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Ministry of Higher Education
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Foundion Education

CHAPTER 5

Educational Philosophies

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Learning Objectives

- Describe different philosophies of education
- Describe characteristics of one philosophy of education
- Connect characteristics of one philosophy of education to instructional methods and classroom management
- Write a brief I-statement on students' emerging philosophy of education
- Differentiate between an educational philosophy and ideology





Pre-Reading Activity

Think and write on the following guiding questions

- What does being teacher mean?
- What are the aspects that make teachers what teachers are?
- What should be taught?
- How should it be taught?
- Why is it important to teach....(insert content)?
- What is knowledge?
- How does knowledge become learned by students?
- What is the relationship between teacher and student?



Educational Philosophies

5.1:

Foundations of Educational Philosophy

5.2:

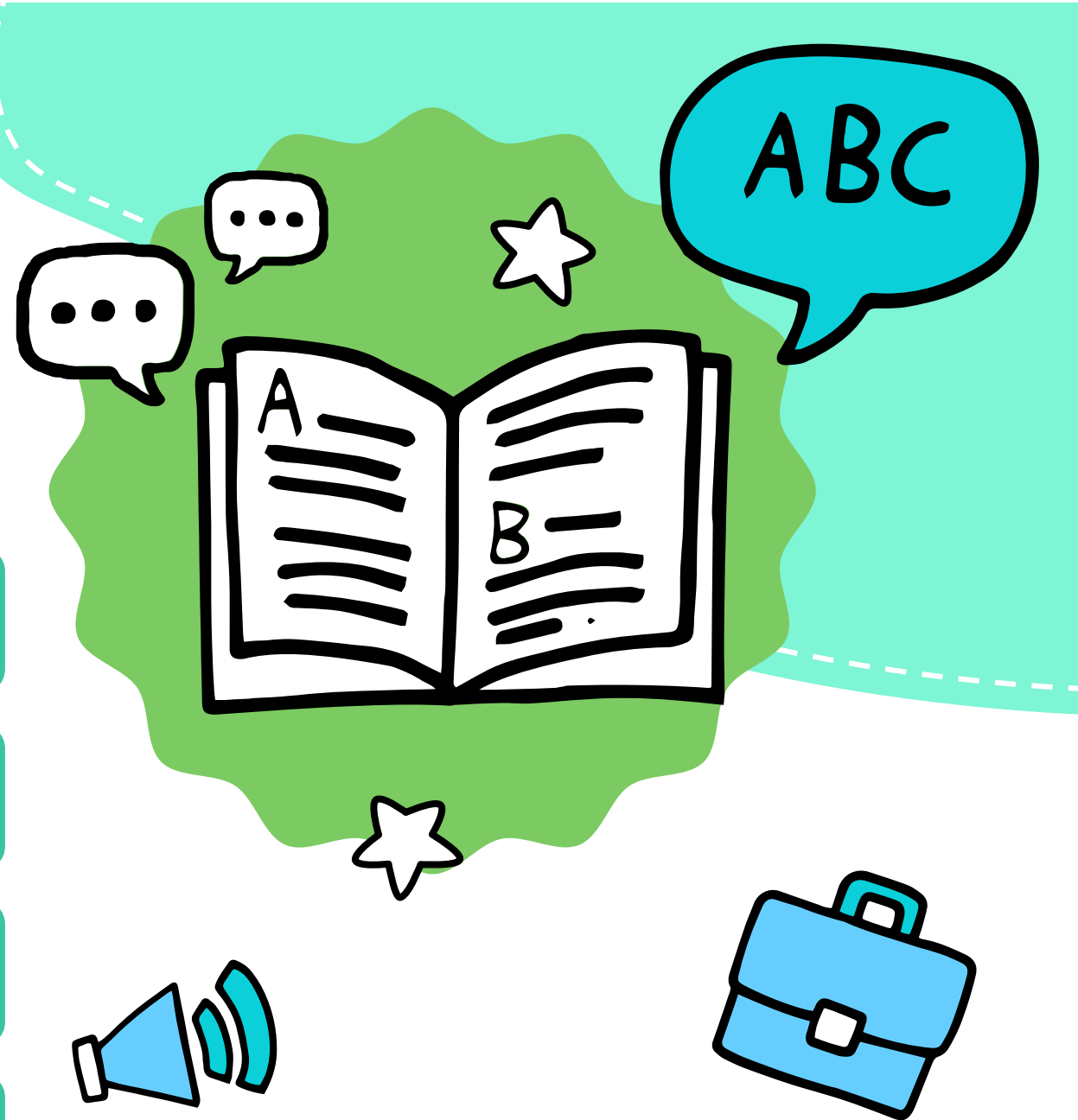
Ontological Frameworks of Philosophy

5.3:

