

*Authorities in Philosophy of Education establish philosophical systems. The Ross Educational Philosophical Inventory is designed to measure philosophical perspective toward four systems: idealism, realism, pragmatism, and existentialism. By responding to definitive statements concerning reality, knowledge, and values the instrument can measure attitudinal change or predisposition toward a particular philosophy.*

*The author has developed an inventory which assists in answering the question, "What is Your Philosophy of Education?" The inventory is personally copyrighted and is published with the author's permission.*

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## **An Educational Philosophical Inventory: An Instrument For Measuring Change and Determining Philosophical Perspective**

Most educational theoretical inventories aim to measure teacher attitudes toward children, school experiences, or the educational environment. In the same perspective, such inventories attempt to relate these teacher beliefs to teaching success. One such scale is the *Scale For Determining Teacher Beliefs*.<sup>1</sup> This scale clearly states its aim is one of finding out what teachers believe about children, schools, and teaching.

Educational theoretical inventories deal with the macroscopics of school life. That is, these evaluative devices deal with the surface issues of teacher attitudes. Such an approach is helpful in gaining a periodic picture of how teachers perceive a particular school setting.

However, these inventories are open to the criticism of being superficial with regards to testee responses. In many cases the individual completing the inventory may answer as he/she believes the statement should be answered. Thus the validity and reliability of such instruments can always be questioned.

In addition, changing circumstances are likely to alter the responses of the individual completing the inventory. Thus such macroscopic evaluations lack the basic microscopic bases necessary for a more comprehensive picture of the person's educational perspectives.

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<sup>1</sup>Burton W. Kreitlow, and William Dreier, "A Scale for Measuring Teacher's Beliefs About Children, Schools, and Teaching," *The Elementary School Journal*, LV (February, 1955), pp. 325-330.

Every human being has an underlying philosophy of life which prompts their day to day behavior. Teachers do many things out of habit. These habits and modes of teaching are based on a microscopic set of beliefs which are best known as an educational philosophy.

The author, having taught many undergraduate and graduate courses in the philosophies of education, decided to measure teachers' microscopic, philosophical changes. This resulted in an *Educational Philosophical Inventory* discussed below.

The inventory aims to measure philosophical change. The test does not consist of attitudes toward children or schools, but rather attitudes and beliefs about reality, knowledge, and values. Rather than deal with the macroscopic elements of children, teaching, and schools, this inventory deals with the microscopic elements of metaphysics, epistemology, and axiology.

In order to determine an individual's philosophical perspective it is necessary to get at the person's beliefs concerning reality, values, and knowledge. More specifically, to determine an individual's educational philosophical orientation, the content of the evaluative device must be oriented toward the special nature of the learning process.

#### *Development of the Inventory*

A comprehensive bibliographic analysis of authorities in philosophies of education yielded descriptions of the philosophical bases of idealism, realism, pragmatism, and existentialism. (Most other educational philosophical perspectives are offsprings of these four major philosophies.)

It was decided that the test would be composed of statements reflecting the four major philosophies of education. Hundreds of statements that dealt with the areas of knowledge, values, and reality were arranged according to the philosophies of idealism, realism, pragmatism, and existentialism.

Many statements were eliminated because they lacked internal validity. That is, they did not correspond, in content, with the bases of the philosophy under concern. In order to gain a high degree of validity, the remaining statements were submitted to professors of philosophy of education at several educational institutions. Only those statements which were consistently agreed upon by these authorities to be of discriminative, descriptive, and definitive value were kept on the list of potential inventory statements.

Approximately one hundred sixty statements were left after these instructors examined them. There were about forty statements that would correspond to each of the four major philosophies of education.

These statements were arranged as an inventory and administered to undergraduate and graduate students in education. The students were

asked to match each statement with one of the four major philosophies. The students taking the sample inventory numbered around five hundred.

An item analysis was run on the results of the test. Items on which there was consistent disagreement of responses were eliminated from the inventory. In addition, any statement that could not be codified according to one of the philosophies was eliminated.

The results of the item analysis enabled the author to code twenty statements in each of the four major philosophies of education. Thus the inventory was composed of eighty statements; twenty in each philosophical category. (The inventory and the scoring key are given at the end of this article).

#### *Additional Evaluation of the Inventory*

In order to further examine the inventory three "experimental" situations were arranged.

