

## "RELEVANT EXPERIENCE" FOR TEACHING THE FOUNDATIONS OF EDUCATION<sup>1</sup>

*E. P. Brandon*

Should teachers of educational foundations be required to have prior school teaching experience? The question can arise in the Caribbean, partly because it has been explicitly answered in policy in England. The paper seeks to show that the answer is "No." It examines the idea that such experience is necessary to see the scope for foundational ideas to impinge on teachers and administrators, and the dubious assumptions that are needed to support a positive answer. It looks briefly at the nature and point of foundational studies, and how one foundation subject behaves in other contexts. It concludes by considering some possible motivations for a positive answer, arguing that the issues they raise largely support the opposite.

When we think of the curriculum we tend to think first of its content, perhaps then of its presentation. We do not usually pay much direct attention to who is to present it, the qualifications of its teachers. But this question is obviously a matter for educational policy and it does, equally obviously, have a bearing on content and presentation. We presumably require that certain teachers shall have certain qualifications because we think that possessing those qualifications is very likely to make a significant difference to what and how they teach. If that is not the reason, then I confess I do not see how the demand could be justified.

This paper looks at a specific issue in the broad set of questions concerning the desirable qualifications for teachers. The specific issue is whether the teachers of school teachers should themselves have been school teachers, or rather, it is even narrower: should those who teach school teachers the so-called "foundations" of education have been school teachers? My own acquaintance is with philosophy, and to some extent sociology, so those will be the sources of most of the examples.

In the English-speaking Caribbean, educational policies are often more hope than reality. We still have many untrained teachers in our schools; qualifications intended to address one segment of schooling are often

used to find jobs in other more prestigious and arguably more "advanced" segments. But at the level of the Teachers' Colleges it is, I believe, the general policy, and indeed the general practice, that the education staff should have direct experience in the school system. At the University, policy is often difficult to discover, but practice, as I know to my advantage, has not insisted on this requirement for the "foundation" subjects.

There is then some divergence in practice in the region that allows the question to be raised as not totally without consequence for our future. But there is another reason for wanting the issue addressed explicitly: the fact that explicit policies on this matter have been implemented in England. We are still inclined to adopt policies and practices of the sometime mother country, often without critical examination of their intrinsic worth or their applicability to our rather different conditions. Lest we buy into what appears to me an unfounded, and possibly even pernicious doctrine, without at least confronting what is to be said on both sides, I urge that my question, narrow as it is, is yet worth some attention.

Our focus is, then, the requirement that people engaged in the preparation of school teachers should themselves have been school teachers and so have what in England is called "recent and relevant" experience.<sup>2</sup> As noted above, my particular interest is in the application of this principle, with respect to "relevance," to those of us teaching the "foundations" of education.

One problem with an appeal to relevance is that it seems so solid and unanswerable as not to require any further clarification or support. Home economics is so obviously relevant, Latin so obviously irrelevant for pupils in Tunapuna or Trench Town, that nothing more is usually said. I will come back to showing why this glaring obviousness is so often in fact obfuscation; the point now is that enunciating the English policy did not involve providing any reasons in favour, so that I am forced to supply both the reasons that may be operating to support the policy as well as those that cast doubt on it.

In educational discourse, there has been for many years an extensive, though perhaps not very fruitful, discussion of the relations between

"theory" and "practice," the "foundations of education" and actual teaching, and so on. One difficulty with this debate has been its programmatic nature; its failure to exemplify the contentions being made. This is perhaps one reason why it has proved difficult, remarkably difficult given the actual substantial implications of the official English policy, to find any discussion at all bearing directly on my specific question of principle, though there have been a few comments in papers in the journal sponsored by NATFHE (National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education), the main English union for College lecturers (Reid, 1986; McManus, 1986; Boxall and Burrage, 1989). But one early comment is worth attention, particularly as it comes from one of the major architects of recent educational foundations, Professor Peters. In 1964, at the beginning of the take-over by the "disciplines" approach, he said:

I am postulating by the way, in case you are somewhat uneasy at my talk of 'specialists,' be they philosophers or psychologists, that they must also have had practical experience of teaching. They must know, from first-hand experience, what the battle-field is like. I shudder at the thought of importing pure philosophers or psychologists from University departments, to put on such courses, if they have never tried to take a class of children themselves (1977, p. 148.)

