

Fourteenth Edition

Those Who Can, Teach



Chapter Nine

What Are the Philosophical Foundations of American Education?

PART III Foundations and the Future

9

What Are the Philosophical Foundations of American Education?

InTASC Standards 2 and 9

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 9.1 Define, describe, and explain the nature of philosophical inquiry.
- 9.2 Identify the four branches of philosophy important to educators.
- 9.3 Explain the four schools of educational philosophy common in our schools.
- 9.4 Identify and outline two educational psychology theories that influence our schools.
- 9.5 Describe your own emerging philosophy of education.

Truth OR Fiction?

- T** A teacher's religious views should have no influence on his or her philosophy of education.
- F** Progressive educators view nature as being in flux, as ever changing. Therefore, teachers consider knowledge as something that must continually be redefined and rediscovered to keep up with that change.
- T** A late-night, college ball session is, by definition, nonphilosophical.

The Terrain of Philosophy

Metaphysics	The nature of the real world and existence
Epistemology	The nature and origin of knowledge
Axiology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Values and value judgments• Includes ethics and aesthetics
Logic	Reasoning: includes deductive and inductive reasoning

Your Philosophy of Education Self-Inventory

Up CLOSE

Your Philosophy of Education Self-Inventory



Following are 20 statements about teaching, students, schools, and the curriculum. Using a five-point scale (where 5 = strongly agree; 4 = agree; 3 = neutral; 2 = disagree; and 1 = strongly disagree), indicate your beliefs and feelings about each of the following statements. To gain the greatest insight from this survey, you should try to have your "average" ranking be a "3."

- 1. Essentially, children learn by doing and by discovering things on their own.
- 2. The goal of schooling should be to rigorously prepare children to be productive and engaged members of society.
- 3. The teacher's role is to respond to learners' information needs, not to be a mere information dispenser.
- 4. Teachers should be experts in content knowledge, ready to vigorously engage students in the culture's accumulated wisdom.
- 5. Older students ought to be trained primarily to uncover key ideas and truths through Socratic questioning.
- 6. The teachers' role is to stimulate students' interests and then to be effective facilitators of those interests.
- 7. The true purpose of an education is to make us strong enough to overcome the evils of society.
- 8. Students are in school primarily to acquire the knowledge that has lit the way for humankind from our earliest years.
- 9. Because we live in a democracy, schools should be built around democratic principles, with a major focus on learning how to exist together in democratic harmony.
- 10. Students are in school to listen and to learn the knowledge and skills that they will need to function and prosper in a modern economy.
- 11. Education is serious business, so teachers should avoid methodological frills and focus on tried-and-true teaching strategies.
- 12. Schools should aid students in becoming socially adept and politically literate so they

can take up their responsibilities as democratic citizens.

- 13. Instructionally, teachers must focus on creating an interesting and productive learning environment and, whenever possible, on individualizing instruction.
- 14. Elementary schools should concentrate on teaching basic skills, whereas secondary schools should focus students' learning on disciplined knowledge and scholastic achievement.
- 15. Students are naturally good, and their self-esteem must be protected and fostered.
- 16. During the elementary school years, teachers should ensure that students master the basics, which will enable older students to study materials reflecting universal themes containing humanity's enduring knowledge.
- 17. Teachers have to be skilled in group processing strategies and be able to get students to work together on projects.
- 18. The teachers' primary concern should be teaching a common body of useful knowledge rather than focusing on cultivating the intellect, self-esteem, or democratic living.
- 19. The curriculum should be fluid, based on the interests of learners, but students should not be forced to study.
- 20. The schools should be devoted to a changeless vision of what is essential for human beings to know.

Find the answers to your self-inventory in the next section.

Interpreting Your Self-Inventory

Each of the 20 questions to which you have responded represents one of the four philosophies of education covered in depth in this chapter. The four philosophies and the five statements primarily associated with them are listed here. Fill in the score you gave each statement and then add up the topic score for each philosophy. The maximum score for any philosophy is 25, and the minimum is 5. These numbers will give you an indication of your philosophy of education preferences as you begin a closer analysis of this topic.

Four Schools of Educational Philosophy

Subject-Centered	Perennialism	Essentialism
Child-Centered	Romanticism	Progressivism

Perennialism

- Views nature and human nature as constant, unchanging
- Purpose of life is to search for constant, changeless truth
- Education develops mental discipline needed to search for eternal truths
- Curriculum is based on timeless classics in Western culture, such as Great Books

Essentialism

- Views the mind as the central element of reality
- Learning happens through contact with the physical world and reasoning from observations
- Curriculum based on a core of essential knowledge for living a productive life

Romanticism

- Nature and human nature are preferable to the evils of organized society
- Needs and interests of the individual student are more important than those of society
- Learning is self-guided and self-paced
- Curriculum is led by child's curiosity, rather than set by teachers

Progressivism

- Views nature as ever-changing
- Knowledge must be constantly redefined and rediscovered to keep up with constant change in the world
- Purpose of education is to learn to solve problems and discover knowledge
- Curriculum based on problems to solve, either created by teacher or discovered by students
- School should be democratic to provide practice for participation in democratic government

Behaviorism

- People learn from the consequences of their actions and those of others
- Behavior that is rewarded is more likely to be repeated
- Behavior that is punished or not rewarded is less likely to be repeated
- Curriculum should be based on clearly defined behaviors which students are rewarded for achieving

Constructivism

- Knowledge must be constructed in the mind by each learner, rather than transmitted to students by the teacher
- Learners constantly reconstruct their mental knowledge as new information becomes available
- Curriculum should involve students in real situations that let them use and reconstruct prior knowledge as new information is presented

Developing Your Own Philosophy of Education

- An ongoing process, synthesis
- Requires reflection and experience
- Eclecticism is not an excuse for sloppy thinking

Eclecticism

- *Eclecticism* embodies the idea that truth can be found anywhere, and therefore people should select from various doctrines, systems, and sources.
- The eclectic teacher selects what he or she believes to be the most attractive features of several philosophies
- At its heart is the recognition that no philosophy of education is able to dictate the ideal methodology or learning strategies for all situations or all students.