

A Comparison of Existentialism and Scholasticism in Teaching Methods: A Philosophical Analysis and Its Implications in Education

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Abstract

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This article aims to compare the teaching methods based on existentialism and scholasticism, with a focus on their philosophical implications in education. Existentialism, which emphasizes individual freedom and the search for meaning in life, offers a more flexible and personalized approach to the learning process. In contrast, scholasticism, rooted in medieval tradition, places greater emphasis on logical reasoning and the acceptance of dogma in education. Through a philosophical analysis, this article explores the fundamental differences between these two schools of thought in the context of teaching, and how each approach impacts student development and educational goals. The implications of these philosophies will be discussed in terms of their effectiveness in shaping student character and critical intelligence in the modern era. Thus, this article provides insights into the important role of philosophy in shaping future educational methods and objectives.

Keywords:

Existentialism, Scholasticism, Education, Learning Methods.

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INTRODUCTION

Education, as one of the fundamental aspects in the development of individuals and society, cannot be separated from the influence of various philosophical schools which shape views on the goals, methods and processes of learning. Two philosophical schools that have had a major impact on educational thinking are existentialism and scholasticism. These two schools, although originating from different philosophical traditions, provide diverse perspectives on how education should be organized and what should be the main focus in the learning process. Existentialism, which developed especially in the 20th century, prioritizes individual freedom, authenticity, and the search for meaning in life as central principles in education. Meanwhile, scholasticism, which originates from the medieval philosophical tradition, places greater emphasis on rational thinking, logic, and the authority of classical teachings in determining the correct ways of learning.

Existentialism in education encourages a more flexible approach, based on personal experience, and prioritizes students' freedom to explore and find the meaning of their own lives. In this approach, the role of educators is



more as a facilitator who guides students to discover their potential and identity. In contrast, scholasticism emphasized a stricter structure in the learning process, with the aim of teaching knowledge that already existed and was accepted as objective truth. In educational systems influenced by scholasticism, emphasis was placed on academic discipline, mastery of classical texts, and the application of logic as a means of achieving a deeper understanding of the world and existence.

The conflict between these two views creates challenges in designing curricula and learning methods that not only meet academic standards, but also take into account students' overall personal development. On the one hand, existentialism offers learning that is more oriented towards students as individuals who are free to choose and shape their lives, while scholasticism prioritizes structured learning by emphasizing intellectual discipline and respect for established traditions. As a result, there is a tension in modern education between individual freedom and the importance of academic structure.

This research aims to analyze the comparison between existentialism and scholasticism in the educational context, as well as its implications for the learning methods used in the education system. This research will also discuss how these two philosophies can complement each other in designing a more holistic educational approach, which accommodates students' freedom of thought and creativity, while still maintaining academic discipline and intellectual integrity. By analyzing the contribution of these two philosophical schools, it is hoped that this research can provide deeper insight into the potential for integrating the principles of existentialism and scholasticism in the development of a more balanced and comprehensive education. Education is a process that not only involves the transfer of knowledge, but also the formation of character and individual understanding of the world around them. (Winarti, 2022) In this context, educational philosophy plays an important role in determining the goals, methods and content of education. Existentialism and Scholasticism are two philosophical schools that offer different perspectives on the goals and processes of education. Existentialism focuses on individuals and subjective experiences, while Scholasticism prioritizes logic and systematization of knowledge. (Rahma, Rohmah, & Bakar, 2022) This research aims to discuss these two schools in depth, as well as their implications in education.

Existentialism and Scholasticism are two philosophical schools that have very different approaches and goals in the educational context. (Nurlisma, 2022) Existentialism emerged in the 20th century and emphasizes the importance of individual experience, freedom, and the search for meaning in life. Philosophers such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Søren Kierkegaard argue that each individual has the responsibility to determine the meaning and purpose of his or her own life. (A. M. Harahap, 2020) In education, this approach encourages students to explore their identity and understand

personal experiences as part of the learning process. On the other hand, Scholasticism, which developed in the Middle Ages, emphasized the use of logic and systematic analysis to understand classical religious and philosophical teachings. With figures such as Thomas Aquinas and Anselm of Canterbury, Scholasticism attempted to integrate religious belief with rational thought. This approach emphasizes the importance of debate and dialogue in the learning process, so that students can achieve a deeper understanding of the truth.

