For Philosophy of Education in Teacher Education

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The argument of this article is that the time has come to re-assess the role that Philosophy has to play in the education of teachers, both at the beginning of and during their careers. The argument depends on a view of the character of teachers' work that will, inevitably, excite disagreement but which is also, I hope to show, highly plausible, particularly in the context in which education currently takes place. My detailed references will be to the UK context but the argument has much wider applicability.

   The claim is that the ability to think philosophically is an indispensable component of a teacher's capacity for professional judgment. To substantiate this it will be necessary to explain what is meant by 'professional judgement' and why teachers should have it. 'Professional judgment' has different components in which philosophical reflection should occur.

The Conceptual Framework of Education.

Education is found in every society. All societies bring up their young and induct them into the adult world. Some do this formally, others informally. Education, particularly although not exclusively in the formal sense, has developed a conceptual framework in which its principal features may be discerned and used. This consists of a number of interlocking concepts whose general outlines are clear enough, but whose more detailed understanding for practical use is less so. These are: aims, curriculum, pedagogy, assessment. Thus in one sense, all one needs to know in order to understand the general structure of a formal education system is to grasp that educational *aims* are the general purposes of such a system, the *curriculum* the content of what is transmitted in such a system, *pedagogy* the means by which it is done and *assessment* a procedure for establishing the success of pedagogy in relation to the curriculum.

   While this is obvious, it is also very general and of little practical use in *establishing* aims, *designing* a curriculum, *prescribing* pedagogic methods and *carrying out* assessment. To make this clearer it is necessary to look at the conceptual and the normative issues underlying the practical employment of these categorial educational concepts. Looking first at the conceptual issues, the very claim that education has aims may be disputed. It might be said that as a fundamental human institution, education just exists and does not need justification in terms of purposes. Although I believe this view to be mistaken it requires philosophical argument to dispel it. Alternatively, it might be claimed that education does have aims but they are *implicit* in educational activities rather than explicitly articulated and that, even when they are, they are usually overridden by the implicit ones. The curriculum, characterised as educational content is, by itself, an empty concept, a place-holder for some more substantial notion, the investigation of which will involve looking at educational aims and the origin, classification and organisation of the knowledge, understanding, virtues and attitudes which are its possible content. Furthermore, the normative force of curricula in general and particular curricula is a matter of philosophical dispute.

   Likewise with pedagogy: we may wonder what epistemology and what philosophy of mind underlie pedagogical prescriptions. Philosophical literature presents many examples of the close

relationship between these three: the innatist epistemology of Plato's *Meno*, the empiricism of Locke, the proto-constructivism of Rousseau and his numerous successors, and the Aristotelian habituation/experientialist account of the acquisition of the virtues are just some examples, each with exemplars in contemporary educational thinking. Assessment is another concept with complex and contested relationships with aims, curriculum and pedagogy on the one hand and with questions of the accountability of educational institutions on the other, whose conceptual dimensions still remain to a considerable extent unexplored, but which, nevertheless have a profound effect on the design and operation of educational systems.

The *normative* employment of these concepts is partly determined by conceptual investigation but also by processes that are best described as political in the sense that they involve questions about what kinds of values and goods a society should aim for and what are not just *efficient*, but *acceptable* means of achieving those values and goods. The entanglement of conceptual and normative questions can be seen, for example, in the issue of how explicit educational aims should be, of some importance in the UK in recent years (eg. White 2007; Marples 1999). Questions of what kinds of knowledge should have a place on the curriculum are closely connected with debates about what areas of human activity and interest are actually knowledge-dependent, together with questions concerning the epistemic value of certain subjects (Williams, 2000; McLaughlin 2000). The prescription of pedagogy, although often bound up with empirical and quasi-empirical claims about 'how children learn' is also deeply entangled with philosophical issues concerning whether, for example, the mind is the brain or with questions concerning ethically acceptable ways of teaching (Davis 2004; D. Carr 2000).

