CHAPTER V

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

OF EXISTENTIALISM
EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF EXISTENTIALISM

Education in its technical sense, with all its tools and techniques is the means to achieve some objectives. Its various aspects deal with the methodology of education which refers to a set of methods, principles and rules for regulating an educational system. Methodology of education is revised according to the age and the means at the disposal of a nation. But the aims and objectives that a nation set before are deeply rooted in the philosophy of life it holds and can hardly be changed.

Aims and objectives of education in general comprise the following:

1. Intellectual development which includes development of divergent thinking, creativity, reasoning and the ability to make judgements and to analyse and solve problems, ability to take initiative, persistence, attentiveness and capacity for observation and imagination, the ability to memorize, understand, apply, analyse integrate and evaluate knowledge and the skills for innovation and be able to adapt to changes.

2. Physical development that includes awakening consciousness of maintaining health and physical fitness.

3. Moral development which includes developing the ability to face moral challenges and dilemmas in an informed, authentic manner that is in harmony with ethical values that are developed freely and voluntarily.

4. Spiritual development that makes able to search meaning and purpose in life.
5. Aesthetic development which involves cultivation of children’s interest in aesthetic expression, cultivation of abilities to enjoy life and to appreciate various forms of beauty, art and culture and the ability to optimize their leisure and enrich their cultural life.

6. Cultural development which involves inculcating cultural values in children.

7. Social development which involves social qualities in children to make them fit for society.

8. Harmonious development which involves developing harmoniously and simultaneously all the powers and capacities inherited by the child.

9. Character formation of individuals to make them men with virtues and brotherly love who prize truth, justice, wisdom, benevolence and self control as the worthy acquisitions of a successful life.

10. Education for vocation to prepare the child for some future profession or vocation or trade so that they are able to earn their livelihood.

11. Education for citizenship that enables children to perform multifarious civic duties and responsibilities.

12. Education for self realization which means fulfillment by oneself of the possibilities of one’s character or personality. From the religious point of view, it refers to a profound spiritual awakening where there is an awakening from an illusory self identity image (ego), to the true, divine, perfect condition that the individual is.

Secondary Education Commission (1952-53) suggested following aims of education:
1. Developing democratic citizenship (development of social, moral and intellectual qualities),

2. Improvement of vocational efficiency,

3. Development of personality and

4. Development of qualities for education for leadership.

Indian Education Commission (1964-66) suggested the following aims of education in a democratic setup:

1. Increasing productivity,

2. Developing social and national integrity,

3. Making education modernized and

4. Cultivation of social, moral and spiritual values.

In conclusion we can say that the aims of education in India comprise developing democratic citizenship, development of vocational competency, development of character, education for leadership, increasing national productivity, achieving social and national integration, cultivation of social, moral and spiritual values.

As far as educational implications of existentialism are concerned, it is evident that no existentialist has written formally and comprehensively on education. One can only deduce the existential concept of education from their philosophy. Thus the researcher has tried to infer educational theory and practice from existential thought.
The existentialists believe in authentic life and so they would approve any type of education which may be helpful to the individual in making satisfactory ‘existential’ choices and references and, thereby, living an authentic life, that is the life by and for himself. In other words the existential life. “The uncompromising affirmation of authentic freedom and individual uniqueness is the stirring message of existentialism for the philosophy of education” (Burns and Brauner, 1962, p.294).

Reawakening of man’s interest in himself is the chief characteristic of existential education. Existentialism wants a new education that will prepare free and irrational individuals. Existentialists assert that a good education would encourage individuals to ask such questions as who am I? Where am I going? Why am I here? In dealing with these questions it has to be recognized that the individual is an emotional and irrational creature rather than an unemotional and rational one.

Existentialism is concerned principally with such education which liberate man from his isolation and his insignificance, liberate his mind from the confusions that prevent him from seeing his situation and his powers.

Existentialism in education focuses on the individual, seeking out a personal understanding of the world. Thus each individual characterizes for himself or herself the concepts of reality, truth and goodness and as a result, schools exist to aid children in knowing themselves and their place in society.

Referring to the meaning of education Kierkegaard said, “I believed it is the course the individual goes through in order to catch up with himself, and the person who will not go through this course is not much helped by being born in the most enlightened age” (Kierkegaard, 1843 as cited in Saeverot, 2011). This indicates that one will not be oneself by incorporating cultural values and norms as Hegel
maintains. Rather, one must be involved with what Kierkegaard calls “catching up with oneself” This means searching back to how one was before culture began to influence one’s life. Kierkegaard wants the individual to take a critical distance to the culture, so that the process of individualization can take place, more or less, without cultivation or socialization. As the individual goes into this process, he may be himself anew. From teacher’s point of view the foundation of this form of existential education is to cultivate the individual’s specificity and uniqueness which Kierkegaard described as ‘distinctiveness’.

Kierkegaard asserts subjectification as the function of education that can be best understood as the opposite of the socialization function of education. The reason is that the individual should not be part of an already existing order, but should rather become independent from such orders. When it comes to the individuation or subjectification of people is concerned it is a matter of subjective truth.

According to Kierkegaard, the existential education focuses on “to becoming himself, free, independent” (Kierkegaard,1847 as cited in Saeverot, 2011). The individual can become himself, free and independent only by taking the existential choice on his own and then inscribe the existential or subjective truth in his own life. The point is that the individual cannot live someone else’s truth about existence. From an educational perspective, the individual can only become himself provided the teacher’s intervention is ignored.

Kierkegaard regarded ethical education to be supreme. He was against any system; he rejects the discipline of education as purely social science on the grounds that the systematic idea is the identity of the subject and object, the unity of thought and being. Existence, on the other hand is that separation.
Jean-Paul Sartre’s view of education can be deduced from his idea – ‘existence precedes essence’. The student is viewed first as an individual, who is responsible for his own thoughts, beliefs and ways of behaving. Understanding takes precedence over preordained subject matter or curricula. The role of the teacher is to provide pathways for student exploration, creating an environment in which they may freely choose their own preferred way.

