

## Identifying Existentialist Philosophy of Education

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### Abstract

The purpose of this paper is analyzing and explaining the theoretical foundations of philosophy of education is existentialist perspective. Existentialist philosophy of education is one of the four famous philosophy that has long been discussed in education. The research method is gathering document study. In this method, resources are analyzed. Therefore, the author has been expressed arrangements, principles and history to explore and explain the emergence of ideas and philosophical thinkers of the approach in the field of education, curriculum, teaching and learning. The results show, existentialist philosophy of education is educated a person with independent identity. This person has selection freedom and it caused to his improvement.

**Key words:** Philosophy of Education, Existentialism, Learning, Teaching

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### Introduction:

Philosophy of Education as a territory in presenting ideas and philosophical views about education has history as the history of human thought. Thus, the history of philosophy of education has a range of parallel reviews on human thought. As far as the experts on educational ideas has been established, the history of ideas throughout history dates back to ancient civilizations, ancient civilizations such as ancient India, ancient China, Iran Ancient, Ancient Egypt, ancient Greece and ancient Rome. Then, with the rise of diverse thinkers and visionaries from around the world, these idea has been spread and in some cases has led to the emergence of interesting thought systems about education (Toosi, 1976; Meyer, 1996; Nokhostin, 2001, Kardan, 2003).

Together, these activities historically has resulted in producing the classics works as well. For example, the book "The Republic" from Plato is considered as the first masterpiece in this field; and in the idea of

American philosophers, the book "Emile" from Rousseau, and "Democracy and Education" from Dewey has links with it. After them, can be named the Spencer Educational articles, and educational writings of Locke, Hegel, Kant, Comenius, Pestalozzy, Herbart, and probably Russell (Barro, 1994).

Important note is that in historical studies of educational ideas can be followed of the two main approaches. The first approach relates to examine the views and ideas of philosophers and educators that have Looking deeply philosophical and analytical and critical to educate (the books have been written under the general title "development of educational ideas" or "ideas of trainers" have been complies from this approach). The second approach to examining the position under the watchful philosophical schools, including realism, idealism, naturalism, pragmatism, and etc (the books have been written under the general title "school education" have been complies from this approach).considered.

Philosophy of education as an academic discipline has short history. In the history of this field there are two views. First, the view that knows the beginning of this history in the nineteenth century and has little support. And other views that knows the beginning of this history in the the twentieth century, and it has greater validity.

In the first view, Kamblis (1996), state educational philosophy has earned his proffitional statues in the educational colleges and universities. At first it was created in the courses form in the coluclume and finally it was emerged as master of science and doctorate coluclume. The historical roots of this movement was searched in the nineteenth century.

According to him, in the nineteenth century three concepts of philosophy of education can be distinguished: philosophy of education as a scientific method for inductive inferences (views Spencer, and other scientism), philosophy of education as a discipline that aims to achieve a larger reality is that they come from different sciences (idealists view), and philosophy of education as a set of ideas that should be tested in educational opportunities (John Dewey's view) (Kmblyls, 1996). This paper also deals with the existential philosophy of education.

## **Theoretical basis of research:**

### ***Philosophy of Education***

There are many definitions of Educational Philosophy. G.F.Neler state: "Educational Philosophy want to understand education in the whole form and it is due to general concepts that will guide us in the choice of educational goals and policies and their interpretation "(Neelr, 1971: 202-201).

Arnold Goriz writes: Philosophy of Education Philosophy employed in different aspects of Education (Goriz, 1981: 289).

Neler, Goriz and collect plenty of pundits on the philosophy of education revolve this philosophy around three axes:

1. Metaphysics that is ontology and cosmology.

2. Epistemology.

3 – Value logy.

They Has raised questions in these fields of the diverse philosophy. They have stated answers of the famous fourth philosophies ( idealism, realism, pragmatism and existentialism) and have remind their educational implications.