*Situation One:* A philosophy of education instructor who admittedly was attempting to orient his students toward the existential perspective agreed to have his students pre - tested and post - tested. The results indicated that prior to the instruction the thirty students were not oriented toward any specific philosophical position. The post - test results showed that the students were distinctly oriented toward existentialism. Thus, apparently, the indoctrination was successful.

*Situation Two:* Several students were tested before they entered a philosophy of education course. Some of these students were found to be very idealistic in outlook. The answer sheets of these students were kept aside. After completing the course they were tested again. The results showed that they no longer were idealistic but rather in a state of self questioning. They had responded equally to each of the philosophical positions on the post - test.

*Situation Three:* In order to further test for reliability the inventory was administered to a group of students twice during a forty - eight hour time period. In ninety - six per cent of the trials the results of the two test responses were not statistically different.

#### *Summary*

The author believes — having, over a span of four years, tested and re - tested the inventory — that it is a valid philosophical tool.

The inventory has been used in various situations. And, it appears to be consistently reliable. In addition, the test was thoroughly examined for internal consistency and for consistency of responses.

One might well ask the question: so what? What can it be used for?

### *Uses of the Inventory*

This inventory can be of inestimable value to the teacher, administrator, and philosophy of education instructor.

The classroom teacher, in taking this test, can gain valuable insight into his/her microscopic orientation toward reality, knowledge, and values. Such insight is extremely important since the teacher deals directly with knowledges, values, and realities in every day of classroom instruction. A dogmatic teacher might gain some special insight into his/her conflicts with students whose values are not in correspondence with his or hers.

The educational administrator is always interested in the philosophies of education of his faculty, and especially of the prospective staff member. Thus the superintendent of schools might use this device to find out the philosophy of education of prospective candidates. A copy of the device could be included in teacher application forms. The administrator who wants pragmatic, practical staff people may simply administer the inventory to prospective candidates. This eliminates the need for those ambiguously worded philosophy of education statements included in most application forms.

Finally, the philosophy of education instructor can use the device to find out the impact of his instruction. He may be turning out a group of excessively pragmatic people who have no clearly defined objectives. This device provides the instructor with feedback on the effects of his instruction.

### *Conclusion*

It would seem clear that the macroscopic inventories used to measure teacher attitudes toward children and school are lacking in the requisite microscopic elements that combine to make up a person's beliefs.

The *Educational Philosophical Inventory* aims to get at these underlying motivations of teacher behavior. The inventory was cautiously developed. It has consistently produced valuable and useful data. This inventory provides the teacher, administrator, and education instructor with a microscopic look at an individual's basic philosophical orientation.

### *The Inventory*

This test is designed to determine your educational philosophy by measuring your response to the statements below.

Read the statements and mark the answer sheet or card between the lines, if you:

- (a) strongly agree;      (c) undecided;      (d) disagree;  
 (b) agree;      (e) strongly disagree;

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1. Goodness, beauty, and honesty are not man-made concepts, but are enduring ideas or principles.
  2. The basis of morality is freedom.
  3. Learning is a process of social interaction resulting in the creation of new relationships which can be applied to bio-social problems.
  4. Reality is spiritual or mental in nature.
  5. Man is primarily a plastic nervous system to be molded, in interactivity with the physical environment along lines set by the scientifically ascertained nature of physical reality.
  6. Education can unite the child to the spiritual world.
  7. Knowledge is a means of cultivation of the self.
  8. Knowledge is successful adaptation to and modification of the environment.
  9. Life is a process of making choices day by day.
  10. Knowledge is true if it corresponds to physical reality.
  11. Experiences constitute reality and govern responses to problems.
  12. Man is essentially a spiritual being, needing assistance in setting himself free from the confines imposed by acceptance of the physical and social world.
  13. The only values acceptable to the individual are those he has freely chosen.
  14. Man discovers knowledge from the physical and material world.
  15. Knowledge is an instrument for the sake of survival, existing as practical utility.
  16. Education is basically a process of spiritual or "soul" growth.
  17. Complete objectivity is impossible, man must make decisions on the basis of probabilities.
  18. Physical objects are ideas in the mind of the perceivers; matter is not real.
  19. Personal values can only develop in an environment where man is free to see the consequences of his actions.
  20. Learning is a matter of conditioning.
  21. Good is whatever promotes a course of action as seen in the effect on further action.
  22. Knowledge does not have a priori existence, it occurs.
  23. There is a universal moral law.
  24. Man is a small part of a large universal idea.
  25. Knowledge is found by considering the practical consequences of ideas.
  26. Mind in every detail of its behavior is purely physical and can be explained completely by analysing it into organic (cerebral) and inorganic (environmental) factors in a state of interaction.
  27. Learning is a process of finding the real self.
  28. Values are objective, permanent, and unchanging.
  29. Reality is ever in the making.
  30. The mind is a spiritual entity and dictates or determines what is reality.
  31. Knowledge is true if it is coherent, consistent.
  32. Knowledge does not exist that does not engage the feeling of the knower.
  33. Human nature cannot be changed.
  34. Ideals are operational and practical.
  35. The essence of reality is choice.
  36. Reality is inexplicable.
  37. Intelligence is the ability to know.