Nietzsche wrote explicitly about education, more extensively in his early career, and his work can, partly, be attributed to his existential concern with the growing structures on individual freedom originating from the formation and intensification of a socialist state. However, his educational ideas go beyond mere resentment and political reaction, with his formulation of an educational philosophy not only explicit in his educational writing, but inherent in his poetic work and sometimes magnificent treatment of other philosophical issues. He considered academic endeavour as ‘scholarly grinding’ and acknowledged some values in technical education as appropriate for the masses, although he also observed the need for special individuals having higher aspirations to rise above mediocrity.

Nietzsche began to look into the concrete problems of elementary and university schooling during his first years as a professor at elementary school and at the University of Basel. He observed that the system had neglected the humanist outlook for the scientific. As a result, education was popularized as a tool whose objective was to form useful and profitable men not harmoniously matured and developed personalities. Regarding this condition of education, Nietzsche decided to criticize the ‘unnatural methods of education’ and the tendencies that undermined it.
In his lectures on “The Future of our Educational Institutions”, Nietzsche examined the entrails of the educational system of his time. He found that there were two tendencies that work for the impoverishment of culture - the ‘maximum amplification of culture’ and the ‘maximum reduction of culture’. The first tendency ‘maximum amplification’ intended that the right to culture should be accessible to everyone and demanded that the dogma of economic policy should be followed. The idea was ‘as much knowledge and culture as possible’, hence as much production and demand as possible that will lead to happiness. The second tendency, ‘reduction of culture’ intended that individuals should devote their lives to the defense of the interests of the state and demands that its servants should seek specialization and should be faithful to the state.

Nietzsche argued that the growing disregard for the humanistic formation and the increase in the scientific tendency in school, guidance of schooling by historical and scientific questions and not by practical teachings, the neglection of teaching that aims to form an individual in an artistic sense of language in favour of a doubtful journalistic style, the emphasis given to professionalization that aims at forming people prepared to make money - all of this prevents the educational system from turning itself towards culture. These institutions should turn their attention to the problems of culture, or better, the essential questions posed by the human condition.

In Nietzsche’s thoughts, education and culture are inseparable. There can be no culture without an educational project, nor education without a culture to support it. Culture and education are synonyms of selective training and the formation of the self. For the existence of a culture, it is necessary that individuals learn determined
rules and acquire habits and begin to educate themselves against the education forced upon them.

He acknowledged the need for a greater investment in the learning of the native language and in the art of writing - the most essential tasks of secondary school. The task of a high-quality school should always be to lead the student to understand the importance of studying his native language in depth, for if it loses its vital strength, culture itself will tend to degenerate.

Nietzsche directly confronted the issue of education in three works, “Schopenhauer as Educator”, “The Use and Abuse of History for Life” and the series of lectures, “On the Future of our Educational Institutions”. Nietzsche criticized education for creating a good citizen who has to learn to serve society. He reacted against all forms of education that seek to develop an individual for the sake of others. Morality is used in education to subordinate the individual to custom and, thus, to serve society.

Nietzsche’s education strives to teach the individual to serve himself and not ‘the general good’. He stated, “It might seem to these masses that education for the greatest number of men was only a means to the earthly bliss of the few : (but) the “greatest possible expansion of education” so enfeebles education that it can no longer confer privileges or inspire respect” (Nietzsche, 1924 as cited in Kneller, 1958). Therefore not education of masses but rather education of a few selected men for great and lasting work should be the aim of education.

Nietzsche’s goal is to liberate the free spirit, who is bound by his society. He claimed that the free spirit is a ‘relative concept’, pertaining to someone who manages to free himself from the dominance of his culture. A free spirit is one who thinks
differently from what, on the basis of his origin, environment, his class and profession, or on the basis of the dominant views of the age, would have been expected of him.

Nietzsche declares that the supreme principle of education is that one should offer education only to him who hungers for it. Nietzsche thinks that a drive for knowledge naturally occurs in students and this drive can be successfully satisfied with auspicious teaching. However, if the teaching is inappropriate, the drive for knowledge may be crippled or destroyed. Nietzsche does not suggest to condemn an attempt to teach to a student who is not prepared to receive it but advocated that the teacher must both respond to the hunger of the student and know how to stimulate hunger.

He further argued that one cannot follow a formulaic approach when striving for knowledge, but must be able to employ a variety of means in the search for knowledge. There are no scientific methods which alone lead to knowledge, we have to tackle things passionately. By claiming that the scientific method cannot alone lead one to knowledge, Nietzsche stresses the need to supplement traditional methods of learning with experimentalism. Nietzsche’s stress on a passionate, emotional way to access knowledge suggests learning through activity rather than merely by dry reason.

Jaspers discovered the special nature of education as distinct from making, shaping, tending and ruling. In 1947 he drew a clear distinction between these forms of active conduct in relation to the world and education. At the level of inter-human relations (in particular between the older and the younger generations), education consists of everything that is imparted to young people by communicating contents, allowing them to share the substance of things and disciplining their conduct in such a
way that this knowledge continues to grow within them and enables them to become free. The process by which knowledge is imparted should lead young people imperceptibly to the origins, the genuine and the true foundations. This presupposes that young people will themselves come to terms with the surrounding reality whose many different facets they may experience through play, work and practical activities. The list of this experimental practice ranges from skills in methods of work through physical training, clear speech and disciplined discussion to the intellectual grasp of original contents in poetry, the Bible and art and also to an understanding of history and familiarity with the basic techniques of the natural sciences.

Jaspers perceives three recurrent basic forms of education. Scholastic education of the kind that prevailed in the middle ages and is confined to the transmission of a fixed subject matter compressed into formulae and simply dictated with an accompanying commentary. Education by a master is another form in which a dominant personality is honoured as an unimpeachable authority by students who are totally submitted to him. And finally the Socratic education contains the deepest meaning since it involves no fixed doctrine, but infinity of questions and absolute unknowing. The teacher and his pupil are on the same level in relation to ideas. Education is maieutic i.e. it helps to bring the student's latent ideas into clear consciousness. The potential which exists within him is stimulated, but nothing is forced upon him from outside.

Jaspers parted from the framework of rationalistic, excessively psychological and sociological definitions of education when he remarked with deep concern that organization and its apparatus are like a net that threatens to trap and control all human life. The delusion that everything is feasible is then extended to include the
idea of a perfect society and the possibility of planning human beings. Jaspers therefore draws a distinction between the need for rational, particular planning and the evil which is formed by total planning that extends to the most intimate corners of life, human existence and truth and ultimately ruins them.