Philosophical Perspective of Education

5.4:

Educational Psychology





5.1: Foundations of Educational Philosophy

A philosophy grounds or guides practice in the study of existence and knowledge while developing an ontology (the study of being) on what it means for something or someone to be—or exist. Educational philosophy, then, provides a foundation which constructs and guides the ways knowledge is generated and passed on to others. Therefore, it is of critical import that teachers begin to develop a clear understanding of philosophical traditions and how the philosophical underpinnings inform their educational philosophies; because, a clear educational philosophy will help guide and develop cohesive reasons for how each teacher designs classroom spaces and learning interactions with both teachers and students. A clear philosophy also frames the curriculum along a spectrum from teacher-centered curriculum to student-centered curriculum to society-centered curriculum.

Over the course of history, philosophy has had several paradigm shifts that influence teaching and learning. Each of these paradigm shifts altered the ontology, epistemology, axiology and school of philosophy, which also shaped what it means to be a teacher within each historical era. While Occidental metaphysical traditions are grounded in the tradition of the Ancient Greeks and the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, philosophical traditions from the 19th century helped ground the early foundations of educational philosophy and the development of public education in Europe and the United States.

“What does it mean to be?” is the guiding question of ontology, and stemming from one’s stance on this foundational question, a general structure (Table 1) guides an educator’s general stance on epistemology, axiology, educational philosophy, and psychological orientations; these, then, inform, or should inform, an educator’s choice of instructional methods and classroom management techniques.

