Philosophical Perspectives on Teacher Education
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Teacher education is in a state of flux across the globe. While in some countries public investment in research-informed teacher education continues, in others it is being downsized and the balance between different spaces for teacher education tipped in favour of new types of employment-based learning, following the pattern of ‘Teach for America’. In England specifically, the White Paper for Education (DfE, 2010), heralding the most radical reforms in the sector for several decades, has reopened fundamental questions about the future role of the university in teacher education.

The empirical, conceptual and normative grounds for reforming teacher education remain, however, subject to debate (BERA/RSA, 2014). For example, while there may be broad consensus that school-based learning is necessary to the preparation of new and beginning classroom teachers, there is no agreement as to whether this is sufficient. What do the different spaces for teacher education contribute to becoming and continuing to be a good teacher? Does higher education learning, engagement with research, and theoretical understanding matter to teachers’ professional development? If they do, why? What knowledge, values, dispositions and skills do teachers need to educate others well and how might they best develop them (Orchard and Foreman-Peck, 2011)?

Looking back over the history of state-funded teacher education in England since the forerunner to the English Department of Education was set up in 1839, to oversee the public funding of education, there have been recurrent themes in public debates around teachers’ roles,
knowledge and qualities, and about their relationship with different models of teacher education and with education research. In the current context of heated discussion around the nature of teaching and of teachers’ professional knowledge, and, by extension, about the appropriate sites for teacher education, pausing to reflect on meanings and their framing, prior to moving into action (see MacIntyre, 1984), may be a particularly important exercise in ‘mak[ing] fragile the seeming causality of the present’ (Popkewitz, 2013, p. 2), and this is the purpose of this book.

In fact, narratives of state-funded teacher education have several long-standing tensions at their core, two of which are particularly significant to themes in this volume. First, a philosophical tension between ethics and knowledge in the construction of teaching practice, and second, a political tension between the role of the state, of universities, of the church, and of schools and colleges in shaping and controlling teacher education and the supply of teachers.

This volume contains a range of philosophical perspectives and characteristic preoccupations that may be brought to bear on these particular concerns. At the same time, it recognises that, while questions such as those sketched above may be viewed as characteristically philosophical, they cannot be isolated from the policy context or from practice in teacher education. With this in view, the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain (PESGB) sponsored a series of 48-hour research symposia on the theme ‘Philosophical Perspectives on the Future of Teacher Education’ (PPfTE), over an 18-month period between May 2011 and November 2012, with participants from teacher educators and philosophers of education (Oancea and Orchard, 2012). Further sponsorship from four Higher Education Institutes enabled these to take place at the Department of Education, University of Oxford; Moray House, University of Edinburgh; the Centre for Philosophy in Education, Institute of Education, University of London; and the Graduate School of Education, University of Bristol. A core group of approximately 20 attended each symposium, which allowed discussion in depth among all participants.

There was little sense of complacency about the future or nostalgia about the past of teacher education in any of the symposia. Rather, discussions were characterised by proposals for change based on
principled arguments about what it takes to become a good teacher. This presented participants with a relatively blank canvas, and gave philosophers and teacher educators a shared space in which to frame and articulate the core problems discussed. The symposia experience was a source of mutual learning and has led to publications to disseminate discussions – notably, some that were overtly philosophical, (e.g. Winch, 2012), others self-defined as ‘educational’ (e.g. Ellis, 2012).  

Philosophers contributing to the PPfTE represented in this book not only highlighted logical contradictions in current policies and practices, but also provided well-argued a priori accounts of what ought to be found in any suitable alternative. Colin Wringe (Chapter 2 in this volume) was one of many contributors who used philosophical argument to question the representation of teaching as a craft in current policy discourse. Chris Higgins (Chapter 4), for example, appealed to very different traditions in philosophical thought to evaluate the notion of the ‘good teacher’.  