This research will discuss these two schools further, explaining existentialism and scholasticism in education which is a philosophical analysis of learning methods. Apart from that, it will evaluate how existentialism and scholasticism contribute to the development of education and teaching in the modern era. By understanding these two perspectives, we can see how they make a significant contribution to the way we understand the learning process and educational goals in a broader context.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A. Existentialism

Existentialism is a philosophical school that emphasizes individual freedom, subjective experience, and the search for the meaning of life. Philosophers such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Søren Kierkegaard are key figures in this school. (Syarifah, Utomo, Haris, & Mansur, 2023) Existentialism believes that individuals have the freedom to make choices and are responsible for their actions. (Sultani & Khojir, 2023) In the educational context, this approach emphasizes the importance of personal experience and the development of individual identity. Existentialism is a philosophical school that focuses on individual experience and the meaning of life. The three basic principles of Existentialism which are very important in the educational context are individual freedom, subjective experience, and the search for meaning. (H. Harahap, Salminawati, Lubis, & Harahap, 2022) The following is a more detailed explanation of each of these principles.

1. Individual Freedom

Individual freedom is at the heart of existentialist thought. In this view, each person is considered to have the freedom to make choices and is responsible for the actions taken. Jean-Paul Sartre, one of the main figures in existentialism, emphasized that "we are condemned to be free," meaning that freedom is an inevitable condition for humans. In the educational context, this principle encourages students to explore their interests and talents without limitations from social norms or external pressure. (Rangkuti, 2020)

Education that prioritizes individual freedom provides space for students to learn independently and develop a unique world view. (Rasmini & Amrullah, 2023) By facilitating the process of making

decisions and choices, existentialist education prepares students to face the complexities of life with courage and self-confidence.

2. Subjective Experience

The second principle of existentialism is subjective experience. Every individual has different experiences and perceptions of the world, and this understanding is very important in the learning process. In the existentialist view, personal experience is considered the main source of knowledge and meaning. (Chamidi, 2022) Therefore, education must encourage students to explore and reflect on their own experiences.

By integrating subjective experiences in the curriculum, students are invited to engage in more meaningful and relevant learning. For example, through discussions, experience-based projects, and personal reflection, students can relate knowledge to their daily lives. This not only enriches the learning process, but also helps students build a stronger identity and self-understanding.

3. Search for Meaning

The search for meaning is a fundamental principle in existentialism, where individuals are required to search for purpose and meaning in their lives. Philosophers such as Viktor Frankl argued that the search for meaning is the primary motivation in human life. In the educational context, this means that students must be encouraged to question and explore the meaning of what they learn. (Nisa, 2020)

Education that focuses on the search for meaning helps students understand the relationship between their knowledge, values, and life experiences. By encouraging students to find meaning in learning, they will be more motivated and engaged in the learning process. (Liviani, 2023) This can also equip them with tools to face life's challenges, as well as help them build a deeper perspective on the world around them.

B. Scholasticism

Scholasticism is a philosophical school that emerged and developed in Europe in the Middle Ages, which focused on the use of logic and systematic analysis to understand religious teachings and classical philosophy. This school aims to integrate religious beliefs with rational thinking, thereby creating a deeper understanding of truth. (Parid & Rosadi, 2020) Important figures in scholasticism, such as Thomas Aquinas and Anselm of Canterbury, played a significant role in developing this method.