The classical analytical method of conceptual analysis employed by the pioneering philosophers of education in the post-war period obscured this complexity. It was thought, for example, by Peters in 1966 that it was possible to develop a canonical and universal account of the concept of education, applicable in all times and circumstances. Peters himself, by 1981, realised that this was neither an adequate account of conceptual analysis nor of the complexity of educational concepts and began to distinguish between the categorial and the more particular conceptions of education that are in play in different societies, social groups and times (Peters 1981, Ch. 3). He also recognised that such non-categorial conceptions of education are contested, that they articulate partial visions of the good, related to particular perspectives and that there is not necessarily a decisive philosophical argument that will validate one and invalidate the other for all times and in all circumstances. This does not entail the abandonment of philosophical argument in debate about such issues, but suggests that it may be one ingredient among others in normative disputes about the nature and direction of educational policy.

One reaction to the early Peters project has been the argument that Educational Theory (including its philosophical, normative and empirical components) has no bearing on educational practice. If valid, this argument would put paid, not just to Philosophy of Education, but to all the disciplines of education as a meaningful component of teacher's expertise (W. Carr, 2004, 2005, 2006). I will deal with the arguments against the relevance of empirical research on educational practice below, because they come from quite a broad constituency within Philosophy of Education. But Carr's argument needs to be addressed first.

It is argued that education is a practice whose development is largely autonomous in the sense that it generates and solves its own problems from within, rather than from outside practice.

Professional growth is described as *phronesis* or ethically informed situated judgment, for which experience and the capacities for observation, reflection and modelling are necessary. As practices are largely self-contained, theoretical reflection on them is mostly irrelevant. This is obviously true of the deliverances of analytical philosophy, whose results are simply irrelevant to educational practice as they are concerned with theory rather than practice (eg. Carr 2005, p.624). Practical philosophy, however, as a tool of philosophical reflection on practical issues, has, Carr maintains, been largely discarded and its obvious relevance to teachers discounted. But: "Teaching practitioners to confront the limits of their own self-understanding in this way is the central task of practical philosophy." (Carr 2004, p.62).

There is an important insight in Carr's argument, that conceptual abilities can be brought to bear on the resolution of normative and practical questions in education. It is central to my argument that such abilities need to be developed by teachers and that the study of philosophy by teachers is central to such a project. One of the problems is an unnecessary dichotomy between theory and practice which, ironically is influential in certain forms of analytical philosophy, so that theory is deemed to be irrelevant to practice and *vice versa*. Ryle's influential account of *knowing how* for example, trades to a considerable degree on this distinction (Ryle 1945, 1949), leading Ryle to (unnecessarily) discount the possible influence of theory on practice (see XXXX 2009). Ironically, however, the dichotomy between theory and practice, central to his argument concerning the relevance of analytical philosophy to educational practice, is one that has played an important and too little questioned role in analytical philosophy itself and it needs to be challenged. In the non-categorial development of philosophy of education that Peters sketched out in the 1980s is a model for how such an over simple dichotomy can be overcome. In the Peters' later view, a conceptual framework for education has a tendency to be developed from a particular perspective, and it is *contestable*, on practical, normative and conceptual grounds. Educational problems will tend to be resolved in practice within a particular conception of education. However, teachers need to be able, not only to work within such a framework, but also to be able to see beyond its limitations, for which a broader philosophical understanding, not totally rooted in one's day to day practice is necessary.

The Education of Teachers.

What has this to do with the education of teachers? For those who cleave to a conception of teaching as a form of craft work, based on personal values, experience, intuition and nothing else, it has little relevance. Likewise for those who envisage teaching as a putting into effect of norms based on the best results of empirical research. Beyond these two, mutually contradictory conceptions of teaching as an occupation, there lies a terrain which needs further exploration in terms its general nature, a task which has been tentatively attempted and which illustrates some of the complexity and difficulty in this area (D. Carr 2003 Ch3). Particular conceptions of teaching are internally related to particular conceptions of national education systems as contested terrain, in which aims, curriculum, pedagogy and assessment are live and revisable issues of policy. In such a society, educational policy and practice are matters of near-constant national concern and debate. Teachers, as the principal operatives in the system are under constant scrutiny, and policies on every conceivable educational issue are reformulated. Informed and rational debate (W. Carr, 2006, pp.152-3) on such issues is often in short supply. While it is scarcely appropriate,

in a democratic society, for those who operate a public service to have the sole voice on what it should be for and how it should be run, it is equally mistaken to think of public servants as nothing more than the implementers of policies and practices devised elsewhere.