Jaspers believes that education takes place at the intersection of tension between the past, present and future and that unilateral preference must not be given to any one of these time horizons. He calls repeated attention to the fact that the substance of the present is rooted in the acquired tradition that forms part of human memory and that the path into the future runs through continuity with the past. Education must not be abandoned to tradition, to the passing moment or to some form of utopia as the only ultimate yardsticks. It is only through concentration on the present moment accepted with a spirit of responsibility that the past and future can come truly into their own. The question as to the substance of education arises when intense activity serves merely to hide the vacuum of endless learning. Jaspers takes it for granted that all conscious education presupposes real substance. Without faith, there can be no education but a mere technique of teaching. In 1931 Jaspers diagnosed that education lapses into crisis when the ‘substance of the whole becomes questionable and begins to fall apart’. Education is failing to help children to discover an all-embracing whole. Experiments are made and contents, objectives, methods changed at short intervals. Education has become dispersed because of the fragmentation of traditional historical substance in those individuals who bear responsibility in their mature age.

Jaspers has defined education as helping the individual to come into his own in a spirit of freedom and not like a trained animal. Education is accomplished when
contents are freely acquired; but it fails when it is authoritarian. Hence it follows that ‘from an early age, children must be called upon to act of their own free volition; they must learn through personal insight into the need for learning and not out of mere obedience’. However, intellectual discipline remains indispensable. Constant practice is vital if the greater meaning is to be made visible and brought home effectively.

The uniqueness of Jaspers’ reflection on education is his consideration of love as the driving force and true authority as the source of genuine education. Love protects education from the will to dominate and shaping pupils for finite purposes and makes it a personal encounter instead. Objective facts only acquire significance through loving people.

In his book “The Idea of the University” Jaspers maintained that the university seeks knowledge and truth that is research and not the education of common man. He opines that teaching and research must be a unified whole. Throughout his life, Jaspers remained committed to the idea that the university does not have a mere teaching function, the student must also learn from his professors to engage in personal research and therefore acquire a scientific mode of thought which will colour his whole existence.

According to Jaspers the tasks of the university include research, teaching, training, communication, the whole world of the sciences. He made following assertions regarding university education:

1. To the extent that the university seeks truth through science, research is its fundamental task. Since that task presupposes the passing on of knowledge, research is bound up with teaching. Teaching means allowing students to take part in the research process.
2. The correct method of imparting knowledge and skills in itself contributes to the intellectual training of the whole being.

3. Performance of this task is bound up with communication between thinking beings i.e. between researchers, between teachers and pupils, between pupils and in some circumstances, between all of them.

4. Science is essentially a whole. The structure of the university must be such that all the different sciences are represented.

For Heidegger, real education is that which lays hold of the soul itself and transforms it in entirely by first of all leading us to place of our essential being and then accustoming us to it. “Genuine education leads us back to ourselves, to the place we are (the Da of our Sein), teaches us ‘to dwell’ ‘there’ and transforms us in the process” (Heidegger, 1998 as cited in Thomson, 2001).

Learning for Heidegger is a ‘participatory affair’ where the learner is actively engaged in the subject matter. The didactic form of teaching or an objective set curriculum does not address the basic educational issues for students. The teacher, according to Heidegger, has to ‘let pupils learn’. Through a mutual relationship between teacher and student, where the integrity of both persons remains intact, student ‘submits themselves to the demands and rigor off thinking’. Heidegger was opposed to a form of education that solely required fixed standards that students must attain in their subjects or classrooms that emphasized a mechanical approach to learning. Instead, Heidegger viewed learning as an adventurous journey into the paths that were not yet discovered. The attraction of learning came from the pupil recognizing the stirrings of a new discovery that had not yet become fully known to him or her.
Finally Heidegger’s two important ideas can guide the formation of the modern university: first teaching and research should be harmoniously integrated and second the university community should understand itself as committed to a common substantive task.

Besides these existentialists, an account of the views of other existentialists regarding education will be worthwhile. In regard to education, Camus’ thought provides three conclusions. 1). Education, in its institutional form, can justify its existence only to the extent that it implements programmes for the development of lucid individuals i.e. moral individuals. The school’s rationale for existing is that it is in essence, a moral enterprise. 2). The central purpose of education is to develop moral person who lives the philosophy of limitation in the face of his absurd relationship with the world. 3). All educational consideration is to be grounded in Camus’ theory of man rather than is assertions about the nature of society, of history, of the universe or of God.

Martin Buber, perhaps, more than any other has treated education as a serious topic for philosophical enquiry. His greatest contribution to educational philosophy is I-Thou relation which in an educational framework is the teacher – student relation. This will be dealt in detail later in this chapter.

In addition, he emphasized that:

Education worthy of the name is essentially the education of character. For the genuine educator does not merely consider individual functions of his pupil, as one intending to teach him only to know or be capable of certain definite things; but his concern is always the
person as a whole, both in the actuality in which he lives before you now and in his possibilities, what he can become. (Buber, 1955 as cited in Jyaswal, 1968)

Thus one may cultivate and enhance personality but in education one must aim at character. The teacher can bring before his pupils the image of a great character that denies no answer to life and the world, but accepts responsibility for everything essential that he meets. The teacher by fulfilling his responsibility towards the students can awaken in them a similar responsibility for their fellows, society and the world. Buber’s whole I-Thou philosophy can be looked as a basis for social reconstruction and his educational views as the foundation of this reconstruction.

Buber has also considered education as a means of freedom to be oneself and in tune with God. Besides applying his idea of the education of character to youth, he applies it to his notion of adult education also. He emphasized the role of reality in education. It is on the basis of the knowledge and experience of reality that a child should be enabled to develop his creative powers. Education should help each individual to ‘expose him and others to the creative spirit’.

From the above discussion it is clear that though the existentialist may or may not have made direct commitment regarding education, their philosophy do provide guidelines for the education of authentic man.

Education has been historically assigned an important role in the self realization of the individual. Existentialists too accept this role of education, though in a much modified form. Instead of emphasizing self realization, the existentialists emphasize ‘authentic self-realization of the individual’. Herein lies the main difference between the traditional (even the most recent approaches are traditional
when compared to that of the existentialism) and the existentialist approaches to
education.