I have been unable to discern what reasons he had in mind for this expression of solidarity with his original audience (the paper was originally given at an ATCDE-DES conference in 1964, but not published until 1977). His metaphor, however, might suggest that professional philosophers could easily fail to remember how tough, brutish and unrewarding the activity of teaching in school typically is. (Peters' other notorious comparison of education as a matter of dealing with barbarians at the gate suggests a not dissimilar view of the enterprise, a view that might well not have come immediately to the mind of a cloistered university academic in the early 1960s).

One thought that might have been influencing Peters and those who still follow him on this issue is the simple matter of direct experience. It is normal to criticize generals who know nothing of the realities of the

battle-fields they try to command. If I am to speak to a teacher's day-to-day problems, dilemmas, and opportunities, then I need to know what they are, and where better to get that knowledge, especially if it reveals that things are different from popular preconceptions, than from being a teacher? Once asked, the question does, however, permit several other reasonable answers: from empirical studies of schooling; from novels; from talking to other people, even including the students one is teaching. Granted, the experience might be most valuable, but should we move from holding something *prima facie* desirable to making it a requirement? What may have been Peters' concern—that some people would have too rosy a view of school teaching—does indeed seem to be a perennial danger in the training of teachers, but precisely because the trainers, and those being trained, have all been among the comparatively successful ones in the school system. To get such people to take seriously the experience of those who have consistently failed, who have never acquired even rudimentary school skills, who drop out as soon as circumstances permit, or who ignore the official values of the school system is a very difficult task. Experience as a teacher does not seem to make it easier.

Faculties or colleges of education are often a world unto themselves, so it might be worth noting what the situation is in other areas. Philosophy of education is something of an outcast in Philosophy, but there are other thriving philosophies of *X* with which it can be compared. There is, for instance, philosophy of science, or philosophy of religion, or political philosophy. If it were thought important for a trainee scientist, priest, or politician (or perhaps better, civil servant) to study the "foundations" of his or her subject, one thing that might be meant is the philosophy of science, religion, or politics. These areas of philosophy are, however, nowadays typically pursued by philosophers. No doubt the philosophy of science cannot be done in ignorance of some science (or done well—Feyerabend deplored one consequence of Kuhn's work, its encouragement to "people who have no idea why a stone falls to the ground to talk with assurance about scientific method" (1975, p. 6)), but it does not require one to be, or have been, a scientist. Philosophy of religion is done with exemplary rigour by atheists, and it must be very rare for political philosophers to have sought public office. Participant observation is certainly one method amongst others in sociology, but even then it does not always require one to do more than "pass";

anthropologists, to take the extreme case, do not have to believe the tribal cosmology they study.

Although the philosophy of education can claim an ancestry as ancient as these other branches of the subject, it might be thought one ought to focus on something currently closer to it in the real world of academia. An interesting example is provided by a recent growth area: the philosophy of medicine and medical ethics. As recently as 1970, Scheffler (in a talk published as chapter 2 of his 1973) denied the existence of such a discipline, but it now has at least one journal and a considerable body of literature. It is also beginning to find its way into the preparation of medical practitioners. Its ostensible substantive subject is unquestionably a professional skill, actually requiring a wide range of esoteric knowledge. But while the facts about, say *spina bifida*, are comparatively specialized, discussion of the principles that should guide our policies here is not by its nature restricted to medical practitioners—two of the most provocative and interesting recent English works are again by "straight" philosophers, Jonathan Glover (1977) and John Harris (1985).<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps the philosophy of law comes closest to the condition suggested by our principle. Its major English-speaking exponents in recent times have been jurisprudents, Professors Hart and Dworkin. But while few, besides professional lawyers, may wish to obtain a detailed knowledge of the intricacies of the law, I doubt whether it occurred to anyone appointing these men to their chairs to ask whether or how well they had performed as practising lawyers or judges. And in the Oxford Readings, edited by Dworkin and chosen so that they might "cast doubt on the familiar assumption that the philosophy of law is a discipline separate from the practice of law" (1977, p. 1), three out of seven authors are "straight" philosophers. (The analogous ratio for education, in a volume edited by Peters (1973), is five or six out of eleven.)

Science and religion, if not the other areas mentioned above, are largely a matter of informative claims, theory or dogma; and these claims give rise to many of the philosophical problems discussed in the respective philosophies of X. Understanding informative claims is open to anyone, but it may be thought that education is much more a matter of practice and, thus, accessible only to those who have mastered the particular craft.