As Viv Ellis (2012) argued at the first PPfTE symposium, the practice of education does not fall within the boundaries of neat and discrete disciplinary packages; critical and systematic reflection on education stems from many traditions, voices and modes of enquiry. Teacher education is no exception. However, an important place for characteristically philosophical reflection on all aspects of educational practice remains. The papers in the present volume offer a collection of sustained philosophical responses to crucial questions for the future of teacher education raised though the PPfTE series. The editors have focused on the explicitly philosophical contributions to the PPfTE symposia and have brought together a diverse selection of powerfully argued papers pursuing moral, ontological and epistemological questions in relation to the future of teacher education.  

Philosophical reflection on the future of teacher education continues, for example in an initiative to support ethical deliberation with beginning teachers (working with the Higher Education Academy) and the contribution to a prominent enquiry into research in teacher education (BERA/RSA, 2014). Most importantly, philosophers and teacher educators are engaging in conversation in their everyday professional lives, as evidenced by their participation in the PPfTE symposia and in sessions at professional conferences, and by the generous
response of the institutions and individuals who were invited to engage with the initiative. For many of them, teacher education and its future is not simply something to think and write about, not simply the object of critique, but a space for ‘ontologically transformative’ and ‘constructive’ educational practice in its own right (Aldridge and also Hogan, in this volume). These discussions continue to enrich our understanding of how teachers learn to teach and to be teachers, and this book seeks to share that understanding in ways that we hope will prove enlightening to other teachers, teacher educators, researchers and policy makers.

Janet Orchard and Alis Oancea

NOTE

1 A second strand of publication has developed from an adapted and extended version of the PPTE research symposium format, this time teacher education-led and driven by concern for a particular issue, ‘What and how do teachers learn from experience?’ This event, supported by the Society for Educational Studies and the Oxford Centre for Sociocultural and Activity Theory Research in Oxford, included contributions from philosophers and led to the publication of an edited book (Ellis and Orchard, 2014).
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Notes on Contributors

David Aldridge After teaching and leading in religious education and philosophy departments in secondary schools for ten years, David Aldridge moved to Oxford Brookes University, where he is now Principal Lecturer in Philosophy of Education and Programme Lead for Secondary Initial Teacher Education, MA Programmes in Education, and the Educational Doctorate (EdD). His main research interests are phenomenology and philosophical hermeneutics, and he has published in *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, *Educational Philosophy and Theory* and *Journal of Beliefs and Values*.

Gert Biesta is currently Professor of Educational Theory and Policy and Head of the Institute of Education and Society, University of Luxembourg. He has published widely on the theory and philosophy of education and the theory and philosophy of educational and social research. Recent work focuses particularly on teaching and teacher education and on the roles of theory and theorising in educational research. He is editor-in-chief of the journal *Studies in Philosophy of Education*, and co-edits two book series on the theory and philosophy of education with Routledge. Recent books include *Good Education in an Age of Measurement* (2010) and *The Beautiful Risk of Education* (2014), both with Paradigm Publishers USA. He is also co-author of a chapter on the philosophy of teaching in the forthcoming edition of the AERA *Handbook of Research on Teaching*.

Lorraine Foreman-Peck is an Honorary Research Fellow at Oxford University’s Department for Educational Studies. She has taught in
inner-city secondary schools in London and Newcastle upon Tyne and at the Universities of Newcastle, Northumbria, Oxford Brookes and Northampton, where she was Reader in Education. She has been a Visiting Professor at Northumbria University. Her recent research has included empirical and philosophical investigations into museum pedagogy, responsive evaluation methodology, and teacher well-being. In 2010 she co-authored *Using Educational Research to Inform Practice: A Practical Guide to Practitioner Research in Universities and Colleges* (Routledge) with C. Winch.

**Fiona Hallett** is a Reader in Education at Edge Hill University (UK) and Joint Editor of the *British Journal of Special Education*. She is interested in inclusive educational practices and has researched the lived experiences of children in mainstream and special schools and students in higher education. She is also interested in the ways in which research methodologies position the researcher and the researched and is currently using visual methodologies for an international project on inclusion.