First, teachers are themselves citizens with civic responsibilities who have, moreover, an intimate acquaintance with education, more so than almost any other group within the society. It is not only their own personal interests that are bound up with educational policy and practice, but their broader identifications with the well-being of their society. The benevolence that we expect of them extends beyond the particular children and students that they teach to a broader concern for the effects of their activities on the well-being of the society as a whole (Kerschensteiner, 1901). To exclude them from at least a voice of some authority on such matters is foolish. Second, they constitute, as an occupation, a permanent source of knowledge and expertise about the education system, which runs through all aspects from classroom to policymaking for the future direction of the system. Third, they are responsible for the detailed implementation of national policies and strategies and are not only partly responsible for their successful outcomes but are also the indispensable source of information about the operational conditions in which those policies and strategies are implemented. One might argue that teaching as an occupation is not currently adequately equipped to carry out such roles, but that contention, if true, is not a reason for abandoning them (for they still remain valid requirements) but for ensuring that there is a body of teachers who can fulfil them.

Teachers' professional knowledge (including knowledge of research and applied pedagogical issues).

The most easily recognised component of teachers' professional knowledge is their knowledge of the subjects that they are paid to teach. In the popular view, the expertise of a teacher is thought to consist a] in that knowledge and b] in the ability to successfully transmit it to students. Provided one has the right personality (eg not too shy), a good grasp of the subject is thought to be sufficient. I will assume that the view that good subject knowledge is a necessary condition for a professional competence is correct. To clarify, it will be helpful to explain 'knowledge', both in relation to subject knowledge (SK) and more controversial aspects of what a teacher's knowledge does or should consist in. By 'knowledge' is meant, not merely acquaintance with true propositions within a particular field of human concern that stand in inferential relationships with each other, but the ability to *make relevant inferences* within that field. A 'subject' in this context is an institutionally and socially recognised way of organising knowledge which has a place on the curriculum. Moreover, it is not adequate to think of a field of knowledge, be it a subject or another way of organising knowledge, such as a *form of knowledge* (Hirst 1974) as no more than a set of propositions and the inferential relationships that hold between them, but as the practices of acquiring, validating and rejecting propositions that articulate facts and norms within that field. Thus, although subject knowledge has *knowledge that* (KT) or propositional knowledge as a central feature, it is misleading to think of it in a way that ignores the practical knowledge or *know how* (KH) necessary to maintain the subject as a living entity. It is important to note that the nature of a subject may itself be a topic of debate within the subject (Orchard 2009). There may be controversy about its aims, its extent and relationships with other subjects and its mode of inquiry. Very often these are not empirical but conceptual debates which concern how the subject

is to be understood. For those who claim a more than superficial acquaintance with the subject, it is a reasonable expectation that they have some grasp of these debates.

This is particularly important for teaching because such understandings will have a bearing on curriculum design. Knowledge of the conceptual structure of a subject is necessary, but not sufficient for the design of the curriculum, but it is critical. It may be objected that claims concerning the conceptual structure of particular subjects are contested and therefore cannot be the proper province of teachers. However, having views about such matters is an unavoidable requirement on curriculum designers and they are often teachers, former teachers or individuals whose careers have developed through teaching. In general one would expect those who play a significant role in curriculum design to have had substantial experience of teaching to acquire the practical knowledge of subject configuration and student learning to make sound judgments on such matters. But classroom teachers should not be passive recipients of a curriculum that they then 'deliver' in their classrooms. They need to interpret the curriculum to design schemes of work and lesson plans, but they also need to be able to contribute to debates about curriculum design and reform and need, therefore, to understand debates about the nature of the subjects that they teach (see, for example, Johnson and Siegel 2010; Williams 2000; Gingell 2007; Barnes 2009, for examples of such philosophically informed curriculum debate).