Thomas Aquinas, for example, was known for his ability to harmonize Christian teachings with Aristotelian thought. He uses logic to develop arguments supporting the existence of God and explains theological concepts rationally. Anselm, on the other hand, is famous for his argument stating that thoughts about God are proof of His existence, which is known as the ontological argument. (Su'eb, 2022)

Scholasticism also puts forward the dialectical method, where students are invited to debate and analyze various views. This method not only enriches students' understanding of the concepts being taught, but also trains critical and analytical thinking skills. Thus, scholasticism became the basis for the development of education in Europe, especially in the context of universities that prioritize the study of theology and philosophy. (Firdaus, 2020)

Scholasticism as a school of educational philosophy has several basic principles that guide the learning and understanding process. The three principles are logic and rationality, integration, and the dialectical method. (Aini & Prastowo, 2022) The following is an explanation of each of these principles.

1. Logic and Rationality

Logic and rationality are the main foundations in the scholastic approach. This school emphasizes the importance of using reason and logical thinking to analyze and understand religious and philosophical teachings. (Lutfiana, Mispani, & Jaenullah, 2023) In an educational context, students are taught to think critically and use logic in constructing arguments, so that they can explore complex concepts in a systematic way.

A learning process based on logic helps students develop strong analytical skills. They learn to evaluate evidence, consider various points of view, and build conclusions based on valid reasons. (Maksum, Miftahul Ulum, & Umihani, 2023) Thus, education that applies this principle not only prepares students to understand the material, but also to face intellectual challenges outside the classroom.

2. Integration

Integration is the second principle in scholasticism which prioritizes integration between religious beliefs and rational knowledge. (Setiawan, 2023) This school tries to combine religious teachings with philosophical thinking, thereby creating a holistic understanding. Figures such as Thomas Aquinas attempted to harmonize Christian teachings with Aristotelian philosophy, showing that faith and reason do not conflict with each other, but can complement each other. (Waluyo, 2023)

In the educational context, the principle of integration invites students to see the relationship between various scientific disciplines and religious values. By understanding these connections, students can develop a more comprehensive and in-depth view of the world. Education that prioritizes integration also encourages students to apply the knowledge gained in the context of everyday life, making education more meaningful. (Islamiyati, 2022)

3. Dialectical Method

The dialectical method is a typical approach in scholasticism that involves dialogue and debate as a way to explore the truth. In this method,

students are encouraged to question, discuss and analyze various existing views. (Suriyati, Hasmiati, Jamaluddin, & P, 2022) This process not only enriches students' understanding, but also trains critical thinking abilities and communication skills.

Through the dialectical method, students learn to appreciate different perspectives and develop solid arguments. They are not only taught to receive information passively, but also to be actively involved in the learning process. (Ahmad, 2022) Thus, education that applies this method helps students become independent and open thinkers, ready to face the complexity of issues in the real world

METHOD

This research uses library research methods (*library research*) to analyze the philosophical thoughts of existentialism and scholasticism in the context of education, with a focus on their implications for learning methods. This research method was chosen because it allows researchers to explore various written sources that discuss these two schools of philosophy and their application in the world of education without the need to conduct field research. The researcher relied on existing literature to conduct an in-depth theoretical analysis of these concepts. The first step in this research is collecting library sources. Researchers collected various classic works of philosophy written by important figures in existentialism such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Martin Heidegger, and Søren Kierkegaard, as well as works by scholastic figures such as Thomas Aquinas and Albertus Magnus. Apart from that, researchers also looked for scientific journals, articles and books that discuss the relationship between the philosophies of existentialism and scholasticism and education, as well as the application of these two philosophies in modern education.

After the library sources have been collected, the next step is a critical analysis of the existing literature. Researchers conducted an in-depth study of the concepts proposed by existentialist and scholastic philosophers, especially those related to education. This analysis includes an understanding of the existentialist view which emphasizes individual freedom, authenticity and the search for the meaning of life, compared to scholasticism which focuses more on the rational structure, logic and authority of traditional teachings in education. Apart from that, researchers also discuss the differences and similarities in the application of learning methods based on these two philosophical schools. Existentialism tends to support flexible, experience-based, and more individual-centered learning approaches. Meanwhile, scholasticism encouraged the application of systematic, structured learning methods, and more respect for the authority of classical texts as the basis of teaching. These two schools have very different characteristics, but both make significant contributions to educational theory and curriculum development.

