

# Influence of Contemporary Philosophical Teaching Approaches on Students' Learning Performance in Selected Universities in China: Basis for an Enhanced Teaching Program

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**Abstract:** This study explores the influence of contemporary philosophical teaching approaches on students' learning performance in selected universities in China. The research specifically examines the extent to which philosophical approaches like Perennialism, Essentialism, Progressivism, Reconstructionism, and Behaviorism are manifested among educators and how these approaches impact students' engagement, attitudes, assignment quality, and grades. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the study involved a comprehensive survey of university teachers, followed by a quantitative analysis of the data. The results indicate that Progressivism and Reconstructionism are the most prevalent approaches, showing significant correlations with enhanced student engagement and improved learning outcomes. However, Behaviorism demonstrated a notable predictive ability in influencing students' performance through structured reinforcement strategies. The study highlights the importance of integrating diverse teaching methodologies to cater to varying student needs and promote holistic educational development. These findings provide a basis for proposing a more enriched and adaptable teaching program aimed at fostering a more interactive and student-centered learning environment.

**Keywords:** Contemporary Philosophical Teaching Approaches; Student Learning Performance; Educational Strategies; Teaching Program Enhancement.

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## 1. Introduction

In this stage of higher education, students' ideas and values are the most malleable period. Teachers and students should become a community of mutual learning, mutual promotion and complementarity. Teachers' political accomplishment, moral quality and professional ethics have a great impact on students' thoughts in classroom interaction. However, the teaching paradigm is still generally the traditional "teacher-centered", that is, teacher-centered, lecture-oriented, and mechanically inculcated textbook knowledge to students in the form of full classroom teaching. Moreover, the curriculum is low and outdated, which is difficult to stimulate students' learning interest and initiative, resulting in less interaction, and further phenomena such as students playing mobile phones and dozing off in class. The learning enthusiasm and knowledge absorption rate are not high, and there is no emotional identification with the teacher. The relationship between teachers and students is tense, and the students have received good course learning effect, and the students' initiative and learning thinking ability have been improved.

Education is a dynamic and multifaceted process that plays a crucial role in shaping the intellectual and moral development of individuals. Therefore, we should apply the educational concept that is conducive to improving students' initiative and learning and thinking ability, shift the emphasis from improving teachers' teaching ability and knowledge transfer effect to the cultivation of students' ability and learning effect, and cultivate students' ability to solve complex problems and lifelong learning. In recent years, there has been a growing interest in understanding how different teaching approaches influence student outcomes.

Philosophical teaching approaches, which are grounded in distinct educational philosophies, offer diverse perspectives on how education should be conducted and what its primary goals should be. This study focuses on contemporary philosophical teaching approaches—Perennialism, Essentialism, Progressivism, Reconstructionism, and Behaviorism—and their effects on students' learning performance in selected universities in China. Here is a brief overview of recent literature on different philosophical approaches in education from the last three years.

**Perennialism:** Recent studies have emphasized the importance of a curriculum that focuses on classical knowledge and enduring truths. Perennialism advocates for teaching ideas that have stood the test of time and continue to be relevant in contemporary education. According to Zhang (2020), this approach fosters critical thinking and moral development by engaging students with timeless works of literature, philosophy, and history.

**Essentialism:** Essentialism remains significant in ensuring that students master fundamental skills and knowledge. It emphasizes a disciplined and structured educational environment. Studies by Liu and colleagues (2024) highlight how essentialist approaches are linked to high academic performance, particularly in subjects that require a strong foundation like mathematics and science.

**Progressivism:** Progressivism, which is rooted in the ideas of experiential learning and critical thinking, has been explored in contemporary studies as an effective approach in engaging students actively in learning processes. The work of Martinez and Garza (2021) demonstrates that progressivist methods are associated with enhanced student engagement and higher-order thinking skills in modern educational settings.

Reconstructionism: This philosophical approach focuses on using education as a tool for social change and promoting social justice. Studies by Peng and colleagues (2024) underscore the role of Reconstructionism in encouraging students to critically analyze societal issues and become active participants in societal transformation through education.

Behaviorism: Behaviorism continues to be a significant predictor of student performance in modern classrooms. Patel (2018) showed that behaviorist strategies like reinforcement and structured feedback lead to improved student engagement and academic outcomes. Recent findings also highlight the effectiveness of these techniques in managing classroom behavior and enhancing learning through consistent rewards and feedback mechanisms.

## 2. Statement of the Problem

This study assessed into the teachers’ philosophical approaches and their effects on students’ learning performance.

