

## Chapter 2

# Philosophy and Psychology as Influences on Gifted and Talented Education in the 21st Century Education

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### ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this chapter is to clarify varying beliefs of those within (and those commenting on) education. A review of literature on educational philosophy and educational psychology is followed by an analysis of what these various beliefs mean for those working with gifted and talented students, how these beliefs relate to technology, and the role technology can play to optimize gifted and talented students' education. The focus is on the teacher's beliefs about the truth and purpose of education and about how students learn these beliefs will influence instructional decisions and determine the value of technology in education.*

### INTRODUCTION

Philosophy explains why we provide education and psychology suggests how best to provide the education. While learning needs of children differ children can be group according to certain variables and taught together. The needs of one group, the gifted, differ somewhat from their typically developing peers and peers who have disabilities. Technology provides tools for addressing their needs. Technology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has the potential for delivering education that is highly individualized and personal. Anticipatory questions such as how or to what extent shall we educators apply supports and precision

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approaches to teaching through technology are bound to come up. Technology is very popular and often seen as a panacea but adopting technologies to the education of our gifted students should be done strategically and with consideration to why the students are being educated (philosophical underpinnings) and how best to provide learning to gifted students (psychological underpinnings). That is, it is necessary to consider both educational philosophy and psychology, lenses through which people interpret education as a whole, when choosing instructional technology for gifted learners.

### **PHILOSOPHY**

Philosophy is the fundamental study of the nature of knowledge, reality, and existence while psychology is the study of human behavior, mental processes and experiences in various contexts. Philosophy can be thought of as the *why* we teach, and conversely, psychology can be thought of as necessary for informing *how* we teach (Quora, 2019). Education is provided for a reason and it is important that each educator understand and support the reason of education so as not to risk working at cross purposes to others as well as to design instruction to achieve the purpose. Psychology helps the educator facilitate learning by taking into consideration the strengths, needs, interests and preferred ways of learning of the student. Thus, it is essential we know *why* we provide education and be strategic with instruction (how we provide education) to optimize student learning.

### **BASIC VIEWS OF TRUTH**

Educational philosophy is comprised of varying beliefs regarding pedagogy and best practices. These varying beliefs influence the thoughts and actions of stakeholders (teachers, students, parents, etc.) and have implications for real-life. The hope for this section is that it provides an overarching framework of philosophical thought, peppered with short specifics of each philosophical view, in order to consider the state of affairs of gifted students.

Western Philosophy can be thought of as a discourse in search of truth. Four major philosophical views set the stage for beliefs that directly touch on education: idealism, realism, pragmatism, and existentialism. In beginning any discussion about pedagogy (teaching methods), it is necessary to establish a shared belief in what truth is and how it can be found, discovered, or created by teachers and by students. In Western thought, there are two primary theories which explain the different understandings: Idealism and Realism.

#### **Idealism**

Idealism's roots reach back to Ancient Greece, with Plato as the lauded creator. Plato's conception of ideal forms and the implication therein is that truth is objective and can be reached through revisiting an idea over and over with varying instances to better refine the consistency of the truth. This perspective pays reverence to historical and, frequently, written works. It heavily emphasizes "logic" as a necessary aspect of connecting real world evidence to a universal truth. When teachers ask students to write about

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