## **Existentialism**

To comply with European cultures and languages existentialism "are" has been translated, which is not true in philosophy. This word since the time of Soren Kierkegaard in the nineteenth century and later in the twentieth century has been introduced "being" especially since the French Sartre's time it is known to Existentialist. This word has a special meaning and it's main subject is human life. Hydger believes it means "living human in the world". So, EX-ISTENCE word means "being in the exit". doctor Fardid according to the etymology of this word has translated it as "Tagrir Zohori". (Neler, 2012, p. 79)

## **History of Existentialism**

Existentialism or existentialism school is the most important contemporary philosophical schools that formally declared its existence in the twentieth century.

Martin Heidegger's works from the 1920s focus on the existence of human beings, and their philosophy and Karl Jaspers in 1930 Named his philosophy "Existence philosophy".

Today, in the academic custom, nineteen century is known as serious beginning of existentialism school and Kierkegaard is named as existentialism father.

## **Research Background**

### ***Overview Of The Ideas Of Original Thinkers Of Existentialism***

Four philosopher are the original founders of Existentialism:

1-Soren Kierkegaard, Danish (1813-1855)

2-Friedrich Nietzsche, German (1844-1900)

3-Martin Hadgr-German (1889-1976)

4. Jean-Paul Sartre, French (1905-1980)

The basic theory of this movement goes back to Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard and his criticize and attack against rational philosophy and theology (Popkin, 2010, 419). Kierkegaard whom is more a theologian than a philosopher reacted against Hegel philosophy. He believed Hegel philosophy was not applicable in the life and his philosophy did not correlate to this question "What is the main purpose of human life?" (Popkin, 2010, 420). He said the fundamental question is "What is the meaning of

existence". And what is the truth of existence? But this question is meaningless intellectually because the intellect is incapable of understanding its means. Kierkegaard concluded: questions about the nature of humanity, life and the world are the questions that all grappling with those, however, intellect and tradition philosophy can not give any response to those (Halyng, 1996, 216).

So, man can not be certain knowledge by the intellect. Our sensory experience and historical knowledge is always changing. Being a man means living in a predicament with fear. Generally part of human has animal nature and part of human is rational and these conflict not being resolved (Ibid., 216).

We therefore conclude that the intellect can not be our guide but it is only way to save mankind from ignorance to recognize sad posture in which it is caught, and then with obedience, not by intellect and reason, but by the light of faith save his self from ignorance.

We can highlight four fundamental concept in existentialism: The possibility of being adverse or accidental of life, freedom, responsibility and authenticity. human do not have a nature that is assumed God or nature made it . mankind like any entity is a possible thing nor necessary. He make his self and makes his picks among the options freely. He is responsible for his own choices and should be able to make just what knows true. (And Not behave according to that everyone model) and in this case has done noble work.

providing these points was started by Sartre and have attitude towards ontology. He called it phenomenological ontology and it was based originally on Hidger philosophical achievement (Ahmadi, 2006, 159).

## **Research methodology**

This study is a current research and it was done by reviewing the books in this subject.

## **Research tools**

The instrument used in this study, was books, articles and theoretical studies.

## **The Analysis of Data**

We have used Descriptive studies for analyzing research.

## **Research Findings**

### ***Division of Existentialist***

Sartre in the book Existentialism and emotions on page 13, divided Existentialists into two categories:  
1- Christian existentialists who believes in God. Yaspress and Gabriel Marcel are part of this category.  
2. The second category are those who deny God. Haydger and French existentialists whom Sarter agrees with them also are part of this category. Sarter believes except what is common among existentialists is belief in the primacy of existence over essence (Shariatmadari, 2008, 208, 209).

### ***The Essence Of Existentialism***

Appellation this school is that, according to the philosophers of existence, human existence is more precede than it's essence. In the past philosophies, all creatures, both human and natural objects were divided in the various classes and categories. Each class had a certain nature that all people have common essence in that class. For example, all kinds of trees are "the tree nature" and their enjoyment of this nature, it is possible that all are categorized under the tree. This nature because of forming in the specific conditions is unique and exclusive.

So humans are different in nature and can not be like objects, categorized by type of unit called humanity. According to Sartre, unlike natural objects, first human are existed, understand his existence, enter in the world an and then loses to identify and define his self (ibid., P. 28).