We may grant, with Aristotle, that one learns to do something primarily by doing it. Practice, in both senses, is perhaps essential here. But is studying the *philosophy* of a practice a matter of learning to do it? I would say that there is no *philosophy* of a practice with this orientation. There may be some interesting questions about what any practice amounts to (MacIntyre, 1981; Carr, 1987; Mackenzie, 1991) but, typically, the philosophical questions surrounding a practice involve its (broadly moral) justification and aims and, perhaps, the nature of some of the 'things' that make it up. So, for instance, we have questions about the moral legitimacy of state power (is there an obligation to obey the law?), the morally acceptable ends for which such power may be legitimate (what is justice?), and about such relations as authority involved in its exercise. Any esoteric tips of the trade for rulers are not really part of political philosophy, however prominent they might be in Machiavelli's contribution to the subject. (And note that Machiavelli was never a ruler, though certainly more involved in the exercise of state power than most contributors to the modern debate.)

We have come to the fundamental questions here: what is the point and the nature of the foundations of education? If their main aim (or the main aim of philosophy of education) was to improve practice by revealing esoteric knowledge of how to educate (or simply teach), then the Aristotelian point just admitted would probably secure the principle in question. One would not expect to learn much about tasting wine from someone who had never imbibed, nor much about the details of professional tasting from someone who had never been initiated into the taster's mystery. But whatever may be the case with psychology of education, it does not seem that either philosophy or sociology of education can make such a claim. Deeper understanding of the actual institutions of schooling, or of what they ought to be attempting, is not necessarily going to do anything to actual day-to-day practice.

It may be thought that this last remark is excessively negative—for rational beings understanding affects action. True, but the point is that the deeper understanding derivable from philosophy (and sociology) is not a matter of the means employed so much as of the ends to be aimed at. With new or more adequately understood ends, no doubt action changes in some respects; but given that the means-end relations here are hardly perspicuous, observable changes may be minimal. To try to

exemplify the point: suppose philosophical reflection on teaching or the aims of education leads someone to see more clearly that she should be aiming at getting children to *understand* Boyle's law rather than being able to parrot a formula for it, or merely carry out certain calculations when suitably primed. This will change her aim in teaching; but since we don't have any reliable means to bring about understanding rather than recitation, what she does may not alter very much. Perhaps, as I shall stress later, she will *stop* doing certain things, or stop thinking that students doing well on certain types of test shows anything worth showing, but the changes brought about by philosophical reflection do not connect closely enough with reliable technologies to tell her what to do instead. It is, on the other hand, at least conceivable that psychology could discover something that would provide some new and reliable means of achieving what she is aiming at.

The principle at issue might be supported if a grasp of the general aims or broadly moral justification for educational practices, or the specific natures of philosophically interesting 'parts' of them could not be obtained without participation; but can this reasonably be maintained? For questions of aims and justification, the answer is surely as obviously negative as it would be in other socio-political matters.<sup>4</sup> There is more to say with respect to the elucidation of particular aspects: Socratic-like questions about what teaching or indoctrinating really is. Can only teachers say what teaching is? Here we should distinguish two issues: to take a famous philosophical example (Nagel, 1974), we may not know what it is like to be a bat, but we can still know a very great deal about the kind of thing it is to be a bat (cf. the Russellian contrast McManus (1986) invoked between knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description). Which of these really matters for dealing with philosophical questions of clarification? Relying on analogies from the sciences and history, I am inclined to think that what we can all acquire is sufficient for most purposes.

But if this were denied, to defend the principle we would still need to claim that being on the receiving end of the relation is *not* sufficient for the requisite understanding, although it seems the best that most of us can muster for dealing with political examples such as authority; and secondly, that the teaching we are doing as preparers of teachers is not sufficiently close to the school version to give the requisite insight. But

what would justify saying that? If trained teaching were essentially different from untrained, there might be a case; but however much we value professional preparation, it would be much too extravagant to make such a claim. If teaching younger people were so very different, again there might be a case, but the differences would have to be pretty radical, ones that could not be understood by extrapolation from obvious differences in cognitive grasp and general interests. There are, of course, *some* differences between teaching adults and teaching children (as McManus, 1986, and Boxall and Burrage, 1989, stress); indeed McManus goes further by noting how narrow and specialized his own experience of teaching adolescents had been and so how useless for, say, preparing primary level teachers. What is at stake is (i) whether the differences *matter* for the purposes to hand, which here are whatever a philosopher is going to do with teaching, and (ii) whether those differences that do matter can only be appreciated by direct acquaintance.