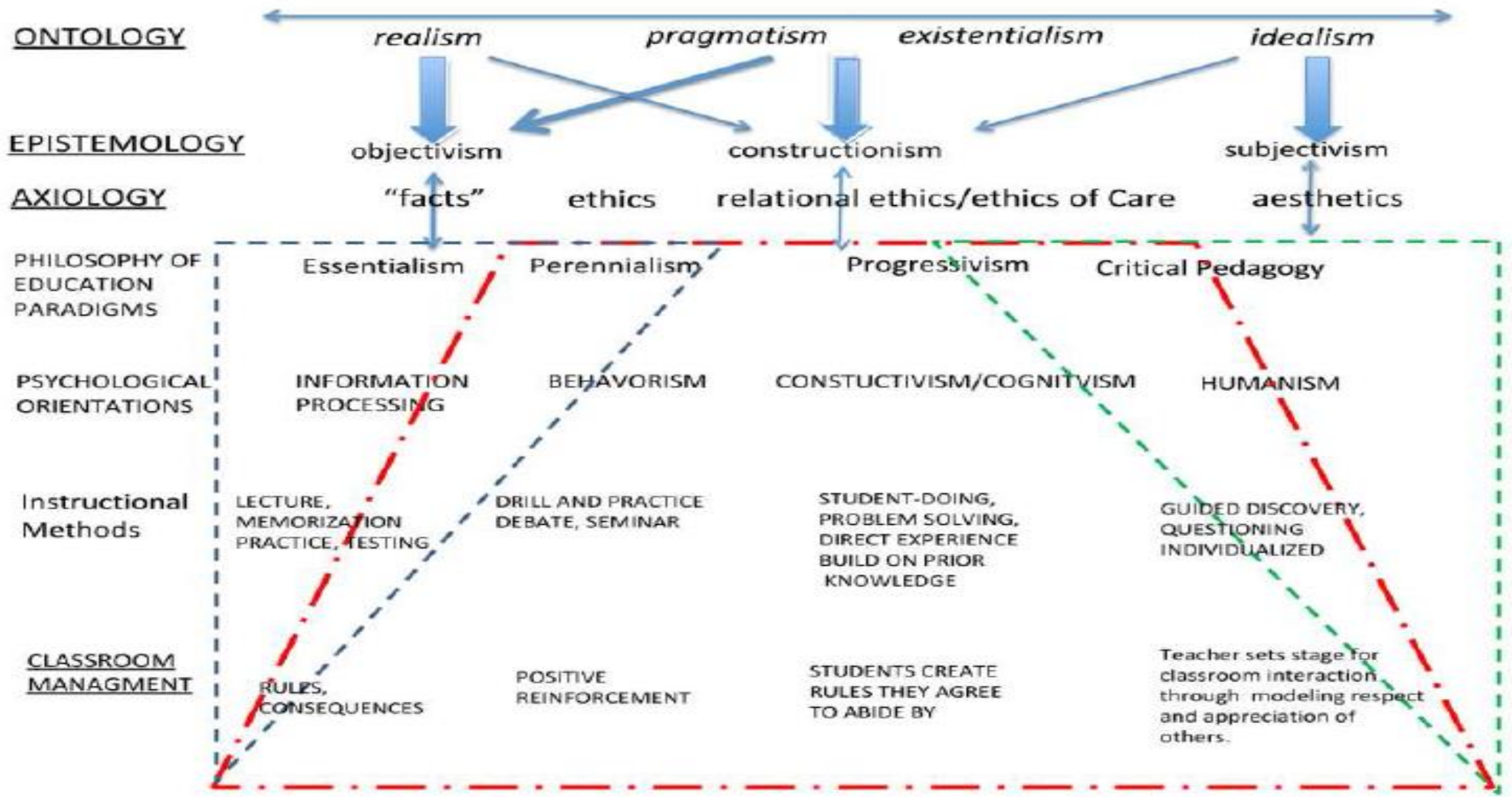


Table 1: Philosophies of Education Matrix



Visual Literacy Activity

Rather than focusing on the difficult and the abstract, let's focus on the concrete and work our way up. Use Table 1 to help answer the following questions:

1. Choose one instructional activity from Table 1 you feel is an effective method of instruction. Explain why?
2. Choose one classroom management technique from Table 1 you feel is an effective classroom management technique. Explain why?
3. Do your two choices align in a similar area of the outlined shape? If so, explain why they might align? If not, explain why they might not align.
4. Trace your two choices up the table to psychological orientations, educational philosophy, axiology, epistemology, and ontology. Does this line align with where you placed on the philosophy of education assessment survey? If so, you are beginning to construct an outline for your philosophy of education. If not, you may need to explore more on what you feel is important in being a teacher. In either case, you will use the rest of this chapter to help guide your (re)developing philosophy of education.



5.2: Ontological Frameworks of Philosophy

There are four main ontological perspectives in educational philosophy:

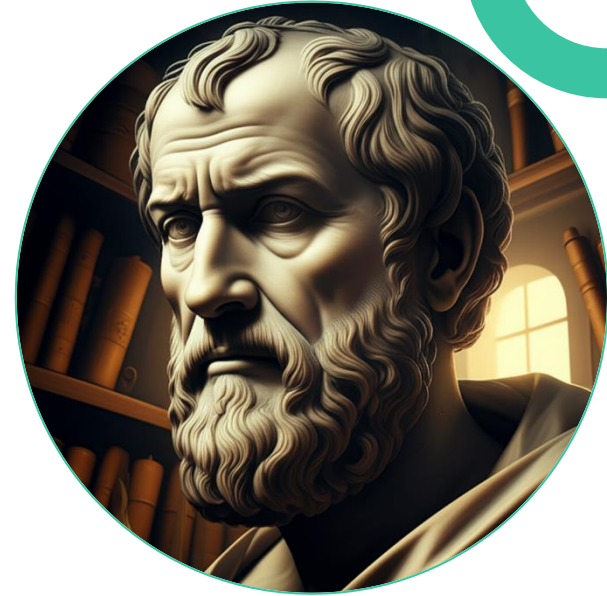
Idealism

Realism

Pragmatism

Existentialism

Idealism and realism originated in **Ancient Greece**, while pragmatism and existentialism developed in the **19th century**. Early education systems were influenced by idealism and realism, whereas pragmatism and existentialism shaped modern educational philosophy in the 20th and 21st centuries.