A detailed discussion of educational implications of Existentialism has been
made below.

**Existentialism and Aims of Education**

The rationale of existential education is to provide an extensive and
comprehensive experience with life in all its forms. The existentialistic aim of
education is humanitarian and humanist. The basic purpose of education is to enable
each individual to develop his or her fullest potential for self-fulfillment. Aims of
education according to existentialism comprise the following:

1. **To develop the authentic self of the child:** The first and foremost aim of
existential education is to develop the authentic self of child. Nietzsche held that the
duty of teacher towards students is “to liberate and empower individuals toward

   Education should create consciousness for ’self’. The existentialists argue that
persons are not only mind, but also feelings and emotions. Consequently, students
must learn to feel, to become an ‘authenticated individual’. ‘Becoming’ requires
conflict and frustration by which persons grow in their personality and understanding.

   Existentialism’s main concern is with the existence of ‘self’. Sartre explained
two modes of self and called them as self-in-itself and self-for-itself. Self-in-itself is
what a person is at the moment and that is his facticity. Self-for-itself is what a person
becomes in his life by making efforts. Education should help in the development of
’self-for-itself’ of student.
According to existentialism, students must develop a consistent scale of values, authenticate their existence by being committed to these values and so act as to be prepared to die for these values than to live without them. Dying for one’s own country constitutes the supreme sacrifice.

2. To assist in the development of self-realization in the child: Education should help the child to achieve self-realization. “The student should become personally concerned with the realization of his own nature and with what Tillich calls the courage to be himself” (Kneller, 1958, p.66).

Existentialism believes that a good education is one that assists each of us in seeing ourselves with our fears, frustrations and hopes, as well as the ways in which we use reason for good and ill. The first step in any education, therefore, is to understand ourselves.

Nietzsche advocated an education that develops in individual the ability of self-overcoming. For Nietzsche, education is simply a means and not a self contained telos. Education as a process does not, for Nietzsche assist a self-overcoming individual to overcome so far accepted valuations; rather, education serves paradoxically as a means for their transmission. “The impetus for any Nietzschean education, if indeed there can be such a possibility begins and ends not with society, not with democracy, not with the school, not with the teacher, but with that multiciplity of individual characterization known collectively as the self” (Johnson, 1998, p.68).

Existential education assumes 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 for existentialists constitutes a choosing, free and
responsible agent. A learning situation is called for in which the structure and significance of the self is meaningfully conveyed.

3. To prepare child to face tragic situations of life: Every individual has to face many tragic situations in his/her life. The most important and inevitable tragic event is death. One of the main aims of existentialistic education is to inculcate proper attitude towards death. Teachers must made student realize that death is not just negative but it has positive sides also. Education for death can be expelled into an experience for better understanding of good life and one's obligations in it. Man should be aware of his death in every moment of life. This realization of death will help in enjoyment of each and every moment of his life due to the fact that he is prepared for death.

Student must be taught that sometimes to die for an ideal is better than the life to betray it. In history we can find many examples of sacrifice of soldiers who died for their country, of men who died for their morality and true path of life and for benefits of others and martyrs for their faith.

Existentialism holds that education helps an individual to realize the best that he is capable of. “In doing so education must help the individual to realize the ‘facticity’ (contingency) of his existence to face the categories of this facticity - dread, anguish, anxiety and fear - resolutely and courageously and finally prepare him to meet death with pleasure” (Seetharamu, 1978, p.87).

4. To inculcate choice making power in students: Education should train men to make better choices and also give the idea that since his choices are never perfect, consequences cannot be predicted Life is a continuous process of making choices and all choices are personal and individual. A man’s life is a project and each of us is his
own architect of life. Choice is always a necessary condition of human life, it is always, to some extent, inescapable, but it is only authentic choice that enables us to stand out as individuals.

The basic function of the school is normative. It should act to encourage the maximum development of individual autonomy or free choice. The fundamental problem confronted by the school is, as Heidegger states, “How one becomes what one is? (Wie man wird, was man ist?)” Developing the capacity for free choice encompasses two basic steps: (1) cultivating the ability to make free and rational decisions and (2) developing the inclination to make such decisions in the first place. Of these, the latter is clearly the more important phase. The basic aim of existentialist education is to develop a sense of commitment to free choice.

5. To prepare child for social adjustment: Another aim of existential education is to prepare child for social adjustment. Education should be such that it makes the student able to see beyond personal interest and goal. Existentialists argue that social education should teach to respect for the freedom of all. Respect for the freedom of others is essential, for freedom is almost certain to conflict. Good education prepares man to will his freedom and at the same time, to will the freedom of all others. When he asserts the value of any action he is asserting a value with this universal appeal “I am responsible for myself and for all”.

Marcel and Jaspers believe that recognition of the freedom of others leads to mutual love and affection. Man must participate in the activities of others but not by surrounding and negating their own personalities.

Since man as a being always lives with other beings, education involves a process of integration into the forms and structures, groups and institutions of society.
Individuality is enhanced through this integration into the social structure. Education imparts familiarity with forms of social intercourse, morals and customs and rules and laws. It associates the ability to adapt with the courage to resist. Education seeks to safeguard the individual citizen in his profession and in politics, but it is not confined to imparting familiarity with forms of public behaviour, to the acquisition of professional expertise and to the generation of an understanding of politics. Education extends beyond integration into society.

6. To develop unique personality of child: Every individual is unique. Education must develop in him this uniqueness. It must cater to individual differences. Existentialism disagrees with the standards made by universal education as it is made up for all and deals generally with the average and compels the student to confirm to the law of average instead of practicing his unique qualities. It does not pay attention to exceptional. For existentialists, every man has a unique variety of methods and organizations which should be developed accordingly.

7. To develop sense of responsibility in child: Existential education emphasizes the importance of individual responsibility as for them there is no escape from wholly individual responsibility. It is the duty of existentialist teacher to assist the student to assume responsible selfhood, to grow up and face the world responsibly.