To take another angle on our question, let us look briefly at a taxonomy of perspectives on the education of teachers, offered by Hartnett and Naish (1980). They distinguish first an *ideological*, dogmatic position which is characterized in such a way that it is hostile to genuine philosophical inquiry; similarly uncongenial to a philosophical approach to practice or its problems is their second perspective, the *technological*, in which the ends have been assumed as unproblematic and the only questions are of the means to achieve them. Preparation for schools as they are, or are believed to be, rather than for what they might become is subsumed under this perspective, and its likely subservience to the status quo duly noted. It is also seen as typically assuming an easy transfer of theories from substantive disciplines to their pedagogical application. The third perspective they distinguish, the *craft* perspective, comes closest to offering a view that makes practice inescapable for responsible philosophizing since it sees the actual experience of teaching as yielding, through reflection, insights unobtainable from the outside. Hartnett and Naish object that such an approach may oversimplify; that experience may make people complacent; and that reflection without some concepts to use, concepts that do not arise magically out of that experience, will be impossible. I might add that, so far, I have been unable to find in those contributions to the theory/practice literature alluded to earlier, which espouse this type of perspective, anyone offering an example of the well grounded beliefs that are alleged to be found at the end of all



this *engagé* reflection on practice. They cannot, by all accounts, be ineffable; if distinguishable from the judicious application of what insights the disciplines have to offer, perhaps they are too trivial to bear publication.

We have been casting around for good reasons for the principle and exposing the dubious assumptions needed to support it, if it is taken as too obvious to need defence. The verdict I would urge at this juncture is that the principle is at least not proven. But yet it does seem obviously good policy to many people; perhaps we may speculate on some of the motivations for so thinking.

*Not rocking the boat.* It might be thought that people who have devoted most of their professional lives to school teaching would not, in general, wish to denigrate the activity. Outsiders have less to lose by wholesale condemnation. Such condemnation is certainly not unlikely. One of the stranger facts about educational thought is that it has been so persistently critical of what is normally done in the name of education. Illich and the de-schoolers are in a way only different in that they write in a context of institutionalized mass schooling. Ever since Plato condemned the sophists, most of the significant figures in the history of educational thought have been as dismissive of the usual practices of school-masters as the de-schoolers. No doubt doctors and lawyers have quarrels about appropriate professional practice, but it would seem that school teachers meet a much more intensive bombardment than most other professional trainees, at least from those introducing them to methods, the sociology of education (*v. my 1982*), and historically important educational theories.

The British Government responsible for the policy in question certainly had little time for the radical critics of schooling it saw flourishing at all levels of teacher training; it may have thought that at least the epidemic could be contained by outlawing outsiders. But we have seen reason for doubting this; and of course, the appropriate response to reasonable criticism is to answer, not silence it.

Another aspect of boat-rocking that one might hope to minimize through use of our principle relates to the much-vaunted, but much less visible, integration and collaboration between the different foundations. One of Peters' areas for development in his recent survey of the field arises from

"the need to integrate philosophy with other disciplines" (Peters, 1983, p. 51), but it is remarkable that the examples he offers are largely of critiques: he mentions Hamlyn's explorations of themes from Piaget and Chomsky, and avers that Bruner's work, too, "is wide open for a philosophical critique" (p.51). On this side of the Atlantic, Burbules has recently tried offering philosophy to administrators with considerable modesty and encouragement for collaboration, but his own examples of the utility of such work include a destructive critique of "product/process" research (1990, p. 299; cf. also Garrison and Macmillan, 1984). While we may endorse Burbules' warning that something intelligent people accept can hardly be complete rubbish, and note that the apparently apodictic results of our preferred mode of philosophizing are usually undermined either by someone else's ingenuity or a change of philosophical fashion, it would still seem that internecine conflict among the foundations is not going to go away, however we restrict their teachers. Equally important, though consistently overlooked by those who suppose there are straightforward lessons to be learned from the pure disciplines, is the fact Carr (1982) notes that each foundation discipline is itself torn apart by bitter disputes over how properly to do philosophy, psychology, sociology, or what-have-you.