For the same reason, philosophers such as Heidegger to differentiate between what and who and believes that "can be asked of statue nature and asked what the statue is? Because the sculpture has the preset nature and it is definable. But about the man can not asked "what is it?" but only can ask "who he is?" (Wall, 1994, p. 92).

Sometimes for the reason of the primacy of man over nature to argue that man's moral character is indifferent and antagonistic mode. So that, for example, can be either good or bad, who asked to select. This problem indicates that humans preset neither good nor bad. But after the elections and decisions and being in different situations and committing diversity acts, is good or evil (Walter Kaufmann, Forrest, Baird, 2008).

### ***Individualism Of Philosophical Systems***

Existentialism philosophy rejects the utility and the possibility of building a structured and systematic philosophy. Existentialism sweeps philosophy school system like Idealism, Realism and Tomism studied most important human forms with individual viewpoint. Everyone born in this world- lives - choose their own path and create their own meaning (Gotk, 2011, p. 167).

This statement of Kierkegaard famously said: If you had to carve an inscription on my tomb rock so, you write, "that person!" (Anderson, 2008, p. 69). In fact, this interpretation of Kierkegaard represents the desire to touchable and concrete person in the individual nobility school (Kane, 1382, p. 50). Existentialism philosophy that is suspected about absolute subject of the world, also is trustless to the philosophical systems that seek to category human experience in terms of the predict fact with a world snapped (Gotk, 2011, p. 166).

### ***Existentialism and Freedom***

Existentialism pay more attention to human freedom and human is free in his choice and this freedom to choose creates responsibility. He is the creator of his actions and constructive way, in other words human is decisive and constructive of his life. Sartermy said the man condemned to freedom. (Sartre, 2007, p. 40). Existentialism does not believe in the power of emotions and passions.

These things can never be man enough to affect that freedom of movement and free choice to deny him. Just for this reason, the ground for the development of an independent existentialism morality of religion is provided. There is no justification for the disclaimer because man is completely free (Ibid, p. 40-41).

### ***Apprehension and Anxiety in Existentialism***

Kierkegaard's "diaries" writes: the most terrifying thing that has been granted to a human is the right to choose and freedom. When we believe that we make own, humanity is living in complete freedom and he is responsible for doing all the choices, inevitably will happen to apprehension. Kierkegaard refers with the dandruff and trembling title.

Sartre's nausea phrase to refer it. Gabriel Marcel used the word malaise and others the word such as anxiety, fear and misunderstanding. So, Sartre to avoid misunderstanding, stressed that the purpose is not fear that leads to withdrawal and to avoid action. It means a simple apprehension that all those who was responsible in life, they have it. Fear prevents action and decision-making but on the contrary it is a prerequisite (Sartre, 2007, p. 37).

### **Existentialist Philosophy**

The existentialism origin emphasize on this point that existence is prior than nature. This point shows the priority of human mental. At first human enter in the world and then he begin to recognize his self. This existential awareness puts human in a position to develop through the selectivity of the human individual, personal and subjective nature. But existentialist position is ambiguous. Each person is unique and this uniqueness is valuable in the world. But at the same time, anyone who lives in a world is indifferent to human existence. Knowledge of human existence implies a similar awareness about his final death. The main objective of existentialism philosophical thinking is describing the human struggle to achieve their personal nature by choosing. Among the trends that reduce personal choice and individual dignity, standardize, categorize, induction of socio-economic roles and oppression are average. All of these modern education trends conflict to create opportunities for the creation genuine person (Gotak, 2011, p. 168).

### **Existentialism Metaphysics**

Existentialism believes that the purpose of human life itself has not been established in the metaphysical world or in sociological and ideological structure of society. Each person is required to create their life purpose (Gotak, 2011, p. 169).

The world from the perspective of this school is constant and unchangeable. It is an impersonal environment that humans need to accept it and live in it. While human lives in an impersonal environment and alike, but he is a creature who begins his life with his choice. It means while we had to live in the world, we have at the same time gives us the right to choose as we all have the right.