Idealism

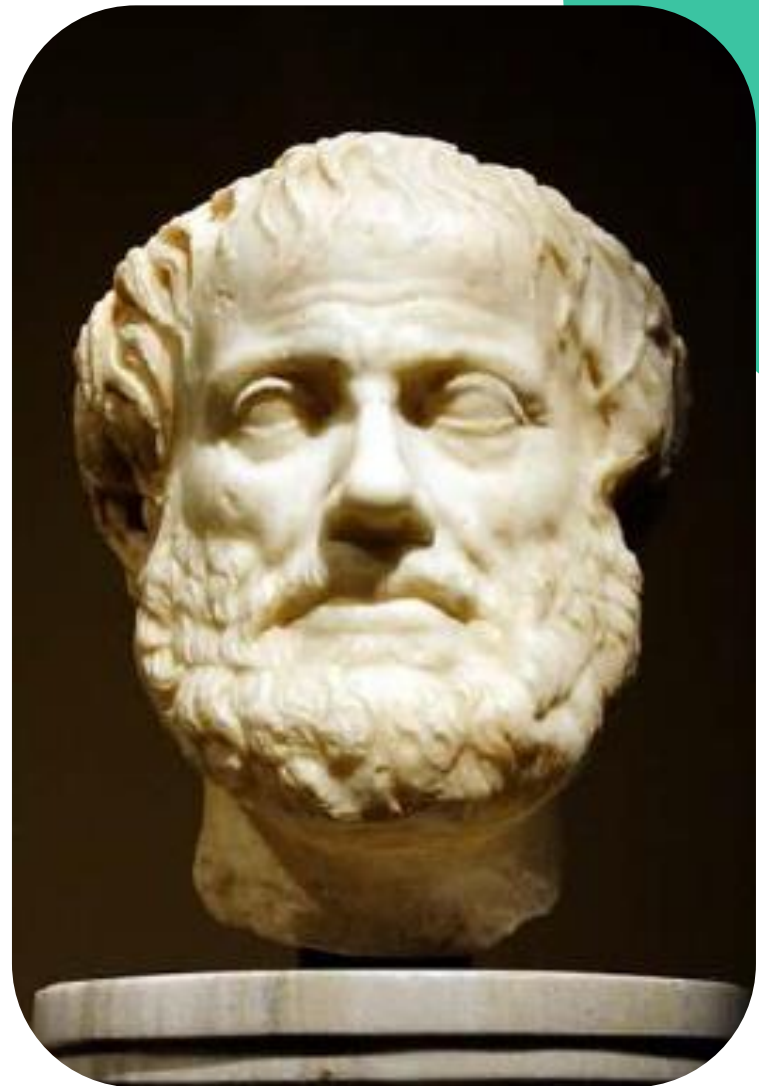
Idealism, founded by Plato, believes that ideas and reasoning are the true reality. Plato explained that there are two worlds: the world of perfect ideas and the imperfect world we experience through the senses. Truth can be discovered through rational thinking. Later, René Descartes supported this view with the idea of mind–body dualism (“I think, therefore I am”). In education, idealism emphasizes moral development and subjects of the mind such as literature, history, and philosophy, using discussion and Socratic dialogue.





Realism

Realism, developed by Aristotle, argues that reality exists independently of the human mind. Truth is discovered through observation, logic, and scientific investigation. During the Enlightenment, thinkers like John Locke promoted common-sense realism, which trusts everyday experience of the physical world. In education, realism focuses on basic **skills, facts, observation, and experimentation.**