38. Values are absolute and perfect.
39. Man is nothing until he acts.
40. There are no definite established lines of good or evil, except functionally.
41. Intelligence is the ability to formulate and project new solutions to problems.
42. Physical or natural laws are real.
43. Reality is a projection of the supernatural mind.
44. All present events have been caused by preceding events and will in turn bring about subsequent events, in a precise pattern of succession.
45. The test of a theory, belief, or doctrine must be its effect upon us, its practical consequences.
46. Knowledge is systematized — it is all certain, all objective, and all in accord with the teachings of physical science as to the nature of physical reality.
47. An idea is true because it is useful.
48. Man is the sum of his actions.
49. God is real.
50. Reality exists in confronting problems consisting of love, choice, freedom, personal relationships, and death.
51. A teacher is an example or model whom the student emulates, imitates.
52. Education is a process of stimulating students to search themselves for their self.
53. True ideas are those we can assimilate, validate, corroborate and verify.
54. Teaching methods can be authoritatively recommended to teachers. There is a mechanical uniformity, alike for all minds.
55. The origin of knowledge is in a supernatural source.
56. Man is free, consequently he is responsible for all his actions.
57. Matter is real and concretely exists in its own right independently of the mind.
58. Man does not form part of any universal system, therefore, he is absolutely free.
59. What man cannot experience cannot be real for him.
60. Values are determined subjectively, relatively.
61. By itself the universe is without meaning or purpose.
62. Man has a spiritual destiny to fulfill.
63. The external world of physical reality is objective and factual. Man has to accept it and conform.
64. Knowledge is operational, therefore, there is always a possibility of improvement.
65. Reality transcends the senses.
66. Reality originates in the material and physical world.
67. The individual is always of higher value than the collective.
68. Obtaining knowledge is essentially a process of searching the universe for facts.
69. The authentic life is one of self determination, within a specific time and place.
70. Knowledge is true and valid regardless of what men think of it.
71. The universe is inherently orderly and purposeful in and of itself.
72. Man receives knowledge by revelation.
73. By himself man is capable of creating new knowledge.
74. Complete objectivity is possible.
75. Reality occurs when man chooses to confront a situation, makes a commitment.
76. The mind is biological in origin.
77. Man is the measurer of truth.
78. Reality is determined by natural laws beyond man's control.

- 79. The aims and laws which regulate human conduct are determined by superior intelligence of an ultimate being.
- 80. The existence of reality lies in man himself.

Ross Educational Philosophical Inventory

Scoring Key

Strongly Agree	= +2	Idealism	= I
Agree	+1	Realism	R
Undecided	0	Pragmatism	P
Disagree	-1	Existentialism	E
Strongly Disagree	-2		

1. I	21. P	41. P	61. E
2. E	22. P	42. R	62. I
3. P	23. R	43. I	63. R
4. I	24. I	44. R	64. P
5. R	25. P	45. P	65. I
6. I	26. R	46. R	66. R
7. E	27. E	47. P	67. E
8. P	28. R	48. E	68. R
9. E	29. P	49. I	69. E
10. R	30. I	50. E	70. I
11. P	31. I	51. I	71. R
12. I	32. E	52. E	72. I
13. E	33. I	53. P	73. P
14. R	34. P	54. R	74. R
15. P	35. E	55. I	75. E
16. I	36. E	56. E	76. R
17. P	37. R	57. R	77. P
18. I	38. I	58. E	78. R
19. E	39. E	59. P	79. I
20. R	40. P	60. P	80. E