While subject knowledge is, perhaps, a self-evident requirement, other types of knowledge are less so. These consist of: first, Pedagogic Content Knowledge (PCK), "…that special amalgam of content and pedagogy that is uniquely the province of teachers, their own special form of professional understanding." (Shulman, 1999); second, knowledge of what, if anything, constitutes effective pedagogy and third, knowledge of how learners actually learn. PCK concerns how a subject is or should be organised in order that it may be most effectively presented for learning purposes. A perspective on this is, in turn, dependent on a view of how learning most efficiently takes place (perhaps it does differently in different subjects, so these two kinds of investigation cannot be easily separated from each other), as well as a view on the nature of the subject or field of enquiry itself. Finally, pedagogical knowledge (PK) will be closely related to these other two categories but less closely linked to knowledge of a subject. Such claims to knowledge are controversial. They are largely empirical claims about certain matters of fact but, because they are often not well-established or because they may not even belong to some well-established field of enquiry, their status is often suspect and based on covert and contestable philosophical assumptions (Alexander 1992, Ch. 11).

Teacher's professional know-how (and how connected with their professional knowledge).

A significant part of the initial teacher education curriculum should, it has been argued, be concerned with the *conceptual and normative structure* of education, in order to provide the conceptual framework in which to develop professional judgement. It will be pointed out that if the argument is that educational concepts tend to be contested, then there is not much point in instructing new teachers in contestable material. But that is to miss the point, which is to provide teachers with a framework for their own thinking and problem-solving, not to provide them with a set of stock answers to complex problems. Recognition of the contestability of such concepts as *assessment, aims* etc. is necessary in order to be able to adequately grasp them, let alone to be able to use them to form professional judgments.

Once one moves to consider empirical research into how learning takes place and what are effective methods of teaching, it might be thought that messy issues of contestability are left behind, with nothing more than easily digestible research results left to find and, once found, to put into effect. This however is far from the case: the findings and interpretation of empirical research are often contestable, let alone the use that is made of it. We need also to ask about the form in which it should be presented to teachers. If the aim is to develop individuals capable of making professional judgements, it cannot be enough that they be taught recipes derived from the research, even when we make the generous assumption that the research is capable of providing a clear and unambiguous guide to action. But if we are to ask teachers to use the research to make their own judgments, it cannot be enough to expect them to derive their knowledge of findings from secondary sources alone.

Secondary sources frequently give over-simple, inaccurate and partial accounts and do not fully present the designs and methods used. Without access to the primary material, it is not possible to make judgments about quality and value. For this it is necessary for teachers to understand the basic categories for understanding and evaluating empirical research. They need to distinguish between knowledge and belief and between truth and justification. They need to understand the difference between justification and proof and between hypothesis and test, not to mention that between corroboration and refutation. In short, they will need to understand basic concepts in the Philosophy of Science and also, although there is not the space to develop the argument, the Philosophy of Social Science. The need for philosophical study is not an alternative to empirical study but complementary and, indeed, a prerequisite for understanding, at the appropriate level of depth, the principles underlying empirical research in education.

The Search for Truth and Applicability in Empirical Educational Research.

I am not going to take the view that many Philosophers of Education hold, that empirical educational research is of little or no value (See Barrow in Barrow and Foreman-Peck 2005; D. Carr 2003. Contrast Phillips 2005; XXXXXXX 2006). This is not to say, however, that the identification of valuable educational research, let alone its implementation, is straightforward. Indeed, it is because of the complexity of identifying the valuable and putting it into effect in professional judgement that Philosophy of Education has something important to contribute.
 Educational reality is conception dependent.

