

Running Head: On the Philosophy of Higher Education

## **On The Philosophy of Higher Education**

A TEM Classics of Tertiary Management

Kenneth Morgan Burke  
Graduate Student  
University of Missouri, St. Louis

Research investigates the philosophy of higher education. Acknowledging that educational philosophy has generally taken a back seat to educational psychology, directions emphasize bridging the gap between philosophy and psychology through interdisciplinary research to solve problems of educational philosophy noted in the literature on the area. Hence, the paper provides a history of ideas with context into higher education from a global history of philosophy and psychology. At a time of political, economic and cultural challenges, developed research is necessary to provide a pragmatic philosophical framework for higher education in the twentieth century.

## Introduction

Since the rise of the study of psychology in the late nineteenth century, the philosophy of education and philosophy in general have taken a back seat to theory influenced more by the area of psychology. Though early psychology remained closely related to philosophy, the eventual predominance of psychology over philosophy became even more significant with behavioral schools of psychology that throughout the twentieth century sought to separate themselves from philosophy. Brubacher (1982: 1-27) provides a discussion of educational philosophy, the difficulties with defining a general philosophy of education, discontent with and conflicts in educational philosophy, specifically from the context of defining a contemporary philosophy for tertiary (higher, postsecondary, even technical) education. This paper approaches answering questions concerning the philosophy of higher education by understanding the developments in the history of ideas that complicate the subject, emphasizing the need to bridge the gaps between psychology and philosophy through interdisciplinary approaches. Research thus engages a historical method for a grounded theory from the history of philosophy and psychology in correlation with the history of tertiary and higher education.

Noting that most educational philosophies tend to examine primary and secondary education and not the specialized problems of tertiary and higher education, Brubacher (1982: 2) suggests that the philosophy of education is important in order to appraise ambivalent and conflicting practices as well as in examining their intellectual underpinnings. While offering the general history of ideas and the underlying philosophical assumptions in higher education, the difficulties with developing a philosophy concerns epistemological and political differences, given the “continued

politicization of higher education [that] can be found in a broader analysis of the role of value judgments in learning” (Brubacher 1982: 17-22). The segregation of philosophy and psychology leads to a separation from the underlying assumptions of the principal conflicts and political foundations of learning systems. Understanding the relationship where influenced by science is itself foundational to solving the problem of postulating a philosophy of higher education. With consideration of the debates is the potential to expand knowledge, research and practice from learning theory to management, the organizational sciences and general systems practice where they tend to engage psychology (particularly as philosophy is often seen as outdated, political and culturally Western). For the context of higher education, unearthing the philosophical foundations through the classics of tertiary management expands knowledge of the issues and provides the opportunity to develop a contemporary theoretical framework.

For reason of simplicity, the history of ideas as they relate to tertiary and higher learning is generalized as best possible, detailing developments in world histories through a Western frame of reference, from which country specific histories and cultural correlations can be built. Where both philosophy and psychology at their origins are based on classical assumptions of science, critique of the Western classical tradition is itself drawn from the philosophy of science and the advances in science throughout the twentieth century as they question classical assumptions. The same benefits a frame of reference for a more in-depth area specific history of ideas in tertiary and higher education. Based on problem solving, answers to questions need not emphasize the dichotomy between philosophy and psychology, but simply encourage interdisciplinary research. Areas such as sociology, anthropology, the history and philosophy of science,

and schools of philosophy that address similar issues equally have directions to offer in the development of ideas for higher education in the twentieth century. Not only are such perspectives significant with issues as discussed by Brubacher (1982) in maintaining the need for, and difficulties with the philosophy of education, they are also critical where educational trends internationally face political, economic and cultural challenges.

### Works Cited

- Ash, M.G. 1995. *Gestalt Psychology in German Culture, 1890-1967: holism and the quest for objectivity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bertalanffy, Ludvig von. 1968. *Organismic Psychology and Systems Theory*.  
Worcester: Clark University Press.
- Boring, E.G. 1950. *A History of Experimental Psychology*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.
- Brubacher, J.S. 1982. *On The Philosophy of Higher Education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Butts, R.F. 1955. *A Cultural History of Western Education; its social and intellectual foundations*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Christie, J.R.R. 1975. "The Rise and Fall of Scottish Science." In Crossland, M., Ed. *The Emergence of Science in Western Europe*. Scotland: The Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Clegg, S. 1979. *The Theory of Power in Organization*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Crosland, M., Ed. 1975. *The Emergence of Science in Western Europe*. Scotland: The Macmillan Press Ltd.

- Gallie, W.B. 1978. *Philosophers of peace and War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hall, M.B. 1975. "Science in the Early Royal Society." In Crossland, M., Ed. *The Emergence of Science in Western Europe*. Scotland: The Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Heisenberg, W. 1989. *Physics and Philosophy*. New York: Prometheus Books.
- Hunt, M. 1993. *The Story of Psychology*. New York: Doubleday.
- Jeans, S.J. 1981. *Physics and Philosophy*. New York: Dover Publications.
- Microsoft Corporation. 2000. *Encarta Dynamic Timeline*. Author.
- Ratansi, P.M. 1975. "Science and Religion in the Seventeenth Century." In Crossland, M., Ed. *The Emergence of Science in Western Europe*. Scotland: The Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Rudolph, F. 1990 [1962]. *The American College and University: A History*. Athens and London: The university of Georgia Press.
- Schmitt. 1975. "Science in the Italian Universities in the Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries." In Crossland, M., Ed. *The Emergence of Science in Western Europe*. Scotland: The Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Snow, C.P. 1981. *The Physicists*. Boston: Little Brown.