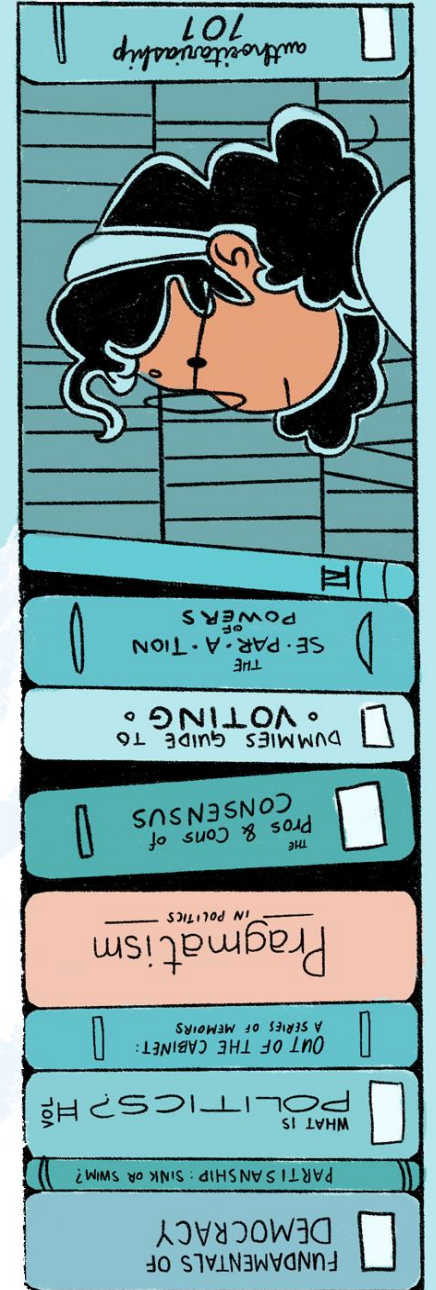


Pragmatism

Pragmatism focuses on practical experience and action. Reality is not fixed but constantly changing through human actions and problem-solving. Charles Sanders Peirce argued that thinking should lead to action, while John Dewey emphasized that learning comes from experience. In education, pragmatism promotes hands-on learning, experiments, and group projects, where students show understanding by solving real problems.

Key philosophers: Charles S. Peirce, William James, John Dewey.

n. PRAGMATISM



Existentialism

Existentialism emphasizes individual freedom and personal responsibility. According to Jean-Paul Sartre, “existence precedes essence,” meaning people create their own identity and meaning in life. Individuals must choose their values and live authentically rather than follow social pressure. In education, existentialism supports student choice, self-direction, and personal development, helping learners form their own identities.

Key philosophers: Søren Kierkegaard, Jean Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir



EXISTENTIALISM

Axiology

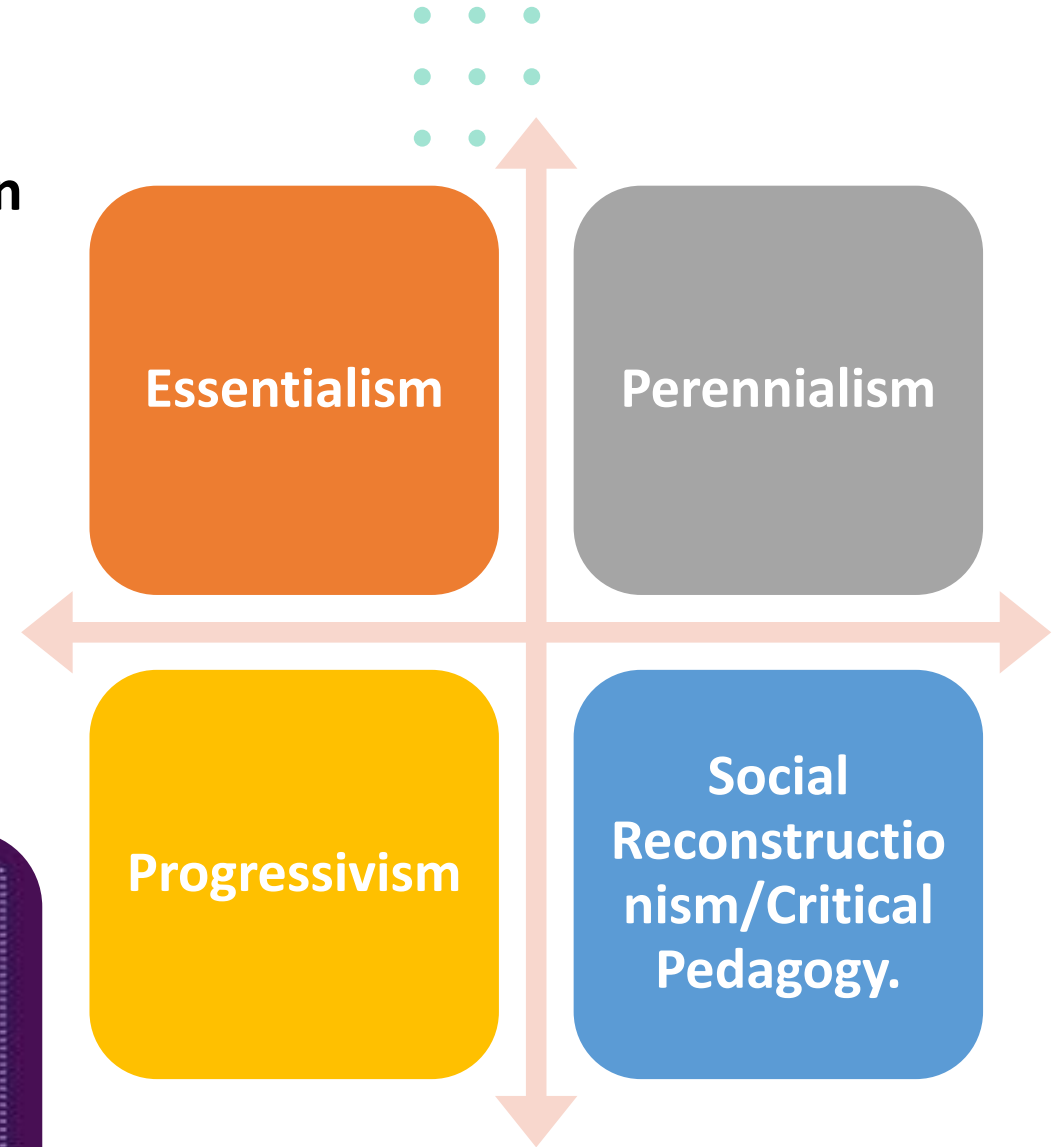
Axiology is the study of values. It mainly includes ethics (what is right or wrong) and aesthetics (what is beautiful). Some approaches try to measure value logically, while normative ethics focuses on moral rules, and ethics of care emphasizes relationships between people. Aesthetics studies how humans experience beauty, art, and form.