Existentialism holds that for all the choices people make they cannot blame others, whether that be their parents or society and they cannot even blame the conditions in which they find themselves. Moreover, there is nothing to guide them in their choices; no principles or rules can guarantee that any choice is right. People must simply make their choice and accept the consequences though the consequences may be unpredictable. Every choice carries our complete personal responsibility.
“Existentialists hold that people decide their own fates and are responsible for what they make of their lives. Because we are self-creating or self-fashioning beings in this sense. We have full responsibility for what we make of our live’(Guignon, 2005, p.252)

According to Sartre, choices are accompanied by forlornness because there is no human being who can enter into your subjectivity and understand your situation well enough to help you decide what to do, therefore, you alone must bear the responsibility for your choices. Choices are accompanied by anxiety because certain of our choices may bring harmful consequences to us or others and our responsibility for these consequences is inescapable.

**Existentialism and Curriculum**

According to existentialism, curriculum symbolize a world of knowledge to explore. Such knowledge should provide concrete content for making free analysis and criticism and establish a firm foundation for the individual creative effort. Existentialism recognizes the ‘individual difference’ and lays emphasis on diverse curricula suiting the needs, abilities and aptitude of the individual.

Realization of self forms part of the curriculum. Self examination and not social obedience is the first lesson.

According to existentialism, curriculum should be mainly liberal since “liberal learning is most likely to lay a foundation for human freedom” (Power, 1982, p.145).

Curriculum should satisfy the immediate as well as the ultimate needs. It should be so designed that a student does have every experience that make up his life.
The function of education is not to hide the ugly and enhance the beautiful, nor to hide the latent evil and focus on all pervading good.

As far as subjects are concerned, Van Cleve Morris said, “If existentialism ever gains a foothold in educational thinking it will probably begin its work in the ‘self-creating’ subject matter.” Existentialism doesn’t believe in formal curriculum consisting of set of body of studies to be pursued but a curriculum, which features the reverberatory effect upon heart and mind of passionate good reading and then personal contact. “The subjects of the existential curriculum are unspecified, although any subject can be, at the right moment, the tool, the vehicle to engage the individual in his or her striving to become” (Scotter, 1985, p.55).

Existentialism believes in the free relationship between student and subject matter. Kneller infers from the existentialist philosophy that:

Since for the existentialist the truth is infinite, it follows that the curriculum cannot be prescribed. There is no denial of the integrity of subject matter; no denial that limits may be set on the extent to which at a certain point in human development certain material is appropriate; but far more essential, in fact indispensable, is the student’s relation to the material studied. (Kneller, 1958, p.122)

The existentialists offer suggestions about how subjects can be best used. For example, social studies is not for adjustment as treated traditionally, but it is for the dreaded freedom and history should not merely concern itself with natural events but with activities of men who are free to choose the line of their action.
The curriculum should be chosen, sorted out and owned by the learner since each individual has specific needs and interests related to his or her self fulfillment. "The student in situation, making a choice should be the deciding factor" (Ozmon and Craver, 1990, p.257).

Freedom or choice of individual requires fundamental which become a must in the content of the student’s existential situation. Being situated in the world, he is apt to choose. For this purpose learning of universal fundamentals must gain importance in curriculum. As put by Sartre, “one should do what everyone else do but be like nobody else!” (Kneller, 1958, p.123). Existentialists afford students great latitude in their choice of subject matter, since they believe it would provide students greater occasion for personal growth and expression.

Existentialism emphasizes educating traditional subject matter to make the student realize the givens of the world in which he has to exercise his freedom. By learning these subject matter student comes to know that although he has freedom to achieve his purpose in this world but he cannot do whatever he wants with it.

Existentialism places great importance to the learning of humanities i.e. history, literature, philosophy and art. “The existentialists believe that humanities have spiritual power” (Taneja, 2005, p.214). Through humanities man’s aesthetic, emotional and moral productivities are exercised. Humanities reveal the inner feelings and thoughts of man i.e. his guilt, sin, suffering, tragedy, death, hate and love. They deal with the essential aspects of human existence such as the relation between people, the tragic as well as the joyous side of human life, the absurdities as well as the sensibleness. These subjects are explored as a means of providing students with sensational experiences that will help unleash their own creativity and self-expression.
Jaspers said, “Humanism is essentially matter of education. It offers youth the deepest human contents in pure and simple form” (Fischer, 1952, p.86). In short, existentialists want to see humankind in its totality- the perverted as well as the exalted, a mundane as well as the glorious, the despairing as well as the hopeful.

Arts reveal the true nature of man. In the study of artistic expression, the existentialists find anguished, pained, aspiring and striving voice of mankind, the visible agony and delight which cause real creativity and genuine existence. There is an urge for affirmation in art. Almost all works of art exhibit the struggle of man with their conscience, existing orders and fate. It is found that almost all existentialists were interested in works of art. Many references are Sartre, the dramatist; Dostoevsky the novelist; Rilke, the poet; van Gogh, the artist and Stravinsky, the musician.

The study of the work of art requires assurance on the part of the reader as Sartre says “art has never been on the side of the purists.” In his view:

> Each book is recovery of the totality of being. Each of them presents this totality to the freedom of the spectator. For this is quite the final goal of art: to recover this world not by giving to be seen as it is but as if it had its source in human freedom. (Priest, 2001, p.272).

For existentialists, an artist is a free man who has one subject to reveal that is freedom which is the heart of existentialism’s themes. Art is a means by which student frees himself from history and begins to exercise talent. The student should always be treated as a potential writer. Through art man can retaliate against the well
established but wrong norms and rules of the society. We see in our society that artist portrays those evils of society in their paintings which they cannot address directly.

In teaching arts, existentialism encourages individual creativity and imagination more than copying and imitating established models. The teaching of these subjects should be done in a manner that students are engaged both mentally as well as emotionally.

Music is also a subject that is existential by nature. When actively listening to music, the child is encouraged to respond individually and creatively to feel the music. The existential curriculum in all cases will be that which is capable to personify knowledge and enhance the involvement of the student.

Literature is emphasized because unlike courses that rely upon the scientific method, it is absorbed in man’s passion, with the ambivalent desires of the human heart. Kierkegaard’s literary style, the use of novel by Camus and the writings of novels and drama by Sartre imply as such. Jaspers held that in literature more than in life itself, there is opportunity for one to authenticate himself. In literature, subjectively appropriated, one can find out what he is and what he can become. It is the literature and artistic creations which stimulate and strengthen the spiritual power and essential urge for the affirmation of one’s existence.