Schools and classrooms exist whether or not they are observed. As Marx pointed out, money only exists as a medium of exchange when it is recognized and treated as such. The physical traces of money, such as coins, will exist whether or not anyone perceives them; their status as money, on the other hand, depends on people employing a concept of money as a medium of exchange and using coins as if they were. Human institutions, including Education, are *conception dependent*. Education as a human activity is *constituted* by the relevant concepts. This is not to say that someone may not fail to recognise an educational activity. Such a failure may rest on an inability to recognise an activity as educational, because the observer's own conception of education does not allow him to categorise what he observes as education. We should note that such a failure, although it may arise in a situation where one is trying to make sense of a very

different culture to one's own, need not always do so. It may be that a practice in our own society which is thought to be educational on one conception of education is not thought to be so on another. Notoriously, this has often been a claim made about activities that go under the name of 'vocational education'. So the conception-dependent nature of education may make it difficult to know where to look for education, even when a range of recognizably human practices has been discerned. The point illustrates the need for educational researchers, teachers and other educational professionals to have a philosophical understanding in order to be sensitive to what may and what may not be educational practices in different contexts. This is hardly a trivial point, since even as a categorical concept, *education* has important properties that are highly relevant to any attempt to identify a *conception* of education or a putative educational practice.

An important corollary is that, in order to make sense of empirical research, one needs to have a good conceptual grasp of education, including its contestable elements. The fact that educational researchers often lack this is a good reason for their studying Philosophy of Education and of Social Science, not a reason for teachers not studying it. If a study of the curriculum is presented, for example, which relies on a confused, tendentious or controversial conception of the curriculum, this needs to be taken into account, in the evaluation of the research. Or, to take another example, studies that present accounts of effective schooling cannot be understood apart from the conception of educational aims that lie not just in the minds of the researchers, but also in those of the individuals working in the institutions which they are researching. It should go without saying that any teacher seeking to understand and evaluate the relevance of such research for professional practice needs to be aware of such issues.

Understanding the Nature of Empirical Research.

In education it may be relatively easy to identify the issue one would like to grapple with, at least in general terms. It may be much less easy to identify the phenomena most relevant to understanding that problem. In looking at illiteracy, should one concentrate on the home, the labour market, the classroom or the child's brain? Indeed, a firm grasp of different conceptions of what might be meant by 'illiteracy' is a prerequisite of useful empirical work in this area. The *focus* of one's attention is a fundamental issue in the design of educational research and presupposes that one already has some idea of the *kind* of explanation required to provide an account of the issue under consideration. While teachers cannot be expected to have a firm grasp of all the issues that need to be considered when designing a research strategy, they should be sensitive to the priority of explanation, that in order for example, to formulate a strategy for reducing illiteracy, one needs, not just a detailed description of the phenomenon, but some outline of a plausible evidence-based interpretation of why it occurs. A strong awareness of the need for *explanatory adequacy* is needed by teachers to inform their approach to reading educational research. This is particularly important when one is concerned with the possible practical import of such research. Studies that show correlations between phenomena can be very important and may bring to light relationships that were previously either poorly perceived or even not noticed at all (for example, Webber and Butler's (2007) on the complexities of the composition of the school population and its effect on academic outcomes). But such correlations are of limited use unless they help to show, not just *that* certain events and processes occur, but *why* they do so.

It is a challenge to locate, identify and collect data necessary to an explanation of an educational phenomenon in a form likely to support a satisfactory explanation. For example, quantification is often useful to provide a sense of the scale for an issue and the different dimensions in which it occurs, as well as correlations and possible relationships between factors. When explanations in terms of reasons, attitudes, practices or causes are, however, required then it may often be inadequate. Neither can it take account of phenomena such as the 'Observer's Paradox' (Labov 1969) which have a strong bearing on how data can be collected without compromising it through its very collection. In order to make judgments about explanatory adequacy, teachers will need to be sensitive to such issues. Doing so requires awareness of the most important ways in which social inquiry differs from the natural sciences and, in particular the need for interpretation and understanding of the conceptual schemes of the participants in making sense of social (including educational) phenomena (Hutchinson and Read 2009). It is thus indispensable to appreciating the adequacy of empirical research that teachers not only have some technical grasp of the methods used, but that they understand underlying issues of interpretation and understanding and how these impact on the adequacy of design of empirical projects and their explanatory potential. This is not to say that teachers should be able to carry out such research itself; that is a task that those qualified at doctoral rather than bachelor or masters level should aspire to, but rather that they can read and discuss educational research with the right level of understanding.

The suggestion is that all initial teacher education programmes should include components on the nature and problems of carrying out educational research and that such components should build on an understanding of the conceptual and normative framework of education in the first instance and on a basic understanding of the debates about scientific method and social scientific method in particular.

