

EXISTENTIALISM IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION: SELF-AWARENESS AND FREEDOM OF CHOICE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

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Abstract. This article explores the philosophical roots of existentialism and its impact on the educational process, particularly focusing on the concepts of self-awareness and freedom of choice. The application of existentialism in education reinforces the humanistic foundations of learner-centered education and plays a crucial role in developing students' inner world.

Keywords: existentialism, philosophy of education, individual, self-awareness, freedom, choice, responsibility, humanistic pedagogy.

Introduction. Education is an integral and essential element of human development. The philosophy of education forms the theoretical and ideological foundation of this process. In modern educational systems, approaches that place the individual at the center are gaining increasing importance. Especially relevant are those that focus on helping each person understand their identity, make choices, and determine their life goals independently.

One such approach is existentialism, which in the philosophy of education, emphasizes human existence, the meaning of life, and the freedom of choice. The pedagogical reception of existentialism offers an approach aimed at nurturing individuals who are self-aware, capable of making choices, and taking responsibility for their decisions [1].

Existentialism emerged in Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and offered deep philosophical reflections on human existence, the meaning of life, and inner freedom. Key representatives include Soren Kierkegaard, Martin Heidegger, Karl Jaspers, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Gabriel Marcel.

In existentialism, the main focus is on personal experience, unconscious decisions, self-definition, and accountability. Jean-Paul Sartre states: "*Man first exists, then defines himself.*" [2] This idea portrays a human being as a creature free from stereotypes, who creates their own life path.

Martin Heidegger describes humans as “Dasein” – a being that strives to understand its own existence and questions the essence of “being.” This perspective positions the individual not as a passive receiver but as an active creator of life.

In the philosophy of education, existentialism is considered one of the theoretical foundations of learner-centered education and is based on the following principles:

- **Individualization:** The learner’s interests, inner world, and worldview are taken into account.
- **Facilitating self-awareness:** The learner tries to find their path in life by understanding their “self.”
- **Freedom and choice:** Students are trained to think independently and choose among alternatives.
- **Responsibility:** Through freedom-based choices, learners acquire responsibility for their own lives [3].

Existentialism in education encourages viewing each student as a unique being, which ensures the dominance of humanistic principles in the educational process.

Self-awareness refers to a conscious relationship with one’s desires, needs, values, and life goals. According to existentialist Karl Jaspers, an individual can only fully experience their existence through self-awareness.

Education can serve as a facilitator of this process: reflective tasks, personal writing, and the analysis of real-life problems contribute to self-discovery.

Sartre emphasized that human freedom grants the right to choose, but this freedom is not spontaneous — it manifests through conscious actions, internal struggles, and accepting responsibility. Implementing these principles in the learning process helps to raise independent thinkers and active participants.

Existential Approach in Pedagogical Practice

In modern education, the existentialist approach is reflected in the following ways:

- **Dialogical communication** – the teacher listens to the student and values their opinion.
- **Choice-based learning** – students are given the right to choose topics, activities, or assignment formats.
- **Analysis of real-life issues** – students are guided to make moral decisions by analyzing personal life situations.
- **Reflection techniques** – journaling, exploring existential questions, and making ethical choices are encouraged.

Through these methods, students develop internal awareness, respect for others, freedom of choice, and a sense of responsibility [5].

Conclusion.

Existentialism, both as a philosophical and pedagogical approach, places the individual at the center. It encourages self-awareness, free choice, and the

development of responsibility for personal decisions. In contemporary education, this approach supports the formation of a personalized, humane, and socially conscious individual. Therefore, the ideas of existentialism must be thoroughly studied and applied in educational practice.

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