Existentialism advocates the teaching of history in order to help the students to change the course of history and to mould the future. The existentialist sees history in terms of man’s struggle to realize his freedom. The student, too, must commit himself to whatever period he is studying and immerse himself in its problems and personalities. The history he reads must fire his thoughts and feelings and become part of him. Rather than emphasizing historical events, existentialists focus upon the
actions of historical individuals, each of whom provides possible models for the students’ own behaviour. History provides impetus to man in his process of becoming.

Psychology may also be included in existential curriculum since existentialism has a psychological foundation. Psychology as a subject is a medium for the realization of many real emotions in man like fear, frustration, love and so on. One cannot make an effort to make himself existentially free without knowing his real emotions and feelings.

Existentialists have many affiliations with psychology. Kierkegaard’s conception of self-estrangement, dread and despair are psychological aspects. Jaspers was a practitioner of psychological aspects. He felt that psychology is able to give answers to all types of philosophical problems which are subjective. Heidegger’s existential phenomenology is deeply rooted in psychology. The problems of existence which he tackled are profoundly based on his psychological thinking. The chief psychological concepts analysed by Sartre are emotions, unconscious, the ego and sensation. Marcel and Jaspers both are of the opinion that psychology should observe man in his quest for existential freedom. Nietzsche tries to tackle the philosophical problem of the mechanism of conscience, sublimation and rationalization through psychoanalysis.

Compared to humanities, existentialism attaches less importance to social sciences. It, however, desires to teach social sciences for inculcating moral obligations and for knowing the relationship of the individual to a group. “The social sciences offer a valuable opportunity for unifying subjective and objective knowledge, for the
formulation of moral obligations from social problems, and for a more profound understanding of the relation of the individual to the group” (Kneller, 1958, p.130).

Existentialists do not have keen interest in science as it does not help in the total development of the personality of the child. Science should be taught but not impersonally and not with a view to extreme specialization or overspecialization because overspecialization stunts the growth of the pupil’s total inner life. As in the opinion of Nietzsche, a specialist in science begins to resemble nothing but a factory workman who spends his whole life in turning one particular screw or handle on a certain instrument or machine. The specialization in any field must be complemented by liberalizing studies, for it is the man who counts and not the profession. It is essential for the students of science to study continuously in the humanities to prevent his mind and sympathies from narrowing. In contrast to the humanities, math and the natural sciences may be de-emphasized, presumably because their subject matter would be considered cold, dry, objective and therefore less fruitful to self-awareness. Jaspers argued children must acquire skills and learn knowledge which is made available in its pure form by the sciences. However, he enters a vigorous objection to the programme of total scientific orientation in all subjects and at all levels and stated that the planning of scientific teaching cannot be decisively determined by science itself or by an understanding of the specific scientific disciplines, but is originally subordinated to an altogether different understanding i.e. knowledge of the essence of things.

The existentialists also oppose any sort of vocational training at a very early stage on the grounds that instead of encouraging the pupil to become a free individual, it trains him to be a particular kind of person.
Ideally a person should use any career or occupation as a means for the exercise of freedom and only secondarily for immediate and tangible rewards. Vocational training should be given to some extent but primarily they should be taught humanities. Vocational education is regarded more as a means of teaching students about themselves and their potential than of earning a livelihood. Jaspers argued "the university can only create the preconditions and foundations required for specific vocational training if its aim is not to 'impart a self-contained body of knowledge but to train and develop scientific modes of thought" (Horn, 1993, p.728).

Regarding moral education, existentialists hold that moral education must be based on moral principles which one has consciously chosen or is about to choose for his 'self-realization' as moral judgement and personal character have their origin in the subjective 'self'. This means that the individual must be left free to choose his own morals and values in life. The good for the existentialist is always a positive affirmation of the self. Evil lies in following the crowd.

Jaspers advocated that:

The need for a moral content in all teaching; reading and writing will then cease to be mere technical attainments and become instead a spiritual act—a miracle. When that spirit is alive, effort and hard work, practice and repetition, which are often experienced as a burden, will acquire new meaning and become a real pleasure. Secondary schools, in all their different forms, must also pursue the same goal. (Horn, 1993, p.728)
As far as religious education is concerned, all existentialists would advocate a study of world religions as an academic matter. Religious attitude is permitted to develop freely if it were authentic. The ideal school permits religious unfolding in accordance with whatever doctrine the student wishes to accept or to reject. The existentialist student does not wander aimlessly in a spiritual vacuum but approaches to his own moral and religious conviction as he arrives at convictions on aesthetic, material and other values. For religious existentialists, religious education becomes vital subject matter and included in the curriculum as something of chief importance that all students need to know so that their commitment is grounded in knowledge.

Secular existentialists hold that religious education is genuine if it can be conceived as the awakening of an already latent and authentic intelligence posed by the student. If it is conceived as indoctrination then it does not qualify, no matter how meritorious and divinely-inspired the indoctrination.

Jaspers gave the idea of political education. The political education of young people comprises many different tasks, among which he lists the imparting of constitutional knowledge and an acceptance of authority, the generation of images and ideas, practical exercises for solving the common problems and the ability to see through mere slogans. This political education presupposes constant self-education of adult citizens in their democratic attitudes, a process which is performed in the keen debate on topical issues. It always endeavours to ensure that the constitution is firmly rooted in the hearts of citizens.

Thus anything that assists in the self-realization of the authentic individual is included in curriculum. Freedom and authenticity are the watchwords of existentialism and the subjects whatever they may be must be capable of assisting the
existential self in his own choice of existence and in the discovery and safeguarding of his freedom.

**Existentialism and Methods of Teaching**

According to existentialism, methods of teaching must develop the creative abilities in children. “Education for creativity’ is most important for existentialists” (Seetharamu, 1978, p.86). They emphasize on application of such instructional techniques which appeal to feeling, emotion, creativity and deeper meaning of life.