Towards a new conception of teacher competence in the context of developing a career.

Teaching shares crucial attributes with other professions, the most important being access to and use of a body of specialist systematic knowledge apt for exercise in professional judgment. It was argued that not only should Philosophy of Education be a component of such knowledge, but that it should also inform judgments concerning the applicability of empirical knowledge about teaching and learning.

First, teachers need to understand what they are doing in order to make day-to-day judgments on matters of classroom practice, to contribute to school policy, to curriculum debate and, last but not least, to wider debates about the current and future direction of education. Suppose the contrary, that we only require teachers who are technicians in a narrow sense. Such teachers will be capable of following guidelines and their own judgments and those of their superiors will be solely concerned with checking that they are following those guidelines correctly.

Let us look at an example for which the case apparently looks most weak. Suppose that we are concerned with standards of literacy in the primary school and with ways of teaching reading that guarantee success. It might seem that the best way to ensure this is to apply the best research available to developing a literacy curriculum and staff training to implement that curriculum through the appropriate use of methods such as synthetic phonics, paired reading etc. Procedural knowledge but little understanding is required for success in such methods and we know that the

application of methods in a systematic way can be effective (MacKay 2006). Consider however that it is reasonable to expect teachers to be able to make contextual judgments concerning the pupils that they are actually teaching and to make arrangements that suit their particular needs. In this case (which is surely the general case in such a matter as the teaching of reading), it is necessary to be able to adapt general principles to particular situations and, where necessary, to devise programmes of study that are adapted to those needs.

Thus an understanding of differences between literary and oral media is necessary. This is, in part, a conceptual rather than a purely empirical question (Goody and Watt 1962; Stubbs 1980; Finnegan 1973). Applied linguistic knowledge of the nature of writing systems in general and of the English alphabetic system in particular is needed in order to diagnose difficulties and to plan instruction. Additionally, an understanding of the nature and purpose of assessment is required in order to do the former. Again, this involves significant elements of philosophical understanding that have been neglected in recent years. It is worth noting in this respect that formative assessment is still considered by many to be a weakness amongst serving teachers. Going beyond the immediate requirements of the classroom, teachers who can contribute to curriculum planning, to the training of their colleagues and to participation in debates about pedagogical improvement, need to be capable of taking an informed interest in these issues, rather than leaving them to specialists. Teachers of reading should read research papers on reading and assessment and be able to understand and comment on the issues involved. They need to because any programme of educational improvement has to sustain itself and to expand beyond the context in which it originated. We have empirical evidence in England concerning the limits of nationally directed programmes that prescribed technique, such as the National Literacy and the National Numeracy strategies. Such strategies have some initial success but then stall as they cannot exploit the enthusiasm and knowledge of the staff concerned, partly because it does not exist in sufficient degree. On the other hand, one cannot assume that successful local initiatives such as that in West Dunbartonshire in Scotland, (Mackay 2006), will either prosper in the long term or be translated into success at the larger scale without mobilising teachers who understand what they are doing and can adapt general principles to particular circumstances.

Where enthusiastically advocated initiatives are not properly understood or even scrutinised, energies are dissipated to little or even negative effect, as in the ill-fated psycholinguistically based approaches to the teaching of reading and writing in the 1980s (eg. Smith 1985). Such occurrences are not only educationally destructive but feed a wider disillusion and cynicism about expertise in education within the profession and beyond. This is not an argument against innovation and experimentation but a plea for research, planning, scrutiny and evaluation of initiatives. That is something that only teachers with an educated understanding, including a philosophical one, can take part in on a large scale.

Implications for initial teacher education.

Teacher education in Britain has undergone much reform designed to make it more relevant to practice over the last quarter of a century. There are many positive aspects to this development but also some negative ones. They can be categorised as two related tendencies. The first is the positing of the classroom as the primary locus of initial teacher education. The model is the assumption that teaching is a kind of craft activity best learned through apprenticeship. It is

conceded that teachers require pedagogic content knowledge and knowledge of the legal and institutional framework in which they operate in order to be effective, but these are more in the nature of add-ons than essential elements of teachers' core competence.