Sensitized by sociological reflection on the prevalence of ideology and interested distortion in our views of the world, we may in fact find reason to endorse the *opposite* of our principle and agree with Hartnett that "the greater academic inquiry is institutionally separate from the world of practice the more valuable its contribution to practice is likely to be" (1983, p. 90). As Hartnett and Naish stress elsewhere (1980) in their fourth, *critical*, perspective on education that I left hanging earlier, one crucial kind of contribution is a just appreciation of how little we really know and of how complex the issues we face actually are. What may be dubbed "apophatic" educational theory<sup>5</sup> is often the best we can claim to have achieved; it can hardly deliver answers to the pressing problems of practice, but can perhaps encourage a certain willingness not to stick to fashions or orthodoxy. But, as Wilson for instance argues very forcefully (1977), when the institutional arrangements for teaching foundations are opposed to such critical educational goals, we should not really expect even this much (cf. also Brook, 1981). Here we have, in fact, what seems to me the major difference between intuitive ideas about teaching and its institutionalized reality. But recent and relevant experience is no

guarantee of recognizing such distortions; the pious platitudes of schoolmasters and principals provide sufficient evidence to show that.

*Closed-shop/monopoly.* Teachers sometimes get advanced degrees, and some of them specialize at that time in the foundations. They cannot usually go back to their schools to use this expertise, so why not secure some places for them to be employed? The main reason against is the nature of their expertise, or rather their likely lack of it. I have elsewhere (1984) suggested that the very restricted exposure to philosophy typical of such an academic career is likely to severely curtail the scope and depth of the work such people are able to do. As already indicated, the philosophy of education is very much an outsider in professional philosophy, and its typical productions often deserve the obloquy they receive, even from a sympathetic "straight" philosopher (need philosophy of education be so dreary? asks one recent article; its answer is not if its devotees can show "that in pursuing philosophy of education they are pursuing substantive philosophical issues which are part of the main fabric of philosophy, or ... that the first-order issues have an urgency that philosophers should not ignore" (Hamlyn, 1985, p. 165)). Its philosophical credentials are not going to be improved by practitioners who are largely ignorant of the history and contemporary practice of mainline philosophy.

This reply returns us to the question of the nature of educational foundations. A broader issue concerns "service" subjects in general. There is pure mathematics and there is the mathematics that departments of economics want their students to know; there is computer science and there is a course in using spreadsheets for accountants. In our context, there is philosophy or sociology, and there is something called "philosophy of education" or "sociology of education" that some people (quite possibly not including any philosophers or sociologists) have decided trainee teachers should be exposed to. There are, of course, interesting sociological and historical questions about the relations between such service subjects and the pure disciplines allied to them, but our present concern is with the disciplinary content. The answer in the last paragraph concerned the service subject's ability to interest its pure relative, and for this expertise in the pure subject is clearly desirable. But there is also the possibility that the service subject has its own issues and contributions to make to its students that need not interest the purists.

The issue then is, to put it metaphorically, which end of the relation do these things spring from? Is it education that wags philosophy or sociology, or vice versa?

Philosophy of education for some used to be little more than inspirational exhortation—not in my view a fit content for any educational curriculum, certainly not something that would interest pure philosophers, or that requires any philosophical expertise. The service subject can, however, have its own specific contributions to make without loss of its rootedness in the pure discipline. The mathematics taught to economists or architects may not be particularly interesting mathematics for the purist, but it is an application of something mathematicians have discovered, and an application that may have enormous utility for the economists or architects concerned. So, I hope, philosophy of education can contribute to teachers by finding applications of ideas or results in philosophy, applications in the specifics of particular school subjects or school decision-making, applications that will not interest the purist because they throw up no new key issue, but which may yet be significant for the teacher or administrator involved. But the point remains that to find applications one must know that which is to be applied, so we are back with a demand for pure subject expertise.

*Relevance.* This notion has been left to the rogue's gallery of disreputable motivations because it seems to me to be usually best seen as such. The logical context in which the expression "relevant" survives and accomplishes its baneful work has been clearly sketched by several writers, so we can be brief (see, for example, Barrow, 1984, pp. 76-78; or my 1987, pp. 109-110). Relevance in educational contexts is a relational matter with three components, but at least one is usually left unspecified: whether  $X$  is relevant for someone depends crucially on the often unstated  $Y$  to which it contributes. The fact that the  $Y$ -slot is either unstated or left very unspecific contributes to the never-ending and fruitless nature of a lot of talk about relevance. So too does the fact that there is no consensus on priorities among the various  $Y$ s we might be trying to achieve in a particular case, say a teacher education programme.