**Ruth Heilbronn** researches and lectures at the UCL Institute of Education, where she has led various teams engaged in teacher education, having previously taught in inner London secondary schools and worked as an LEA adviser. Her publications include research on the induction of newly qualified teachers, for the Department for Education, and *Teacher Education and the Development of Practical Judgement* (Continuum, 2008). In 2010 she co-edited *Critical Practice in Teacher Education* with John Yandell (IoE Press) and has recently published on ethical teacher education. She is an executive member of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain.

**Chris Higgins** is Associate Professor and Program Coordinator of Philosophy of Education in the Department of Education Policy, Organization and Leadership at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where he serves as Editor of *Educational Theory* and holds affiliate appointments in the Unit for Criticism and Interpretive Theory and the Center for Translation Studies. He was Co-Director of an NEH Summer Institute for College Teachers entitled ‘The Centrality
of Translation to the Humanities: New Interdisciplinary Scholarship’ (2013) and Director of the Illinois New Teacher Collaborative (2011–2012). He has served as Program Chair of the Philosophy of Education Society and now serves as General Editor of the Society’s Yearbook, *Philosophy of Education*. His scholarly work concerns the ethical and existential dimensions of the practice of teaching. His book, *The Good Life of Teaching: An Ethics of Professional Practice* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), draws on virtue ethics and neo-praxis philosophy (e.g. Hannah Arendt, John Dewey, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Alasdair MacIntyre, and Michael Oakeshott) to examine the nature of meaningful work and the place of self-cultivation in teaching. His work also explores the dynamics of the teacher–student relationship (freedom and authority, dialogue and recognition, transformative education); teacher education (the role of the arts and the humanities, the cultivation of reflection and professional judgement); aesthetic education (the arts and the educated imagination; creativity and social change); the nature of schooling (progressive and radical theories; what makes a public school public); and higher education (liberal and vocational aims; hermeneutics and translation; humanism and the humanities; political economy of the university).

**Pádraig Hogan** is a senior lecturer at the National University of Ireland Maynooth, where he leads the Research and Development programme ‘Teaching and Learning for the 21st Century’ (TL21). His research interests are mainly concerned with issues of quality in educational experience and with the enhancement of educational policy and practice. He has published widely and his most recent book is *The New Significance of Learning: Imagination’s Heartwork* (Routledge, 2010).

**James McAllister** is director of first year education studies in the School of Education, University of Stirling and is a qualified primary school teacher. His doctoral study at the University of Edinburgh entailed an analysis of philosophical and policy literature related to school discipline, pupil behaviour and teacher authority. His publications have involved philosophical exploration of epistemology and education; how school discipline might be more educational; emotion...
education; physical education; the curriculum for excellence in Scotland; the ethics underpinning educational research; and the role and importance of the body in education. He has two articles forthcoming that explore the thought of the Scottish philosopher John MacMurray on school discipline and emotion education and on the importance of learning through bodily senses and with love.

Mary McAteer has worked for over 30 years as a teacher, local authority consultant and educator, in a range of senior pastoral and curriculum roles. Since moving into higher education in 1999 she has held a range of posts including Senior Lecturer and Principal Lecturer, and programme lead for Master’s-level Professional Development Programmes in two different universities. Her current post is Director of the Specialist Primary Mathematics Programmes in Edge Hill University, where she supports a range of Master’s-level practitioner research projects, and also supervises doctoral studies. She has a particular interest in the notion of ethical deliberation and the changing nature of ethical issues facing the practitioner researcher during the life of a project.

Alis Oancea is Associate Professor in the Philosophy of Education and Deputy Director for Research at the Department of Education, University of Oxford. She writes on philosophy of research, research ethics, knowledge dynamics, policy and governance, higher education, contemporary challenges for philosophy of education, and science and technology studies. She is currently leading an AHRC study on the cultural value of arts and humanities research, and co-editing the *Review of Education* (Wiley). Publications include *Quality in Applied and Practice-Based Research* (Routledge, 2007), *Education for All* (Routledge, 2009) and *Research Methods in Education* (Sage, 2014). She is secretary to the Oxford branch of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain and was part of the executive group of the Society’s Philosophical Perspectives on Teacher Education initiative.

