



The Idea Of Higher Education (Society for Research Into Higher Education)

Ronald Barnett

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Despite an increasing volume of talk about and a growing literature on higher education, very little of it asks the question - what, in essence "is" higher education? The tradition of overarching thinking about higher education - from Newman onwards - has almost vanished. The debate has focused, instead, on technical, administrative, financial and narrow academic concerns and the terms of discussion have been framed by concepts such as efficiency, unit costs, access and the needs of industry - none of which focus on higher education as such. There is, therefore, a need for the aims of higher education to be restated in modern terms. This book explores such concepts as culture, rationality, research and academic freedom; it aims to provide a new approach to educational theory, embracing debates in social theory, philosophy of social science, critical theory, sociology of education and sociology of knowledge. It aims to give an account of the idea of "higher education" draw out the practical implications and propose specific strategies for realizing a liberal higher education.

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