So to take up an earlier example, home economics is relevant for a student in Tunapuna, *if* we are looking at what she might be using next week or month in her home; but if we are thinking of extending her

opportunities for "high-tech" employment next year or next decade, or equipping her with skills of incisive logical criticism, it might be far down the list of priorities, while Latin—if its teachers are to be believed—might be high for at least the last aim.

Because most rhetorical appeals to relevance elide the Y-slot, they permit unargued endorsement of particular and often contestable ends. Boxall and Burrage are not alone in criticizing the narrow vocationalism they see underlying the insistence on recent and relevant experience, and which, as is well-known, surfaces in many teacher trainees' reactions to the foundations of education. The critical perspective, or "reflective teaching" (see Broadfoot and Brandon, 1988), are not exactly designed to make insecure beginning teachers any happier. There might well be situations in which something narrower is more sensible. But with respect to philosophy at least, there is a lot to be said for its ability to contribute to preparing teachers of specific subjects in a way subject specialists are usually unable to (for an example of one such contribution, see my 1989; cf. also Shulman, 1990); and with respect to all the foundations there is one further consideration I would like to close with.

In the "first" world, trainee teachers have easy access to a wide range of ideas (TV "chat shows"; Sunday papers; even libraries). Many such sources are notably absent elsewhere. The growth of an informed and critical public is an essential requirement for desirable political and, probably, economic life; for teachers in training, one source of the necessary ideas could be the pragmatically marginal reflections they meet in studying the foundations. That might not be the best way; but it might yet remain an acceptable compromise, given the enormous pressure of other priorities. As Reid argued, trainees can easily meet practising teachers; "they just as obviously need, and possibly get less, contact with staff whose scholarship is ongoing and vital" (1986, p. 25) and who can therefore, we may hope, challenge them with new and provocative ideas, if not supply them with a guaranteed recipe for success.

## References

- Barrow, R. (1984). *Giving teaching back to teachers*. Brighton: Wheatsheaf Books.
- Boxall, W., & Burrage, H. (1989). 'Recent, relevant experience': CATE's narrow definitions. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 13, 30-45.
- Brandon, E. P. (1982). Can teachers live with the truth about teaching? A reaction to Morrill and Steffy. *Journal of Thought*, 17, 13-17.
- Brandon, E. P. (1984). The philosophy in the philosophy of education. *Teaching Philosophy*, 7, 1-15.
- Brandon, E. P. (1987). Ellipsis and ideology. In D. N. Perkins, J. Lochhead, & J. C. Bishop, (Eds.), *Thinking: The Second International Conference*. New Jersey: L. Erlbaum Associates.
- Brandon, E. P. (1989). Subverting common sense: Textbooks and scientific theory. In D. E. Herget, (Ed.), *The history and philosophy of science in science teaching: Proceedings of the first international conference* (pp. 30-40). Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida: Science Education, and Department of Philosophy, .
- Broadfoot, P., & Brandon, E. P. (1988). Introduction: From classroom research to professional practice. In E. P. Brandon, P. Broadfoot, & E. Leo-Rhynie, (Eds.), *From research to reflective teaching*, a special issue of the *Caribbean Journal of Education*, 15, (1 & 2), 1-8.
- Brook, D. J. P. (1981). Why theory into practice doesn't normally go: A response to Carr, 1980. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 5, 46-53.
- Burbules, N. (1990) Making a case for relevance. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 26, 293-301.
- Carr, W. (1982). Treating the symptoms, neglecting the cause: Diagnosing the problems of theory and practice. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 6, 19-29.
- Carr, W. (1987). What is an educational practice? *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 21, 163-175.
- Dworkin, R. M. (Ed.). (1977). *The philosophy of law*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Feyerabend, P. K. (1975). How to defend society against science. *Radical Philosophy*, 11, 3-8.
- Garrison, J. W., & Macmillan, C. J. B. (1984). A philosophical critique of process-product research on teaching. *Educational Theory*, 34, 255-274.
- Gibbs, G., Habeshaw, T., & Habeshaw, S. (1987). *53 interesting things to do in your lectures*. Bristol: Technical and Educational Services.
- Glover, J. (1977). *Causing death and saving lives*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Hamlyn, D. W. (1985). Need philosophy of education be so dreary? *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 19, 159-165.
- Harris, J. (1985). *The value of life*. London: Routledge.