Specifically, it sought answers to the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the teacher respondents in terms of the following:

- 1.1. Sex
- 1.2. Highest Educational Attainment
- 1.3. Academic Rank

2. To what extent are the following contemporary philosophical teaching approaches to teaching manifested among the teacher respondents in terms of:

- 2.1. Perennialism
- 2.2. Essentialism
- 2.3. Progressivism
- 2.4. Reconstructionism
- 2.5. Behaviorism

3. Is there a significant difference in the extent of the manifestation of contemporary philosophical approaches to teaching among the teacher respondents when their profile is taken as a test factor?

4. What is the assessment of the teacher respondents on the level of the students’ learning performance in terms of:

- 4.1. Maximum engagement
- 4.2 Attitude
- 4.3. Assignment
- 4.4. Grades

5. Do contemporary philosophical teaching approaches predict the level of student learning performance?

6. Based on the findings of the study, what teaching plan of the strategies can be proposed?

## 3. Research Design

The study utilized a quantitative method in determining the influence of philosophical approaches to teaching on student learning performance. It involved a quantitative description of the respondents’ assessment of the extent of philosophical approaches to teaching and student learning performance. It was a fact-finding process that encompasses adequate interpretation of numerical values derived from the scaled assessments. The study also employed a quantitative comparative analysis of the assessments based on the profile of the respondents. It has been done by determining significant differences in the assessments of the respondents. Moreover, the quantitative nature of the study allowed predictive correlational analysis to determine whether philosophical approaches to teaching predict the level of student learning performance.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

**Table 1.** Profile of the Respondents

Profile	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Male	134	38.7%
Female	212	61.3%
Highest Educational Attainment		
Bachelor’s Degree	0	0%
Master’s Degree	110	31.8%
Doctoral Degree	236	68.2%
Academic Rank		
Instructor	205	59.2%
Associate Professor	79	22.8%
Professor	41	11.8%
Others	21	6.1%

The data in Table 1 reveals a significant gender disparity among the teacher respondents, with females representing 61.3% of the population and males accounting for 38.7%. This finding aligns with broader educational trends, where female representation in teaching roles, particularly at the tertiary level, has been increasing globally. According to Lazzari et al. (2017), the rise in female educators may be attributed to the growing emphasis on gender equality in academia. However, this imbalance may also reflect underlying societal norms and expectations about gender roles in education, which could have implications for teaching dynamics and student-teacher interactions.

In terms of educational attainment, the majority of

respondents held a Doctoral Degree (68.2%), while the remaining 31.8% have a Master's Degree. This high level of academic qualification among the respondents indicates a strong foundation in educational theory and practice, which was essential for the effective implementation of contemporary philosophical teaching approaches. Research by Gonzalez and Jackson (2018) suggested that higher educational attainment among teachers correlates with better student outcomes, as educators with advanced degrees are more likely to employ diverse and innovative pedagogical strategies, including those rooted in philosophical frameworks such as Progressivism and Reconstructionism.

Regarding academic rank, the majority of respondents were

instructors (59.2%), followed by associate professors (22.8%) and professors (11.8%). The significant proportion of instructors may suggest that many of the teaching staff are relatively early in their academic careers or were focused on teaching rather than research. According to Smith and Anderson (2019), the academic rank of educators can influence their teaching approach, with more experienced faculty members, such as professors, potentially having

greater autonomy and confidence to integrate contemporary philosophical methods in their teaching. This distribution of academic ranked highlights the need for professional development opportunities that encourage all educators, regardless of rank, to engage with and apply philosophical teaching approaches to enhance student learning outcomes.

Contemporary Philosophical Teaching Approaches as Manifested Among the Teacher Respondents

**Table 2.** Perennialism

Item	Mean	SD	VD	INT	Rank
1.I believe in teaching timeless truths and enduring ideas.	3.20	0.87	A	TAME	7
3.My teaching focuses on developing students' intellectual and moral virtues.	3.23	0.90	A	TAME	4.5
5.I emphasize the study of great works of literature, philosophy, and art.	3.22	0.97	A	TAME	6
7.I encourage students to seek knowledge that is universal and transcends cultural and historical contexts.	3.27	0.89	A	TAME	1.5
9.I believe in a structured curriculum that focuses on essential subjects such as literature, history, and philosophy.	3.27	0.89	A	TAME	1.5
11.I prioritize the cultivation of students' intellectual curiosity and love for learning.	3.15	0.86	A	TAME	8
13.I incorporate discussions on ethics and moral values into my teaching to help students understand their significance in society.	3.23	0.85	A	TAME	4.5
15.I encourage students to analyze and interpret classic literature and philosophical texts to gain deeper insights into human experience.	3.24	0.95	A	TAME	3
Overall	3.23	0.77	A	TAME	