After this analysis, the researcher then prepared a synthesis between the two philosophical thoughts in the educational context. Researchers compare these two schools and try to find a meeting point between the values contained in existentialism and scholasticism. This synthesis aims to understand how these two philosophies can complement each other in developing a more holistic and balanced learning method, which considers individual freedom while prioritizing the importance of a clear academic structure.

In the next stage, the researcher discusses the implications of existentialism and scholasticism theories for current educational practices. Researchers will explore how these two philosophies influence curriculum design, teaching methodology, and relationships between teachers and students. This discussion aims to provide deeper insight into how education can integrate the values of individual freedom advocated by existentialism with the discipline and mastery of knowledge emphasized in scholasticism. The researcher also drew up conclusions which include the main findings of this research. This conclusion will provide recommendations regarding how these two philosophical thoughts can be integrated in the contemporary education system. Researchers will also suggest the possibility of implementing learning methods that accommodate students' freedom of thought and creativity (as taught in existentialism) while still respecting the importance of academic and disciplinary structures that exist in scholasticism.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Comparison of Existentialism and Scholasticism

Existentialism and Scholasticism are two philosophical schools that have very different approaches and goals in the educational context. (Salas, 2024) Existentialism emphasizes individual experience, freedom, and the search for meaning, with the assumption that each individual is responsible for finding their own purpose in life through subjective experience. (Natadireja & Nurachadijat, 2023) The learning approach in existentialism is flexible, where students are encouraged to explore their interests and talents freely, while teachers function as facilitators who help students in the process. In contrast, Scholasticism focused on the use of logic and systematic analysis to understand religious and philosophical teachings, seeking to integrate religious belief with rational thought. In scholasticism, the learning approach is more structural and systematic, where students are involved in dialogue and debate through dialectical methods, with the teacher as a source of knowledge who guides them. (Mustadi & Qomaruddin, 2023)

The aim of education in existentialism is to help individuals find the meaning and purpose of their lives, while in scholasticism, the focus is on developing critical and analytical thinking skills as well as a deep

understanding of religious and philosophical values. (Dewantoro, Masitoh, & Nursalim, 2022) The implications of these two streams in education produce individuals who are creative and open-minded in existentialism, as well as students who are able to think logically and systematically in scholasticism. By understanding these differences, educators can formulate a more holistic and relevant approach in modern education. (Maskhuroh & Haris, 2022)

Comparative Table of Existentialism and Scholasticism

No	Aspect	Existentialism	Scholasticism
1	Main Focus	Individual experience, freedom, and the search for meaning	Use of logic and systematic analysis
2	Learning Approach	Flexible, encouraging exploration of interests and talents	Structural, prioritizing the dialectical method
3	Student Roles	Active and free, involved in the learning process	Participant in dialogue and debate
4	Teacher's Role	Facilitator who helps student exploration	A source of knowledge that guides students

Existentialism and Scholasticism have very different focuses in the educational context. Existentialism emphasizes individual experience, freedom, and the search for meaning, where each individual is considered to have the responsibility to find their own purpose in life through subjective experience. In contrast, Scholasticism focuses on the use of logic and systematic analysis to understand religious teachings and classical philosophy, seeking to integrate religious beliefs with rational thinking to produce a comprehensive understanding of truth. (Witono, Haris, & Mansur, 2023) In terms of learning approaches, existentialism prioritizes flexibility, encouraging students to explore their interests and talents freely, while Scholasticism uses a more structural approach, with students engaging in debate and analysis through dialectical methods. The role of students in existentialist education is very active and free, where they are expected to explore personal experiences and build meaning from the learning process. (El-Yunusi, Safiani, & Mahbubah, 2023) On the other hand, in Scholasticism, students act as participants who are involved in dialogue, analyzing various views, and building logical arguments. The role of the teacher is also different; in existentialism, the teacher functions as a facilitator who creates an environment supporting students' freedom and creativity, while in Scholasticism, the teacher acts as a source of knowledge who guides students through methods of analysis and debate.