5.3: Philosophical Perspective of Education

There are four main educational philosophies used in schools:

These perspectives focus on what should be taught and how it should be taught in the curriculum.



Essentialism

Essentialism emphasizes teaching **basic skills and core knowledge** to all students. It focuses on traditional subjects such as reading, writing, and mathematics to prepare students to be productive members of society. Classrooms are usually **teacher-centered**, using lectures and demonstrations.

Key theorists: William Bagley, E. D. Hirsch Jr.

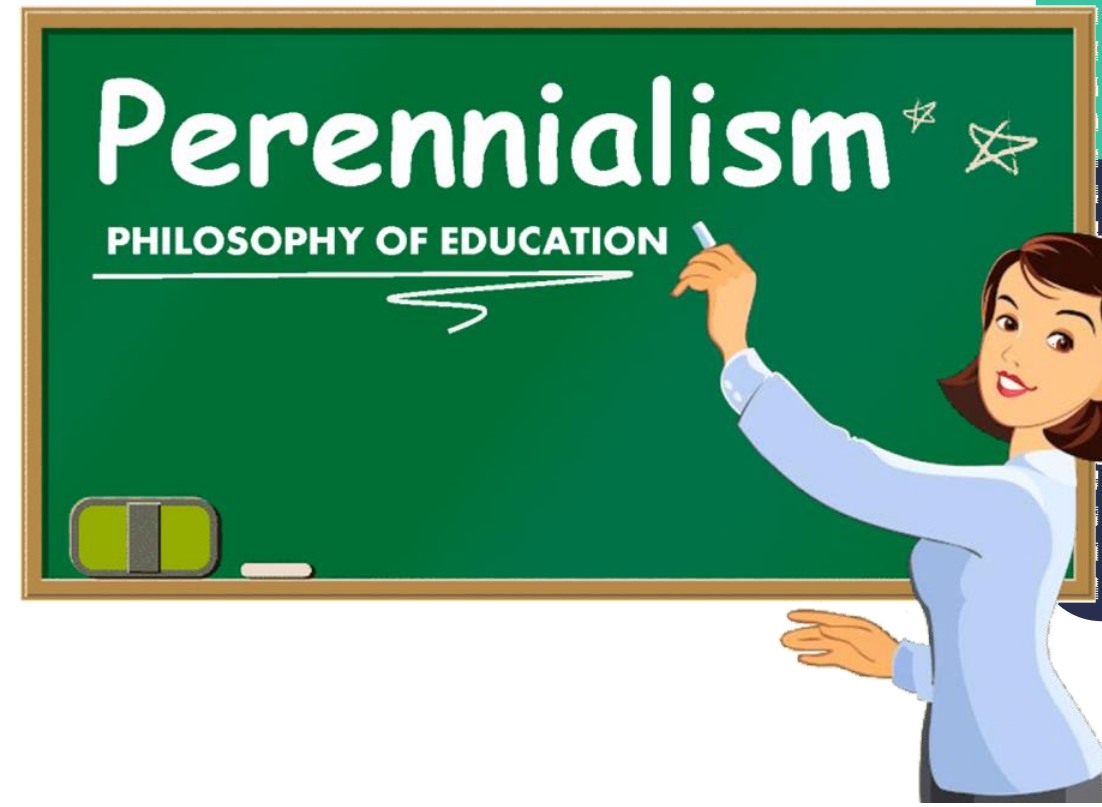


Perennialism

Perennialism focuses on teaching universal and timeless ideas that help students understand important human problems. It supports a liberal arts education including literature, languages, mathematics, sciences, arts, and philosophy.