- Hartnett, A. (1983). The sociology of education and the education of teachers: Arguments for a reconsideration of the relationship. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 4, 85-98.
- Hartnett, A., & Naish, M. (1980). Technicians or social bandits? Some moral and political issues in the education of teachers. In P. Woods, (Ed.), *Teacher strategies* (pp. 254-273). London: Croom Helm.
- Lossky, V. (1957). *The mystical theology of the Eastern Church*. London: James Clarke
- MacIntyre, A. (1981). *After virtue*. London: Duckworth.
- Mackenzie, J. (1991). Street phronesis. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 25, 153-169.
- McManus, M. (1986). Teacher-training: the voice of recent, substantial and relevant experience. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 10, 27-28.
- Nagel, T. (1974). What is it like to be a bat? *Philosophical Review*, 83, 435-450.
- Peters, R. S. (Ed.). (1973). *The philosophy of education*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Peters, R. S. (1977). *Education and the education of teachers*. London: Routledge.
- Peters, R. S. (1983). Philosophy of education. In P. H. Hirst, (Ed.), *Educational theory and its foundation disciplines* (pp. 30-61). London: Routledge.
- Reid, I. (1986). Hoops, swings and roundabouts in teacher education: A critical review of the CATE Criteria. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 10, 20-26.
- Scheffler, I. (1973). *Reason and teaching*. London: Routledge.
- Shulman, L. (1990). Reconnecting foundations to the substance of teacher education. *Teachers College Record*, 91, 300-310.
- Wilson, P. S. (1977). Review. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 1, 135-143.

## Footnotes

1. This paper derives from a contribution to the Faculty of Education cross-campus conference held at St Augustine in 1992. At the time the paper, entitled "'Relevant experience' and the foundations of education", was intended to provoke rather than lay out a definitive position, and I am very grateful for the comments it did provoke from the anonymous referee(s) of this journal. I doubt that this version fully answers the comments received--I may still have preferred the more provocative extreme to the truer but blander middle way--but they have certainly helped to clarify the issues.
2. It may be worth stating explicitly that the question is not whether teachers (specifically in Teachers' Colleges and other institutions of higher education) should have some training in how to teach. After almost a thousand years' resistance, we can perhaps say that this battle has been won. But the terms of the present victory do not assume that to teach at a university, say, one needs to have been trained to teach or simply to have taught in a school. The principle I am addressing is very different: it requires school teaching experience (and presumably, therefore, the training normally prerequisite for this) of the trainers of school teachers, not merely that they should have been given guidance on "53 interesting things to do in your lectures," seminars and tutorials (cf. a series of guides by Gibbs and the Habeshaws, e.g. 1987).

There is another matter of clarification, called for by the debate about theory and practice alluded to above: it is not my concern here to decide whether it is a good thing to provide "foundations" for trainee teachers. The question arises within the supposition that these things are desirable. My first contribution to my Department at Mona was an argument that I be made redundant, and I still have considerable sympathy for those views that would keep teachers in training, or at least in initial training, away from anything recognizable as philosophy or sociology. But that broader issue is not the one I want to address now, at least not directly.

3. Medical training provides another analogy that can be used in support of my position: clinical versus pre-clinical training. The former matches the practice of teaching, the latter corresponds to the "foundations" of education. Now while the clinical teachers of trainee doctors are themselves clinicians, pre-clinical training is often carried out by "pure" scientists who would not be permitted to practice medicine. They are,



however, experts in the biochemistry or physiology that it is believed important for doctors to have learnt.

4. This could be challenged, particularly when we are looking at "middle-range" aims specific to educational processes or institutions. A referee remarks that if "ought implies can," as many philosophers believe, then knowledge of the extent of the possible (or perhaps better the feasible) is a key element in responsible thinking about the aims of education. The problem is whether personal experience (excluding the reading, etc. accessible to non-participants) has much to tell us about the limits of the feasible. It may well give us a feeling for the local blinkers on the feasible, but that is another matter—of limited practical politics perhaps, rather than normative argument. How many, ten years ago in South Africa or Eastern Europe, would have got the limits of the feasible even roughly right?
5. The term is borrowed from a strand in Eastern Orthodox theology (cf. Lossky, 1957, ch. 2) where God is only spoken of in negative terms: God is not this, God is not that, .... As I noted earlier, a study of the educational foundation disciplines can tell us that certain things don't work, shouldn't be aimed at, but may not get very far on the positive side.