Janet Orchard is Co-Director of the PGCE Programme at the Graduate School of Education, University of Bristol, having previously
taught in secondary schools for over 14 years. Her publications focus on professional education, specifically the contribution of philosophy to teacher education. She co-authored ‘The Contribution of Educational Research to Teachers’ Professional Learning – Philosophical Understandings’ with Christopher Winch and Alis Oancea for the BERA/RSA Teacher Education Inquiry, and in 2014 she co-edited Learning Teaching from Experience: Multiple Perspectives, International Contexts (Bloomsbury) with Viv Ellis. She has been a co-opted member of the Executive of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain since 2008, with specific responsibility for engagement with teacher education, the capacity in which she convened the Philosophical Perspectives for Teacher Education initiative.

**Paul Reynolds** is Reader in Sociology and Social Philosophy at Edge Hill University. His research interests are in radical theory, ethics and critique, and, germane to his contribution here, radical pedagogy and the possibility of moral agency in professional practice. Amongst his research involvements is co-directorship of the International Network for Cultural Difference and Social Solidarity; and Co-Convenor of the International Network for Sexual Ethics and Politics and co-editor in chief of its journal with Barbara Budrich Publishers. He is also a member of the editorial board of Historical Materialism: Research in Critical Marxist Theory and has held and holds other examinerships and advisory board memberships.

**Damien Shortt** teaches English literature on Edge Hill University’s Secondary Undergraduate teacher-training programme. His research interests lie in a broad number of areas including the ethics of teaching, teachers’ standards and codes of conduct, the management of behaviour in schools, and the place of English in the National Curriculum. His current research into behaviour management aims at exploring the philosophical foundations of individual schools' behaviour management policies, in order to map the synergies and tensions between their stated means and ends. Recent publications include articles in the European Journal of Teacher Education and the Journal of Teaching and Teacher Education, and a chapter entitled ‘Who Put the Ball in the English Net? Postnationalism in Dermot Bolger’s In High

**Colin Wringe** is an Honorary Fellow of Keele University where he was previously a Reader in Education. His publications in Philosophy of Education include *Children’s Rights: a Philosophical Study* (Routledge, 1981), *Democracy, Schooling and Political Education* (Unwin, 1984), *Understanding Educational Aims* (Unwin, 1988), *Moral Education: Beyond the Teaching of Right and Wrong* (Springer, 2006) and numerous articles, mostly published in the *Journal of Philosophy of Education*. He gained his first degree at St Edmund Hall, Oxford and his PhD at the London Institute of Education, and has been a member of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain since its foundation in 1963, having served two substantial terms as the Society’s Treasurer. He taught in schools for a number of years before moving to higher education and retains a close interest in the practice of classroom teaching, particularly in his original curriculum subject (Modern Foreign Languages) regarding which he has written two books and edited the subject’s main professional journal. The focus of his current research remains the point, purpose and nature of the educational enterprise and their implications for the initial education and continuing professional development of teachers.
Editors’ Introduction

Education ‘policy borrowing’, as indicated by Carrie Winstanley (2012), is taking place on a global scale. Antoni Verger, Hülya Altinyelken and Mireille de Koning (2013) report on the situation in Indonesia, Jamaica, Namibia, Uganda, Peru, India and Turkey, countries all experiencing similar changes. Further examples are found in the US Race to the Top initiative, and the implementation of national professional standards for teachers in Australia and New Zealand. These education policies share basic features and assumptions. They are based on standards or competencies for teachers and test and examination results for students, so that teachers’ identity and work is now situated in what Stephen Ball (2001) has characterised as a culture of performativity.