In recent years the national specifications for qualified teachers have moved from a *competence* model, in which necessary attributes are set out in behaviourally realisable descriptors, to a *standards* model which includes the specification of attributes such as attitudes and values as well as behavioural descriptors (TDA 2009). While this is an undoubted improvement on the earlier competence model it falls far short of acknowledging the ability to make a wide range of professional judgments which should be at the core of professional capacity. In particular, the setting out of standards for work in the classroom are still largely descriptive of the kinds of actions or types of actions that are required of teachers and thus remain, in effect, competences in the old sense. The standards are, in effect, *prescriptions* of attitudes, values and practices with which teachers are expected to comply, rather than descriptors of a wide-ranging occupational capacity.

Does this matter? It is helpful to consider an example. C12 in the current standards states that "Teachers should know a range of approaches to assessment, including the importance of formative assessment" (TDA 2010, p.18). A teacher could satisfy this standard without having a grasp of the purposes of assessment and how they may vary. This is a fundamental professional inadequacy. There would thus need to be a statement of standards concerning assessment in a broad sense and then, in relation to formative assessment, something like: "Understanding the purposes, importance and uses of formative assessment" would be a better way of expressing the significance and depth of the professional judgement that is required of an effective teacher in respect of formative assessment.

This is not a trivial matter as the contrasting specifications are quite different. In the latter case, a teacher needs to know about the various purposes which assessment can address. These are, in turn, related to understanding of the character of aims, curriculum and pedagogy. It is not simply a matter of knowing the importance of formative assessment, but of *knowing what it is for* and hence the circumstances in which it is to be used. This understanding has then to be related to an understanding of the nature of the curriculum area in which she is working. The teacher working to the current standard will have been told *that* formative assessment is important, but will not necessarily understand *why*. More damagingly, she will not necessarily be able to relate its importance to the wider and diverse purposes of assessment. The teacher working to a broader, philosophically informed, statement of professional capacity will be able to form an opinion about that issue and should also be able to relate it to an understanding of the epistemology of the subject she is teaching. Such teachers can form their own judgments and influence those of others and are the kind that are needed in a workforce that is independently minded and capable of making professional problems their own concern and, even more important, capable of supplying leadership within the profession.

Implications for continuing professional development.

Philosophically reflective ability acquired in initial professional formation will need to be developed as a more comprehensive ability in mid-career. It will be particularly important for teachers to gain, among other things, a heightened understanding of the issues that concern the

education system at a national level, the epistemology of their subjects, the impact of educational research on their work and last, but certainly not least, an understanding of what is involved in exercising responsibility within the profession, through an understanding of management and motivation, of the nature of individual and institutional self-evaluation and of the context of educational change. By this I do not mean the latest management fads, but a deeper understanding of agency, attitude and the reasons that people have for their actions. Such a study combines philosophical with empirical considerations. A Masters in Teaching and Learning which only concentrates on issues of classroom and institutional management will not be capable of doing such a job, although parts of it may well contribute to it. Teachers need and deserve a qualification that reflects a rigorous engagement with educational issues rather than a series of prescriptive fixes for classroom and institutional management problems.

The Rise and Fall of Philosophy of Education in Initial Teacher Education.

It is natural to ask why Philosophy of Education should be revived as a key element in initial teacher education given that it had a period of influence which went into significant decline in the 1980s and that it is almost moribund in Teacher Education now. The study of Philosophy of Education by both intending and serving teachers has had a long and chequered history. To take the UK as a prominent example, from the heyday of the R.S. Peters-inspired B.Ed. degrees in the 1960s and 70s to the nadir of assaults from the then Education Secretary, Kenneth Clarke, on it as a component of 'barmy' educational theory in the early 1990s, not to mention the philosophical assault on college-based teacher education from Anthony O'Hear and others, Philosophy of Education can hardly claim to have found a secure place in the education of teachers. The post 1988 landscape of a regulated and accountable state education system seems to offer even less scope for Philosophy. Its prospects seem stuck in the deepest midwinter. Yet philosophical reflection on educational issues has never gone away. Even the long retreat of the 80s and 90s was marked by some sophisticated philosophical reflection on the nature of education, ironically from some of those most concerned to banish it from the education of teachers. The work of the Centre for Policy Studies was a principal source: Letwin (1988) on the core aims of education and Marenbon (1987) on the place and nature of English education are good examples of philosophical reflection closely related to policy formation.