Existentialists advocate Socratic Method of Teaching. Socratic Method of teaching was one of asking questions, refining answers, asking more questions and pushing the issue until some acceptable conclusion was reached. The teacher seeks to draw the information from students by means of skillfully directed questions. Students become aware of the working of their own mind by seeking the answer of teachers’ questions. Thus he gets the truth and accepts it. This method is based on the assumption that knowledge is inborn but we cannot draw it out without expert help. Etymologically also education means ‘drawing out’.

Existentialists favour the Socratic approach to teaching, as Socratic method is personal, intimate and an I-thou affair in which knowledge and wisdom are achieved through the mutual interaction of two living beings, the teacher and the taught. “For existentialism what count is personal contact and not time table” (Seetharamu, 1978, p.86).

According to existentialists, any method that is capable of testing the inner life without interfering the subjectivity of both the teacher and the taught is acceptable. Socratic method has this quality it “tests the inner-life-as a stethoscope sounds the
heart” (Kneller, 1958, p. 134). In Socratic method, every presupposition got tested, all arguments are probed for their possible inaccuracy. In this way Socrates transferred into students’ minds the excessive amount of knowledge and wisdom he himself possessed.

Jaspers held that university education is ‘by nature Socratic’ because the student’s sense of responsibility and freedom come into play. It is only through freedom that we can acquire experience of the original desire for knowledge and hence of human independence which is the gift of God and bound up with God. The freedom of learning has as its counterpart the freedom of teaching.

Socratic Method includes ‘problem method’, though the existentialists do not advocate it, since it is impersonal, unproductive and generally socially oriented and also concerned with the immediate. They however acknowledge problem method if the problem originates in the life of the one who has to work out the solutions. It is unacceptable if the problem is derived from the society’s needs.

In order to unfold the individual as a whole, the existentialists advocate individualized instruction so that the learner should have more of aesthetic, moral and emotional self than his scientific rational self. He should develop his capacity to love, to appreciate and to respond emotionally to the world around him.

Existentialists do not advocate mass education as it results in rote-learning which causes the student to repeat what he/she has been taught in the classroom. They reject the group method because in group dynamic the superiority of the group decision over individual decision is prominent and hence the opportunity of unique individualism and free choice is lost.
"On the lighter side existentialism emphasize the importance of play" (Kneller, 1964, p.70). Sartre admire the value of play over seriousness. In play the individual give full rein to his creativity. Sartre and Marcel have found the play and the novel more natural and powerful vehicles for some of their teaching and philosophy than the treatise and the lecture. For in the novel and the play ideas can be embodied in living characters, which clash and react, the appeal being to the feelings and the reason at the same time.

The existentialists suggest that we first look at students as individuals and allow them to take a positive role in the shaping of their own education and life. It is true that every student brings to school background of experiences that will influence personal decisions, but by and large, existentialists argue that schools and their institutions be free places where students are encouraged to do things because for diversity in education, not only in curriculum, but in the way things are taught. Some students learn well through one approach and others through another. Many options for learning should be open to them.

Students are encouraged to pursue projects that will help them develop needed skills and acquire requisite knowledge. The processes of reflective thought are generally emphasized.

Existentialist methods focus on the individual. Learning is self-paced, self directed and includes a great deal of individual contact with the teacher, who relates to each student openly and honestly.
Existentialism and School

In education, existentialism focuses on the individual, seeking out a personal understanding of the world. Through this interpretation, each individual characterizes for him or herself the concepts of reality, truth and goodness and as a result, schools exist to aid children in knowing themselves and their place in society. In existential school man’s non-rational i.e. his aesthetic, moral and emotional self are more evident than his scientific, rational self. Existentialists are more interested in developing the effective side of man, his capacity to love, to appreciate and to respond emotionally to the world around him. The aim of school should be to nurture self-discipline and cultivate self-evaluation. Existentialism argues that continued pedagogical and psychological experimentation will avail nothing if the child is not reared in a humanizing school.

The school should provide an atmosphere where the individuals develop in a healthy way. The school is primarily a place for having experience with life since existentialism, almost as much as pragmatism, rejects the spectators theory of knowledge. So schools should try to immerse their students in life.

The school should be a forum where students are able to engage in dialogue with other students and teachers to help them clarify their progress towards self fulfillment. “Schooling must be seen as a bringing together of people, some in the position of guides and other in the position of supposed followers, but all having deeply serious concern always with them and not easily allayed if at all” (Butler, 1968, p.464).
Democratic ideals should pervade the school. It should be the democracy of unique individuals who value differences and respect one another. Self-government, pupil participation in planning and the encouragement of a free atmosphere characterize the school.

Mechanization and impersonality should be neutralized in school. Computerization of student’s timetables and work programmes and the use of programmed instruction, teaching machines and other equipments tend to decrease the personal contact between teachers and pupils. This impersonality is a hazard to the individual development and growth of the child’s personality and therefore concern and respect for the individual student should be a feature of the school.

Van Cleve Morris, the American educator who has written extensively on existentialism and education holds that the task of education that falls chiefly on the secondary schools is to provide the occasions and circumstances for the awakening and intensification of awareness. He tries to show that there are three constituents of awareness which make up the psychological content of the self: “These are (1) choosing agent, unable to avoid making choices throughout life, (2) free agent, personally accountable for his freely selected choices and (3) responsible agent, personally accountable for his freely selected choices” (Morris, 1966 as cited in Park, 1968).

In existentialists’ view however home has greater importance than school. The existentialists assert that educational growth cannot take place without the assistance of home-life. It is pity that parents shift several of their responsibilities to the schools. Home is deeper reaching in education than the school can ever be. It is here that the child gets love. In the school, the child gets the idea of being one object
among many, while at home he identifies himself. In the home the child finds the proper soil for fostering the authentic self. Jaspers says that “the home is a symbol of the world which is the child’s necessary historical environment” It is in the family that children experience through the love of their parents and the constant concern for their welfare that humanity which helps them to master the difficulties of daily life. The genuine spirit of love and comradeship which develops in the family carries over into relations with the outside world, whether in school, factory, or public life.

**Existentialism and Teacher**

Since existentialism as an educational tradition may be characterized as a reawakening of man’s interest in himself, the task of teacher is to awaken in students the freedom and responsibility.