Present policy on teacher education raises specifically philosophical questions that we seek to address in this book, focusing on four key questions: Is the account of teacher training and education in current policy statements adequate to the practical and ethical demands they will face? If the account is lacking, in what respects is it deficient? Are current arrangements for teacher education and training adequate to meet possible deficiencies in the official account? Is there a better way of thinking about preparation for teaching? In addressing these issues our contributors employ a variety of approaches to the philosophy of education. Some authors employ a broadly analytical approach to concepts and arguments. Others start with key writers or philosophical texts to illuminate a practical concern in the education of teachers.
The book is organised around three central philosophical concerns, which address the questions above in different ways. The first is the knowledge required by teachers; the second is about teachers as ethical agents; and the third is ontological, that is – what is it to be a teacher? These concerns necessarily overlap and are inextricably related in several of the chapters.

All three contributors to the first section of the book ask questions about the nature of practitioner knowledge and what preparation for teaching might be. How practitioner knowledge is conceived has a bearing on the kind of teacher education that is promoted and enshrined in policy. If teaching is predominantly conceived as a science, for which empirical evidence of effectiveness can be amassed – as, for example, promulgated by David Reynolds (1991) – it follows that teachers can be ‘trained’ to believe in and rely on the efficacy of methods based on the findings of empirical research which makes claims about ‘what works’. The argument against what is seen as an effectiveness mantra has been much rehearsed, but still has considerable purchase in today’s educational climate despite vigorous challenges to the school effectiveness and school improvement movement (see, for example, Slee, Weiner and Tomlinson, 1998). Gert Biesta addresses the question of teacher knowledge in Chapter 1 on ‘competence, evidence and wisdom’ by considering the proposition that teaching should be conceived as an evidence-based practice and also that standards and competences are appropriate mechanisms for training teachers and judging their performance and quality. The chapter argues that both ideas fail to capture the reality of teaching and are therefore insufficient and potentially problematic as reference points for teacher education. Based on the assumption that teaching is a multidimensional teleological practice, that is, a practice constituted by aims, it argues that central to good teaching is the ability to make situated judgements about what is educationally desirable. This is not a matter of the application of evidence, nor should it be understood as a competence. Instead Biesta sees this as something that requires the exercise of ‘practical educational wisdom’, which he develops in relation to Aristotle’s account of techne, poesis and praxis. Teacher education, Biesta claims, should focus on the cultivation of ‘practical educational wisdom’ and the wider ‘virtuosity’ of teaching.
Colin Wringe contrasts two aspects of preparation for teaching, namely the knowledge, techniques and skills necessary for teaching the content of a particular subject effectively, and the more transformative knowledge and understanding needed to enable teachers to achieve a sophisticated and open-minded conception of what education is supposed to be, beyond the mere transmission of curricular content and skills. In particular, the chapter argues that given the diversity of legitimate educational aspirations and the unpredictability of human responses, good teaching cannot simply be a matter of applying tried and tested techniques and procedures but requires wise and conscientious judgements in what are essentially individual situations. The chapter further argues that in the discussion and practice of teacher education it is all too common for those with particular perspectives on this task to emphasise one of these two aspects to the neglect of the other. Both merit equal attention.

In the last chapter in this section James McAllister discusses the idea of a university and school partnership, arguing that in the current context in England and Scotland, where school-based training is possible without any higher education component, the role of the university has become too grounded in educational practice, to the exclusion of educational theory. With reference to J. H. Newman, the chapter argues that staff in education faculties in universities have an important role to play in helping educators to resist any such ‘de-theorising’ of education. Newman suggested that professionals who had a sole focus on ‘professional learning’ would develop a narrow skill base, rather than broad knowledge-based worldviews, and he claimed that the function of the university was to promote a broad liberal rather than a solely vocational and professional education. While acknowledging issues with Newman’s account, the chapter argues that universities partnered with schools should support educators to further develop their own understandings of educational practices and concepts; develop the knowledge and the skills necessary for conducting, comprehending and interpreting practice-based research; and form a critical attitude towards government policy and the findings and application of educational research. McAllister argues for staff in partner schools being encouraged to engage with ‘liberal educational knowledge’, which he takes to mean educational theory that is not explicitly derived from practice or practice-based.