By understanding these differences, educators can formulate teaching methods that are more appropriate to students' needs and characteristics, as well as creating a more meaningful learning experience. (Imroatun & Ilzamudin, 2020) The details of the comparison of existentialism and scholasticism can be seen from the following aspects.

1. Main Focus

Existentialism and Scholasticism had very different focuses. Existentialism emphasizes individual experience, freedom, and the search for meaning. In this view, each individual is considered to have the responsibility to find his or her own purpose in life through subjective experience. (Zulkhaidir, Yoga Febrian, & Sari, 2023) Meanwhile, Scholasticism focuses on the use of logic and systematic analysis to understand classical religious and philosophical teachings. This school tries to integrate religious beliefs with rational thinking, resulting in a comprehensive understanding of truth.

2. Learning Approach

The learning approach in these two streams is also different. Existentialism promotes a flexible approach, where students are encouraged to explore their interests and talents freely. The learning process in existentialism is oriented towards developing individual identity and personal reflection. (Tolchah, 2020) In contrast, Scholasticism uses a more structural and systematic approach. Here, students engage in debate and analysis through the dialectical method, where arguments and counter-arguments are confronted to achieve deeper understanding.

3. Student Role

The role of students in existentialist education is very active and free. Students are considered as individuals who have the capacity to explore and determine their own path in learning. In this context, they are encouraged to explore personal experiences and build meaning from their learning process. (Muhlasin & Salik, 2022) On the other hand, in Scholasticism, students act as participants involved in dialogue and debate. They are expected to analyze various views and construct logical arguments, so their role is more focused on understanding and evaluating concepts.

4. Teacher's Role

The role of the teacher in these two streams is also different. In existentialism, teachers function as facilitators who help students in the process of exploration and reflection. They create an environment that supports student freedom and creativity. Meanwhile, in Scholasticism, teachers act as sources of knowledge who guide students through methods of analysis and debate. (Afifah, Nurjaman, & Fatkhulloh, 2022) Teachers here are considered to have authority in providing a deep understanding of philosophical and theological teachings.

B. Implications in Education

The Existentialist approach to education can produce individuals who are creative and have self-awareness. By providing space for students to explore experiences and choose their own paths, this education helps form authentic identities and life goals. (Junaidi & Hasanah, 2021) On the other hand, the Scholasticism approach can produce students who think critically and analytically, are able to integrate various scientific disciplines, and have a strong understanding of religious and philosophical values. The Existentialist approach to education focuses on developing individuals as unique beings and having the potential to create meaning in their lives. This philosophy encourages students to explore their personal experiences, giving them the freedom to choose and determine their own life path. (Iqbal, 2023) In this context, education is not only seen as a transfer of knowledge, but as a process that helps students discover their identity. By providing space for exploration, students can understand themselves better and identify the values that are important to them. This allows them to form life goals that are authentic and relevant to their experiences.

One important aspect of this approach is the emphasis on subjective experience. Existentialism assumes that each individual has a different perspective on the world, and personal experience is the key to understanding human existence. In education, this means that the curriculum must be structured in a way that respects and facilitates student experiences. Teaching methods based on dialogue and reflection allow students to explore their own thoughts, ask questions, and find answers that fit their views. This process not only enriches their understanding, but also increases their self-confidence and ability to think critically. (Sudrajat & Sufiyana, 2020)

The existentialist approach also includes the importance of the emotional and social in the learning process. Students not only learn from books, but also from their interactions with other people. Strong social relationships can help students feel more connected and motivated in their learning. (Maharani, 2023) Here, teachers act as guides who support students in exploring their emotional experiences. By creating a safe and inclusive learning environment, students are encouraged to share their stories and perspectives, which in turn enriches the collective learning experience. However, the existentialist approach also faces challenges. One of the main challenges is how to integrate individual freedom with social responsibility. Although students are given the freedom to explore and choose their paths, it is important for them to understand the impact of their choices on other people and society. (Maharani, 2023) Therefore, existentialist education needs to emphasize ethical and moral values, so that students do not only pursue personal interests, but also consider collective welfare.