Disciplines and rules that science has discovered is not enough originality, but the desire for safety, which is the desire to get rid of real freedom and genuine horror of the human condition. Human existence in the universe is an accident.

There is no world order or any normal plan for objects that humans to be created within it. Therefore, the man owes nothing to nature but his self. So he preceded his being on nature, which means that if any man should be, there should be (Neler, 2012, p. 82).

## **Existentialism Epistemology**

Existentialism epistemological assume that the individual is responsible for his knowledge. Knowledge stems from one's consciousness and from his knowledge content and feelings as product experience is combined. epistemology in this school is reflected of this recognition and human experience and knowledge is subjective, personal, rational and irrational (Gotak, 2011, p. 177).

Sartre's book "Existentialism and human emotions" defines Existentialism as a belief that it can possible human life and in addition, it points that there are a human essence and mental base or inner human factor in each fact and act (Shariatmadari, 2008, 208).

## **Value of Existentialism**

Existentialism believes that values are not absolute and are not determined by external criteria, but each value is determined by person's free choice. A fundamental value for every person, is his existence. Important values for each person, depending on the circumstances and those are relative. The value is very personal and individual (Shoarinejad, 2012, 539). According to the existentialists ideas the fundamental philosophical issue is valuation and choice.

Values have no root in metaphysical or sociological thinking but they are created through personal choices.

Any outside general criteria for estimating the value can not be applied and the person has to opt out (Gotak, 2011, p. 169).

Sartre believes what one chooses is precious because he can never choose evil. Always, good is selected (Shariatmadari, 2008, 217).

## **Characteristics of the Philosophy of Human Origin or Existence are as Follows:**

### **A) *A protest movement:***

This philosophy is a movement against some forms of classical philosophy and modern society, especially philosophers thinking and beliefs such as Plato and Hegel's ideas that actually paid more attention to the mental people concept than man existence. Existentialism also protest against the inhuman nature in the industry or technology time, absolute science (that says science is just way to recognize

human) and against stockpile movement. In this school idea, industrial society perfect machine to human and a man faced with the danger that comes just a tool or object (Shoarinejad, 2012, 535)

***B) Diagnostic of the situation and unsatisfactory state of man:***

This school strives to know conflicts of human existence and origin of these conflicts and to predict how to overcome them. This school knows human the only concern subject and its leaders, especially Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Sartre have studied the human situation. (Ibid., 535)

***C) Belief in the top officials of existence or presence:***

Existentialism believes in the superiority of human existence and knows it immediately experience of existence or consciousness. It means man realize the presence or existence at first. The main motive of any person is being and recognition (Ibid., 535)

***D) Emphasis on subjective experience:***

Existentialism gives special importance to the life and experience of the person and believes that knowledge is no apart of person. Human inner life is considered with behavior, anxiety and decision in this school (Shoarinejad, 2012, 536).

***E) Recognition of freedom and responsibility:***

An emphasis on personal existence led to an emphasis on freedom and human responsibility. Man is free to select and decision-making and this characteristic create responsibility for him. So man is responsible and is free because he has responsibility (Ibid., 536).

***F) Emphasis on human weakness and insecurity:***

Existentialists respect the man's freedom more than anything, but they also considered their weakness, insecurity, fears and limitations, and are not oblivious their feelings of anxiety, disappointment, fear, guilt, loneliness and death. They believe that man's insignificance create when they feel anxious. (Ibid., 536).

## **Existentialists and Education**

Application of existential philosophy in education simply is not possible. The issues discussed in this philosophy show Education philosophy is a theoretical study of the philosophy of education and believes that should be given attention to the individual of student and so once bring them to realize their true value and benefit from the freedom and personally decide and be responsible to their quality of life (Sjoarinejad, , 2012, 539).