The quality of much of the work done between the 1960s and 1990s was outstanding. Indeed, the fact that conceptual reflection on education still exists in the UK is a testimony to the work of the pioneers in the field such as Peters, Hirst and Dearden. They had an influence far beyond their own lecture theatres, not only in the classrooms of their students but also in policymaking. Although the discipline was undoubtedly a victim of the assault on college-based teacher education that was part of the climate of educational politics from the early 1980s onwards, we need to ascertain whether they were internal contributory factors in its decline and whether they can be avoided in any future mass incarnation.

There was a tendency for some leading practitioners to write as if they were attempting a canonical, normative, context-free account of education and its central concepts, rather than a representation of the complexity and contested nature of educational discourse. It is true that Peters, for example, moved considerably from the dogmatic position of *Ethics and Education* in 1966 to a radically different view in *Essays on Educators* in 1981, but the furrow that he

ploughed in the last period of his working life was left fallow by most of his immediate colleagues and successors. The price paid was a perception of an overly aloof and élitist discipline promoting a partial and context-bound conception of education, as if it were a categorial concept.

The second problem was that of a particular understanding of the role of Philosophy of Education by some of its practitioners as a form of debunking. Philosophy of Education was sometimes seen as a way of deflating the muddled and overambitious claims of other disciplines within the field of education without necessarily putting anything in their place. It acquired a reputation in some quarters as a form of intellectual bloodsport, ruthlessly exposing and criticising the intellectual shortcomings of policymakers, gurus and other educational researchers, despite some very serious and valuable constructive work (Robert Dearden's careful essays on assessment and learning how to learn spring to mind). It was also isolated from the other disciplines of education, its mode of engagement with them being, all too often, a kind of disdainful critique. There was too little evidence of sympathetic engagement with Psychologists, Sociologists and Economists of Education, let alone initiatives to work with them in common enterprises of educational research. I am not suggesting that Philosophy of Education should ever have eschewed its critical and destructive role, rather that this was overemphasised in the mind of some of its practitioners, as well as being the signature perception of the subject amongst other educational professionals and researchers (eg. Straughan and Wilson (1983); Barrow (1984) for some notable examples of this tendency). These problems were by no means sufficient to cause the discipline's institutional decline, but contributed to an inability to command a wide constituency of support when it really mattered.

Conclusion.

The educational landscape in England has utterly changed since the heyday of Philosophy of Education as a significant component of initial and continuing teacher education. We now live in an era of accountability within a structured framework with national aims, curriculum and assessment of various kinds. Empirical research actively informs policy. Few would wish to return to the days when teachers devised their own aims, curricula, pedagogies and assessment procedures, with little reference to anything other than their own prejudices or whatever happened to be the current fad of the local authority inspectorate. The teaching profession is largely graduate and there is an aspiration to turn it into a Masters level profession in the coming years. But conceptual reflection remains minimal and there are reasons to think that the current official conception of teaching consists of an uneasy amalgam of a kind of craft based in classroom practice and of a technical pursuit which involves putting into practice prescriptions worked up by empirical researchers. There is little sense of recognition teacher independence and initiative, let alone of the development of breadth of understanding and of self-understanding. National strategies based on prescription, which are cascaded down to classroom level, have reached an impasse. At the same time, the management and deployment of teachers is treated as the manipulation of the workforce through a performance regime, rather than being organised around the development of professional élan (Smith 2001).

It is no coincidence that the craft –cum – technician model, combined with discredited management methods that do not give due account to the professional judgment of teachers, have

coincided with a stalling of progress in the development of the UK education system. Teachers have the potential to make the system progress once again, but only if they are given back their powers of judgment. A teacher education curriculum in which Philosophy of Education is fully engaged with practice, debate, educational research and reflection on subjects, is one important component of such a renewal.

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