C. Scholasticism Approach in Education

On the other hand, the Scholasticism approach emphasizes the importance of logic and systematic analysis in the educational process. This school developed in the Middle Ages and tried to integrate religious teachings with rational thinking. In an educational context, scholasticism encourages students to understand and analyze classical texts and religious teachings in a logical and structured way. (Samsiyah, 2022) This approach emphasizes that knowledge can be obtained through systematic investigation and rational argumentation.

One of the characteristic features of the scholastic approach is the dialectical method, where students are trained to discuss and debate various views. In this method, students are not only expected to receive information, but also to question and analyze existing arguments. This process not only improves critical thinking skills, but also helps students build effective communication skills. (Romli, Fajar Shodiq, Defri Juliansyah, Mawardi, & Yusron Maulana El-Yunusi, 2023) By practicing listening to and responding to other people's arguments, students learn to appreciate different perspectives and build deeper understanding.

The scholasticism approach also focuses on the integration of various scientific disciplines. Students are invited to see the relationship between various concepts and teachings, so that they can develop a holistic understanding. For example, when studying philosophy, students can be invited to consider the ethical implications of those teachings in a religious context. (Alfatih, 2023) In this way, education not only produces discrete knowledge, but also creates meaningful connections between disciplines.

In scholasticism, the role of the teacher is very important. Teachers are considered a source of knowledge who guides students through the learning process. They not only convey information, but also invite students to think critically and deeply about what they are learning. By asking challenging questions and encouraging students to analyze, teachers help students develop a strong and comprehensive understanding of the topic being taught. (Andreani, Salminawati, & Usiono, 2023)

Although the scholastic approach offers many benefits, such as critical and analytical thinking skills, there are also challenges that need to be faced. One challenge is the risk of placing too much emphasis on logic and analysis to the point of ignoring the emotional and social aspects of learning. In an effort to produce rational and critical students, it is important to ensure that education remains relevant to the complex and diverse human experience

CONCLUSION

This research has revealed that although existentialism and scholasticism have very different approaches to educational philosophy, both have important contributions in forming effective and meaningful learning methods. Existentialism, with its emphasis on individual freedom, authenticity, and the search for meaning in life, advocates a more flexible, experience-based, and student-centered approach. In this context, education should provide space for students to explore their potential and make decisions based on their free choices, which in turn facilitates deeper and more personalized learning. In contrast, scholasticism, which emphasized rational, systematic thinking, and the authority of classical teachings, provided a clear structure and disciplined methodology for learning. In this approach, education is more about directing students to master established knowledge through a structured approach, with a focus on in-depth and objective intellectual development. Therefore, the learning method applied in scholasticism prioritizes text-based learning and proven thinking, which aims to form a strong intellectual character.

Although these two philosophies offer different approaches, this research concludes that they can complement each other in modern education. The integration of existentialist principles which provide space for freedom of thought and creativity with a scholastic approach which provides intellectual discipline and a deep understanding of knowledge can produce a more holistic curriculum. Thus, ideal education is one that is able to balance individual freedom with academic discipline, creating an environment that not only develops intellectual abilities, but also enriches students' life experiences as a whole. This research also provides recommendations for designing a more flexible but still structured education system, which allows students to develop both cognitively and emotionally. By accommodating both, education can become a means for forming a more complete character, equipping students with the skills needed to face life's challenges more wisely and responsibly.

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