Existentialism is a philosophy based on the notion that man’s existence is an internal, subjective experience. It holds that beyond mere existence lies essence, which can be achieved by those who actively seek to discover purposefulness in their existence and to attribute personal meaning to it. They do this by making authentic, independent choices and by assuming responsibility of the consequences of those choices throughout their lives. The teachers must therefore recognize that reality is experienced subjectively and he must then respect and nurture their students’ subjective realities. They can do this by applying two existential principles in their classrooms. First, they can rejoice, rather than discourage authenticity. Second they can encourage their students to have ‘the courage to be’ by recognizing students’ subjective realities, by celebrating the authentic and by encouraging students with the opportunity to be the best they can be.
The teacher must ensure self realization. For this, he must see that the students are personally involved in their problems because one cannot realize his ‘self’ without getting things done in his own way. The student on other hand must identify his ‘authenticate self’ in and with all his knowledge and all learning experiences.

The teacher should help students to be ‘original’ and ‘authentic’. The teacher should make efforts to see the students’ mind should have autonomous functioning so that they become free, liberal and self moving. Buber held that the teacher nourishes the students’ mind, recognizes it as unique and autonomous. The teacher recognizes each of his pupils a single, unique person, the bearer of a special task of being which can be fulfilled through him alone. He acts as a helper of each in the inner battle between the actualising forces and those which oppose them. But he cannot impose on the student the product of his own struggle for actualisation as each man realizes right in his personal unique way. The teacher also grows as he guides students in their self realization.

Another task of teacher is to encourage students to work hard and make the best of life and accept death as something certain. He inculcates in the students the idea that a life lived lazily, selfishly or improperly is a life not worthy of living. Dying for one’s country is glorious.

The teacher must encourage their creativity, their discovery, their inventiveness, but should not attempt to direct them or impose his will on them. The responsibility and duty of existentialist teacher is very difficult because in his treatment of ‘other’ he must have to hold his own subjectivity at the same time realizing the subjectivity of that other.
According to Jaspers, the only true educator is the one who is permanently engaged in a process of self-education through communication. Education can only be correct if its addressees acquire the ability to educate themselves through stringent and persistent learning.

The good teacher aims to produce novels not replica Its products should be men and women who stand apart from him even more distinctly than when he first met them.

Existentialism and Teacher- Pupil Relationship

Existentialism stresses that the relation of the teacher to his students must be more informal, intimate, lively and personal than the one existing between the two in the traditional school. All the major existentialists condemn the emptiness of formal responses and formal relationships. They assert that relation between the teacher and student must be very close involving intensely exploratory intimacy. The teacher as well as the students must in all cases be a free personality of their own.

Buber argues that dialogue should be the core of education. He holds that both I-Thou and I-It relations play a role in education. In education, I-Thou is the teacher-student relationship. I-Thou is a relation of subject-to-subject. In the I-Thou relationships, human beings are aware of each other as having unity of being, moreover human beings do not perceive each other as consisting of specific, isolated qualities, but engage in dialogue involving each other’s whole being. The person engaged in I-Thou regards his Thou as unique- the only member of his class. “I-Thou is the primary word of relation. It is categorized by mutuality, directness, presentness, intensity and ineffability” (Friedman, 2002, p.65). The constructive forces of the
world the child needs for building up its personality can be transferred only through I-Thou relations.

I-It is a relation of subject-object. It is always mediate and indirect and hence is comprehensible and orderable, significant only in connection and not in itself. Major contribution of Buber to education is the concept of ‘inclusion’ i.e. the ability to develop a dual sensation among those engaged in the dialogue: experiencing oneself and simultaneously perceiving the ‘other’ in singularity.

In his work “Address on Education” which is based on I and Thou, Buber criticizes the teacher-centered approach for it gives too much weight to the role of teacher and this makes the development of an I-Thou relation difficult and therefore teacher and students become trapped into an I-It relation where the teacher provides students with facts and information, infuse information into students, but does not encourage the creativity. Buber also criticizes the student-centered approach for focusing too much on the role of the student, since this also makes difficult for the I-Thou relation to arise as the student lacks proper guidance from the teacher, the student is left to pump his education out of his own subjective interests or needs within a given environment. For Buber, an educational approach based on dialogue is an approach that places appropriate weight on both the teacher and student’s roles. The relation in education is one of pure dialogue. The dialogue can only come to the force if the student trusts the educator, if the student feels accepted otherwise any attempt to educate will lead to rebellion and lack of interest. Moreover dialogue requires two basic conditions: sovereign partners and a free choice by both sides to enter the relations. These demands contrast strongly with the educational reality based on pupil’s dependency on their teacher. The classroom is characterized by absence of
mutuality—being dominated by the authority exercised by the teacher upon the young pupils. The inferior status of pupil leads him to relinquish his own will and accept the choice of teacher. Moreover, the curriculum is in most cases dictated by the school authorities without taking in consideration the pupils’ opinion and in contradiction to the atmosphere of freedom demanded by the dialogue. Buber claims that the pedagogical realm is entirely dialogical.

“Education is to be understood in terms of the communion between the teacher and student because the development of the pupil as a person rests on the impact of one human being on another” (Baker, 1968, p.331). Communion, in the opinion of Buber comes about through the child’s first being free to venture on his own and then encountering the real values of the teacher. The teacher presents these values in the form of a lifted finger or subtle hint rather than as an imposition of the ‘right’ and the pupil learns from this encounter because he has first experimented himself. The doing of the teacher proceeds, moreover, out of a concentration which has the appearance of rest. The teacher who interferes, divides the soul into an obedient and rebellious part, but the teacher who has integrity, integrates the pupil through his actions and attitudes. The teacher must be ‘wholly alive and able to communicate himself directly to his fellow beings’, but must do this, as far as possible, without affecting them. He is most effective when he is simply there without any arbitrariness and conscious striving for effectiveness, for then what he is in himself is communicated to his pupils. Intellectual instruction is by no means unimportant, but it is only really important when it arises as an expression of a real human existence.

The teacher can educate the pupil if he is able to build a relationship based on authentic dialogue with students and on mutuality, that is, on I-Thou relations.
Through mutuality the student develops an awareness of the meaning of what the teacher as a person and the author of the book as a Thou presents before him and thus subject matter becomes personally meaningful reality for him.