Existentialists believe that the existence moment rise when public aware to their presence in the world as self and this occurs around puberty and it's characteristic is person awareness to his presence among others and the emergence of the knowledge and insights on his own responsibility towards their action. Existentialist education began at the school years and will continue through high school and college. The purpose of education in this course is finding and severing the individual's consciousness. Elements of experience is considered that those are subjective, personal and emotional and those raise questions about good, evil, right and wrong (Gotak, 2011, 176).

They prefer that instead of creating a philosophical system that explain all aspects of human life, philosophize about the human condition. Classification, Standardization, inducing socio-economic roles and injustice which lowered personal choice and individual recognition is known as obstacle. These trends are inconsistent with creating opportunity for creativity of genuine people (Ibid., P. 173). Another



source of society trends and contemporary education that restricts individual's identity is socio-economic pressures that has changed teaching and learning to play a role as well. It defines good citizen as a social success. Given that Van Klumury does not specifically define Education existentialist but believes that education should be inclusive leads to awareness. This knowledge means that students should recognize that as a person should be select consistently, freely, independently and creatively their choices (Gotak, 2011, p. 175).

### **Existentialist Teaching and Learning Method**

Existentialist teacher in his teaching should be democratic and used indirect methods and technology. Never teacher, does not impose his-her personal goals to the student and his task is student guidance (Shoarinejad, 2012, 540).

In teaching method, Socratic dialogue method is an appropriate method for existentialists. It don not cancel the relationship between me and you, it uses dialogue approach, the best type of question can be answered only in the sense of the student's performance. The teacher encourages students to be aware and be able to express their minds (Gotak, 2011, p. 180).

Based on humanistic psychology, in existential teaching try to encourage, facilitate learning or self-examination, and recognize the individual in the broad sense of the word.

Establishing way of existentialist in the classroom requires a delicate balancing, whereby both teachers and students as human beings, to protect his identity. This means that the teacher must constantly avoid of defining students based on age, academic rank, status or group membership (ibid.).

man is not subject but what chooses and creates for himself, this is the first principle of Sartre's philosophy of existentialism. Building self nature and making reliability about himself than others, creates a sense of responsibility in person (Shariatmadari, 2008).

### **Curriculum in Existentialism**

Curriculum in existentialism is including skills and subjects that state real and social facts. It includes human sciences that states human selection. There are topics such as history, literature, language, math, science, etc. are indisputable as fields of knowledge. Learning stage is not in the structure of knowledge or the curriculum but also in the sense that students are lies. Although the existentialist coach may choose a variety of educational methods for his work but should not be allowed to harm any of these methods relationships among "I-you" which should exist between teacher and student (Gotak, 2011).

From the standpoint of this philosophy, no lesson (per se) is not more important than another lesson. Training is important to help that person has the realization of self and awareness of the world. From the perspective of some, this lesson is the natural knowledge and in many other, it includes history, literature, philosophy or art (Neler, 2012, 93).

### **Open School**

John Holt like existentialist coaches wanted to make the students aware of their responsibility to know their options.

He offered open classroom as an environment, which creates great opportunities for choice, So that children by pursuing their interests to achieve learning without being put under pressure by the teacher or school (Gotak, 2011, p. 182).

John Holt, one of the proponents of freedom of children and open education has a practical training to existentialist approach in schools. In the defense of open learning, he stated that children are intelligent, vibrant, curious, eager to learn and unlike traditional schools do not have the usual manner by deception and facetae or are forced to learn. He suggests open class as a suitable environment for learning because it has many facilities to select. This condition causes to children go on learning patiently and without any obligation by teacher or school. Holt spontaneous self motivation and self-advocacy learning is done by the students themselves (ibid.).

## **Conclusion**

The results show that the philosophy of education argue about how and why of education. Philosophy of education had four major approaches, that Existentialism is one of them. The principle of this school is based on the existence. This philosophy was born out of circumstances and is not some curiosity of the human mind. The most important goals of existentialism philosophy is providing an opportunity for free choice and moral. In this school, the value is determined by one's free choice and it is very personal and individual. Existentialist education gives conscious attention to individual about institutions, powers and procedures that limit freedom. Also this philosophy educates this sense that each person is responsible about his identity and everyone should tries to accomplish his personality.

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