Teaching may be teacher-centered but also includes discussion methods like the Socratic Seminar to develop critical thinking.

Key theorists: Robert Hutchins, Mortimer Adler.



Progressivism

Progressivism emphasizes **learning through experience and real-world problem solving**. Students learn by doing activities such as projects and group work. Classrooms are **student-centered**, and students often participate in planning and decision-making. This philosophy is strongly influenced by **pragmatism**.

Key theorists: John Dewey, Maria Montessori.



A black and white portrait of a young woman with dark, curly hair. She is resting her chin on her right hand and looking directly at the camera with a thoughtful expression. She is wearing a patterned top. The background is slightly blurred, showing some architectural elements.



5.4: Educational Psychology

Educational psychology focuses on how learning occurs; however, like educational perspectives and axiology, there are differing positions in educational psychology that can be traced back to ontological stances.

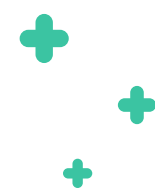
There are four main psychology stances on human development and learning that inform education:

- ☐ information processing
- ☐ behaviorism
- ☐ constructivism / cognitivism
- ☐ humanism.



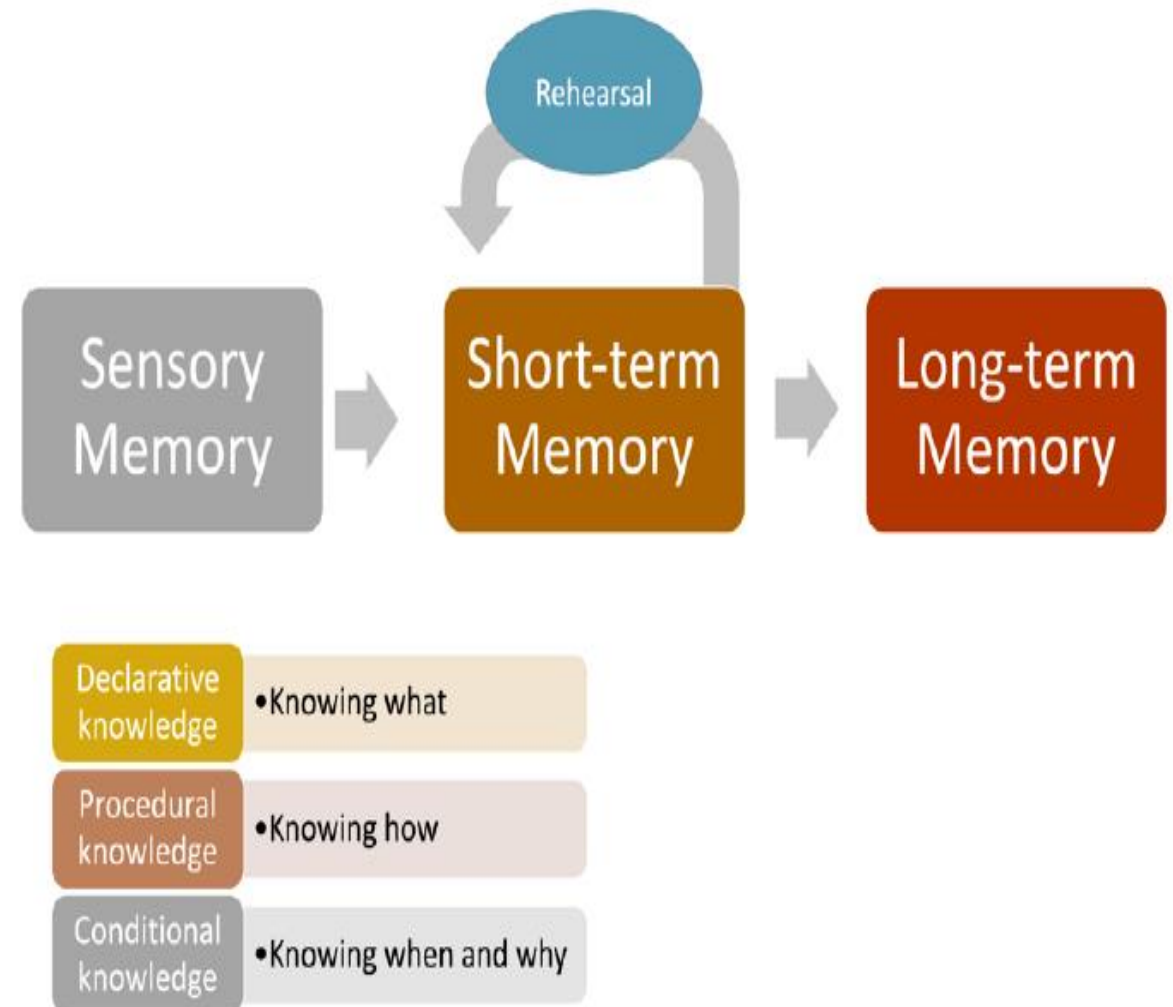


Information Processing



