bring students to the forefront of learning, enjoining them to take charge of their own growth and development.
3. The need for a world of radical freedom, but each person taking personal responsibility for how he or she lives a human life.


She maintained that this philosophy is really no more difficult than any other serious intellectual movement and that the problems of these thinkers have much in common with those of other philosophic schools. The origins of existentialism lie in the union of the practical concern for human freedom with the phenomenological method of Husserl. She concluded that existentialism is dogmatic, subjective and anti-scientific.

Rasheed (2006) provided a conceptual and philosophical framework for looking behind the screen of the teleological givens within instrumental curriculum
and explored the possibilities of a curriculum of action that is based on Sartre’s and Maxine Greene’s concepts of freedom. This framework, which is an existentialist perspective, implores educators to look past the givens associated with neoliberalist concepts of education that are said to produce degrees of passive compliance to the possibilities associated with a curriculum which fosters critical spirit - a spirit which, once deployed, seeks possibility, hope and change.

Rasheed articulated Maxine Greene’s concept of freedom and its relationship to action. How this developed from Sartre is highlighted, as are the similarities and differences between their perspectives. Then he articulated Greene’s resonance with Freire with regard to the concept of naming. He has importance of providing curriculum space for naming to occur, which then flows to taking collective action towards change. He further took the construct of ‘possibility’ through accentuating the utility of literature and how some literary texts can be used to explore freedom and possibility. Finally, he provided suggestions around the provision of curriculum that fosters ‘dialogical knowing, thinking and experiencing’ - curriculum that celebrates multiplicity as opposed to standardization.

Maisel (2012) approached depression as a symptom of having 1) excessive focus on negative thoughts and 2) lack of intentionality in creating personal meaning. He articulated how these deficiencies create what we call depression and specific tools on how to overcome these deficiencies and turn them into strengths.

After covering some foundational concepts of existentialist philosophies and the failures of doctors in mis-diagnosing depression, Maisel suggested people to take charge of their lives. The ‘locus of control’ is thus has been moved from external entities like doctors, friends, enemies and drugs back to the individual.
He argued that by taking the common human experience of unhappiness out of the shadows and acknowledging its existence, we begin to reduce its power.

Once we decide to take charge, the focus is then on creating a set of personal values upon which to create a happy and meaningful life. Among other tools, there is a ‘Life-Purpose Vision’ that is a short or long living statement of what really matters to us in our life. The deliberate, conscious act of both creating and revising this statement over time provides a direction. As our situation, resources, capabilities and desires change over time, we can refer to this Life-Purpose Vision to keep our bearings. Dr Maisel presented this Vision not as an unchanging definition to which we should conform, but a current statement that is expected to change as we and our reality changes. ‘The Life-Purpose Vision’ is not like a rule. It functions more like an existential chime, resonating with consistent actions and ringing dissonant with actions that are inconsistent with your purpose statement and values.

He presented several approaches to ensure that we can plan for a meaningful and fulfilling day every day, that we seize opportunities to make meaning and that we can resolve crises of meaning as they arise. He summarized his application of existentialism to meaning as: Meaning is private, personal, individual and subjective. Every argument for the objectivity of meaning is merely someone’s attempt to elevate his subjective experience and his opinions above yours and mine.

Saeverot (2013) focussed on education’s existential dimension. He argued that such a focus requires at least three things. Firstly, we need to justify why it is necessary to reconnect with existentialism in education. Secondly, we need to undergo an examination of the quality of existential education, so that we can have a
basis as to what kind of educational interests teachers should have. Thirdly, we need to gain knowledge about how teachers may teach in light of existential matters.

However, to teach in light of existence is highly paradoxical in that existence cannot be forced on someone, but is rather a subjective matter. Teaching which is non-ironical or too direct can thus be very problematic concerning existential issues. The reason being that there is no objective truth in terms of existence. There is only a matter of subjective or existential truth, which is only true for the single individual. Therefore, the author suggested that the approach teachers’ take must be discrete and indirect so as to create room for students to take responsibility for their subjective truth. Such an indirect pedagogy is not a programme, but rather a form of existential education.