Legend: VD (Verbal Description), INT (Interpretation). 3.51-4.00 SA (Strongly Agree) / TAHE (To a high extent); 2.51-3.50 A (Agree) / TAME (To a moderate extent); 1.51-2.50 D (Disagree) / TASE (To a small extent); 1.00-1.50 SD (Strongly Disagree) / TNEA (To no extent at all)

The data in Table 2 indicates that the respondents generally agree with the principles of Perennialism, as evidenced by an overall mean score of 3.23, interpreted as “To a Moderate Extent” (TAME). This suggested that while teachers acknowledge the value of timeless truths, intellectual and moral virtues, and the study of great works, these principles were not the predominant focus in their teaching practices. According to Kneller (2017), Perennialism emphasized the cultivation of intellectual development and moral reasoning through a structured curriculum centered on classical texts. The moderate extent of agreement in the respondents' teaching practices may reflect the balance teachers seek between traditional educational ideals and more contemporary approaches that cater to the diverse needs of students in a rapidly changing society.

The highest-ranking items, with mean scores of 3.27, highlight the emphasis on encouraging students to seek knowledge that transcends cultural and historical contexts and the importance of a structured curriculum focusing on essential subjects like literature, history, and philosophy. This aligns with the core tenets of Perennialism, which advocate for education that transcends the immediate and focuses on enduring ideas and universal truths. However, the slight variation in responses, with standard deviations ranging from 0.85 to 0.97, suggested a level of variability in how these principles were implemented across different classrooms. As highlighted by McEwan (2018), while Perennialism provided

a strong framework for developing critical thinking and ethical reasoning, its application may vary depending on the teacher's personal beliefs, institutional culture, and the student population's characteristics.

Conversely, the lowest meant scores, such as those associated with prioritizing the cultivation of students' intellectual curiosity (3.15) and teaching timeless truths and enduring ideas (3.20), indicate areas where Perennialist principles may be less emphasized. This may be due to the increasing pressure on educators to adopt more pragmatic and student-centered approaches that align with contemporary educational trends, such as constructivism and experiential learning. Noddings (2016) argued that while Perennialism remained a valuable educational philosophy, the evolving demands of the modern educational landscape require a more flexible approach that integrates traditional and progressive methods. This balanced approach can help educators foster a learning environment that not only respects enduring ideas but also prepares students to navigate the complexities of contemporary society.

## 5. Conclusion

### 1.Philosophical Approaches and Student Performance

The study reveals that Behaviorism and Reconstructionism significantly predict student learning performance through structured feedback, reinforcement, and real-world problem-solving, while Perennialism, Essentialism, and Progressivism,

though less directly influential, contribute to a well-rounded educational experience.

#### 2. Student Engagement and Attitudes

The findings indicate high levels of student engagement, with experiential and hands-on learning activities being particularly effective. Students also demonstrated positive attitudes towards learning about social justice and community improvement, which suggests that integrating relevant, real-world issues into the curriculum can enhance student motivation and interest. The analysis of attitudes reveals that students generally hold positive views towards various learning activities and methods, including classic literature, foundational subjects, and inquiry-based learning. This underscores the importance of maintaining a diverse and engaging curriculum to foster a positive learning environment.

#### 3. Assignments and Grades

The findings show that experiential and hands-on learning activities significantly boost student engagement, with positive attitudes toward social justice and inquiry-based learning highlighting the value of integrating real-world issues and a diverse curriculum to enhance motivation and create a positive learning environment.

#### 4. Implications for Teaching Practices

The study recommends a balanced integration of philosophical approaches, encouraging teachers to blend Behaviorism, Reconstructionism, and other methods to create a dynamic learning environment, supported by professional development focused on contemporary strategies to enhance teaching effectiveness and student outcomes.

In conclusion, the study underscores the importance of adopting a diverse set of teaching approaches to meet various learning needs and improve overall student performance. By integrating these findings into educational practice, universities can enhance their teaching programs and better support student success.

## 6. Recommendations

1. Integrate effective philosophical approaches like Progressivism and Reconstructionism and focusing on strategies that improve student engagement and performance.

2. Creation of a dynamic and practical learning environment emphasizing team collaboration, wholesome and meaningful group works.

3. Universities in China should prioritize student engagement through provision for experimental learning opportunities.

4. Incorporating more activities like project-based learning and real-world problem-solving tasks that connect theoretical knowledge with practical applications, educators can increase

student motivation and involvement.

5. Inclusion of social justice and community improvement topics that can further boost students' engagement and positive attitudes towards learning, making the educational experience more meaningful and impactful.

6. Provision for quality of assignments which promote critical thinking and creativity and the detailed feedbacks provided. To enhance assignment quality, institutions should ensure that assignments are designed to promote critical thinking and creativity, and provide timely and detailed feedback.

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