This theory compares the **human mind to a computer** that processes information through attention, storage, and retrieval from memory. Knowledge has three types: **declarative** (knowing facts), **procedural** (knowing how to do something), and **conditional** (knowing when and why to apply knowledge).

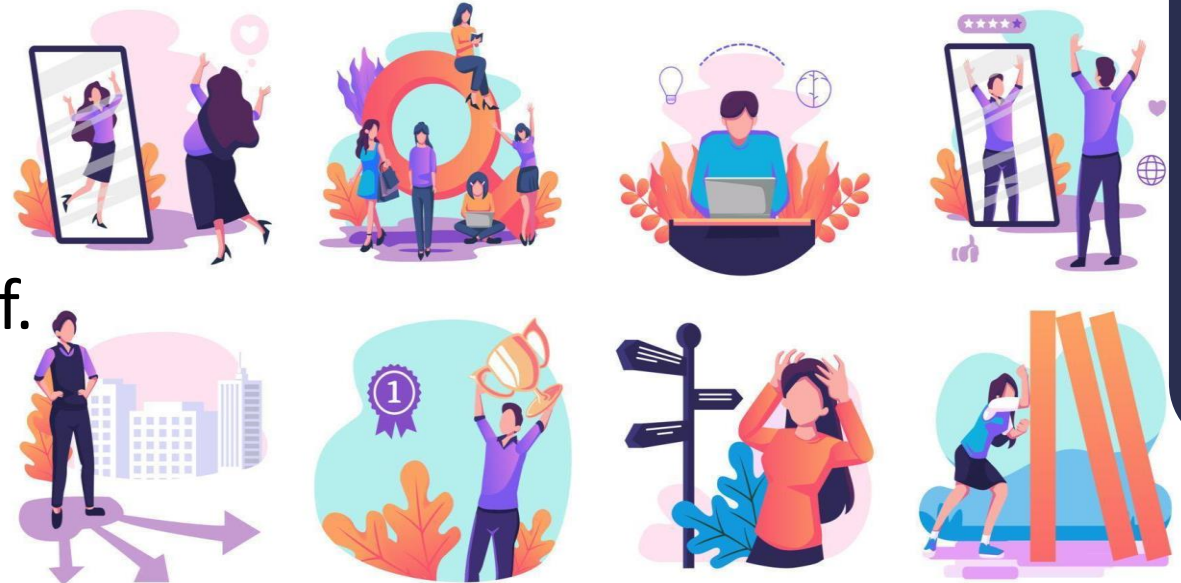
Key theorists: John Atkinson, Richard Shiffrin.



Behaviorism

Behaviorism focuses on **observable behavior** rather than internal thinking. Learning occurs through **stimuli and reinforcement** (positive or negative), such as grades, praise, or rewards. Teachers guide learning by encouraging desired behaviors through repetition and reinforcement.

Key theorists: B. F. Skinner, Montrose Wolf.



Constructivism / Cognitivism

This theory views students as **active learners** who build knowledge through experiences and interaction with others. Learners organize knowledge into **schemas** and modify them when new information appears. Social constructivism emphasizes learning with others, especially within the **Zone of Proximal Development**.

Key theorists: Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky.



Humanism

Humanism focuses on the **personal growth and well-being of students**. It believes learners have **free will and natural potential**, and learning should involve autonomy, choice, and intrinsic motivation. Education aims to develop **independent, lifelong learners** while supporting emotional and social development.

Key theorists:

Carl Rogers, Harold C. Lyon Jr.



THANKS

